Interviewer: I'm Barbara Barer interviewing Herb Lakritz in San Francisco, and it's August 7th, 1990. May as well get the facts straight. So, let's start, Herb.

Interview with HERBERT LAKRITZ

Holocaust Oral History Project

Date: 8/7/90 Place: San Francisco, CA

Interviewer: Barbara Barer

Transcriber: Cynthia Wang

Q: HOW OLD ARE YOU NOW?

A: Fifty-three.

Q: FIFTY-THREE?

A: Right.

Q: WHERE WERE YOU BORN?

A: I was born in Kiel, Germany, on September 2nd, 1936.

Q: AND TELL ME ABOUT YOUR FAMILY. DO YOU HAVE BROTHERS AND SISTERS OR --

A: I have one brother, one brother who's alive, who lives in Los Angeles. He's two years older than I am, about two and a half years older than I am. He lives in Los Angeles.

Q: AND WERE THERE OTHER CHILDREN IN THE FAMILY?

A: No. I have -- My mother had a daughter in between, but she died at birth; so just a brother and I.

Q: AND WHAT DID YOUR FATHER DO? WHAT KIND OF WORK DID HE DO?

A: What kind of work did he do. When? You mean like before I was born or approximately during those years --

A: WELL, I'M TRYING TO GET A PICTURE OF WHAT YOUR LIFE WAS LIKE BEFORE THE WAR.

A: Before the war. Let's see. If I can give you a

little bit of background as well as I'm able to remember or even know.

Q: OKAY.

A: Both my parents were born in Poland. Let's see, my mother was born in 1904, my father in 1907. They both, their families at least, emigrated to Germany; exactly how or why, I don't know. My father's family emigrated to Kiel, Germany, my mother's family to Cologne, Germany.
My father's father was in business in Kiel. I think he was in the schmatte business; I think he was a rag man. But became quite successful, and from what I understand, wealthy apparently at the time because apparently, he owned property in Kiel. And, in fact, these are just stories that I'm told yet --
But apparently, a lot of the problems that was happening in Germany did occur in Kiel because Kiel had a very small Jewish population, I'm told. I'm told that the temple in Kiel was burned and that there were no places for the Jews to congregate. And they used one of my grandfather's warehouses, so to speak, and made it a local temple for the community. And the community, as I'm told, was only -- only about a hundred Jews in all of Kiel. And I'm told, according to my brother, who checked this out, that only seven survived. But my grandfather was the leader of the

apparently Jewish community there. My father worked for my grandfather, basically, in that business; and that's what he did, basically, for a living.

His marriage to my mother was something that was arranged. It was something that was done at the time, and they moved to Kiel and lived in Kiel until --

Q: WHERE IS KIEL?

A: Kiel is a northern port. This is where all the submarine base, Nazi submarine base, was; the main base, northern Germany, northeastern Germany.

Q: SO MOST OF WHAT HAPPENED AT THE ONSET OF THE WAR WAS TOLD TO YOU?

A: Well, pretty much because remember, I was born in 1936.

Q: RIGHT.

A: Okay. From -- And this already at that time, you know, that place in Germany, we were apparently already being persecuted and discriminated against. And the first thing, almost, that I remember was the fact that I was put in a train like a -- I think a cow's --

Q: CATTLE TRAIN?

A: Cattle train. Shipped back to Poland because this was just before the war broke out; because they were sending us back to where we were --

Q: THE WHOLE FAMILY?

A: The whole family, yeah. And apparently, again you know, I was what, three years old or two and a half years old. The border, this is when Poland closed the border. And, in essence, really probably, this is one of the many, many things that happened that saved my life. The border was closed and the train was returned back to Germany; and we were put back in Kiel. And we probably stayed there for maybe another few months. And apparently, my parents found a way to get out of there.

Q: DOES THAT MEAN THE WHOLE JEWISH COMMUNITY DID EN MASSE AS YOU UNDERSTAND?

A: We were basically deported out of the country. The authorities deported all the Jews out, where we were, back to the country of origin.

Q: BUT YOU WEREN'T ALLOWED BACK?

A: We weren't allowed back. This was just before the war broke out against Poland, and Poland had closed its border with Germany. So our train went back, and went back the other way. So we got back to Kiel.

From Kiel we were able to get out, and we got out. This was just before September '39, so we just got out and got into Belgium. Again, I was three years old. I don't remember much, you know. My brother was a couple years older. He

claims he remembers a little bit more, but I really don't remember too much. I do know we went to Belgium, and from there we were refugees. From there we went, you know, to France. From France to southern France, and basically we settled in southern France in a small town called Bolmonde. And actually, we were there just for a little while; and from Bolmonde, they sent us to a little suburb of Bolmonde even though Bolmonde was only a town of 10,000 to begin with. But we settled in a small little, nothing little farm town right outside of Bolmonde, and we were able to -- They found us a place to live, which was really a little chicken coop, and we lived in the chicken coop. And it was a place with dirt floors and, of course, no -- no bathrooms, no running water, no nothing.

And this is where we settled. And my parents had to go out and find a way to earn some living. And my father worked as a migrant worker for the local farms around, all hours of the day and night. But at least he found some work. He was able to bring back some food, which was scarce, I know that.

My mother then was a seamstress, and she walked around from one farm to the other looking for work to do as a seamstress. And we settled there for, well, from 1939 through about 1941 or so; '41, '42.

Of course, this was the part of France which was occupied and controlled by the Vichy Government at that time, and therefore, it was somewhat secure still in these early years.

So we were able, even though people knew we were Jewish, we were able to still assimilate and survive one way or another. And in fact, there obviously must have been other Jews and Jewish organizations around which was somehow surviving and working because at one point, my parents and my brother and I -- and I was five at the time, my brother seven -- to a Jewish camp, as today you would send your children to a Jewish camp for a two-week vacation.

They sent us to this camp. We were there for a couple weeks with all sorts of other Jewish kids. At the end of the two weeks, most of the other Jewish kids went home. We were told not to go back because our parents had apparently asked the directors of the camp to keep us because things had become dangerous for us to come back because, apparently, they had been taken by local authorities. And at one point, taken in a small camp and then returned. And anyway, my parents felt that it wasn't safe for us to come back, so we stayed for an extended period of time. But that little extended period of time, which was originally two weeks, ended up lasting two and a half years. And then that really is the whole story. What happens after a few weeks in that camp, of course, became too dangerous to be in a camp which was just for Jewish children, Jewish orphans or children, whatever they may be. And there, a lot

of things became very mysterious because lots of helping hands came in; and I don't know who they are or where they came from, but somebody helped because I know at one time I was taken in the middle of the night away from there with my brother, and we got put in some sort of carriage, an automobile, and told that we couldn't go back to our parents because our parents had been taken in a concentration camp; that we were going to be put in some form of orphan home throughout -- or in other parts of France; that we should change our name from that night on, and that my name would be Hubert Lacroix; and we should change our religion to Protestant, that we would remain Jewish, but it was going to be a secret among ourselves.As far as the rest of the world was concerned, we would be Protestant.

