

Interview with JOHN FRANKLIN

Holocaust Oral History Project

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Q. ALL RIGHT, JOHN, IF YOU WOULD TELL US WHEN YOU WERE BORN AND WHERE YOU WERE BORN, YOUR BIRTHDAY?

A. I was born Hans (Frankentow), a German name, in (Vitsburg) Germany, Bavaria, in 1930, July 2nd, 1930.

Q. AND TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR FAMILY, HOW MANY BROTHERS AND SISTERS YOU HAVE.

A. I had one brother who was seven years older.

Q. AND HIS NAME?

A. Was at birth Danner, as he came to the United States was Warren.

Q. Just one brother?

A. Just one brother, no other siblings.

Q. AND YOUR PARENTS, WHAT WERE THEIR NAMES?

A. My father was Max (Frankentow), and my mother was Clara (Frankentow).

Q. Both from Germany?

A. Both from Germany from the same area, (Vitsburg) and villages outside of the city.

My father's village was about eight

1 kilometers or six kilometers from my mother's village, and
2 as my -- there was no religious service in my mother's
3 village, but there was in my father's village, so she
4 walked with her parents across the fields, and that's how
5 she met my father in his village.

6 Q. DO YOU HAVE A NAME?

SP 7 A. Yes, my mother was born in (Unterizenheim), and my
SP 8 father was born in (Schwanfeld), which is in upper
9 Bavaria.

10 Q. DID YOU SAY YOUR MOTHER'S NAME?

SE 11 A. My mother's maiden name was (Frankentower), with an
12 E-R, so when she married my father she dropped the E-R.

13 Q. AND WHAT DID YOUR FATHER DO FOR A LIVING?

(14 A. My father was in the wholesale wine business. He
15 had his own firm together with his brother, which he
16 started shortly after World War I.

17 Q. AND YOUR MOTHER WAS A HOMEMAKER?

18 A. My mother was a homemaker.

19 Q. DID YOU HAVE ANY OTHER RELATIVES LIVING AROUND YOU?

SP 20 A. Yes. Both my grandparents were living close to
21 us. In fact, my father's parents are buried in (Vitsburg)
22 in the Jewish cemetery there, which I have visited
23 frequently, and it's one of the cemeteries which has not
24 been disturbed. In fact, there's a Holocaust memorial in
25 the cemetery today.

(26 Q. WHAT WERE THEIR NAMES?

(SP 1 A. Their names was Joseph and (Clotilda)
SP 2 (Frankentower). My mother's parents Samuel and (Etta)
SP 3 (Frankentower) died in Holland later and are buried in a
4 small village in the southern part of Holland in a Jewish
5 cemetery, and I go there once and a while too.

6 Q. AND THEY DIED BEFORE THE WAR?

7 A. No, they died during the war before we were
8 deported.

9 My grandmother died after the war, she was
10 hidden during the war, and she died after the war, and
11 she's buried next to him. My grandfather was buried --
12 died in 1943 and was buried -- 1942 I think it was, yes.

13 Q. WHERE WAS YOUR GRANDMOTHER HIDDEN?

(14 A. She was in Holland with good friends of the family
15 in a small town in the southern part of Holland.

16 Q. Do you know the name of it?

17 A. Oh, very well because it was an unusual situation
18 that they risked their lives to hide her. She was hidden
19 in a small room under the attic in a 16th century house
20 with no running water, they had a pump in the backyard.
21 And two other -- one other family was hidden in the
22 house.

23 My grandmother was a religious person,
24 which saved her I think. Her whole family being deported,
25 she spent most of her time praying, and it worked.

(26 Q. DID SHE TELL YOU ABOUT HER EXPERIENCES WHILE SHE

1 HAD BEEN HIDDEN, OR DID SHE RELATE ANY OF THEM?

2 A. Not very much. She didn't leave the room very
3 often. She was -- people had to be extremely careful not
4 to turn on any lights or be noticed. So she was already
5 in her 70's, so she didn't move around too much.

6 Naturally it was difficult for her, very
7 difficult for her, but she had enough food and care by her
8 loving friends who took care of her.

9 Q. AND WHAT WERE THEIR NAMES?

10 A. Their names -- no sound -- lived together, ladies,
11 (Cora Fenhoef) and (Jo Fenhoef), and the other one I
12 referred to as Uncle Tome (Tonfu). I refer to all of them
13 as aunts and uncles even if I was not related to them,
14 they adopted me as a nephew. And they died in the 1960's.

15 Q. HOW DID IT COME THAT IT WAS ONLY YOUR GRANDMOTHER
16 WHO WAS HIDDEN AND NOT OTHERS?

17 A. Yes. When we were living in Holland -- or shall I
18 go back and tell you how we came to be in Holland? I
19 think it might well be -- my father's family, all of them
20 lived in Germany. My mother's family, my grandmother and
21 her sisters lived in Germany while her brother's emigrated
22 to the United States in the 1880's.

23 So I had a lot of family in the United
24 States on my mother's side, and they came frequently to
25 Germany and visited and told us stories about the United
26 States and so on.

1 My father's family, he had seven brothers
2 and one sister, large families in those days, and he --
3 all of them were killed, with the exception of two who
4 emigrated to Israel.

5 And my father, being a typical German Jew,
6 thought that because he served in World War I and received
7 his Iron Cross first class in World War I thought that he
8 had served the fatherland well and that he would not be
9 persecuted.

10 And Kristallnacht came, and my father as
11 well as two -- no sound -- they were -- would not be safe
12 staying in Germany, so my father's partner, his brother
13 Morris, traveled in Holland and Belgium and sold our wines
14 there, so we had a lot of business connections and friends
15 in Holland.

16 My father worked mostly in Germany, they
17 had their wine business as well as their vineyards in
18 (Vitsburg), and when the time -- when 1938 rolled around
19 we realized that it became very dangerous to stay in
20 Germany, so through many of our good friends of Holland we
21 were able to leave Germany with little of our possessions,
22 most of them we had to leave behind, but we took some of
23 them with us and moved to Holland, to Hague, Holland.

24 Q. IN 1938?

25 A. In the summer of 1938. And with us came my
26 grandparents on my mother's side, two of my uncles, and

1 later on another uncle, brother of my father, his wife and
2 two children came also, and many other members of the
3 family. There were about I would say 20 members of the
4 family moved to Holland, fled to Holland.

5 And we started in The Hague, which is on
6 the coast, it's the capital of Holland. In 1940 the
7 Germans invaded Holland, and one of the first acts was
8 that all foreigners had to move away from the coast.

9 We were foreigners, we were never Dutch
10 citizens. According to Hitler we were stateless. We did
11 not get Dutch citizenship, so we moved inland to a town
12 called (Thimbost), (Satothimbost), where my father
13 continued his business as long as he could. Let's see.

14 Q. WE WERE TRYING TO FIND OUT HOW YOUR GRANDMOTHER WAS
15 THE ONLY ONE TO BE HIDDEN.

16 A. Ah, yes. So in 1942 my grandfather, her husband,
17 died and the Jews were becoming persecuted, were being
18 picked up, sent to camps, started going into hiding -- no
19 sound -- Switzerland somewhere, and we had ideas at that
20 time maybe that would be a good idea if we could flee
21 somewhere to a safe place, but we heard some horrible
22 stories about people being called, being turned over by
23 the people who you had paid money to in order to get help
24 getting across a border like Switzerland or in a fishing
25 boat to England, that my father and uncles and so on
26 decided not to risk it.

(SP 1 So end of 1942, beginning of 1943, all the
2 Jews in the town of (Thimbost) were removed either to camp
3 or to Amsterdam, which was the ghetto. At that time the
4 family decided to put my grandmother into hiding. She
5 never went to Amsterdam like we did.

6 Q. WHY?

7 A. We felt it would be safer for her. I was at that
8 time 13 years old, I was not part of the decision making
9 of the family. I really don't know what -- why they
10 didn't go into hiding. I don't know. But they still had
11 hope maybe to survive.

(SP 12 We went to Amsterdam and (Umtome), which
13 was one of the persons who was hiding my grandmother, came
14 frequently to Amsterdam and brought us food. We were
15 naturally rationed, and so we didn't have much food, and
16 we were happy to receive it.

(SP 17 While we were living in Amsterdam two of
18 our uncles lived with us, (Oinken) and Morris. I went to
19 a Jewish school in Amsterdam, and we were -- in middle of
20 1943 we were picked up by the S.S. But let me backtrack a
21 little bit.

