



Interview with **Eugene Kleiner**

HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Date: October 18, 1994

Place: San Francisco, California

Interviewer: Gene Ayres

Transcriber: Diane Zacky

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Today is Tuesday, October 18, 1994. I am Gene Ayres, an interviewer with the Holocaust Oral History Project of San Francisco, California. Today we are talking with Eugene Kleiner. Camera operator is Sean Simplicio. John Grant is video producer.

Q. GOOD MORNING, MR. KLEINER. WOULD YOU TELL US, PLEASE, WHERE YOU WERE BORN AND THE PRECISE DATE.

A. I was born in Vienna on May 12, 1923. I was the youngest of three children. My father's name was Leon. My mother's name was Anna.

Q. YOUR BROTHER'S AND SISTER'S NAMES ALSO?

A. My brother's name is Bernard, and my sister is Rose.

Q. AND WHAT WAS THE SITUATION WITH YOUR FAMILY AS EARLY AS YOU CAN REMEMBER IN VIENNA? WHAT WAS YOUR FATHER'S OCCUPATION?

A. My father had a shoe factory, shoe factory and shoe wholesale. He had several shoe factories, really, making different types of shoes.

And my mother was a housewife, I guess; but later on she opened a special type of retail store for shoes using some of my father's products. And, actually, she did quite

well as a businesswoman even though she did not have any experience.

Q. WHAT SECTION OF VIENNA DID YOU LIVE IN AS EARLY AS YOU CAN REMEMBER?

A. We lived in the so-called First District.

Q. DESCRIBE THAT.

A. Well, I was not born in the First District. At that time, we lived in the Third District. I guess as my father became more prosperous, we moved to the First District, which was the nicest part of Vienna. It contained all the nice monuments and the other sites of Vienna. And as we moved there, I guess -- I'm not quite sure -- but we moved when I was around six or seven.

Q. DO YOU RECALL THE STREET?

A. Yes. Estonia Icana Bastai 21. I even remember the number. It was an apartment house; and we had, I guess, one floor there and an elevator. I remember there was a fourth floor.

I guess we moved there before I started high school, so I was under 10. It was right in the center of the city; it was not on the outskirts, and it was nice. It was a nice place.

Q. WERE YOU A RELIGIOUS FAMILY?

A. Not very religious. My father was really more religious than my mother. We did keep the holidays, and we did keep the kosher.

Q. YOU KEPT KOSHER?

A. Yes, we did. But I guess with my mother being less

religious, that we were certainly aware of being Jewish. And we practiced the Jewish religion, but I personally as a child did not keep the Sabbath or anything of the sort, but we did go through all the holidays.

Q. DID YOU BELONG TO A CONGREGATION?

A. Oh, yes, we did.

Q. DO YOU RECALL WHAT THAT WAS?

A. It was not very far away. Stetengassa, or something like that. It was a very nice synagogue.

Q. WHO WAS THE RABBI; DO YOU REMEMBER?

A. No, I don't remember.

And I don't think I personally had any contact with the rabbi. I did have bar mitzvah when I was 13, of course, but it was not a big affair for some personal reasons that my parents had at that time.

Q. IN THE AREA WHERE YOU LIVED, WAS THAT PARTICULARLY A JEWISH AREA?

A. No, it was not particularly a Jewish area.

Q. IT WAS NOT?

A. It was not, no. It was not far away from the more Jewish area, but it was the First District, which really was the center of the city, and it was not especially -- I don't know how many Jews lived in the building, but I would say not more than, I'd say 10 percent, which is equivalent to the population there. It was a Jewish community. Most of our friends and associates were Jewish.

Q. WHEN YOU STARTED SCHOOL, DESCRIBE HOW THAT WAS AND WHETHER YOUR CLASSMATES WERE ORDINARY AUSTRIANS.

A. Yes, well I did go to the school in the more Jewish -- it was across the bridge in the more Jewish section, so in that school -- you start high school there when you are about 10. In that school, I would say maybe 60 percent or more. It was a majority of Jewish students. It was not far away. It was maybe a 20-minute walk, half-an-hour-walk at most. So again, the non-Jewish people were in the minority there.

Q. THIS WAS WHAT WE WOULD CALL A PUBLIC SCHOOL.

A. A public school. We called it gymnasium.

Q. GYMNASIUM.

AND YOU START THAT WHEN YOU'RE ABOUT 10 YEARS OLD?

A. Ten, and for twelve -- for eight years, four years elementary and eight years of gymnasium.

Q. DO YOU RECALL WHAT THE ATTITUDE WAS IN VIENNA TOWARD JEWISH FAMILIES IN THOSE DAYS?

A. At that time I thought it was, in general, pretty good. And they, well -- of course, I was in the school. I was part of a majority and not the minority.

Q. SO THINGS WENT SMOOTHLY?

A. So I thought it was pretty good. I thought it was very good, as a matter of fact.

Q. WERE YOU CONSCIOUS OF JEWISH PRESENCE IN VIENNA, BECAUSE MANY OF THE LEADING CITIZENS AND THE ARTS AND MEDICINE AND EVERYTHING WERE JEWISH?

A. Yes.

Q. WERE YOU CONSCIOUS OF THAT?

A. Well, again, it made me feel good and comfortable,

at that time at least. I did not analyze how come or anything of this sort. I just accepted the way it was, and I felt good about it. But we were certainly not ashamed to be Jewish, and in many instances, maybe proud without diminishing the accomplishments of others. And in general even, my mother more so than my father, we wanted to become part of the general population.

My father made me more conscious of the dangers, the dangers of being Jewish or the unpleasantness, or whatever else. But as a child, I did not feel any discrimination, because I was part. But I felt comfortable being part of the Jewish community, but I did not associate a lot with non-Jewish children.

Q. HAD YOUR FAMILY LIVED IN VIENNA FOR A LONG TIME?

A. No. My parents came to Vienna at the beginning of World War I.

Q. FROM WHERE?

A. From Poland. Well, it was right at the Polish/Russian border, and which I guess was -- being on the border, was more active there, and they did flee to Vienna.

Q. WAS THERE A CITY WHERE THEY CAME FROM?

A. It was a small city.

Q. WHAT WAS THAT? DO YOU KNOW?

A. Yes. My mother came from Podruchesk and my father from Hushatine, which is all part of -- was all within -- I forgot -- maybe 20 or 30 miles from the border. The border was Russian. I guess the biggest city next to it in Poland was Lidorf.

But they did speak, and they spoke German quite well. I mean, very well, like a native, and Jewish expressions were used at times, but we did not speak Yiddish. Of course, there's some similarity between Yiddish and German, but we did speak German at home. My parents, I guess, did speak some Polish, and the children, we did not speak any Polish. They sometimes talked Polish when they had secrets they didn't want us to overhear. But in general, we did not speak Polish. We spoke German at home.

Q. A VIENNESE KIND OF GERMAN?

A. Yes, a Viennese accent, but basically it was German.

Q. AND YOU SAY YOU WANTED TO BE PART OF THE GENERAL POPULATION? YOU WANTED TO BE AUSTRIAN?

A. Well, we were. I never questioned that. Maybe others questioned it, but it never occurred to me that I'm not.

Q. IN WORLD WAR I, WAS YOUR FATHER INVOLVED IN THE ARMY OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT AT ALL?

A. Yes. I don't know the exact history, but he was in the Austrian army. That part of Poland was part of the Austrian Empire.

Q. THAT WAS QUITE COMMON, WAS IT NOT, THAT MANY, MANY JEWS SERVED IN THE GERMAN AND THE AUSTRIAN ARMY IN WORLD WAR I?

A. Yes.

Q. DID YOUR FATHER HAVE A GREAT FEELING OF PATRIOTISM? DID HE HAVE AUSTRIAN CITIZENSHIP?

A. He did have Austrian citizenship. I don't think there was an excessive amount of patriotism involved. There was more emphasis on family and maybe religion than on national grandeur.

Q. WAS YOUR FATHER ACTIVE POLITICALLY?

A. He was quite active in the Jewish community politically.

Q. POLITICALLY?

A. Yes.

In Austria, as far as I remember, there was a Jewish government, so to say, with actual taxing powers of the Jewish community. In other words, there was a percentage of the federal taxes that had to be paid to the Jewish community, which was enforced by the state. So they never had to ask for donations. They wouldn't have to pay taxes, so to say, to maintain the Jewish community.

Q. MONEY WAS SPENT FOR WHAT, SCHOOLS PERHAPS?

A. Well, there were Jewish schools, but there were hospitals and charitable things -- people that did not do well.

I don't know the percentage of the federal taxes that had to be paid, but I know it was a fixed percentage, and there was no question about it.

And my father was social service counselor in the Jewish community. So he was quite active. He liked social life in the Jewish community more so than my mother did.

Q. YOUR FATHER, BEING A MAN OF AFFAIRS AND CIVIC ACTIVITY, WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE KNOWN WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN

GERMANY IN THOSE YEARS, WOULD HE NOT?

A. I imagine, of course, he did.

Q. DO YOU EVER RECALL HIS SAYING ANYTHING ABOUT IT?

HITLER CAME TO POWER IN 1933 WHEN YOU WERE ABOUT TEN.