So it all is a little bit hazy, but I know from there we went to camps a little bit all over France; some pretty close to Lyon, one pretty close to the Swiss border. In the first camps we went to, it was amazing. There were a lot of other Jewish kids, and yet, there were others too. But you know, those of us who were Jewish soon found a way to communicate and kind of tell one another, and we kind of grew. And since we had companionship, and we were all basically were the same age or a few years older, we really had all the support, and it wasn't as traumatic

as it may sound, because of all that, because of the support that we had, having so many of us. We were in the same boat, really.

Q: WHAT KIND OF JEWISH UPBRINGING HAD YOU HAD UP TO THAT POINT?

A: Actually, even though my background from my grandfather was a very strict Orthodox Jewish upbringing,because of the war, there practically wasn't any at all. It wasn't really until I went to that first camp, you know, the first camp which was supposed to last two week there, it was run by teenagers but who had very good Jewish education, that really took the time to instill Jewish education and Jewish tradition into us. And even though we were there just the few weeks, the real -- whatever real Jewish education I really had, I probably got it just in those few weeks I was among these other kids. Of course, after that it all -- there wasn't any more because obviously we were there with, you know, orphans homes and from orphanage camps really, groups, and in fact we even ended up -- one of them we went to, we spent about probably about a year in Lourdes in France which, I don't know if you know where Lourdes is. It's the main Catholic shrine in France. And there, when we got to Lourdes, we were then, maybe out of maybe a group of two or three hundred orphans, there were

maybe four or five Jewish kids.

Q: WHY WERE THE OTHER KIDS ORPHANED? WHO KNOWS?

A: Displacements from the war from who knows.

Q: WERE YOU BOYS AND GIRLS TOGETHER?

A: Yeah. And we had to attend Catholic services, catechism. But I remember that, you know, there was a little camaraderie with the other Jewish boys that whenever it was time for -- or we attended certain class, for example, when it came catechism class. Whenever it came time for that, we all went to the bathroom. So it was always there, that feeling that there was somebody else just like you. There was, but who did all this , I don't know. And I also remember they were people that came to visit us. And I remember a lady coming to visit us who knew we were Jewish, who brought presents as best she could and who knew there was a secret that we were Jewish that she wasn't supposed to know, and that type of thing. I don't know who these people are, who these people were, or where they came from, how they knew us, or whatever, but there were people like that. So anyway, that was Lourdes. From Lourdes, my brother and I were still together all that time.

Q: DID YOU HAVE ANY COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR PARENTS AT ANY POINT?

A: No, none whatsoever, no. I'll tell you what I know what happened to them. But anyway, from Lourds we went on

to Tarbes and to Pau and another little city outside of Pau where we were finally placed in a single-family home. By then the war was almost over. It was --/ in fact, we were there when the French forces came and liberated the small town. We were living then in a private home with two ladies, older ladies, and we were just orphans that they had taken in. And we stayed there for, oh, maybe six months. Life wasn't bad; it wasn't good, but it wasn't bad. We attended school, and I know one day while attending school somebody walked in and I almost had a premonition. Somebody walked in and asked for me by name.

Q: YOU WERE LACROIX?

A: No; by my real name, and said -- you know, by then the war had been over -- "You want to go home now to your mother?" you know, and "Okay," you know. So then they got my brother too, and the next day they got us on the train and they brought us back to Bolmonde, the town that we had started with. And there was a woman on the dock and they said, "That's your mother." Okay. We went back to our house with the lady who was, I guess was my mother. My brother said he sort of recognized her, but I certainly didn't. It had been, well, two and a half years, from the time I was five to seven and a half. Anyway, so that's that. We lived in a, at that time, in a house there was built in the 13th century, but that was interesting. My mother had suffered a great deal.

Q: WAS YOUR FATHER THERE?

A: No, no. My father -- my father -- What happened when he sent us away in that camp, he knew that it was just a matter of time

before he was going to be taken away. And it wasn't that scary to begin with because still, the area was controlled by the Vichy government. And so originally, both my mother and father were taken to camp, and concentration camp, but in France and controlled by the Vichy government. My mother was actually released and because it was so controlled by French people. And she was released because she was pregnant. She was able to leave and hide. And she hid the rest of the war on a farm in France, a farm that was run by an Italian family, a nice Italian family with nine kids. And she stayed there hidden the entire balance of the war, working there and survived.

My father was in that one camp, and from there, he was taken to other camps. And then eventually to Germany, and he perished, obviously,in a concentration camp. I can show you one card which -- You know, you asked me to bring some. I do have the one card that he sent from -- This is the last card that he sent from the concentration camp in which he was at in France.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER HIM?

A: Well, he really sent it to the two of us.

Q: TO CAMP?

A: To -- Well, he sent it to -- it says "Marjorie Lakritz." It is without my glasses. He did send it to my mother, yeah. But to the town out -- That was the little town outside of Bolmonde. And I wish I had brought my glasses. But in French it says, "My dear wife and my dear Alfred and Herbert, the two children." Anyway, he just wants to say that he's safe and in good health.

Until today, he finds himself at Camp Drancy, and this evening they're going to leave for -- I guess the next camp, anyway, in Germany. And he must have had a premonition because, anyway, he underlines "bon courage," and in real big he says "adieu." And this was dated March 3,1943. Anyway, so --

Q: AND THAT IS THE LAST --

A: Right. Anyway, here's his picture; a picture of my mother.

Q: WERE THERE UNCLES AND AUNTS; DID THEY HAVE BROTHERS AND SISTERS?

A: Yeah, yeah; my mother. This is why we're here. My mother had a brother who had been wise enough -- Well, actually he had a -- he had a -- They had an uncle who had emigrated to the United States back in the '20s, and my mother's brother had emigrated to the United States in the early '30s. And I know my mother had tried to come to the United States, but somehow or other, I don't know, didn't make it. I don't know why; because of quotas or whatever, didn't make it. So certainly after we were reunited after the war, we tried everything we could to come to the United States. It wasn't easy because of the quota situation; particular since my mother was under the Polish quota, which was extremely restricted. It was easier, actually, for my brother and I because we remained stateless as far as France was concerned. So as stateless, it was easier quota than being under the Polish quota. Anyway, it eventually all worked out and we emigrated in 1950.

Q: WAIT. WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN -- YOU EMIGRATED TOGETHER, THE THREE OF YOU?

A: Yeah, in 1950, yeah.

Q: SO, WHAT WAS YOUR LIFE LIKE IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE WAR? WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO BE REUNITED?

A: Well, you know, I don't think I really have any real good memories one way or the -- I mean, I don't have any bad memories. I don't have any clear memories of, shall we say, the first moments or the first months or the first year. We were just together and, you know, and lived, I'm sure,happily. They just sort of took their course, and I'm sure it was difficult for my mother because she had to find a way to provide for herself and her two boys. There was some assistance, I'm sure, by the French government authorities, and there were by then, Jewish organizations and Red Cross and so forth, that assisted and so forth. So there was help. And my brother and I began to attend school, and I know I assimilated very well and did very well in school. And, you know, it was very -- those years were very happy. In fact, when it was time to go to the United States, I didn't want to go. I was very happy in school and with friends and was well adjusted.