(22 We were -- many of the Dutch Jews had
23 already been arrested and sent to camps. We were very
24 lucky, we had a good friend who was a client and friend of
25 my uncle Morris, who for the purpose of befriending the
26 Germans for our sake drank and socialized with one of the

(1 S.S. leaders, and probably saved my mother's and my life
2 because we were deported perhaps three or four months
3 later than many of the other people, which was probably
4 the saving grace.

5 So one night -- all Jews had to be in by
6 dark -- no sound -- we were forced to wear -- we were then
7 picked up by the S.S. and shipped or transported to what
8 is called the Dutch theater in Amsterdam, it was a
9 gathering point. And from there the next day we were
10 transported to a Dutch camp calls (Besaborg).

SP
SP 11 In (Besaborg) we didn't know beforehand, we
12 met my father's other brother Ludwig and his wife Ilse
13 with their sons, one was one year older than I, one was
14 one year younger.

(15 Ludwig had been there for eight months. We
16 didn't know he was the head surgeon of the camp. And let
17 me backtrack a little bit.

18 Ludwig was already working with the
19 beginning of penicillin in World War I with moles as an
20 experiment. He was a surgeon in World War I, and in order
21 to stop bleeding or to help he was experimenting with
22 moles. He was a famous surgeon in Germany.

SP 23 So when they sent him to (Besaborg) he not
24 only was a doctor, one of the doctors to the camp, but
25 also to the S.S. who were guarding the camp since they
26 didn't have their own surgeon, and they trusted him. He

1 was a German Jew, but still.

2 Later Ludwig, Ilsa, and the two sons were
3 shipped to Auschwitz. The Germans offered Ludwig to save
4 his life but ship his wife and the two children to
5 Auschwitz. Naturally Ludwig did not accept, he went with
6 them. And he went, as we heard later, to the gas chamber
7 with his sons.

8 Ilsa survived the camp and came back to
9 Holland after the war. She stayed there and died in
10 Holland in 1988. She had family in the United States,
11 brothers and sisters in England, but never wanted to leave
12 Holland.

13 So we were surprised to see them there, we
14 had no idea where they had been. And at that time my
15 mother was caught trying to get a letter out -- no sound
16 -- and because of that she and my father's brother Morris
17 were sent on a transport to Auschwitz.

18 Shortly thereafter my father and other
19 brother (Oinken) and I were sent to Bergen-Belsen in
20 northern Germany. It is there that my uncle died in 1944.

21 And later on -- we didn't know much about
22 the war, except once and a while we saw planes overhead
23 and we heard bombs dropping, but we didn't know how the
24 war was progressing.

25 There were incidents that we heard things
26 in between. For example, we heard about -- we didn't know

1 it was a plot against Hitler, but we did know or we did
2 find out that there were some S.S. leaders being executed
3 in Bergen-Belsen. Later on after the war we found out
4 this was part of the plot to kill Hitler, we didn't know
5 at that time.

6 My father and uncle had to work. I was
7 lucky, I didn't have to work. And the worst part of the
8 day was the counting in the morning when sometimes we
9 stood for three hours in the cold or the rain, people were
10 dropping.

11 Our own camp were mostly Dutch, some German
12 Jews and Greeks, Greek Jews.

13 Next to us was another camp of political
14 prisoners, and next to that were Russians. And there was
15 no crematorium in Belsen, people were buried in lime pits
16 by the thousands.

17 Hunger and disease was one of the great
18 problems, and my uncle died of hunger, and my father was
19 quite weak. But as 1945 approached -- no sound -- then
20 the Germans decided to ship us on a train to
21 Theresienstadt, which was actually in Austria, which was
22 one of the camps that was a transit camp for Auschwitz.

23 We got on the train and my father died
24 shortly thereafter and was buried in a mass grave on one
25 of the stops that the train made. The train continued
26 going. We were strafed and bombed a few times. We

1 stopped every day to remove the dead and bury them.

2 We were liberated in -- we went through
3 Berlin, and Berlin was being bombed at that time. We
4 couldn't see much through the cracks of the train, the
5 openings, but we realized that the war was getting close
6 because next to us sometimes a train with German war
7 wounded went the other way, and they were cattle cars with
8 the doors open, men lying there bleeding, so we knew we
9 were getting close to the action.

10 One morning the S.S. had left us and the
11 (Heimware), which was the German defense force of elder
12 men, or older men, let's put it this way, took over the
13 train. It was then that we realized that we were getting
14 close to liberation, perhaps.

15 And on March 23, 1945, we were liberated by
16 the Cossacks. And we stayed for about three months under
17 their protection and help, I worked for a field kitchen.

18 We were in a part of Germany which was
19 later to become the Russian zone. At that time it still
20 was Russian zone, but the Americans were very close, they
21 were in (Litzig) at that time, because the Americans had
22 advanced past the Yalta agreement, found out later, we
23 didn't know, then later withdrew.

24 I think we stayed -- no sound -- the
25 survivors, and today I'm aware of it because I joined an
26 organization called The Lost Transport, which I hadn't

1 known we were referred to as the lost transport, the one
2 that got lost in between Bergen-Belsen and Theresienstadt,
3 and there is an organization which is celebrating or
4 memorializing that today, 50 years it will be next April.

5 So we were liberated then by the Russians
6 and -- no sound -- for prisoners of war, and from there
7 the Americans shipped people home to their various
8 countries where they came from.

9 At that time they shipped me back to
10 Holland, and the Dutch arrested me upon arrival in Holland
11 because I was not a Dutch citizen. So I was interred by
12 the Dutch for a few weeks, and one day I was in -- it was
13 an old castle guarded by soldiers, and somebody said to me
14 there's somebody asking for the name of (Frankentow), he's
15 looking for the surgeon Ludwig (Frankentow), if anybody
16 knows what happened to him. I said, "That's my uncle."

17 So I went downstairs, and it happened to be
18 an American officer, major, who was the brother of Ilse
19 (Frankentow), Ludwig's wife. And he told me my mother was
20 alive, he had contacted her, was able to contact her in
21 Holland. So I phoned her immediately, and she was --
22 she had found my grandmother, her mother, alive and well
23 and joined her.

24 So two weeks later I was able to join
25 them. And we were the only ones of the whole family to
26 have survived.

1 My brother, I think I've forgotten to
2 mention, he came -- no sound -- on his own he was able to
3 get a visa. We were not able, we tried very hard to get
4 visas for ourselves, but it was not possible, but he was
5 able to come to the United States in 1938.

6 When we came to Holland he had gone to
7 school in England and visited us and left with the last
8 Dutch ship that left. The ship returned, and that was the
9 last ship that made it to the United States.

10 So he had a lot of family here in San
11 Francisco, and they helped him out. And naturally he
12 fought in the Second World War in Asia, and he did not
13 know what happened to us. So when we contacted him it was
14 a great joy.

15 My mother's brother also, in order to avoid
16 the draft in the First World War, came to the United
17 States before the First World War. My mother had one
18 brother and, naturally, so the whole family was very happy
19 that we made it.

20 So after the war when we lived in Holland
21 we lived with my grandmother and she fell and broke her
22 hip and was hospitalized. There was no penicillin at that
23 time, so my Uncle Arthur, my mother's brother, came from
24 the United States with penicillin.

25 She had been in a coma for three days, they
26 gave her the penicillin, she came out of the coma, she

1 talked to her son for a few hours and died peacefully. It
2 was at that time that we decided shortly thereafter what
3 sense is there for to us stay in Europe, my mother and I,
4 there was nobody left for us, and many members of her
5 family had come to the United States, and I had a
6 granduncle, my grandmother's brother, came in the 1880's,
7 he brought over his brothers, three of them, and so we had
8 a large family here.

9 He also told his sisters what married
10 German husbands that their first born he would sponsor, so
11 many members of the family came to the United States and
12 settled here just before World War II, so I have a large
13 family here.

14 Q. BEFORE WE START TALKING ABOUT YOUR LIFE HERE I WANT
15 TO GO BACK AND FILL IN A FEW -- NO SOUND -- TELL ME A
16 LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR FAMILY LIFE BEFORE THE WAR -- NO
17 SOUND -- WERE YOU A RELIGIOUS FAMILY, WHAT KIND OF --

18 A. Conservative, yes, absolutely, I went to synagogue
19 with my father.

20 Q. Weekly?

21 A. Weekly. We had Shabbat services at home Friday
22 night. My father was not ultrareligious, but he was a
23 religious person.

24 Our life was comfortable. We were middle
25 class, we had all the comforts. My father and mother
26 owned their own house, and they had a comfortable life.

