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This morning is January 20, 1999. We're at the Temple Beth El at 1700 Alameda de las Pulgas in San Mateo, California. We are interviewing Walter Saphir. My name is Peter Ryan, interviewer. And Graham Salminger is doing the videotaping with help from--

Trevor and--

[INAUDIBLE]. Could we begin by my asking you where and when you were born?

I was born in Vienna, Austria.

What year?

1927. And how many people were in your family?

Immediate family, at that time, at my birth, father, mother, and older brother.

And could you give their names?

My father's name was Armin, A-R-M-I-N, Saphir. My mother was Elsa Saphir nee [? Popper. ?] My brother's name is Kurt Saphir.

And how much older was he then you?

Almost two years older than myself.

Ten?

Two.

Two. Now could you describe the living conditions when you were born?

We lived comfortable probably in the middle class area in Vienna. Initially, we all lived in an area which was, I believe, the 18th District in Vienna. My grandparents owned a very large piano business in the center of Vienna, in the 2nd District. And upon her death, who was basically the leading light of the piano business, my father took over. And we moved into that area then.

How old were you then?

I think I was five.

Do you remember that change?

I remember the change in the sense that the entire floor of a very large building in that area existed 1/3 of the apartment where we lived then. Because my grandmother had nine children, who were all raised in that particular apartment. And then the piano business occupied the other 2/3 of that same floor. And so the size was somewhat overwhelming initially.

So you moved into the 2nd District about 1932.

Approximately, '32, '33 if I remember correctly.

Could you describe your early schooling?

Yes. Clearly, I started schooling after we had moved into the 2nd District, the normal kind of public school in two

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adjoining buildings, boys in one and the girls in the next, where you attend elementary school which lasted four years. After that, I went into the high school, quote "gymnasium", as it was called at that particular time, which also was in 2nd District.

And coincidentally, my father had gone there, too, and so did most of his brothers, where I went until the I think was until Crystal Night, November 1938, after which Jewish students were kicked out. And we went to a gymnasium, which was a Jewish gymnasium, subsequently until my departure from Vienna.

Any particular memories stand out of your schooling?

Probably the most, as far as school is concerned, the most evident memory I have is the way we were forced to leave the school. It was pretty well-organized, in the sense that the younger youngsters, below the age of 13, could leave either on their own or be picked up on that memorable day, whereas the kids who were 13 and older, up to about the age of 18 when people went to the gymnasium, were systematically beaten up as we were leaving.

And very generously, one of the older, non-Jewish boys, clearly an Aryan boy, very kindly explained to the parents that the younger kids would not be beaten up, and they could go home unhindered.

And you were still young enough?

I was young.

And do you know the history of your family, how long they've been in Austria?

Yes. Actually, on my father's side, it must be dating back to the late 18th century, early 19th. There's a very famous great, great, great grandparent, whose name is Moritz Gottlieb Saphir, who in the early 1800s was a music critic, a satirist, a humorist. In fact, coincidentally, about three weeks ago, a friend of mine drew my attention to an article in The Wall Street Journal that mentioned him.

So I presume from that, it dates back that far. I mean, it's well known that-- and the Jews of the second Jews were permitted to live in Vienna, which means after 1780. And a large part of the family came from Prague and had been living in Prague for many, many, many years. And that's really my mother's family, of whom I know very little, because the grandparents had died before my birth, were, as far as I knew, Viennese.

But she didn't talk much about their backgrounds, so I don't know.

Do you know where they came from in Austria?

I think it's probably Vienna, too.

Was that by decree that in 1780, you say?

Early 1800s, I'm not exactly sure. But there are quite a lot of books written by him still available apparently, secondhand stores in Vienna.

So he mandated that Jews were allowed to live in--

He, apparently, yes, as you know, you know, there was a great, perhaps not at that age, but rather in the Herzl's time, Herzl initially felt that the best thing for Jews was to be all baptized, before he realized with the Dreyfus case that there would be no help. Dreyfus being baptized, to be baptized as a Jew, and began the Zionist trade, move to Israel, Palestine at the time.

But many were baptized. I don't really know. Not, no one that I know in my family had been baptized. They were the very typical, so-called assimilated Jew of central Europe.

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Were they very religious, your parents?

Not at all.

Not at all. What kind of religious training did you get?

We'll get into that a little bit later, I'm sure. It's probably, I would call it, very close to zero. None of us were ever baptized. I think all of us were aware we were Jewish. And it's also in Austria, the law stated that I think once a week Protestants, of whom there were not too many in Catholic Austria in the first place, Jews and Catholic had to have religious education. I don't know whether it was one hour a week or so.

In the school?

In the schools, in the public schools.

Did you have that?

Yes.

And how many were there in your class?

I really don't remember it. I know, you separated. I don't think anything was unusual. It was in the elementary school, you know, until I was about 10. But I must frankly say, in the elementary school, I never remember any negative reaction on the part of the other kids. Because clearly, at that time, everybody knew who was Jewish. Because this was a legal situation of having to attend religious education.

Right. But no, no backlash at all that you remember.

No, on the contrary, I would say, I mean, I remember that favorably I, at the graduation ceremony when I was 10, you know, there were all sorts of things happening. And I know I was playing the piano. And then I was playing the violin. This was the thing one did in Vienna at that time. One doesn't do it now anymore.

Could you describe your father? What was he like?

My father who was very hardworking businessman. And I remember him to be under always a considerable amount of stress. Clearly because in the '30s business did very poorly. He was also the kind of person, and much of what I know is from what my mother told me, because she was 102 and 1/2 when she died two years ago, was that he never wanted to reduce the size of the business.

And this was a very sizable business. And it was the largest in Vienna. And Vienna, as you all are aware of, music was the important aspect of everybody's life, probably aggravated the problems or the concerns and the worries. And so I didn't really see that much of him. I do remember, whenever I performed, then clearly close attention was paid to that. But I remember him very fondly and as a kind person and non-disciplinarian at all.

And also, the chamber music, weekly chamber music evenings, in which he was the one who played the cello, was always something important also to my brother and myself, our lives when we were small children.

Would that be at the house?

Yes.

Do you know if Austria was hard hit by the depression?

I think so. It wasn't anything I felt directly personally, because whatever happened, I accept it. And though I must frankly say, my mother denied it when I confronted her with it, I mean, very often, dinner times was buttered bread and tea was dinner. And it was just-- it just was part of it. My brother and I expected that. And very often, it was not. And many times it was the things that one does in Vienna a lot like apricot dumplings, things like that weren't expensive.

And that's the reason why you have a lot of desserts in Vienna. Because meat was very expensive. And so if you fashion something, use potato flour and fruit, it was very tasty and filling.

Tell us a little about your mother. What was she like?

My mother was one of those women who was told by many people, sometimes she acts as if she would be the empress of Austria, you know, sort of presiding very kindly, very concerned, expect the kids to do what was expected. No physical punishment, except rarely I guess. Rose to the occasion, of course, when Hitler came way beyond what anybody would have expected, as I presume most women in a situation like this do.

The empress came through.

Absolutely came through. Was very helpful, in many respects, to her own sister who was a very impoverished person. Not much money was available. I remember an incidence when I had a violin lesson. For that, there was always apparently money available. And I had very severe abdominal pain. At that time, I think I must have been nine years old. And the question was taking the bus or I don't have these things of any value.

Yes, yes.

The choice my mother gave me was, shall we take the bus? Is the pain-- is the pain so bad we should? Or because she has to buy some bread. Well, I certainly can manage.

So the question was whether to walk to where--

To home or not. And the same night, I had an appendectomy. So I guess the pain was a little worse than I remember it.

So you were a good little trooper.

I think most of the kids were. Most of my friends were the same way.

Yeah.

Nothing was unusual. You grew up in that time where these things everybody did, everybody expected out of you. Rebelliousness, of course, didn't exist, these kind of things. And I think my childhood, in spite of all these things, and I've often thought back about it and talked to my kids about it, it was really a very happy childhood. It-- I remember it very, very positively, none of the negative things that say that would have-- I would have felt very bad about as a parent happening to my kids bothered me at the time.

What kind of things would have bothered you if it had happened--

With my kids? The diet situation, perhaps. Perhaps the fact that I would not-- I would be very, very concerned what would happen to them if they would be on the streets.

The danger.

The incipient danger that, obviously, there was a feeling for that. I mean, it's inconceivable that I could ever have dealt with this happening to my children. And when I speak to my son about it, if this would happen to his daughter, he just can't imagine it. It's just way beyond his imagination.

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You have to sort of experience it.

You have to experience it. Or be vitally, vitally interested, which, to be absolutely fair, my kids are not.

They're not.

Not vitally interested. I mean, their beginning to recognize some interest--

Are they interested in you being interviewed?

They don't know.

They don't know.

No.

They will know.

If the occasion comes up, I would mention it to them.