A. I don't really. I do remember, of course, when Hitler came to power in Germany in '33, that mention was made. And later on in his capacity as social service counselor, whatever, there were some refugees that came from Germany to Austria, and I think his department helped take care of those that needed help.

Q. SO HE CERTAINLY WAS AWARE.

A. He definitely was aware. As children, we were aware of it; but we did not --

Well, you know, compared to what happened later on, some of the things there were kind of -- were not nearly as bad. And I do remember even jokes were made. "Well, then our young men will not be allowed to go with gentile girls," which my father thought the way it should be, which is the way it should be. So I do remember the joke. We shall say it jokingly, but I think he meant it.

Q. HE FELT THAT'S THE WAY?

A. He felt that's the way, how it should be.

Q. AND MANY OF THE OLDER GENERATION PROBABLY DID FEEL THAT WAY.

DO YOU EVER RECALL HIS SAYING ANYTHING ABOUT WHAT HE WAS SEEING WITH THE REFUGEES FROM GERMANY OR WHAT WAS HAPPENING? YOU DO NOT RECALL HIS SAYING ANYTHING?

A. No. No. I knew it was bad, but, again, I think the joke really may give you an idea just the degree that I thought it was. It meant a separation of the societies more than really serious persecution.

Q. AND NOW YOU'RE A YOUNG MAN IN HIGH SCHOOL OR GYMNASIUM. DO YOU EVER RECALL THERE WAS A NAZI MOVEMENT IN AUSTRIA?

A. Yes.

Q. WERE YOU CONSCIOUS OF THAT, OR DO YOU RECALL ANYTHING THAT HAPPENED BECAUSE THIS RISING NATIONALISM?

A. Well, actually it started off that Austria used to be a socialist country, and then the Christian democrats -- which are not the Nazi movement. They were a Catholic-backed conservative group that took over, and I forgot -- it was around '34, '35. So I still was quite young, 10 years or so.

And my brother, who was nine years older than I was, really was part of the socialist youth movement. And there was a civil war, I remember. It lasted for maybe a week or two, between the old socialist group and the new semi-fascist Catholic, whatever, movement.

Q. HEIMBER?

A. Heimber (phonetic), yes.

And I do remember slightly, yes, but my brother just wanted to go out and be part of the people that --

My father had hid his shoes.

Q. HID HIS SHOES?

A. Yes, so he couldn't go out.

Q. HE WOULD HAVE BEEN ABOUT 19 OR 20?

A. Yes. Let's see. It was maybe '35 or '36. So that, yes, he was 20, 21. He was born in 1914.

So I do remember that well.

And it was not that my brother wanted to do his duty; my father would not let him do his duty. My father thought it was -- the time has come for the others to take over, and it was a hopeless cause.

Q. IN THIS CIVIL UNREST, DO YOU RECALL WHEN THE GOVERNMENT FIRED ARTILLERY AT THE WORKERS' HOUSING?

A. Yes. I didn't see it because it was more on the outskirts in the labor districts of the city; but, yes, we did.

There was a Karl Marx Housing Project. I remember that. And they did fire a cannon, or at least machine guns, to the house.

Q. CHANCELLOR WOULD HAVE BEEN DULFUS (PHONETIC) AT THIS TIME?

A. Yes, he was assassinated at this time.

Q. DO YOU RECALL THAT INCIDENT?

A. Yes, I do remember when he was assassinated.

Q. NOW THIS WAS SAID TO HAVE BEEN DONE BY THE NAZI MOVEMENT.

A. Yes.

Q. WERE YOU AWARE OF THAT?

A. Yes, we were. I do remember. I'm not sure I had my own judgment at that point, but we didn't really cry when he was assassinated.

Q. YOU WERE 11 AT THAT TIME?

A. I wouldn't say we were happy about it, but we were not part of his party.

Q. OBVIOUSLY, THIS CAUSED -- THERE WAS A GREAT CIVIL UNREST IN AUSTRIA. DO YOU RECALL WHAT YOUR FATHER OR YOUR MOTHER'S OR THEIR ATTITUDE WOULD HAVE BEEN? WERE THEY BEGINNING TO BECOME APPREHENSIVE ABOUT WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN? DO YOU RECALL?

A. I did not recall they were apprehensive about it. In thinking back now, I think they didn't like either party too much. And my father tended towards the new party a little bit. And he thought -- well, having factories and so on, we always think about labor, laborers' rights, and salaries, and he felt this would be better controlled by the semi-fascist Christian democrats, whatever they were called.

So my parents were ready to accept the new government. And I don't think it was particularly Jewish-friendly, but it was not, as an official policy, they were not anti-Semitic, and the originals certainly were. But the official government program was not anti-Semitic, but strongly more nationalistic and very religious. The Catholics, they did dominate the thing.

Q. NOW WE'RE GETTING INTO THE LATE THIRTIES?

A. Yes.

Q. WHERE I WONDER IF YOU OR YOUR FAMILY WERE MORE CONSCIOUS OF THE NAZI MOVEMENT, THE MORE ACTIVE NAZI MOVEMENT IN AUSTRIA?

A. I guess my parents must have underestimated the

strength of the Nazi movement in Austria. That's either '35 or '36 time frame. They were just considered some bums or people that preached violence, but they were not taken very seriously, which, of course, could have been a mistake.

I do remember -- it must have been in '36 or so, we went skiing -- the school -- we went skiing. Skiing was done on the outskirts of Vienna. You could take a street car to the ski place. Instead of gym, we had skiing in the afternoon once a week or so. And I remember that's the first time I really felt it.

It must have been around '36, that some of the gentile people got together, and I felt it was some sort of secret society. I wasn't sure. I was sure I wasn't invited, but I don't think at that time I knew why I wasn't invited. And I could see that they had some sort of confidence. Confidentially, they talked about certain things which they didn't want others to hear, and I wasn't quite sure what it was. But that was the first time I really felt uncomfortable about it.

Q. THIS HAPPENED ON SOME OF THOSE SKI OUTINGS?

A. Yes, on the outings.

Q. WERE THESE YOUR CLASSMATES?

A. Yes. And the leader of the group really was the gym teacher. So, again, it's the type of group which excelled maybe in physical exercise and skiing and sports.

Q. THE GYM TEACHER WAS --

A. Yes, yes.

Q. DO YOU NOW RECOGNIZE THAT THESE ARE NAZIS?

A. Oh, yes, definitely. I didn't at that time. But that's the first time I really felt excluded from something. But I know now definitely that they were a secret group of Nazis.

Q. I'VE BEEN TOLD THE NAZIS WORE DISTINCTIVE CLOTHING IN THOSE DAYS.

A. That's true. And that came later too. They wore white over-the-calf socks and --

Q. UP ABOUT HALF WAY?

A. No, all the way up.

Q. ALL THE WAY UP?

A. Up the calf. And that was really the big thing was white knit socks.

Q. WITH SHORT TROUSERS?

A. With short trousers, yes.

Q. LIEDERHOSEN?

A. And the white socks --

Q. THAT WAS VERY DISTINCTIVE?

A. -- was very distinctive with that group. And we all knew it, but we didn't put much importance to it.

And then in '38 when the Germans marched into Austria, these people came out in the open, and it confirmed, really, the suspicion that we had. But we never paid an awful lot of attention to it.

Q. EVEN DESPITE WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN GERMANY, AND YOUR FATHER MUST HAVE KNOWN ABOUT THAT.

A. Yes.

Q. BECAUSE HE WAS DEALING WITH REFUGEES.

A. Yes.

Q. AND STILL YOU DON'T RECALL THAT THERE WAS ANY FEELING THAT THIS COULD HAPPEN IN AUSTRIA ALSO?

A. I don't think so. I don't remember that ever occurred to anybody. Well, the only exception to that would be that I had an aunt -- or great-aunt, I think she was, who lived in Switzerland, and my father always sent some money to her, not to support her, but to keep for us, which was later on against the law. And so that the only thing, in thinking back -- at that time I didn't know about it. We keep the money somewhere, but at that time in thinking back now, I felt he must have been concerned, but it was a really small portion of the money he had. But it was something, and it helped us a great deal later on.

Q. YES, OBVIOUSLY HE SAW THE NEED TO DO SOMETHING.

A. He saw the need to do something, and I guess the money was idle money, did not earn any interest.

Q. YOUR FATHER HAD MORE THAN ONE FACTORY, DID HE NOT?

A. Well, he had several factories for several different types of shoes. In one factory, they were making ski shoes; the other one, they were making fine men's shoes; the other one, they were making cheaper men's shoes, and so on.

Q. BUT YOU WOULD CONSIDER YOUR FAMILY AT THAT TIME TO BE WELL OFF?

A. At that time, yes, quite well.

Q. DO YOU RECALL WHEN THE MOVEMENT BEGAN TO MAKE ITSELF KNOWN FOR ONSLAUS (PHONETIC), THE JOINING OF GERMANY

AND AUSTRIA, BECAUSE HITLER WAS TALKING ABOUT THIS?