1 Q. DID YOU -- WAS YOUR FAMILY KOSHER?

2 A. Yes, they were kosher.

3 Q. AND DID YOUR BROTHER HAVE A BAR MITZVAH?

4 A. Yes, he did. I had my bar mitzvah in Holland, his
5 was in Germany.

6 Q. SO YOU DID HAVE ONE?

7 A. I had, yeah. We were arrested I think a month
8 after my bar mitzvah.

9 Q. TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL LIFE IN
10 GERMANY.

11 A. In Germany. In the beginning I went to a Jewish
12 school, and I don't remember too much, I was so young, but
13 where we lived in the small town of (Vitsburg) it was
14 quite a Jewish community, they had their own school, they
15 had even their own sports club.

16 There was -- no sound -- always the
17 accusation of other Jews that the German Jews were more
18 German than Jews. So it was probably true that the
19 Germans, before all the trouble started, probably thought
20 themselves more German than Jew and were proud to be
21 German. It took them a long time I think to be accepted
22 in the professions, there were many, many years when I
23 think, especially in the 19th century, where many Jews
24 left the religion, changed their name in order to find
25 themselves accepted in the things they -- no sound --
26 there was a lot of that.

1 And the German Jews were always -- were
2 accused by other Germans, I found out later, I didn't
3 know, I was too young then, of being more German than Jew,
4 that they wanted to be German, and it didn't work out.

5 Q. CAN YOU DESCRIBE WHAT THAT MEANT IN TERMS OF --

6 A. Behavior, yes, absolutely, absolutely. I have
7 relatives in Israel, I went there and I learned about
8 these things, I didn't know about these things as a young
9 boy, but the German Jews were hated by other Jews because
10 they thought themselves better, above the other Jews.
11 They thought themselves, when the other Jews lived in
12 (Shettel), dressed in caftan and the beards and everything
13 else, they maintained the Jewish life, the German Jew was
14 -- somehow wanted to be part of the German identity. He
15 dressed like them, he acted like them, he wanted to be
16 part of that. He felt that in order to -- if he wanted to
17 be treated well he has to be like them, and so he tried
18 very hard to be German.

19 There was always a pecking order in Europe
20 as far as Jews were concerned. The English Jews had
21 achievement and felt themselves above any other, and he
22 looked down upon the French Jew, the French Jew looked
23 down upon the Dutch Jew, the Dutch Jew looked down upon
24 the German Jew, the German Jew look down upon the eastern
25 European Jew who in turn looked down upon the Balkan
26 Jews.

1 It was a pecking order of how they had
2 emancipated themselves, as the German Jew would call it.
3 All of this I didn't know as a boy of 13 or 14, but I was
4 interested in it later, and especially when I came to
5 Israel and saw the great dislike for the German Jew in
6 Israel, it was fascinating for me.

7 I didn't understand why when the German Jew
8 came to Israel he thought himself better than the other
9 Jews. He had the education, what education? The western
10 education which was not considered to be of any great
11 value in Jewish life in the other parts of Europe, but in
12 Germany it was.

13 So the German Jew thought himself to be
14 better than anybody else, and I had that feeling in Israel
15 that many descendants of the non-German Jews thought the
16 German Jews had it coming to them because of their
17 attitude. It was a horrible feeling, but I understood
18 what they were saying. -- no sound -- It was an
19 eye-opener for me.

20 Q. DO YOU REMEMBER -- DID YOUR PARENTS EVER SAY ACT
21 THIS WAY AND NOT THAT WAY AND NOT THIS WAY TO HIDE YOUR
22 JEWISHNESS OR CHANGE IT IN ANY WAY?

23 A. Absolutely.

24 Q. CAN YOU EXPLAIN THAT?

25 A. Well, I don't remember the exact incidents, but we
26 were always afraid to talk loudly and were afraid to admit

1 being Jewish. We tried to hide it. Not before 1938, but
2 afterwards when the Jews were being persecuted. You try
3 to hide your Jewishness in order not to be persecuted, if
4 it would help. But by that time we had been identified,
5 we were registered as Jews, we wore stars, we were treated
6 as Jews.

7 Q. BUT BEFORE THAT YOU DIDN'T FEEL THE PRESSURE TO?

8 A. No. I remember one incident, I went to a summer
9 camp, this was already in the mid '30's, was a Jewish
10 summer camp, and other kids who were not in the camp threw
11 rocks at us and called us dirty names and all that.

12 But most of my remembrance was my
13 association was only with Jews, it wasn't with non-Jews,
14 Except my father had two or three employees in his
15 business who were not Jews, but we didn't socialize with
16 anybody but Jews.

17 But even before that I remember that it was
18 mostly a Jewish life. Most of my family's friends were
19 Jews, they were not non-Jews, they were all Jewish.

20 Q. AND THE FRIENDS YOU PLAYED WITH?

21 A. Were all Jewish.

22 Q. EVEN IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?

23 A. Yes. We went to school together, we played
24 together, there weren't any that weren't, because I was
25 born in 1930, by the time I was six, 1936, there was
26 already beginning of antisemitism, so -- no sound -- very

1 careful and not standing out, so you were very careful in
2 their behavior of not bringing somebody's hatred down on
3 them and avoiding their showing of Jewishness in whatever
4 way.

5 Q. DO YOU REMEMBER ANY INCIDENTS OF ANTISEMITISM?

6 A. Not really, except the Kristallnacht, but otherwise
7 I don't remember.

8 Q. CAN YOU DESCRIBE --

9 A. The Kristallnacht?

10 Q. M-HM. (AFFIRMATIVE)

11 A. I just remember my mother was terrified by my
12 father -- no sound -- released him the next day. He was
13 beaten -- no sound -- so many other -- I mean it was that
14 time I think that many of the Jews in Germany realized
15 that the handwriting was on the wall, that either get out
16 or flee somewhere or go in hiding, whatever is necessary.

17 Q. DO YOU REMEMBER ANY ACTIVITY IN THE STREET, THE
18 S.S. DRIVING AT NIGHT?

19 A. No. No. I remember the stores we went to were
20 mostly Jewish stores, the ones that were left in Germany.

21 In Holland it was different, there was no
22 such thing until the Germans occupied Holland and started
23 putting pressure on the Dutch at that time.

24 Q. DID YOU SEE ANY STORES DAMAGED THE NEXT DAY?

25 A. No, I don't remember.

26 Q. ANY EVIDENCE?

1 A. No. I don't remember that. I'm sure they were.

2 Q. SO YOU HAD NO NON-JEWISH FRIENDS?

3 A. No, none at all, not until after World War II
4 because in Holland, again I went to a public school in
5 Holland, and there were non-Jews there, but within a year
6 or two we had -- I had to drop out of that school and go
7 to a Jewish school. So all my friends then were Jewish.

8 In fact, I am still very close with one of
9 them who lives in Holland, retired in Holland, he and his
10 wife and his family, we're very close today. We went to
11 grammar school and high school together. He spent the war
12 hidden, he and his family were hidden.

13 I will always remember, I have the greatest
14 respect for the Dutch who went out of their way to help
15 us, they didn't have to. They sacrificed their own safety
16 by helping us, and I think they were extremely courageous,
17 and I will never forget that for what they -- how they
18 helped us.

19 There were some among them who were
20 collaborators, but most of them weren't. They probably
21 saved my life.

22 Q. HOW DID, AFTER KRISTALLNACHT, HOW DID YOUR DAILY
23 LIFE CHANGE?

24 A. I don't remember. I was eight years old. I don't
25 remember because shortly thereafter I think we moved to
26 Holland.

1 Q. SO YOU WERE STILL GOING TO SCHOOL?

2 A. I was still going to school up to that point.

3 Q. YOU WERE STILL SHOPPING AT JEWISH STORES?

4 A. Yes. Yes. Moving to Holland changed the whole --
5 no sound -- perspective, because in Germany we were Jews
6 and we had to stay within our own community.

7 In Holland when we arrived was still before
8 World War II -- no sound -- general population, we did
9 what we wanted to, we travel where we wanted to, we lived
10 where we wanted to. There were no restrictions, until
11 later, until the invasion of Holland, and shortly
12 thereafter restrictive laws.

13 Q. SO WHEN YOU MOVED TO HOLLAND YOU STARTED OUT IN A
14 NON-JEWISH SCHOOL?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. WHAT WAS THAT LIKE FOR YOU, NOT HAVING BEEN AROUND
17 NON-JEWS VERY MUCH?

18 A. It was similar to my -- when I came to the United
19 States the great freedom of being able to do what one
20 wants to do and say what one wants to say. I was still
21 careful because the past experiences in Germany and -- but
22 it was marvelous, it was wonderful for me.