I see.

Probably would be more interested, I was interviewed in New York, where I was just on the street of Times Square as to what I thought about Clinton. Probably.

Tell us a little about your brother. What was he like?

My brother was relatively, in that sense, European sense, fairly wild. I was clearly the good boy. I was the obvious bright kid. He, as you know, educational definitions unfortunately made in Europe even to this day, as to evaluation, how bright you are by the age nine or 10.

Very quick.

And then you go to either the gymnasium to ultimately be a professional person or else you don't. You go to school for five years.

So your life was determined very early, the shape of it.

Very early, in that sense. It's perhaps less of a problem in my case. It may have been more of a problem in my brother's case. But things changed as the years went on. And the Shanghai situation arose. But he probably, retrospectively, had a certain degree of learning disability, a word that, of course, didn't exist at that time. People always assume that's because their nasty kids and that's why they don't study and all this kind of thing.

And my father belonged to this school of anthroposophy, I don't know if you heard about Rudolf Steiner was a philosopher, or whatever you wish to call him. It wasn't my thing. But it was my father thing, not fanatic, but at least certainly very much involved with this kind of philosophy. And there was a very good school. The schools here are called Waldorf schools. I'd never heard of that name until I came to The States.

And he went to one of those schools. And I think meeting him and his friends, I mean, it was actually an excellent, excellent school, probably much better than the gymnasium I went to

What did they do that was different from the public school, could you say?

Probably much more intense. For one thing, I'm sure the classes were smaller, much more intense reading, a little bit

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more history, a little bit more philosophy. Kids were not pressured in conforming. You know, it's very similar to the, what is it, the Pacific High School in Palo Alto, you know.

So a much more relaxed atmosphere.

A much more relaxed atmosphere. I do remember distinctly my brother's knowledge of Greek and Roman mythology at the age of 11 was absolutely overwhelming, because it was very interesting. And so-- so that was, I thought, a great advantage for him at that particular level, to attend a school, that kind of a school.

Did he blossom there, would you say?

I think he did well enough. It was a really very short interval between the time we went to gymnasium and by the time Hitler really came in March '38.

Did you have meals at home in the middle of the day?

Trying to think, yes. The public schools gave free milk at the time. So around 10:00, you had milk. I don't know remember, may have had some slice of bread. And everybody got that, doesn't matter.

Yeah. And then you went home for your--

And then I remember distinct most of the time I was picked up by my paternal grandfather, who always lived with us. And, you know, corner park, played a little marbles, and I went home.

What would those meals be like?

It probably kind of buttered bread. I remember a few things, because when I quoted this to the children. It was spotted bread with pieces of chocolate on it. Sometimes was jam and sliced bananas on it. I mean, none of you know this kind of stuff. But it's really very good. But it may not be nutritionally very sound.

Would there be a lot of talk?

Talk, not really. The family didn't so much, we had it made. We often ate in the kitchen and that kind of thing. You know, I mentioned before, the food may not have been plentiful. But there were certain standards that somehow needed to be maintained, as I indicated before, you know, music lessons, a maid in the house, that kind of thing, which was very acceptable.

Yeah. Do you remember those meal times together fondly?

Not in any-- not important in the American sense, the family should eat together and talk about what has happened during the day and inquire as to what the teachers have been doing, that kind of-- not in that kind of sense.

What kind of sense then?

The sense really is more of a listening kind of situation.

A listening, you mean the children.

More listening, not that you had to be quiet or shut up. It's just simply you were much more busy eating and getting back to play or going out or whatever.

Did that change over time as the situation in Austria changed? Did politics get discussed much?

No. I think, I would imagine that within the framework of my immediate family, that they were politically very, very

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naive. And--

Did they belong to a political party?

No.

No.

Not social Democrats or anything.

Not as far as I know.

OK.

In fact, I don't really truly remember politics being discussed in that sense. What was historically discussed is the old emperor, perhaps, who had died in 1916 anyway. Discussion of music a lot. Perhaps philosophy, I think I knew a fair amount of Schiller and Goethe, this kind of thing, by the time I was nine or 10.

And liked it?

Yes, actually, my brother and I were talking about we can still recite some of Goethe's poems, which is ridiculous to pluck out one's brain with things like that. So it's in that sense. There's a reason why I consider the naivety of my parents. Because probably we could have avoided the Shanghai experience if they would not have been so naive about the kind of situation.

And they didn't feel it was a temporary thing. And my father didn't think, because it was a Hungarian cavalry officer, not much would happen. And because we had very, very little contact, I think, with Jewish organization, I would say zero, there was not enough warning perhaps coming through. I think. But that's an adult evaluation. Much of what I say is really looking back at childhood as an adult.

Sure.

Do you remember when Dreyfus-- Dollfuss was assassinated.

Yes.

Could you tell us--

It, well, I don't remember it that well. I remember my family was horror struck, because it was, at that time, there was awareness of Nazis, of course, who were, it was felt, responsible for part of that.

What kind of awareness was it? Did they have a presence in Austria?

The Nazis, I didn't feel it at the time.

OK.

And I don't know, I would be fear of what I know to what I've read. Because I've read a lot about these things since then. But I do remember the Dollfuss situation happening. Whether I remember it from my grandfather, who, he and I were exceedingly close, or from the atmosphere, I don't remember. I know I don't actually remember that it was discussed in school. Actually civics and these kinds of things weren't discussed.

Wasn't there street fighting in Vienna during that--

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I know. And I know-- but, again, retrospectively, an uncle of mine was an intern at the famous hospital. And there were repercussions within the hospital emergency rooms and all that kind of thing about injuries and so forth. But then I heard this after I came to the States from my uncle.

OK. When did you become aware of the Nazi threat?

Probably in a realistic sense in March.

When you came--

In March when Hitler entered Austria, and I saw it from the balcony and the screaming and yelling and the swastikas. And there was a sense of anxiety. It didn't really act up in the sense that I was horribly fearful of going. But I had a girlfriend, [INAUDIBLE] 10-year-olds have girlfriend. And I saw her on the street. And for some reason or other, she was going on the other side as she saw me come.

She didn't recognize me. And you know, after I hollered after her, and went after her, she ran, caught up with her. What's going on? She thought I was a Nazi.

She thought you were a Nazi.

I was a Nazi, right? At that time, I was pretty fair-haired and so forth. You know, and you have these preconceived notions. That I remember was always one of my early reactions as to this kind of fear and anxiety. But I don't remember my parents warning me one way or the other. I do remember being stopped by one of my classmates and tell me if I had any money. And I think I had two pennies and said, what do you want with it? Well, we want it because you're a Jew. Gave it to him.

Another situation, I think that happened, I wasn't the kind of kid, I think, that's of some importance psychologically as things get into all the years, who was a kind of kid who was beaten up. Not because I was tough, but I just wasn't the kind of kid.

You weren't a target.

Pardon me. Not so much a target, it just-- I didn't come across threatening, I presume, or anything of that sort. In class, I was relatively popular, that kind of thing. So in that sense, you know, whereas friends of mine were beaten up. Adults didn't beat up me, because, as you probably realize, adult Austrians often beat up Jewish kids. I didn't have that kind of experience.

Would you be-- could you easily be picked out as Jewish would you say?

I don't really think so. At that time, at that time, I had no idea, basically, when somebody looked Jewish or didn't look Jewish. This whole idea, subsequently, of under Goebbels and the [? Sturmer ?] and all this kind thing, what a Jewish looks like. I'd never seen anybody like this. And none of my friends looked so, obviously, this kind of Jewish that I don't really think when I think of the Jewish kids in my class, unless we all would be going to that religious class, none of us would have known who is or is not.

Did you have friends who were not Jewish?

Yes, yes.

What happened to those friendships?

They, during the time, I had very little relationships with them. I actually at first, I've thought about it now that you're mentioning it, met them on the street, played marbles together. That's as much. It wasn't really in the fact you come to each other's house, you know, the American way, you don't just come and invite a kid for dinner because he's your

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friend. You always were expected to come home and have your dinner and that's it with your family.

So you would meet your friends on the street.

Basically played together and go to the Prater, famous part of Vienna, together and see them there.

Did you witness any of those incidents after the Nazis came in, where they had people cleaning the sidewalks with toothbrushes or any of that kind of thing?

Probably the most traumatic experience I had at the time was that my violin teacher was caught on the street. By that time, it was, I presume, very close in November already Crystal Night '38, who died in cleaning the street with a toothbrush of a sudden heart attack. That was literally incomprehensible to me, number one, and hard to take, number two.

And the violin teacher, you know, who is a certain authority figure, that this should happen. That, to me, was very traumatic. And--

How did you find about it?

My mother told me. And she befriended the widow then, of course. And I think once my mother and I went to see her. You know, at that time, when somebody died, you wore black. And it seems so unrealistic to me, as many things do, that this even could happen or occur. And my feeling at that time was, this can only be a temporary situation, a horrible thing that happens. And within a few months, it'll be gone.

