



Interview with Ray Redel

HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Date: November 1, 1993

Place: San Francisco, California

Interviewer: Peggy Coster

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Q I'D LIKE TO START BY ASKING YOU IF THERE'S ANYTHING YOU'VE REMEMBERED ABOUT YOUR PRE-WAR EXPERIENCES IN GERMANY THAT YOU HADN'T REMEMBERED FOR THE OTHER TAPES.

A That's kind of hard for me, because I didn't look last night. I looked at the second tape and not the first one. I'm not quite sure what I said on that.

It's strange how one gets used to a certain style of life. There was -- and must have been, looking back -- a constant state of fear, and not so much obvious fear as being on the lookout, defensive. That was even before when there was anti-Semitism from name calling, of course, from some of my peers. You sort of settled down into that mental condition of being on the alert.

It doesn't take too much energy because that's already -- you're settling into that kind of condition, and you are aware what goes on around you, like crime in the cities now, where you're aware that you walk in the middle of the sidewalk. So it was that.

On the other hand, I grew up with a very positive view of who I am and of being a Jew, and the thought of not being, that never entered my head. So, when I looked at everybody around who was an adversary in some way or another, I can't say I felt superior, but I certainly did not feel

diminished by anybody or what anybody said. And I was very fortunate.

My family, of course, was positive, and I was one of those few kids that even likes some religious education. I don't remember anyone else who really liked it. I liked it. So, there was all kinds of reinforcements.

Danger was there all the time, and before Hitler, there was a very dangerous situation under the Weimar Republic because there was hunger and chaos and all kinds of things. People were poor. So it wasn't just the Jews who were careful, other people too, but of course, the Jews even more so.

I don't know what I left out. I'm sure I left out other things. But I was always very comfortable with the movement. I was in before Hitler--the Jewish sports movement. And there was a huge break between generations at that time. My parents were very supportive and understanding but didn't really have a part in any of this.

I met this friend of mine, Johanon, and he got me into the Jewish sports movement, and we decided that what Jews need is to get rid of the image that they had which was "weak and physically unfit," and whatever.

And, of course, also caricatures had an impact on my thinking of who they were, and we wanted to get rid of the Jews in the view of everybody else or a lot of people in newspapers, and so forth. Even some even before Hitler.

There was always a right wing, a very strong right wing constituency in Germany, Stahlhelm, which was a quasi military movement. That was a very right wing with old Kaiser flags and military exercises and stuff. And they were all anti-Semitic.

So we were aware of that, and we wanted to change in a way some parts of it that we thought were justified. We wanted to go back to the land and become farmers in Palestine. We wanted to do physical work. We wanted to be strong physically and this kind of thing. That happened even before Hitler, really.

Q THAT YOUR PARENTS AND THEIR GENERATION JUST DIDN'T SEEM TO HAVE THIS IDEA?

A No, they didn't. It so happened that my father was like me, very slim and active and was fine and my mother, too, used to go for walks, but as an idea, as an ideology, this was totally absent.

The main thing was to try to make a living, which was very hard in those days -- support a family, very difficult, and nobody did any exercises. There were very few Jews in the outdoors or sports. There were some, but very few, and the sports organizations were big, successful, (the Jewish ones) in competition with everybody else. They were recognized in Germany, and we competed with a Magen David on our chest on a white shirt. So we were very proud of who we were, and we felt good about it, whatever anybody said or did.

Q DO YOU THINK THAT THIS IDEOLOGY, OR WHATEVER IT IS, WAS A DIRECT RESULT OF THE NAZIS AND THEIR PROPAGANDA?

A I think it helped a lot. It was already before.

The Germans, in general, are very body-conscious. There were lots of sports organizations in Germany, and we were growing up in this culture--at least at that time, they were. We were part of that kind of thought.

It wasn't just Jewish. The Germans also competed, and sports were very big, and hiking was very big. There were organizations and so forth, so we basically were in the general mode of German life, the young generation. I don't think the old Germans did much of that, but they did some of it. The Jews didn't, mostly; and we wanted to change that. That all had to do with Zionism, and a new Jew wasn't just going somewhere; it was a new character.

Q DID YOU PLAY WITH NON-JEWISH SPORTS CLUBS?

A Oh, yes, all the time.

Q HOW DID THEY TREAT YOU? WAS IT LIKE THEY TREATED ANY OTHER SPORTS CLUB?

A Yes, yes. We had some records in running, especially in Germany. We had the West German, I don't know, 400 meters or something. We were real competition. I don't remember a single discrimination. There may have been some, but I never came across it, and I did quite a bit in that sports organization.

We were recognized, and we treated each other as

equals, generally, even into the Hitler period, we did, until very late. We had our own sports ground, sports arena, where we went on Sundays, and we competed.

I remember there was a race in Berlin--Potsdam, Berlin, which was to another town, and it was a relay race. I participated in it at one time once or twice; and that was all according to groups like youth and seniors and others. We were very good in these things, and we had no problem.

We ran through the streets of Berlin. There were lots of spectators. I don't remember anything by anybody even though we carried the Magen David, and we were definitely Jewish.

Q HOW LONG COULD YOU DO THIS BEFORE YOU BEGAN GETTING INSULTS?

A I don't think that ever happened. I think we were closed down at one point. I don't quite remember what happened. I don't think we really got insults. It was just impossible after a while. I don't know when that happened, but I think I remember things until about '36 or so going along that way and also having our own uniform, not only the sports club, which were two different organizations. The sports club was one and the Zionist hiking and camping and all of these other things, and planning to go to Palestine at the time was another.

We all had uniforms, and I don't remember any real trouble until we got into difficulties with the Nazi storm

troopers and this kind of thing.

Q WHEN DID THAT HAPPEN?

A I think I mentioned in my first one when we were camping and surrounded by a group of storm troopers and forced to march to a headquarters, and we thought we were going to be in for a big, big fight which turned out to resolve itself. But I think it had a lot to do with the way we behaved and where.

You know the difference even now that the police tell you, "Don't behave like a victim, or you're going to be one." We did not behave like victims, and we may have been totally stupid, but we were not really showing any fear, and we didn't really have a lot of fear, if I remember when I think back. We had problems, and sometimes there was a good reason for fear, but we were very cocky.

Q DID YOU (inaudible)

A Yes.

Q A LOT?

A No, not a lot, but that was even before that time. My best friend was the only other Jew in the class in the elementary school. I had some gentile friends that I played with in the street where we lived that were living in the same area, and we played ball and everything else.

But I do remember that one time--and it definitely shocked me. That I do remember--Your question is good--that they just said, "Jew, Jew, Jude," and I couldn't believe it

because I played with these kids all the time; and I thought they were all my friends, my pals--not my intimate friends, but all my pals. We had a good time together, and that really shocked me.

And then I repressed that, too, because that was just the way I was.

Q WHAT DID YOU REPRESS, THE MEMORY OR THE FEELINGS?

A The shock of it and the fact that these are my friends, these are not my friends. After that, we still got together, played again as if it was sort of forgotten. But I guess it was never really forgotten. I remember it now, which is, after all, 65 years later or something. But I remember now how shocked I was.

Q DID YOU STOP SEEING THESE GENTILE FRIENDS?

A No, not really. We weren't very intimate, so we kept playing ball in the streets and things like that.

But I had a gentile friend in the house. He was a grandson of the owner of the building. He was gentile, and we played together a lot. And there was no problem at all. I don't even remember his name.

Q DO YOU RECALL ANY OF THEIR PARENTS BEGINNING TO--
WANTING TO WITHDRAW FROM YOU BECAUSE YOU WERE JEWISH AS THE
NAZI PERIOD WENT ON?

A The people that knew us, I don't think did any such thing. We were a little more aware, and I guess they were aware who we were, who they were, but there was no overt

discrimination.

I don't remember that, that people actually withdrew. I don't know, I may be a unique case in many ways because I just, when I think back how I marched through life-- in school, I told this story, and it's on my first tape as to the teacher and the stealing of gloves and so forth, and there was definite trouble with the teacher who didn't know me all that well. But the kids in my class, and so forth--I never really had any trouble.