23 Not that I disliked Jewish school, but we
24 were always warned to be careful and to walk in a certain
25 way and certain streets and so on that were safer than
26 others, and you didn't have to do that, didn't have to be

1 as careful, you were more or less a free person.

2 Q. SO NOW YOU HAD NON-JEWISH FRIENDS?

3 A. It was difficult. I didn't speak Dutch in the
4 beginning, and didn't take long to -- at that age to pick
5 up the language. I didn't -- in The Hague we only lived
6 for two years, so I don't remember making any close
7 friends in The Hague, but once we came to the provincial
8 town of (Limbost), I made a lot of friends there, they
9 were all Jewish because -- well, we were already
10 identified as Jews in those days, so my friends were
11 Jewish, most of them.

12 Q. AT WHAT POINT DID YOU HAVE TO START WEARING --

13 A. The star?

14 Q. YES.

15 A. One of the oppressive laws of I think 1942 when the
16 Germans insisted on Jews registering, and as soon as we
17 were registered I think the next law was wearing stars.

18 Q. SO THIS WAS AFTER YOU WERE LIVING --

19 A. In Holland, this was in (Limbost), I think it was
20 1941 or 1942, I'm not exact, that we started wearing
21 stars.

22 Q. SO WHEN YOU FIRST WENT THERE YOU STARTED GOING TO
23 SCHOOL REGULARLY?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. AND LIFE WAS SOMEWHAT NORMAL?

26 A. It was normal.

1 Q. THEN DESCRIBE HOW THINGS PROGRESSIVELY CHANGED,
2 WHAT PRIVILEGES WERE TAKEN AWAY. WHATEVER'S EASIER.

3 A. The most important thing naturally was the food.
4 It wasn't Jews alone, we were on rations, and rations were
5 short.

6 I went to a general school first in The
7 Hague and later on in (Limbost), and within a short period
8 of time my parents had to take me out of the school and --
9 no sound -- was small and people from surrounding areas,
10 Jews, came by train every morning, youngsters, and
11 attended that particular school.

12 And gradually they disappeared, they were
13 either sent to camp or they went into hiding or fled
14 somewhere. And less and less, so the school got smaller
15 and smaller, and apparently didn't exist by the time we
16 went to Amsterdam -- no sound -- the ghetto had been
17 formed shortly before we got there, and Jews from all over
18 Holland who had not been sent to camps were living in that
19 ghetto, and it was raided two or three times a week.

20 And then people were picked up. Now, we
21 didn't know where these people were being sent to,
22 naturally.

23 So there again in Amsterdam I went to a
24 Dutch -- I mean a Jewish high school in Amsterdam.

25 Q. SO DID YOU GO TO SCHOOL ALL THE WAY THROUGH?

26 A. All the way to 1943, until we were arrested.

1 Q. WERE THERE OTHER RESTRICTIONS IN -- HOW DO YOU --

58 2 A. (Limbost).

3 Q. WERE THERE RESTRICTIONS LIKE CURFEWS?

4 A. No, not at that time. No, there weren't any. That
5 was early, probably 1942 when we moved to Amsterdam,
6 probably, because we were picked up in 1943, so probably
7 1942. There weren't any restrictions.

8 Q. AND WHERE DID YOU HAVE YOUR BAR MITZVAH?

9 A. In Amsterdam.

10 Q. CAN YOU DESCRIBE THAT?

11 A. Yes. I did it all in Hebrew. I went to school for
12 three or four months beforehand and studied with a Hebrew
13 teacher and was very proud to become a member of the
14 community, of the Jewish community there.

15 But it was already a very dangerous time,
16 people kept on disappearing by great multitude, and I was
17 aware of the congregation becoming smaller and smaller.
18 It was a big temple, but less and less people kept coming
19 to the temple, and then my teacher was deported.

20 But still I had a bar mitzvah, and it was
21 shortly thereafter that we were also arrested and
22 transported.

23 Q. WAS THERE ANY KIND OF CELEBRATION OR PARTY FOR YOUR
24 BAR MITZVAH?

25 A. No. No, it was very -- I think my family, my
26 immediate family, that was all. It was different from a

1 bar mitzvah today in the United States. It was a
2 religious ceremony, there wasn't any -- no sound -- it was
3 nothing to celebrate except coming of age so -- but I
4 think -- I'm not a religious person today, and I think
5 that my experiences perhaps turned me in the direction
6 away from religion.

7 Some people seek more religion because of
8 experiences, my experiences were such that I interpreted
9 it as trying to meld in with the population as a whole,
10 not being a Jew.

11 In fact, I didn't think of my past until
12 recently, in the last year or two, I tried to forget it.
13 I tried to ignore it, like it didn't exist.

14 Perhaps I came to a conclusion that
15 religion was not worth dying for, perhaps.

16 Anyhow, only lately, in the last two years
17 I would say, have I become aware of my background and have
18 started to talk about it to friends. None of my friends
19 knew I had been in a camp, I didn't make a point of it, I
20 didn't talk about my background, it was something that was
21 past, it's not something of my present.

22 But only recently since I retired has it
23 become part of my existence.

24 Q. WHY DO YOU THINK YOU CHANGED?

25 A. The value of my grandparents, my family, it is
26 something I want to continue, I'd say, at least the

1 cultural part, if not the religious part. I never denied
2 being Jewish, I just didn't advertise it. It's probably
3 because of my experiences.

4 What is interesting also is when I met my
5 mother after the camp we talked briefly on how my father
6 died and what happened to our family members and she told
7 me briefly what happened to her. Never again did we
8 mention the subject. She didn't want to talk about it, I
9 didn't want to talk about it.

10 When somebody -- my mother had a very heavy
11 German accent. When somebody heard that and wanted to
12 speak German with her she never answered in German, she
13 answered in English.

14 She went back to Germany with me a few
15 times. We both felt very suspicious, I mean we felt
16 untrusting, especially the older Germans, we didn't trust
17 them; can you blame us?

18 But she did want to go, she did want to see
19 where she was born, she wanted to make the connection.
20 And it was then that I visited -- no sound -- I visited
21 what was left of the Jewish community in (Vitsburg).
22 There were about seven or eight members, they were not
23 from (Vitsburg), they were from eastern Europe, had
24 settled after the war.

25 It was then that I went to my father's
26 village, and I saw a sign, Israel -- (speaking foreign

1 language) -- it's Jewish cemetery. I went there and it
2 was surrounded by a fence. I climbed the fence, I wanted
3 to see if I could find members of my family there. I did,
4 but I couldn't read the grave stones because in this
5 cemetery they were in German, but before that they were in
6 Hebrew, I didn't read Hebrew.

7 Later on I took my nephew and niece, after
8 my brother had died, I took them there. The cemetery was
9 open and there were a few guardians, or a few not
10 guardians but gardeners who tried to maintain the
11 cemetery. They told me that the cemetery was 700 years
12 old, had not been destroyed. Naturally for such an old
13 cemetery some of the stones were falling down, and they
14 tried to right them.

15 I think the Bavarian government had an
16 agreement with the Israeli government that they would
17 maintain the cemetery, quite a large cemetery.

18 So my nephew and niece at least have some
19 roots, some connection. I showed them where their family
20 was born, where they had lived, where their grandparents,
21 greatgrandparents are buried.

22 It was a great satisfaction for me to
23 continue that, to show them, because my brother never
24 wanted to have anything to do with Europe.

25 Q. HOW RECENTLY WAS THIS?

26 A. 1990.

1 Q. DO YOU THINK THAT WILL HAVE SOME AFFECT ON YOU
2 BEING MORE --

3 A. Absolutely. I took my wife, I -- we went to
4 (Vestibore), which is a memorial, we went to
5 Bergen-Belsen, which is a memorial.

6 I talked to my wife, then I began to open
7 up to my friends, but only when the subject was
8 approached, the where you were year of 1943, something
9 like that, but not a voluntary basis. I still don't do
10 that, only if it's -- I have to trust somebody implicitly
11 before I open up.

12 Q. HAVE YOU TALKED ABOUT IT WITH YOUR WIFE OVER THE
13 YEARS?

14 A. Yeah, over the years.

15 Q. AND YOUR CHILDREN?

16 A. I was a bachelor until I was 57 years old, and my
17 wife had two grown daughters, I have not talked to them
18 much about it.

