

BAY AREA HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
GARY BIGUS

INTERVIEWER: Peter and Elizabeth Ryan
TRANSCRIBER: Tessa Botha
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AREA: SAN MATEO, CALIFORNIA - BETH-EL TEMPLE

A There was a little joke, you know, if people would say something against the Jews, the Jew would say: "Yeah, sure, the Jews and the bicycle drivers." So he'd said: "Why the bicycle drivers?" And we would answer: "Why the Jews?"

Q I LIKE IT, I LIKE IT.
TODAY IS MAY 27TH 1998. WE'RE AT THE TEMPLE BETH-EL IN SAN MATEO, CALIFORNIA. WE ARE INTERVIEWING GARY BIGUS. MY NAME IS PETER RYAN, INTERVIEWER. ELIZABETH RYAN IS THE OTHER INTERVIEWER. AND, MAURICE HARRIS IS DOING THE VIDEO TAPE. COULD WE BEGIN BY MY ASKING WHERE AND WHEN YOU WERE BORN?

A I was born in Berlin, Germany, on the 2nd of October, 1924.

Q AND, HOW MANY PEOPLE WERE IN THE FAMILY?

A There was my father and my mother. I had a half brother, Willie.

Q WILLIE?

A He was the child - my mother was married before she met my father. And she was a widow, with a little boy, and that was my brother.

Q AND HOW MUCH OLDER WAS HE THAN YOU?

A Fifteen and a half years.

Q COULD YOU GIVE ME YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER'S NAMES?

A My father's name was Abraham Bigus and he was generally called Adolph, in Berlin. He lived at home then and in Berlin, they all called him Adolph. Very famous name. And my mother's name was Sarah. Her maiden name was Friedlander.

Q FRIEDLANDER.

A Her first marriage was [Rayveldt?]. And then, Bigus.

Q DID HER HUSBAND DIE?

A Yes, in 1919.

Q WHAT KIND OF LIVING ARRANGEMENTS DID YOU HAVE WHEN YOU WERE BORN?

A We were having a very comfortable what they call them, a middle class apartment. And we were living in it with.. Should I describe the apartment to you or what or..?

Q SURE, IF YOU WANT TO.

A No, it's up to you. I don't think...

Q HOW BIG WAS IT OR HOW SMALL?

A Oh, it has two bedrooms, dining room, living room, kitchen, and bath..

Q AND WHAT KIND OF A NEIGHBOURHOOD DID YOU HAVE?

A It was a middle class neighbourhood and a lot of Jewish families lived there. And it was surrounding that you would call [hand konfektion?] - now let me see - there were a lot of stores of gentlemen's outfitting. There were the suits, overcoats - no shirts or thing or hats. And they were, I think, all in Jewish hands and there were quite a bit in that street and our store was among them.

Q SO YOUR FATHER HAD A STORE?

A Right.

Q AND IT WAS A CLOTHING STORE?

A Right, for gentlemen's outfits - suits, overcoats, trousers, jackets, all kinds, leather jackets.

Q NOT SHIRTS AND SHOES?

A No, no. That was in Germany, it was a different store altogether

Q OKAY. WERE THERE ALSO NON-JEWISH PEOPLE LIVING IN THIS NEIGHBOURHOOD?

A Yes, there were. In our house, the funny thing is, the lower floors, my father I remember, were all Jews and in the upper floors, there were Gentiles.

Q COULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR EARLY SCHOOLING?

A Yes. I only went to Jewish school. You see, Berlin had about 200 000 Jews - and there were a lot of Jewish schools. So I first went to the Jewish Public School for Boys in [Keiserstrasse?], then later on to the Jewish High School - [Grosse Hamburgerstrasse?].

Q AND THERE WERE ONLY JEWS IN THIS SCHOOL?

A Only Jews and Jewish teachers.

Q AND WAS THERE JEWISH EDUCATION?

A Yes. They were not religious schools - there were also religious schools. But those schools where I went were not religious schools. But, let's say, in Bible class we did not have the New Testament only the Old Testament and once we were finished with I, we repeated it. But, with critical explanations - it was very interesting. And we had of course, one of the subjects was Hebrew - we learnt Hebrew, how to pray, and...

Q SO YOU LEARNED HEBREW?

A Yes.

Q WERE YOU TAKING CLASSES THAT WOULD LEAD YOU TO GO TO COLLEGE, TO UNIVERSITY?

A I was planning to, but, fate had it otherwise.

Q OKAY, BUT THAT WAS THE PLAN?

A That was the plan, originally, yes.

Q DID YOU HAVE NON-JEWISH FRIENDS?

A Two or rather, three. Yes.

Q THESE WERE PEOPLE IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD?

A Two of them were, while one was - you know, every summer in the college we went to certain places. And we always met the same people and one of them became my friend - yes.

Q WHAT KIND OF PLACES WOULD YOU GO TO IN THE SUMMER?

A Alright. The first three summers - it was 1929, '30 and '31 [Werdlieneritz?] where we lived at the villa of a hunter's family. He was a hunter. In 1932, '33 and '34 my mother and I, not my father, my mother and I - we went to the North Sea. It was the nicest and happiest vacations I ever had.

Q THE ONES THAT YOU HAD AT THE NORTH SEA

A And we always met the same people - we were a crowd and they knew we were Jewish. We were the only Jews there. 1932 they had, at the beach, baskets where you would sit and little cabanas for one or two persons and, you don't know it here, but it was very common over there. And there were flags, with flags on. 1932 you saw flags for the National Socialists, for the National Socialists and Nazis - the swastikas. Or, the German Conservatives, black, white and red, and also for Social Democrats.

Q THEY HAD THEIR OWN FLAG?

A Oh, yes, they had their own flag. But, you didn't see any hammer and sickle except for the Communist parties. You didn't see, but it ..

Q DID THEY HAVE A FLAG TOO?

A Oh, yes. The Communists?

Q YEAH.

A They had a red flag with a hammer and sickle.

Q OKAY. WAS THE HAMMER AND SICKLE BLACK?

A No, it was a golden colour. It was on the upper left side.

Q SO IT WAS RED AND GOLD?

A Like the, in the Soviet Union. The same flag was the flag of the Communist Party, in Germany.

- Q OKAY. DID YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT THOSE FLAGS WERE FOR THEN?
- A Oh, yes. I was quite politically, for my age, you know, educated, according to my dad.
- Q NOW YOU WERE ABOUT NINE OR TEN?
- A Let's, well, 1932 I was eight and a half years when I went over there, then nine and ten and a half years. And so, I knew already what anti-Semitism, about, what those flags were all about. 1933 there were no more.. the Nazis were already in power.
- Q AND THERE WERE NO MORE FLAGS, EXCEPT ONE?
- A Well, at that time you still see the black, white and red - the national flag. But in 1934, only Swastika.
- Q NOW WHERE DID YOU LEARN ABOUT WHAT THE FLAGS WERE AND WHAT THEY MEANT? HOW DID YOU LEARN THAT?
- A Oh, we were discussing, of course, politics.
- Q IN YOUR FAMILY?
- A In our family, and the upcoming of the Nazis, and I must admit I understood the whole thing.
- Q WAS YOUR FATHER POLITICAL?
- A Oh, he had his convictions, but he was not politically active - no. He was a businessman.
- Q DID HE BELONG TO ANY PARTY?
- A No he did not. We didn't.
- Q DID HE VOTE? DO YOU KNOW HOW HE VOTED?
- A Okay. When my father left Poland, he lost his Polish nationality and he was stateless. So, he couldn't vote.
- Q AAH.
- A My father never had the German nationality. He was stateless.

Q MARRYING YOUR MOTHER DID NOT GIVE HIM GERMAN NATIONALITY?

A On the contrary - my mother lost her German nationality and she became stateless too, because that was the law in Germany.

Q WAS IT BECAUSE HE WAS...

A And, I was born stateless. I still have the passport here - the stateless pass.

Q SO WAS IT BECAUSE THEY WERE JEWISH, OR JUST BECAUSE..

A No, no, no. Because he lost his nationality - and never applied for the German nationality. So he had a friend pass which is, that means, a passport for strangers.

Q NOW YOUR MOTHER LOST HERS BECAUSE SHE MARRIED YOUR FATHER?

A That's correct.

Q NOW COULD SHE HAVE REAPPLIED FOR HERS?

A I'm not sure - I don't think so.

Q BUT HE COULD HAVE APPLIED FOR IT?

A If he wanted to, I .. ja, but he never, he never. It occurred to him as I know my father, he could, I mean, he never, those times I don't think he ever..

Q HE COULDN'T IMAGINE HOW IMPORTANT IT WOULD BECOME?

A Right, and I'm glad he didn't, because we were - 1939 we were thrown out because we were stateless. If not...

Q THEY WOULD HAVE KEPT HIM, MAYBE.

A In fact, I'm the only survivor of my family. Everybody else, from my father and my mother's side, they perished in the Holocaust. So, my father and mother, we went to Shanghai - my father died in Shanghai, but if we were not stateless they would have stayed in Germany. They would have perished too.

Q I SEE. WHAT PART OF POLAND DID HE COME FROM?

A From a little town, Somperno?]. He told me it was in the surrounding of [Watslavik?], [Koloo?] and [Konyen?] - that's all what I know. It's not too far from the German border.

Q DO YOU KNOW HOW LONG THEY HAD BEEN THERE - HIS FAMILY?

A For generations.

Q FOR GENERATIONS.

A Oh, ja.

Q DO YOU KNOW WHY HE CAME TO GERMANY?

A Yes, I know. That part of Poland was part of Russia until 1917 / '18 / '19. and, his father had ten children and three boys, and the others were girls. The oldest boy, he had to serve in the Russian army - he became a sergeant. When the war broke out he was captured at the battle of [Tannenburg?]. The other boy, next, he fell in the First World War - also 1914, at the beginning of the war. He fell.

Q IN THE RUSSIAN ARMY? WAS HE IN THE RUSSIAN ARMY?

A He - the Russian army. The Russian army belonged to Russia, it was part of Russia. You see, today's Poland was part of Austria, [Galietsia?] and so on and part of Russia. So that part where my father come from was part of Russia.

Q WAS YOUR FATHER IN WORLD WAR I?

A Alright. He was then too young, ja. He was the youngest of the ten children. In fact, when he was born, his mother was 54, that I was told. Unusual but his mother was 54. And, ja, he was the very last one. They didn't expect it. So, when Poland declared its independence, it must have been 1918, I guess so - '17, 1918, the mother said, "I lost already my boys. Abraham, they called him Avram in Yiddish, he's my last one. If he goes, I'll die." So it was decided that my father goes over the border into Germany.

There was already peace there and a lot of Jewish men did the same thing, because, in fact, in Berlin, he met some friends and they came together, you know, all Polish boys who went over the border. And there were all, lots of nationalities because of that. And they were stateless.

Q THE OLDEST BROTHER, THE ONE THAT WAS CAPTURED BY THE GERMANS IN WORLD WAR I - DID HE SURVIVE?

A He survived. And, in fact, ja, I have his picture here. He survived. Yitsak, Uncle Yitsak, he survived. He was married - had two little girls.

Q DID HE LIVE IN GERMANY OR POLAND?

A No, he lived in the old state, in [Somperno?] in Poland.

Q POLAND.

A In [Somperno?] in Poland.

Q OKAY. SO YOUR FATHER WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO LEFT THE FAMILY AND ..

A Right, right, right.

Q TELL ME A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR MOTHER'S BACKGROUND?

A Alright, my mother was born in [Naacker?] on the river, Nietze. That was Germany, and after 1918, it became Poland. But, by then, of course, my mother didn't live there anymore. But she was born there. But she never knew [Naacker?] because when she was a few weeks old, the family moved to [Polish Friedland?] and..

Q IS THAT IN THE NORTH?

A [Polish Friedland?] is in West Prussia.

Q WEST PRUSSIA?

A There is East Prussia - West Prussia. Ja, in West Prussia, and she grew up, and she considered [Polish Friedland?] actually her hometown, not [Naacker?] which she never knew. She grew up in [Polish Friedland?] and when she was about 18 she moved to Berlin

Q WHY?

A Good question. She learned a trade in [Polish Friedland?] - how to sew and keep household and after schooling, and of course. And then the mother tell her she should go to cooking school, because it's important that the wife knows how to cook. So the cooking school was in Berlin - whether that was the real reason, I really don't know.

Q HOW OLD WAS SHE WHEN SHE..?

A I assume sixteen,- I'm not quite sure, about that.

Q DID SHE KNOW PEOPLE IN BERLIN?

A Yes, her aunt, the sister of her mother, lived there. And her son and daughter lived there, it means my mother's cousin, yeah, lived there.

Q DID SHE LIVE WITH THEM?

A I don't know. You put pressure, I don't know.

Q SHE WAS PRETTY YOUNG.

A Ja, maybe she was eighteen - I don't know. She went, there was a home for Jewish girls, where they learn how to cook, and to make household - I think she over-nighted over there. She was there for how long, I don't know. Two years or what.

Q WAS YOUR FAMILY RELIGIOUS?

A My father was. In fact, when he left Poland he was 100% kosher, that means they had, in their household, milschik and fleischik and strictly orthodox. He became more tolerant when he was a young man. But he, every morning he laid his tefillum and said his prayers. And when I was 13, I learnt my tefillum too, and said my prayers. I still do it - say my prayers today - I don't like tefillum anymore. But I say, not a printed prayer, but whatever's in my heart.

Q SO HE KEPT TO TRADITION?

A Oh, yes. Actually very Jewish.

Q HOW ABOUT YOUR MOTHER? WAS SHE RELIGIOUS?

A In her own way - in her own way. We always bought our meat at the Jewish butcher and I think, after a certain year, '35, '36, they were not allowed to [schochot?] anymore. [Schochot?] means to religious slaughter there. But we still kept buying our meat still at the Jewish butcher. And he called it moo-kosher. That means there was no pork, no nothing. But he had no separate milschik and fleischik. We did not.

Q DID YOU CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAYS?

A Oh, yes, very much. In fact, I remember every Passover, there was a big table and about, at least 12 persons were there - at least, or more. And my father was always, he was a wonderful, he would greet them, and would sing with it, you know. It was a happy, a very happy occasion.

Q WHO WOULD THE OTHER PEOPLE BE?

A Well, alright. There were, my mother's mother - she was still alive - her brother and his wife, my bother and his wife, then, the main employees in our store, with their wives, and some neighbours - Jewish neighbours.

Q HOW MANY EMPLOYEES WERE THERE IN THE STORE?

A We had three.

Q THREE?

A Ja. At times, sometimes two, sometimes three. It would depend, you know, how business was.

Q NOW, WOULD THEY HIRE NON-JEWS IN THE STORE?

A Well, we also had non-Jews in our store. I remember in the beginning, her name was... non-Jewish. But most of the others were Jewish. Shaman? was Jewish, Fishman was Jewish. And maybe we had one or two non-Jews and the rest were Jewish, ja.

Q OKAY. COULD YOU DESCRIBE, A LITTLE, WHAT YOUR FATHER WAS LIKE?

A Yes, I can. I still remember him, very well. His main I say, project in life was to keep his family well. The family came first, then he came. But, first came his family. And he was very honest. He told me, one of the things he told me, whenever you lay your head down on the pillow at night, you should sleep in peace with the thought - I have done nothing wrong, nothing dishonest. And he was a good businessman in this way - oh, yes. He could sell his merchandise, it was honest, good merchandise, but he could sell it very well. He could be very jovial, when he celebrated, for instance, New Year's Eve, and the wedding day - the anniversary of my parents, which was December 23rd. They just went to Christmas time to be celebrated. That was always - and New Year's Eve was always.. Our home was a centre, I would say, where all came, together always in our home. Where all the celebration was. So I had a very happy childhood. Very happy.