A. Yes, but that was not -- it seemed to me at that time that it was more nationalistic Austrian rather than the combination of Austria and Germany, so it was more Austrian than German, and that's what I thought, or that's what they were talking about.

Q. WAS IT A SURPRISE TO YOU?

A. Yes, it was, because I knew they were active, and I knew that they wanted to change the government into the Nazi government; but the party, Nazi party, was outlawed really. So maybe you could wear the white socks, but you officially couldn't do much more than that. But it was always, at least in my mind, it was always considered to be the Austrian party rather than the German party.

And I don't know exactly how it happened; but apparently, they tried to overthrow the government, the Austrian government, and establish a Nazi-type Austrian party, and they either were not successful in doing it, and they asked for help, or somebody thought they should ask for help from Germany, which Germany was delighted to give by sending troops over the border into Austria. That's how I recollect it. I'm not sure whether it's historically a hundred percent correct.

Q. WELL, IT SEEMS, PERHAPS IN RETROSPECT, FAIRLY CLEAR THAT THE AUSTRIAN NAZI PARTY WAS WORKING WITH THE GERMAN NAZI PARTY --

A. Yes.

Q. -- TO BRING THE TWO COUNTRIES TOGETHER.

A. They did get support and money from Germany. And let me put it this way. It seemed that the average party member, of the lower level at least, thought of it as being an Austrian, Nationalist Austrian party. But it could easily be, again, looking back; it could be that the leaders knew what they were doing and they meant to combine the countries.

Q. IN THE LATE THIRTIES WITH YOU IN YOUR EARLY TEEN YEARS, HOW WERE THINGS GOING FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY PERSONALLY? YOU WERE GROWING UP.

A. It was still going quite well.

Let's see, I was just under 15 when the Germans came to Austria, or Vienna, and it went quite well. We obviously were concerned. Well, we were concerned with the unrest before the Germans. Maybe it was a week or so or maybe more than a week. There was critical unrest; and again, the Nazi party being outlawed, everybody knew it was an underground party; but I guess it wasn't taken seriously enough. And again we, mistakenly, of course, thought it was strictly an Austrian party. We never even thought of combining the two, which was lack of knowledge of history and lack of knowledge of the whole situation, was not because it wasn't there.

Q. DO YOU RECALL THE PLEBISCITE?

A. Yes. The plebiscite really was only yes or no. It was not electing a parliament or anything of that sort.

Q. WHAT WAS THE QUESTION OF THE PLEBISCITE; DO YOU RECALL THAT?

A. I don't recall it. I know it was only ruled yes or no.

Q. I DON'T RECALL HOW IT WAS PHRASED BUT, SHALL AUSTRIA BECOME PART OF THE GREATER GERMAN REICH, OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT?

A. There were two. Again, I'm a little fuzzy on that. There were two plebiscites. I guess one was before the Germans marched in, which was overwhelming victory for the Shushnik (phonetic) I think was the chancellor. It was an overwhelming victory of the Austrian party, like 98.9 percent, something like that.

Q. FOR AUSTRIA TO REMAIN INDEPENDENT?

A. Yes. And it was an overwhelming victory. However honest the election was, I don't know. Just say, again, it was just a yes or no. And then we had a similar plebiscite just a few weeks after the Germans marched in, and it was 99 percent the other way.

Q. BY THIS TIME THE NAZI PARTY WAS NOT OUTLAWED?

A. Was not outlawed. But I think in both cases, at least for me, it seemed that the plebiscite really reflected the sentiment of the population. It was not too dishonest.

Q. EVEN THE SECOND ONE?

A. Both of them did, yes.

Q. DO YOU KNOW HOW YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER VOTED ON THOSE?

A. Well, the second one, we couldn't vote.

Q. JEWS WEREN'T ALLOWED TO VOTE IN THE SECOND ONE?

A. No. It was after the Germans marched in. The

first one, I know they wanted to maintain, of course, what there was, even though they were not happy about what there was. But they were not terribly unhappy about it either. They thought it would settle down into a livable condition.

Q. NOW WE HEAR REPORTS THAT ONCE THE GERMANS MARCHED IN, CAME IN, THAT NAZIS ROSE UP AND BEGAN PERSECUTION OF JEWS. ANY INCIDENTS LIKE THAT THAT YOU RECALL?

A. Yes, I witnessed some of it. It did not affect for some reason. I don't know if there was any good reason, just they couldn't get around to everybody. It did not affect my immediate family, but it was more -- it was certainly, it was strong-arm methods, but the type of thing they asked you to do was to scrub the sidewalks and remove graffiti on the sidewalks and things of this sort, and you had to do this thing under the threat of being beaten up or whatever.

Q. DID YOU WITNESS SOME OF THOSE?

A. I did witness some of those even though it did not happen to my immediate family. I witnessed it. And I forgot whether my father told us to stay away, to not expose ourselves by being maybe less visible on the street and so on.

Q. IN THE INCIDENTS YOU WITNESSED, WERE THERE PEOPLE, JUST JEWS STOPPED ON THE STREET?

A. Yes, just stopped on the street.

Q. MEN, WOMEN?

A. Largely men and subject to certain indignities really.

Q. THESE HAVE BEEN ORTHODOX JEWS PERHAPS WITH

DISTINCTIVE?

A. No. No. They certainly were obvious targets. No, other Jews as well.

Q. HOW WOULD THEY KNOW WHETHER A PERSON WAS JEWISH?

A. Well, when the Germans marched in, those that were not Jewish all started to wear swastika buttons, and Jewish, number one, didn't wear it and, number two, they weren't allowed to wear it. So that was one sign. It was almost a sign of being Arian if you wore a little swastika. And there was one, in general, you could tell that maybe not a hundred percent, but you could tell the difference.

Q. WOULD AN ORDINARY VIENNESE, PERHAPS NOT A MEMBER OF THE NAZI PARTY, BUT A VIENNESE GENTILE, WOULD THEY?

A. They all put on the Nazi, they wanted to make sure they are not mistaken to be Jewish, and they definitely did whether they were members of the party or not. And then later on, they had special type of insignia that those that were members of the party were only allowed to wear. Those that were members before the party became legal were allowed to wear a little bigger, and it was slightly different sign.

Q. AT ANY POINT DURING THE TIME -- DURING THOSE DAYS, WERE JEWS REQUIRED TO WEAR THE YELLOW STAR?

A. No. It was nothing. It was just the sense of wearing the swastika that helps identify them, but you did not have to wear a yellow star, which came later.

But these things happened quickly. The Germans marched in the middle of March, I remember, and it happened within a few weeks, Jews being subject to indignities. Some

prominent people were arrested, but it didn't immediately affect the German population.

And then the next thing that came is in the schools. The Jewish students were asked to leave the class room. There was one Jewish gymnasium there which was not too far from where we lived, but anyway, most of them had to go there. And I don't quite recall, but I think one or two schools with predominant Jewish student body were converted into Jewish schools so to say. We really thought at that time, the students and myself, it was just terrible to do this and never suspected it could get worse than that.

Q. DO YOU RECALL YOUR FAMILY IN FAMILY DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER AND YOUR OLDER BROTHER AND YOUR SISTER -- WAS ANYBODY SAYING THINGS ARE NOT GOING TO GET ANY BETTER FOR US. MAYBE WE SHOULD GET OUT?

A. Yes. That came. Yes, we did talk about it in the family; and even myself, being the youngest, I was certainly part of the conversation. The thought was we should get out, but we didn't see how urgent it was to do it, how quickly we have to do it. Thought maybe a year or two. We certainly saw at least there was no future there especially for young people like my brother and my sister.

But we didn't really have many connections outside of Vienna. We had a great-aunt in Switzerland, and we had some far relatives in the United States, but we didn't even know where it was.

Q. DO YOU RECALL IN THOSE DAYS, IN EARLY 1938 AFTER THE GERMANS WERE THERE, DO YOU RECALL THAT MANY JEWS WERE

BEING ENCOURAGED TO LEAVE?

A. Definitely. And at that time, they were encouraged to leave. And as far as I remember, they were allowed to take a lot of stuff with them. Well, even furniture and whatever possessions they had. I don't quite recall the details, but I think they had to pay a certain tax on what they were taking with them, but it was discriminatory tax, of course, but it was not outlandish.

Q. DO YOU RECALL ANY FAMILY DISCUSSIONS ABOUT YOUR FATHER PERHAPS SELLING HIS FACTORIES?

A. Well, it was not a question of selling it. They put, especially in the bigger concerns, they put somebody in there. Well, they did two things, as far as I remember, on the business basis. My father had to keep on paying his bills, but people did not have to pay him.

Q. NON-JEWS DID NOT HAVE TO PAY HIM?

A. And so you can't do this very long and stay in business long.

Q. WHAT EFFECT DID THAT HAVE ON YOUR FATHER'S BUSINESS?

A. Well, how long can you keep it up? So he, of course, did not want to send more things to the retailers that he supplied with shoes, but you're not in business if you don't sell. If you still have to pay, why should you sell? So it was a devilish plan.