19 It's a different generation. It's hard for
20 me to make contact with that.

21 I was a teacher all my life, I had contact,
22 but I never mentioned it in classroom, never. Public
23 schools in America the kids have no idea what Second World
24 War was all about. If you teach a particular unit on that
25 that would be one thing, but to bring it up just wasn't
26 part of the --

1 Q. WHAT DID YOU TEACH?

2 A. Social studies.

3 Q. THERE COULD HAVE BEEN AN OPPORTUNITY.

4 A. Could have been. Yes. Yes. Too late now.

5 Q. HOW DID YOUR MOTHER FEEL AFTER -- NO SOUND.

6 A. Mixed feelings. It brought back the good parts
7 because she was -- she was in her 50's when she came to
8 the United States, so many of her formative years were
9 spent in Germany. So it was more meaningful to her, but
10 she didn't trust any of them, and she was glad when she
11 left every time.

12 The food brought back the good memories,
13 but some of the behavior of the people, you never met a
14 German who fought against the United States, they all
15 fought on the Russian front.

16 No, we didn't know anything about that. So
17 after a while you began to realize it was a defense.

18 What is still bothering me today is that
19 many of the German youth don't know anything about their
20 history, their parents won't tell them, they claim
21 ignorance. It's not being taught over there as much, and
22 yet I have German friends who are very -- some of them are
23 members of the Green Party, very aware of what happened.

24 If they're interested they find out, and
25 some of them do. So it's a mixed feeling for me too when
26 I go.

1 Q. LET'S GO BACK A LITTLE BIT AND TALK ABOUT SOME OF
2 THE DETAILS OF WHEN YOU WERE TAKEN FROM AMSTERDAM. DID
3 YOU HAVE ANY SENSE THAT THAT WAS COMING, ANY PRIOR
4 WARNING? DID IT JUST HAPPEN SUDDENLY?

5 A. It happened suddenly.

6 Q. HOW WERE YOU NOTIFIED?

7 A. You weren't.

8 Q. I MEAN THEY CAME TO THE DOOR OR --

9 A. You've got five minutes to pack a bag. But all the
10 Jews had their bags packed, they knew, the bags were
11 always packed in every Jewish household. You were allowed
12 one bag, and this was it, and the bag was packed just in
13 case they came.

14 These were Dutch Nazis, Dutch S.S., under
15 German command. They were just as bad if not worse. And
16 we had already at that time given some of our furniture,
17 our belongings to some of our friends, which were returned
18 to us after the war, so my mother ended up with part of
19 her furniture because these people gave it back after the
20 war.

21 Q. DID YOUR FATHER DURING THIS TIME -- WAS EVERYTHING
22 ON RATION, OR DID YOUR FATHER WORK AT ALL?

23 A. He was not allowed to work. Thank goodness we were
24 part of the middle class and we had some money -- no sound
25 -- interesting part was my father had worked very hard,
26 earned quite a bit of money, and he bought American stocks

1 and shares, which were buried during the war in Holland.

2 My mother, thank goodness, remembered where
3 they were buried because I had -- what did I know as a
4 kid? Nothing.

5 So when they were unearthed after the war
6 they had to be sent to the United States for
7 identification because most of them had been in the ground
8 for two and a half, three years, and you could hardly see
9 the paper. Yet it was lucky that the companies had
10 identification, had registration who had purchased them so
11 we could claim title to them.

12 Q. SO YOUR MOTHER GOT THEM AFTER THE WAR?

13 A. Yes. Yes. But my mother, typical in those days,
14 knew nothing about business, it was my father who did, but
15 thank goodness she remembered where they were buried.

16 Q. DO -- NO SOUND.

17 A. Where my grandmother was hidden, near there.

18 You were asking -- lost my train of thought.

19 Q. I WAS TAKING YOU BACK TO WHEN YOU WERE TAKEN FROM
20 AMSTERDAM.

21 A. From Amsterdam, yes, yes. We were.

22 Q. WAS IT AT NIGHT, IN THE DAYTIME?

23 A. Night, after 8:00 o'clock they came and picked you
24 up when it was dark so the population couldn't see it.

25 All these things I didn't know, I read about it after the
26 war, why, how, when.

1 We on the inside who were being deported
2 didn't know anything. We didn't know where we were being
3 deported to, when our future would be, if there was any,
4 nothing.

5 I think, I'm not sure, but I think we were
6 sent to Bergen-Belsen because of my uncle's friend. This
7 was a privileged camp supposedly. I mean the people that
8 were sent to Auschwitz didn't make it past the train, most
9 of them were sent to the gas chambers right away.

10 Belsen didn't have a gas chamber. We were
11 supposedly being used as exchange for German prisoners of
12 war. I don't think any of them ever made it.

13 So we weren't treated any better, but at
14 least we weren't gassed. So those who were sent to
15 Bergen-Belsen died of starvation or brutality because the
16 capo, the inmates themselves who were political prisoners
17 who were there first, they were worse in some cases than
18 the Germans. But if it wouldn't have been for that we
19 would have ended up in Auschwitz.

20 My mother was on the death march from
21 (Berkinow) to Germany when the Russians approached from
22 the east and she made it through there, she survived it.

23 So it's I think due to our Dutch friends
24 that we were able to survive, at least I was able to
25 survive, and my mother, even if she went to Auschwitz we
26 were picked up later than many of the Dutch Jews.

1 Q. Can you describe the train that took you from
2 Holland to Bergen-Belsen?

3 A. They were not cattle cars. They were old
4 carriages. We didn't know where we were going, had no
5 idea. We -- it was -- Belsen is not too far from
6 (Vesterborg), so it didn't take a long time to get there.

7 Once we were in camp I never left the
8 camp. My father and uncle went to work, so they left the
9 enclosure in order to go to the work area. I never did.

10 However, I had one unusual experience which
11 gave me a little faith in humanity later in thinking back
12 on it. I was allowed to work a little bit, I was supposed
13 to keep the guard warm by lighting a fire and keeping
14 coals in it. I spent a couple hours a day doing that and
15 cleaning up the little house where he was. He was an
16 elderly man, a kind man, out of his big overcoat he
17 sometimes reached and got some potatoes which he gave me,
18 which I put in the coals and ate. But again, you know, he
19 did it at great risk to himself. Had he been caught he
20 would have been sent to the eastern front.

21 Again there were people who did risky
22 things. They weren't all bad. He was an elderly man, but
23 a kind man -- no sound -- so I -- that was the only
24 experience, the only time I was allowed outside really.

25 Q. WHAT DID YOU DO THE REST OF THE DAY?

26 A. Nothing. I just listened to people. We talked a

1 lot, but we were -- I wasn't aware of it at that time, but
2 all the camps around us had the camp uniform, the
3 concentration camp, you know, the stripes, we didn't. We
4 had on civilian clothes, the ones that we came in.

5 We weren't treated any better, all of this
6 I found out later, that we were treated differently from
7 the people in Auschwitz. I don't know how many of them
8 made it out of Belsen, I have no idea.

9 Q. WERE THERE OTHER CHILDREN AROUND YOUR AGE?

10 A. Yes. I lost contact, and I'm in the process right
11 now of trying to -- I wrote a letter to Benjamin Mead and
12 never got an answer, but I'll try again.

13 There were three or four young people
14 without parents who I associated with. I know one of them
15 made it to the United States, and two of them didn't, they
16 stayed in Europe, and we all worked for the Russians.

17 The Russians were very kind to us, they
18 offered to take us, the boys, to Russia and educate us.
19 There was nothing harsh and cruel about their treatment of
20 us. The Germans they shot at sight, they raped, they
21 pillaged, can't blame them, the treatment that the Germans
22 gave to the Russians was returned in kind, but they
23 treated us like kind parents.

24 We said no, we didn't go. We didn't know
25 if anybody was alive where we came from, so we offered to
26 go back, but they offered to take us -- no sound -- to

1 Holland, I met an American soldier, a Jewish American
2 soldier who had married an ex-inmate of one of the camps,
3 a Jewish girl. And they saw me and they took a liking to
4 me and they wanted to take me to the United States. And
5 again I said I have to go back and find out who's alive.

6 There is -- well, there is a memorial being
7 placed in ^{Trobitz} (Thurbitz), this is the place where we were
8 liberated, and the organization is in Israel. I think
9 many of the people from the train went to Israel after the
10 war. I'm thinking of attending it next year, I'm not
11 sure.

12 I don't know anybody except the four, the
13 three that we associated together. I'm going to try to
14 make contact with them if they're still alive.

15 Q. YOU DON'T KNOW, HOWEVER, ONCE YOU'RE THERE YOU MAY
16 SEE THEM?

17 A. I may. I may.

18 Q. So that will be in --

19 A. April of next year. A commemorative, and they're
20 placing the big stone memorial in the town. I went there
21 with my wife last year. I didn't recognize anything.