I was one of them, and again, I think one of the main reasons for all that is I never felt to be a victim. I was standing up. I wasn't that strong. I wasn't that powerful, but I sort of could take care of myself. I wasn't fearful, and I don't think it ever showed that I was. That helped a lot.

Q DO YOU EVER RECALL SEEING PEOPLE PICK ON OTHER JEWISH KIDS OR ADULTS IN THE STREETS OR ANYWHERE? I MEAN, BECAUSE AT ONE POINT YOU DID SAY BERLIN WAS VERY VIOLENT. THERE WAS ALL KINDS OF THINGS HAPPENING, AND I HOPE I'M NOT REPEATING A QUESTION. IT'S SORT OF PROBLEMATIC WHEN THERE'S SO MUCH TIME BETWEEN INTERVIEWS.

A Right. Well, the thing is that, I have never seen again -- It is one of those things. I wasn't there Kristallnacht. I wasn't in Berlin. I was in the country somewhere, didn't know about it until it was all over and somebody told me about it.

And that year when it was really bad in the cities, I was on that farm, so I escaped most of it. I never saw Jews being beaten up in the streets. I saw communists and Nazis fighting, and I saw bakeries stormed.

Q WHY WERE BAKERIES STORMED?

A People were hungry. So there were groups, and they just stormed bakeries. There was one in our house where I lived, where I was born, and I remember them. So, that happened.

There was very bad times before. That was why Hitler was so successful.

Q I KNOW A GERMAN MAN WHO SUGGESTED AT ONE POINT THAT ONE OF THE REASONS--EVERYBODY KNOWS THAT A LOT OF REASONS SIMILAR TO THIS OR SIMILAR TO THE REASONS THAT HITLER GAINED POPULARITY THAT THERE WAS SO MUCH HOMELESSNESS, AND WITH EMPTY APARTMENTS, BECAUSE OF THE INFLATION OR PRICES OR WHAT, THAT THERE WAS JUST AN AWFUL LOT OF HOMELESS PEOPLE ON THE STREETS, AND THAT HITLER'S COMING TO POWER, BASICALLY INSTITUTING RENT CONTROL, WAS SOMETHING THAT THE PEOPLE VERY MUCH APPRECIATED.

DO YOU REMEMBER MUCH ABOUT THAT?

A I don't remember. I was too little, probably -- not too little, but I don't remember anything about rent control; but, of course, there was a lot of crime and people were afraid, and Hitler came in with his police and his troops, and he established order.

The Germans loved order. He did all kinds of things

that--building the roads through Germany, and he certainly got those people into his party.

I don't know where he got the money. I know the German industrialists supported him very greatly, but where did they get that much money for rearmament and so forth? I don't really know where all this money came from because Germany was very poor at the time. But he got, like the communists did, into their party. They got them into a disciplined group with an idea and off the streets, and that contributed a lot to so-called order.

There certainly was no more violence after Hitler came to power, which people were afraid of before.

Q BECAUSE IT HAD ACTUALLY HAPPENED?

A What happened? Violence?

Q VIOLENCE.

A Some of it had, sure. There was constant shooting and brick-throwing and physical fist-fighting between communists and Nazis. The headquarters were always in pubs, in bars, and taverns, and one was known as a communist headquarter; one was known as a Nazi headquarter. And they would meet and fight it out very often, so there was a great deal of chaos everywhere.

At that time, the inflation, I don't know, just the inflation, the big inflation was way before that, after the first world war, but people had no money. They were all very poor. There was few jobs -- and it also created jobs.

The military rearmament created jobs, and the building created jobs; so, in many ways, Germany was better off with this dictator, if they didn't care about that.

Q SOMETIMES WHEN I LISTEN TO YOU, I ALWAYS GET THE FEELING LIKE IT WASN'T SO BAD, AND I'M NOT SURE THAT THAT'S WHAT YOU MEAN TO CONVEY.

A Well, that's a real problem because my father didn't have a job. My mother managed to feed us -- I don't know how. And I'm not a good example because I was so lucky; and I was very tender in some ways. In spite of that, all the things I said, that if I had really seen some of the bad stuff, I don't know how I would have handled it. I just escaped it all. I'm really, really exceptional in some ways.

Of course, the times were bad. That they weren't that bad for me before I left is something different, and that's how it was. And I think the people who belonged to my organization -- all this kind of stuff -- probably escaped, indeed.

A lot of what you will hear from other people, especially German Jews who were very assimilated, and if they believed themselves to be true Germans, they were, psychologically, totally devastated; which didn't happen to me because I never felt that I was a German. And I always felt I was the other, and looking down on whatever was around me and not feeling really totally a part of it. And the German Jews did, mainly did.

It was a very interesting thing. I went to a cemetery in Berlin. There is no Hebrew on any of the gravestones -- no Hebrew! They all had German. There's no other Jewish cemetery where there's not Hebrew on the gravestones, not in Germany. They were Germans. They were very, very assimilated, felt themselves true Germans; and this turn around of their lives was totally devastating. So they were more miserable, psychologically, to begin with than really materially.

Now, we also didn't have any money, even before. We didn't lose all this material wealth that a lot of people did. We didn't live a wonderful life, and all of a sudden, we had to make do. We always had to make do. So in a way, it was one of those fortunate things.

Q NO CHANGE THERE?

A No change there. We knew how to do without money -- never had any. Even as far as I can remember back, we were okay, but we never had any wealth. So, it wasn't devastating to lose it as it was for lots of German Jews, and my father wasn't a doctor who couldn't practice any longer, had a store that was boycotted, or all these other terrible things that happened.

It was sort of a good thing to be a nobody.

Q WELL, LET ME ASK IF YOU REMEMBER A COUPLE THINGS THAT HISTORICALLY HAPPENED. ONE OF THEM WAS WHEN THEY HAD THE OLYMPICS.

A Yes.

Q IN 1936.

A Right.

Q ONE OF THE THINGS I READ WAS THAT THE HARASSMENT OF THE JEWS AT THAT POINT HAD GOTTEN PRETTY BAD, BUT THAT THEY CLEANED IT ALL UP. THERE WEREN'T ANY PAMPHLETS OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT AROUND?

A Right. That's true. That's true.

Q TO IMPRESS?

A Yeah. We all wanted to try and get to the Olympics. I never made it, for whatever reason. Probably, I didn't have the money to get in. But we were always very keen to go to the Olympic games because we were all doing athletics.

Q NO, WHAT I MEAN IS THAT --

A Yeah, they did clean that up. There was no question. They made it seem like a lie.

Q SO PEOPLE WOULDN'T BELIEVE THE STUFF AGAINST JEWS?

A Of course, of course.

Q THE STUFF WAS EVIDENT?

A It was evident. It definitely was evident.

The newspapers were different. Yes. Yes, I mean that's -- you know, they do it in China. They do it everywhere. If you want international recognition, you did that.

Of course, we all were very happy that -- was it Jesse Owens who won the hundred meter dash and -- the black

American -- and Hitler was very upset with that, and so forth. We cheered.

Q YOU DID KIND OF NOTICE THOUGH, THE GRAFFITI AND ALL THAT STUFF?

A There weren't too many graffiti because graffiti weren't allowed, not like it was here. Graffiti were mob violence, and the party wanted to have a tight grip, of whatever happened, they had to get permission, and they didn't want graffiti. So, that wasn't what was happening even then.

Q WHAT WAS IT THEN?

A Graffiti wasn't. It was the media mainly. The media and, of course, on stores was written, "Don't buy here." "He's Jewish," and things like that; and all of that was very down-played during the Olympics and the preparation for the Olympics.

That the Olympics happened there at all was one of those ghastly errors of international sport, not just sport -- shouldn't have been there at all. It was a recognition.

I also remember that the Prince of Wales and Hitler took a walk together, and the British -- There was a big class of Britishers who were very fond of the Germans because they were against the communists, that was a kind of thing.

They were anti-communist, and that got them into all kinds of circles. And as for that as we have done, Americans have done, in all kinds of Latin American countries as long as they were anti-communist, we were willing to overlook all

kinds of other disasters in the same country.