Q: IT WAS TO YOUR MOTHER'S BROTHER THAT YOU CAME TO THE UNITED STATES?

A: Yeah, eventually it was, right. So, when we came here we stayed with them for a while. He was our sponsor.

Q: WHERE DID YOU STAY?

A: Oakland, California. The real tragedy was with my mother, you know, obviously. She -- What kind of life did she have, really? My father, obviously -- my brother and I --

Q: YOU WERE CHILDREN.

A: We were children. And, you know, we may have some maybe psychological difficulties, but I don't really know of --

Q: I WAS GOING TO ASK YOU, HOW DO YOU THINK YOUR LIFE WAS AFFECTED BY YOUR EXPERIENCES?

A: I don't know. I think I'd rather have somebody else judge that; maybe somebody who would know me may be able to judge that better. It probably has some impact, but I'm not sure. I'm sure it has some impact as far as how I view the world and politics and those around me, and, you know, my life on a day-to-day basis, the way I feel as a parent or as a father; it does all that. But has it really harmed me deeply? If it has, I don't think about it, never have, and I don't think I have scars personally for it. I really think it was a tragedy for my mother and my father.

Q: HOW LONG DID YOUR MOTHER LIVE?

A: Not long enough. But she lived -- She came to the United States and she saw my brother and I do well. I mean we both went to the University of California, Berkeley; he's an attorney; I became a CPA; I'm now an auto dealer. He has two children and she saw both of those born and grow. I have three; she only saw one of them, but she did see him. She remarried here. Unfortunately, when she died, she was 65 when she died. You know, she really retained scars.

Q: DID SHE EVER TALK OF THAT?

A: Yeah, she did.

Q: DID YOU ASK HER?

A: I did, and yet I don't know. We wanted to talk about happier

times. It wasn't pleasant to talk about, to think about.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER ANYTHING OF WHAT SHE TOLD YOU?

A: Well, you know, it -- She told me -- I mean a great deal, most of it obviously, would focus on what happened in Germany, and why didn't they leave and why didn't they leave sooner; and the regrets, why didn't they do this,why didn't they do that. Because afterwards, it was almost like no control. The one -- thank God, I'm sure she feels that she was able to send us away even though all the other -- whatever other letters I had from my father or my mother, it was always the feeling even -- that even though we sent you away, we love you, we miss you, we did this for your good to save your life, and don't forget us, and that type of thing.

Q: NOW AS A PARENT YOU CAN UNDERSTAND HOW DIFFICULT IT MUST HAVE BEEN.

A: Right. Really, right.

Q: DO YOU THINK THEY KNEW / ANYTHING ABOUT YOU IN THE TWO AND A HALF YEARS?

A: No, I'm sure; except for the first few weeks where they knew exactly where we were. Once we got taken away from there, they had no idea where we were; and that's why I say the suffering was the parents, you know.

Q: UMM-HMM.

A: Because we, as I kidded, we didn't know any different. I was always with my brother, which was a tremendous support, particularly for me because he was an older brother. And then we were always with other peers whether Jewish, non-Jewish, they were peers.

Q: WERE YOU EVER AFRAID OF BEING FOUND OUT YOU WERE JEWISH?

A: Yeah. But not to the point where -- I don't ever recall being so frightened that I was fearful for my life at any moment that somebody would come knocking on the door and that would be -- I never got in that predicament.

Q: CAN YOU THINK OF A SITUATION WHEN YOU WERE A LITTLE BOY AND IT WAS UNCOMFORTABLE OR SOMETHING, THAT SOMEONE WOULD KNOW?

A: Well, I mean, I knew it was bad to be Jewish; let's put it that way. I mean that had really been ingrained into me, that you had to hide the fact that you were Jewish, it was bad, everybody hated you, you were dirty, slimy, blah, blah, whatever. So you did everything you could to hide, normally, during the war, but even afterwards. And so I certainly didn't go around telling everybody I was Jewish. I hid that. In fact, the most amazing thing to me, once when I first attended Sunday school here in Oakland, and the teacher asked the students, "How many of you are proud to be Jewish?" Of course, I was like this. I couldn't believe the number of kids that were Jewish who actually raised their hands. It was flabbergasting to me that there would be kids, even if they didn't mean it, that they had at least had the ability , the freedom of mind, to be able to raise their hands. That really was a shock; and if I hadn't been so brain-washed that was the worst thing I could be. But actually in fear for my life, I don't recall specific incidences, you know. I knew I couldn't let anybody know because, you know, either something would happen, or they would take me away or something real bad was going to happen if anybody found out. So it was a super-secret thing during the war when I was in these people's home, but it never came close to happening as far as I remember.

Q: YOU HAD MENTIONED THAT YOU ATTENDED A SURVIVORS' GROUP ONCE, OR SOMETHING. WHAT LED YOU TO THIS?

A: Oh, I had a former neighbor, a lady, who lived across the street from where I live now, was a survivor of the Holocaust, and she married a non-Jewish person here. And she also, during the war, hid and was in fear for her life and was also told to basically change her name and change her religion; and she kept this -- and kept this double identity, so to speak, after the war. And all the way through her -- well, her marriage, and she had three children, grown children, and never a word to anybody until --. We became friends but not great friends, but she found the need to one day to talk me, and came out with the story that she was Jewish and been leading this double life and couldn't take it anymore. And anyway, so she -- We communicated, went to see the rabbi, and she told her husband and her children, and it was a very traumatic thing for her, and she found she went through a lot of difficult times. Because of this she found this support group that she would go to once a month where other holocaust survivors basically would tell their story, give each other support. She asked me to go along with her to more or less give her support and maybe to see if I needed any support. And I did go a couple times, and I really didn't feel the need , or didn't feel comfortable continuing.

Q: DID YOU EVER CONSIDER RETAINING YOUR PROTESTANT IDENTITY?

A: No, never. That never entered my mind. I mean, that had been ingrained / into me that I was Jewish, and there was no question about that ever. I maybe played the part that I was Protestant at

times. I played the part I was Catholic, I attended Catholic services in Lourdes, and catechism, but there was never ever a doubt.

Q: WHAT KIND OF INFLUENCE DO YOU THINK YOUR BROTHER HAD ON YOU?

A: Oh, probably quite a bit. I'm sure I leaned a great deal on him. He was older, and two years when you're five seems like a lot. So, beyond that, I know I leaned a great deal on him, and he was almost like my father-image during that period of time.

Q: WHAT KIND OF JEWISH LIFE DO YOU LEAD NOW? HOW DID YOU RAISE YOUR CHILDREN?

A: Well, first I married a very nice Jewish girl from New York.

Q: SOUNDS LIKE A GOOD START.

A: My mother was happy about that, but I was happy about that because, well, I had the need to lead a life that's at peace; at peace with myself, and comfortable. And I know I can only really do that with a Jewish spouse because that's me. That's part of me. I have nothing against people marrying out of their religion; just for me, the comfort just isn't there. So anyway, so I have a very nice wife, very good home life, and we have three children, all boys, all barmitzvahed. They have all gone to Israel. We certainly are not an Orthodox Jewish family. We are, probably are, as liberal as most American families are today, or at least a lot of them. And so we just have a very happy suburban life. My three kids all go to the university. My wife works, I work. I think we have a nice, happy life.