How long were you able to hold onto that feeling?

Until it became very real, until on Crystal Night, my uncle had always lived with us was sent to Dachau. My father was sent to prison. And then they weren't there. The other thing is--

Were you there when that happened?

No, because I was in that school. And that was a time the question of the beating up of the older kids came up. So if a mother of a classmate of mine picked me up and said I should come home with them. Because there was no one there to pick me up. When I approached my house, which was next to the largest Jewish temple, it was burning. And, you know, it's [INAUDIBLE] things before.

Excuse me. And-- and I heard the people yelling, throw the Jews into the fire. Then I went home and I was alone.

Nobody home.

No, my father wasn't there. And my grandfather had left for the United States. And I don't know where my mother was. Whether it happened on that day or the day afterwards, my mother told me she was hauled to the Gestapo to wash windows. And at that time, of course, she would be the only one at home. And she, obviously, had never washed windows in her life. So she took a pail and so forth. I mean, that story came up much, much, much, much later. I mean, I was well an adult by that time.

And so she went into the Gestapo house, which was in the 1st District, with a pail. And the SS men in front told her, you go up to the third floor and was windows. It was a little dangerous in the first place. Because the third floor is the fourth floor in our American way of thinking. And she started. And an SS officer came and wondered what she was doing there. That was many years ago, clearly, 60 years ago.

She was a very, very, very beautiful woman. And he said-- he said-- she said, I've been called to wash the windows. He said, well, that's ridiculous. What are you doing here? Go home. She said, I can't go home, because the SS men down there told me. He says, well, that's OK. I'll take you through there, then you go home. And that SS officer got her

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through and she went home. And she was home.

So she told me this many, many years later.

Yeah. How did she tell it? How did she feel about it?

She told me this when I was an adult, had kids. She actually told me many of these things really only in the last 20 years before she died. And as I mentioned before, she died in 1995, 1996 actually, right, 1996. So there was a lot of time to tell me things. But she really didn't want to talk about many of these kinds of things. There was a lot of denial, I think, because when I amusedly told her about the dinners we had, I mean, she denied it. I mean, it was very hard for her to accept it.

That she couldn't provide more. I'm not sure about the psychological reason behind it. But a lot has to do with her own long history of her own life and her tremendous ability to survive. You have had many interview, interviewees here that have told you about the Shanghai situation. So there's no need for me to repeat it. But I mean, she was really a survivor in Shanghai.

And there are all sorts of reasons that she was, and that our life in Shanghai perhaps was somewhat different than the life of many friends of mine, for certain reasons.

Did anything happen to your brother that day in Crystal Night?

No, no.

He was--

He has never mentioned anything to me. We have really never talked about it. He is very, very, very different from myself. Actually, I realize he doesn't talk about it, because it isn't that prominent in his mind, I don't think. He married a Polish lady, who was in Auschwitz at the slave labor, many, many years ago. He's obviously happily married to her.

And she told me that the only one she can talk about some of these experiences, so she lost her parents and her brother, is myself. She, I think, feels she doesn't want to burden my brother with these kinds of stories. He's sort of a very easygoing, charming, live let live kind of guy. And I think people feel instinctively why bother him with these things. So--

So when did your mother come home that day?

I think she-- I think she was there by that evening.

Were you frightened?

Very much. Well, the temple was burning. It was the largest temple, a magnificent, you know, the usual Moorish style, the way they built temple. It was the largest temple. I don't think it was the oldest one. But it certainly was built in the late 1800s. I mean, after all, the Jews were 10% of the Vienna population, which was, what, about 200,000, and were prominent.

And much of what I'm telling you is sort of retrospectively. There's an excellent book written by Berkley about Vienna and Its Jews, with the subtitle, The Tragedy Of Success.

The tragedy of what?

The tragedy of success. And the success, when you really know what Jews had accomplished in Vienna around the turn of the century and how prominent they were in the music field, in journalism, in medicine, just down the line, part of me was felt this intense envy of success. So much of what I know and say may be based very much on what I've been

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reading.

How long was your father and, what, your uncle?

My uncle was in Dachau until the point my mother could get him out by proving that we were leaving Austria. And that was in April 1939.

From November to April.

Right. And my father got out, was in jail, he had had a few months before a very serious stomach surgery for bleeding ulcer. And he was in jail probably three weeks. And but was, I think, at that point, emotionally relatively incapacitated. And so my mother, you know, took over many of these kinds of things.

By that time, and that brings me back to the political naivety of my parents, my two uncles, one of whom had a very large pharmacy in Vienna, and the other one was a very prominent lawyer, had left with their wives earlier. And--

Where'd they go?

To-- my uncle, from the pharmacy, went to the United States in May, I think, '38. My other uncle came temporarily to Shanghai, where a relative of an aunt of mine was a postal director for the city of Shanghai. You know, that was before the war and lived with them very temporarily. Because my aunt had tuberculosis. And you couldn't immediately get accepted, because she had, obviously, some lung pulmonary findings on the X-ray.

So there was a question of waiting time. And then immediately got back, got to the United States about six months later. So they lived very, very well in Shanghai at that fabulous home. My grandfather, however, had stayed. And my father, prior to the November '38 day, was able to get my grandfather out to the United States. He still has had justified some anger about his brothers who didn't take their father with them.

So my grandfather left alone for the United States. Because I had two uncles who had been in the United States since the early '20s. And they were doc physicians in Chicago.

Were they his sons?

They were the sons of my grandfather, yes.

So he was able to get him to the United States.

Without any difficulty.

Yeah, which probably was a better experience than going to Shanghai.

For my grandfather?

Yeah.

Oh, yes. I'm sure that's the case. He found it-- my grandfather was one of those wonderful people. And you have these fantastic memories of some people in your lives. And I do of my grandfather. And I remember that his departure from Vienna from-- my mother was very close to him and, obviously, I was-- was extremely traumatic for him. So in that sense, retrospectively, now that you ask this question, perhaps he would have preferred going through all the problems in Shanghai.

But he, obviously, had a lot of grandchildren in the United States. And that was so. But once we left Vienna, there was never any contact with him anymore when the war broke out. [COUGH] Excuse me.

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Tell me some of your memories of him.

Picking me up in school. He was-- he was the one, probably, who was instrumental in teaching me about German culture. I mean, these names may not mean much to you nowadays. You know, this is kind of the culture that was very prominent then, you know, Heine and those I mentioned before, Schiller, and Goethe and [INAUDIBLE], and these kinds of people, the operators, you know, and Johann Strauss, and [? Lehar, ?] and things of that sort.

That was his thing. My father's thing was more opera. And the first opera I had to go and see was Richard Wagner, at the age of seven, which was traumatic at my age. So my grandfather's memory deal very much about surrounding me with a culture, which we all would like to do as grandparents, to give our grandchildren something very positive, which parents don't have the time or even the knowledge to impart on the kids. And that's how I remember my grandfather.

What had he done? Had he run the piano business?

He had run the piano business originally. But his wife was really the-- she had been a teacher in Vienna-- the business mind behind it. It was a kind of business in which many of the prominent musicians were giving recitals, people, you know, whose names became prominent in the United States subsequently after Hitler.

But she was really the mind and whether now my father felt he had to keep this up because it was her big thing. That kind of a status probably may have been a reason that he, in spite of advice given by other people, reduced the size of the business and the expense of it. He just didn't and couldn't do.

Do you know if your mother was able to go see your father while he was in prison?

No.

No.

There was suddenly a ringing at the door. And here he was there with another friend, who also was released from prison three weeks later. And-- and here he was. Initially, we didn't know where my uncle was. But then, of course, it became evident because you got notified.

Was there any communication with the uncle?

No. I think the first thing I saw was a picture, which they had to send in order to get the tickets or whatever. You had to get the visa or whatever. You didn't need a visa to go to Shanghai at that time. It was under Japanese occupation. But you had to get some picture, some sort of stateless passport. You did-- weren't permitted to have an Austrian passport. We had a stateless passport, you know, with a J in it.

And that picture looked horrible, clearly. And that's a memory I have, in that sense, until he got out.

Do you remember when the talk began about leaving?

Probably-- probably shortly after my father's return from jail. The family had all left basically about it. And-- and there was, if I remember correctly, there was a problem about even getting out, Shanghai would have been the only possibility. Because that's a whole problem about immigration quota at the United States. There weren't that many visas available.

And we did have an Austrian visa. So many Austrians had to go to Poland, because they were born in Poland, which was almost an non-existing immigration quota at the time. But the Austrian wasn't bad, except they didn't fill the quotas in the United States in that year. And so the question came, what's to be done? Because there was no question, number one, you couldn't get my uncle out from concentration camp. And number two, our lives would be forfeited at the time.