Q THOSE ARE GOOD MEMORIES.

A Very good memories.

Q TELL US ABOUT YOUR MOTHER - WHAT WAS SHE LIKE?

A My mother was - I don't think she ever had an enemy in the world. She was a - they came to her when people had any problems, whether it was in Germany, Shanghai or I lived in Israel too. And even here, in the United States, when she was old they came to her with their problems and she would listen to it. She always had a good word for everyone.

Q UH-HUH. THEN SHE WAS A GOOD LISTENER, HUH?

A She was a good listener. She also had in the store, too. Oh yes, when my father was out buying things, you know for the store. You know she was .. Oh yeah, she was..

Q WOULD SHE HAVE TO SELL? [indicates he didn't hear]
WOULD SHE ACUALLY SELL IN THE STORE WHEN HE WAS NOT THERE?

A Yes, she was mostly there before noon, you know. And when my father was out, he went buying at the tailors, at the wholesale tailors, buying suits for the store - she would watch the store.

She was there and if somebody would come in, oh yes, she would sell. Before, when the business wasn't that much great - it mostly, the afternoon. The store was open till 7. In fact, all the stores were open until 7 o'clock.

Q SO FROM NOON TILL 7?

A Was in main business, yes.

Q YEAH.

A I was helping by the end, in the store, too. Not much, but I helped. Oh yes.

Q NOW SHE HAD TRAINED TO BE A COOK. WAS SHE A GOOD COOK?

A Very good cook.

Q VERY GOOD COOK.

A Very good cook! Too good. [pats his stomach]

Q SO WHEN YOU HAD PESACH AND OTHER HOLIDAYS DID SHE DO ALL THE COOKING FOR THE HOLIDAY?

A Yes, yes. Oh, Pesach - gefilter fish. Not like today, you buy that all and that. That is not gefilter fish, that's a filling. But she would - there was a fish carved out and stuffed in the - it was really a gefilter fish. Fresh fish.

Q A WHOLE FISH?

A Yeah. Oh yes, and then there was chicken, turkey or goose. Oh, it was delicious.

Q DO YOU REMEMBER THE DEPRESSION?

A I heard of it, I learned about it, but I have no experience with it, because, my father always kept his family well. We never had any - we never had to starve, or what. The only, about the depression, what I know from the outside - not in our family was, there were a lot of people without a job. A lot of them. This I remember and there were unrest in the streets. Demonstrations.

Oh yes, I remember, they were marching - the Communists were marching, the Nazis were marching and there were slogans, you know. The Social Democrats were marching. Oh yes, I remember - this I remember.

Q BUT, DIRECTLY IT DIDN'T ??

A Not directly. Oh no, there was always enough to eat, and that was my father was a good provider, an excellent provider.

Q TELL US ABOUT WILLIE?

A My brother and I were only half brothers, but we adored each other. We didn't love , we adored each other. He learned the radio technique - when he was young, he was building his own radio sets. And when he got a job, as a young man, he was nervous - they didn't know he was Jewish and then this was a Nazi. Even before Hitler, he was one of the earliest members. And since my brother took off - at the Jewish holidays - some of [Merbis?] friends said, "You know, Willie [Rayveldt?] was, he was [Rayveldt?],he seems to be Jewish". So [Merbis?] ask him. He said: "Are you Jewish?" He said: "Yes, I am." "Impossible, you can't be Jewish. Jewish are - have long noses, not straight and so on." And he became very fond of Willie, you know. And..

Q HE KEPT HIM ON?

A He kept him on until he couldn't anymore. And then, he always sent somebody in to ask how Willie was. And then he said: "Get out of Germany." He said to him: "Get out of Germany." Unfortunately, my brother did not get out of Germany. He married [Kita Pelsman?], they had a little son, and I.. the one in our family, that was 1938, who was fighting about getting out of Germany - that was I. As young as I was, I swear to God, that's the truth. Nobody else wanted to get out. So, and then, we got, from the German government, a notice, since we were stateless, within three months we have to leave Germany. So I told my father, if you don't get out of Germany, I had the opportunity to go to England. So I was..

Q ??

A Through our school, you know. He said: "No, we all leave together." And then, that part, we had nobody in the whole world - the world was closed for us. Palestine. Everything was closed to us. We had no one. Shanghai was the city - all what you needed was a ship's passage; you didn't need a visa, nothing. So, of course, Shanghai was over, won, you know. I never, my father paid twice, twice of a ship's passage, so that he could get out of Germany.

Q WHY DIDN'T WILLIE GET OUT?

A Huh. They never thought it would - get that bad.
[shakes head]

Q SO HE WAS ONLY??

A They all perished in the Holocaust. My whole family - from my father's side, in Poland, from my mother's side, in Germany - everyone perished. Everyone. I thought when I went to the Holocaust Museum, it was in Washington, I saw all their names in it from Berlin.

Q NOW, AT THE TIME YOU LEFT AND WILLIE THOUGHT IT WOULDN'T GET SO BAD, HAD HE LOST HIS JOB ALREADY?

A He had another job then, by then. He was very handy. He got a job as a repairman in a, it was small factory that manufactured for women, how would you call it, when you sit in the beauty parlour under the.. [indicates with hands - hairdryer]

Q HAIRDRYER.

A Dryers and so on. There they manufacturing hairdryers and my brother was very handy. He not only repaired them, he made something that they put in as a patent. So, he knew that Willie was Jewish and he kept him on, and later on, we got letters that told us what happened. He had to dismiss him - the Gestapo arrested him. He had to work on a railway station as a.. for soldiers and officers taking their baggage, you know. Tell you what, they left the railway station on board to Auschwitz.

Q HE WAS WHAT?

A First he, and then a few days later, they came to the, to my brother's home and arrested the wife and the little kid too.

Q WAS THE WIFE JEWISH?

A Half Jewish.

Q HALF JEWISH.

A But, she converted and she became Jewish and she married by a rabbi and everything - ja.

Q WHEN DID YOU BECOME AWARE THAT THINGS WERE LOOKING BAD IN GERMANY?

A Quite early.

Q WHAT KIND OF THINGS?

A I remember, for instance, it must have been 1933, '34, the Nazis were marching on the street where we lived. We were standing at the window. They were marching, it was evening, they had their torches, you know, they were six in a row, and the older ones they had their torches, you know. And they were singing the song:

"Ja wenn das Juden blood vom messe spitz dan getz nog maa zer gut."

When Jewish blood squirts from the knife, then everything goes twice as well. And then, one would shout: "Jude!" - the whole chorus would shout:

"[Verrekke?]" . [Verrek?] means to die in the gutter. Jews die in the gutter. So you know what was going on. I - you know. And not only that, coming from school sometimes, some of the other boys, they waiting for us and we had to fight. Oh, yes.

Q HOW OFTEN DID THAT HAPPEN?

A How often? Not too often, but it did happen - yes. It did happen. Even when I was younger, I was thrown by a whole bunch of them into the snow and beaten up and I say: "Why did you do that?" "Dis tog ein Jude." - he is a Jew. He said: "And so what?" Oh, yeah. So I knew what was going on.

Q SO YOU KNEW

A Oh, there's more. One of my friend, Gert [Garbovski?], stand one day on the street and was talking and was joined by others, by some of his friend and one, or two, of them, they didn't know that I was Jewish. And they were talking how they were indoctrinated in school and among others. "So - we will put all the [itshes?]" - that was the name like [kaik?] or something, for Jews - "against the wall and then, brrrrrrrrr." [shows a shooting movement with hands] That was 1936, '37, so I knew what was going on.

Q THEY NEVER KNEW YOU WERE JEWISH WHEN THEY WERE TALKING?

A Oh Gert [Garbovski?] - he knew. Oh, he knew I was Jewish.

Q HE WASN'T JEWISH?

A No, no. Oh, no, no. He hadn't joined the - and everybody else - the Hitler youth - [Jungfrung?] - and then from about 14, you step up from the [Jungfrung?] to the Hitler youth.

Q HE KEPT BEING YOUR FRIEND?

A We saw him, at home, occasionally. We still exchanged books and so on, and we greeted each other but we were not so - whether he was afraid or what - I don't know, but we never became that close again. And the other one, the other friend that I had was even closer - Klaus Berner. We were friends since I remember, little boys, we would go up and we were very close and he had to join the Hitler youth too. And he proudly showed me - "here, take a look, this what I am wearing now, a badge with the shoulder belt and the..."

Q DID HE STOP BEING YOUR FRIEND?

A Well, we grew apart and I think, because he was indoctrinated too. We became close again, in 1937, we went to, in the grade school holidays, we went to [Waldersdorf?], and as it happened, he went with his grandfather too, to [Waldersdorf?]. So, we came again and then we talked again, like in old times. But, he was a Nazi - that's, they were all Nazis; let me tell you that.

Q WAS IT HARD NOT TO BE A NAZI THEN, IF YOU WERE ??

A Yes, it was very hard for them. First of all, besides being indoctrinated, things, that I must admit, got better in Germany. Everybody had a job, everybody was making money - our business was doing very well, too. I must say that.

Q DID THEY BOYCOTT YOUR BUSINESS?

A Several times. The first one was on April 1933, when the army were going with placards - don't buy at Jewish stores, you know, don't make business with Jews - and then, on another occasion, they smeared our window and so on. And then, of course, the [gesteiner?] that was a big one. Then our store was destroyed.

Q SO YOU COULDN'T USE IT ANYMORE?

A Well, you want me to describe [gesteiner?] what I know about it.

Q YES. OF COURSE.

A Well, we knew it would go bad when that German diplomat died, that was shot by Greenspan, his name was, Von Raad. We didn't know what to expect. But we knew it was - we heard rumours, already, the evening before - that they were starting to smash Jewish stores. The next morning I still went to school, but on they way already to school I saw some Jewish stores and the main strasse they were, Brandman - he had clocks and watches and jewellery. Windows smashed, and you know, all the stores, they had those sliding grids, iron grids over there - I don't know, you don't see it so much here, you know. And it was, somebody had tried to bend it and the glass was laying on the streets, you know. And people were in there, you know, grabbing things. That I saw on the way to school, so we only spoke about it, there were not many pupils there and..

Q YOU KEPT ON IN SCHOOL?

A Yes and then, somebody knocked at the door and it was my mother. She came to pick me up. So, I went with her, I said had something happened to our store. She said: "Not yet."

Q NOT YET?

A No, and so we went home, we saw again in all the streets, the Jewish stores, smashed and so.. but, in our street nothing happened so far. So we went up, we stood at the window and then, we see a howling mob coming and, not in uniform, they was no policemen in sight and they were not in uniform. But you could see what kind of a people they were. Low class, you could see, I mean, pimps or what have you, but I don't know, they were not well behaved. And they started smashing up things. We could see - our store was on the same side and we could see in the reflection of the window of the bakery what happened to our store. And then the store opposite us, they were all gentlemen outfitting stores, Jewish outfitting stores, you know - they were broken in to and opened and smashed and smeared and shouting: "Jude, [verrekke?]"

Q DID THEY? JUST TAKE THE CLOTHES?

A We didn't dare to go down on the night. It was looted during the night and some of them, they burned and cut up with scissors, you know. A lot of it.

Q AND WHERE WERE YOU WHEN THIS WAS HAPPENING?

A Alright. Now, when that was happened, it was afraid that, my brother didn't live with us anymore, at that time, that my father and I would be arrested. So we went up on, where they hung the laundry and ..

Q ON THE ROOF?

A And, not - under the roof, you know. And way down, they put some old things or what, and then we stayed there and then, in the late afternoon they would pick us up again and my father and I, we went into hiding. My aunt, Paula, that's the wife of my uncle, my mother's brother, ja, his wife, she had two unmarried sisters. And we, my father and I, we stayed there for two weeks.

Q HOW FAR WAS THAT FROM YOUR HOUSE?

A Aah, 15 minutes, by foot.

Q WERE THERE ANY MEN IN THAT HOUSE?

A I don't know. We didn't go out. We stayed there, you know, and..

Q I MEAN WERE THERE ANY MEN IN THAT APARTMENT, THAT LIVED THERE?

A No, no, no. Just the two unmarried sisters, elderly sisters.

Q SO YOU THOUGHT THEY WON'T COME HERE?

A That's what, ja exactly.

Q AND YOU STAYED THERE FOR TWO WEEKS?

A Right.

Q WHERE WAS YOUR MOTHER DURING THAT TIME?

A She stayed at home.

Q DID YOU SEE ANY SYNAGOGUES BURNING?

A I didn't see any synagogues burning, but I was going regularly to synagogue, synagogue [Kaiserstrasse?] - there was also bar mitzvah - and it was sad and it was, I was told that that synagogue was burned and demolished. And for some time there was also there was a school there when - a public school - they used the big hall, you know the assembly hall, the school assembly hall, as a synagogue. And I went there regularly. Later on, once we were in Shanghai, we were told, that they - that the Jewish community re-did that synagogue down there, the big synagogue. It was a beautiful synagogue. And they had services there till 1940, the war..

Q DO YOU KNOW - DID THEY COME FOR YOU OR YOUR FATHER, IN THAT TWO WEEK PERIOD?

A No, they did not.

Q THEY DID NOT.

A They did not, no.

Q SO IT WAS YOU AND YOUR BROTHER AT THE AUNT'S HOUSE RIGHT, OR WAS IT..?

A No, my brother...

Q IT WAS HIM AND THE FATHER - WHERE WAS YOUR BROTHER DURING THIS TIME?

A He was with his family.

Q DID HE GO INTO HIDING?

A That was 1938 - that means he already had a little boy. The boy was, at that time, two months. He was born in September, so he was three months old - the little boy. So he stayed home. He already had a job, as I told you before. They were repair.. alright, and I don't whether he went out or not. I really don't know.

Q THEY DIDN'T ARREST HIM THEN?

A I beg your pardon?

Q THEY DIDN'T ARREST HIM DURING THAT TIME?

A No, they did not.

Q WAS ANY MEMBER OF YOUR FAMILY ARRESTED DURING THAT TIME?

A No. No, something very curious happened. A year before, or two years before, there was a so-called Polish action, where they arrested all young men of Polish nationality and sent them over the border to Poland. And they arrested my father, too. And he came to the police station, and he showed this pass and said: "Hey, you're not Polish. You have a stateless pass here". They sent my father home.

Q SO THERE WERE ON TECHNICALITIES..

A In fact he told me, a policeman, and he was very nice, so my father told him when they arrested him: "Let me say my prayers, I'll be here." And he said: "Of course". So he went to other; my father laid his tefillum and said his prayers. Then he came to pick him up and that is when they sent him home, when they discovered that he was not Polish, but stateless.

Q STATELESS WAS BETTER THAN POLISH?

A For this purpose, oh, yes.

Q DID YOUR FATHER CONSIDER HIMSELF GERMAN OR POLISH?

A Before Hitler, he'd felt very much German. Oh, yes he loved Berlin. He loved Berlin. We had a very good life, let me tell you, besides the Nazis. We had a very good life. We went to the theatre and they took me with him. And I still remember that all, quite often.. oh yeah.

Q WHAT KIND OF THEATRE?