Q. DID IT DRIVE HIM OUT OF BUSINESS?

A. It drove him out of the business, and then to accelerate these things, to put a gentile person in there to

oversee the business or to act as -- I forgot the name that they call them, but to oversee that things are done their way.

Q. SO YOUR FATHER RETAINED OWNERSHIP IN NAME, BUT HE HAD NO CONTROL?

A. In name, but it didn't mean anything any longer.

Q. HOW DID THAT AFFECT YOUR LIVELIHOOD FOR YOUR FAMILY?

A. Well, I guess he had enough reserves. It never came up as a problem. I don't remember it coming up as a problem, but that's when it started to get serious, how much longer can we do this?

Q. YOU DON'T RECALL DURING THOSE DAYS THE NAZI GOVERNMENT DID NOT SEIZE JEWISH BANK ACCOUNTS OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT?

A. I'm not sure really.

Q. APPARENTLY NOT?

A. I wouldn't be surprised, but I'm not a hundred percent sure that it blocked certain accounts. They didn't seize it, but blocked it, which, again, made it difficult. But this approach was in March. It started in March, and we are approaching now maybe September or October time frame; and things, of course, gradually got worse and worse.

Q. WERE YOU AWARE OF THE SEDATIN (PHONETIC) LAND SITUATION?

A. Yes, very much so. And, again, we saw -- I don't put too much in retrospect, but the forces of evil to triumph and really win whatever they try to do whether they were

right or wrong. And this became very clear. I forgot exactly when this Sedatin land thing happened.

Q. I THINK IN OCTOBER.

A. In October, yes.

Q. '38?

A. In October it started to get bad really, and of course, communism in November when we had the Kristallnacht. And at that point, for some reason, we were all at home, and they came pretty early in the morning, and we had to stand in the foyer there and were not allowed to move or do anything.

Q. YOU SAY "THEY CAME." WHO WERE "THEY"?

A. Well, again, these were members of the Nazi party. They were not in uniform, but they had the armband with the swastika on it.

Q. THEY CAME TO YOUR HOME?

A. They came to our home.

And there was one fellow in there who was, I think, an apprentice in my father's business, and my father did a lot of favors for him really, and my father was very shocked, more shocked about this young man being part of the group than the group coming in the first place.

But they were right there, and I remember we had a safe. They wanted us to open the safe, which my father did, and they took whatever was in the safe. Again, looking back, it was kind of silly to keep things in the safe, but apparently my parents kept whatever, you know, we didn't have an awful lot of the jewelry, but some jewelry, and some valuables right in the safe, and they essentially emptied

it. And I remember my brother was there and my future brother-in-law who was about the same age as my brother was, and he was there, too, and they were both in their twenties.

And they just asked my father to come with them, and we didn't hear from my father for a few days, and then we did hear about him, don't remember exactly how, but we did hear about him and that he was alive. And what we did then -- see my father was gone. He was arrested, or taken away by the people that came, and we didn't know exactly what to do next and kind of the leadership was gone; and we, as I mentioned before, we lived in an apartment house, and it had a -- well, the top floor was kind of, you know, we used this for storage and other things.

And for some reason, we were apparently on good terms with the superintendent of the house, and he said why don't you, for the time, move to the top floor until this thing blows over so to say. And we did that. We stayed there for maybe one or two nights, and then we went back to the apartment.

In the meantime, we did hear that my father was safe in the city jail, and the story, to the best of my recollection, that my father told us about is that he and many other Jewish people were taken to the police station, and they had lines with people to record their name, etc. My father knew one of the police inspectors, and he said, "Mr. Kleiner, you're in the wrong line here. That line goes to the concentration camps." So they were well aware of what was going on. And he told my father to go out of this line,

and they put my father in another line which was for people, oh, petty thieves and civil disobedient people, and that saved my father's life really because he was right; the line that my father was put in did go to the various concentration camps.

My father was put into the city jail for maybe, I forgot, may 20 days or 30 days because of a misdemeanor charge, whatever, and that saved his life.

Q. THIS WAS A JAILER WHO KNEW YOUR FATHER?

A. A policeman.

Q. A POLICEMAN?

A. A police officer maybe.

Q. WHO TOOK HIM OUT -- KNOWINGLY, TOOK HIM OUT OF LINE?

A. Yes, put him in with the petty criminals.

Q. AND DO YOU KNOW WHICH CAMP THE OTHER LINE WENT TO?

A. They went to the various camps, Dachau and Buchenwald.

And my father, I forgot exactly how long, but he stayed there for several weeks, and he always felt safe in jail. It was a city jail. And I remember my mother bringing him food and things. Later on, my father told us that he was in good company. There was a doctor in the same house living there, and he was with him there, and he didn't know how he got there, and my father didn't know exactly how he got there, but it became clear to us that was how he was saved from -- but we saw the horror stories.

And the very day they released my father, let's

see, it was at the end of November, they told him he has to leave the country by the end of February, let's say. And it started to get serious.

And there was no place to go really. On the one hand, my father felt he doesn't want to go too far away because this fellow Hitler won't last that long. He wanted to be nearby, but there was no place to go. And then somehow, I forgot exactly, but it was an official visa or a visa, a forged visa to Belgium, and I'm not completely clear on that, but I think my brother and my future brother-in-law went first. And they were afraid really to, even though they had a visa to Belgium, there were rumors around that they take people off the train and so on. So they went by train somewhere close to the border and then walked across the border.

Q. THE BORDER TO WHERE?

A. To Belgium.

Q. LEAVING AUSTRIA, WHICH COUNTRY DID THEY ENTER?

A. Well, Germany, but that was one country now.

Q. SO THEY COULD TRAVEL THROUGH GERMANY?

A. Yes. They had to travel through Germany, but they did not go all the way to the Belgium/German border. It was near Cologne. I think they got off at Cologne and then walked the rest of it, somehow got transportation for the rest of the way. And they did get there, and we heard from them. And my father at that point did get a visa too.

Again, it's difficult for me to understand that, but I was supposed to leave with another group, possibly for

Palestine -- we called it Palestine -- or London with some youth group that was supposed to go there.

Q. HAD THERE BEEN A FAMILY DECISION TO TAKE EVERYONE OUT?

A. Oh, definitely. Definitely, and with visas. I'm not quite sure how they got the visa, but they were very expensive anyhow. Whether they got them legally or illegally, they were very expensive, and they didn't really know very much about Belgium, and anyway, I had an opportunity -- they had youth groups leaving for Palestine and England -- to be part of the group, and it's difficult for me to understand today, but at that time, it seemed the logical thing to do. They left for Belgium, and they went all the way by train across the border to Belgium.

Q. YOUR PARENTS LEFT BEFORE YOU DID?

A. Before I did, and I was left and still in our old apartment; and again, I was quite surprised, but I felt pretty good about it. And my parents left me some money, and I bought all sorts of junk that boys like to buy, which parents don't give them, and I even negotiated to sell some of our belongings that were still there because we didn't know what to do for a few weeks, and then the special youth group that I was supposed to join, for some reason, the whole thing was cancelled, and my parents didn't -- I still felt pretty good, and my parents started to get a little panicky about that.

Q. YOU WERE IN TOUCH WITH YOUR PARENTS?

A. Yes. I was in touch with my parents, but it was

not a telephone conversation, it was mail. And now an aunt of mine was still here, a sister of my mother. And so while I lived alone for a little while -- I was only 15, 15 and a half, but I lived alone in a big apartment. I'm not sure whether it was on my own or urging of my aunt or urging of my parents, but I moved to my aunt's house. And my parents kind of gave up about my going to Palestine or England, and they worked from Belgium to get me to Belgium somehow, and I did go to Belgium.

Q. HOW DID THAT WORK? DID THEY OBTAIN A VISA FOR YOU?

A. I'm not quite sure. I think they obtained a visa, or I think it was part of a group of young people around my age that left as a group to go to Belgium, but it was a fact you couldn't just travel. You had to have your visa to go somewhere. So I was part of that group. So I was alone for maybe -- my parents left the end of February, so maybe three months, two, three months.

Q. YOUR SISTERS --

A. My sister went with her parents, and her fiance was there already and my brother too.

Q. DID YOU HAVE EXTENDED FAMILY, AUNTS AND UNCLES AND GRANDPARENTS LIKE THAT IN VIENNA?

A. Yes, I had aunts and uncles, and they all left. Looking back, it seemed they didn't share as much information as I think they should have shared, but it was very abnormal times.

Q. DID THEY ALL GET OUT?

A. They all got out except for the husband of this one

aunt that I moved to. He was sent to Buchenwald, and he was murdered there.

Q. AND YOU WERE ABLE TO FIND THAT OUT SPECIFICALLY?

A. Yes. They sent the urn with the ashes to my aunt at that time.

Q. WAS HE JEWISH?

A. Yes. He was -- again, a little bit of hindsight, he was a sergeant or corporal or something in the army in World War I, and the stories that we heard about his death there in the concentration camp was that he had leadership qualities, and they went always after anybody that showed any sign of leadership. They went after those first. So they knew what they were doing.