So that certainly happened there. And that was also why some of the churches and others supported them because they were anti-communist, and that was a very, very big deal. They were not just anti-Jewish. So the fact that they were anti-Jewish was as big as the fact that they were anti-communist or anti-gypsies or anti-eugenics of people who were handicapped, and this kind of stuff. It just didn't weigh as much.

Q NOW, THE EUGENICS MOVEMENT STARTED ACTUALLY MUCH EARLIER THAN THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR. DO YOU RECALL THAT?

A Oh, yes.

Q JUST PASSING OUT THE IDEA OF EUGENICS?

A I know that it was there before. But I also know that the Nazis really picked that up.

Q DO YOU REMEMBER MUCH ABOUT THAT?

A No. It was just as far as I remember, I was a kid, and I wasn't that learned. But it was just one theory, eugenics. People did talk about it all before, but it wasn't a movement. It wasn't anything the government was really getting into.

Q I DON'T BELIEVE THEY DID UNTIL 1940 OR '41, ACTUALLY START?

A To really act on it, but the education started way before that. I remember it in school.

Q THEY TAUGHT IT TO YOU?

A Oh, yes.

Q WHAT WOULD THEY TEACH YOU?

A They would show pictures of people, and I remember the guy that showed it. I don't know if he died it -- He had a gray streak of hair through brown hair, so he said you inherit all these features.

So if you inherit being low class or being sick or homosexual or whatever, you inherit that, and you're a bad person, obviously. So, what we want is to breed. Breeding was a big deal among Nazis, you know, the blonde, blue-eyed.

The funny part is that Hitler didn't look anything like it, of course. It just goes to show how you can get away with this thing, with big lies. As Geralt said, first of all, it has to be a big lie, otherwise nobody will believe it; and secondly, you have to repeat it often enough that everybody will believe it, and that's absolutely true.

I mean Geralt had a club foot; he was a little guy. He looked like nothing of Arian ancestry. It didn't matter. They got away with all of that. It's very funny. I mean, it's ironic rather than funny.

Q SO YOU REMEMBER DISCUSSIONS AND THE TEACHING PICKING UP?

A Oh, yeah. They had these calipers too. They showed you how the head should be and how wide it should be, and where the nose should be and showed you the ideal and then deformities, and that was all in school.

Q NOW, WHEN THEY TAUGHT YOU THIS, DID YOU PICK THIS UP AS SOMETHING THAT WAS REALLY TRUE, OR HOW DID YOU HEAR THIS?

A Yeah. We were, I think, so. I was a kid, and most of the stuff we picked up. I do think so. A lot of it we picked up, uh-huh. Yeah, I must say, to my regret, that when kids go to school and are totally surrounded by it, they're not that discriminating. You do pick that up.

Q WELL, ESPECIALLY IF YOU'RE TAUGHT THE TEACHER IS ALWAYS RIGHT.

A The teacher knew, yes, but also it was all around. The teaching was all around. The newspapers talked about it.

Yeah, we didn't think that was all garbage, which, of course, in hindsight --

Q WHAT DID IT TAKE YOU TO REALIZE THAT IT WASN'T TRUE? AT SOME POINT, DID YOU REALIZE, "OH, IT REALLY CAN'T BE TRUE"?

A I don't think so as long as I was in Germany did I think so. I had to get out of there first to think and look at it from the outside. You are very much in the middle, you pick up a lot of the stuff that you maybe, may regret later, but we did.

I mean, we also did the thing. We had formations. We marched. We did that whole thing, and in a way, it wasn't bad really because it helped us to survive. W e w e r e acknowledged, and we felt good, and we didn't really do anything bad. I mean, there was nothing that wrong about it.

We weren't truly military or any such thing, and

nobody recommended hurting anybody, really. It was more self-defense and more image building and this kind of stuff. But we picked that up.

Q YOU MEAN THE BELIEF ABOUT --

A Well, the uniform. We had our own uniform. They had the brown uniform.

Q NO, I'M TALKING ABOUT EUTHANASIA.

A Oh, no, no. That was something we did not pick up. No, that was getting too far.

Q EVEN THEN?

A No, that never was possible. No, we never believed in that.

Q DID YOU EVER GO HOME AND TELL YOUR PARENTS WHAT THEY WERE TEACHING YOU IN SCHOOL?

A Did I tell my parents what we -- in school? I don't think I actually did that because my parents were aware of that. That was happening all over. I mean, it was common knowledge. We didn't really have to tell.

You know, that generation, the parents' generation, it's hard to imagine right now, really, they weren't that remote from me. We were a very close family, but we were the kind of family that was existing then. And we really discussed very little. I didn't discuss what happened in school. My father looked at my report card, and once in a while, I might have mentioned something that I did well, but that was about it.

The communication wasn't very great at all. There were the parents, and there were the kids; and especially since we had a different life style we embarked on and so forth. Our ideals, usually if you're a boy, it's your father and so forth. It wasn't really true in my case. I loved my father very much, but not as an ideal, as something I should follow. What I should follow was some other personality, and that didn't create really trouble in my family either. They were willing to let me do that. They were very --

Q THAT'S VERY FREE PARENTS.

A I didn't even think they were that free. All kinds of things you couldn't do, but that they let me do, yes.

Q THAT'S WHAT I MEAN. I WOULD THINK THAT MOST PARENTS DISCIPLINED, BUT I THINK IT TAKES AN EXTRAORDINARY SET OF PARENTS TO ALLOW THEIR CHILDREN TO BE DIFFERENT.

A Yes, yes I do agree. It also had to do with the times. I don't know what would have happened at any other time, but the time was chaotic, and nothing worked anymore. The old systems didn't work any more. Even the old family systems didn't quite work any more.

It was highly dangerous. It was very chaotic. Old beliefs were overturned, and my father's belief that nothing will ever happen in Germany, although he wasn't a German, he was also aware of things, but that this wouldn't last, they were all shot to hell. So you couldn't really enforce anything anymore. And we were all on our own in a way to find

our ways.

Q LET ME ASK YOU ABOUT A COUPLE OF OTHER HISTORIC THINGS THAT HAPPENED.

DO YOU REMEMBER THE DAY THAT THE NAZIS PLACED GUARDS IN ALL THE JEWISH STORES AND PREVENTED PEOPLE BASICALLY -- I DON'T KNOW IF IT WAS FORBIDDEN OR ENCOURAGED, MAYBE DEPENDED ON THE PERSONALITY OF THE GUARD, BUT TO NOT BUY IN THAT JEWISH STORE THAT DAY?

A I don't remember guards, but I remember the signs that were -- almost anybody -- that don't buy here and put it on the glass front of the stores.

Again, it was almost like war. It was terrible, but we didn't own a store. I mean, we felt with everybody, but it wasn't as devastating as someone owning a store and all of a sudden having no livelihood, and was totally outside the community with that.

People did obey that. And all the stores were eventually -- had to be closed or whatever because it was totally devastating, and then it kept going -- Don't do this with Jews; don't do that with Jews; don't go to Jewish doctors; don't do whatever.

Well, we usually did have Jewish doctors, anyway, in my family and so forth. But thinking -- I'm trying to almost think the way you would as an American and, again, it's unbelievable to understand that. It was that restricted; and the restrictions came, in Germany; they came slowly, one after

the other, after the other. It wasn't like an invasion that they did in Poland or other places where everything was immediate -- or France or whatever. So we were just -- the school was getting tighter and tighter.

In a way, it was terrible, but we already had a time from 1935 or so on to '40. It got, you know, it was five years, it got worse and worse and worse, so people wanted to get out more and more and more. People who didn't want to get out in the beginning wanted to get out two years later and then couldn't.

Q DO YOU REMEMBER THE HORST WESSEL SONG?

A Oh, yes.

Q DO YOU REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME YOU HEARD IT?

A I don't remember the first time I heard it, but there were all kinds of songs like that. One of them was "When Jewish blood flies over knives."

Q I THINK THAT WAS THE HORST WESSEL SONG.

A I'm not sure that it was. Maybe it was one of the verses. I thought it was a different song as well.

Q THERE PROBABLY WAS MORE THAN ONE.