22 Q. YOU SAID EARLIER THAT IN BERGEN-BELSEN THE WORST
23 THING WAS THE COUNTING?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. HOW MANY TIMES A DAY?

26 A. Once. It had to be exactly the number, if it

1 wasn't had to do it over again. They purposefully let you
2 stand there for hours in the rain and the snow. People
3 were suffering, were dying, and there was one S.S. who was
4 in charge of the whole camp of our -- no sound -- never
5 accepted the count that was given, and the count was never
6 the same because so many people died every night.

7 So I think most of us had one thought,
8 survival, and I think that idea probably guided the rest
9 of my life. There's nothing I would do today that I
10 wouldn't do in order to stay alive. I wouldn't kill
11 somebody, but I would fight for my life to survive. And I
12 think most of us, what we have in common is the idea of
13 survival.

14 I joined a group here in Marin, and
15 unfortunately only lasted for two years, of Holocaust
16 survivors. The leader of the group thought that the
17 therapy would be for those who needed it most. I was
18 interested if was there a common denominator, was there
19 commonality. Most I think were married to non-Jews, is
20 that a common denominator? I was curious, we never got
21 into this.

22 They were from all over Europe.
23 Interesting group. The only common thing I could see,
24 that they were in the humanities, all of them, with one
25 person being a businessman. They were social workers,
26 they were teachers, psychologists.

1 I wondered, we never got down to what I
2 wanted to know, did our common background steer us in that
3 direction. Even today I could never be a businessman, it
4 just would not be satisfying to me. Is that a common
5 denominator? I don't know. That is curious.

58 6 Jerry (Chapaulski) was the person who
7 headed the group, fine, fine person, but he felt that the
8 group was there for those who needed the most, so,
9 therefore, two or three people in the group took up all
10 the time with their particular problems, which was fine,
11 but we never got around to --

12 Q. WHEN YOU WERE IN BERGEN-BELSEN WHAT DID YOU DO OR
13 WHAT DID YOU THINK ABOUT TO SURVIVE?

14 A. The next day, survive until the next day. You
15 didn't -- it's hard to think as a 14 or 15-year-old when
16 you look back on it today with the kind of thoughts that
17 go through your mind today, the complicated psyches and so
18 on. It wasn't that way. It was survival from
19 day-to-day.

20 You didn't -- you had a feeling, you know,
21 that the hours were getting closer, and you heard rumors,
22 but rumors were rumors and you just had to live.

23 Some people stole food; you took somebody
24 else's life by doing that. Was there morality? For some,
25 yes, like there is among our population today; others, no.

26 Q. DID YOU EVER CONSIDER THAT?

1 A. Stealing?

2 Q. M-HM. (AFFIRMATIVE)

3 A. No, I didn't, but I did see some others. What
4 judgment do you make? It's like the famous parable about
5 the life raft that's made for one person, somebody's
6 drowning, do you reach out?

7 Q. WERE THERE WAYS IN WHICH YOU AND THE PEOPLE YOU
8 WERE WITH HELPED EACH OTHER?

9 A. No. Very little. There were some people that were
10 the elders of the camp, the leaders but -- no sound --
11 group, survival. Some of them cooperated with the Germans
12 in order to survive, and -- no sound -- escape, there
13 weren't any. They had barbed wire -- no sound -- threw
14 themselves on the electrified wires.

15 There were babies born in the camp. I
16 don't know how many of them survived, but life went on.

17 Q. I'M SORRY?

18 A. Life went on.

19 Q. DID YOU EVER THINK OF SUICIDE?

20 A. No. Never. My father was a fighter and he -- I
21 think he perpetuated or he taught me or encouraged me to
22 do the same. And ever since then if I ever had any
23 thought of suicide in my later life I always thought why
24 take a life, your own, which somebody else, Hitler, tried
25 to take by force, and it always discouraged me.

26 But survival -- I have problems today with

1 some of the younger generation today and their laid-back
2 attitude. When I see what it took us, what we had to do
3 in order to survive, and I expect that of younger people.

4 It's a different world today. A completely
5 different world. I won't do this, I won't do this, there
6 was no such thing. You did what was necessary whether you
7 liked it or not. Times were different.

8 So it's sometimes hard for me to see
9 today's and hear the answer, oh, I won't do that. That's
10 generational, I guess, it has nothing to do with the camp.

11 Q. DID YOU OR YOUR FATHER EVER GET SICK?

12 A. Everybody had diarrhea most of the time, many
13 people died of it, dehydration. My father had some
14 abscesses. They cut them open and squeezed the pus out
15 and wrapped a towel around it.

16 Q. WHO?

17 A. There was a camp doctor, a Jewish man who happened
18 to be a doctor who helped others. There was no
19 medication, there was nothing. Those who were too sick to
20 work didn't get food, they'd die.

21 There was no heat. It was pretty cold. My
22 wife wonders today why I don't like the cold. She
23 understands now.

24 Q. DID THEY GIVE YOU ANY EXTRA BLANKETS?

25 A. No. No.

26 Q. YOU JUST HAD YOUR CLOTHES?

1 A. Clothes and one blanket. My father and I slept
2 together in the same bed.

3 Q. WAS THAT -- HOW WAS THE BED SET UP?

4 A. Two next to each other, and these were bunks,
5 wooden bunks, three high I think they were, and double. I
6 mean there was a division, it was this wide (indicating),
7 and the next one was put up against it.

8 In the beginning every bed was taken, and
9 within a short period of time there was a lot of room.

10 Q. WAS IT JUST WOOD?

11 A. Wood and a straw mattress. And the lice, everybody
12 had lice, in your clothes, everywhere. You wore the same
13 clothes day in and day out.

14 Q. DID THEY CUT YOUR HAIR?

15 A. No. No.

16 Q. DID YOU BATHE?

17 A. We had a shower once every six months. It was
18 after we were liberated and the Americans deloused us and
19 shaved our heads because of the head lice. It seems like
20 a different world.

21 Q. YOU MENTIONED EARLIER THAT THERE WERE MASS GRAVES.

22 A. Yes. That I found out later, I didn't know in
23 those days, except that inmates brought carts, wooden
24 carts that usually horses pulled, this time inmates pulled
25 them, so there were no horses. There was a big beam in
26 the middle, and the size of the cart, like a hay cart,

1 with stays, okay. And what they did is every day is pick
2 up the bodies -- no sound -- took them was they told us to
3 large pits, but before they took them there some of them
4 were -- still had some life left in them, the other
5 inmates usually took their shoes and their clothing of
6 those people, and they were skeletons, skin and bones.

7 The only healthy ones were the capos, they
8 were healthy and strong. I always wondered what happened
9 to them because they survived, most of them -- no sound.

10 I'm glad I did this because my memory is
11 starting to go, and if I wouldn't have done it now in a
12 few years from now I don't think I would have remembered
13 most of it.

14 Q. CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE TRAIN THAT -- WHEN YOU LEFT
15 BERGEN-BELSEN WHEN YOU WERE GOING TO --

16 A. Yeah. Again they were not cattle cars. They had
17 guards everywhere, and the doors were locked permanently.
18 They had wooden benches you were sitting on. You couldn't
19 stretch out, you -- you had rations.

20 Q. SO THEY DID FEED YOU?

21 A. Not while we were on the train, they gave us some
22 before we went on the train. When we were on the train
23 there was nothing.

24 As I said before, they stopped every day
25 and removed the bodies, and --

26 Q. DID THEY BURY THE BODIES?

1 A. Yeah. In huge graves.

2 Q. DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN THAT?

3 A. No, I didn't. I turned to the Red Cross after the
4 war to find out where my father was buried, and it was a
5 mass grave on the side of the railroad.

6 And the curtains -- well, the windows were
7 taped over so -- no sound -- but you could peek through
8 some openings, which we did when we went through Berlin,
9 and saw the bombing that had taken place there and -- but
10 we didn't know where we were going, we had no idea.

11 And we knew we were in a war zone, as I
12 mentioned before the train was attacked at various times
13 from the air.

14 But they were old railway carriages with
15 one walkway down the center and wooden benches on each
16 side.

17 I remember very distinctly my first -- when
18 the guards left us we were in a small community and we all
19 poured into the community to get some food, and I was by
20 myself. I walked into a walled farm, the Russians had
21 just been ahead of me, they were there, had just shot the
22 farmer who tried to block the gate to them, and in the
23 living room the rug was removed and there was a hiding
24 place underneath with things that one remembers, with
25 thousands of cans of tennis balls which had been stolen
26 from some occupied country which the man had hoarded.