A My parents liked the operettas, you know, by Franz Lehar and by Paul Abraham you know. That kind of - we had also, a Jewish theatre there, a Judische Kulturbond where I got tickets, where I bought tickets quite a bit. And I saw some very nice plays there - dramas, Shakespeare and so on. Oh yeah, I remember that. I loved that.

Q YEAH. DID YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF GERMAN?

A No.

Q WHAT DID YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF?

A Jewish.

Q JEWISH. YOU WERE UNUSUAL.

A When I was a very little boy, three years old, I remember, I once heard the national anthem played "Deutschland, Deutschland, uber alles" and I felt elated, ja. But that, with the Nazi time, that [shakes head].. I felt just Jewish.

Q DID THAT FEEL DANGEROUS, TO BE JEWISH?

A I would say yes, in Germany, yes. It was dangerous. Definitely. Wherever we went, you know, they said we went on holiday to [Waldersdorf?]- you come there on the entrance of the town, on one side, made out of wood, you know, hand carved - is a man stretched up from here on [shows Hitler salute] [German?] - If you come here, if you are German, your greeting should be 'Heil Hitler'. On the other side of the street they had carved out of wood a Jew with a big nose, and he said: "Juden onder unsch?" - Jews not wanted

But we had already made reservations because we got the name of a certain hotel where the proprietor didn't mind to have Jews.

Q THIS WAS IN THE NORTH SEA?

A No, that was late.. that was afterwards. The North Sea was '32, '33, '34. That was in '36 and '37 that we were at [Waldersdorf?].

Q WHERE WAS THAT LOCATED?

A About only two hours from Berlin.

Q WAS IT LIKE A LAKE?

A It was a river, I think there were [hawe?]. It was a very nice and big forests there, you know. And that establishment, where we lived, half of the guests were Jewish.

Q HOW WAS IT THAT HE WAS ABLE TO TAKE IN JEWISH...?

A I don't know. He didn't mind. He was that proprietor, I still remember his name was Günter. He was a forester. A forester was also a profession, not, you know, with a green uniform, with a hunting license, you know, and a little feather here [indicates to the head] and the rifle. And the little man, with a beer belly, but you know, very jovial. And, as he said he didn't mine, half of his guests were Jewish.

Q AND NOBODY BOTHERED HIM AT THAT TIME?

A No. In fact, I had the experience that a lot of Germans would assist him. So, were still national Germans for the ex-Kaiser. I remember, opposite us there was a pub, and his name was Page. And I remember, he got, just a load of beer and you know, there was big horses in front and the man who brought the barrel in [gestures huge moustache] and Page himself had a moustache like that. Each one had a big glass of beer - "Prost Wilhelm" [gestures a toast] - that means Wilhelm was the name of the Kaiser. And they said that loud and they looked around if somebody would mind. Oh, that wasn't good in Nazi Germany.

Q NO BUT THEY WERE STILL HOLDING ON TO THE OLD ?

- A Oh, they were Deutsch Nazionaal - German nationals, you know, for the Kaiser.
- Q DO YOU THINK THAT THEIR LOCATION IN A FOREST LIKE THAT MAYBE PROTECTED THEM..?
- A No, no. They were forest, but they were not in the forest. Was not in the forest, was in street and the forest started and then the... No, I think maybe he wasn't so Nazi. He was more German national, you know.
- Q AND NOBODY, HE DIDN'T...?
- A Which he was, he was in here, not outside. Ha- ha..
- Q YOU HAD TO BE CAREFUL.
- A I remember one afternoon, if you want to know about it. We were all sitting having our coffee and cake - there was a little garden in front of it. And it came, a band armed with instruments and they said: "Well, let's play for our guests here." And they started for play for us, and all of us sitting there were Jews, but they didn't realise, they didn't know it. And they were playing, you know, their oom-pah-pah music and so on. We didn't dare to say anything. We all sitting there. Oh, yes, I remember that.
- Q THEY THOUGHT THEY WERE ENTERTAINING YOU?
- A Exactly. Exactly.
- Q WHEN DID THE FAMILY START TALKING ABOUT LEAVING?
- A Well as I said before, the one that talked about that was I, who insisted on it.
- Q WHY DID YOU..?
- A And then, because, I knew it was coming. I mean, after I heard "brrrrrrr" [makes a shooting movement] they kill the Jews and that, nobody believed me. I was just a little boy of fourteen years old.
- Q WHAT WOULD YOU KNOW, HUH?

- A What could I know. And then after the [gesteiner?] we applied for Shanghai and then, finally, after my father paid twice as much - there was a passage for the three of us.
- Q AND YOU HAD TO LEAVE EVERYTHING BEHIND?
- A Yes, we sold whatever we could, for a price... We had beautiful furniture, beautiful furniture - for a price, next to nothing. And this was, each one was allowed to have ten mark. Nothing. And we kept, in order not to... because they examined, at the border you know, they came into our railway compartment and looked around and we had to leave the compartment - they looked. They found nothing; we had nothing. But if we would, we would have come to concentration camp. Oh, yeah.
- Q GARY, DO YOU REMEMBER THE OLYMPICS?
- A Yes. 1936. During that time all the signs about Jews vanished. And restaurants - Jews not wanted, and that - vanished. So, foreigners came and they saw nothing. Berlin was a beautiful city and they decorated, I must admit, beautiful. And I went with some friends to the [Underlined?] autograph hunting for, we were kids, you know.
- Q DID YOU GET?
- A Oh, yeah, I got some autographs of - quite a bit from foreign countries, sports who participated. Men and women who participated in sports. And we were proudly showing off, you know. And we knew all about Jesse Owens. He was our hero, you know, and it was a good time. I must say I mean- that's the honest truth. Then of course, after a while the signs were back again and??
- Q DO YOU REMEMBER ANY FEELINGS DURING THE OLYMPICS ABOUT WHO YOU WANTED TO WIN?
- A That's a good question. I was following, and we were writing down actually, no. My feeling was, let the best man win. Let the better man win; that was my feeling.
- Q DID YOU WANT SOME GERMANS TO WIN?

A Not that I know of. It's a good question - I really don't know the answer. As I said, in some respects, the Germans won, and if they were the better sport I didn't mind. Let's say it that way, 'ja. I really don't know the correct answer.

Q WHAT ABOUT JESSE OWENS - HE WAS YOUR HERO - WERE YOU THRILLED WHEN HE WON?

A Oh, yes definitely. He won the 100 metre, 200 metre, the 4-man, how do you call it?

Q THE RELAY.

A The relay - and the broad jump. Oh yes, he won this - in the 100 metre was 10.3 seconds and the 200 metre was 20.6. And it's a different than today, because today when they run the you know, 100 metre, they have something there [bends forward and indicates to foot] here where they could.. jumping start. They didn't have it at that time, you know, so if he would have used that, it would have been faster.

Q HOW DID PEOPLE FEEL ABOUT BLACK PEOPLE WINNING? WAS THAT OKAY?

A [Shakes head] We had no black people and we had no prejudice. We had no prejudice. It never came up because we did..

Q NOW THERE WAS A JEWISH WOMAN ON THE TRACK TEAM - A GERMAN JEWISH WOMAN.

A We heard about it. For Germany?

Q YES.

A I heard about it years later, but I forgot already about it. Ja, I heard it - about it, years later. I don't know how true it is. I can't believe that they'd put a full Jew on the team. I really don't know.

Q DID - WERE YOU AWARE THAT THERE WAS AN AMERICAN SPRINTER WHO WAS JEWISH, AND HE WAS KEPT OUT OF THE RACE AT THE LAST MINUTE?

A No.

Q MARTIN GEUCKMANN?

A No, I don't know anything about it.

Q HE BECAME A FAMOUS ANNOUNCER - OF SPORTS IN NEW YORK AFTER.

A No, I don't know anything about it.

Q OKAY. SO WAS IT HARD TO BE IN BERLIN?

A Even if we loved Berlin - and we did love Berlin, at the end, we were glad to leave.

Q YOU COULD FEEL HAPPINESS AT LEAVING?

A I wouldn't say happiness, but, feeling - breathing easier. Especially when we came, after Germany we came into Italy, because our ship started in Trieste and at that time, though there was the Fascists in power, there was no anti-Semitism in Israel, er, in Italy, at that time, that came later. So, my father said, I still remember: "Haaah.. now I feel easier, that I left Germany".

Q DID WILLIE SEE YOU OFF?

A Oh, they came all to the railway station.

Q HOW WAS THAT? WHAT..

A It was a tearful goodbye. It was a tearful goodbye.

Q DID YOU I WILL SEE THEM AGAIN, OR I WON'T?

A I had a feeling that I would never see them again, and I was right. I had that feeling - yes.

Q WERE ANY OF THE OTHER RELATIVES TRYING TO GET OUT AT THAT POINT?

A No.

Q NO, THEY ALL THOUGHT IT WAS OKAY?

A No, in fact, I remember my uncle Ronald, that's the brother of my mother, saying: "You had to hurry out of Germany, you will see, one day, I will send you an affidavit to come back to Germany".

Q THEY WERE THAT CONFIDENT - HEY?

A That's how they felt.

Q DESCRIBE THE TRAIN RIDE.

A We were leaving from Berlin station, to Munich. In Munich we changed trains.

Q MUCH OF A DELAY BEFORE YOU GOT THE NEXT?

A Aah... At least an hour, because I remember the big beer hall, not I, was standing at the entrance watching them drinking and so. But we didn't, let's say it that way, we didn't dare, to interfere, or to mix with the others - we didn't dare, ja.

Q WERE YOU AFRAID WHEN YOU WERE THERE?

A Yes, we were all afraid in Germany.

Q SOMETHING COULD HAPPEN.

A Something could, let me tell you something which is - which you didn't ask because you didn't know about it, but it is important.. Since about, I would say, '37, '38, a lot of Jews tried to get illegally over the border into Belgium. That was before we had that passage to Shanghai. In fact, friends of ours, quite a bit [Killberts]...??? and so on, they left for Berlin and the good month they left to Czechoslovakia - they thought they were safe there. And, it was decided that my father and I - that was in 1938 - should go over the border into Belgium. My mother would stay behind - would sell everything, and when we are safe there, she would also arrive. So, it was on Christmas day, that was December 24th or something, in the evening or something, the first time we went to Dusseldorf. It was already, no, it was already, there was certain smugglers that were - it was their profession, they got money for it. Brought Jews over the border.

Q THIS WAS 1937..?

A '38. '38, after Christmas night.

Q OKAY.

A And, they got money for it and it was already arranged in Berlin. I don't know how, there must have been a contact man, somehow, so he was waiting - the smuggler was waiting for us in Dusseldorf, and he said the following: "So far, there were regular soldiers at the border, and they were bribed. They let Jews go over. Now, there are SS men and they cannot be bribed, there could be some shooting". So, when my father heard that, he said we'd better, "I'm not going over, I'm going back". So, we went back and two days later, there was another contact - this time went to Cologne. And again, we met a smuggler, somebody following us, and we couldn't - we could see, I mean, at the railway station, there were some Gestapo men. You could see, I mean, the way that they looked at you and saw we were afraid, very afraid, and one man following us, overcoat - it was winter, of course. Then, when he passed us, he told us: "Go to Don Hotel, Don Hotel." I still remember; it was the smuggler. And I went and my father and another man with a son - the four of us. Again the same thing happened, he told us the same thing, but now there were S men and there could be shooting. Again, we went back. Lucky, for us. If we would have got to Belgium, like the friends of us - they all perished. They all perished, all our friends in Belgium and Czechoslovakia... they all perished.

Q DID THEY ??

A So my mother said and my father said: "This is it. Now, we are not going anymore. Now we will all three go together". And, that's when they applied for Shanghai, and luckily, they got it.

Q HOW DID THE SMUGGLER KNOW WHO YOU WERE, AND YOU KNOW WHO HE WAS?

A He must.. the first time we met that man at the hotel.

Q AT THE HOTEL?

A At the hotel.

Q OKAY.

A I still remember that. The second time, he followed us. He must have seen two men, with a little boy. He was expecting two men, with two boys. Ja, and he could see. They knew that we were Jewish, you could see it. Somehow.

Q WAS IT COMMON KNOWLEDGE THAT THE MEN WERE MORE IN DANGER THAN THE WOMEN?

A Yes, yes.

Q HOW DID YOU KNOW THAT?

A Because, men they brought into concentration camps. Already then, that was before Auschwitz, and then the poison chamber, the gas chambers, they were brought into concentration camps and not women. We heard that some women were brought too, but, politically non-Jewish women, like Klara [Weidorf?]. She was very famous [chansonette?] and she was politically, her songs were against the Nazis. She was brought to concentration camp. But otherwise, no. You asked me before if I know of somebody from our family were.. the brother of my aunt Paula - he was arrested, because he was before, very left wing. He was arrested and put into concentration camp. And some...

Q WHICH...

A I don't know which one.

Q OKAY.

A I think [Oranjenborg?]. I think [Oranjenborg?], ja. And, some teachers in our school, were also arrested. And they came back with short clipped hair, you know, the hair was shorn.

Q DID THEY TALK ABOUT IT AT ALL?

A They did not talk about it. Some of them said: "I'm sorry, I don't want to talk about it". Most probably they had to be sworn not to talk about, or something like that. Ja, but they did not talk about it.

Q NOW, HOW DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT SHANGHAI. DO YOU KNOW?

- A Well, you see, in time of this crisis - the Jews visit each other, you know. Especially in the surrounding - and there was the talk: "There is a place where you don't need visa and that is Shanghai, China."
"Ooh, whoever heard of Shanghai, China, before?"
And then, "But everything is sold out already", and so on and so on. That's how we knew about Shanghai, otherwise we wouldn't...
- Q IT MUST HAVE SEEMED LIKE GETTING A TICKET TO GO TO MARS. [nods head] YOU DIDN'T KNOW WHAT YOU WOULD FIND.
- A Well, my father told me the following. He went to the travel bureau in Berlin and she said: "Well, Mr Bigus, there is nothing available but we will let you know if... And then he got to know this, there was a doctor and his family who wanted to go to Shanghai, but he is ready to give up his ticket if he gets this certain amount of money." And, the travel bureau also wanted that money. So, my father paid twice the amount. He's sure that the travel bureau kept the whole thing, you know. But that's how we got the ticket to Shanghai.
- Q LET'S GO BACK TO THE TRAIN RIDE FROM MUNICH? YOU WERE IN MUNICH FOR AN HOUR. YOU WERE KIND OF AFRAID... YOU SAW LOTS OF NAZI...
- A Right, right, right. At that time we were all afraid already, ja.
- Q DID YOU HAVE ANY MONEY SMUGGLED ANYWHERE?
- A No, nothing what... ten mark exactly, my father was always strictly to the...
- Q SO HE WASN'T GOING TO TAKE ANY CHANCES?
- A No chances. There was a funny thing. We were not allowed to have any gold. My father, and he had a holder, a cigar holder, and with the part of it was, what he thought was artificial gold and he was displaying it. Even for the officials, you know. We were in Shanghai and one man, who was a goldsmith, said: "Do you know that this is gold?" He didn't know it.
- Q HE DIDN'T REALIZE IT?