A. No, there was one Horst Wessel song, don't remember it, but I remember this one. It said, "We feel twice as good." That was a verse I remember. And, hell, yeah, that was scary all right.

Q DIDN'T THE GENERAL POPULATION REACT TO THAT?

A No.

Q THE WORDS OF THAT SONG?

A No.

Q NOT AT ALL?

A No.

Q THE JEWISH POPULATION MUST HAVE, DIDN'T THEY?

A Sure. It was just one other thing that --

Q LIKE ONE MORE THING?

A One more thing is what it was.

Q THE GERMAN POPULATION -- THEY JUST DIDN'T SEEM TO REACT AT ALL?

A No. No. No, they didn't.

Q DID YOU EVER HEAR ANYBODY TALK ABOUT WHY THEY WOULDN'T HAVE REACTED?

A No.

Q WHEN PEOPLE SAY THAT THEY DIDN'T KNOW AND THEY HAD NO IDEA WHAT HITLER WAS GOING TO DO AND STUFF, THAT SONG SPELLED IT OUT.

A It did. I guess the first time that came up, I guess we didn't take it too seriously. I mean, we took it seriously, but not real seriously that this was going to become a policy or anything like that. The Nazis did this kind of stuff, and it was one of the songs they sang marching, but we didn't think that was going to be really an action-oriented kind of song.

Why? I don't know. You live with images. You live with beliefs, you know, it can't happen. This is Germany

where a lot of culture, a lot of history of culture and it just can't happen. This is just one group that does these crazy things, and when it started, and they're not going to go win.

I remember, my father and I -- I think I said it on the first tape even -- we walked around before elections and counted flags because people would hang flags out of windows -- the Social Democratic sign, which was two arrows, or the Nazi or the communist -- and we would sort of look around and we said they're not going to win.

Q WERE YOU --

A But the Horst Wessel song was already there.

Q WERE YOU, WHEN YOU SAID THAT THE NAZIS COULDN'T WIN, WERE YOU AWARE OF--WERE THEY (INAUDIBLE)

A You asked me that once before, and I frankly, don't know.

Q SORRY. I CAN'T REMEMBER.

A No. I understand because I don't know what I said at the time was that if they were smart, I guess many of them would have thought anyway if they're smart, they wouldn't participate because there was no law to vote.

And I really don't know -- well, my father wouldn't have voted anyhow because I'm pretty sure it was strictly for German citizens. I'm guessing this, but I would imagine knowing the situation, the German psyche, that even though you're a resident, like here -- When you vote here, do you

vote if you're not an American citizen?

Q NO.

A So, we were not a German citizen, so we probably couldn't vote anyway.

Q ONE OF THE THINGS I HEARD MOST FREQUENTLY IS THE STATISTIC ABOUT 99, A VERY HIGH PERCENTAGE OF GERMANS ELECTED HITLER, PLEBISCITE.

A Right.

Q BUT I NEVER HEARD IT EXCEPT ONCE IN A WHILE; FOR INSTANCE, I READ A BOOK, THE MOSES OF ROGNO, WHO WAS ABOUT A RESCUER.

A Uh-huh.

Q WHO WAS A GERMAN ENGINEER.

A Yes.

Q AND HE TELLS ABOUT THIS ELECTION AND WHEN HE WENT IN TO VOTE, THERE WAS A NAZI -- I MEAN YOU HAD A CLOSED BOOTH THAT YOU COULD GO.

A Right, right.

Q AND VOTE ANONYMOUSLY.

A Right.

Q -- BUT THIS WAS ALSO WHERE EVERYBODY ELSE WAS VOTING, WHICH WAS AN OPEN BOOTH WHERE THERE WAS A NAZI SOLDIER SITTING THERE WATCHING WHILE EVERYBODY VOTED, SO ONE PERSON IN TOWN IS BRAVE ENOUGH TO GO INTO THE BOOTH, AND THERE WAS ONE VOTE CAST AGAINST HITLER, AND THERE WAS REPRISALS TAKEN AGAINST HIM.

A Sounds very, very convincing to me, sure.

Q SO I GUESS WHAT I'M CURIOUS ABOUT, DO YOU THINK --
I MEAN BECAUSE I'M ALWAYS HEARING ABOUT THIS PLEBISCITE LIKE
IT WAS A FREE ELECTION, AND TO ME, IT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE IT
WAS VERY FREE AT ALL.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THAT? DO YOU THINK THERE'S
VERY MUCH AWARENESS OF THAT IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY?

A In the Jewish community, that this wasn't a real
plebiscite? A lot of times it's talked about.

Q SEE, YOU CAN TELL THE GERMANS ARE FOR HITLER BECAUSE
THEY ALL VOTED FOR HIM. BUT TO ME, IT SEEMS LIKE A FALSE
GAUGE.

A Well, I don't know; this would all be guess-work.
I said at the time that the Jews, if they had any brains, they
wouldn't vote anyway if they could because who wants to vote
for Hitler or vote against Hitler and get into danger?

I know there was a very fertile ground for Hitler
for dictator that would give order to Germany because it was
getting to be too chaotic. I guess it happens in other
countries; and at that time, of course, you didn't -- yes, you
did know. You did know what he was standing -- he had written
Mein Kampf. He had spelled out what he wanted, and you did
know all of that.

But the Germans, I think, in general discarded that
in order to have improvement in the German condition at that
time. And when they voted for Hitler, democracy wasn't very

old in Germany at all.

There was some even under the Kaiser, of course, but there was already before that even, during the Weimar Republic was a huge right wing element that nothing to do with democracy. They weren't going to vote for it or fight for it, so the Germans were used to and liked having a fuhrer to tell them how and what to do, and the only thing that mattered was their life was going to be better materially. That they got into a war, they didn't know at the time.

Q BUT DO YOU THINK TODAY THAT PEOPLE WERE AWARE THAT WASN'T A FREE PLEBISCITE?

A I have no idea.

Q OR AT LEAST FROM INDICATIONS.

A I think what everybody hears, is that a majority in any case would have voted for Hitler. It didn't matter what percentage, but they would have voted for -- I think so.

Q AND WHAT YOU'RE JUST SAYING MAKES SENSE. I'VE HEARD PEOPLE IN AMERICA BE WILLING TO GIVE UP OUR BASIC BILL OF RIGHTS.

A Yes, it happens everywhere.

Q BECAUSE OF THE CRIME AND STUFF. ACTUALLY, WHAT I USUALLY HEAR IS PEOPLE SAYING THAT THEY'RE WILLING TO GET RID OF THE BILL OF RIGHTS SO LONG AS EVERYBODY IS FORCED TO BELIEVE LIKE THEY DO.

A Well, yes, and the dilemma is that during chaotic times all these rights are difficult and dangerous sometimes.

overlook the democratic option, inside and outside, sure.

Q WELL, LET ME GO BACK AND ASK YOU -- IT SEEMED LIKE YOUR SISTERS GOT OUT FIRST IN '36 BECAUSE THEY GOT MARRIED?

A Yes.

Q AND THEN BY THE TIME YOU GOT OUT, YOUR PARENTS WERE REALLY AWARE THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO GET OUT. HOW COME YOUR PARENTS COULDN'T GET OUT AT THE SAME TIME?

A Well, my brothers-in-law -- my sisters were married or getting married -- left Germany early because trouble was -- a good friend of mine left in '33 before the election. He was in the government, and they went skiing and never came back to Czechoslovakia, so there were a lot of people who knew it was time to get out.

Both my brothers-in-law -- their families stayed. Also, the fathers stayed, but they wanted to get out very early and they got jobs, one in Belgium, one in Spain. And a lot of people were able to do that. It took a long time to get permission to get into England, for instance.

We left in '39, but I don't know when my mother and father actually applied. It took for ages and applied for a German visa to get out and all these things. I didn't do any of that. My parents did. It could have taken years.

Q SO THEY REALLY DIDN'T TALK TO YOU, JUST WHEN A VISA FINALLY CAME, THEY SAID WE HAVE A VISA FOR YOU?

A Right.

Q BUT THEY DIDN'T LET YOU KNOW AHEAD OF TIME?