Q: AND DO YOU HAVE ANY JEWISH AFFILIATIONS?

A: Not really, no. In college, certainly, I attended, I was in a Jewish fraternity, Sammies; I have Jewish friends, you know, go to

Jewish temple, but I don't really -- I don't belong to any number of Jewish organizations, no. I attend functions --

Q: BUT YOU HAVE TEMPLE AFFILIATIONS, YOUR BOYS WERE BARMITZVAHED?

A: Yeah. And confirmed, and so forth and so on, yeah.

Q: SO, DID THE BOYS KNOW ABOUT THEIR GRANDPARENTS, WHAT THEY WENT THROUGH IN THE HOLOCUAST?

A: Yes, but not enough. But they also know it from the fact that my wife's father also was in a concentration camp. He was in Dachau, and they were from Austria. And they were there on Kristallnacht and he was taken in concentration camp, but she was able to get him out, and they got out of -- because this was still in the early part, this was in 1939. So they were able to get out, and got out of Austria and came to the United States in '39 and went to New York. But they're alive,and they're very close to my children, and they have a chance to relate their stories a great deal to my children.

Q: UMM-HUMM.

A: So, my children probably know more about my father-in-law, and call him grandpa and grandma, than / they do more about my father because they've been told first hand.

Q: THEY'RE REAL PEOPLE TO THEM.

A; Right.

Q: SO THE MIRACLES WERE THAT YOUR PARENTS HAD THE FORESIGHT TO NOT BRING YOU BACK HOME?

A: The miracles, that was one of them. There were just so many. It started with probably the Polish border closing when the train went over there. How we got out of there and got to Belgium --

from Belgium to France, and France -- Yeah, that my brother and I were sent to this camp and not returned. That from there, who helped us? We were taken from one camp to another camp, from one orphan home to another one. And there were times at the beginning, I'm sure people knew we were Jewish. Eventually, probably not. We were just kind of assimilated among all the other orphans. But at the beginning, it certainly was; and there were some people out there who did something, so somebody helped. And you know, that in itself is a miracle. My mother survived is a miracle.

Q: YES.

A: So, I don't know. It was -- I mean --

Q: AND ONLY HER BROTHER WHO CAME TO THE STATES SURVIVED? ANY OTHER AUNTS OR UNCLES IN YOUR LIFE?

A: The only other one that survived is -- My mother also had a sister, and her sister had her daughter, and that daughter was able to escape to the Netherlands; and there she was hidden by a family in the Netherlands throughout the whole war, that one child, that one daughter. And after the war, she was able to come to Oakland also to Uncle Mike, and she was another survivor.

Q: AND YOUR COUSIN IN OAKLAND?

A: Right. Cousin Adelle. And she has seen that family in the going back to see that family that hid her during the war, and their children just recently visited here. So those are the survivors: my brother, my mother, myself, my cousin Adelle, who actually lived through the years of the war over there. Whenever other relatives who are alive came to the United States before, it was my Uncle Mike

and his wife and their three children and their uncle, Uncle Max, and there were some other cousins that went to New York earlier, and they survived. But the rest of them, it was big families, they didn't.

Q: DO YOU KNOW WHAT CONCENTRATION CAMP YOUR DAD WAS TAKEN TO OR --

A; The main one.

Q: DACHAU?

A: NO.

Q: AUSCHWITZ?

A: Auschwitz, yeah. According to records of-- that my brother found in Israel, they have records there of the names of actually people who died, and they have his name listed. And apparently, he died just before the war ended. It was pretty tragic because he almost made it.

Q: WHAT HAVE I NOT ASKED YOU THAT I SHOULD HAVE?

A: Oh, I don't know. I mean, there's stories about names changed, the forced name changes. I have some of it. I don't remember, but my name really isn't supposed to be Lakritz, it's supposed to be really Webber.

Q: WHO'S THIS?

A: When, apparently, the Nazis did not recognize as a real marriage the Jewish marriages, which were ordained in Poland. And so they didn't recognize the legal marriage name, and so they gave the off-springs of any marriage the name of the mother. So, for example, my father's name, my father's father's name, was really Webber. But they gave my father the name Lakritz because that was his mother's

name; and the same thing happened to my mother. So, those were, say, indignations or insults, basically, that they forced on us. And it has bothered a lot of people, and a lot of people have traced their roots and changed their names back to whatever their original name was. I thought of doing that. I know my brother has a great deal. But anyway, so that's just one minor thing. But what haven't you asked me? But the biggest thing to me I remember as a child was that I was a very small child, and we lived during those two and a half years in extremely difficult situations,obviously. I mean I have memories of finding a rotten apple in the gutter and that being my lunch for the day or dinner or whatever. I remember living in that chicken coop in Sanpardue in France and really being very hungry. And the only meal the family had wasn't even real potatoes. I don't even know what they call them anymore. But something that seemed like potatoes and water that was supposed to be our dinner. And I was a real bad kid, and I ate those things that was supposed to be like potatoes. Basically, that was dinner for everybody. But I went back to that place a few years ago and, I mean, it is really unbelievable. It is used as a chicken coop again, you know, but it was interesting to see.

Q: AND YOU FOUND IT?

A: Yeah. I found, actually, some of the people that were there at the time, and they remember the stores.

Q: THEY REMEMBER THE STORIES OF YOUR FAMILY BEING THERE?

A: Yeah, they remembered the Jewish family being there and the refugees, that poor people were looking for a way to survive, being

taken away because it happened several times. I remember that I had the memories of fear on several occasions while I was still living there. The authorities would come and get my father, and there were like knocks on the window, and my father would get taken away; and he would come back. And this was at the beginning. I don't know why. And he would come back, and that's when they sent us away. But it never happened to me personally, I don't think, or my brother.

Q: JUST BY NATURE OF YOUR AGE?

A: Right. The age and the fact that we assimilated with other children in the area which were either safe or people turned their eyes and didn't want to know that we were Jewish children hiding.

Q: DO YOU THINK THERE WERE PLACES WHERE PEOPLE REALLY KNEW YOU WERE JEWISH BUT WEREN'T -- OR WERE THERE SOME JEWISH KIDS THAT YOU COULDN'T --

A: The kids didn't know, but I can't believe that there weren't some people in authority somewhere that must have known there were some Jewish kids. The Germans were right there. German soldiers were all around us, this little town. So it was an obviously very nerve-racking situation.

Q: YOU REMEMBER BEING AFRAID OF GERMANS?

A: Oh, yeah. They were there, barbed wires, walking around all the time. But I also remember having a snowball fight against them.

Q: YOU WERE PLAYING WITH THEM?

A: Not playing. We were determined that's all we could do as kids was basically -- But that's what you do.

Q: DID SOME OF THEM THROW BACK AT YOU?

A: No, they didn't throw back at us. We threw it at them and ran away. Other than that --

Q: I HAVE A COUPLE OF QUESTIONS: COULD YOU TELL US WHAT A TYPICAL DAY WAS LIKE IN THIS FACILITY WHERE YOU SPENT A LOT OF TIME THERE?