And my parents, for some reason or other, didn't permit Kindertransports. You know about the Kindertransports.

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Yeah, yeah. Was there any opportunity?

Lots.

A lot.

A little bit more if you had from-- I hear from friends of mine who were Kindertransports from the Vienna, if you had more of a connection with the Jewish community.

So the--

I think so. I think that maybe, I wouldn't call it isolation. It was just--

Separation.

It was just the way things were. And I don't know whether they ever confronted Jewish community about it, what should they do, what should they not do. I really don't know. But it is certainly true that I don't know how much information they had about Kindertransports. But at that time, the Shanghai situation came as a family. And then the problem, of course, was we didn't have any money.

Did the Germans take the business away?

The main workmen of my father's business was empowered by the Nazis to Aryanize the business. Every organization, you know, what that meant. And--

Were they were able to get anything out of it?

Absolutely nothing. My mother tells me that she-- there was absolutely really no money really actually for food. My grandfather got a little bit of pocket money from his sons in Chicago. And he gave that money to my mother, as she told me. She begged, as she told me, on bended knee this particular man. After all, he has known the family for such a long time. And we had a good relationship. He didn't have a good relationship with my father. But they had a very good relationship with my mother and certainly with us kids.

I mean, he was just like a second father. And I presume that's the basis on which he gave a little bit of money to-- so that you, you know, could buy food or whatever.

And this was what, a friend or the person then--

No, that was the person who took over the business.

Who took over?

Right.

OK.

There was another workman there who was sympathetic, but I don't think he had anything to be done. And the accountant in the business was just doing what the Nazis were telling him. I think he was fearful. Because I confronted him when I was stationed in Germany and I went to Austria. But that was many years later.

So-- so the problem was of Shanghai and you had to pay for your tickets. And that we didn't really have any money. And very indirectly, there's sort of a long story . Through the very distant relatives, who received affidavits from my uncles in Chicago, who were very wealthy in Vienna and apparently still had funds, gave us the money to buy the

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tickets and thusly got my uncle out of Dachau, proving that we would leave.

And off we went to Shanghai in April.

Now this was from money provided by the--

By these distant relatives--

--the uncles.

--who gave us the money when they received the affidavits. And they then left on the strength of these affidavits to come to the United States.

Now, after Crystal Night, you were not allowed to go back to school.

No, I went to that Jewish Hebrew school called [PERSONAL NAME] Gymnasium. To this day, I don't know who [PERSONAL NAME] was but apparently a prominent Jewish person.

And what was that like, that school?

The faintest memory of it that I have was it seemed to be a good school. IT-- they taught a lot of Hebrew of which I don't remember anything at all. And so I went there, I guess, in November '38. And it may have, yes, around that time, it may have been slightly before actually. And we left in April. So it was just really a few months that time of the year. I probably was in the second year of the gymnasium class by that time.

And I assume all the other students that were with you that their families were trying to get out.

The-- a number of them had left for other places. After Crystal Night, the few contacts I had were people who basically had left. And I just-- it's a real blank of what happened between the Crystal Night and the time we left for Shanghai.

Which was in May.

Was April, I think.

April.

Yeah.

So there were about almost six months that you were there.

Right. And you know, it's living in a state somewhat of suspense, as the parents were trying to do this Shanghai trip, what Shanghai was like. I do remember-- I do remember one thing. I had a very good friend whose father was a bookbinder. It was days before machine. You did everything by hand actually. And I learned how to do bookbinding when I was 10 and 1/2, 11. Actually, I still know how to.

My mother, because everybody was told you had to learn some sort of trade, the last thing anyone in my family really had an ordinary trade, except my father was a piano tuner, obviously, which is a trade. And my mother when-- what did she learn? I think it's something with cooking something of the sort, you know, I think so. And people learned to do things. I remember that. I think they learned how to make hats and things like that.

What did your brother learn?

I don't-- I don't really remember.

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OK.

I don't-- I think the bookbinding wasn't anything, that was a very close friend of mine. It was fun.

Yeah.

And I still have things like music notes, which I bound, to this day. So but that was a fun situation. It wasn't anything because of Shanghai I would have to go and get a job at 10 or at 11.

Mm-hmm. Go ahead.

Well and then my mother's sister and her two daughters were still in Vienna. They were originally from-- her divorced husband was from Bratislava, Slovakia now. And they helped us flee. Because there was some problem I know with taxes. You had to pay all your tax before you could leave. And we didn't have the money for that. And I think the Germans, believe it or not, had made a mistake in giving us something, you know, which is unheard of.

And so we had this. But the fear was that they're going to fight it out. So we fled at 5 o'clock in the morning. And my father arranged to-- had gotten all this emotional strength back, that we should take the train to Munich and from Munich to Genoa, to get onto the ship to take us to Shanghai. Why Munich? Well, that's because nobody would be stupid enough to go into Germany and follow. And they wouldn't find us this way.

So we took the train to Munich and Munich down to Genoa. That was his reasoning.

And you went right into the lion's mouth.

Exactly.

Yeah.

And, Munich, as you know, Bavaria is a stronghold. My theory is still in the Catholic countries, like Austria, Bavaria, Ukraine, and Poland, very strong Catholic countries, where the relatively uneducated priests felt very strongly that Jews were instrumental in killing Christ were worse. I mean, you could go to Berlin still relatively well in '37, '38, and so forth. I mean, there are books written on that subject.

That must have been terrifying to--

It-- well, we took the train, stayed at the station, took the train back. So there wasn't much time to think about it.

How much layover between getting there and leaving?

If I remember, it was just something like two hours. You know, I mean, the efficiency of trains was still excellent at the time. And then we arrived in Genoa. We stayed there. My uncle had gone to Genoa a few days before in order to separate him from the family, in case they catch one or the other. And we stayed a few days in Genoa, which was actually a relatively happy time.

And this uncle was related to you by your father?

My father's brother.

Your father's brother.

Yeah.

Was he single?

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He was single. He had lived with us. I might be jumping from--

That's OK.

My father was one of 9. And my grandmother was a kind of person where intelligence and education is more important than anything else. And so she directed all of these nine kids. So my oldest, the oldest one was the only daughter she had, became a physician, which for a woman and a Jew in, what would it have been, in 1908 to 1909 was not the easiest thing to do.

But my grandmother had a lot of influence because of this music business, which, as you probably know, was a big thing, was able to get her in. And two of my uncles also became physicians. The-- another uncle of mine studied agricultural engineering and a job in, for a Jew and in Europe, because nobody got baptized, was obviously impossible to find.

And I'm a little bit shy on the subject. There was a very prominent wealthy Jew in the '20s who wanted to develop colonies in Argentina, perhaps some of you know more about it. And in fact, a cousin of mine mentioned the name the other day. And my uncle, with his expertise, went to Argentina at that time to assist in the development of this, of Jews settling there.

Another uncle of mine, well, some of them obviously had to stay in the piano business, was dispatched with quite a lot of pianos to Palestine in 1921 or '22, did exceedingly well, from what I understand. He also-- music was important. He was the first cellist with the Vienna Opera House. But nonetheless, the piano business was important and sold a lot of piano. Simply at that time, you know, they had these chic areas. And if one of the wives wanted to buy a piano, the other woman wanted to get one, too.

And the pianos had to be decorated in red and gold and so forth. So he did, from what I understand, extremely well. And my single uncle, who I'd referenced to before, was in Dachau. Also they went to stay with him for seven or eight years in Palestine at that time, had a bit of a falling out with my-- with this uncle who had originally been in Palestine, came back to resume his relationship with my father and had a business where he grew up.

So he was in the piano business.

Yeah, right. And then I had the uncle I mentioned before in the pharmacy business, whose wife actually owned the pharmacy. It was a pharmacy that didn't belong to the family until probably the early 1900s but went back to the 17th century. And when I was stationed in Germany and I came to visit them in the '50s, I'm sure they had a jar of leeches still standing there. Leeches are coming back. But it wasn't very typical at that time.

Anyway and then another uncle was a very prominent lawyer in Vienna. And I have a feeling I'm leaving some out. But anyway that was the sort of family structure at the time. And she-- and so the piano business is the one who, more or less, fed into all this kind of education. And my grandmother felt very, very strongly that Austria was getting so decadent that the family in the early '30s should all move to the United States.

Did she?

Pardon me.

Did she move?

Well, should move.

Should move.

She-- but these are stories. She came to Chicago to visit her sons and in all due respect in quotes her American daughter-

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in-laws. And she was a real matriarch who expected people to jump, particularly women ad particular daughter-in-laws. It didn't quite work out that way in Chicago. And she decided, one of the few wrong decisions she has made, she'd rather die in decadent Austria than put up with this kind of behavior.

The behavior is a long story. It's a cute story. But my cousins may hear this. And I don't want to tell them that.

You don't want to tell them.