- A No, you know, if it would have been discovered, we would have never gone to Shanghai.
- Q IF HE HAD IT IN HIS POCKET, HE MIGHT HAVE GOT IN TROUBLE.
- A No, he had it...
- Q BUT SMOKING IT THEY THOUGHT SURELY THIS CAN'T BE GOLD, HEY?
- A Right.
- Q WOW, HE THOUGHT IT WAS - I KNOW WHAT GOLD PLATE IS... SO HE JUST ASSUMED THAT'S WHAT IT WAS.
- A He didn't know. Otherwise, we had quite a bit of gold and diamonds, you know. We were wealthy Jewish family. We had to give it away. We had to ?? to the official. He still had a piece of paper where they give us smidgen for it. They broke it apart,
- Q DID YOUR FATHER TRY TO GIVE MONEY TO WILLIE?
- A Well, he gave him money - yes. He gave him money. Well, I have to tell you about another person that came into my life. Let me tell you about him, because of that gold thing. His name was [Oigen Rohner?]. He was a Gentile, not only a gentile, he was one of the earliest member of the Nazi party. But he was an idealistic national socialist - they didn't call themselves Nazis. Their enemies called them Nazis. They called themselves National Socialists. I dealt with him because he was anti-communist - he was not ??? he was a friend of my fathers. He and my father were friends. And, so we were visiting each other - in fact, I have a picture. I don't have it with me, a picture where they are both together. And at the end, we gave all the gold away, except my father had one big ring with an AB engraved on it. Very heavy ring. And, for some reason, he didn't give that away. But, he was too afraid to bring it over the border. So he let [Oigen Rohner?] know he want to give it to him. And then, some other things, I don't know what, that wanted to give it to him. So, Oigen Rohner came to our home, I was home at the time, and my father gave him, he said: "I promise to you, I will give it back to you the same way as you give it to me."

He was in the SS - he went out of our apartment and there was a, you know, a staircase and so on. And he started to cry. So help me God, it's true. And he started to shout in German: "You damn, [vershlotten hunde?]" - you damn dogs, they make of you ashes and soot - and the house collects and there was stones and - soot and ashes they should make out of you. He shouted loud. And upstairs, there were Nazis living there. And my father said: "Oigen, Please, be quiet please." You know we were afraid, that what happened. They made ??, but that was [Oigen Rohner?].

Q WHY, WHY...

A When we heard of him, in the bombings, he and his wife died.

Q WHY WAS HE SHOUTING - WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE SHOUTING?

A Because he realized what was coming. He told us one of the following stories. There was a Jew who saved his life in World War I; he was a soldier. And somebody saw how he pressed his hand to get his hand. He was called before the Party court. He told us that. He came there and said the judge and the brown uniform, [puffs up his mouth] very like a [Taurus?] you know. That's the way he felt, that you dare to give the Jewish swine your hand. He said: "But that man saved my life."

Q WHY WAS HE...

A But, he realized what he was not, really he was an idealistic - you know, because he saw a lot of communist revolutionaries. That man gave us some hope. That's why he became a Nazi, an early Nazi, but then he realized what was really happening.

Q SO HE DIDN'T QUIT AND MAKE A STATEMENT.

A No, he couldn't. How could you? There - he wouldn't live until the next day. Are you kidding? You didn't know what it means to live under a dictatorship. Always people ask me and say: "How could you let that happen? How could you let..." [shakes head] If you lived under the dictatorship, then you know.

Q YOU KNOW HOW IT HAPPENED.

A Not only that, some people came to our store, I still remember, they said: "Haaah... At least here we can speak out. We are afraid of our own children". And how many times did it happen that the children denounce to the teacher my father spoke that and that, and they were picked up. Oh yes.

Q WOULD YOU LISTEN TO HITLER'S SPEECHES AT HOME, THE FAMILY?

A Yes, we would. Yes, we would, in order to inform ourselves of...

Q WHAT WAS THAT LIKE?

A Aah, ha-ha. In the beginning, I mean, we'd never thought that it would come to the gas chambers. You know there was - but, then it was more and more Goebels and Hitler. Oh, we listened to all of this speeches, yes.

Q WHAT DID IT SOUND LIKE TO YOU?

A Evil. To me, Hitler didn't say, in his speeches, that we gonna kill the Jews. He didn't - oh no. That was already before - no. But my father and my mother told me, when they came back, there was a special place where all the luggage would be packed and sealed and inspected, ja. They call it 'pakhof'. There was a big sign there and it says, "In falle eines kriegels, ??vernicsht ein Juden." - it means, "in case of war the one that will be annihilated will be the Jews" . Says so there, and they told me that.

Q THESE SIGNS MADE AN IMPRESSION ON YOU, DON'T THEY?

A I didn't see that sign. I saw a lot of other signs. Oh, yes, very much. Very much.

Q YOU KNEW THEY MEANT IT.

A Very much. Another sign - the synagogues became fuller and fuller and fuller. As I told you, I went regularly to synagogue and when they were so full, they had to put extra chairs in it. It was a large synagogue, not like this one. Maybe, four times as big you know

- Q AND YOU KNEW - WHAT DID THAT MEAN TO YOU, THAT THE JEWS WERE BECOMING CLOSER TO ONE ANOTHER?
- A That - it was a mixture of feeling like being afraid, try to survive and try to get out. And praying to God that one should stay alive. A mixture of all those feelings, maybe, you may call it.
- Q SO WHEN YOU BOARDED THE TRAIN IN MUNICH, HOW LONG WAS IT TO THE GERMAN BORDER?
- A Not too long. That was over, I remember, it was already evening and I remember looking up and I saw big mountains there - I know they were the Alps. And we tried to sleep. You know, we leaned back, but there were no beds. We leaned back and sleep. When I woke up, we were in Italy. And I could see the Alps there and it went down we came, into you know Italy.
- Q WAS THE WHOLE TRAIN FULL OF REFUGEES, LIKE YOU?
- A No, no, no.
- Q SO YOU HAD TO BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU SAID.
- A Oh, ho, ho, ho. But the waiter knew, because we all had something to eat. And he said: "You don't have to go to the dining room. You stay here and I'll bring you." I still remember we had lamb and potatoes and so on.
- Q AAAH...SO WAS HE TRYING TO SAVE YOU BEING HUMILIATED OR..?
- A No, no. I don't know, he expected a good tip, which he got, because we had more than ten mark, but when we came into the border, we disposed of everything, we bought - some chocolates, or what, you know - that you get exactly, each person, ten mark.
- Q SO YOU DON'T REMEMBER BEING SEARCHED ON THE BORDER?
- A No, we were not searched. I knew other people were searched, but they searched our compartment. This I know, because we had to leave it and I knew that two of them, they were going in, no. That's what I know, you know. But we were not searched.

Q SO, DESCRIBE THE JOURNEY FROM THEN. DESCRIBE THE JOURNEY FROM THEN.

A Oh, well, we came, when we went from the train into Trieste - we somehow, I don't know how we found the hotel. We had to go to a certain hotel. That hotel was full of refugees, all to Shanghai. That I remember. I remember, we had to stay there for two or three days - the ship was the Condorosa? and the Condorosa? was sailing. I remember that the students were marching, walking and they were singing songs - beautiful though, not political songs. They had certain caps on and [stolle?] and they were singing, I remember that. I remember, I was walking around Trieste and I got lost. I wrote down and what I wrote down wasn't the name of the street. I don't know, and I got lost and they had to notify the police. But, down at the hotel, there was a shoemaker and he saw me, and took me by the hand and brought me along. Good fun.

Q WERE YOU AFRAID?

A A little bit maybe. Not being a Jew, but because...

Q BEING LOST IS...

A Right, in a strange town and the next day the ship was going.

Q AND A FUNNY LANGUAGE THAT YOU DIDN'T... UMM, WHAT DID I WANT TO ASK YOU? HOW DID YOU MANAGE TO STRETCH TEN MARKS EACH, SO THAT YOU COULD EAT FOR ALL THAT TIME UNTIL YOU GOT ON THE SHIP?

A I don't know. I assume, I don't know, ja, I am assuming that we paid that hotel already, in Germany. I assume.

Q AHEAD OF TIME?

A Ahead of time. I assume, I really don't know. That's the honest answer. I really don't know, but that would make sense, somehow. I don't know.

Q 'CAUSE THE TEN MARKS IS NOTHING.

A No, nothing.

Q WHAT WOULD IT BE THE EQUIVALENT OF IN DOLLARS TODAY?

A Well, in 1938. Maybe \$25.00, because 1938 money was worth more. Maybe, even that is educated guessing. I really don't know.

Q HOW ABOUT TODAY'S DOLLARS, JUST AN ESTIMATE?

A Ja, in today's..., 25 dollars, in today's dollar.

Q IT DOESN'T GO VERY FAR FOR THREE DAYS?

A No, it doesn't.

Q WHAT WAS THE NAME OF THE SHIP, GARY?

A [Condoroso?].

Q HOW BIG A SHIP?

A Was a big ship, not compared to those big ocean liners, but, I would say 25 thousand tons, or something like that. It was a big ship. We were going first class - at that time, today you don't have first classes anymore. But at that time, they had first class, second class, third class We paid for first class twice as much. And we got a beautiful cabin, bed and there was a sofa, and I slept on the sofa. And it was a very happy voyage. Quite long - I don't know how many weeks till we got to Shanghai. It said on my passport Singapore, Hong Kong, Ceylon, Columbus in Ceylon, all stamping.

Q WERE YOU ALLOWED OFF THE SHIP?

A Yes. Not on every port, but we went at the beginning of the Suez Canal, we went to Alexandria in Egypt and we went through Alexandria, and we came off in Ceylon. Today it's Sri Lanka, but that time it was Ceylon, Colombo. And we went off in Singapore.

Q DID YOU ALL THREE STAY TOGETHER SO YOU..?

A Yes. We stayed together and a little by myself too, but it was okay.

Q MUST HAVE BEEN...

A It was fabulous, it was, you know.

Q TO SEE ALL THOSE STRANGE, EXOTIC PLACES.

- A Right. And, in Hong Kong we went on, you know and then Shanghai.
- Q DID THEY TRUST YOU ENOUGH TO LET YOU NAVIGATE THE STREETS IN TRIESTE, WITHOUT, BY YOURSELF? [nods head] YEAH. AND AFTER YOU...?
- A There was no, and as I said, nothing, we didn't feel any anti-Semitism there, in Italy. Well, we didn't know, but what I learned later on, you know, that Hitler introduced anti-Semitism later on, you know. When he convinced Mussolini you has to be against the Jews. That came later.
- Q BUT AFTER YOU GOT LOST IN TRIESTE, WERE THEY WORRIED WHEN YOU GOT OFF IN OTHER CITIES?
- A Umm, I don't think so. No, no, I say that and during distance you know, and near the ship I went around and not too far around. Not too far.
[1:18:49]
- Q AND WHAT DID YOU KNOW ABOUT THE PLACE YOU WERE GOING TO?
- A Well, rather, the impression that I had. I still remember, in Singapore, there was a native's quarter, the meat was hanging down covered with flies. And people were doing their, how would you call it, their needs, you know, in the streets there. That I remember, we were taken in the home of, a man who came to our ship - he must have been Jewish, but he lived there for years in Singapore. He invited us to his home, beautiful home, with a servant, you know, and we had something to drink, and so on. This I remember too.
- Q WAS HE SOMEONE THAT YOUR FATHER KNEW?
- A No, no, nobody knew my father.
- Q HE WAS JUST...?
- A He was - no, nobody knew him. And I could speak a little bit English, because I went to High School where we learned English, so I could speak a little bit of English. And I was the translator.

Q SO WHAT YOU SAW IN SINGAPORE GAVE YOU THE IDEA THAT THIS WAS GOING TO BE VERY DIFFERENT TO ANYTHING YOU WERE USED TO?

A Yes, I didn't necessarily - worse, or good, or better, or worse, but, I had the feeling of being different. And that's what I expected of Shanghai and that's what it was. Different.

Q HOW? IN WHAT WAYS - TELL ME?

A When we came to Shanghai, we saw the silhouette of the [bund?] or [band?], I don't know how you, what the correct pronunciation - and it looked very European. All the big banks and business houses and we said: "Oh, this is Shanghai." Ja, but it - we didn't live there.

Q THAT WAS NOT THE SHANGHAI YOU WERE GOING TO LIVE IN.

A We were put on a truck and transported somewhere else.

Q AND WHAT DID THAT LOOK LIKE?

A The [Hongshu?] - you see, Shanghai had many parts: International [Ferdinand?] - That was predominantly ruled by the British. The French Concession - which was French. And, [Hongshu?]. [Hongshu?] was the part where the Japanese invaded. You know, the Japanese invaded China several times. And the last time was '37, and that's the part they occupied, [Hongshu?]. And that's the part we lived in. And [Hongshu?] was half destroyed, when we came a lot of houses were just little stone, there, like a, oh, my God, we shook - we dead. But, they started to build it up and I think I have a picture here how it looks from our window. We found an apartment that was in the centre of the district, you know. One window was this street and one window was that street. It really was the centre. And we were glad to have that. It was one room, only. And there was, for the whole house, one bathroom, for the whole house. But we were very lucky. It was a water closet.

Q HOW MANY PEOPLE...

A Because in the house next to us, in the house was not a water closet.

Q HOW MANY PEOPLE WERE IN THE HOUSE? GUESS.

A Alright, there were about one, two, three, four, about eight apartments, you know, one room apartments. It belonged to a white Russian, a former Cossack.

Q ONE BATHROOM FOR THE EIGHT FAMILIES?

A Right. And we were lucky, because it was, as I said, a water closet.

Q AND COOKING, COOKING FACILITIES?

A Ah, cooking we had, I remember, we bought from Germany, we had brought one, this petroleum and in the beginning we used it, but we gave it up.. my mother gave it up for some reason. It was, I don't think it worked too good. And then we installed 220V, no, a special for electric cooking. You needed a special counter, you know. And we had to pay for it, to use electricity. And we use also, what you call it, it looked like a flower-pot, with an opening below - and you put some little pieces of coal there and you stood with a fan at the little opening. We called it a shiny stove, we called it. And that we used too. So, because when electricity, later on, was, during the wartime you know, after Pearl Harbour, the Japanese had less and less material, you know, to - because electricity uses oil and so on, you know. So, we were allowed to use only that and that much watts per month. If we used more and more, you know, the flower-pot.

Q I'M CURIOUS, YOU SAID YOUR LANDLORD WAS A FORMER COSSACK, I WONDERED IF YOU GOT ANY ANTI-SEMITIC FEELING FROM HIM?

A Alright. There were a lot of Russians there that fled from the communist revolution. Needless to say, they were all anti-communist. On the side, they wanted Hitler to win the war. But he and my family got quite, got along. He couldn't speak, very little English, my father could speak Slav because he was born in Poland that belonged to Russia, a little bit Russian.

So they made themselves understandable. So he played cards with us, you know, and...

Q HE DIDN'T CARE THAT YOU WERE JEWISH?

A Apparently not. I don't know what was in his heart, but I know, he and his friends, they wanted Hitler to win the war. This I know.

Q BECAUSE THEY WANTED THE COMMUNISTS TO LOSE?

A When they talk about it. I visited one of his friends because one of his friends sold cheese made out of soya. He manufactured that. And when I looked into his room - a big picture of Hitler hanging there. So, we all knew, you know.

Q NOW DO YOU THINK HE WANTED GERMANY TO WIN, OR RUSSIA TO LOSE?

A It's the same thing, more or less, isn't it? If Russia would lose, then Germany would win that part. Yes, because they wanted to return to Russia. But, not a communist Russia. They had pictures from the Tsar and what have you, you know.