A: In the various camps?

Q: YEAH.

A: Of course, there were several, and it depended on --

Q: WELL, THEN I'D LIKE TO HEAR ABOUT TO EACH ONE. WHY DON'T YOU START WITH ONE IN PARTICULAR?

A: The very first one, of course, was truly a Jewish camp where all the Jewish traditional -- observed Jewish foods and Jewish companionship and so forth. From there on, it became more like a camp for lost children who just happened to congregate, and nuns and priests basically ran the camps. And what we did is we attended classes mostly and did whatever work they asked us to do.

Q: WHAT SORT OF WORK?

A: It was just very easy work, menial work, wasn't anything very hard. But mostly we just really attended school and played, and life was, I mean, somewhat normal, considering, of course, we didn't have any parents, but fairly normal. The food was horrible all the time. I was always, you know -- they fed us -- I remember seeing nails and strings inside whatever we ate, but we all survived. Toward the end of the war, when we got placed in this private home, the work became more demanding. But we were also attending school.

Q: WHAT KIND OF WORK BECAME MORE DEMANDING?

A: Well, the ladies just needed more help around the house. I mean, I forget exactly. We certainly weren't treated as slaves but we were just expected to do hard work. Of course, I was seven years old at the time. Maybe things seemed hard and it wasn't. I don't know.

Q: THESE WERE LIKE TWO MAIDEN LADIES?

A: Yeah, a mother and daughter; older ladies.

Q: AND THEY TOOK JUST THE TWO OF YOU?

A: Right. This was after things were over, basically. The war had terminated, and they were kind of dispersing all the orphans and people were adopting them really. This was like being adopted.

Q: WAS YOUR IDENTITY SOMETHING YOU HAD TO KEEP SECRET AT THAT TIME?

A: Sure.

Q: SO THE WAR HADN'T COMPLETELY ENDED AT THAT POINT?

A: Well, we were -- it had been liberated. The war wasn't over by itself. We were in the free part of France by then.

Q: IF YOU HADN'T KEPT YOUR IDENTITY A SECRET, WHAT KIND OF RISK WOULD YOU HAVE BEEN AT IN SITUATIONS?

A: You know, about then, I don't think there would have been any great risk other then the scorn that you were Jewish, and by then it had been ingrained in me that was the worst thing that anyone could be; and I certainly wasn't going to reveal that to anyone. It's possible that these ladies would not have wanted / us there if they had known we were Jewish. Lord knows where we would have gone. I don't know if they would have allowed us in school, or I don't know what they would have done to us. So there was certainly something that we were frightened of that we wanted to keep a secret.

Q: DID YOU HIDE THIS, THEN, FROM YOUR SCHOOLMATE CHUMS?

A: Sure; everybody.

Q: BUT YOU AND YOUR BROTHER WERE TOGETHER?

A: Yeah, we were together all the time, so we had each other's support.

Q: NOW, WERE YOU AWARE OF OTHER JEWISH KIDS WHO WERE IN THESE FACILITIES?

A: At the end, no, because by then we had been dispersed from these groups so we were sort of alone. But earlier throughout, during the war, yes; there were other Jewish kids, and we soon got to know one another. And wherever we went, whatever camp we were in, there was always some Jewish kids; only very much a minority, but we did find each other.

Q: NOW, WERE THESE SITUATIONS IN WHICH EACH OF YOU KIDS WERE TRYING TO KEEP YOUR IDENTITY SECRET AND YOU SORT OF FOUND EACH OTHER KIND OF BY INSTINCT?

A: Right.

Q: HOW DID THAT WORK? TELL ME ABOUT THAT. THAT'S KIND OF INTERESTING.

A: I wish I could remember, really; but it's -- it worked that way like I said. I gave one small example. Whenever it was time for the catechism class, you found the same group of boys always going to the bathroom, and we kind of stayed there. And we kind of giggled about the fact that we always found ourselves / in the bathroom at that time.

Q: DID THAT MEAN YOU WERE CUTTING CLASS?

A: Right.

Q: NOW, IF YOU CUT A CLASS, DOESN'T THE NUN RAP YOUR KNUCKLES LATER ON?

A: They weren't stupid. They had figured it out pretty soon too that the same bunch of kids were always missing at the same time.

Q: SO THEY UNDERSTOOD AND CHOSE TO IGNORE IT TO NOT MAKE WAVES?

A: Right.

Q: BUT YOUR OTHER CLASSMATES DIDN'T OBSERVE THIS?

A: Not really.

Q: NOT REALLY? MAYBE THEY DID?

A: No, I don't think so. I don't have any recollection of it ever happening. And remember, it got to a point where it wasn't important to even think that you were Jewish anymore because, by that year and a half, this secret, so to speak, that you're living with, there's other things to think about. And so, you know, school and the other kids; and you don't think about that all the time. So it's not really the number one factor, but you did somehow perceive that there were some others out there.

Q: DID YOU HAVE ANY ENCOUNTERS WITH ANTI-SEMITISM IN THESE CHILDREN'S FACILITIES THAT YOU WERE IN, EITHER IF NOT DIRECTLY, INDIRECTLY, IN ANY WAY? YOU KNOW HOW CRUEL KIDS ARE. DID YOU EXPERIENCE ANY IN THAT KIND OF A SITUATION?

A: I'm sure I did but, you know, I really don't have specific recollections of it. More of it happened afterwards after the war when we were, you know, basically -- I went back to my so-called home town, reunited, went to school. And sure, it would happen; savagery from this and that. There was a lot that that would occur, and I would hear.

Q: NOW, WHAT TOWN ARE WE IN?

A: Bolmonde in southern France.

Q: AND HOW WOULD THOSE SITUATIONS PLAY THEMSELVES OUT? DID YOU TURN THE OTHER CHEEK OR GET INTO FIGHTS?

A: I found myself mostly turning the other cheek and walking away. I don't recall ever getting into a fight over --

Q: YOU HAD BEEN CONDITIONED TO AVOID CONFRONTATION?

A: Totally run away from it. Conditioned? That basically is true. I guess I've been told that since I can remember. I've had a difficult time confronting anyone to this day, but that's something I've worked on and deal with a little bit better. But in those days when I was a kid, just walk away from it.

Q: HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE EXISTENCE OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL IN RELATION TO MAYBE TO SOME OF THESE FEELINGS THAT YOU HAVE? ON SOME LEVEL, THE EXISTENCE OF ISRAEL IS TAKING A STAND ON THESE ISSUES.

A: Right. Well, don't give me any guilt feelings here. Obviously, you know, it's having the State of Israel there is the one refuge we all have. At least it's someplace that we can hopefully in time, if things get bad, all go to. Whereas before, there was no place to go to, and because of what's happened, I certainly don't feel secure anywhere in the United States or anywhere. Yes, thank God, there is at least, you know, a place that / we can run to should or when, you know, the day come. But I don't have -- I don't really have the need in me to go there. I've assimilated. Whether that's right or wrong, I don't know, but I've assimilated and feel at home here.