Q. DID YOUR FAMILY HEAR THE DETAILS OF HOW THIS MAN WAS KILLED?

A. Yes.

Q. DESCRIBE THOSE.

A. Well, the details as I remember, he didn't really try to organize any resistance. He just tried to organize the chaos a little bit and showed his leadership qualities, and he was beaten to death.

And my parents were gone already. I was with my aunt at the time when she got the urn of supposedly his ashes. So my aunt was bitter because she had a daughter, and the daughter somehow got in touch with family in the United States, and I don't know how they got in touch because we were not in continuous touch, but anyway she did.

And she was maybe two years older than I was, the

daughter, and she left alone for the United States. And at that time, it was relatively -- compared to later on, it was relatively easy. It was quite difficult. But she went on one of the big ships, Queen Mary or something, and she went to the United States. So she must have been 16 or 17 at that time, 17, and my aunt stayed. And later on another aunt that went to England helped her get to England.

Q. AMERICA WAS ACCEPTING THE REFUGEES FROM AUSTRIA?

A. Very selectively. You couldn't just go there. You couldn't go anywhere. Some people went over the border to Italy, and some were sent back. I don't know how we got the Belgium connection, because I don't recall knowing anybody in Belgium. But we did that, and some people tried to go to Switzerland, of course, but very few succeeded.

Q. DID YOUR FATHER, WHEN HIS SHOE FACTORIES WERE OPERATING, DID HE HAVE INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS CONNECTIONS IN BELGIUM OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT?

A. No, not in Belgium really. He had some business connection in the United States. He was exporting ski shoes to the United States, so that helped us later on. But he did not have any connection in Belgium. But one of my uncles that was in at the textile business, he had some connection in England. That's why my aunt and uncle went to England.

Q. YOU REJOINED YOUR FAMILY IN BELGIUM?

A. I rejoined the family.

Q. WHAT WAS YOUR SITUATION THERE?

A. Well, I guess we had some money from the aunt in Switzerland or wherever we got the money from. We lived in a

furnished, small apartment, and I don't know what we were waiting for.

Q. THIS WAS EARLY 1939?

A. That was in early '39, yes.

And we were, I guess, my father being optimistic, he again felt this fellow would not be lasting very long; and he really didn't, if you look at history, but certainly long enough to do an awful lot of damage.

At that time Belgium gave you a visiting visa, which I think was good for three months or something of that sort. So you went from one extension to the next. It was not your permanent residence.

And, of course, the language was different. And Flemish was easier to understand because it was more similar to German than to French. And my sister spoke French. She took French in school, I guess; and my high school was English, Latin and English, and hers was French and Latin, so she spoke some French, and my future brother-in-law, her fiance, did too. And he was a doctor, a medical doctor, so he became part of the Jewish community there to help, I guess, be a doctor to the -- he was not allowed to practice in Belgium, but he was allowed to help the Jewish refugees that came from Germany and Austria.

Q. WHAT CITY WERE YOU IN, AND WERE THERE A LOT OF JEWISH REFUGEES?

A. Brussels. And actually more Jews were in Antwerp than in Brussels. For some reason I don't really know, we were in Brussels. And things started to, well, everyday life

starts to take over, and there's no comparison to the way we lived before, but we were never hungry so to say.

Q. WHAT DID YOU DO? YOU WERE WHAT, 15?

A. I was 15. And my parents identified that there was a need to learn a trade rather than hope to have a more academic career, and my father saw that very clearly. I'm not sure my mother saw it that clearly. I think many people of the Jewish community must have felt the same way, and they started a course for young people around my age to learn to become toolmakers and machinists, and so on, and they apparently had some very good engineers from Germany -- Jewish engineers from Germany to instruct young people, and I became part of that group. It was a wonderful thing, of course.

I would like to excuse myself for a few minutes.

(Whereupon, a break was taken.)

Q. YOU WERE TAKING THIS TRADE COURSE?

A. Yes. But I left out something.

Before I did that, my parents thought that I should become a mechanical dentist. In Europe, apparently, you don't need to be a doctor of dentistry for certain type of work. You had to be a doctor to pull teeth, but not to put in fillings and crowns and bridges and such. And they apprenticed me out to a dentist, and he was supposed to teach me, or I was supposed to help him with some of the dental work. But I didn't learn much, and I just wound up carrying his briefcase really. And I told my parents that it's better than nothing, but it's not really the final thing. It was

largely, I guess, he went through the motions of helping people, but he didn't really do much.

So after a month or two, I dropped that, and I started this course I mentioned before, which was very good because it was both morning and afternoon session. In the morning, we had shop. Actually, we had machines there, and they trained us in shop training. And in the afternoon, we had theory. The irony, the morning session, it was largely in Flemish, and I didn't speak any Flemish; and the afternoon session, theory was in French. I didn't speak any French.

Q. WERE THERE NOT JEWISH INSTRUCTORS?

A. They were largely, yes, there were a number of Jewish instructors. Of course, we could communicate with them, but the shop people were Belgium or Flemish, and so it was -- well, at that time I thought it was good, and looking back, it was exceptionally good.

It kept us off the streets, so to say, and gave us some responsibility to be there at eight o'clock in the morning and so on and stayed there practically all day. And, of course, we learned a trade, which turned out to be extremely important for the rest of our life really. That was just designed for people approximately my age, approximately a year or two older, and it was done with the Jewish community, and it was done quite well.

Q. DID YOUR FATHER AND YOUR OLDER BROTHER OR YOUR MOTHER, DID THEY WORK IN BELGIUM?

A. No. No. Well, let me get to that.

No, they did not in the beginning. My father

then -- I don't know how he communicated with the people, but somehow he did, and because he, too, did not speak French or Flemish, and he really became part owner of a small shoe factory making children's shoes and sandals and things like that. And I remember the factory very well. It was a tremendous factory, it was something. And I'm absolutely amazed at how he did that. I did not ask him later on how he managed it, but he did do that. So we were able to support ourselves.

I didn't get paid, but I got some sort of something. Even though it was school, I got some payment equivalent to I don't know what, but it was some sort of payment. So I didn't have to go to my father for pocket money. It was a very good program, and I became an expert tool and die maker. But I learned a lot there.

Well, anyway, so that's how we stayed in Belgium. And that takes us into May of 1940 now when the Germans marched into Belgium.

Q. COULD YOUR FAMILY SEE ANYTHING LIKE THAT COMING? I MEAN, HITLER HAD INVADED POLAND, OF COURSE, BY NOW.

A. No. He did invade Poland and Czechoslovakia before that, and we never -- at least to my knowledge, we never even thought that he would go into Belgium. There was a war between Germany and the French; and the imaginary line, I remember, but there was no real warfare.

Q. A PHONY WAR?

A. A phony war on both sides.

And we didn't think so, so it came somewhat as a

surprise, but we took it seriously from the beginning, and we and many others say, where should we go next? And nobody really thought that they would march into Belgium, and a few days later be in France and all that, and so the idea was could we escape to France or possibly to England. Many people went to Dunkirk, and very few were evacuated with the remainder of the British Army in Dunkirk.

Maybe a few were, but not many, and many went to France. We tried to go to France too, but then either we were not competent or maybe we were unrealistic. We thought it was impossible. All the roads were blocked.

Q. YOU WERE STILL IN BELGIUM AT A TIME WHEN THE GERMAN ARMY HAD OVERCOME BELGIUM?

A. Overcome Belgium at the border there, and they were getting through.

Q. THEY HAD ALREADY REACHED DUNKIRK?

A. Well, they had not quite reached Dunkirk. They first occupied Brussels in a very short period of time maybe a week or so.

Q. YOU WERE STILL THERE?

A. We were still in Brussels. We tried to go away to France, but so were many others. We saw the futility, I guess, and it was a right decision. We just gave up, and we went back to our homes. When the Germans marched into Belgium and occupied the whole country, and certainly Brussels was one of the early cities they occupied, and it was largely the German army, of course, that came first, and my father felt at that time, correctly, that if he can get

out, we should try to get out now while the army is still in charge rather than to wait for the political people to take over. This was a hundred percent correct, and it indeed helped save our lives.

I don't know the details . I wish I knew the details, but I never asked about it, and nobody else is here to ask. But apparently, we heard the place to go was Lisbon, Portugal, but in order to get to Portugal, you have to go through France and Spain.

Q. WHAT WAS YOUR DESTINATION?

A. Lisbon. From there, to go to the United States.

Q. ULTIMATELY YOU WANTED TO GO TO THE UNITED STATES?

A. Oh, definitely.

And at that time I think we did make contact with our far relatives that we had that we hardly knew about for all these years. My father had an aunt there, and we were in touch with them.

But, well, there was no consulate there, nothing we could do. We felt we had to go to Lisbon if we ever wanted to reach the United States, and we did. But we had to go through France which really was part of the occupied zone, which was not too difficult especially if you had a visa going to Spain and to Lisbon -- and to Portugal, and we did have a Portuguese visa and, again, I don't know if it was made in the cellar or it came from Portugal. But we had a so-called legitimate Portuguese visa. But we didn't have a Spanish visa.