Q WELL, THEY HAD BEEN WEALTHY THERE I SUPPOSE?

A I don't know whether they were wealthy or not. I don't know.

Q NOW HOW DID YOUR FAMILY SURVIVE ECONOMICALLY?

A Shanghai was a very, very hard experience. It was totally distant. All the experiences that we had in Europe and the way to survive, you could throw overboard. Shanghai was totally different, and people who were quite successful in Germany had nothing in Shanghai. And I know some people, I don't want any names, who had nearly nothing in Germany, who became big and opened up some bars and what have you and that. Became big in Shanghai. How did we survive personally? As I said, my father was a good provider and in the beginning, he fell back on his tailoring experience, before we had the store and he made some repairs and so on. But, later he did something else. He bought our sewing machine to Shanghai and he bought linens and the colour it was off-white, yellowish, you know.

That was the tropic linen, and he made suits out of them. And these suits he sold as long as it was possible.

Q TO OTHER REFUGEES?

A No, ja, refugees too, but I don't know, he also had some customers - Chinese and even Japanese. It was before Pearl Harbour, you know. He had - he went, for instance, there was, in some of the, in the outer district, there was a lot of people displayed things for selling and he displayed his suits there - and he sold them.

Q SO HE WAS...

A I was a young - I didn't want to go to school anymore. Maybe it was a mistake, but, I wanted to help my parents, so I learnt a profession.

Q WHAT KIND OF PROFESSION?

A I learnt the radio technique. But, I didn't realise, as an apprentice, I made next to nothing, next to nothing. That's the way apprentices learn their profession. Next to nothing. So, but that's why, as I said my father was a good provider and I never was hungry.

Q NO?

A No. I know other people were hungry. I must say, as far as I remember, I was never hungry. Then we didn't have that life that we had in Germany, but it was enough to eat, you know.

Q WHAT DID YOUR MOTHER DO?

A She, besides doing the household and the cooking, she helped my father, I remember, with the suits. I remember, with the suits, she did the pockets, for instance, you know and...

Q SO HE MUST HAVE BEEN A GOOD TAILOR TO BE ABLE TO MAKE MEN'S LINEN SUITS. THAT'S...

- A Yeah, well, there was a man who was a cutter. And he made the models, you know, according to the sizes. Size, 44, 42, 40, 30... he put it on, this my father did not know. But from then on, my father did everything.
- Q WAS THE WHITE LINEN SUITS A NOVELTY?
- A It was an off-white. It was a tropical linen, something like that [shows his clothing] linen, you know.
Because in Shanghai, during the summer, it's very humid, very hot, and that's mostly what people were wearing. Either the short or long trousers with a jacket, you know, they were very light.
- Q HOW LONG WAS HE ABLE TO KEEP MAKING THE SUITS?
- A I ask myself that question and I really don't know the answer. I believe, let's say, 1942, '43, I believe.
- Q SO, FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS?
- A Yes, he did. And then you know, the Japanese closed the district. We couldn't leave anymore, except if somebody has a special pass. A blue and red, the red one was for the international citizens and the blue one was for [Hongshu?]. And you always had to go and renew it. And so he could go out in the beginning, but then, later, he couldn't go out anymore.
- Q NOW, AFTER YOU ARRIVED IN SHANGHAI, YOU NEVER WENT TO SCHOOL?
- A No, I did not. A lot of people did - maybe I should have, but I didn't.
- Q HOW DID YOU GET INTO THE RADIO TECHNICIAN THING?
- A A friend of mine, he was two years older, he had a job in one of those radio joints. He built and repaired radio, specially in the beginning, building, you know. And they needed a new apprentice and he told his boss: "My friend, he would be perfect for the job," and that was I.
- Q SO HAD YOU ALREADY MADE THE DECISION NOT TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL. OR ?

A Yes, yes I was fed up, with school. Let's say I was fed up - I was a good pupil, but for some reason, I was fed up. And I wanted to learn Russian, and I wanted to help my parents - all that together accumulated to achieving - no school and..

Q DID YOU KNOW ANYONE IN SHANGHAI THAT YOU KNEW IN GERMANY?

A Only a few people, yes. A few people. In fact, from my school, I met two persons, or three persons, rather, you know, that went to the school together.

Q DID THAT MAKE YOU WANT TO FORM A BOND WITH THEM?

A Uhh.. little bit. But first of all also on the ship there were some boys about my age and we became friends. But later on, we were, there's a centre there for friends, you know. And we stayed together and laid on some - ?? and we had girlfriends and later on, we made parties. And, in fact, one of them died a few years ago here in the States and the other two, one lives in Florida and the other lives nearby. I get together with them every week, at least once. We have lunch together and talk and so on. So we stay together, ja and..

Q SO WHAT WAS THE RADIO TECHNICIAN JOB LIKE FOR YOU?

A Well, in the beginning, an apprentice, not like here - an apprentice had to do everything. The most common jobs...

Q ALL THE DIRTY WORK?

A All the dirty work! And we were building - I learnt how to build radios.

Q DOES THAT MEAN YOU COULD LISTEN TO RADIOS?

A Yes, we did a bit of listening too.

Q SO YOU - DID YOU KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON IN THE WORLD?

A That was, yes, we knew what was going on. Because on short wave, you know - we were listening to short wave. We were listening to London, to Berlin too and then, later on, to Russia, you know.

Oh, yes. But don't forget the Japanese forbid all short wave and they had - we had to cut out all the short wave from all the radios in Shanghai. Oh, yes.

Q THIS AFTER PEARL HARBOUR? [nods head] BUT NOT BEFORE?

A No, no, no. That was after, a while after Pearl Harbour. Not right away, but...

Q SO THEY DIDN'T WANT YOU TO HEAR...?

A Right, but there was a German radio station, a Nazi German radio station. But there was a Russian station - all languages, besides Russian. Part of it was in German. If you were listening to that, you knew what was going on. And then the newspapers, you know....

Q YOU KNEW ABOUT POLAND FALLING?

A Yes.

Q YOU KNEW ABOUT FRANCE FALLING?

A Yes, we knew.

Q YOU HEARD ABOUT GERMANY INVADING RUSSIA?

A Yes

Q AND THEN, AT THE END OF THAT YEAR IT STOPPED?

A Oh no. The Russian station still reported and we knew, for instance, in the beginning, the Japanese put a signal to it - OOOOHHHHH... we still could listen, but then somehow, some diplomatic things going on, because they had to stop. And they were telling us in the later years how bitter fighting there was and how Stalingrad - oh, we knew about it. Oh yes.

Q WERE YOU ABLE TO CORRESPOND WITH FAMILY MEMBERS?

A Alright. This I tell you about. Until Germany invaded Russia, we corresponded via Siberia. That means, they sent card that went through Siberia to us and we sent cards that went via Siberia to them

So we did write to each other. But after Germany invaded Russia, that stopped.

Q AND THERE WAS NO OTHER WAY?

A There was no other way.

Q SO YOU HAD NO NEWS AND YOU KNEW YOU WEREN'T GOING TO HAVE ANY NEWS?

A That's correct.

Q SO HOW DID YOU LEARN THE FATE OF YOUR RELATIVES?

A Well, once the war was over first there were rumours. And then, came more and more the knowledge about...

Q WHAT RUMOURS?

A That a lot of Jews died and were killed.

Q WOULD YOU HEAR THAT ON THE RUSSIAN RADIO?

A No. I don't know, no, among each other. Among each other, among the immigrants - among each other, you know. And then, came the official announcement about the Holocaust and of course, we tried via certain organisations to reach our relatives. And then, we contact the neighbours of my brother, who were Gentiles. Lukas, the Lukas family. And they told us about, that they were arrested, and that and that and that... and then, we also heard about my aunt and uncle and Poland and... I don't know. I think there was an organisation who specialised for that.

Q MISSING PERSONS?

A But by that time, my father died on the 27th July 1945, a few days before the atom bomb fell. So, he never knew about the fate of his family.

Q WHAT DID HE DIE OF?

A Huh, the official death certificate says typhus. He didn't have typhus. It was a virus, an unknown virus, that were going round, epidemic.

He had fever, he lost his voice and within seven days he was dead. He was the only one. There was no investigation or nothing.

Q AND THEY NEVER FIGURED OUT WHAT IT WAS?

A Oh, after years, we were already in Israel, and my mother heard that the chief physician, Dr. Meimann, or Mannheim, Dr. Mannheim, was living, also in Israel in that and that kibbutz. So, she wrote him if he remembers what it was, because she wanted certificate, because the German government was paying if they knew it was through their fault that that happened, you know. And so, she wanted a certificate. And he wrote - of course I remember Abraham Bigus, he was dying of, now he wrote the word, I repeat it the way he wrote it - "Japanische gewurnhoudt syndrome" - "Japanisch" means Japanese, "gewurn" is brain, "gewurnhoudt" means the membrane of the brain. An inflammation of the membrane of the brain; through a virus. "Japanische gewurnhoudt syndrome" - that was his very words. I remember it.

Q DID YOU HAVE ANY DEALINGS WITH THE JAPANESE WHILE YOU WERE THERE IN SHANGHAI?

A On the beginning, because, as I said, I was building radios for, three-point radio, we had quite a bit of Japanese customers. They were very friendly to us. And some of them were Japanese policemen, I remember. And I was delivering them to their homes - they invited me, some of them, to sit down. They give me something to eat. They were very friendly, that's the honest truth. And, but there was also another side of it. Are you interested in that to hear?

Q OF COURSE.

A Alright, I tell you a few things. I remember, for instance, I was chief apprentice - already we had some other apprentices - delivering a radio to a Japanese home. He invited us into the lounge. And he had a cat - it was annoying him. So he took the cat, put something heavy on the tail, by the chest, then he threw the cat through the room against the wall.

Some other experiences - we were dancing, you know we went with girls for dancing, there were quite a bit of restaurants for ?? and we were there one evening, dancing, and in came some Japanese - you could see they were drunk.

Q SOLDIERS?

A They were in uniforms and one was in half military uniform, you know. Not directly in... the one that was drunk, he must be the head of that group, or... He came to the centre of the room: "OOOOhHHH". And we were all of course, afraid, it was already the time, you know, with the district and we tried to get out to the toilets and so. And he caught one other Japanese and he took something from his pocket. It was about that long, [indicates unseen from camera, with hands] it had a silver metal thing in it like that and [makes a throwing motion] out came a whip - steel, with a flex on it, onto the head of the man. And the man just stood there, you know, and the blood was running down, he was [hitting motion]

Q THIS MAN WAS JAPANESE?

A Yes. It was part of his party. In fact, some other Japanese came in and they went and they left, and we all were running upstairs just to hide, you know. Then another was an incident, ?? a Japanese he ordered a drink and he took the glass and behind the bar was a big mirror, he took it and [throwing motion] threw it into the mirror. I don't know whether he paid for it or not, I don't know. Then I was told - I didn't see, that at the same bar Japanese comes over that and beats that woman into the breast. And then something happened to me.

Q WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?

A We had, there was a Japanese - he belonged to the naval landing Party. That was like in Japanese, the Gestapo. He had a radio and we repaired and he didn't pick it up. And then, it was New Year's Eve, and people wanted to listen to radios and there was that one man and he had this radio for repair and our boss gave his the radio of Mr. [Azor?], I still remember the name - [Azor?]. He gave it to him.

Q HE GAVE IT TO HIM TO USE?

A No, no, just for lending, for the evening. He wanted - for the evening. We were open till seven. Around six o'clock it was already dark - in came [Azor?] Mr. [Azor?] - drunk. He smelled of alcohol. "Where's my radio? I was sick!"

I said: "Just a moment, Mr. [Azor?]". He grabbed me [motions to around the neck] and there was a board and there was a staircase going up - and it was out of beton. And he crashed my head against that beton, not once, I don't know how many times, and slapped me in the face. I didn't - he would have shot me, they all carried pistols, you know. And he crashed my head against that - you know, my head, I could feel... then finally, one of the boys must have run home and got my boss and he came and:

"Yah, yah, yah, just a moment, Mr {Azor?] and..."

"I was sick." [makes a hitting motion with hand]

He kept hitting until they pulled me away, or something. I was, I am still suffering from that. I get dizzy spells and one of my doctors, he examined me here, here in the United States, he said: "You must have a scar, here on your..." I didn't remember that, I said: "I don't remember how I got that."

"Did somebody bang you over the head?"

I said: "No, I can't - Oh my God! [Azor?] the damn swine!"

Q SO WERE YOU REAL SICK AFTER THE ATTACK?

A I can tell you how I felt, not sick, but like [motions to the head] an empty, like not right. Let's say in that way. But that feeling went away after my mother's... I still remember, it was in New Year's Eve, oh yeah. And there was three other boys, apprentices, in the store.

Q AND DID HE DO THIS BEFORE HE KNEW THAT THE RADIO WASN'T THERE?

A Ja, he left and brrrrr.. he tear out, he went and... And, somebody went right back to that man who had his radio, and he brought it back here and by that time he was gone already.

Q SO HE DIDN'T GET THE RADIO? [shakes head] NO.

A He must have picked it up later, I don't know.

Q SO YOU SAW EXPLOSIVE KINDS OF BEHAVIOUR?

A Oh yeah, that was the way they, and then, I didn't see it, but there was a so-called bridge house, they called it. And to the bridge house, they imprisoned people they were undesirable. Some of them died, there were horrible conditions. I haven't seen it. This... must have...

Q DID YOU KNOW ANYONE THAT WENT IN?

A Ossie Levin, he was a chief editor of the newspaper. The Shanghai Jewish Chronicle and I knew other person, but I don't know by name.

Q DID HE SURVIVE THIS...?

A He survived, but some of them died, yes. So, and not only that, they were - when you went on a bus, for instance, and you had to pass, the Japanese soldier was sitting post - and he stood there, and the driver asked "Whoosh!" [very gruff voice] you know, that's the way they spoke like that with people.

Q DID YOU KNOW WHAT THEY WERE SAYING?

A "Whoosh!" I was told means pass. But, I remember, we had one comedian, his name was Herbert Sanding, after the war, he said: "If I go in the street and somebody be, and some hear something behind him 'Whoosh!' I know this time it's a dog." Yeah, but that's the way they were - very rough. I could see how one Japanese, was beating up, I don't know, a group of Chinese and then, they didn't do anything.

Q YOU SAW THAT?

A I saw that with my own eyes. He was in uniform, you know - like military cadet, navy cadet, dark uniform. Oh yeah, I remember that.

Q AND THEY WERE AFRAID TO MAKE A MOVE? SO, IT MUST HAVE LOOKED TO YOU, A LOT LIKE WHAT YOU JUST GOT AWAY FROM.

A Well, they were not anti-Semitic, you know, they were not in the beginning. But later it came out that the German Nazis, they had a colony of Nazis in Shanghai, persuaded them to install gas ovens on the Isle of [Puton?] for us. That's what I heard and I heard that those who signed that document were hanged

The Japanese and the Germans who signed that were hanged. And one Japanese who was the most feared one - his name was [Goya?] - he did not sign it. He survived the war. He was beaten up, but he survived.

Q SO THE PLAN WAS TO TAKE THE JEWS THERE?

A Oh yes, if... yes, that was the plan for us. If it was meant to be.

Q AND IT JUST NEVER HAPPENED BECAUSE THE WAR ENDED?

A I don't know what happened. You know that was, I read about it and it was a rumour, but a lot of people said, no, it was not so. So, I really don't know for sure. That's the truth.