Q: WHEN YOU WENT TO SUNDAY SCHOOL IN OAKLAND, DID YOU HAVE RESISTANCE TO IT?

A: Yeah; it wasn't comfortable.

Q: DID YOUR MOM MAKE YOU DO IT OR --

A: Yeah. My mom, or it was the thing to do. I wasn't all that comfortable doing it, but --

Q: AT THAT POINT YOU WOULD HAVE PREFERRED NOT TO?

A: Yeah. I mean I didn't -- didn't feel the need for it. I mean, I didn't have a craving for it. It wasn't something that I searched for or wanted.

Q: DID YOU KNOW ANY JEWISH PRAYERS AT THAT POINT OR JEWISH TRADITIONS?

A: Well, obviously, whatever I had done I certainly had forgotten, or most of it. But again, I was blessed by being close to my mother's brother, Uncle Mike, and he was a very religious man. And when we first came to the United States and stayed with him the first few months, every Shabbas he would take me to temple; and we would go there every Saturday morning. He would sit with me together, and he made Shabbas, and so did his wife. So I had the warmth of a good Jewish home through him and his wife.

Q: DID HE BECOME LIKE A SUBSTITUTE FATHER IN YOUR LIFE?

A: I don't know. I think he was an uncle.

Q: AN UNCLE?

A: He was an uncle, and a good uncle. And all that came at a good time, and those were all good, warm memories. And I do try to bring some of that with my kids.

Q: THIS IS NOT TO BE A TEST OF YOUR JEWISHNESS, IT'S JUST HOW LIFE EVOLVES, WHAT IT DOES TO PEOPLE. I HAVE ANOTHER THOUGHT: DO YOU RECALL

ANY CLOSE SHAVES THAT YOU HAD IN ANY OF THESE LOCATIONS AS A KID, WERE TROOPS OR OFFICIALS MAKING SWEEPS , PASSED PERILOUSLY CLOSE, AND WHAT TRANSPIRED IN THOSE SITUATIONS?

A: Maybe I will after I leave here, but I really can't think of, you know, of that clear, scary moments like that don't occur because I basically was living a hidden life, and I almost believed it. And everyone around me believed it. So, you know, what was I afraid of?

Q: YOU WERE SAFE.

A: I was safe because I was like every other kid aroundme. We were all just poor orphans, and a lot of people felt sorry for us, all of us. It wasn't just me.

Q: IS IT SOMETHING YOU AND YOUR BROTHER TALK ABOUT?

A: More these days than we did before, but not that much. My brother is more lately. He's more interested in finding out really for himself about our parents and their parents and the roots of all this. So we do talk a little bit. What we don't talk about it, actually, what happened to us for that two and a half years; not really.

Q: YOU ACTUALLY DON'T NEED TO. YOU WERE BOTH THERE.

A: I know my wife constantly asks me what was it like to be without a father and mother for that long a period of time in that age; and I don't know, after a while, it just becomes normal.

Q: BECAUSE YOU DON'T KNOW OTHERWISE.

A: You don't know anything different; and the kids around you, they are in the same boat as you are. So it wasn't like I was envying other children who had a beautiful home and parents and birthday parties, and all that kind of stuff. I didn't see it for anybody.

Nobody had it. Nobody had fancy meals or fancy clothes or anything. We were -- It was all normal. It became more difficult, actually, after the war because then, you know, we were very poor; and the rest of the people we were associating with were just French families with normal father and mother and homes, good clothes, and birthday parties and, you know; so that became more difficult the years after the war because we were now obviously so poor.

Q: WERE THERE OTHER JEWISH FAMILIES THAT CAME BACK AT THAT TIME?

A: You know, there was. My father was very close with one other Jewish family, but for some reason -- Well, the father survived, and the mother. And it was easier on them; I don't know why. The father was aggressive to get into business almost right after the war and did well. And financially things were good for them. And so they, you know, lived a good life. In our case, of course, my mother was by herself. It was much more difficult, and it was -- Financially, it was difficult. And when I compared myself with other kids, I was -- I knew I was down here, and they were basically up here.

Q: WAS YOUR MOTHER WORKING AS A SEAMSTRESS THEN?

A: Yeah. She worked in the house, and she would take work inside the house as a seamstress. And we would help do whatever we could to -- we were -- My brother even stopped going to school at the age of 14 and he became an apprentice tailor for a while, because in France, you do have an opportunity to stop at the age of 14. So, he did that. For him, thank God, he came to the United States. He went back to school and he became an attorney. So that was a good thing. So anyway, it was troubling. I noticed the real difference more after the war than I did

even during the war. And I certainly noticed the fact that we were different, being a Jewish kid.

Q: SO YOU TOOK ON A JEWISH IDENTITY WHEN YOU WENT BACK?

A: Yeah, right. In the entire town of 10,000, there may have been three Jewish families. To be -- We were barmitzvahed. In order to be barmitzvahed, some nice old man came by train from the big town to our home every Thursday to teach us how to read Hebrew so we could be barmitzvahed. There's a guy who belongs in heaven. The guy must have been 70 years old, and every Thursday he used to travel.

Q: JUST FOR THE TWO OF YOU? WERE THERE ANY OTHER LITTLE BOYS?

A: I think there might have been a couple other. I think I even remember his name. It's Landau, I think.

Q: WOW.

A: Incredible. But anyway -- So we were barmitzvahed. We had to go to the big town to be barmitzvahed. Obviously, there was no temple.

Q: WHO CAME TO YOUR BARMITZVAH?

A: Who came to my barmitzvah? My wife, when she watches this, she's going to laugh because there's a story, but I won't go into that. Who came to the barmitzvah? Well, to my barmitzvah, not too many people, no. Well, my mother had a few friends, of course. We had to go to the next town to have it. Not too many people, no. It was a small affair. We went to -- After the barmitzvah, just a few of us, four or five of us, we went to a restaurant. Anyway, went to lunch; but that's because of the Jewish community. It was nonexistent, basically.

Q: I'LL BET MR. LANDAU WAS PROUD.

A: Probably was. Probably was. He worked hard. Poor guy had to

walk up three flights of steps just to come to see us.

Q: THAT'S REALLY TOUCHING.

A: Yeah. Anyway, my mother worked hard all that time. But they were good years. I was a good student, I know. Then I had good friends and enjoyed sports a great deal as a child. But I was -- eventually became very happy. Like I said, I didn't want to come to the United States; I really didn't.

Q: YOU DO NOT STAY IN TOUCH WITH ANY ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE AT THAT TIME?

A: I did for a while, and then, you know, and then I went back to France. I did see them all, yeah.

Q: YOU DID?

A: Yeah.

Q: DID YOU HAVE YOUR FAMILY WITH YOU?

A: No; just my wife. That was warm. That really was warm because my best friend --

Q: NOT JEWISH?

A: No. And my best friend's father was the mayor of the town, and he was just a wonderful man. One thing he did is he had my father's name inscribed in the city's monument of the dead World War II -- as a French soldier. And they treated him like a French citizen, French soldier who died "pour la patrie," for mother France. And that was really very touching when he did that. Anyway, when we went back, he greeted us like we were kings, celebrities who came back because it brought back for him, you know -- he had been -- he had fought with Charles de Gaulle, and brought back all his war memories. And the fact that I had been his kid's best friend for all those years after the war.

