

1 Interview of Sam Moreno on Sept. 27, 2000.

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3 INTERVIEWER: Today is September 27,
4 2000. We are at Temple Beth El in Berkeley,
5 California. Today we're interviewing Sammy Moreno.
6 My name is Peter Ryan, interviewer, and Anne
7 Saldinger is doing the videotape.

8 Could we begin by my asking you when and
9 where you were born?

10 MR. MORENO: Yes, I was born
11 April 18, 1929 in Paris, France.

12 INTERVIEWER: How many people were in
13 your family?

14 MR. MORENO: I have a younger sister,
15 younger brother, mother and father.

16 INTERVIEWER: Could you give their
17 names?

18 MR. MORENO: My father was Vitale
19 Moreno, my mother was Esther Cohen, my brother is
20 Mark Moreno and my sister is Rochelle Moreno.

21 INTERVIEWER: How much older was your
22 brother than you?

23 MR. MORENO: Two years older.

24 INTERVIEWER: And your brother?

25 MR. MORENO: My sister is about a

1 year and a half younger than I. I'm the middle
2 one.

3 INTERVIEWER: What kind of living
4 arrangements did you have when you were born?

5 MR. MORENO: Where I was born we
6 lived in a fairly low class neighborhood and by the
7 time we were five years old my dad moved us in a
8 new apartment in Paris which was very nice, on the
9 fifth floor. We had a balcony. We lived very well
10 there.

11 My dad had a -- well, he didn't have a
12 shoe store. He had a -- what do you call that
13 here -- shoe repair store in Paris on the Avenue
14 Le Republic and he made a fairly good living at it.
15 We went to public schools. We were happy. We
16 would go on vacation every year by the ocean in
17 Normandy, a place called Mercibom and he would join
18 us for a week. It's the only time we would do
19 that. It's the only time we would go to the ocean,
20 because Paris is inland.

21 INTERVIEWER: Was your mother a
22 housewife?

23 MR. MORENO: Yes, she was a
24 housewife. She didn't work.

25 INTERVIEWER: Do you remember when

1 you first went to school?

2 MR. MORENO: Yes, I remember we went
3 to kindergarten. We lived near a Jewish
4 neighborhood, mostly Sephardic, Spanish-speaking
5 people. I went to kindergarten. I remember going
6 to the regular school in Paris which was about four
7 or five blocks from where I lived, so we would walk
8 every morning to school.

9 In France there was only boys, and girls
10 were separated. That school, you started about six
11 years old and you stayed in the same school up to
12 two years of college and then from then on you went
13 to university if you were capable.

14 So I went to that school until I was
15 twelve years old and I'll tell you what happened,
16 because by the time I was twelve years old, it was
17 1940, 1941. The Germans had already occupied
18 France and they started making all kind of laws
19 against Jews, no radio, curfew, only certain hours
20 to go shopping.

21 What happened, the first law that passed
22 was every Jew had to register himself at the
23 prefecture of police, which is the police
24 headquarters, and my dad, like a good Jew, he went
25 and registered himself as Jewish. Most Jews did.

1 They thought it was the thing to do.

2 On August 20, 1941 at 6:00 in the morning
3 the Germans came in, picked up my father. We asked
4 what for and my mother asked why do you pick him up
5 and they said well, we're going to ask him some
6 questions. Just give him enough clothes for two
7 days. He'll be right back. So they took him and
8 they sent him to a concentration camp right outside
9 Paris called Drancy.

10 INTERVIEWER: Was he a French
11 citizen?

12 MR. MORENO: No. They had just filed
13 to become naturalized French citizens. They made a
14 mistake not to become French citizen, although
15 later on it didn't make any difference.

16 So he was sent to a camp in Drancy and he
17 was able to send us postcards to let us know how he
18 was doing. My mother and I, we used to try
19 to -- we would take a bus, go to Drancy and there
20 was a little coffee shop about 200 feet from the
21 concentration camp.

22 The camp, what they did, they had a high
23 rise building, like about a six or eight story big
24 building. We had a big apartment building, like a
25 big condo building. It had been under construction

1 and because of the war they had stopped
2 construction. They put a chain link fence around
3 it and made a concentration camp out of it.

4 So all the men were there and we could see
5 them and my dad, we would tell him what day we were
6 coming because they allowed us to communicate with
7 postcards. It had to be postcards so they could
8 read what we were saying. We would go there and we
9 would tell him we would be there around 2:00 in the
10 afternoon and he would stand by like a balcony or
11 window and he would wave at us and we would wave
12 back.

13 INTERVIEWER: He could see you?

14 MR. MORENO: Yes, he could see. He
15 could see us.

16 INTERVIEWER: The camp was run by the
17 French?

18 MR. MORENO: It was run by the French
19 gendarme, but the people who came to pick him up
20 was a civilian German. He spoke French but you
21 could tell he had a German accent.

22 INTERVIEWER: How far was Drancy from
23 Paris?

24 MR. MORENO: From Paris itself, I
25 would say about 30 miles, maybe 25 to 30 miles. It

1 wasn't very far.

2 So he stayed in Drancy about six months
3 and then I'll show you, I have a Red Cross paper
4 which shows which convoy he was put in and sent to
5 Germany, to Auschwitz.