And I do remember that my father went to the

Spanish consulate, and my father didn't speak French; and I, at that time spoke a little French, and he took me with him to be the interpreter, but the fellows that knew my father wanted him to stamp our passport with the Spanish transit visa. It was really just a transit visa, and my father folded some money in there, and he took it, looked at it, and gave it back to my father until my father put the right amount of money in there.

So, again, you had people taking advantage of the misery. But, anyway, the more important thing is that we packed our bags and we went on a regular train through France to go to Spain, and we had a Spanish visa, and we had a Portuguese visa.

We had to change trains in Paris. I remember that. And everything was done on a day-to-day basis. It was not like a tourist going to Portugal. And for some reason, we had to stay in Paris for a couple of days.

Q. WAS IT EASY TO SEE THE GERMAN PRESENCE IN PARIS?

A. Oh, yes, occupied, uniform and so on. And this really was the unpleasant part. We tried to mix in with the population as much as possible. And I remember that very well; it was really frightening.

I was walking around, maybe I was sight-seeing, and a German officer came over and in very broken French asked me where a certain street was, and I had no idea where the street was, of course, and he asked me where the street was, and I had a hard time understanding him, what he really wanted, and somehow got bailed out by either -- at that time

I think he was married to my sister already, my brother-in-law. But this was the kind of condition things were.

And anyway we stayed there for a few days, and then went on to Spain on the train, but we didn't really stop. When the train stopped, we stopped, but we stayed on the train continuously, but it was just a transit through Spain.

Spain was allied to Germany at that time, and we didn't trust them, and I don't think we should have trusted them. We saw obvious Gestapo agents going through these trains, but somehow they didn't touch us, and we went to Portugal.

Q. YOU'RE TRAVELING ON AN AUSTRIAN PASSPORT ALL THIS TIME?

A. We still had -- I think it was a German passport at that time already, and it had a big "J" on the German passport, and Austrian passport didn't exist any longer.

And for some reason, they detained my brother-in-law on the border, the Portuguese did. I still don't know why, and we never found out why, and they let the rest of us go on to Lisbon, and he was kept in a small town, in a small border town, and they didn't let him -- they didn't send him back, but they didn't let him in. We still don't know why. Maybe because was a doctor.

Q. HOW LONG DID THEY KEEP HIM?

A. They kept him there, if I remember correctly, for about two months, and we were very concerned because it was on the border of Spain, that they would send him back. But

two months or so later, they did release him to go on to Lisbon. And we don't know why they kept him. We don't know why they released them. We didn't know why one thing happened and why it didn't happen.

We lived in Lisbon. It was a beautiful city. And there were, of course, a lot of Jewish, largely Jewish refugees from France and Belgium, from all of Europe really. They were all trying to get to the United States. And we established contact with the long-forgotten aunt which my father had in the United States, and she remembered my father as a child or something. She had children of her own, and the children sent us so-called affidavits that you had to have in order to get to the United States.

Q. WERE THOSE AFFIDAVITS SAYING THAT THEY WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE TO SUPPORT YOU?

A. That's right.

Q. THEN YOU COULD GET A VISA TO COME IN?

A. On that basis, there was a quota problem, too. I remember one incident distinctly. My English at that time was pretty good. Well, I had, I think, one year in high school and took some courses. Anyway, I was able to speak some English.

My father had a hard time with the foreign languages, so I went with my father to the consul, and he asked me where the relatives -- how well we knew the relatives, and we said we don't know them intimately well, but they're part of the family and all that, and then they said, "Do you think they will really support you?"

And, of course, the correct answer was, "Of course, they will." And at that time, well, I was very sure of myself. Out of ignorance we become sometimes very courageous, and I said, "I don't, but I heard of the United States. I don't think we need to be supported by anybody. I have a trade, and I can work and I can support myself. My father supported himself all his life, and I don't see why I have to rely on the old aunt."

It was just the wrong answer, but somehow the fellow liked what I said, and he gave us the visa. Maybe we would have gotten it anyhow. I don't know.

Q. THE U. S. CONSULATE IN LISBON?

A. The U. S. Consulate in Lisbon, yes.

And we had the visa, and the next thing was to get on the boat. And there were not many boats going to the United States; and, again, it was a matter of bribery always to get on the boat. We did get on the Portuguese boat. It was one of the few last.

Q. WHAT SHIP?

A. I'm not quite sure. I think it was the Silver Pinto, if I remember correctly.

Q. YOU RECALL THAT YOU HAD TO BRIBE PEOPLE TO GET ON THE BOAT?

A. Yes, yes.

Q. EVERYONE IN LISBON WAS TRYING TO GET ON A BOAT?

A. Yes. You couldn't get on the boat unless you had a visa, but even those few that had a visa, there weren't enough boats to go around, I guess.

Q. DO YOU RECALL HOW MUCH OF A BRIBE IT WAS?

A. No, I don't recall, but I know that in relation to what we had, it was a lot. But -- well, we just had to leave. Even Lisbon -- Portugal was never occupied. We never knew.

Q. YOU MUST HAVE AT LEAST BECOME FAMILIAR WITH SOME OTHER REFUGEES WHILE YOU WERE?

A. Yes.

Q. RAN INTO EACH OTHER AT THE EMBASSIES?

A. Oh, sure, yes.

Q. THERE MUST HAVE BEEN OTHER REFUGEES THERE WHO HAD NO MONEY WITH WHICH TO BRIBE?

A. Yes.

Q. DO YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED?

A. I think basically they were out of luck because some of the people had an awful lot of money. Some of the Belgium diamond people were able to take their factory and a satchel of diamonds with them. There was no way, and that was our concern, there was no way we could compete. We had some money, but not a lot. There was no way we could compete with these people, but we did. Somehow my father did.

Q. IF PERSONS HAD NO MONEY TO BRIBE, WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM? DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA?

A. I think they stayed there.

Q. WAS THERE A LIMIT ON HOW LONG YOU COULD STAY IN LISBON?

A. Yes, there was a limit, but there was no place to go.

Q. WAS ANYONE EVER SENT BACK?

A. Not to my knowledge. Some people I remember did go to North Africa, Casa Blanca, and various places, but none of them, to my knowledge, was sent back. But the fear of being sent back was always there.

And there were, obviously, German agents all around, but we did get on the boat -- I think it was the Silver Pinto, and we got to the United States.

Q. WHEN YOU WERE IN LISBON?

A. For about a year there.

Q. ABOUT A YEAR?

A. Yes.

Q. WERE YOU AWARE, AND WERE OTHER REFUGEES AWARE OF CONCENTRATION CAMPS AND THINGS THAT WERE HAPPENING BACK IN GERMANY?

A. Yes, we were aware of it.

Again, nobody's right mind could imagine what really happened, but we were well aware of it, and everybody was pretty much aware of it.

Q. EVERYBODY WAS CERTAINLY FEARFUL?

A. Fearful? Oh, yes.

Q. THERE WERE GERMAN AGENTS ALL AROUND?

A. That's true, and even though I don't know of a case, the rumor mill was strong, and people said they took one man back for political reasons or whatever. So the rumor mill was very bad.

But, again, we knew there were concentration camps, but, again, we didn't think it was a mass murder. We thought

it was individuals who were put into camps, and maybe that's how it started, but it certainly got much worse.

Q. THEN YOUR FAMILY, ALL YOUR FAMILY, WENT ON THE SHIP TOGETHER; IS THAT CORRECT?

A. Yes, my sister, brother, and parents.

Q. AND YOU?

A. And myself, yes. That was it.

Q. WHERE DID YOU LAND?

A. Where did we land?

Q. IN NEW YORK -- OR IN THE UNITED STATES, WHERE DID THE SHIP LAND?

A. I think it was in Brooklyn, as a matter of fact.

Q. AND WHERE WAS YOUR RELATIVE, YOUR AUNT?

A. They happened to live in Brooklyn, and they -- I don't remember exactly, but I think they prepared some accommodation for us, and I think my brother and I went to one of the aunt's children's house as guests for a short while. Then my parents rented an apartment, and it was a two-family house, and we all moved together again. I think my brother was -- I was 17 -- was 18 at that time -- it was May, I came to the United States in May, so it was just my 18th birthday.

But let me -- I did forget something. When we were in Brussels and the Germans marched into Brussels, the Belgians felt they had to do something, and so they rounded up largely Jewish -- Jews as German spies, and they sent us to empty army barracks.

Q. TO SPY ON THE GERMANS?

A. Well, the Jews to spy on the Belgians to help. In other words, they felt they had to do something against the Germans because the Germans were just walking into Belgium really. So they rounded up a bunch of Jews as German spies, and they sent us to an empty army barracks around Brussels on the outskirts of Brussels, and that's where I had my 17th birthday. That was in May of 1940.

Q. TO BE SURE I UNDERSTAND YOU -- THE BELGIANS ROUNDED UP JEWISH REFUGEES WHO WERE GERMAN-SPEAKING?

A. Yes.

Q. CONTENDING THAT YOU WERE SPIES FOR GERMANY?

A. To Germany. And I'm not sure if they knew that we were refugees but understood what it meant or just think these are people that speak German.