So we spent a really -- a very warm day when I went back to see him.

Q: AND HE LET HIS KID HAVE A BEST FRIEND WHO WAS JEWISH?

A: Yeah, that's true.

Q: SOME RECEPTION.

A: Yeah.

Q: I HAVE A QUESTION: I'M CURIOUS ABOUT THE RELIGIOUS ALIASES THAT YOU TOOK ON, THE DECISIONS BEHIND THEM AT SPECIFIC TIMES. I GOT THE IMPRESSION THAT YOU WERE FIRST A -- YOUR FIRST ALIAS WAS A PROTESTANT ALIAS. THAT SOUNDED UNUSUAL TO ME, WHEN YOU'RE SENDING A KID INTO FRANCE, TO MAKE HIM A PROTESTANT. BUT THEN IT SOUNDED LATER ON, YOU TOOK ON A CATHOLIC ALIAS. AND I WAS JUST WONDERING WHAT NECESSITATED THE SECOND CHANGE AND WHAT WAS THE REASON FOR DECIDING ON A PROTESTANT IDENTITY INITIALLY RATHER THAN, SAY, A CATHOLIC IDENTITY IN FRANCE?

A: Okay. I can only guess at that. But my guess is that this was something suggested to us by whoever was trying to protect us at the time, other Jewish people who were doing this to save the fugitive children who were there. My guess is a simple one. It is the fact that Protestants are a minority in France. Most of the people who you would be in contact with would be Catholic, and by being a Protestant, I didn't have to necessarily have to know much about being Protestant. And they obviously didn't know much about being Protestant. Therefore, it was safer to be Protestant than to be Catholic because if you were Catholic, you would have had to do all the things all the rest of them were doing. So this way, you have an excuse for not knowing what was what. How did it eventually change? Well really, when we got to Lourdes with the shrine of Catholicism, I mean everybody had to be Catholic. You just weren't in Lourdes without being Catholic. And

it's just sort of just the form just to go with everybody else and just do it. Everybody went to church; we went to church.

Q: IF YOU HAD BEEN A PROTESTANT, WOULD YOU NOT HAVE BEEN ADMITTED TO SOME OF THESE INSTITUTIONS THAT YOU WERE PUT INTO?

A: I don't know. But it had gotten to the point where you were such an oddball, it was better not to be an oddball. So you just went along with everybody at that point. And by then, it became easier. And I had become more familiar. I mean I had to attend some of those catechism classes. I've forgotten now, but I'm sure then I probably knew quite a bit. So it would be -- It was quite normal. It came easy, but it was just something that evolved.

Q: I'M SURE ANY BRIGHT YOUNG KID COULD PICK IT UP ALL AROUND YOU.

A: Right. That's basically what happened, yeah. I'm sure after we're all through, I'll think of 10,000 different things I should have told you.

Q: AND I'LL THINK OF 10,000 THINGS I SHOULD HAVE ASKED YOU. THAT'S ALL RIGHT. THAT'S THE WAY IT GOES. YOU'VE DONE A GOOD JOB OF SHARING. COULD YOU ELABORATE ON THE STORY OF STEALING THE PHONY POTATOES? WHAT HAPPENED THERE? WHAT WAS THE SITUATION IN WHICH THAT EXISTED?

A: Well, we were very hungry. I was very hungry. I mean I was just five years old, but I remember. The reason I remember it so well is because I really got hell, but good. My brother was screaming his head off, and my father was mad because I -- Well, I had eaten the food for the whole family, and the only food that there was for the whole day. And everybody had to go to bed hungry, and it was cold and we were living

on this dirt. And anyway, I mean I just remember really getting hell; and, you know, never going to do that again. But that's why I remember the story because I knew I was hungry, but my parents and my brother, they went to bed really hungry. And it wasn't even real potatoes. At least it would have been something good to eat. But they were what we called in France rutabaga.

Q: RUTABAGA.

A: Rutabagas, yeah. And anyway, in just dishwater basically,you know.

Q: SO WHERE DID THE FOOD COME FROM THE NEXT DAY?

A: Well, my father would go to work, you know, in the fields helping the farmers, and brought back, hopefully brought back, some food. And my mother would find some work as a seamstress somewhere, hopefully. And it was a day-to-day existence, hoping something would come. I mean there was no money to help, no nothing. It's wherever. I remember my father working late in the night out in the fields. And he certainly hadn't been used to this because this wasn't the kind of life he had as a child. He certainly had no upbringing of ever being on a farm / or whatever. But you do what you have to do to survive. It was tough on them.

Q: DID HE HAVE AN ORTHODOX UPBRINGING?

A: Yeah, he did. But I certainly don't remember any practices of it because there was no way he could practice it. Certainly, you wouldn't want anybody to see you practice it anyway.

Q: WHAT'S IN THE BINDER?

A: What's in the binder? The only thing in the binder, because I just tried to -- I just really quickly grabbed a few things that I

could. Let's go through them one at a time. Let's see. This is after. This is a picture of after the war, and this is my brother, and this is me, and this is on the farm, and this is where my mother was hid during the war.

Q: YOU KNOW WHAT I'D LOVE TO DO IS SET UP A LITTLE EASEL SO I COULD SET THAT ON IT AND GET A REALLY CLOSE SHOT WHILE YOU DO YOUR EXPLANATION. WOULD THAT BE OKAY?

A: This is after the war, and I would say this would be like in 1946, probably '45, '46.

Q: OKAY.

A: And it's in France and it's on a farm, and this is the farm where my mother spent the hidden two years or three years that she was there. And after the war she took us to their farm. In fact, we used to go back there, oh, every summer. It was just a wonderful place to spend --

Q: SO THAT'S YOU AND YOUR MOTHER AND YOUR BROTHER?

A: No, that's not my mother. That's my brother, and that's me down here.

Q: ALL RIGHT.

A: And the lady there is a lady who actually had polio. She's one of the daughters of the farmer. Anyway, we were just there and spent some happy times.

Q: AT THE TIME THAT YOUR MOTHER WAS ON THE FARM, SHE GAVE BIRTH TO A CHILD?

A: No. She had told the authorities in the camp she -- at the concentration camp she was at -- that she was pregnant. This was the

concentration camp that was run by the Vichy Government; therefore, the French people let her go. But she wasn't pregnant, no.

Q: SO THAT WAS A SURVIVAL TECHNIQUE TO --

A: Right.

Q: OKAY. NOW TELL US ABOUT THIS ONE.

A: This is just -- See how we looked better already? This was a couple of years later at, basically, on the same farm. And it's like -- there's like a castle there next to the farm. And there's my brother and I sitting on the motorcycle. And that's my mother in the background. And you can tell from her face she still has the strain of struggles she went through in the war. I mean, look at that face and you can see all the pain and suffering that she's gone through. But we were happy.

Q: AND YOU'RE WITH KIDS IN THAT PICTURE?

A: I'm the one in the back; my brother's in front.