6 INTERVIEWER: You were eleven then?

7 MR. MORENO: I was eleven. No, I was
8 twelve.

9 So once they took my father, we found out
10 through the community that all the men were picked
11 up by the Germans. Those who could hide started
12 running and hiding and were not picked up. Most
13 fathers were picked up. A friend of mine, their
14 father was picked up. So we didn't have a father
15 for a while. We were wearing the yellow star
16 still.

17 INTERVIEWER: When did that start?

18 MR. MORENO: That showed up in late
19 1940. It was a law that all the Jews had to come
20 in and get a yellow star in the schools and police
21 stations and we were told we had to wear it, or
22 else.

23 INTERVIEWER: Did you wear it when
24 you went to school?

25 MR. MORENO: Yes, I wore it when I

1 went to school.

2 INTERVIEWER: Did that
3 (unintelligible).

4 A. Yes, there was always some people who
5 picked on us. So I had some people spit at me in
6 the street because I wore a star. Most Jews felt
7 proud to wear the star. We thought it was a symbol
8 of being proud about it.

9 Then one day I got called in the school.
10 I was twelve years old. I got to tell you that
11 story because I was twelve years old and in a
12 French school when the class starts, the doors are
13 closed and if someone from outside wants to come in
14 they have to knock. The teacher says "enter" and
15 all that.

16 We had to take a foreign language so I
17 decided to take English. That's in 1941. I was
18 sitting in my first class, English class, and a
19 half hour into the class, the teacher was an
20 English teacher, he was writing on the board the
21 French word, the English word, the French word, the
22 English word and about a half hour into the class
23 the door swings open loud and everybody was stunned
24 because it doesn't happen that way in a French
25 school and two German officers walked in the class

1 with boots and all dressed up with their uniform
2 and one of them pushes the English teacher off the
3 platform which -- it was a platform where the desk
4 was sitting on. Pushed him off the platform while
5 the other one is erasing the chalk board. One of
6 the officers faced the class and he said "I
7 understand this is an English class." We said
8 "yes." He said "Well, from now on English will no
9 longer be spoken, only German. So this is going to
10 be from now on a German speaking class." Then he
11 said "Those who don't want to learn German can
12 leave," so the whole class got up and we all left.
13 The teacher had a big smile on his face. That was
14 the end of my English class, a half hour.

15 About two weeks later I got called into
16 the principal's office and I was told that it would
17 be wise for me to leave the school. I said "What
18 do you mean, I'm only twelve years old?" He said
19 "Well, if you stay in the school the Germans are
20 going to come and pick you up."

21 INTERVIEWER: Who told you that?

22 MR. MORENO: The principal. He says
23 actually "We're doing you a favor."

24 So I went home. My mother said "What are
25 you doing home?" I said they kicked me out of

1 school and I explained. So she understood. So
2 from then on I didn't go to school from twelve
3 years old on.

4 INTERVIEWER: What did you do?

5 MR. MORENO: Well, I told my mom I've
6 got to do something so she said well, see if you
7 can get a job. So I had a friend who worked in a
8 hardware store. It wasn't really a hardware store.
9 Where they made metal pans, crepe pans and frying
10 pans and they needed someone to make deliveries.
11 Now, twelve years old. I was about a head shorter
12 than I am now. I looked like about an eight year
13 old when I was twelve years old.

14 We didn't have much to eat because we were
15 in rations. The Germans were issuing rations to
16 all the French people. What they did is every
17 month they had a different color ration. If you
18 didn't eat all your ticket rations for that month
19 you couldn't use it for the following month. Not
20 that they gave you very much. So every month you
21 had a different color stamp to go buy food.

22 Anyway --

23 INTERVIEWER: When you were
24 delivering, were you delivering with a star?

25 MR. MORENO: Yes.

1 INTERVIEWER: You were visible?

2 MR. MORENO: Yes, I was very visible.

3 The delivery, they don't have a car, didn't have a
4 motorcycle, didn't have a bicycle. I was
5 delivering with the hand -- I don't know if you've
6 ever seen this. It's a two wheel cart with two
7 handles and a leather strap. You run and you push
8 the cart yourself. I went in the middle of the
9 street twelve years old pushing this stupid cart.

10 I kept doing that, which was terrible
11 work. I could have gotten killed in the streets of
12 Paris pushing this cart, twelve years old.

13 Anyway, one weekend a friend of mine named
14 Ramon Fresco, he and I were both about twelve, 13
15 years old and we heard that a Jewish senator or
16 some senator was having a Chanukah party and so we
17 decided let's go see what it's all about. So we
18 went there and there was a -- they had a stage and
19 some young boys put up a display or show and we
20 found out they were Boy Scouts, Jewish Boy Scouts.
21 They called themselves Israelite Boy Scouts of
22 France. They said any young boy you want to join,
23 please come and join us. So my friend and I said
24 let's join, it looks like something to do. So we
25 went and joined the Boy Scouts.

1 Well, as soon as we joined the Boy Scouts
2 we found out that they were more than Boy Scouts.
3 They were part of the Jewish underground.
4 Meanwhile, you see I have a photograph. Meanwhile
5 I became 13 years old and I had a bar mitzvah.
6 Well, the synagogues were hiding in Paris. There
7 was a small synagogue inside from the -- from the
8 exterior would you never know it's a synagogue.
9 You had to go through a building and in the back
10 there was a small synagogue.