No, that's their mother. And so she came back. But it was an intriguing point of view. And it gives you a little picture of the kind of a situation of the intelligence that she had and where she directed really a number of her children into different directions, particularly her doctor sons and so forth.

Very successful family sounds like.

The family really I would say has good reason to be proud of itself. I think the younger generation also, the kids of my uncles have achieved a lot. My brother-- my brother who left school in Shanghai, he went to school I think one or two more years, left school basically at 14 and had three large piano stores in Chicago area. He's doing extremely well. He's always done better than me as a physician.

And he's very happy. His son is running now the piano business. And I understand his grandson is particularly talented. And this goes into generations, really truly into generations.

Do you remember the picture that you have of Shanghai when you were going there?

Initially, my first impression of--

What you though it would be like, did you have any visions of it?

I-- actually I had none. I think my brother and I had a good time on the ship. I think it was a bit of a shock to arrive. It was a large shock, really. And I think both my brother and I began to realize we are living for the present day, I mean, almost instinctively. And in talking to friends of mine now as a senior citizen, so to speak, seemed most of us had the impression, this is temporary. This is present. This can't be the future. And so we arrived.

And my uncle, who had lived with-- has lived in this fabulous place in Shanghai, picked us up. And you went to a camp. As you probably know, there's a very wealthy Jewish community in Shanghai, you know, the Kadoories, the Suns, and so forth. Many, many extremely wealthy were very, very kind and helpful. So large camp, the men went into one and the women into another, huge halls with, I don't know, 100 beds and so forth, two or three layers.

And boys about the age of 10 had to go with the men, which produced a horrible reaction, my mother's thing. And at that point, she, obviously, broke down and cried all the time. My brother and I started to roam the streets of Shanghai, which wasn't a good thing to do at 11 and 13, not knowing where you're going. And you know, anybody would have kidnapped us that would have been the end.

My father immediately went out to look for a place where it would be more reasonable and the family can be together. And he did find something. And--

What did he find?

He found-- I'm trying to think where we lived at first, a room in a very nice house, where the four of us were in a room. But it was a very nice house. And my uncle sort of was living in the kitchen kind of area.

In the same house.

In the same compound, right. My uncle, my father was getting a little bit of money from my uncle. Because my uncle's

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from Chicago had sent some money. So he could afford, you know, paying the rent at that time. And as far as-- so we weren't really in that place longer than at the most four or five days. And--

Before your father found a place.

Right. And my father and uncle found a place in a music store called Robinson. But it was Chinese owned. And they were piano tuners, both of them. And did really very well. Now this is in '39, so war didn't break out until December '41. And really did surprisingly well.

They had a need for piano tuners.

Oh yeah. Shanghai, I don't know what you heard. is-- was, and apparently has become, an amazing city with the International Settlement and the Constitution Francaise, which were given to the French, the English, because the Chinese had lost the Opium War. Unjustly, but they lost the Opium War. And so Shanghai was, therefore, divided. The area where we lived was called the Hongkou area, which was Chinese, to a large extent still to-- partly destroyed still by the Japanese, you know, at the time. When, in '36, they conquered the entire side of the Chinese Sea and all the way from North all the way South.

The house in which my father found a place had been originally English owned. I don't remember who owned it at the time when he rented it. But both my father and uncle found the job as piano tuners. And I think they did surprisingly well. Kadoorie, who was one of the wealthy, I think, Baghdad Jews, who had emigrated to Shanghai, I don't know, 1900 or so, had rented the building in the same Hongkou district for the Jewish kids, to which my brother and I went for a year.

For school.

To that school. The school closed, because they lost the lease. And they were building another school. , But there was a few months in between. And now comes a story that differs me from other kids. My father thought we have to go to a good school. And for some reason or other, and he may have found it through one of his friends who had been living in Shanghai longer, a Catholic school. It was called St. Francis Xavier College. St Francis Xavier was the missionary to China in the olden days, years ago.

And it was in Francis Xavier College but he went from elementary school all the way through high school. So he and my brother and I went. He--

Did you have to pay?

He left after one year. I don't know whether in the first year we paid. And after that, I know I stayed on. And it was free. They gave me-- it was totally free because I know when the war came, my parents couldn't afford anything. Besides my father was dying at the time anyway. So could never afford, and I stayed on. And it was a very strict missionary school, you know, with corporal punishment.

Boys.

Only boys. A few of the kids lived there in the boarding. Other kids were living outside.

What was the age range?

Well, it was from elementary school, so I guess from 6 to 18.

OK.

It went all the way through. And it was very disciplined. And luckily, they didn't take uniforms. Because I certainly couldn't have managed that. And the education was superb.

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How did you feel about the school?

Being Catholic, being religious or something, I took it in my stride. But that's been my philosophy literally since early childhood. You had to take all the religious information. I mean, you had to say a rosary. You didn't have to say this being a Jewish kid. But you had to stand up and listen to that time and time and time again. You had to go to mass, if it was a funeral mass or something of the sort. You knelt because everybody else knelt, that kind of stuff.

But you didn't partake. And it was accepted. And I accepted it.

Were there other Jewish children?

There was one Jewish kid in my class, who was a Russian Jew.

How big was the class?

Initially, it was much larger. It was something like, they had two classes at that time, I remember in sixth grade. Sixth grade isn't what we have in the sixth grade. First grade is the lowest grade. Probably they had two sixth grade and each one must have been 30 kids. The graduation class was only 24, one single class. And so it was the one Jewish kid. And I know once we got in terrible trouble because it was said-- next to me was telling me a joke during the rosary. And I got the church giggles. And we had to leave.

But I must say, frankly, there was no attempt at conversion, at least none that I felt. Perhaps there was. I thought the education was excellent. I thought--

Were your parents at all worried that you might convert?

Didn't enter their mind, knowing them.

OK.

I know, I know I'm here in a religious school. I hope it doesn't strike you too negatively. Because I never did get converted. But I learned a lot. You know, it's a memorization of all the Gospels. I mean, to this day, I can recite you all of Saint Luke's gospel from beginning to the end, or the acts of the apostle, all this kind of thing. And it's come in very, very helpful with my Catholic friends in the United States. Because there isn't anything they can tell me that I couldn't immediately argue against.

They were very kind. Because, clearly, I ask questions. And--

You were not timid.

I was timid. That wouldn't be the right word. Let's say, I wasn't I would, for instance, ask not in a provocative way. I mean, the immaculate conception, I don't know if you know what that is, the virgin being born immaculately, which I think is always one of those remarkable things. You know, it was only decided by the pope in the middle of 1800s. And the question I ask, well, what happened before the 1850?

You know, I mean, this is not improper. It's a question that's justified. Well, the answer was invariably, who are you to ask the whys of God and the pope? Well, OK. They wanted, you know, this is a miracle. And that's a miracle. And that's all there is to it.

Didn't anyone take you more seriously and try to give you a better--

It is-- it wasn't-- number one, I wasn't provocative. Number two, they didn't want to convert me. And I presume it wasn't really that important to convince me. Nor were all the brothers the most intellectual of all people. But there were many,

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the one who taught advanced math and things like that. But in the younger years, probably not extremely bright.

So at the same time, I felt almost instinctively I didn't want to challenge them. They were very nice persons. And, you know, why challenge this kind of thing? So I stayed there until I graduated. The--

At what age did you graduate? In-- I know it was in 1946. I was 18. Yes.

So you went there from 11 to 18?

Yes. 12 to 18, because I have this one year in that school. The-- well, that's my school experience. And I did well in school.

You liked school.

I liked school. At that time also, I went to school. I went home from school. I studied. You had to do a fair amount of studying. I mean, this is all-- there are lots of memorization as the olden days when, I mean, you studied Julius Caesar from beginning to the end not just the speeches, you know, poems and stuff like that. Doesn't exist anymore I know. But everybody had to. But I took it in stride.

So this was really my school experience, apart from the home experiences.

And what was it like when you weren't in school?

When I was not in school?

Yeah.

The things were fairly stable until December 8. It was seventh here, wasn't it? The Pearl Harbor it's the international date line. When I went to school, I was sent home. And--

No explanation.

No explanation. There, you better go home. We'll see what happens. And I went home and then I found out. Then with this kind of declaration, everything seemed to stop in Shanghai. Clearly, you know, you've seen movies like, what's it called, the setting-- rising sun or the sun by Bertolucci and plays like this, where suddenly, you know, all the foreigners got into a real bind clearly because if a white person was a foreigner, for all practical purposes.

And so there was a temporary hiatus as far as school was concerned. We-- we-- we had moved-- we had befriended somebody, had moved from that house. It was sold to another area, where we had a small apartment.

Was your uncle there?