Q I'VE HEARD IT MENTIONED BEFORE, BUT NEVER SO SPECIFIC. YOU EVEN KNOW WHERE, AND WHO.

A I remember even the man who was supposed to defend the Germans - his name was, he was a lawyer, he was a Jewish lawyer, I believe, by the name of Fox. And first of all he was attacked because he was ready to defend those Nazis he was pushed out of the organisation of lawyers, or what and he never did defend them. So that's all what I know.

Q THAT'S A LOT. WOULD YOU SAY THAT YOU WERE AFRAID OF THE JAPANESE?

A Yes and no. Generally no, but in the beginning they treated me very friendly. I was invited, as I said, and they came to our store and I told them: "?????" - Japanese - it means - please sit down - to the ladies, you know, and I knew a few words that I was taught to show how long wave, or short wave, ?? 6-tube radio and so on. You know, they were nice. They were - when I came to their home, I had to take my shoes off - yes, and walk on the...

Q WAS THAT YOUR FIRST SAMPLING OF JAPANESE?

A Yes.

Q WHAT WAS THAT LIKE FOR YOU?

- A That I found that different and exotic. Ja, they had no - they didn't even know about Jews and one Japanese was speaking to me, who bought a radio: "Though we are allies, you German and we Japanese, we are allies." And then, after Pearl Harbour, it was after Pearl Harbour, I remember, we were in the bus, he said: "Yeah, and the American industry gets smaller and smaller and the Japanese industry gets bigger and bigger." I smiled at him, I said: "Oh."
- Q SO THEY LOOKED UPON YOU AS ALLIES?
- A I wouldn't say allies, but some Japanese, as Germans, and then they were educated by the Nazis that we... as enemies, yes, and that how we were treated.
- Q WHAT KIND OF SOCIAL LIFE DID YOU HAVE IN SHANGHAI?
- A That was only among us immigrants. We were a clique of boys and girls - we made parties, we got to dances, and that was our social life in a... and there were a lot of actors and actresses, in Shanghai doing shows, you know. They made theatres. So we went to - whether it was an opera, operetta or a drama - we went to see it. And your humoristic plays, you know. ?? evenings, stand up comedians, you know, we had quite a few and we went to movies, that was our social life.
- Q WHAT KIND OF MOVIES?
- A American movies. And as long as they could, they imported the, no imported, there came American movies, you know. But later on, later on there were no new movies coming in, you know. And they showed only old movies.
- Q YOU DIDN'T SEE JAPANESE MOVIES?
- A No. I never saw a Japanese movie.
- Q WHAT ABOUT THE CHINESE, DID YOU HAVE ANY DEALINGS WITH THE CHINESE?
- A Contact with... yes, partly. First of all, one of our employees was a Chinese.
- Q IN THE RADIO STORE?

- A In the radio store, yes, he built radios. He was already older than me, we were - he had experience years before, so he was building radios - a very nice guy. And my other experience was, I went to the settlement to buy parts and the parts were all in Chinese stores. That's how my contact with Chinese...
- Q THE PERSON WHO WORKED IN THE RADIO STORE, COULD YOU COMMUNICATE WITH HIM?
- A Oh, yes, he spoke English. We all could communicate in English - that was called Pidgin English. It was very few words, but he could speak English, we made ourselves understandable. Oh, yes.
- Q AND WHAT KIND OF SENSE DID YOU HAVE ABOUT THE KIND OF LIFE HE WAS LIVING?
- A Way he was living?
- Q YEAH, DID THEY HAVE ENOUGH TO EAT?
- A Yes, in fact, I introduced him to some European food - he tasted some sandwiches made with ['braunspeige'?] - that's the German sausage - you know, and he liked it and he wanted to buy it and I sent him to the provision store opposite us and I said: "He would like to have quarter pound of ['braunspeige'?]". And, he later told of his son, and he had a son, he liked it very much. And then he went by himself, he asked for ['braunspeige'?] {spoken with accent} Oh, yeah.
- Q HOW ABOUT THE OTHER CHINESE PEOPLE THAT YOU...?
- A How they lived. Well, okay, the very rich ones, middle class and very poor ones and beggars. A lot of beggars. They were, I give you one scene that I remember - when we came there. A group went through the middle of the street. In the front was a little boy, he had a bear, he had a rope around it's neck and was leading a couple. He had to because that old man had no eyes anymore. And the boy was leading them. His wife, the old man's wife, he was carrying like that [cradles arms] because she had no feet anymore. And the boy was ringing and he was shouting out: "For beggars."

And there were other beggars lean on the street, they had their stall written in Chinese letters, you know, with their face down, because they lost their face, you know. And, people were throwing coins.

Q WAS IT BECAUSE OF THE WAR THAT THEY...?

A I don't know. There were a lot, in all those countries, not only in Shanghai. Wherever you go - in the Arab countries or everywhere, you saw a lot of beggars. Not only in Shanghai, a lot of...

Q HOW DID YOU FEEL ABOUT THE BEGGARS?

A Sorry, we felt sorry about the richer coolies. You know, they were pulling other human beings and dehumanising to - I said no, if you don't use them, this is their profession. If you don't use them you deprive them of their livelihood, use them. So even if you feel bad about it and somebody should pull you - they want you to because that's how they make their money. The richer coolie was also a low form in Chinese society. You know, a coolie was a low form.

Q DID YOU LET YOURSELF TAKE RIDES THAT WAY?

A Very seldom. I remember I was sick with dysentery and what have you and malaria and when I came home from the hospital, my father and I we used a rickshaw.

Q HOW LONG WERE YOU IN THE HOUSE FOR?

A Over a month. I was young and I was quite heavy with...

Q DID YOU GET OVER IT OR DID IT...?

A Oh, yeah, but malaria, I had a relapse a year later, or two years later, and it was much heavier. But from then on I only got some headaches, with the fever and so, but not anymore those violent attacks.

Q I THINK WE HAVE TO STOP NOW TO CHANGE THE TAPE, AND THEN WE GO ON.

Q GARY, I WANTED TO ASK, THE FRIENDS THAT YOU HAD, THAT YOU WERE CLOSEST TO IN SHANGHAI, WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?

A All from Germany.

Q ALL FROM GERMANY. I WANTED TO ASK IF THE...

A Berlin, Germany.

Q I WANTED TO ASK IF THE GERMAN YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE AUSTRIAN YOUNG PEOPLE WERE FRIENDS WITH EACH OTHER OR...?

A Good question. Well, in the very beginning, the Austrians, the Viennese and the Germans, they didn't get along.

Q DO YOU KNOW WHY?

A I think this occurs in a lot of people, a lot of communities, let's say. That, people stick together and look upon others, you know, and actually we shouldn't have, because we were all in the same destiny. We were all Jewish and all refugees, but it did happen, you know. They called us the ['piskkes'?).

Q WHAT DID THAT MEAN?

A [Pischkes?] is a typical German name, you know - the Pischkes. And we called them the 'Viennas'. That means, because they didn't pronounce Vienna of Weiner, but vee-aan-ner, you know, that's how... But, only the beginning - later on, it got less and less and less and less, there were intermarriages between Austrians and Germans and..

Q AND WAS THAT OKAY WITH THE PARENTS?

A I assume so.

Q NO BIG DEAL.

A One of my friends, the sister of my friend, married a Viennese and of course, we were invited there it was very nice, he was a very nice guy. And I had a Viennese girlfriend.

Q YOU DID?

A Yes.

Q FOR HOW LONG?

A Two years. And...

Q WAS THAT YOUR FIRST GIRLFRIEND?

A No, but they had some expressions that we didn't have, you know, for certain foods, they named it different. That was actually more or less the same food, but with the different name. But later on, as I said, there was no difference anymore. That was only in the beginning.

Q TELL ME A LITTLE ABOUT WHAT YOU WITNESSED IN REGARD TO THE CHINESE?

A Alright, now, as I said, I found the whole thing exotic and strange and tried to suck it up like a sponge, the impressions, you know. And there were some experiences that you didn't see in Europe or in Middle Europe. For instance, you wander along the street, especially [Hongshu?] - not so much in the settlement, but the main streets, but in [Hongshu?] we saw little straw mats, laying in entrances. And they were folded, ja, and these were children - they were dead.

Q DEAD?

A Dead. Unwanted children.

Q WERE THEY MURDERED?

A I don't know, but what they were, I don't know. And I was told, most of them, they're girls. The didn't want any, and then, all I saw, when winter came - Shanghai could get very cold, in winter - children in straw mats, laying there, frozen to death. Beggars and so, frozen to death. And you get accustomed to scenes like that people there, laying there, you get accustomed to it. And you get, somehow; not so sensitive about it anymore. It's horrible, ja, but it's part of everyday life, you know. Immune - in a way you never get really immune to it, but in a way it doesn't affect you like in the beginning. And then you see scenes in Shang - I mean, a barber sitting on the street, doing his business, you know. And people sitting there, and he's cutting them - on the street, you know.

He's the one barber, or some food carriers, you know they carry their buckets [indicates to the shoulder] on the stick with some food there and: "Hey, ho. Hey, ho." And then they sit down and he displays it and he has some food there to display - warm food, or cold food and the Chinese buy it, you know. These are street scenes that you get used to it.

Q WOULD THEY - WOULD THE FOREIGNERS BUY IT?

A I've seen some foreigners buying those long sticks that were deep fried like bread sticks, twisted, and about that long [indicates with hands] - I saw the foreigners buy it, yes. But, and we went ourselves sometimes to Chinese restaurants, and had like little stuffed, we call it [trepler?/ trepshin?]. And the Chinese, remembered the word and he said: "Ah, you come to eat [trepshin?]" Oh yeah, you know, the dumplings, stuffed dumplings. Those in borscht and so on...

Q PROBABLY MADE A LITTLE DIFFERENT INSIDE THAN THE..

A Ja. Well later, after the war, we went to some Chinese restaurants, some very nice ones - in [Ferdinand?], when we had some money, you know, and we did go and they were very nice restaurant. Beautiful restaurant.

Q NOW, DURING THE WAR YOU DIDN'T GO TO ANY CHINESE RESTAURANTS?

A No, not during the war.

Q PEOPLE COULDN'T AFFORD IT?

A There were some restaurants among ourselves. I mean, immigrants, oh yes, there were some. We did go now and then, now and then, but mostly then I ate at home.

Q NOW DID YOU KEEP WORKING ON THE RADIO ALL DURING THE WAR?

A On radios, yes.

Q AND TELL US WHAT YOU WERE SAYING DURING THE INTERMISSION ABOUT THE BROADCASTS YOU WOULD LISTEN TO?

A Oh, after Pearl Harbour, after a while the Japanese had an edict that it was forbidden to listen to short wave. Short waves to the radio store, and get a certificate. We had to cut out the short wave, that they could listen only to standard broadcast. We called it middle wave. Ja, standard broadcast. And...

Q WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE TO HOOK UP TO SHORT WAVE AGAIN AFTER THE...?

A Ja, well, they had to bring it in and we had to put in coils, ja, short wave coils. Oscillated coils and antennae coils - oh yes, it was possible.

Q SO DID PEOPLE DO THAT?

A Oh, yes, it was quite a business for us.

Q WAS IT DANGEROUS?

A After the war?

Q NO, NO, NO. DURING THE WAR.

A Oh, during the... no, during the war, no short wave was installed.

Q AND NO ONE TRIED TO HOOK UP TO SHORT WAVE?

A Oh, no, no, no, no.

Q BUT IT MADE YOU BUSINESS

A Even the Japanese were not allowed to have short wave. I mean, the simple civilian persons, you know. I don't know what the higher up, I don't know.

Q SO YOU HAD THE BUSINESS ON BOTH ENDS - TAKING IT OUT AND PUTTING IT BACK IN.

A Right, right.

Q AND WHAT WAS THE BROADCAST YOU LISTENED TO?

A Alright, now I heard it. I don't know what - a woman, one of our immigrants said there is a German, supposed to be a German radio station at night - listen to a broadcast a German broadcast

So I tried that and indeed, I was listening to a "Freie Deutschestation", or... in other words, anti-Nazi station, in German. I don't know from where this transmission, or where it was located but it was quite clear. I can testify that I was listening to it, quite a bit.

Q DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT WHEN YOU STARTED TO LISTEN?

A I know for sure it was about 1945 that I listened. As it was, before 1945, I don't recall, it could be '44 too that I started. I don't recall, but '45 for sure.

Q AND WHAT KIND OF THINGS DID YOU LEARN FROM LISTENING?

A Well, I learned that the Nazi propaganda was wrong; they were losing the war; that Hitler died, shortly... even before it was publicly announced and that - this was officially on the Russian station, in German - you know, about Stalingrad and about all the battles that they were losing. And about the gains of the territories that they - yes, we were listening to it.

Q FROM THE PERIOD OF PEARL HARBOUR UNTIL THE END OF THE WAR, WHAT DID YOU KNOW ABOUT THE COURSE OF THE WAR AND UNITED STATES AGAINST JAPAN?

A The official version was that Japan was winning. But, we hoped and knew, and I wouldn't say knew, I mean, it was an educated thinking that this is not the case. In fact, I remember an incident, that a man with the name of Solomon went to apply for a passport at [Goya's?] office, and everybody was talking about it. So he jumped up and said: "Solomon, a very bad name, get out!". Because of the Solomon Islands. They got quite a bit from the Americans, you know they were defeated by the Americans at the Solomon Islands. So he shouted: "Solomon is very bad name, get out!"

Q WERE PEOPLE ABLE TO MAKE THAT CONNECTION? DID THEY UNDERSTAND WHY HE WAS...?

A I'm sure. I did.

Q YOU DID?

- A I did. But I'm sure, we all knew. Look, for instance, the Russian station did not bring news about the Japanese.
- Q THEY DIDN'T?
- A But the Europeans said of war, oh yes, they did. Oh yes.
- Q NOW...
- A But not about the Japanese.
- Q THE JAPANESE AND THE RUSSIANS WEREN'T TECHNICALLY AT WAR.
- A No they were not at war. In fact, after the atom bomb, Russia declared war on Japan. Not before.
- Q NO. SO THAT'S PROBABLY WHY...
- A By then the war was practically over, but except in Manchuria, that's where whole Japanese army was destroyed by the Russians. A very bloody battle, I think. Oh yes, that's when Japan said we cannot take on United States and Russia, and they applied for peace.
- Q SO DO YOU THINK THE RUSSIANS DIDN'T TALK ABOUT THE JAPANESE WAR BECAUSE THEY WEREN'T AT WAR WITH THEM?
- A No, I think it was, maybe it was an agreement, they take off the disturbing signal and we don't speak... I think - who knows what instructions they have? This I don't know, but they didn't talk about it.
- Q SO THEY DID TAKE OFF THE SIGNAL THAT...?
- A Oh yes, the signal, the station was clear there on their broadcast. This I remember.
- Q DID YOU HEAR RUMOURS ABOUT THE ATOM BOMB, OR DID YOU HEAR THAT ON THE RADIO?
- A Well, the way I heard about it - it was when my father died on the 27th of July and I stayed home for a few days. I had [minion?] said you know, we prayed and had kadesh. When I came back to work they said, they said: "Didn't you hear about the atom bomb?"

I said: "No."

"Well, an atom bomb fall down on Japan."

I said: "That's the end of the war. That's it."

Q YOU KNEW.

A Then - that's when I knew, ja. How they knew about it, I don't know.