11 INTERVIEWER: Were the other
12 synagogues shut down?

13 MR. MORENO: Most of it was shut
14 down. That synagogue was a Sephardic synagogue.
15 My mom had me take Sunday Hebrew class and I went
16 and took my bar mitzvah. The time I took my bar
17 mitzvah, I think my father was still in Drancy
18 because we sent him a photograph. Then while he
19 was in Drancy he had someone make a frame and I'll
20 show you, I have the actual frame because he -- he
21 got someone to send it back to me. The frame was
22 carved with a lion and all the decoration. You'll
23 see it. He had my picture in it.

24 So anyway, I did bar mitzvah and I had to
25 make a speech in Spanish which I memorized and

1 after that they closed the synagogue. It was too
2 dangerous for the Jews.

3 INTERVIEWER: Did you
4 (unintelligible).

5 A. Yes, as a matter of fact my mother was so
6 pleased that I could say it in Spanish. Spanish
7 wasn't my best language. You only hear it, you
8 understand it but you don't speak it, so my mom was
9 speaking Spanish, I would answer in French until I
10 came to this country. I'll explain to you why.

11 INTERVIEWER: Is that Spanish or --

12 MR. MORENO: It's Ladino. Ladino is
13 the Spanish they spoke 500 years ago. When the
14 Jews left Spain, that's the language they were
15 speaking then and they stayed speaking that
16 language. Since then Spanish, they are using the
17 TH sound, using the Castilian sound, but we spoke
18 the old Spanish because that's all we knew. Even
19 today when we speak Ladino we speak the old
20 Spanish.

21 INTERVIEWER: The whole community --

22 MR. MORENO: Yes, the whole Sephardic
23 community, they were and Greece also and Turkish,
24 of course, and Greek.

25 INTERVIEWER: Did you have many

1 refugees coming to that community from the Spanish
2 Civil War?

3 MR. MORENO: Really, I wouldn't know.
4 I was just a kid. I don't know. I'm sure a lot of
5 them came through France because of the war with
6 Franco.

7 Anyway, we joined the Boy Scouts and then
8 we had meetings and our leader, which was a young
9 man called Freddie Menashem, he would gather us and
10 say our job as Boy Scouts is to help the Jews
11 because nobody seems to help us. He said I want
12 each of you to get the name of ten Jewish families
13 in your neighborhood. He said we have connections
14 at the Gestapo. He said we're going to know which
15 neighborhood they are going to come pick up people.
16 Now they are not picking men any more, they are
17 picking women and children. So they said as soon
18 as we know, we will notify you and you go tell the
19 ten families right away to get the hell out of the
20 house.

21 So young boys, we thought that was the
22 greatest thing, we were Boy Scouts. So we got the
23 name of families in our neighborhood and
24 lo and behold, one day our leader calls us and he
25 says tonight they are going to come in your

1 neighborhood. So tell your folks to get out of the
2 house and go notify the ten families.

3 So we did and we explained who we were to
4 the families. Some believed us, some didn't
5 believe us. Some stayed, some left. Most of them
6 left because they knew -- rumor got around that the
7 Germans were picking up Jews like crazy.

8 Sure enough, I told my mother that evening
9 we got to get out of the house because the Germans
10 are going to come in our neighborhood and I
11 notified the ten families and it was close to 7:00
12 and it was almost curfew time and my older brother
13 hadn't come home yet. My dad had an old -- first
14 of all, the shoe store that he had, we were told by
15 the French that, because my dad was gone, that we
16 could -- we, the Jews, could not run the store. We
17 had to hire -- the government gave us what they
18 call a -- I don't remember the name now, but he was
19 a French man who would run the store for us, an
20 overseer, and he would be the one who would run the
21 business. We would just -- we just happened to own
22 the business but he was the one running it. He
23 managed the business. We had to pay him.

24 INTERVIEWER: Did your family go get
25 money from the business?

1 MR. MORENO: After we paid him,
2 whatever was left. He worked at his own pace. He
3 did the work. A shoemaker, we were too young to
4 take over the job. My mother couldn't cut leather,
5 so she hired -- she let us hire a French shoemaker
6 who would run the business for us.

7 So my dad had bought, unknown to anybody,
8 he had rented a basement where he would keep his
9 stock, leather, old shoes, everything. And so my
10 mother said we're going to go spend the night in
11 that cellar. The only trouble, that cellar was in
12 a high rise building. When we go in, you've got to
13 be very quiet, we don't want people to know we
14 there. So we pack up our clothes for overnight
15 stay and we left the house that evening and my
16 mother said well, your brother is going to come,
17 he's not going to find us home. So I'll write him
18 a note.

19 I wrote him a note and I said come where
20 you know. We had been there before because we had
21 been told to leave the house before. I said "come
22 where you know" and I pinned it on the front door
23 of our apartment. We lived on the fifth floor in
24 Paris. On our way down the stairs my brother was
25 coming up. So we told him don't even go home.

1 It's late. We're late for the curfew. Let's
2 quickly go to -- it was about five, six blocks away
3 from our house where that cellar was. So we all
4 went there. The note was still on the door.