My uncle-- my uncle was also there. My uncle always stayed with us. And my father was beginning to be sick. He had this severe ulcer operation in Vienna. He was beginning to bleed. There wasn't much one could do at the time. But he was managing to continue working until, again, and I don't remember the date exactly, that under German pressure, that is certainly so, the Jews had emigrated into Shanghai in '38 and later had to go to this designated area, the way it was called, which clearly was a ghetto, designated--

Pardon me.

Did it have a name, the ghetto?

No.

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No.

They called it a designated area. It was called ghetto. I was trying to think-- I don't remember, but it had a name.

OK.

But it was designated in terms of you knew the borders of it. And--

Did it have barbed wire?

No. No, but it had-- you had to leave in certain areas. You had permission to leave from the Japanese. And that, I don't want to repeat myself, that you must have heard many, many times, that you had to have a passport to leave. By that time, to get into the more personal things, the school had moved way out to the other side of Shanghai into what was called the International Settlement.

And because the school really didn't have any American or English students. Most of them were Portuguese, who were Catholic, as you probably know, a few Chinese, all sorts of different nationalities, and had moved far, far away. And when the war broke out, clearly, I had to, number one, get the passport. By that time, that was in the '41, so I was, December, so I was 14, in order to leave that area.

And Ghoya, who is a name that you may have heard in other Shanghai situation, was a person who very arbitrarily be threatening you and throwing you into jail or whatever was giving you the passport. He told me that he would cut off my head if I leave the designated street that I had to go to get to my school.

So you had a particular route that you had to go.

Right. And there was no transportation, clearly.

How would you get there?

I walked.

How far?

Oh, it took two hours.

Each way?

They had street cars in the evenings. But the school was only-- school at that time was in the afternoons only. And so you walked. You know, Shanghai's horribly hot in summer and horribly cold in winter. Because your own-- it didn't have much heat in the first place. So you walked. And I managed to do that. But, you know, if I got late, I got punished. I mean, this continued to be still the missionary zeal.

Was it any-- was it hazardous to walk that far alone?

No.

No. No one ever accosted you--

When the Japanese accosted you in-- because-- but they accosted you for wanting the pass, you know, that you weren't English American. Because you couldn't, by that time, they had caught them all. They only caught you to check your health certificate. And very often, I didn't have-- I had had more typhoid shots and cholera shots then imaginable, because I didn't always remember to have the health certificate with me.

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They are very health conscious. And they were at the time. I mean, they would just drag you to the next station and inject you. And so the school continued. And there was, however, while-- no, there was later. I'm sorry. At that time, my father really was very sick. He was still able-- when either myself or my brother took him to the bus stop, he always said, if he can get into the bus, he would leave it. But if he can't get in the bus, he just can't handle it. He was so weak.

So after that, the piano tuning business stopped, in that sense. And that was the end of that, probably by '42.

But your uncle was still doing it.

My uncle also did a little bit of tuning. But there was so little be done. Much of the tuning was actually in the local ghetto area, you know. And-- but that's a subject by itself, how the Jews in that area started having operas and symphonies and so forth. And so, you know, somebody had to tune those pianos, so my uncle was doing that. But he was within the compound mostly. But the, as opposed to most of my friends who's father had a trade that was very usable, let's say, they were tailors or could make uniforms or could run a restaurant or were bakers and so forth.

My family didn't have a usable trade. And so we were probably more dependent on the soup kitchens. They were then give them out at noon.

What was your mother doing?

Nothing. Boiling water so you could drink it and that kind of thing. There was really no, I mean, there was not a job opportunity. I don't really know. I mean, it's not something that I could ever ask. Well, why don't you get a job? There was really no job. They couldn't do anything about it. People, if they had any kind of business, it was within the family structure. And so-- so the soup kitchens were maintained, I presume, by the Joint Distribution Committee from the United States via Switzerland, through some of the Russian Jewish organizations into the area.

And there are some books written on the subject where apparently one very, very fabulous Jewish Russian woman had spoken to a Japanese general and said he would have 20,000 Jews dead at his hands if they would not permit something of the sort. That's also been written in books, which I didn't know, but I've read since. And so the soup kitchens existed. I mean, they were, what, 8 ounces of bread per person and soup with some meat in it. And we lived on that basically speaking.

How many meals a day?

Once, one. And we lived on that. It worked out OK. But--

You would get up in the morning and go all day without eating.

No, with some bread leftover from the night before. And then-- and I was trying to think about my mother sold a fair amount of things that she had. And so there was some money. But you bought for the family two ounces of cold cuts, you know, and put a little sliver at the end of the bread. I mean, I don't want to complain about it. Because that was just so. You accepted it. It was OK.

I mean, we didn't hear how much people suffered in Europe at the time, you know. All we could hear is the Japanese radio stations. So they went on. And then my father-- oh, I must also say, I had a very close friend who had a restaurant. And I was particularly fortunate over it because very occasionally I was invited to have lunch there. It was great. You know, I felt guilty. Because my brother didn't have that kind of thing.

My brother did work a little bit at the time as a guardsman to check the passports of people leaving the area.

Coming in and out.

He was called [NON-ENGLISH], which I presume is a Chinese word. What it means I don't know any more. To check these passports. Because if anybody had been found outside by anybody controlling would be a real problem.

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Would he get paid for that?

He got some money for it. Minimal, I'm sure.

Why did he quit school?

He was not interested in school. He was never-- he was never a student. It's just a-- he didn't go into the school that then was also rebuilt by these Kadoorie people. He didn't go to that either. He didn't want to go to school. I'm trying to think if he was working at something else or not. I don't remember actually. Other kids went to that school, I do remember. But I lost contact to many of people my own age when I went to that other school.

You know you had a girlfriend in Vienna. Did you have one in Shanghai?

Not really.

No.

Yeah, somebody I did music with, that kind of thing, but not in the intimate American kind of style, where you're supposed to begin at 13 and 14. No.

You were still playing the violin or the piano.

The violin, I took some lesson. But then I gave it up. I really concentrate on the piano at that time. So which I did play piano, and there was a piano around that friends of mine owned. So that went on. And so-- so there was a home on the one hand and then there was a school. My-- we befriended a wonderful person who worked very hard and very, very successfully making lampshades for the very, very large department stores.

They were still very, very active in Shanghai, which still exist at this time. And he was very successful and financially did very well. And his father and father-in-law helped him, making them, decorating them. Apparently, his father was very talented, his painting and so forth. And they-- when you had to move into that designated area, we had nowhere to go, except that they had bought sort of two adjoining, what you would facetiously call, townhouses here. But they were Chinese things and invited us to stay with him.

He was a widow, a widower, and had a child. And he was very close with the family. And so he gave us a room where four of us slept and--

Who had made the contact with him then?

We had known-- I think it was from music. Because his wife was a very fine pianist. I think that's the way it was. I don't remember. When I go to New York, I always call him. He must be 88 years old now. Next time I call, I'll ask him how this happened. And so we were living there and friends and really had a grand piano. I mean, he actually was, for the circumstances. relatively comfortably off.

And we profited by his-- by his kindness, an astonishing, astonishing person.

Did you have more to eat there?

Food never entered it. I mean, the toilet, of course, was non-existent. It was one of those things, you know, which was collected 6 o'clock in the morning and emptied into some of those carts and then replaced. There was no hot water. So--

Were you still eating in the soup kitchen?

Yeah, throughout that time. But I don't want to give the wrong impression. It really wasn't a bad thing. So, I mean, it

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may sound bad for the concept here. But it really wasn't that bad. We managed. My father had to have, because he was bleeding, you know, spleen, you know, which I wouldn't eat, I don't care how hungry I was, things of that sort. Because, facetiously, you thought it would build up blood. It doesn't.

But you used to think so. And so whatever little money was really to help him. And then he died shortly before the war ended in '45. But then Shanghai was bombed. I don't know if you know that. And it was misbombed in the Jewish ghetto were quite a few death.

People you know.

Pardon me.

People you know.

Yes. And you went to sort of assist. It was-- apparently, it was a radio station. But it was subsequently said it was really a mistake. But you didn't know much about bombing. Because that's when you found out what it was like. And he died after the bombing. But at that time, you know, there was no way of going. If the place would be bombed, that would be it. You couldn't get him down into a lower floor.

And so he died when he was just 50, in early '40-- early '45. And then things improve. Because the uncle sent money from Chicago. And my grandfather died meanwhile. And--

Your grandfather in--

In the States, in Chicago. And--

Had there been any contact during the war?

No.

No. And I finished going to school. And I graduated in 1946. And--

Did you know what you wanted to do then?

Yeah, I wanted to be a physician.

Yeah. Tell me how you came to that.

Well, I'm trying to think whether it's sort of the typical, well, how many profession would theoretically be open for Jews. At the time, it was pharmacy, medicine, law kind of thing. I mean, if people-- kids ask me now, what would you have been if it wouldn't be a physicians? I'll tell them something else. But at that time, the expectations, I'm sure, were there, unspoken expectations.