A No, they actually didn't. Because I had plans to go to Palestine. When my mother came and said we have to get out, you've got a visa, it was a surprise.

My mother was an incredible person. She was unreal. She did all these things. I mean, it was her family, and we were close to the family in London. But I didn't manage it, she did. But of course I was pretty young; I was a kid. I was 17 or so. What did I know? Nothing.

Q I HAVE ONE MORE QUESTION ABOUT GERMANY AND WE'LL GO TO ENGLAND.

WHEN YOU WENT TO NURNBERG THAT TIME, YOU DIDN'T DESCRIBE IT IN TOO MUCH DETAIL, BUT IT WAS HITLER'S BIRTHDAY. COULD YOU GIVE US A DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF WHAT WAS GOING ON? AND DID ANYBODY SEEM TO NOTICE YOU IN YOUR UNIFORM, OR DID THEY JUST IGNORE YOU AGAIN?

A I think at that time -- I'm trying to think, -- I think I was 15 or 16, so it was 1935, '36 probably, something like that. People assumed that there was nothing else around. They didn't know there was a Jewish movement. They didn't expect it.

Nurnberg was one of the birthplaces of the Nazis.

Q WAS THERE SORT OF LIKE ROMAN CATHOLICS?

A Close to it. There was Munich and Nurnberg, and Nurnberg, they had the annual big pageant, rally, and all of that was famous.

My God, it was Hitler's birthday, and they saw me,

but they wouldn't have believed that the Jew in uniform -- It was unbelievable! And I didn't look particularly Jewish -- they couldn't tell, and I don't think it occurred to anybody.

There was this kid walking along, 15, 16; nobody paid attention, and he walked, not on the sidewalk. They probably thought there's this kid who likes to march or whatever. Nobody paid attention to me. They wouldn't have believed it.

The Jews didn't believe it that I finally called and asked where I could stay. They, you know, I came from nowhere. They didn't know I existed or this group existed -- didn't know much about it. I had to explain it all later at evening meal to the whole surrounding.

So it was pretty wild. It was a wild trip, and the guy that picked me up on the motorcycle probably didn't know who I was because you can't converse. In a car, you talk -- Who are you, where are you going, things like that. But I was sitting on the back of a motorcycle. He just picked me up. He didn't know who I was, I'm sure. One of those things.

Q BUT, DO YOU REMEMBER MUCH ABOUT HOW THEY WERE CELEBRATING?

A They had pictures. They had paintings of Hitler you wouldn't believe. They were a story high. They were enormous, and there was a guard left and right with flags -- I don't know whether they had flags, but there was a guard, and it was constant down that street.

I guess we went down the main street into Nurnberg, and that was mainly the thing. I didn't see anything because I wouldn't have gone to it anyway, the rallies or beer hall celebrations or demonstrations. I just came in Main Street, with the paintings, I remember, and the guards, I remember, and people walking up and down and saying "Heil, Hitler" every time they passed a painting. It was like the old time or (inaudible), you had to salute. It was pretty wild.

Even at that time, I thought it was ridiculous. That I do remember. I mean, there I split from the general surrounding.

Q WELL, EXCEPT FOR THE RESIDENTS OF THE TOWN WHO MAY OR MAY NOT, BEEN THIS WAY, IN THE INFLUX OF PEOPLE AT THAT TIME WERE REALLY RABID, TOTALLY COMMITTED, SPIRITUAL NAZIS.

A Yes. Again, I didn't see them on the street. I didn't see groups of storm troopers marching up and down. It may have just been because it was a short time driving in, walking along, and meeting all of these people and all of that. It wasn't a big time span, and they may have even done it before or after. I don't know what happened, otherwise. But they were just people of the town walking up and down, saluting and so forth.

There was no other celebration that I saw. I'm sure there was, but I wasn't part of it. So I can't say much more than that, but that I remember like today.

Q OKAY, THANKS.

SO, WHEN YOU WERE IN LONDON DURING THE BLITZ?

A Yes.

Q WHEN YOUR PARENTS CAME OVER, AND THEY PROBABLY HAD
A STATELESS PASSPORT TOO?

A Yes.

Q WHAT NATIONALITY WERE THEY GIVEN?

A That's a very good question. You know, I don't know. I actually do not know. They weren't interned either, you know, I never thought about that. That's amazing. I actually don't know. I know they weren't, but it's possible that they might have been considered German because I didn't hear my father say anything like my story of being Russian.

But they already weren't that young, and it's possible -- and I don't remember that quite because I only knew young people, and older people like my parents were probably not deported. I remember people of military age basically, and so forth, but those are the people I knew, so I really don't know. I know other people in England who were not interned, so it may be there was a cutoff date at an age regardless. I think -- I can't swear to it, but I don't know why I never questioned that, but I didn't.

Good question.

Q WHEN I WAS LISTENING TO YOU TALK ABOUT YOUR
EXPERIENCES IN THE BLITZ LAST TIME, I KEPT GETTING THE FEELING
THAT YOU DIDN'T LIVE WITH YOUR PARENTS.

A I did for a while, yes. When you may remember that

I said my father didn't want to go to a shelter either. I lived, not with my parents -- We both had an apartment. I had a room in the same building. I was living below, they were living above, or the other way around, for a long time. Most of the blitz, yes, we were living together in the same building, and when there was a blitz, we either went together down or we didn't. But we were in different apartments. We didn't live in the same one.

Q WHAT DID YOUR PARENTS DO DURING THE WAR?

A My father was working for a company, for -- What's that famous -- Burberry? Now they're making raincoats. They were doing uniforms, and my father was a presser. Now, he wasn't a young man, but he pressed uniforms all day. He came early, he left late, and it was a great time for the family actually. My mother loved it because my father came home with money.

They went out to have a beer sometimes and apart, of course, from the war and all this destruction -- this is how crazy it can get -- they were happy. I mean, not happy, but they got along very well and they were, sort of had some self-esteem. You know, my father, as long as he didn't have a job in Germany was devastated. You don't think you're any good, but in England, he felt he was doing a job, and he was doing a job for the military, and he felt good about it. So, it was very good in that aspect of it.

He was working, and he had to go early, and he was

the first one there. He had coffee with the cleaning woman every morning. He was that kind of a man. He was a lovely man.

Q WAS IT EASY TO GET FOOD IN LONDON DURING THE WAR?

A It was easy to get food apart from the things you couldn't get. You got one egg a month or no butter or chocolate was out. Things like that were hard to get or sometimes not at all, and there was rationing of food, but nobody was starving. We all had enough to eat and the variety was poor.

We ate a lot of Spam. God, the Americans sent Spam. I remember a lot of Spam and there was a thing everybody was proud, every woman was proud to have variations of Spam for dinner. The selection was very limited, and everyone had his own recipes on how to do it so everybody could eat it day after day, that kind of thing, so I haven't eaten Spam after that.

And that was also why, when we went to Switzerland, when I got to Switzerland just before coming to America, everybody else was eating like crazy. I mean, I understood that they were all starving for chocolate and eggs and butter and things like that, but some of it I am repeating I think, but I got some eggs from a farmer, and I was with a friend and I was bringing eggs back. I had about four, and I ate my two raw on the way. I was running, and just swallowed them because they were eggs! It was fantastic! I couldn't wait!

Q IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU REMEMBER ABOUT FOOD AND HOW HARD IT WAS TO GET OR WHATEVER YOU DID WHEN YOU GOT SOMETHING SPECIAL?

A Well, we had coupons for rationing. For rationing, you had coupons, and my mother was incredibly inventive, so she knew how to -- she wasn't a gourmet cook I don't think, but she knew how to manage things already in Germany, she did, when times were tough. She could just manage to do things, so we were never hungry.

Q WAS THERE A BLACK MARKET IN ENGLAND?

A Oh, there was. There was some, but I don't think it was anything really big -- I wasn't really that close to it to know. But one of the currencies were nylons, for instance. Nylons were a big currency. I could do all kinds of things if I only had nylons.

When people knew my sister was in Hollywood, they would come to me, women, and say get me nylons and you can get what you want. But I was such a good kid, I would never -- it wasn't on my agenda anyway, but I never got nylons from my sister anyhow.