5 Well, the next day I went to work pushing
6 my cart and I got a lady told me to come back to
7 the store. So I went back to the store and she
8 says your mother called and she said whatever you
9 do, don't go home because the Germans had come that
10 night. They had broken our door and sealed the
11 apartment. That's what they would do. If no one
12 answered, they would break the door, get in, and
13 they would look to see nobody was there and then
14 they would seal, they would put a stamp that no one
15 should enter the apartment. So from then on we
16 lived in that cellar. We had a mattress on the
17 floor.

18 INTERVIEWER: When did you go
19 (unintelligible).

20 MR. MORENO: I think it was 1942,
21 late in 1942.

22 INTERVIEWER: After the roundup?

23 MR. MORENO: After the big roundup.
24 Then I went to see my leader and I told him well,
25 now I'll turn (unintelligible). Now we're in the

1 street, living in a cellar.

2 INTERVIEWER: No cooking privileges?

3 MR. MORENO: No cooking. All we had
4 was a pot to urinate or make a bowel movement. We
5 had a mattress on the floor and a couple of
6 blankets and that was it.

7 INTERVIEWER: How did you get food?

8 MR. MORENO: The Germans tried to
9 find you. If they didn't find you, you were put on
10 a list. When you went to get your monthly ration
11 ticket they would look at the list. If you were
12 one of them, they grabbed you right then and there.
13 So as soon as we knew we were wanted by the
14 Germans, we knew we couldn't get any more food
15 rations.

16 INTERVIEWER: How did you know that?

17 MR. MORENO: The word got around.
18 Plus our leader was up to date on it. He had all
19 kinds of connections with the Germans.

20 First of all, our leader took his star
21 off. He changed his name from Freddie Menashem to
22 Franswoir (In French). He wore short pants, a
23 khaki shirt and a big Red Cross band, so-called a
24 Red Cross representative.

25 So I called him and he said to me meet me

1 at such and such subway station. I really don't
2 remember the name now. I know it was near the
3 Louvre, more the higher part of Paris. I met him
4 at that station, still wearing a Jewish Star. I
5 was waiting for him, waiting for him and finally I
6 saw him come on a bicycle with his Red Cross thing
7 and he pulled alongside of me and he said Sam, he
8 said, you going to follow me. Don't say a word.
9 He handed me a book. He said hide your Jewish
10 Star, put the book here and hide your Jewish Star.
11 He said follow me. So he walks with his bicycle
12 and there's a big German headquarters with the Nazi
13 flag and the two guards and the flag and he walks
14 right into the building and he waves at the guards.
15 They seem to know him. I'm following right behind
16 him with my book hiding the Jewish Star.

17 We walk into the courtyard. We walked
18 through a set of stairs, another little courtyard,
19 another set of stairs and then there he opens the
20 door and it's a little room that looks like an
21 infirmary, got boxes of band-aids, a cot, a couple
22 of chairs and a table.

23 He said you can now take the book away.
24 This is my place. We're safe here. He says we're
25 going to have to give you false ID for you, your

1 mother, your brother and your sister.

2 He says -- everybody in France has to have
3 an ID card and they used to stamp the word "Jew" on
4 it, the Germans. People learned, they were able to
5 erase the ink and the Germans got smart. So then
6 they would perforate the word "Jew" with holes in
7 it so you could never fake it, undo it.

8 So he said get your folks' ID cards right
9 away. We're going to give you false ID cards,
10 going to make false ID cards for you. We're going
11 to change your name. So they changed my name from
12 Moreno to Moreni with an I on the end of it and
13 from Sam to Sergey. My brother's first name was
14 Mark. He said that doesn't sound too Jewish so it
15 was okay. Moreni was our last name and it said we
16 were born in Corsica Island. He said the Germans
17 cannot check Corsica because it's still free
18 French, so he said don't worry about that. He said
19 if they catch you, you are French. Get rid of your
20 star, tell your folks to get rid of the stars,
21 don't ever wear stars any more.

22 Before you leave, he reach in one of these
23 bandaids boxes, he took out some bandaids and he
24 reached down and he got a stack of food ration
25 tickets about that thick and they were all

1 different colored. He said we don't know which
2 color they going to be next month but we got enough
3 colors that it will cover you and your family for a
4 while.

5 So he says take this home and be careful,
6 don't get stopped by the Germans because if they
7 find you with those rations they'll torture you to
8 find out where you got them. He said that's going
9 to save your family.

10 I said okay. So we got false papers. We
11 had food rations and we survived for a while until
12 I got very sick. We had very little food. I broke
13 out with big boils all over my body. As a matter
14 of fact, you'll see my bar mitzvah picture, you can
15 still see boils on my arm. I broke out with big
16 boils. So my mother got a hold of the Boy Scout
17 leader again but these days they were all
18 underground. There was no more uniforms, no more
19 nothing.

20 She says what can you do for my children?
21 He said well, we send a lot of children out of the
22 country. So we're going to take your kid and send
23 him out of the country. Meanwhile I was talking to
24 my leader and we were sitting down talking and he
25 said I got stopped by the Germans in the subway.

1 He said he had a briefcase where he had bought a
2 box of sugar on the black market and the Germans,
3 they would block the subway station. Everybody got
4 off the subway. The subway would leave and
5 everybody had to go through and check papers.
6 Anybody who was a Jew, they would grab him.
7 Luckily -- of course, he has false papers so he got
8 away.