Q WERE PEOPLE AFRAID TO BELIEVE THAT OR...

A No. No, no. We all had the feeling, more or less, that we will get out of Shanghai. We will survive. We will, we have to survive, we will get out of Shanghai and we will win the war. That's the feeling that we had. All of us.

Q WHEN YOU WENT TO SHANGHAI, DID YOU CONSIDER IT A WAY-STATION TO SOMEWHERE ELSE? YOU NEVER CONSIDERED IT

A There was a difference between me and the white Russians I talked about. They wanted to go back, they left, they never thought they could get out. They stayed there for years. We knew we will get out; we won't stay there. A lot of us died there, like my father, ja. But we knew otherwise, we will get out. We knew.

Q DID YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHERE YOU WOULD END UP?

A No.

Q DID YOU HAVE A PREFERENCE?

A Alright, well, we had three - part of them wanted to go back to Germany. I never wanted to go back to Germany.

Q DID MANY PEOPLE WANT TO

A I had such a hate against the Nazis in my heart. I couldn't. For myself there was three possibilities - United States, Australia or Palestine. And then, especially then, I always was a Zionist and then the state was created of Israel. You see the state was created...

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Q DID YOU HAVE A PREFERENCE?

A Well, whatever would come, I would take, let's say.

Q WHATEVER CAME FIRST.

A No, I had the German quarter, because I was born in Berlin and the German quarter was very good. I was already examined by an American doctor and so on. And there was a co-operative affidavit that - we had nobody here in the States, but we, the American Jewish Joined, they gave us co-operative affidavit.

Q WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

A That means they vouched for us; that we won't be a burden to the state.

Q SO YOU DIDN'T NEED A SPONSOR?

A We didn't need a sponsor. The sponsor was American Jewish Joined. So, I was ready to go. But, my mother, as I said was born in [Naacker?] which came into Poland. She had the Polish quarter which was very bad.

Q SO SHE COULDN'T COME THE SAME TIME?

A No. I could have gone and left my mother there, but I don't do that. I stick with my mother. I said: "We are together." In fact, I had to support my mother now. And we wanted to wait it out.

We were registered to come here. In the mean time there was a civilian, a civil war going on between the communists and the Shanghai Shek forces and the communist forces came nearer and nearer Shanghai then they stood in front of the gate of Shanghai. And it was already end of '48 and then there came the United Nations chartered some ships to go to Israel. Whoever wants to go to Israel, within one week, has to be ready. And we took that and we sold whatever we had. We packed and went to Israel.

Q WHAT WAS THAT LIKE? WHAT WAS THAT LIKE?

A Israel?

Q TO GO THERE?

A Again, a complete different experience. Huh, first of all, to go there we all came on a little ship - there were, I think there were 2 000 of us on a boat built for 200.

Q ALL FROM SHANGHAI?

A All from Shanghai. There were Russian Jews and part European Jews. And it was going - I was so seasick. The conditions were horrible. How I survived, I don't know. We couldn't go through Suez Canal - we had to, because it was a war going on. And I was already examined by an Israeli army doctor, in Shanghai. And, we went all around Africa and Cape Town - we landed and the huge community knew we were coming, stood there, they bought cigarettes and chocolates on board, you know. We couldn't get down but, and then we went to Marseilles - from there we went to Marseilles. In Marseilles we changed over to a Jewish ship - the [Negbar?] and we came to Haifa.

Q WAS THIS 1948?

A We left end of 1948, Shanghai. On the 14th of February, '49, we came to Israel. Now, when we were in [Ibratar?] - we were listening to the radio there, we heard that truce was declared. That means I didn't need to go to the army right away.

Q BUT IT WAS ALREADY A STATE, RIGHT?

A It was already declared a state.

Q WHAT DID YOU DO IN SHANGHAI FROM 1945 UNTIL 1948?

A Alright, when the Americans came to Shanghai, they established civilian jobs for the army. So, everybody wanted to work there. I was working too for the army. And we made good money.

Q WHAT? DID YOU DO RADIOS OR SOMETHING...?

A No, I could, if I would have waited long enough. I would have gotten a job in radio, like some of my friends did. But, as I said, my father died and I had to support my mother, and when they were asking for - they had a job opening for quite a bit of - in the PX warehouse, to handle the warehouse. I took that job. It was a good job; it paid well. And we got some chocolates and so on at home, to take home and so... Yeah, that's how it came that I had a job like that.

Q WAS YOUR MOTHER DEVASTATED BY YOUR FATHER'S DEATH?

A Very. Very, very.

Q HOW OLD WAS SHE BY THEN?

A Hoooh, me see, I have to figure that out. I guess, sixty, something like that - 55, 60, ja.

Q SO YOU NOT ONLY HAD TO TAKE CARE OF HER FINANCIALLY BUT PROBABLY EMOTIONALLY?

A Yes. But, she was then alright - you know, I mean. She had to be alright. And...

Q HOW LONG AFTER THE WAR BEFORE YOU FOUND OUT THAT THERE WAS NO MORE FAMILY?

A I don't know the exact amount of time, but we went to some organizations that [makes expansive movement with hand] and we got a reply; there is no one alive. And then, neighbors of mt brother wrote to us... we wrote to them - that's how they got our address, and they wrote us and said they were all arrested and that nobody existed anymore.

Q SO...

A And we had already asked in Poland - nobody existed there anymore, either.

Q SO IN THE WHOLE WORLD, IT WAS YOU AND YOUR MOTHER.

A That's correct.

Q OH WOW. SO, HOW WAS IT FOR YOU IN ISRAEL?

A Well, I found - first I had to live in a tent, in an immigration camp. I was able to bring my mother into a blockhouse, you know, it was a stone blockhouse. And I was living in the tent for 6 weeks. I found a job in a radio store.

Q DID YOU REMEMBER ANY HEBREW?

A I did not. I knew how to pray, but I didn't know Hebrew. So, I came in, in the store, and said: "Excuse me, I don't speak Hebrew, do you speak German or English?" So, she answered in perfect German: "We are here twenty years in this country and we don't speak Hebrew." That was her answer - in perfect German and the German. And I found there as a repairman. I worked there, and after one year, I had to go to the army. And on weekends, when I came home, I worked there in the store behind that, closed the curtains, because on Shabbat everything was closed... to make some extra money for my mother, you know.

Q AND DID THEY PAY IN THE ARMY AT ALL?

A Little bit, pocket money and my mother got some pocket money. And I don't know how they call it, and she able to buy the value PX, you know.

Q WHERE WAS SHE LIVING BY THAT TIME, WHEN YOU WENT TO THE ARMY?

A Alright, then by chance, we got a little room, in a settlement and we had to pay [key?] money. In Israel, you pay [key?] money if you want to get something. And that was one room, with adjoining kitchen, with a doorway, you know, one door between. Only one room - that was it. And when we came there there was no electric lights there. There was no toilet - the toilet was outside, with some other parties. But, then, we bought furniture and a little carpet and we made it, that it looks nice and people came to us and: "Oh, that looks nice here." Then we get electric light and so, and when I came home from the army...

Q HOW LONG WERE YOU IN THE ARMY?

A Two years regular duty and then about seven years reserve duty.

Q DID YOU HAPPEN TO GET IN ANY FIGHTING?

A No, I came in a technical group. And luckily, I didn't have to kill nobody. And, I didn't do any fighting.

Q WOULD YOU HAVE?

A We had, especially when we were on reserve duty - we had to go out on some maneuvers at night, in the desert, I had to lay with a rifle you know, but luckily, as I said, I didn't have to shoot to no human being.

Q WOULD YOU HAVE, IF YOU HAD TO?

A I had to, otherwise they would have killed me. So, you have no other choice.

Q SO, WAS YOUR MOTHER ABLE TO FARE OKAY WHILE YOU WERE IN THE ARMY?

A She was always a sickly person and you know, I remember her being sick quite a bit. And I gave her whatever I had, you know, and she managed to survive, you know. And then, after the army, in the meantime the elderly couple where I worked for, they had retired. And they let me have the store and I paid just for the equipment, in installments, you know. I took on a partner, the son of the landlord, he was a son born Israeli

He became my partner and I taught him the profession. And it worked out fine.

Q DID YOU HAVE GIRLFRIENDS IN ISRAEL?

A I had, in the army I had a girlfriend from Bulgaria. There, we were a group of boys and girls and I know they wanted to marry me off. I didn't want to - I had a little relationship with a married woman you know. Oh well, she had an elderly husband. And, but that's besides the point. You don't have to...

Q YOU WEREN'T READY TO GET MARRIED, THEN?

A I - that's the way, yeah, right.

Q WAS IT THE FEELING THAT YOU HAD TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR MOTHER. IS THAT WHAT?

A I don't know why - maybe if the right one would have come along, maybe I would have married then. So, after we there over about nine years my mother said: "Look," we lived in a little town, called Hadera. At eight o'clock, everything was dark already and they was obviously at home for a few moments and then when the movie was over the streets were a little bit. But otherwise, there was nothing going on. She said: "There's no life for you here." And to go to Tel Aviv, you had to pay a lot of key money and so...
"We are registered to the United States, why don't we go to America?"

Q YOU WERE STILL REGISTERED AT THAT TIME?

A Still registered, because a lot of Israelis wanted to get out, but they had to wait years and years and years. But, we were regist... in the meantime, friends of ours from Shanghai they were citizens and they were vouching for us, they were ready to send affidavits of support for us. That means that we would not be a burden to the state... I mean, we had three affidavits. And since we were registered ten years ago, we were able to get out fairly fast.

Q IT HAD NOT OCCURRED TO YOU BEFORE?

A Well, no. I left Israel with a bad feeling, because I loved Israel, you know. And somehow, I said I'm very uncomfortable for a while

Q DID YOUR MOTHER REALLY WANT TO COME TO AMERICA, OR WAS SHE WORRIED ABOUT YOU?

A Yes.

Q WAS SHE WORRIED ABOUT YOU?

A Both, both.

Q THERE WERE NO ???

A And she had all her friends there too. She made friends, you know. She was a very person - they would come to her with their problems, you know. But she wanted to come to America. And that's why in March '58, I landed here in the United States.

Q HOW DID YOU DECIDE WHERE TO GO?

A San Francisco - because all our friends, who sent us affidavits, were living here, in San Francisco.

Q SO THAT SETTLED IT, HUH?

A Settled it.

Q YOU KNEW YOU WOULD HAVE FRIENDS HERE?

A Right, right, right.

Q SO, WHAT WAS THAT LIKE, TO COME HERE?

A Then, it was a new experience. Emotionally and everything, whatever we learned before, it's all overboard. Things that in Europe, were so here different. And, if you ask me today, what are those things - I don't know, anymore. But I know there's a difference, but now I'm - this is my home. America is my home. I'm an American citizen; I'm proud of it. I know what it means to live under a dictatorship - that's why I appreciate the freedoms that we have. And, God bless the United States - that's the way I feel.

Q WHEN YOU CAME HERE DID YOU ALREADY SPEAK ENGLISH OKAY?

A Yes, yes, I could speak.

Q HOW ABOUT YOUR MOTHER?

A No, she spoke very little, and all her friends were German, so she spoke...

Q SO WAS SHE ABLE TO HAVE A SOCIAL LIFE HERE?

A Oh yes, among her friends. The only problem was, I met a girl who was happily married. She was an American - a Jewish American. She spoke a little bit Yiddish-German. But, Florence learned German in no time. And she and my mother got along beautiful.

Q WHERE DID YOU MEET HER?

A At the Jewish Community Center in San Francisco.

Q AND WHAT DID YOU DO FOR A LIVING HERE?

A Okay, now I wanted to work in radio, ja, but all what we had, the experience is... [shakes head] It's completely different. We didn't have transistors, or what. Everything is different here. And I got a job in a radio store and when it came to pay out, he gave me a few dollars. I said: "Look, I cannot live, even one day."

"Ja, ja, that's the way it is here." So I quit. And then, my former boss, from Shanghai, he heard that somebody was looking for somebody... So, he gave me the address. I went there, it turned out it was a wholesale firm. All build up by the immigrants, from years ago, and he would like to have one of our people because he knew he would be trustworthy and reliable. You know, and then...

Q WHAT KIND OF FIRM?

A A wholesale firm that sold all kinds, like zippers, buttons and hair guards, everything in the oceans, you know. And I worked there for twenty years. I worked my way up, then I went on the road as a salesman, where I very good money. And then I came back and worked on the inside - I had my own office. And I was head of a department, ja. And I worked there for twenty years.

Q DID YOU LIKE IT?

A I would say yes. I got used to it, you know. I can do a lot of things. And I am, as I said, I am reliable. I can do a lot of things. And I am able to do it with - do it good without mistakes, and that's what I did.

Q SO NOT FINISHING SCHOOL DIDN'T GET IN YOUR WAY, VERY MUCH?

A No, I was reading a lot, especially in the beginning. History things, I like these things, you know. So I'm informed, in general, you might say. And when I came, after twenty years, so my wife said - we wanted to get away from San Francisco, you know, we wanted to live in the sun. Get a beautiful home in the sunset district. Everyday overcast and she was getting a cold every year.

Q WHERE WAS SHE FROM?

A New York, originally. Let's move to Southern California. Friends of ours moved to Southern California, to Laguna Hills, to Leisure World, and they invited us to stay there and to see around. So we came there and we lived with them for a week and we fell in love with it. And we paid, a down payment on a home already there in Laguna Hills in Leisure World. And that's when I quit my job and...

Q HOW OLD WERE YOU THEN?

A That was - I moved into Laguna in November '78, yeah, '78, I was 54. Ja, 54.

Q WAS YOUR MOTHER STILL ALIVE THEN?

A No. My mother died in '72.

Q SO THAT MADE ???

A She was 86 - I think she was 86. Over 80 years old, yeah.

Q SO ALL YOUR TIME DOWN IN LEISURE WORLD WAS RETIREMENT?

A Not quite. I found a job three minutes from our home, outside Leisure World, you know. Wholesale center - an electronic firm, I went back to electronics. Sun Electric, we repaired and manufactured electronic automotive test equipment. And we were one of 48 branches in the United States. I must have done something right, because after, they employed some young person, or so, and they let them go and they kept me, So I must have done something right.

Q DID YOU WANT TO WORK MORE?

A I liked that job. But I was also looking for retirement, because I have some hobbies, you know. And on one day, after I'd worked there for three years, Sun Electric closed about 23, 28 branches or something on the same day in the United States and among the branches they closed was Laguna Hills. That we all, who worked inside, we lost our job. And then, I made some repairs on my own. I advertised but it went nowhere, you know. And then, in Leisure World we had our own security system, busses and that and that and that - I worked for Leisure World security. I had a uniform and so. That was a job, but by then, I was already half retired. And so was my wife. And, but, we had a very social life there - lot of friends, life was very good there. Until the day my wife got sick. Turned out - lung cancer. I quit my job to care for her, for three years. I cared for her as long as I could. Then she passed away. And I knew Rose already by then, you know.

Q HOW?

A Very good friend of ours - she was the niece of those friends, and she always came, in beginning, with her husband. And then, when her husband died she came little bit to visit, you know. And that's how we got together. And when my wife died, she and I got together and...

Q AND HERE YOU ARE, BACK IN SAN FRANCISCO?.

A So, the part of the time - the beginning, we lived part of the time in Laguna Hills; part here. Part ?? part Laguna Hills. But, it was hard you know, to drive the car eight and a half hours, back and forth

So, we decided, I should move here completely. So I rent my home - I still have the condo, you know. I rent it now and I moved here.