It was also interesting the whole idea of liberality, helping mankind, helping people kind of thing. It certainly wasn't making money at the time or the reliability of the profession. It was really that kind of idealistic part of you. I'm sure that was the case. So when I graduated, the SFX, St. Francis Xavier's College had had arrangements with England, so that you would get an acceptable graduating kind of certificate.

Because, I mean, who knows something about the Shanghai schools. They-- most of the schools had arranged with Cambridge, used the Cambridge entrance examination. My school, high on the horse, felt anybody can go to Cambridge. That wasn't good enough. That was a typical public school, you know, where the fancy kids from England go.

Oxford.

No. Exactly. No, it has to be the University of London. So they took up with the University of London. Again, there were problems. The University of London sent the questions to the school. We answered. And the answers were sent back to the University of London. And we got the certificate if you passed, even first or second division. And I passed. And so you had something official at the time.

But this was in '46. And though we were eager to get to the United States, you know, the four of us who were left, it took the American Consulate a tremendously long time of getting the visas ready. So you stood, and I would say, it produces a little bit of anger in my part, even retrospectively. You stood in front of the American Consulate, you know, line up for your visa, very shortly after the American Consulate opened, which it did very soon thereafter.

So you stood in a line. It's hot. And at 2 o'clock, you saw those lovely young vice consuls in their white golf shorts and tennis shorts leaving and closing the consulate. That was the end of that. So you left. And you lined up again. And it took literally until I could leave in August '47. The rest of my family left a month later. That long to where we had the visa from way before to get to that.

You didn't have any resentment. And friends of mine, of course, discuss a lot of these things. Simply over there, you were so browbeaten by that time, you know, it's expected. You know, they are the better class of people, you know, clearly. I mean-- I mean, what did you have? You had old clothes on that were tailored upside down. You know, because it looked inside better than outside. So I'm sure that had something to do with it.

But it didn't take anything away from your self-respect in many respects. I do want to emphasize that. Because after all, by the time, who knows who these people are at my University of London exam. But because it took that long in time, I had to go on to the university. And the university, I'm trying to emphasize a little bit there might be a little bit different about my case than other people that had Shanghai experiences.

The second language heavily stressed at the St Francis Xavier's College was French. And the reason it was stressed because they expected their graduates to go to the French university, UniversitÃ© l'Aurore, which was a Jesuit University. And so if you passed, you were then admitted to University. So I went on to the French University, which was in French. And it was--

In Shanghai?

In Shanghai. And by that time, of course, the war was over with. The French had more or less resettled their French concession. And-- and there was-- there was, I don't know whether it was a senior center or something, there was free-- a free kitchen food thing not too far from the university, where a girl and I-- the girl had come from another school. She may have been Russian and I were sort of friends. But she was Jewish.

And also when there was a co-educational school. No, I'm sorry. It wasn't co-educational school. She went to a sort of sister school. But we met at that lunchroom. Because we got pretty decent food, which was, I think, sponsored by the Polish community. The Polish community during the war was able to get much, much more funds than the Central European Jew that wasn't really a good Jew in the first place.

And so there were these sections, you know, the-- pardon me.

How did they get the funds, do you know?

I think they got it through the United States to Yeshiva organizations and so forth. I don't know that much about it. But I do know that indirectly I profited because I had a very good lunch in this place and met some wonderfully nice people, you know, that otherwise I would have had no opportunity to meet. Anyway, so the-- so I went to that French university. And meanwhile, the-- my family in Chicago on the strength of all my tests was able to get me admitted to University of Chicago.

So I left Shanghai in August 1947. Now in the last two years, as soon as the war ended, a Rabbi Fine, who is rather well

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known from San Francisco, from Temple Emanu-El, who is now retired in is-- well in his 80s, lives in [INAUDIBLE] had come to the Shanghai. He was a rabbi with the American military, I think with the army, who-- and they had heard there's a group of Jews there, particularly young Jews, who had been isolated from the world.

He would like to see what it's like. He came with the Captain Herbert, also a captain who a Jew. The all-American man, literally from Texas, I mean, it was a new revelation to all of us kids. A Jew, you know a very sporty and football type of guy. And they created the club called Tikvah, and I did find out it meant hope, for the Jewish boys. That more or less signaled the return of my-- of my really not knowing many of the kids to that group of kids, you know, who had stayed around in the Jewish schools and so forth.

And we became, of course, very close. And I have a lot of friends in the United States from that. There was a very progressive club. We learned about things. We put on a play called Warsaw Ghetto, you know, which you hadn't heard anything about in the past. There were concerts given at that time. I could use some of my piano playing. There were extremely many talented Jewish singers. And operettas were performed. I mentioned that earlier.

And it was a tremendous cultural experience, theaters, many, many things going on, even during the war, I must say. And so that Tikvah club then flourished for two years until many of us left. And the third person involved with this was Jordan. If you have heard about the, I don't remember his first, was representative of the Joint Distribution Committee, who more or less insulted that finances were coming into the Jewish community.

He subsequently, we heard in the '50s, was killed in Prague. And it's assumed that it was a CIA person was killed by Arabs, apparently. It's written up actually in [INAUDIBLE]. And he was very, very helpful also to help settlement, a very close friend of mine, who subsequently became a very famous suit and coat designer for women in New York City, was sent by him to they call the bazaar in Paris. People went different kind of ways. And that's where he was for two years until he came back to the United States.

So a number of kids such as we, you know, went in different ways. I would say I was the only one who really went into medicine. Because in the European sense, you enter professional schools after high school, not the way we do here in the States with a college intervening between professional schools and high school.

Now when you came to Chicago, did you go to undergraduate?

The University of Chicago, to which I attended a quarter, subjects you to all sorts of tests. The-- it's for the first time I saw objective tests. You know with these pencils and true and false questions, which one of five questions is the most reasonable one. I mean, I'd never seen anything like this. You know, I was raised with essay questions and oral things and that. So I mean, it was really something.

But I was accepted and, you know, into whatever the definition was. But I really basically felt not too comfortable with their system. You know, it was a [INAUDIBLE] system. It was relatively new. It was very different. And I looked in the University of Illinois. I really-- Chicago also is a private university. And I felt, after first quarter, I couldn't really afford it. University of Illinois was a state university. And, obviously, it didn't cost much. I could manage working and all that kind of thing.

And I transferred to the University of Illinois. The--

Which was Champaign?

No, they had a down-- they had a downtown campus. You know Chicago? It was at Navy Pier at the time. They didn't have the big fancy University of Illinois downtown campus that they have in the last 25 or 30 years. It was the Navy Pier, which is now an amusement park. At the time, I really liked it better. The system was more what I was familiar with. Also I was able to proficiency out of a number of tests, particularly languages, including English to be frank.

Did you know English?

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I knew it pretty well.

You did.

The high-- the school I went to in Shanghai was in English.

Oh.

My German ends at the age of 11.

And you became proficient in English and French.

Yes.

OK.

And I got credits for, let's see, advanced math. Because that was all the University of London business and physics and so forth. So I was able, after a year and a half of college, to get into medical school. And the-- well, I wasn't that young anymore. But I did get, after that, into the University of Illinois Medical School.

How young were you when you got into medical school?

Let me try and see. After we've-- it would be 20-- 21, 21.

Now when you were in Chicago, did you live with your uncle?

In the first year, we-- the family lived with my uncle.

When you say the family?

My mother, my brother, my uncle, myself. My uncle had always lived with us. And then we found the apartment. My mother went to work. She worked in the hat shop, a bridal hat shop. My uncle had a job as a piano tuner. My brother worked in-- in an optometry shop. And initially, I worked in the optometry shop. And we both then worked in a wholesale drug house. And then I worked, I mean, in college I did this. But it's unheard of nowadays.

In my first year of medical school, I worked as-- in the emergency room as a physician. I mean, don't mention that nowadays. And I worked in a blood bank. Anyway, so and medical school, that was the thing that happened next.

How-- what did America feel like to you when you came here?

It-- I arrived in San Francisco, clearly. And I had some cousins there, the sort of typical, young, handsome American cousins in their late 20s in a very pretty house in Berkeley. It was beautiful weather. It was August. Oh, it was absolutely delightful. I mean, it's-- I mean, a milkshake, these kinds of things. I mean, it may sound a little naive to you now and probably does to me nowadays. But it was an experience along these kinds of lines.

And then I took the train to Chicago, arrived in Chicago, again, in August, horribly humid, horribly hot. The back entrance-- a contrast. The back entrance into the train station, one of my uncles who was a doctor picked me up and took me to my other uncle, who was a Chief of Pathology at Michael Reese Hospital, a very well known, large, large hospital in Chicago. Took me there, who wanted to know if I really want study medicine, and I said yes. So that, everything went on from there.

You passed.