9 They looked in his briefcase and they saw
10 he had a box of sugar. So they arrested him, took
11 him in a truck and took him to the German commander
12 and said where did you get the sugar? So he was
13 sitting at the waiting office. There was a German
14 doing some typing on a table and three or four
15 other men were waiting to be interviewed. When he
16 opened his bag he saw he had about 15 Jewish Boy
17 Scout badges which was a Star of David with the ten
18 commandments, the two lines, and he said if they
19 find that, I'm dead.

20 While he was sitting there with a German
21 typing, he grabbed one of them and he pinned it
22 under the chair he was sitting on and he managed to
23 pin all 15 of them by the time he got called by the
24 Germans. It was smart. I would have never thought
25 of it. Anyway, he went in and he explained to the

1 Germans that yes, he was part of the Red Cross, he
2 needed sugar for children. He had bought it black
3 market. So they fined him and confiscated the
4 sugar but they let him go.

5 I thought that was quite a story, to be
6 able to think of that. Anyway --

7 INTERVIEWER: How old was he?

8 MR. MORENO: He was about 18, 19
9 years old. A very intelligent fellow.

10 After that they decided they were going to
11 send us out of Paris, the children. So my younger
12 sister and I, and we told him I had a young cousin
13 who was also the age of my sister, was twelve years
14 old, eleven years old, and he also -- his mother,
15 father, kids, had been taken, he was almost an
16 orphan, so we took him with us and the three of us
17 were put in a truck and driven to the train
18 station, put on a train. We said good-bye to our
19 folks, my mother and brother. My older brother
20 stayed with my mother. From there we --

21 INTERVIEWER: You had false papers?

22 MR. MORENO: We had false papers.

23 From there we met other young boys, Jewish
24 kids. There was about ten of us on the train. We
25 arrived in a little town called (in French), I

1 would guess about 50-kilometers from Strassberg, to
2 give you an idea, east of Paris, about 300 miles
3 from Paris.

4 We arrived there about 8:00, 9:00 at
5 night. It was very dark. A little town with 300
6 people in the middle of nowhere. So the only
7 person who came to meet us at the railroad station
8 was the Catholic priest with the big hat, the robe,
9 the whole bit. The leader introduced himself to
10 him. Evidently they had discussions before,
11 because they knew each other. It wasn't Freddie.
12 It was some other young man. I didn't know who he
13 was. But he introduced himself, Jewish guy. And
14 he talked to the priest for a little while and he
15 said okay, you stay here, Father so and so will
16 take care of you. Don't worry, you are going to be
17 safe. If you want to write to your folks, don't do
18 it now, wait a while, if you can find your folks.
19 You'll be safe. Hopefully you'll be here for the
20 duration of the war. And he took off. We were
21 there with suitcases, all ten kids.

22 INTERVIEWER: Scared?

23 MR. MORENO: Scared to death. He
24 took us into his church. He said I know you are
25 Jewish, he said but he said nobody else in the

1 village knows you are Jewish, nobody is going to
2 know you are Jewish. He says we told the people
3 you going to be put in that you were kids whose
4 home had been bombed, you didn't know where your
5 parents are and, therefore, we are going to place
6 you in farms, different farms, and they told me
7 your sister will be in a farm where you can go see
8 her later on and my young cousin and I, we were
9 assigned to a house, to a little farm.

10 The priest said now, you do like everybody
11 else. I expect you to come to mass every Sunday,
12 cross yourself, do whatever it takes. He said
13 nobody will know you are Jewish. He said the only
14 thing I won't tolerate is reading comic books in
15 church. He made us laugh. But he was very nice.

16 And so he took us all from house to house.
17 We got to a little farm. A lady came out and he
18 said this is Sergey, this is my cousin Jack. My
19 cousin was Jack Cohen. They change his name to
20 Collin, because you couldn't have a Jewish name.
21 So he explained to the lady -- they had already
22 selected houses where we would stay. The ladies
23 were aware who we were, young kids. The lady said
24 good, I could use young boys to help me on the
25 farm.

1 INTERVIEWER: But they didn't know
2 you were Jewish?

3 MR. MORENO: No, no one knew we were
4 Jewish. The lady we were with, her husband had
5 been taken prisoner of law, French soldier. She
6 had a little boy and she was running the farm all
7 by herself so she said I could use two young men to
8 help me.

9 INTERVIEWER: How old was the boy?

10 MR. MORENO: The boy was about three
11 years old, a little boy. So we lived on a farm.

12 Well, the first thing she noticed was my
13 boils. I had a lot of them. They were that big,
14 yellow, pus, everything. So she called the priest
15 the next day, the same priest. She said this kid,
16 we started to see real food because up to then
17 sometimes we just have a little piece of bread, a
18 little oil and that was our dinner. So we started
19 seeing real food. She was feeding us -- on the
20 farm she was able to have eggs, chicken, she would
21 make her own bread. There were no bakeries. She
22 would make her own bread.

23 So she called the priest and he said
24 that's pretty bad. He said we're going to give him
25 a bath. So they gave me a bath, it looked like

1 wheat, a bath with straw. That's what it looked
2 like, straw, sticks of straw in water, hot water.
3 They put me in there and gave me a bath. I don't
4 know if it helped but I think the food was more
5 than anything else because within three weeks to a
6 month they were all gone.