Q DID YOUR SISTER SEND PACKAGES OVER?

A I remember one of the women where I worked said you can put them on yourself.

Q DID YOUR SISTER SEND PACKAGES FROM AMERICA?

A No, no, I don't think they got through. I don't know whether they ever tried to actually, but there were

convoys and things. I don't think packages were something that they would take.

Q WAS IT HARD TO GET NEW CLOTHING IF, SAY FOR INSTANCE, WHEN PEOPLE'S HOUSING WAS BOMBED AND THEY HAD NOTHING LEFT?

A I don't think so. There was Marks and Spencer always and there were always stores. I don't know how that really worked. I never bought much new clothes anyhow. Neither did my parents, so I don't know whether it was a real problem, but I do think that people who got bombed out got clothing. I don't think it was a national or London big problem. I think it was still there and everybody made do.

It wasn't a time when you went out and bought new Easter clothes or anything like that. I don't think you did. It wasn't that kind of thing, and I think everyone was aware of the tremendous losses of the Merchant Fleet, so you really didn't feel entitled to put that much pressure on imports and things.

Of course some things were gone in England, lots of things were gone in England.

Q DID YOU EVER HEAR VERY MUCH AGAINST THE WAR IN ENGLAND? WHAT WAS THE GENERAL ATTITUDE OF THE BRITISHERS DURING THE WAR?

A Well, there were two things. One, in the beginning of the war, I think there was an Oxford group that was against the war, but they were minor, small, although they were the

intellectuals, group of intellectuals. In general, there was no opposition to the war mainly because we didn't have much choice. Hitler was going to conquer England, so there was no choice, really, about this war.

The only thing I remember is at the end when people got weary and when the V-1's, the missiles came that people were weary of the war and ready to give up in a way or to give in or they were kind of losing their courage.

But then America came into the war. When the United States came into the war, that made it then everybody believed we would win, but until that time, and even later sometime -- V-1's actually were later -- The United States was already in the war I believe.

London was really getting depressed a little bit. That was the only time people had enough of the war and weren't quite sure how to get out of it, what to do about it. But there was really never a choice basically. You were being attacked. It wasn't that they were out to conquer something, the British, so there wasn't too much discussion or opposition. Couldn't really do it.

Q WHAT HAPPENED WHEN ALL THE FOREIGN SOLDIERS LIKE THE CANADIANS, THE AUSTRALIANS, AND THE AMERICAN SOLDIERS STARTED FLOODING INTO THE COUNTRY? HOW DID THAT CHANGE HOW THINGS WERE?

A Well, I think the main thing I remember was that the women of London were very attracted by foreign soldiers

partially because sometimes they had more money than the British. The British were paid very poorly.

Sometimes they were very dashing like the Polish airmen. The Poles had a field day. There was a whole group of Poles, there was a group of Spanish Civil War veterans who were extremely attractive to women and who were singing the old Spanish Civil War songs which, you know the songs, the communists and the civil war people had the songs -- the left always had the songs.

They were wonderful, musically great, and they used to play the guitars, and I used to visit some of those clubs of people I knew, and they were nothing like the staid British. They were very attractive.

When the Americans came, they really had money, far more money than anybody else, so there was some resentment about that especially since the Americans were very loose. They didn't have that much discipline. They would sort of lean against lampposts and look around, the G. I.'s, and look pretty sloppy and so there was a resentment among various people about this sloppy American contingent and that they had so much money. But on the other hand, they had to be appreciated that they were there fighting, so this resentment wasn't very deep or very great. There was some.

And the Canadians, the Canadians were wild, and the Australians and New Zealanders were too, but I remember the Canadians usually drank more than anybody. They were

reckless. They were wild. It was also pretty attractive in those days. Canadians were really wild.

It was quite a melange, quite a mixture there during the war. And the airmen, of course, you knew they were always in terrible danger and that was very attractive to a female gender. And they looked great in their uniforms, not only the foreign, the British too were very dashing, the airmen were.

I remember going out with a couple. I had a girlfriend and an airman and his girlfriend and we painted the town. We had a bottle of rum and everywhere we had a sip of rum, and I remember climbing a lamppost and we had great times. And it was a pretty wild night. That was part of it.

Q ONE OF THE THINGS YOU SAID LAST TIME WAS THAT THE NAZIS SPREAD A LOT OF RUMORS ABOUT THE CATHOLICS, THE PRIESTS BEING HOMOSEXUAL.

A Yes.

Q WHAT KIND OF RUMORS DID THE NAZIS SPREAD ABOUT OTHER DENOMINATIONS?

A About other denominations? I don't remember too much of that, that they did. I think they were really after the celibacy of priests and so forth and made it look very suspicious and the implication was that homosexuality was rampant within the priesthood since that wasn't true of Protestantism. I don't remember now.

There were some Protestants like Niehmueller, a famous pastor, Niehmueller, that spoke out against the Nazis

and was interned.

There were some great people, heroes in the churches that spoke out. I don't remember, but I'm sure there were some among the Catholics too, but I mainly remember the Protestant pastor Niehmueller who was a hero.

Q THERE WERE TWO THAT WERE VERY FAMOUS. ONE WAS NIEHMUELLER.

A I'm sure there were others, but I just can't remember right now.

Q WHY DO YOU THINK THEY PICKED PARTICULARLY ON THE CATHOLICS? THE CELIBACY, OF COURSE, BUT HOW MUCH COULD THEY HAVE CARED ABOUT THAT? IT HAD TO BE SOMETHING DEEPER.

A Probably. One can just speculate. I guess that they wanted all the power. The Protestant ministry didn't have all that power over the souls of their flock, but the Catholics did, and if a Catholic bishop, for instance, would speak out against the Nazis, which was possible, then this will be danger, so I think they wanted to cast a lot of aspersions against the Catholic church because the Catholic church had more power then they liked, the Nazis. They wanted all the power and although there was not really -- that I remember at least -- a great deal of opposition by the church; in fact, they were also enamored in the beginning by the anti-communist stand of the Nazis.

This was also one of their things, to be anti-communist and anti-Atheist and all of those things and anti-

religious, I think they just didn't want it to come up, the power of the Catholic church. They wanted to make sure that whatever the Catholics said, bishops, whatever, the hierarchy, was not going to be treated as anything to follow. They didn't know what was going to come up, and so they wanted to denigrate.

Q IT WAS SORT OF LIKE A PREVENTATIVE MEASURE I THINK.

A Yes, mainly that's what it was. There again, I'm speculating, but it makes sense to me that that's what it was.

Q THERE WERE ABOUT THREE THOUSAND GERMAN PRIESTS THAT WERE PUT IN CAMPS.

A Yes, and you know, they had a lot of power even the priests over the people who came for confession and so forth and I have a feeling that the Nazis never liked that. They never liked to share power, whatever power with anybody and that's why I guess they were easy on the Protestants because they didn't really have that kind of relationship with the congregations. Catholics did. I don't know how effective they would have been anyway, but there was always -- preventive sounds good to me.

Q I THINK IT WOULD HAVE BEEN VERY EFFECTIVE IF ROME HAD SPOKEN OUT.

A Indeed, and I guess they also might have been afraid of that. And they wanted to prevent that, even if the Pope had spoken out forcefully against it, that the Priests and the Catholic church in Germany would have been not followed. I

mean, would have been either frightened or people would think, well, what do these homosexuals know? But to cast aspersions on it I think that altogether, you are absolutely right because the Pope still had a lot of power, didn't use it, but he had it.

Q AND IN FACT ONE OF THE BOOKS THAT I READ THAT WAS TALKING MORE ABOUT THE ADMINISTRATION -- THE WAY THE NAZIS WENT ABOUT IT WAS THAT THEY CULTIVATED FRIENDSHIP WITH ROME.

A Yes, they did.