Q. WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU ALL?

A. I was, and my father, only the men, and we stayed at the barracks for maybe three or four days, and everyone disappeared. The guards disappeared. It was a funny episode there. Everybody disappeared, and the only fellow that stayed was the baker, and he wasn't told that something was to stop, and he kept on baking bread -- beautiful white bread. I remember that. It seemed like beautiful white bread, and nobody was there, so we left too. And each one of us had two or three loaves of bread with us, and we went back to our apartment where my sister and mother stayed.

But in any case, we got settled in Brooklyn rather quickly, not too far from where my aunt lived and her children lived, and they were very nice to us.

Q. AFTER YOUR LEAVING THE CAMP WITH TWO OR THREE LOAVES OF BREAD EACH?

A. Yes.

Q. WERE YOU EVER TROUBLED BY THE BELGIAN AUTHORITIES AGAIN?

A. No, not at all.

Q. THEY JUST MADE A GESTURE?

A. Gesture that they had to round up somebody. I guess they couldn't round up the right people, so they rounded up the German-speaking.

Q. SO YOU STILL WERE IN BELGIUM FOR A LITTLE WHILE?

A. Yes, we did, and I told you what happened before and trying to get a Spanish transit visa and all that, and we left.

It was lucky that we left while the army was still in control, the occupation army was still in control. And we understand from the reports that we got, that soon after that the Gestapo came, and then it was almost impossible to leave once they came, but the army was more of a bureaucracy. If you had certain things, you could go.

Q. YOUR FAMILY, THEN, IS IN BROOKLYN, AND GO AHEAD AND BRING US UP-TO-DATE ON WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR FAMILY.

A. Well, my father -- we had some money left, but not an awful lot because of the bribery and other things we had to do on the way. And my father somehow pretty early got started, but he did know leather and shoes very well, and he bought leather and sold it and made some money this way.

My brother-in-law had to study so he could get a

license to practice medicine in the United States. So he did that.

My brother got some sort of a job. I don't remember what it was, but it was not much of a job, but it was a job.

And I got a job as a toolmaker.

Q. TOOLMAKER?

A. Yes, right then and there.

Q. THEY NEEDED A LOT OF TOOLMAKERS?

A. Yes. It was the beginning of the war, and I did get a job and very good pay. It seemed at that time to be good pay. It was just under a dollar, which was a lot; but some people got forty cents an hour. So things were happy again.

My sister got some sort of a job, too, and I forgot what she did. But she did not have any special skills. And my father started to make a decent living, but what he did at that time is he bought leather and then sorted the bundles of leather into maybe three or four different piles. One pile was good for handbag leather, the other for shoes, and so on, and usually they had to buy the whole pile and then sell off what they couldn't use. And my father made a business out of sorting this leather and selling it to different people, and I'm still amazed how he did that. I mean the sorting was easy, but how he communicated to sell to the people.

Q. WITHOUT LANGUAGE?

A. Without language, but he did.

Q. DID YOUR FAMILY STAY IN BROOKLYN THROUGHOUT THE

WAR?

A. Yes. We stayed in Brooklyn. Yes, we stayed in Brooklyn for quite a while.

Q. SHOES BECAME RATIONED IN THIS COUNTRY?

A. Yes, but he didn't make shoes at that time.

Q. IT WAS JUST LEATHER?

A. Yes. But leather was difficult to get, too, and he apparently had some friends, business acquaintances in Brazil, so he got leather imported from Brazil, which he sorted and he sold to the different people.

Q. TAKE US ON UP TO THE POINT WHERE YOU -- WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR FAMILY AND WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU WHEN YOU DECIDED TO BECOME AN ENGINEER WITH YOUR EDUCATION AND SO ON?

A. Well, I worked as a toolmaker, and then I was drafted into to the army, and I think I got one deferment because what I did was essential work.

Q. WHAT SORT OF FACTORY OR PLANT?

A. It was a relatively small plant, but we were making dies for bullets, I think it was. But it was a war-type thing, and that's why they gave me a six-month deferment, but I guess it was important enough at that time to get the deferment. I wasn't that skilled. I mean, I knew more than newcomers to it, but anyway, I did get that.

I started to make some good money at that time. I think I made something like a dollar fifty an hour, which was good money at that time. And before I got into the army, I think it was close to \$2.00 an hour, and I made dies and jigs and fixtures. And I really became skilled after a while.

Q. AND THEN YOU WERE DRAFTED DID YOU SAY?

A. Yes. And only after I got out of the army.

Q. YOU WERE NOT A U. S. CITIZEN?

A. I was not a U. S. citizen at that time, but after maybe a month or two in the army, they took all the uncitizens and made us citizens so we did not have to wait five years that you usually have to wait, and that was really very uneventful.

Q. (INAUDIBLE) -- TIME IN THE ARMY?

A. Well, at that time I was infantry replacement really, which is not a very desirable position to be in, and I tried to get into the ski mountain infantry, the Tenth Mountain, as a matter of fact, and I did get into that, but they didn't do any skiing at that time. They had other type of training. And then, by some miracle -- not miracle, but there was a call for German-speaking people, and I was picked for that.

Q. BY THIS TIME YOUR ENGLISH WAS PRETTY GOOD I WOULD IMAGINE?

A. Oh, yes. I still have an accent so I certainly had at that time, but I was picked to help. We had some German prisoners-of-war in the United States and to help guard them and administrate, which was --

Q. WHAT LOCATION WAS THAT?

A. That was the Camp Howsie (phonetic) in Texas.

Q. TEXAS?

A. It was the Texas/Oklahoma border. And that was it. Really it was very uneventful. On the one hand, I would

have liked to go on more frontline fighting. On the other hand, I was happy with the assignment.

Q. YOU SPENT THE REST OF THE -- UNTIL THE WAR WAS OVER?

A. Yes.

Q. THEN AFTER THE WAR, WHAT?

A. Well, after the war, I went to school on the GI Bill.

Q. WHERE DID YOU GO?

A. Well, I didn't have a high school diploma at that time, and I applied to college right away because I was 18, 19 years old, and I didn't feel like going to high school. I passed some examinations, and I got accepted by Polytechnic. It's now called Polytechnic University which was Brooklyn Polytech, which was an engineering school; and indeed, I did get the bachelor's mechanical engineering after three years there.

Q. AND YOUR FAMILY IS STILL THERE IN BROOKLYN?

A. Yeah. They still lived in Brooklyn. Yes, my brother-in-law did. He never went into the army, but he did pass his medical examination and became a doctor and had to work in the hospital for a while. And my brother was drafted very early in the army, but he, too, he stayed in the army for maybe four or five years but he became a staff sergeant or some sergeant, and he too was administrating. He was an accountant really, and he was administrating some German prisoners-of-war.

Q. Using his German language skill?

A. Using his language, also accounting skills. Apparently, some of the prisoners were allowed to work with the farmers, were allowed to pick peanuts, and they got some pay for it. Well, there had to be an accounting done for that, and he did this. And he was drafted, as I said before, quite early. It was '41. And he stayed till '46 or something.

Q. THEN AFTER YOU COMPLETED YOUR COLLEGE DEGREE, WHAT DID YOU DO THEN?

A. I got a job.

Well, actually, I did get a job. I became an instructor at a college; and again, my skills of being able to operate machinery came in very useful at that time because the average engineer really doesn't learn that. So it was a little bit different from that, and I did that and went to graduate school at the same time two and a half to three years. I did get the master's in industrial engineering at NYU at the time. And I was married at the time, and I was supporting myself, and my wife was working too.

Q. SHE WAS A BROOKLYN GIRL?

A. Yes. But she, too, came from Europe.

Q. WHAT COUNTRY?

A. She came from Poland.

Q. AND YOU MET HER WHERE?

A. I met her in New York really. Before I went into the army. Somebody on the job thought you were such a nice young man.

And then after I got my master's degree, I decided

that futures in academics is not the way to go, that I needed more practical experience. And I did get a job in the Bell System, Western Electric first and then the Bell System, and I stayed there.

Q. YOU STAYED THERE UNTIL RETIREMENT?

A. 1956. And then I came to California in '56. I was recruited by Bill Sharkly.

Q. BILL SHARKLY?

A. Yes.

Q. THAT'S STANFORD?

A. Yes. He got the Nobel Prize for inventing the transistor.

And he got a group of people together, and my job was supposed to be manufacturing, and that's what I did in the Bell System, and he brought me to California, really.

Q. THEN YOUR PARENTS REMAINED IN BROOKLYN, I GUESS?

A. My parents remained in Brooklyn 1956. My sister got pretty well established in Brooklyn, and he (brother-in-law) was a very successful doctor. My brother stayed in South Carolina where he was stationed most of the time. And he married a local girl there, and he started a family and he stayed there and worked as an accountant.

Q. AND YOUR PARENTS REMAINED -- I GATHER YOUR PARENTS ARE NO LONGER LIVING?

A. No, they were still living in '56.

Q. IN '56 THEY WERE?

A. Now they're not. In '56 they were still living, and they lived in Brooklyn, and my father started to get

older, of course, and he kept on doing this thing, and then he opened a shoe factory finally. And he made children's shoes, largely. I don't think he was rich, but they supported themselves well.