7 So we stayed on the farm.

8 INTERVIEWER: (unintelligible)

9 MR. MORENO: No, a little town. We
10 barely saw a German. Once in a while there would
11 be a German car going by but that was it. We were
12 really out in the boonies. Very seldom did we see
13 Germans. When the Germans came in, usually they
14 would be talking to the priest. They wouldn't come
15 to the farm very often.

16 So we stayed on the farm and I learned how
17 to use a big scythe. I learned how to make a mound
18 of wheat and how to do all the farming. We would
19 go in the field and dig potatoes from the potato
20 field.

21 INTERVIEWER: Did you like it?

22 MR. MORENO: We survived. We knew we
23 were lucky even to be there in those days.

24 INTERVIEWER: Was the woman nice?

25 MR. MORENO: Very nice, very, very

1 nice, very helpful, very nice.

2 So we got to learn the people of the town.
3 We would go to church every Sunday. We would cross
4 ourselves and sit down and go to mass and meet
5 people after church. I didn't even know there was
6 a war going on for a while out there. It was just
7 pretty quiet, very quiet.

8 Once in a while we would hear some bombing
9 and we learned that a lot of the men in that little
10 town had formed a group of underground, French
11 underground, and every so often they would get
12 together, get their old World War 1 rifles, big,
13 long, awkward rifle and they would get together and
14 go in the woods and they would come -- you would
15 hear some rifle shots. They would come back and
16 say "Today we shot two Germans." Then one day they
17 came in and they were wearing parachute scarves.
18 They said we found an English parachuter and we
19 took care of him, tried to get him back to England.
20 So they would cut the parachute and make scarves
21 out of it.

22 The Germans knew there were underground
23 floating around but they wouldn't bother too much
24 with it. So we went on during the war until we
25 heard on the radio one night that the British and

1 Americans had landed in Europe. Of course,
2 everybody had a big party in the town. It took a
3 while for them to come where we were because they
4 had to liberate Paris first before they even get to
5 where we were.

6 The Germans started retreating because we
7 noticed Germans, German troops starting to come
8 through our village. Usually they would never come
9 through our village. They would go through the
10 main highway which was about three miles away.

11 INTERVIEWER: They wanted to stay off
12 the main road?

13 MR. MORENO: Off the main road. The
14 underground said we got to do something. The
15 Germans would come in small groups. There would be
16 about 200 soldiers would come in. First they had
17 cars. Then as it got closer to the end of the war
18 they had some horses with funny looking little
19 carts. The Germans were sitting on it. They
20 started looking raggedy. You could tell they had
21 been in combat. You would see a few wounded
22 Germans come through our town. What the
23 underground would do, our town, two miles away
24 there was a main highway. It had a sign "Germany,
25 Belgium." As soon as one group of Germans would

1 come by, the underground would go in and turn all
2 the signs around. Another group of Germans would
3 come in and they would go by and they would go back
4 and turn the signs around again trying to confuse
5 the Germans. They relied on signs.

6 I was in the American army. We had men at
7 every intersection, but they relied on signs. So
8 they decided we'll teach them. So they kept
9 turning signs around.

10 INTERVIEWER: Did you have the
11 opportunity to (unintelligible).

12 A. Yes, we would see each other every Sunday
13 at mass. We had one church in town.

14 INTERVIEWER: How was she doing?

15 MR. MORENO: She was fine. She was
16 with one of the wealthiest people in that little
17 town. She was enjoying it. She loved it. They
18 had children. They had a couple of girls her age
19 so she got along really good with them.

20 INTERVIEWER: How old was she?

21 MR. MORENO: She was about twelve
22 years old. I was 14 by then.

23 So we stayed in the farm until the
24 duration of the war. Until finally some guy came
25 in -- we had a big heavy farm horses. A guy came

1 in running through town the Americans are on the
2 main highway. So all us kids dropped everything
3 and we ran on the main highway and sure enough we
4 saw big tanks and trucks and all the American
5 convoy coming through. I was so happy. I grabbed
6 the first GI I saw and I kissed him. He gave me a
7 box of Graham crackers, I remember. We were so
8 happy to get that. The GIs were so friendly. They
9 would throw candy, throw everything you wanted,
10 K-rations.

11 Anyway, after two or three days I told my
12 sister I'm going to hitchhike back to Paris to see
13 if I can find my mother. She said no, don't do
14 that, they are still fighting, it's too soon.

15 So I decided I'd wait a little longer.
16 One morning a truck came by and my mother and my
17 friend's sister came in and they said we came to
18 get you, take you home.

19 INTERVIEWER: Your mother knew where
20 you were?

21 MR. MORENO: We had written. We had
22 written. I don't know how she knew where we were.
23 I think she found out through the Jewish
24 underground because we couldn't write to her. We
25 didn't want them to know about our parents. She

1 found out where we were. She came with a truck and
2 she picked us up and we went back to Paris.

3 I said are we still in our apartment? She
4 said when the Americans landed we got a hold, my
5 mother got a hold of the French underground and the
6 Germans had put in some French Aryan living in our
7 apartment.