I passed. I'm not so sure that he was that excited, that second uncle, about it. But I said I came that far. I don't see why I

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shouldn't. And there's no problem working. At that time, you could really put in a lot of hours work, in spite of going through college and medical school.

Yeah. Did you have any idea why he might not have been enthusiastic about you doing it?

I think it was somewhat his style. He thought it was difficult. He didn't know me really in that sense. And I would say that after I got to know him better, I didn't love him anymore. But he had many, and I do want to be really here quite prejudiced and, many negative characteristics of a transplanted European, of a transplanted European professional.

Now, at another time, I can explain what I mean by that. But I have, since that time, we've seen this on a number of occasions. In terms of a certain superciliousness, certain terms of arrogance, insurmountable difficulties with my background kind of thing, that kind of thing. I think he, obviously, after some time, appreciated what I was able to achieve. But I'm sure he didn't remember his initial reactions.

Probably not. So you stayed at the University of Chicago--

For one quarter only, Illinois. Yes, all the way through. And then was accepted to the University of Illinois Medical School and stayed there. The only reason why I mentioned Chicago, as opposed to San Francisco, I mean, as soon as medical school finished, I applied to San Francisco, to a hospital internship.

That really made an impression on you, your first--

Well, it made an impression for me. But Chicago, which I like a lot more now that I visited then at that particular time, it was a bit of a hardship also. You know, I never had a car. You know, the subways, the schools were a little bit away from-- I lived way on the the south side. The school was on the west side. It was difficult. But I had began to have some very nice friends who all had cars, who literally picked me up at home to take me to school and so forth, you know.

So it really was great. The school was excellent.

When you finished school, you wanted to come out here.

Yeah.

And your mother was--

My mother-- No, my mother and uncle stayed on in Chicago. They lived-- after the initial apartment, they had bought a very small house. My mother had stopped working. My uncle did quite well in his business. As I told my brother all the time, piano tuning paid a lot more than a house call did in the early days here in pediatrics. So he did quite well. And they bought a very small house, very nice.

And subsequently, they got married and were very, very happy together.

I could hear that coming.

Oh, yeah. OK. Actually, they're very, very happy together, I must say. One of my aunts, after I had moved out, insisted on the morality of the situation. About once I'm gone, which clearly I don't function as a chaperone anymore, you know, a man and woman living together should really get married, which they did. By then, I [LAUGHING]. It was amusing. But who cares?

And anyway, they were very happy then. The-- so they continued living in Chicago, while I was here for the internship in the year.

And your brother stayed in Chicago.

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My brother was then opened up a very small piano business. He is-- his wife has a business sense. I must say, quoting my mother, the Polish head had an unbelievable business sense. And my brother who's a very charming person and can sell any kind of piano. Business wise, you know, I had to capitulate to her. And if there's that success I really would attribute to her. I mean, really had done exceedingly well.

Yeah.

And so he had opened up that little piano business and gradually more and more and more. And then had these stores, which he owns in a very important area in Wilmette, North Shore suburb. And I'd come to San Francisco then for a year. After that, just to finish the educational aspect, my uncles wrote to me there's no, believe it or not, no decent medicine is practiced west of the Mississippi.

Which uncle? Or the--

The pathologist, while he was a very famous pathologist, I must say in the United States. I mean, he has written books. I mean, much of the dissection of a cadaver, much of the virus effect on the heart is his doing.

Was this uncle number one who picked you up or uncle number two who was skeptical?

Number two who was skeptical. So-- so he's the one who felt very strongly about this medical aspect west of the Mississippi. So I returned and--

To Chicago.

To Chicago. And--

Where did you do your training out here when you came back here?

At Mount Zion Hospital in San Francisco. And I was very nice, you know, a young Jewish doctor in San Francisco, you know, has it made. So--

And that was a good institution, wasn't it?

Yes. It was very good. I would say that I wanted to be a pediatrician even then. And obviously, the pediatrician was in charge of the department, was very, very supportive at the time. And I made a lot of very wonderful long-term friends. And so I came back to Michael Reese Hospital, to the Children's Hospital for my first year residency, which was an excellent, excellent residency program with a lot of independence on the part of a resident. I mean, you really were in charge. And--

And you were in pediatrics.

Yeah, right.

Yeah. Why pediatrics?

Actually I like it. I felt I really would do well with kids. I-- you know, of course, these questions I've been asked many times. I really, retrospectively, I would have liked to be a family physician. But at that time, there was-- it didn't have the reputation that you have nowadays. I mean, I certainly would have wanted to be a family physician. Training is much, much better nowadays.

Family physician, I certainly didn't want to be a pathologist. And I didn't want to be a surgeon. So the question comes up, what didn't you want to be? Internal medicine was the other thing. Internal medicine frightened me because all the people I knew were brilliant in that field. I don't want to bore you with the medical aspect of it. But I had the misfortune of only meeting brilliant people in it. I knew I could never be on that level.

But I felt in pediatrics I would do well. And there was an additional factor. The father of my aunt, who is not a blood relative but, clearly, was-- is a pediatrician or was a pediatrician, very, very famous. His name is Julius Hess, who's written up in all books. He was the originator of any care for the premature in 1910. In fact, the Hess bed is in the Smithsonian Institute. He took a great interest in me. And--

Here in Chicago.

Yes.

Yeah.

And he was a professor. And he had retired, of course, long time before. And he died, I think, in the early '50s. But he knew at least I was a pediatrician.

Why did he take an interest in you?

Why did he take an interest in me? Well, because I was a fledgling doctor at the time. I was in medical school. No, I actually, I wanted to be a doctor. I was still in college. I think he also took an interest in the family because we were Jewish immigrants. He was Jewish. His wife was not. Actually, she was-- came with the Pilgrim fathers, her background, a wonderful person. That may have had something to do with it.

I mean, never discussed that kind of thing. But perhaps retrospective now that you ask me that had something to do with it. And the fact that I actually, at that time, I really wanted to be a pediatrician. So after that year at Michael Reese, I got an offer from Stanford to become the chief resident at Stanford. Now you have to remember, Stanford used to be in San Francisco.

And it was a different kind of university the way it is now. When they moved in 1960, it was a very clinical kind of situation. And it was a tremendous honor, you know, after first year residency to become a chief resident in an institution like that. And because I've had enough of Chicago, and there was this tremendous offer of--

You weren't going to listen to your uncle's advice, huh.

By the time, they've learned not to interfere. And-- and so I went to Stanford then. And I had a year there. And then, well, the next thing is, at that time, the universal draft was over with, as you may remember. I finished Stanford in '56. The universal draft was over with in the early '50s I think, except for physicians. I was never deferred. But I was a physician. It was called the Berry Plan, so I had to go in.

And then, as soon as I finished my residency, I was put in the service. And within-- I finished and literally had to report. And then by that time, I was married.

Where had you met your wife?

I met my wife during the internship. She was a secretary in the hospital. There was a hospital, a chronic disease hospital, called Maimonides attached to Mount Zion hospital. I really don't know whether it still exists. But it had a very large pediatric ward of children with rheumatic fever, which is a disease luckily that exist anymore. So I was really involved with that.

And she was the secretary there. And that's where I met her and didn't think much of it. And she came visiting in Chicago on occasion. And when I came back to Stanford, we took up our relationship and became married shortly thereafter. And so I was drafted. And she stayed back, because she was pregnant.

And so you had to go to San Antonio to go to the military medical school, to learn how to polish your shoes and how to take out bullets from goats in the middle of the night, to infiltrate barbed wire with all the rattlesnakes in Texas, which I

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didn't like. And then I was sent to Germany.

Did you have any choice?

Yes. And that's an intriguing fact. I applied-- they asked you where to go. And I really want to go to Europe. Because, you know, I thought I'd be stationed someplace in Italy really if nothing else. Because they had a big base there. I knew they had in Germany. And then the question came up, they are sending me to Germany. And I had absolutely no objections.

So and they needed pediatricians. You know, I was a practicing pediatrician. And I was board eligible at the time. And I finished Stanford. And they needed somebody on that level. And I was still relatively young. So I was sent to-- to Europe, very close to Frankfurt, Mainz and Weisbaden, that theater. The city was called Bad Kreuznach. Its subtitle is city of roses and nightingales.

It's a beautiful spa city on a lovely tributary of the Rhine. And it was a field hospital. The preceding physician had been a regular army officer, a major. And you know, you're a captain when you get in. And he was now suddenly being replaced by a, quotes, two-year man. So I got there in-- in end of July and beginning of August.

What year are you talking about?

'56, that's when I finished my residency, in that year. And then in November, my wife came, even though she was heavily practiced. Because no, I'm sorry. She came in September. She came two months after me, even though the baby was born in November. It was very difficult. But it was a propeller plane at the time still. But she had a birth, so she came over. And then I was two years in Germany.

You know, you talked about going to Austria while you were there.

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