But I felt I had to leave. I felt it was good opportunity; and it turned out, of course, to be the right thing to do, though, I didn't know it at the time how good it was.

Q. DO YOU HAVE CHILDREN?

A. Yes, two children. One was Lisa, who you saw earlier; and I have a son, older son.

Q. HAVE YOU DISCUSSED YOUR EUROPEAN EXPERIENCES WITH YOUR CHILDREN?

A. Yes. They ask questions about it, and that's why my daughter really helped arrange this interview here. Because I didn't think I had really that much to tell because I saw a lot of the things, but I didn't experience the suffering and indignities myself, and she felt that's not for me to judge.

Q. YOUR DISRUPTION OF YOUR FAMILY?

A. Of course. But compared to all the physical suffering people had to undergo, I was really spared. But especially Lisa felt that I may have something, a story to tell.

Q. YOUR IMMEDIATE FAMILY WAS ABLE TO ESCAPE AND LEAVE THERE. WERE THERE OTHER RELATIVES, PERHAPS MORE REMOTE RELATIVES WHO DID NOT LEAVE?

A. Yes. There were a number of remote relatives.

Largely my father's family. Many of them stayed in Poland, and they were all, with the exception of one or two people, which we found out later. They were all murdered. And my mother's family largely escaped except for this one uncle that I mentioned before who was killed.

Q. BUT YOUR FATHER'S RELATIVES, HOW MANY OF THOSE IN A GENERAL SENSE?

A. I did not know them all because they lived in Poland, and I think he had maybe two or three siblings and their families.

Q. I WONDER IF YOUR FATHER, AFTER THE WAR WAS OVER, WAS THERE ANY ATTEMPT TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED?

A. I think he did find out, and he found that there was one young man who somehow escaped the whole thing, and we helped bring him over to the United States; and as a matter of fact, he was a doctor, and by some miracle, he was spared.

Being a doctor, you sometimes had to do certain things different from the others. You take care of some people, and we succeeded in getting him to the United States. He became a well-to-do physician. And he told us some of the stories -- not stories -- I mean he gave us an accounting of what happened, and apparently somebody escaped to Israel, and we did talk to them. So my father found out all the terrible things that had happened to the family.

Q. HAVE YOU EVER, IN REFLECTING BACK, WONDERED WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF YOU HAD MANAGED TO GO TO PALESTINE BACK IN THOSE DAYS?

A. Yes. I did and very often and even though things went very much my way here, I sometimes did wonder what would have happened and sometimes almost that I should have gone to Israel, but sometimes you accept the way things happen. I guess I didn't have enough strength or courage to drop everything and go to Israel, and there was very strong feeling in my family.

Q. STRONG FEELING FOR ISRAEL?

A. Yes, in my family. My brother, less so.

Q. HAVE YOU BEEN TO ISRAEL NOW?

A. Yes, I have been there two times. And, actually, I did, for the first time, meet a cousin there who was the daughter of one of my father's sisters. And she ran away from home before the war to go to Israel, which was a terrible thing, but she's the only one that survived.

Q. WAS THERE A STRONG -- BACK IN YOUR VIENNESE DAYS WHEN YOU WERE A YOUNG MAN, DID YOU NOTICE A STRONG ZIONIST MOVEMENT IN VIENNA?

A. Yes, at least in the circles.

As a matter of fact, two of my father's brothers before the war went over to Israel in '36 maybe or '34, went to Israel; and they, again, most likely would not have survived had they not gone to Israel. My father's brothers, they may have been a little younger than my father, but they were kind of old for Israel, and they didn't have any special skills, and so I partially am happy, I mean, my parents urging me to acquire a skill, which was not customary among Jewish people, really changed my life.

Q. NOT CUSTOMARY IN WHAT WAY?

A. Skills, work with your hands.

Q. MOST OF THE PEOPLE WERE ACADEMIC?

A. Yes, either academic or some business kind of a thing, but working with the hands was not done in our circles, our friends, and I don't know. I think without the guidance of my parents, I would not have started this at all, and I am glad that I did, of course.

Q. ON YOUR VISITS TO ISRAEL HAVE YOU MET ANY PEOPLE WHOM YOU GREW UP WITH IN VIENNA?

A. No. I did see the two uncles, my father's brothers who were there, and I met some of their children and met this young woman who went as a teenager to Israel when she ran away. I met her for the first time, and I'm still very much in touch with her children. And actually both her sons became doctors, medical doctors, and one of them is head of some hospital in Tel Aviv, and he comes to the United States pretty often, and he even stayed at my house for a while, maybe a week or so, and my sister's house in New York.

Q. HAVE YOU BEEN BACK TO VIENNA?

A. Yes, I've been there twice. The first time it was in '67, and my motives there, I don't know, I guess I think my motives were I wanted to show the children that -- well, you see those terrible pictures and, of course, the way the Germans handled things stripped people of their dignity and then killed them really, and I wanted to show my children how I lived before the war, and that was the main purpose of my trip to Vienna the first time, and I succeeded in doing

that. Showed them the house where I was born and where the grandmother lived there.

Q. IT'S STILL THERE?

A. Yes, very little of Vienna was destroyed, and showed them various things, the school I used to go to. It worked out well. And then Lisa was still small.

The second time, I went just to show my wife. We were in Israel. On the way back, we went to Vienna. It felt quite uncomfortable at that time.

Q. WHAT YEAR WAS THAT?

A. The first was in '67; the next was maybe 1969, 1970.

Q. WHY?

A. I just couldn't pin it down. I just didn't feel comfortable, and I asked my wife why did I have to come here at all and we, of course, came to the conclusion that I don't have to.

Q. SHE WAS NOT VIENNESE?

A. No, she was not Viennese. She is a little younger than I.

Q. DOES SHE SPEAK GERMAN?

A. Yes, she speaks German. She came to the United States with her parents to the World's Fair. It was the World's Fair in '39. That was before Poland was occupied. So they came here as tourists to see the World's Fair, and while they were here, the war broke out, so they never went back, and they settled in the United States.

Q. JUST A FEW YEARS AGO EAST GERMANY AND WEST GERMANY

WERE REUNITED. DID YOU HAVE A POINT OF VIEW ON WHETHER THAT SHOULD HAVE HAPPENED OR NOT?

A. Yes. I'm amazed about the recovery of Germany and even the recovery of Austria as well; and, obviously, I'm not partial to -- I'm not trying to be impartial, but it's difficult for me to forgive on one hand. On the other hand, you get consumed with hatred, too, so rather than fight, I don't know, going to discussions in Vienna, I just decided not to expose myself to it any longer because even if I was wrong, I still couldn't feel any different than the way I felt.

Q. IN YOUR HEART, HOWEVER, DO YOU THINK IT WAS GOOD OR BAD THAT EAST GERMANY, THAT GERMANY IS REUNITED?

A. Well, anything -- yes, I thought it was bad, but obviously my heart -- anybody would have asked me, I would have told the truth. It meant really that everything is more or less forgotten and forgiven, and it was not just war, but it was really -- it was terrible, and I don't think it should be forgotten that quickly. So I did not think it was progress even though maybe it was progress towards peace for the whole world.

Q. YOU'RE AWARE OF WHAT ARE CALLED NEO-NAZIS IN GERMANY, I GATHER. DO YOU HAVE AN OBSERVATION ABOUT THAT?

A. Well, the other day, just a few days ago in the Austrian election some right-wing party got increased participation in the parliament, or whatever they have. Yeah, it's going back to the good old days, and they don't have anybody left to kill there, so I don't know what they're

going to do next.

Q. I WAS GOING TO ASK YOU WHEN YOU RETURNED TO VIENNA, DID YOU FIND MUCH OF A JEWISH COMMUNITY THERE?

A. No, I didn't find anything, really, to speak of. By some miracle, the synagogue that we used to go to was still standing. It was partially destroyed, but basically it was standing. Apparently they have the Jewish community government or consul is located there. But I have nobody there for me to contact, and I didn't try very hard. I just didn't, there was nobody close that I could contact. Maybe I could have found somebody, but I didn't try.

Q. DO YOU THINK YOU'LL EVER GO TO VIENNA AGAIN?

A. No. That's the last trip. Can't tell you exactly what happened there that made it, because I don't know myself, but I started to feel very uncomfortable, and I just decided not to go.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO SAY IN CONCLUSION?

A. I'm happy that my children won't have the strong resentment that I have, very strong hatred or resentment, to put it mildly. And yet they do realize what was going on and how bad it was. But not having participated in it, I think they have a much more healthy, normal attitude towards it; and I'm not sure the exact formula on how to do it, but I did it, so I'm glad about that.

Q. HOW OLD ARE YOUR CHILDREN?

A. Well, my daughter is 35. My son is 41, 42. So they are grown-up, as grown-up as they'll ever be.

Q. ARE YOU GOING TO LEAVE THEM THIS VIDEO RECORD?

A. Of course.

Yes, my daughter, as I mentioned before, she arranged the whole thing for me. She is a lawyer by training, and she's now in the process of having children.

(Sound on the tape stops here.)

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