8 Like I said, it was a very nice apartment.
9 It had a big balcony and everything. My mother
10 told the French underground these people don't
11 belong there. This used to be our house. We are
12 Jewish. We were kicked out by the Germans. So the
13 French underground went up there and told the
14 people you've got 24 hours to get out of there or
15 else. So they got out and my mother was able to
16 move back in the apartment. Of course, they had
17 nothing, not a table, not a chair. So she went to
18 talk to some group who was trying to help the Jews
19 and they gave her a little furniture. So when I
20 got back we had a bed, we had a table.

21 INTERVIEWER: Was your family very
22 religious?

23 MR. MORENO: My dad used to go to
24 synagogue every Saturday but I would say very
25 religious, no. We didn't eat kosher food. We

1 celebrated Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashana but not really
2 religious, very religious, and we became even less
3 religious after the war.

4 After the war I went back to the Boy
5 Scouts, the Jewish Boy Scouts, and in 1945 I think
6 it was, 1946, the Boy Scouts had a big worldwide
7 jamboree in Paris. So we, all the Jewish, French
8 Israelite Boy Scouts put on our uniforms, big
9 Jewish Magan David uniform, and we paraded with all
10 the Boy Scouts. That was a great day for us, it
11 really was.

12 Then after that Israel tried to become a
13 state in 1946, 1947. By then I was 16 years old,
14 17 years old. My friend and I, we joined the
15 Hagannah. The Boy Scouts, as you got older they
16 started training you to -- the Jewish leader would
17 tell us don't assimilate, don't forget you are
18 Jewish, don't do Hitler's work, et cetera,
19 et cetera. So we joined, my friend and I joined
20 what they called a young Jewish group, then we
21 found out it was part of the Hagannah which was the
22 Jewish underground army in those days because the
23 Jews didn't have an army.

24 So we joined the Hagannah. I was in the
25 Hagannah for two years in Paris. We trained. They

1 rented an old castle right outside Paris and we did
2 hand to hand combat, trained with weapons. Our job
3 was to try to buy weapons from British soldiers,
4 put it on a truck, ship it to Marseilles, load it
5 on ships for Israel. They had no weapons to fight
6 with. The British wouldn't let them. We also
7 learned how to fight with sticks because we were
8 going to go on ships to try to take all the poor
9 Jewish refugees who were trying to go to Israel,
10 the British wouldn't let them go to Israel. They
11 would attack the Jewish ships and send them to
12 Cyprus. As a matter of fact, a couple of my
13 friends were stopped by the British and sent to
14 Cyprus on boats and ships.

15 So I was all geared to go to Palestine and
16 my mother was afraid I would get hurt, you survived
17 the war, are you going to go to Palestine and get
18 killed there? That was in 1947.

19 Since then we found out we had relatives
20 in the United States. My father's brother and
21 sister lived in New York. They tried to contact
22 us. When we were in Paris an American GI knocked
23 on our door and he said "I'm your cousin from
24 New York." We never knew him. He was a second
25 cousin. Close enough. He was so happy to see us.

1 We invited him over. He liked to play cards and
2 drink rakee. It's like Uzoo, a Turkish liquor. He
3 loved that. We would drink some rakee and we would
4 invite him for dinner and he would bring us
5 American goods, all the stuff that we never had
6 before, cigarettes, chewing gum, whatever he could
7 get from the PX, chocolate.

8 So my aunt found out where we were and she
9 wrote us a letter from New York saying I'd like to
10 take one of your boys to come to New York after the
11 war. So my mother said my older brother is going
12 to New York. So he started learning English and
13 everything. Me, I said I'm going to Palestine. So
14 she sent a ticket for a boat to New York and my
15 mother tried to get a passport and the French said
16 no, you cannot leave France because you are of
17 military age. He was 18 or 19, if I remember. So
18 the French wouldn't let him leave.

19 INTERVIEWER: But you were young?

20 MR. MORENO: I was young enough. My
21 mother said if he can't go, you're going. It was
22 24 hours before I had to leave. I said no, I'm
23 going to Palestine. She said no, you are going to
24 New York. If you don't like New York, then go to
25 Palestine.

1 So 24 hours later my mother takes me on a
2 train to Cannes, south of France near Nice. From
3 there I took a boat, Sovietski, a Polish luxury
4 boat. It was a pretty nice boat. I had never been
5 on a boat before. We got on the boat. I couldn't
6 speak a word of English because I had never learned
7 English. So here I am on a Polish boat on the way
8 to New York. There were a couple of other young
9 French people on the boat so I could communicate
10 pretty well.

11 So I got on the boat. By then the French
12 still hadn't recovered from the war. It was 1948
13 and food was still very scarce. When we got on the
14 boat, we got there around 7:00 in the evening.
15 They had already finished eating in the boat so
16 they made a special table for this group of people
17 who got on the boat. There was about ten of us got
18 on the boat. For us they set up a table. Well,
19 they had food like we had never seen before,
20 sandwiches and food and fruits and everything. So
21 my friend said look at all the food. Let's take
22 some for tomorrow in case they don't have it. So
23 we stuffed our pockets with sandwiches, not knowing
24 that that was nothing compared to what we saw the
25 next morning.