1 Other things too he had hoarded, I forget exactly what,
2 but there was no food there.

3 The Russians helped me and gave me some
4 food, but he was lying in the courtyard and his dog was
5 howling.

6 Shortly thereafter the Russians put us up
7 with farmers. In other words, they had to whether they
8 liked it or not, we were pushed on them, and --

9 Q. HOW DID THEY REACT TO YOU?

10 A. Kind of not friendly, that's for sure. I mean you
11 were forced on them and they had to feed us and give us
12 food and they didn't like it. We stayed away from them as
13 much as we could, except for the food part, and we
14 received the food and cooked our own food.

15 I was together with a family that had
16 survived, the man died during the two months there, but
17 there were two children my age and their mother, and we
18 all shared -- no sound.

19 I remember the man was quite sick, so they
20 asked me to go to the next community to get medicine. So
21 I borrowed an old bike from the farmer and went to the
22 next community. On the way back I ran into a Russian with
23 a machine gun over his shoulder who pulled it on me and
24 pointed to the bike. He wanted my bike, his wasn't
25 running anymore. So naturally I gave him the bike, and I
26 walked the rest of the way home.

1 But some of the Russians which we saw were
2 quite primitive, they came from rural areas in the Soviet
3 Union and had not seen much of the west, had never seen
4 the west, and to them it was a completely new experience
5 to see running water, to see toilets.

6 Q. HOW LONG DID YOU STAY THERE?

7 A. A couple months, until the war was over, April,
8 when was the war over? A few months. No sound.

9 We stayed in another village, (Kidheim),
10 which is near the (Turbitz) between the two towns I think.
11 Whoever was left on the train dispersed to these two
12 communities and lived in these two communities.

13 Q. WAS THERE ANYBODY WITH YOU THAT YOU KNEW FROM
14 BERGEN-BELSEN THAT YOU --

15 A. No. Three boys. I knew them.

16 Q. What were their names?

17 A. (Yopi) Hollis -- can't even think. I have them
18 written down at home. I can't even think of their name.
19 I haven't seen them since then.

20 Q. SO DO YOU STILL HAVE CONTACT WITH THEM DURING THOSE
21 TWO MONTHS?

22 A. Yes, that's when we formed like a friendship. We
23 had something in common; we had no parents, we were
24 alone. I think all of them were born in Germany, raised
25 in Holland. In my case I didn't know my mother -- I
26 didn't think she would be alive, so we considered

1 ourselves orphans, so we formed a group and we stayed
2 together, but we didn't live together.

3 Q. SO WHAT DID YOU DO FROM DAY-TO-DAY?

4 A. Nothing. We walked around the farm, looked at the
5 farm animals, trying to get food, that was our main goal
6 was get food. I think it was then that -- no, it was
7 later that we were shaved, could have been then, could
8 have been then very possibly, I don't remember exact. We
9 tried to get rid of the lice, but we had no DDT or
10 anything like that, but we had -- at least we tried to get
11 different clothes, that we succeeded in.

12 Q. WHAT HAPPENED THEN WHEN THE WAR ENDED?

13 A. When the war ended somehow, I don't know how the
14 Americans found out we were there, but they did find out,
15 and they sent trucks. Was my first black American I've
16 ever seen is the driver of that truck, and a big cigar in
17 his mouth. I didn't understand a word he was saying, but
18 we all piled into the truck, about ten or 15 trucks of
19 survivors, and they took us to a city called (Litezig),
20 which was American at that time because the Americans had
21 advanced, and there was a big compound of many barracks,
22 huge-three story brick barracks, and they fed us
23 fabulously.

24 They cleaned us, they gave us clothes, they
25 really treated us like human beings. We had been
26 mistreated for so many years that this was fabulous to

1 us. And they said, you know, after you register here
2 there's an order that we ship you back to where you came
3 from.

58 4 So we stayed there I think, in (Litezig), I
5 think probably a week or so, that was the first DDT, they
6 powdered us for sure.

7 So all these people that were at that time
8 prisoners, whether they were political prisoners or
9 whether they were military prisoners, they all came back
10 through that camp and were shipped to their country of
11 origin.

12 The only identification I had, I still have
13 it at home I think, is a registration of the Dutch Red
14 Cross identifying me as who I was, and in Dutch. That was
15 my pass to get back to Holland. I couldn't prove anything
16 else, I had nothing. So that's how I ended up back in
17 Holland.

18 Q. THEN YOU SEPARATED THEN FROM YOUR THREE FRIENDS?

19 A. Yes, we -- we went our own ways. I know one of
20 them, we corresponded for a while, he ended up near
21 Chicago. I have his name at home. I planned for the last
22 few years to try to contact him, but I haven't done so, I
23 should make more of an effort.

24 Q. WHERE DID YOU FIRST ARRIVE BACK IN HOLLAND?

25 A. No sound -- thought we were German's, we weren't
26 Dutch. They couldn't tell whether we were Nazis trying to

1 flee Germany or what we were, so they had to certify that.
2 And after they did that a few weeks in a castle guarded,
3 treated well, food was good and all that, but we were in
4 prison. No sound -- where my grandmother was hidden.

5 Q. YOU FOUND HER FIRST?

6 A. My mother and grand -- my mother had already been
7 returned and she found my grandmother, and they were
8 together there. And I had TB, I found out shortly
9 thereafter, so I was bedridden for about two months or so,
10 and naturally with the new medication, medicines that they
11 had, I was able to recover my strength within a few
12 months.

13 My mother took care of me; we stayed in a
14 small hotel, and after I recovered then we took out my
15 grandmother, her mother, and we got a small apartment in
16 the town where we were living before the war, (Limlost),
17 and we moved there.

18 And the other Jews who had survived had
19 returned to the town, there weren't many, but there were
20 some, and we all formed a kind of community.

21 Many of the Dutch Jews were hidden. Not
22 many, but -- no sound -- it was a Jewish community of
23 maybe 50 people there after the war. Many of them went to
24 Israel, some to Canada, some to the United States, and
25 some stayed.

26 And my friend Luke Rosenbaum, who was my

1 best friend, stayed and became a psychologist in
2 Amsterdam, and we're still close today.

3 Q. HE WAS THE MAN YOU KNEW BEFORE?

4 A. I went to school with him in (Limlost), grammar
5 school and high school. I was over at his house, he was
6 over at mine. We were raised together.

7 In fact, his sister -- that part of Holland
8 was occupied by the British, and she met a British
9 soldier, a Jewish boy from London, and she married him and
10 moved to England, so --

11 Q. HOW LONG DID YOU AND YOUR GRANDMOTHER AND MOTHER
12 STAY THERE?

13 A. Until 1947. My grandmother died in 1946, a year
14 after the war, and we stayed for another year, and in
15 January 1948 we came to the United States.

16 Q. HOW DID YOU SUPPORT YOURSELVES WHILE YOU WERE
17 THERE?

18 A. In Holland? We had borrowed some money, and my
19 uncle in the United States had sent us some money, and we
20 had the stocks which we were working on to get them
21 renewed or exchanged for papers and they were -- the
22 dividends had accumulated, so my mother had -- wasn't
23 wealthy, but she had money to live off, and which helped
24 her the rest of her life too.

25 She also received a pension from the German
26 government for the death of my father, wrongful death,

1 which was what she lived on.

2 Q. WHAT DID YOU DO? DID YOU GO TO SCHOOL?

3 A. I went to school. I had a year of high school that
4 I went to, my English wasn't very good, but it was good
5 enough, and then I went to college, University of
6 California, and got a degree.

7 And after I got out of college I moved to
8 New York for, oh, about six years I think, six or seven
9 years. I was a businessman in New York, and at the end I
10 realized I was not meant for business, so I came back to
11 California, went back to school, night school while I was
12 working in the daytime, got a teaching credential, and got
13 a job teaching high school in San Francisco for over 20
14 years.

15 Q. WHAT AGE LEVEL?

16 A. Senior in high school, 17 years old, 17 and 18. I
17 was an idealist. I loved it in the beginning, and as one
18 teaches after a while problems became bigger, one becomes
19 older, students stay the same age, it was harder.

20 All of us started more or less at the same
21 time, a whole group of teachers, we were very idealistic.
22 We thought we could change the world, and we realized
23 after a while it wasn't going to change, but we tried.

24 I still see a lot of them today, just as
25 disillusioned as I am, so -- but my life in the United
26 States did not center around the Jewish world. It -- in

1 fact, I haven't been to synagogue since I came to the
2 United States except a memorial service of somebody close
3 to me.

4 I am not a religious person, so I choose my
5 friends for their values, for what we share, and not for
6 their culture, unless their values are part of the
7 culture. It makes no difference to me who they are, if we
8 share something that is how I choose my friends, how much
9 I respect them.