Q AND, IN FACT, I MEAN THE GOOD AND THE BAD -- I MEAN THE OTHER SIDE WHICH WAS NOT GOOD -- BECAUSE I PERSONALLY THINK THEY SHOULD HAVE SPOKEN OUT. BUT I'M SURE IN ITALY, THE CHURCH WAS ABLE TO SAVE THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE THEY WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SAVE IF THEY HAD SPOKEN OUT. MAYBE THE ITALIAN JEWISH PEOPLE WOULDN'T FEEL THIS WAY, BUT I DON'T PERSONALLY FEEL -- I PERSONALLY FEEL THEY SHOULD HAVE SPOKEN OUT.

A I don't think it would have made that much difference in Italy that the church would have saved Jews or that it would have been possible even if they had spoken out because the Jews in Italy were getting along rather well. There was not a huge anti-Semitism in Italy at that time, even under Mussolini.

Q BUT THOUSANDS WERE SAVED.

A I mean they might have been saved anyway because Italian people were willing to save their friends generally, and it was nothing like Germany where you would have been

killed if you did, if you did save a Jew. That wasn't true in Italy, from what I know. There were a lot of intermingling between friends. Jews were very prominent in Italy as Jews which they weren't so much in Germany where they wanted to be more German.

I don't think that prevented the Pope from speaking out that he was worried about that part that maybe Jews couldn't be saved in Italy.

Q I THINK THE NAZIS WERE TRYING TO BE CAREFUL IN A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHURCH AND MAYBE DIDN'T INVESTIGATE.

A Well, they had one thing in common. They were both very anti-communist and anti-Atheist and anti anti-religious people, so they did have that in common.

Q THE NAZIS WERE ANTI ANTI-RELIGIOUS?

A Well, they didn't want religion really, not really, no. No, they didn't -- their own religion maybe -- the Nazi religion, but not the Protestant, not the Catholic. They didn't want any of that really, but they all agreed -- the Catholic church and the Nazis agreed that it was very important to be anti-communist. The movements were very strong all over in Europe, and the church fought them.

Q THE CHURCH WAS TERRORIZED BY COMMUNISM?

A Yes, absolutely.

Q WHAT ABOUT YOUR FRIEND WHO WAS KILLED CROSSING THE RHINE IN THE COMMANDO GROUP? YOU SAID THERE WERE LOTS OF STORIES ABOUT HIM.

WOULD YOU WANT TO GIVE A COUPLE?

A Did I say that? I don't remember saying that. He was, at times, my best friend. His name was {Herbert Zacks}. What can I say about him?

He went to a special school when he grew up. I don't know whether it was Montessori or some such school where physical excellence was very important. He was very, very good. He knew how to ski and --

Q SO YOU DIDN'T REMEMBER WHAT YOU WERE THINKING OF WHEN YOU SAID THAT?

A No. I don't think there were many stories about him.

Q THIS LAST THING KIND OF GETS INTO THE LAST QUESTION THAT I HAVE.

A I can see it's heavy.

Q THE LAST TIME WE TALKED A LOT OF GOD.

A I knew it. What do you think about God? Yes.

Q AFTER YOU SAID THAT YOU WENT TO -- WHERE DID YOU GO WHEN YOU SAID YOU GOT SOME ANSWERS?

A The University of Judaism in Los Angeles.

Q WHAT ANSWERS DID YOU GET THAT HELPED WHEN YOU WERE THERE?

A (Laughing) You want another tape?

No, I really can't do too much because I'm still digesting a lot. But one of my things was that the prayer is out of date, and that religion is not static, and that when

you say it may have been needed in archaic times in order to make the laws -- the Jewish laws powerful -- you had to say, if you're good, the rains will fall. Well, that isn't so. Or if you obey the laws, this and that will happen; or if you don't, you'll be punished, and all of that is in all the prayers, I think, in most religions, Christianity too, of course, and that's really a fallacy, and that's what I said.

And the Rabbi that did the -- the title of the program was "Evil in God's World," and there were two things. Now, he is also from a special group within Judaism which is a reconstructionist, which is conservative with a difference, and in Judaism you could always argue with God. When you read the old Rabbinic stories, there are people who argue with God. God, why did you do this, why did you do this, and so forth. This was accepted.

So what he said -- which I thought I was way out in left field -- and said was nature -- Maimonides, a great Jewish philosopher, fabulous -- in the Middle Ages -- Maimonides in Egypt. He was also a physician. He was physician to the Caliph of Egypt, and he wrote all kinds of books, and I read some of it, and it's fabulous.

He said nature just doing its thing. For instance, earthquakes are not evil. Whatever is natural is not evil. That just is nature doing its thing, and you can't say that is evil. Evil is what men do to men; that can be evil. But the other thing is not. You have to accept nature. Even

diseases, shortcomings, handicaps are part of God, divinity. Divine power created the world and men as well -- and created it with all kinds of possibilities, and the only way that God is really present in this world is through this, through man, and the way that nature works, but nature just goes along, and they are not God's thing.

One of the things that he really wanted to stress that God is not behind evil things. That's not what it is. Man is, but God isn't, and therefore, it's true that if you pray and say, "Let there be rain," there either will be rain or not be rain, but that's nature doing its thing, and there's really no influence of that kind, he believes, and I believe too.

So, most of those things are just not true. However, what is, when you read through the Jewish laws, not through the rituals so much or through some of the customs, but through the basic laws.

Q YOU MEAN THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS?

A Well, there's a lot even in the first Five Books. For instance, he gave an example. He said in the first Five Books, in the Torah, if a son is disobedient to a father, a father can kill him. Pretty rough, right? Well, the Rabbis took it out. They said we don't want any of that, but that was whenever, in those rough times.

And I don't know if it ever was done because that's a story of Abraham who couldn't do it, right? So there are a

lot of things like that have to be changed, and it's okay to change them so orthodox, meaning going back and taking every word is not the way of the Jewish religion and maybe not of other religions; shouldn't be anyway.

So the way that the perfection of what is created, God is the creator, he was the power create as well. That's how God manifests itself, and that I can buy, not much else; meaning, you have to do your life the way you want to do it, and be good about it, and if you follow the law, your life, you will do the good things.

And you can't always count on there being a retribution, meaning you will have everything wonderful for you just because you are doing it right. That may not be part of it. But the power of saying God wants you to do that, makes you do it, whatever. It puts power behind behavior, behind law, so in that way, God is present in a way. But I mean God made you so perfect that you can do all these things. You have all these choices. You have all these options most of the time.

Sometimes you don't, like the children that were murdered in the Holocaust. They didn't have a choice. They hadn't grown up yet, and that just happened, and it shows that really beyond having perfected us and perfected nature to its degree it is, there isn't too much you fall back on, and I remember; and I take that.

But to some people and even to me a little bit who

proclaimed this kind of philosophy and wanted to battle with the Rabbis about it -- there was a woman next to me who happens to be a professor of English literature and she was devastated by this concept, and I feel kind of sad about it too even though I think it's basically agreeable.

Q HOW WAS SHE DEVASTATED?

A We didn't have long discussion on that, but I imagine that she felt she wanted -- I mean I can't go into everything right now, the power or prayer and so forth. But she felt, what I got out of it, that there was this divine power going to influence her life being integrated into her life directly like, you know, God will help; and that hope may not be there.

That you are who you are and the world is as it is and you do what you can and follow the law, whatever, like the Christians basically did in times of Nazis when they saved Jews. They did what they were supposed to do basically, and they didn't expect anything in return. It was very dangerous.

Now, if everybody would act that way, the world would be wonderful. We have the possibility. That's it. That's where it ends, however. When I look at my life and how charmed I was all the time, I still don't know why and I don't credit the power of God. I can't do that because it's blasphemy in a way because there are all these other people that didn't make it. I can't say that I deserved it and they didn't. That just can't be done. It would be unreal. I

don't know why I was charmed. I don't know. If there was a reason, I don't know it.

Q WELL, NOW, YOU'RE SENDING YOUR SON TO A JEWISH SCHOOL. HE'LL LEARN RELIGION IN THIS SCHOOL?

A Yes. Well partly, yes. Right.

Q WOULD IT BOTHER YOU IF HE PICKED UP THE KIND OF RELIGION WHERE GOD WAS VERY PERSONAL AND VERY INVOLVED?