Q: ABOUT THIS ONE?

A: Okay. This is really going back. This is a treasure of a picture, really. It's my father, my mother, my brother, and I. This is on the beach in Kiel, Germany; and this is, of course, before the war. And this is when we were living happily as a family before this entire thing.

Q: YOU LOOK LIKE MAYBE TWO YEARS OLD.

A: Maybe one year old.

Q: THIS IS '36, '37?

A: That's about right, yeah.

Q: AND YOUR MOM KEPT THESE PICTURES?

A: Yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah. These are the good old days before it all started, yeah.

Q: ALL RIGHT. TELL US ABOUT THIS ONE.

A: Okay. This is a picture of my father. This was an identity picture that was taken in France as he got there, and they had to have identification papers. Everywhere you turned, you had to have your identification papers. To this day, I'm always walking around in fear of somebody asking me for my identification papers. So this is the photo the authorities took of him.

Q: DO YOU KNOW WHAT YEAR THIS WAS TAKEN, ROUGHLY?

A: I would say this is probably 1941, 1940; 1941.

Q: CAN YOU TELL US ABUT THIS ONE, PLEASE?

A: Okay. This is a picture of my mother. This is after the war, probably 1946, probably, where she's beginning to really almost look alive again. And this shows an identity picture at the time.

Q: OKAY.

A: Okay. This is a picture of me after. This is after the war as I'm attending school, now the French school, and I'm just one of the guys. This is probably 1946. I would say 1946, 1947. Happy young kid.

Q: OKAY. WHAT'S THIS?

A: And this is June 1950 aboard the S. S. NEPTUNE coming to America.

Q: WOW.

A: Took an Italian ship to the United States, landed in Halifax and New York, saw my Uncle Mike, took a train over to California.

Q: HE MET YOU IN NEW YORK?

A: Right. Yeah.

Q: DID YOU BRING THIS OUT LIKE TO BRING HERE, OR DO YOU KEEP IT LIKE THIS? THIS IS AFTER THE WAR?

A: After the war. And I'm not even sure where, but it looks like we're wearing our boy scout belts, I can see.

Q: UH-HUH.

A: It's just after the war in probably '46, '45.

Q: THAT'S YOU ON THE RIGHT?

A: Yeah. I'm the small one.

Q: OKAY. AND TELL US ABOUT THIS POSTCARD.

A: Well, this is the last written communication that we had from my father. This is a card that he sent from the concentration camp he was detained at. And this was the last card that he sent just before he was being shipped to Auschwitz. It's dated the 3rd of March, 1943; and on it he says "bon courage" and "adieu."

Q: WAS THIS COMMUNICATION CENSORED AT ALL, DO YOU THINK?

A: I'm sure it was because on the back of it there is a stamp that is from the prefecture of the police.

Q: WHERE DOES IT SAY HE IS LEAVING FOR?

A: I can't read it.

Q: IF YOU CAN TRANSLATE FOR US AGAIN. I KNOW YOU DID A LITTLE EARLIER. IT WOULD BE NICE.

A: "My dear wife and my Alfred and Herbert, I'm letting you know that I am well. Up until today I am in Camp Drancy. This evening I am leaving at last for Azire." I really can't read that too well.

Then it says "bon courage." Unforgettable maybe? I don't know. I have a feeling it says, "Don't forget your mother and father." I can't read that.

Q: TELL US ABOUT THIS.

A: Okay. This is -- this is written in German, and this is a letter written by my father from St. Pardoux. That's where we were living then, next to Bolmonde. And it's dated, I believe, May 1942. And it's addressed to the director, to the "Directeur Cohen," which obviously was the director of the camp which he had sent us to, which was supposed to be the summer camp. And anyway, I believe the letter says to keep us there and to tell us "not to forget us" and remind us of who we are, and that it was too dangerous for us to come back. And there is a constant reference to a 50 francs because, well, this is dated August 30th, 1942; and the 50 franc reference is to -- of course, my birthday was coming up on September 2nd, and obviously he was wrenching with pain, the fact that he had sent us away. There was no way he could have us with him. And I don't know how he had saved 50 francs. It must have been all the money he had. So he was sending 50 francs along with a letter for a birthday present for me.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER GETTING THAT 50 FRANCS?

A: No. Don't remember anything like that.

Q: DID YOU HAVE THIS LETTER TRANSLATED AT ONE TIME?

A: Yes, a couple times. My wife actually reads German.

Q: I CAN FLIP IT OVER.

A: This is another letter which, again, he writes to Director Cohen at the camp, and -- I wish there was somebody here who could translate

it, but I think he's trying to tell the director all about us and all about the fact that, should something happen, that we have relatives in America and who the relatives are and where they are, and so forth. And, if you go down a little bit further in the letter, you will see, you know, Uncle Max Fass in Oakland, California, and the names and the address, Lakeshore Avenue in Oakland, and the address.

Q: IT'S RIGHT NEAR WHERE I LIVE, ACTUALLY.

A: Is it? Max Fass in Oakland. So he's trying to tell about the 50 francs. He's still asking about the 50 francs.

Q: IS THERE ANYTHING ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS? HOW DID YOU -- HOW WERE THESE LETTERS PRESERVED?

A: I really don't know. Very good question. Russ Cohen must have somehow or other, somehow -- I don't know. They got into my mother's hands because my mother kept them, and that's where I got them from. But I don't know how, I don't know how they were acquired.

Q: IS THE NOTATION ON THE BOTTOM ALSO WRITTEN BY HIM? IT SEEMS LIKE IT PROBABLY --

A: I think that was my mother. See, the main letter was written by my father to us, and the bottom was my mother adding, you know, her comments.

Q: I SEE.

A: This was a letter written to us when we were in that first camp.

Q: AND THESE ARE OTHER LETTERS FROM YOUR FATHER TO YOU AND YOUR BROTHER WHILE YOU WERE IN THE CAMP?

A: Right, I guess. Mainly, I think if you read, at least as I recall, it's mostly a lot of agonizing: "Don't forget us. Don't forget

us." "Dear Herbert, dear Alfred dearest ... Don't forget. Don't forget."

Q: DID YOU NAME ANY OF YOUR SONS AFTER YOUR FATHER?

A: Yeah. My first son's middle name is Cooper.

Q: PARDON?

A: My first son's middle name is Cooper.

Q: IS THAT IN YOUR MOTHER'S HANDWRITING?

A: Yeah. Right.

Q: THE ORPHANAGE WHERE YOU AND YOUR BROTHER WENT, WERE THESE PLACES ALL BOYS OR WERE THEY BOYS AND GIRLS?

A: I remember you asked me that question also, and I said there were boys and girls. But you know what, I mostly remember just boys, and I think it may have been -- Of course, there were so many different places. There must have been, maybe throughout the two years' period of time, maybe there were a dozen places. But in my memory, it was mostly boys except, of course, the very first camp was just for Jewish kids. This was boys and girls. But after that, it was mostly just boys.

Q: WAS THERE ANY SUCH THING SUCH AS BOYS AND GIRLS SOCIALIZING?

A: I sure don't recall much of it if there was.