Q HOW LONG AGO?

A I moved here - forgotten - '95 was it? Yeah, '95.

Q HAS THAT BEEN A GOOD MOVE FOR YOU?

A No, about '96. Ja, it was good, because we had a nice circle of friends and Rose and I, we get along perfectly. So, I consider it a good move.

Q GARY, WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'VE LEARNED FROM ALL THE EXPERIENCE YOU'VE HAD - GOING FROM PLACE TO PLACE, HAVING TO PUT ASIDE ALL THE THINGS YOU'VE LEARNED IN ONE PLACE WHEN YOU GO TO THE NEW PLACE - NEW LANGUAGE AND... WHAT HAS ALL THAT DONE FOR YOU, OR TO YOU?

A Well, made me more cosmopolitan, tolerant.

Q TOLERANT?

A Tolerant. Yeah, I am very tolerant, and liberal, more liberal maybe. I see that everyone has a right to live as long as he live honestly and has a right to get along in his life, according to his own will, as long as he doesn't hurt other people. Does it answer your question about?

Q YES. IT MADE YOU MORE TOLERANT? DIFFERENCES, HUH?

A Tolerant, ja. Right.

Q HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT GERMANY?

A In the beginning I had a deep hate of me. Any German, anything German. When I learnt specially that all my relatives are wiped out. And I still have, for everything that smells Nazi. I cannot hate a young German, a new generation, and I spoke with some - they even denounce Nazism and I was invited to Berlin in '95. We went to Berlin, on invitation, and I saw some inscriptions on the wall, saying against Nazis and against war that they had enough. And I cannot hate a new generation.

But, if somebody comes, regardless of nationality, and he is a Neo-Nazi, oh, he would get it from me. He would get it from me.

Q WHAT WAS THAT LIKE FOR YOU, TO GO BACK TO BERLIN?

A Huh, there's a saying you never can come home again. And that was true, there too. Berlin is nice city, but it's not the city of my youth. When I went back to part of that part where I was - it doesn't exist anymore. Bombed out, ja. Doesn't exist anymore. The street, they put other streets there. But, there I walked with my grandmother, when I was little, you know. She took me to ?? and to a place called [Madchenbrun?], that is there were a lot of fountains there and figures out of fairy tales all around it. And I went there and it's still the same thing. But nobody was there, I was the only one with my wife. I taped it on the camcorder. But nobody was there. And when I was used, it was full of laughing children. Nobody was there.

Q WHY NOT - DO YOU KNOW?

A I don't know. That part belonged to Eastern Germany, but by then, it was already one Berlin. By then - but, I saw nobody. It's not the same anymore. I mean, still it's a nice town to visit, but, I found it different - let's say that, different. And when we went around by tourist bus, you know they explained to us - it was interesting, but I didn't have the feeling, this is my home, no. This is my home now, here.

Q DID YOU FIND YOUR SCHOOL?

A The public school was closed from the outside, with big doors, and I don't know what's behind it. And the high school, which I visited, they didn't let us in, because, that's what I found in Germany - they have, before every synagogue, police protection. It's as though they expect something. Before every, we visited some synagogues, there were police all around and also before that school. And, the one who opened the door, she was a teacher, and I heard she's a non-Jewish teacher - they have a lot of non-Jewish teachers there, and she said: "I'm not allowed to let anybody in."

But, I could see from the outside - I could see everything where I was, you know, I taped it. It was a feeling of something that came back from my youth.

Q HOW DID THAT FEEL?

A Melancholy and at the same time, it was a nice memory, you know. That came back.

Q ONE OF THE FEW, HUH?

A Right.

Q IT MUST BE SO STRANGE TO SEE IT WITH GUARDS ALL AROUND IT?

A Ja, no, not guards, it's ?? but they were policemen.

Q PROVING THEY MUST BE WORRIED ABOUT - WHAT? NAZIS?

A Yes, and that there was, we were invited for the opening of the Judaik Burial, where they opened up - it used to be once, a synagogue, the Great Synagogue of Berlin, but was only the outside façade. And the inside was, just an emptiness where people would sit. And the - wasn't important, because the German Chancellor was there and the President was there and some dignitaries, Catholic dignitaries and Israeli dignitaries, and a lot, and I taped it you know, and so on. It was interesting, but it was like something was going on that was interesting, but I had no, let's say, personal involvement. "Hey, that's me, now, you know." I did not. It was interesting to be there. And they showed it to us, and then they, as I said, they did everything in their power to make us feel comfortable. We had a drive on the steamer, on the river [Sprei?] with lunch and then they invited and they invited... and the theatre...

Q DID YOU FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE?

A The theatre, I didn't feel uncomfortable, but I felt, not at home, and, as I said, a little bit strange. We went to a supermarket, to buy a few things for us and there, it's different than here, you know. Here - used to here, we were bagging things, you know. And the cashiers were there.

Over there they bag it and we had to put something on and we didn't know it, so the cashier said: "What you here for?" I said: ??

"You have to put it on the scale for roughly", you know. It was a little bit strange, you know. But that's what happened to Rose, and I was standing there too, you know.

Q HAVE YOU EVER GONE BACK TO SHANGHAI?

A Well, I would like to. And, in fact, we were booked already to go on the trip, but then, either I got sick, then Rose got sick and so on. Then we said: "Oh, we'd better not."

Q YOU WOULD LIKE TO THOUGH?

A No, I would like to go. Rose is undecided, but because it isn't only Shanghai. I never saw the Great Wall of China - I would like to see Beijing, the Emperor Palace, the Forbidden City. I like these things you know.

Q THERE A LOT OF THINGS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE.

A Yes. And to me, Shanghai, there's a part where I was, just to look at that, you know. It's part of my childhood. I ?? growing up.

Q IS YOUR FATHER BURIED THERE?

A Alright. My father was buried in the Columbia Cemetery, which I heard, does not exist anymore. The Chinese communists uprooted so many cemeteries, and put it to People's Park. And that's one of them, unfortunately. I don't know what happened.

Q DID YOU KNOW ROSE IN SHANGHAI?

A No, I did not. And she didn't know me.

Q WHAT ABOUT ISRAEL - DO YOU GO BACK THERE EVER?

A I would love to live there again, yes. Would love to and most probably we will, one day. I would love to. I still have, there's a place in here [pats his chest]. I never saw the Western Wall because when I left it was still in Jordanian hands. And I want to see it before I die.

Q DO YOU THINK A HOLOCAUST COULD HAPPEN AGAIN?

A If, here in the United States, the Ku Klux Klan would ever come to power, heavens beware, everything is possible. Yes, if you see all those bombings that's still going on today - on churches and so on. There are still some fanatics; they don't know, what it means the word, liberty and freedom. They take advantage of that word. They don't know what it means to live under a dictatorship, the feeling of freedom, which you don't have in a dictatorship, you know.

Q ??

A They don't know what they would lose if, heaven forbid, they would get our country's power, which I doubt.

Q SO YOU KNOW THERE'S A LOT OF HATRED IN THE WORLD?

A Yes there is. Yes there is, unfortunately. You know, I don't believe in the Messiah, I think there never was such a person, there is such a person, but there could be a Messianic Age when people start to realize we have to live with each other in order to survive. We have to get along with each other..

Q WHAT WOULD IT TAKE TO HAVE THAT HAPPEN? WHAT WOULD IT TAKE TO HAVE THAT HAPPEN, DO YOU THINK?

A Well, maybe another big war; where a lot of people are wiped out. Or, where the food of the world has to be so distributed that nobody should die of hunger that...

Q WHERE WE HAVE TO DEPEND ON EACH OTHER.

A Depend on each other, exactly, yes.

Q GARY, ON BEHALF OF THE HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, I WANT TO THANK YOU TREMENDOUSLY FOR YOUR WONDERFUL INTERVIEW.

A It was a pleasure.

Q TELL US MORE ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT.

A [Shows old, yellowed page] This is my birth certificate. I was born in October 1924. [Photograph of man and child in doorway of a store.] Alright, now this is our first store that we had, and I was about three or four years old. [Points to himself as the young boy in photograph] That's my father beside me. [Points to man in photograph]

Q WHERE IS IT?

A In Berlin; in [Koloniestrasse?]. We rented and we had other stores, you know.

Q THIS SECOND PICTURE?

A Here we met some friends of the name, Linn - Berlin of course. You see in the background the Brandenburg Gate.

Q HOW OLD DO YOU THINK YOU WERE THEN?

A That must have been about '37. There I was 13 years, 12, 13 years old.

Q NEXT PICTURE.

A Alright, that's my first school day. Now in Germany, you know the first school day all the young girl and boys, that shape of a container, [points to conical shaped item in photograph] where all the relatives put sweets in, fruits and..

Q WHAT IS IT MADE OUT OF - THAT CONTAINER?

A Cardboard. Of course, my uncle insisted that he should buy it and he bought the biggest one he could get.

Q THE PACKET WAS ALMOST AS BIG AS YOU.

A [Next photo] Now, we were not allowed to go to Poland anymore, and my father wanted to see his family. So, we met in the city of Danzig - Danzig is now called Gedansk and this is where we met, three times.

Q NOW WHY COULD YOU MEET IN DANZIG?

A A free city.

Q WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

A Free city means it was a state by itself. It didn't belong to Germany, it didn't belong to Poland; it belonged to no country. It belonged to itself.

Q SO GERMANS COULD GO THERE AND POLES COULD GO THERE?

A Ja, I think they need permission somehow. But I don't know how - we must have gotten it, but... Now, that is my mother [points to woman, top right of photo] my father [points to the man to the left of her] his older brother, Yitsak [points to the man left of father] his sister, Yetta, [points to woman at top, extreme left] his oldest sister, Hannah Hoogel, [points to woman at bottom, extreme left]. That's my grandfather, [points to man extreme right, bottom] my father's father and that's me. [points to boy at the bottom in the middle]

Q AND WHAT YEAR IS THIS?

A I must have been around five, six years old. Seven years.

Q OKAY AND THEN THIS NEXT PICTURE?

A That is my bar-mitzvah picture. I was bar-mitzvah on the 18th of September 1937. I was bar-mitzvah at the synagogue [Kaiserstrasse?] in Berlin. [Next picture] That is me in school, sitting at the desk. Must be around the beginning of '38, I assume.

Q YOU WERE 14?

A Around 13, 14, yes. Around there.

Q AND THE SECOND PICTURE.

A This is my brother, Willie, his wife, Katie, and the little boy, Danny. That was taken, also, 1938. In December '38, or something. November '38. [picture of a document] This is my first passport. It says that I am not a German citizen and it's a passport for people living in Germany, who had not the German nationality. We were stateless.

Q AND IS THERE ANYTHING INTERESTING ABOUT YOUR NAME,
OR ?

A Oh, yes. They added the word, Israel, to it.[points to the second name on the document] Now, my real name is Gerhard and then the Nazis decreed that all males, except for Jewish names, should have the added name of Israel, and all females should have the added name of Sarah.

Q WHY IS THERE A 'J' ON THE PASSPORT?

A Because it was made 'specially for going out of Germany, you know, for immigration. Not for living there. I assume that's the reason for the 'J' and the name Israel, you know, that I am Jewish.
[next document]

Q CAN YOU GET THAT? [uh-huh] OKAY, IT'S THE PHOTO OF THE BIGGER?? YOU.

A That's me, about 14 years old. It tells you that I'm stateless, that I'm still a pupil, born in Berlin and then description of my figure. Little face, oval, eyes blue, hair is brown and no other special things on my body.

Q YOU WERE PRETTY CUTE.

A I think the same thing.

Q HERE?[Refers to document]

A Here, they telling you that, that pass is for the inland and foreign lands. I can use it in Germany and outside Germany. It was stamped by the police president from Berlin. Germany, we went to Italy, in order to board the ship to Shanghai, and of course, we needed an entry visa to Italy.[points to portion of the document] And that is that.

Q YES THERE'S THE STAMP AND EVERYTHING.

A Germany - that I'm allowed to leave Germany. On the way to Shanghai, we were allowed to go and see other cities like, [points to stamp on document] Colombo on the island of Ceylon, which is now called Sri Lanka. Hong Kong [points to stamp] and also Singapore and Alexandria, but I haven't the stamps anymore. [Refers to portion on document] I was examined already by Israeli army doctor, because we thought I would have to go to the army right away.

[Looking at another document] And this is that I can enter Israel, and go through the frontier.

Q DID THEY DEMAND ANY PAPERS OR ANY PROOF THAT YOU WERE JEWISH?

A I'm sorry - I didn't.

Q DID THEY DEMAND ANY PAPERS OR PROOF THAT YOU WERE JEWISH?

A I don't remember, but I still have the certificate about the marriage of my parents. Jewish certificate.

Q ??

A [Photograph of three people] So when we came to Shanghai we had ourselves photographed to send it to our family, back in Berlin. That's my father, my mother and myself. That was around 1939, 1940. 1940, you know.

[Another photograph] Here are some street scenes from Shanghai - after the war, there was quite a black market on the streets. And here, I photographed a Chinese officer buying on the black market.

Q OKAY, THE NEXT ONE.

A That is a view from our window. And that was centrally located in the district where the immigrants lived. That is the one road, here, you see the bus going,

Q IS THAT [HONGKU]?

A That's [Hongku?].

Q OKAY, THE NEXT PICTURE.

A Here, also a view from our window. These houses, were all still in stones and ashes, when we came there. They all built up and nice to look at - all along.

Q AND THIS LAST ONE?[Refers to photograph]

A Here you see a street scene, that so many Chinese have their professions on the streets, like barber, shoemaker, what have you not. And here, is the shoemaker, you see, on the street.

[next picture] This is the grave of my father in Shanghai, on the Colombia Cemetery, which unfortunately, doesn't exist anymore, because the Chinese converted it into a People's Park.

Q THIS IS?[Refers of photograph]

A Israeli passport - mine and my mother's. That we got when we left Israel, ??for immigration for some time. Even then, we were living here before I made my citizenship. I still have Israeli nationality.
[new picture] That's me, in my Israeli passport.

Q WHAT YEAR WOULD THAT BE?

A 1958, beginning of 1958.

Q TELL US ABOUT THIS.

A That is my mother's Israeli passport. Also done in the beginning of 1958.

Q OKAY, I'M HAVING A LITTLE FOCUS PROBLEM HERE. GIVE US AN EXTRA SECOND. [new picture of two men] GO AHEAD.

A Here I am, with a friend of mine, at a crossroad in Hadera. There's a sign pointing out to Tel Aviv.

Q OKAY AND THE NEXT ONE?[Refers to another photograph]

A Here I am, walking, in Tel Aviv with a friend of mine while I was in the Israeli army.

Q NEXT ONE.

A That was when I entered the Israeli army in 1950, I visited some friends in Jerusalem and they took that picture.

Q AND THIS LAST ONE.

A Here I am, in my store in Israel. We made radio repairs - the name of the store was 'Radio Gill'. And this is my partner, Timkus Ravinovitch. [picture of three people in front of a car] Then we came to United States, we stayed two weeks in New York, with a friend of mine, [indicates to person extreme left] Gary Jacob.

Q FROM SHANGHAI?

A Yes, I knew him from Shang... it was he who convinced me to go into radio technique - that's him. And, that's me and my mother. [picture of older woman] My mother around 1960 in our apartment on 14th Street in San Francisco.

[End]