A Not really because I think for a child it would be too hard to do otherwise, and I think when he grows up and I won't be there, unfortunately, but when he grows up and comes to a -- I don't think it does any harm in some ways. I don't think it does any terrible harm to believe that God intervenes personally in a sense. I'm sure people are happier when they can do that and calmer and whatever. So I don't think it's great harm if I let him think it through when he grows up.

And he will have this tape maybe. Hopefully he won't get it until he's grown up, not this part, because I don't really want to disillusion him. It's disillusionment in a way. It's not that easy to take; however, there it is.

Q WELL, ONE THING YOU SAID GAVE RISE TO ANOTHER LAST QUESTION HERE. I HEAR THIS VERY FREQUENTLY THAT, HOW TERRIBLE IT WAS TO KILL THE JEWISH CHILDREN AND THE JEWISH ELDERLY AND SOMETIMES -- AND I'M NOT SURE IF PEOPLE REALLY MEAN IT TO SOUND THIS WAY, BUT IT'S ALMOST LIKE, WELL, WE ADULTS WEREN'T THAT IMPORTANT.

A I agree there. It is just more horrible to imagine

and it's more horrible to think of God's role -- because there's always the possibility, and it suggests that at times that the people who were grown up made choices that were wrong in their lives, you know, the Jews didn't follow the laws. Some Orthodox Jews will say that, and they are punished.

This kind of thing is always in the back of people's minds, but children had no choice at all. It's so clear-cut a case. That is why I think it's being mentioned more than the other. It is just as terrible. I do totally agree with you, but mentally it's more profound that children were murdered in a most brutal way.

Q YOU THINK SO?

A I think so.

Q BECAUSE HISTORICALLY, AND I'M NOT SAYING THAT IT'S NOT TERRIBLE, BUT HISTORICALLY, CHILDREN HAVE FREQUENTLY -- LIKE THE ROMANS, THEY USED TO PUT BABIES OUT TO DIE AND EVEN IN OUR OWN DAY I KNOW, THERE IS A BIG DIFFERENCE IN ATTITUDES ABOUT ABORTION, BUT WE'RE JUST KILLING ALL THESE PREBORN BABIES.

A Well, I don't think I want to get into the abortion debate.

Q IT'S JUST INTERESTING TO THINK THAT -- BECAUSE ON THE ONE HAND, ALL THESE OTHER CHILDREN WERE KILLED AND ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE WAS THIS DISREGARD OF CHILDREN.

A That's another issue. The issue only is that children were being killed by government decree, and we all

know that children neither had a choice nor could have done that much wrong to be punished for it.

I just thought about it sometimes in my nightmares; there are these children and I have watched and there is one kid that goes forward and gets thrown into a fire. They were thrown into a burning fire because they didn't gas too well in the gas chamber, so they were burned alive, and there's the next kid in line, and he looks at the fire, and he sees that kid burning.

When you want to understand the Holocaust, I think you have to do more than look at numbers. The words have lost meaning a lot, but think of it -- your kid or somebody's you know stands there and knows he's going to burn. There is a different dimension to that I think.

Q THAN FOR AN ADULT?

A Well, it's terrible for an adult, of course. Adults were being shot, sure. It's all awful, but it sort of grabs me more -- bad as it all is -- I don't know whether I can make distinctions like that really, but I can't help feeling how adults can die with dignity and with resignation and whatever. But kids can't do that. It's different.

Q DO YOU THINK THAT THIS EMPHASIS ON CHILDREN AND ON ELDERLY -- WE HAVEN'T TALKED ABOUT THAT, BUT THERE IS ALSO THAT, BUT YOU THINK IT'S NOT SO MUCH A MATTER OF SAYING THEY'RE MORE IMPORTANT, BUT A MATTER OF --

A Not that they're more important, but it's just that

what I was saying, that they're totally -- everybody was helpless, but there were riots. There were Warsaw ghetto uprising. There were people who escaped, adults. There were no children who escaped. There were no elderly who escaped. They were more helpless than anybody.

I have an aunt of mine -- I found out when I went to Berlin -- she died in the cattle car and never made it, not that it makes any difference really, but they were already, they were more helpless than anybody, than the adults who sometimes got out, sometimes survived, sometimes. I don't remember any old people surviving.

There were some kids that survived, yes, mostly those that were strong and could be used to do work and stuff like that. Those are the ones I dealt with in England. By that time they were 12 when they were liberated, something like that. But you know that Mengele, the Nazi doctor who did the choosing of who lives, who dies, put a board up as part of the history, put a board, and the kids who went under and didn't touch the board were immediately sent to die and the others were used to work and the kids apparently knew it. At least when I looked at the Holocaust museum in Los Angeles where I did a trip when I was there, they were going on tippytoes to be taller and maybe not fit under that board because apparently by that time knew they were going to die.

You know, one has to go into details even though I wasn't there, and even though I can't experience it, I can

visualize some of it by just thinking myself in that situation.

Q WELL, JOHN WANTS ME TO ALSO ASK A QUESTION ABOUT LIBERATION. BASICALLY, YOU WEREN'T IN A CAMP AND YOU GOT OUT EARLY ENOUGH SO THAT LIBERATION ISN'T THE ONE, BUT IN TERMS OF EMOTIONAL LIBERATION YOU WANTED TO TALK A LITTLE ABOUT THAT BECAUSE I MEAN --

A It's fabulous.

Q IT'S FABULOUS? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

A It's fabulous to be free, to be out of Germany. I don't know what else I can say. But I think I felt it more the first night I woke up to the international in France than anytime after that, but it was that first moment of being out. That was overwhelming. That was something incredible.

Q AND WHAT ABOUT IN TERMS OF EMOTIONAL LIBERATION, YOU KNOW, OVER THE YEARS ALL THIS STUFF THAT WAS INSIDE WHEN YOU STARTED TO TALK ABOUT FIVE YEARS AGO OR SO IT STARTED COMING UP, THE DEPRESSION AND WHATEVER. DO YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT THAT LIBERATION A LITTLE? ARE YOU STILL IN THE MIDST OF IT?

A I don't know whether this liberates me in any way talking, here. It's good. It's interesting. I have talked some of it to my wife and my children already before that anyway. I don't feel liberated in a way by talking about it. I'm sure some people do again. I don't. I feel sad. I mostly feel terrible about the people that didn't get liberated and somewhat that's more of an emotion than any

other that I'm liberated. I think it's more of the emotion of all the people I know and all the people I don't know that didn't make it. It's a very saddening experience I think to talk about it more than any other emotion.

Q WOULD YOU TERM THAT MAYBE PART AS SURVIVOR GUILT?

A You can put a name to it, whatever. I don't feel guilty having gotten out. I do not. But like I described, the kid, I feel what everybody else, similarly, I have seen some films, German films of people rushing, being dumped by a truck into a ditch and then being shot at with machine guns. You know, I feel with all of that. That's it. That's it.

I mean I'm perfectly happy and I don't think I feel any guilt of having escaped, but when I, in thinking of those times somehow I don't think of my liberation so much as I think of all the people that I left.

Q SO YOU WOULD SAY ALSO SOMEHOW EMOTIONALLY THAT YOU'RE STILL NOT LIBERATED; IS THIS TRUE?

A I guess that's probably true. I guess that's probably true. I have a painting on the wall of my study which is of my aunt when she was about seven. She was the one that died in the cattle car, and I have it sitting there, and I see it everyday. In the sense if liberation means that you're over it, dismiss it, that will not happen. That is not possible.

Q WHAT WOULD LIBERATION MEAN TO YOU IN THE EMOTIONAL SENSE?

A I can't really imagine it, to tell you the truth. I would think it would be a betrayal, a betrayal of the memory of all those people if I would just totally be as if it didn't happen or that I've totally put everything behind me.

Q SO YOU THINK THAT LIBERATION MEANS PUTTING EVERYTHING BEHIND YOU AND NOT CARRYING IT ANYMORE; IS THAT IT?

A Well, I don't know what liberation really means. I am free. I'm liberated, but emotionally I do carry it and I don't really want not to carry it. I really don't. I want to feel the way I feel, and I don't want to change that.

Q OKAY. THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH.

A You're very welcome. Thank you.