10 So I'm not part of the Jewish community. I
11 have become more aware of in the last few years of my
12 Jewish background, more sensitive to it, let's put it that
13 way. I've never denied it. When people ask me what I am
14 I said, "I'm a Jew by culture, not by religion."

15 But I think my various trips to Israel have
16 made me more aware of my background. I have a very large
17 family over there, which I'm very close to and very fond
18 of. I think the feeling is mutual.

19 And one young couple, grandchildren of my
20 first cousin are living in the Bay Area and we're very
21 close, I'm very fond of them, makes me feel kind of part
22 of the family because my wife is not Jewish.

23 And so I'm still missing part of the Jewish
24 contacts, which is hard to define, but -- so I'm not
25 searching for identity, but I am reevaluating my
26 background, let's put it that way.

1 Q. HOW DO YOU THINK YOUR WAR EXPERIENCE AFFECTED YOUR
2 JEWISH IDENTITY?

3 A. I didn't want to be a Jew because I suffered for
4 being a Jew. I didn't want to die for being a Jew -- no
5 sound -- at least that's how I analyzed it afterward. At
6 15, 14, you don't analyze it that way, you want to live,
7 you do whatever whatever you need to survive, but
8 afterwards, that's how I analyzed it, that I didn't want
9 to die for my religion. Not that I was willing to accept
10 another religion for that, wasn't willing to change and
11 become a Catholic or Protestant or whatever. I didn't
12 want to suffer for my religion.

13 Maybe I wasn't religious enough to begin
14 with. There come the German Judaism in my -- were I have
15 been born in a Jewish (Schtetel) with a tremendous load of
16 Jewish culture maybe I would have thought differently.

17 But yet I look at most my family in Israel
18 today, sure they're Jewish, but not religious. They go to
19 temple once or twice a year, but they're not what I
20 call -- what I would say religious people.

21 So when I look at my grandparents on both
22 sides, how religious they were, how they kept a kosher
23 house, how they prayed, et cetera, compared to them, well,
24 I think with everybody today that our grandparents were
25 probably much more religious than we are. I think.

26 Some of us have -- some members of my

1 family have returned and some of them are living in Israel
2 from the United States after two generations in America.
3 The young ones have become religious, started studying,
4 and have gone with their family to Israel. Their parents
5 don't understand it, but they're doing it.

6 Q. SO WHY WERE YOU INTERESTED IN SPEAKING OUT NOW, OR
7 TALKING ABOUT IT NOW?

8 A. I felt perhaps that people after me might benefit
9 from this, and I hope and we all hope that this can never
10 happen again, but it's happening today, different parts,
11 but at least we ought to try to prevent this from
12 happening again.

13 I think whatever small part I can have by
14 telling my story and might contribute to that.

15 Q. SO IN ALL THOSE YEARS OF TEACHING SOCIAL STUDIES
16 DID YOU EVER TEACH ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST?

17 A. Never.

18 Q. IT WAS NEVER PART OF THE CURRICULUM?

19 A. It was part of the curriculum, true, but the
20 connection I was teaching 17 year old, mostly minority
21 kids, who -- most of them had never seen a Jew, they don't
22 even know what a Jew is, and to bring it some -- I didn't
23 teach history, I taught political science and economics,
24 to work it into that, sure, you can enter the political
25 aspect of it, but somehow I -- I wasn't ready to expose
26 myself either, let's put it that way, and saying this is

1 who I am, who I was, who I am, maybe I like to tell you
2 about it.

3 I felt the reference wasn't there. They
4 were not there to understand or feel or willing to
5 receive. Their experiences were different, so I didn't.
6 I didn't even talk to my colleagues about it. Now I have.

7 Q. WHAT PROMPTED YOU TO RETURN TO GERMANY AND THE
8 PLACES WHERE YOU HAD THOSE EXPERIENCES?

9 A. Connections, roots. I know it's a popular word
10 today, but sentimentalism to the good parts, perhaps, and
11 finding out, you know, what can I find out where my family
12 has lived for generations, why, what do I know about
13 them?

14 I had a book that my grandmother kept where
15 all the members of the family, their birth, their marriage
16 and their death dating back to 1806, and I'm sharing this
17 with members of the family today and letting them see, you
18 know, and try to find out how these people lived. To me
19 it's meaningful, and I hope that it will be meaningful to
20 the younger generation.

21 THE VIDEOGRAPHER: I've got to change --

22 Q. ONE MORE QUESTION. YOU SORT OF TOUCHED ON THIS A
23 LITTLE BIT, BUT HOW HAVE THESE WAR EXPERIENCES AFFECTED
24 YOUR UNDERSTANDING OR SENSE OF GOD?

25 A. Very negatively I would say. I ask myself all the
26 time how could -- if there is a God how can he allow such

1 a thing to happen?

2 While I was in camp whether somebody was
3 religious or not they behaved the same way. We're humans.
4 I would say that my experiences have marked me negatively
5 towards God. I do not believe in one because, as I said,
6 when you ask yourself the horrors that millions of people
7 went through how -- if there is a God how could he let
8 this happen?

9 I know there are other people -- no sound
10 -- my interpretation is different.

11 I still have the conflict between being a
12 Jew culturally and being an atheist religiously, which may
13 be a conflict. I'm proud to be a Jew culturally, but I do
14 not believe in the God.

15 Q. I HAVE NO FURTHER QUESTIONS. IS THERE ANYTHING
16 THAT YOU'D LIKE TO ADD OR --

17 A. Nothing really.

18 Q. ANY MEMORY THAT CAME UP THAT WE --

19 A. Only when I leave here will I think.

20 Q. ALL RIGHT. THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR DOING THIS.

21 A. Thank you very much for allowing me to express my
22 feelings.

23 (Mr. Franklin showing pictures for the videotape.)

24 This was the last picture taken of the
25 family, 1935 when we were together, my father on the left,
26 my brother in the middle, and my mother on the right. I'm

1 the middle one on the bottom.

2 This is the village of Unterizenheim near
3 (Vitsburg) Germany where my mother's family was born.

4 These are my grandparents on my father's
5 side, and they are from Schwanfeld, Bavaria, near
6 (Vitsburg).

7 Q. AND THEIR NAMES?

8 A. Joseph and (Clatilda) (Frankentower).

9 This was my grandmother, (Etta)
10 (Frankentower).

11 This was my grandfather, the husband of
12 (Etta), Samuel (Frankentower), he died in 1942 in Holland.

13 Q. AND THIS IS ON YOUR MOTHER'S SIDE?

14 A. It's on my mother's side.

15 This is my -- this was my mother and father
16 on their honeymoon most likely. Clara and Max
17 (Frankentou).

18 Q. DO YOU KNOW WHERE THEY WENT?

19 A. Somewhere in the North Sea.

20 This was my father and mother, and I'm
21 peeking through right behind them, taken in (Limlost)
22 Holland, probably 1942.

23 Q. IS THIS YOUR HOUSE WHERE YOU LIVED?

24 A. This was the house where we lived.

25 There was my father Max on the right with
26 his three brothers from left to right, Morris, (Oinken),

1 and Ludwig, taken in (Berkinow) about 1937.

2 This was my father Max (Frankentow) taken
3 in (Berkinow) in 1934.

4 My brother and I in 1931. My brother is
5 the larger one.

6 Q. SO YOU'RE ABOUT A YEAR OLD?

7 A. About a year old.

8 Here I was five years old with my first
9 bike.

10 Q. WHERE IS THIS?

11 A. In (Vitsburg) Germany. I was 16, just returned
12 from concentration camp. This picture was taken in
13 (Limbost) Holland.

14 Q. WHAT YEAR?

15 A. 1946.

16 This is (Tome Fonuden), I refer to him as
17 Uncle (Tome). He helped hide my grandmother (Etta) in
18 (Boxtow) Holland.

19 This was (Jofenhoff), she helped (Tome
20 Fonuden) to hide my grandmother (Etta) in (Boxtow).

21 My brother on the left, my mother in the
22 middle, and I on the right, and the dog (Ami), my mother's
23 constant companion next to her in San Francisco 1966.

24 This is Mrs. (Fundervain) and (Up
25 Fundervain) with me in the middle as a soldier in
26 (Savenheim), Holland, in 1953. (Up Fondervain) was the

1 man responsible probably for me being alive. He
2 socialized and drank with S.S. leader (Auster Fenton) in
3 Holland and delayed our deportation to a concentration
4 camp by perhaps four months.

5 End of tape.

6 (During the last segment they were looking
7 at pictures.)

8 (End of tape 1)

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