1 So the next morning we got rid of all the
2 food for the fish in the water. They had food like
3 we had never seen before. I don't know if you have
4 ever been on a luxury ship, but the food is
5 unbelievable. From Cannes we went across Gibraltar
6 and then up to Halifax, Canada and from Canada to
7 New York. So it was a long trip, eleven days. We
8 got seasick, we had a storm, everything.

9 We landed in New York. I didn't know who
10 my aunt was. I couldn't speak English. A friend
11 of mine, we were still on the boat docked and a
12 friend of mine said look, somebody has a sign with
13 your name on it. My uncle had written a huge sign
14 Sammy Moreno, happy new year. So we got off the
15 boat. We introduced each other. I couldn't speak
16 English. She couldn't speak French. So we spoke
17 Spanish. She said thank God you speak Spanish. So
18 we started speaking Spanish. I had never spoken
19 Spanish really. I always heard it but I never
20 spoke it. I was able to speak Spanish from memory
21 because I heard it so many.

22 INTERVIEWER: You were speaking
23 Ladino?

24 MR. MORENO: Yes, Ladino. So we
25 spoke Ladino. My Ladino came back and we spoke

1 Ladino.

2 I was in New York two weeks and she said
3 we're going to California. What's in California?
4 She said well, her brother is in California. You
5 are coming with us. So we got an a train and we
6 went to LA.

7 INTERVIEWER: Why were they going?

8 MR. MORENO: For vacation to see him.

9 My aunt, she worked in the garment industry in
10 New York, like a slave there. The first time she
11 went to California, she loved it in California.
12 She told her husband go back, sell everything in
13 New York. I'm not going back to New York. So we
14 stayed in California.

15 INTERVIEWER: Where were you, in
16 Los Angeles?

17 MR. MORENO: Los Angeles. A year
18 later I was drafted in the American Army for the
19 Korean war. First I didn't want to go but by then
20 Israel had become a state so I figured why go to
21 Israel? I liked it here in the United States. I
22 learned English. I worked for a Spanish-speaking
23 shoe factory in LA. He spoke Spanish so I was able
24 to get a job there. I was making 85 cents an hour.
25 For me that was a lot of money because I only had

1 \$2 when I landed in New York.

2 A year later I got drafted in the American
3 Army. I was told if I want to become a citizen I
4 had to serve in the Army. I didn't want to be like
5 my father who never became a French citizen. So I
6 decided I would serve in the American Army.

7 INTERVIEWER: Were you offered the
8 chance to wait five years?

9 MR. MORENO: When I did my basic
10 training at Fort Ord I found out we were training
11 to go to Korea. In 1950 in Korea, we were getting
12 our butts shot out there. I went to speak to my
13 captain and I said I'd like to speak to an Army
14 lawyer about becoming an American citizen. They
15 sent me to a G2. G2 is the lawyers in the Army. I
16 went to him for an interview.

17 I said to him look, I'm ready to go to
18 Korea. We are just finished our basic training and
19 I may get killed out there and I'd like to be an
20 American citizen in case of war. In time of war
21 you can become a citizen right away. He said
22 that's true, but Korea is not a war, it's a police
23 action. Why don't you send policeman out there and
24 let me go home? It didn't work that way.

25 So when we finished our basic training,

1 the whole outfit was sent to Korea except for two
2 people. I was one of the two, because I spoke
3 three languages. They sent me to an outfit in
4 Washington, DC, Arlington, Virginia, intelligence.
5 While they were checking my papers, I stayed there
6 three months pushing a lawn mower at the generals'
7 houses, and they called me in and said we can't
8 keep you here, this is top secret and you are not
9 even an American citizen.

10 I said I could have told you that the day
11 I walked in here if only you asked me. They said
12 well, this is too top secret. We'll give you a
13 choice: Korea, Alaska or Europe.

14 INTERVIEWER: What?

15 MR. MORENO: Korea, Alaska or Europe.
16 So I put Europe, Europe, Europe, because I still
17 had my mother and my sister and my brother in
18 Europe. I figured I'd get a chance to see them.
19 So I was sent to Germany, of all the places. There
20 I was in an American uniform.

21 INTERVIEWER: Where?

22 MR. MORENO: I was stationed near
23 Frankfurt on Main in a town called Gernhausen and
24 from Gernhausen we were sent to (unintelligible), a
25 little teeny town right on the east German border

1 and our job was to guard the border. So we were
2 two weeks on the border and two weeks in garrison.
3 While we were on the border our job was to -- well,
4 the Russians were making threats, you know, our job
5 was to stop them, hold them for 24 hours so they
6 couldn't reach, you know. Of course, we would be
7 goners.' So I ended up in demolitions in the Army
8 in a headquarters company and I learned how to set
9 booby traps, explosives, compositions, C3, in those
10 days we used C3 composition, how to shoot at tanks
11 and everything else.

12 I've always been good at drafting. As you
13 know, I'm an architect. So I used to -- they
14 wanted me to draw (unintelligible) on their uniform
15 and all, and I would do that. My captain found out
16 I was doing that and let me know one day he didn't
17 want to see any more uniforms with all kind of
18 (unintelligible) on them. Then they needed someone
19 to do maps for G3, which is the operations group.
20 They are the ones -- it's a headquarters where they
21 lay the maps where the troops are being assigned,
22 where the mine fields are located, et cetera,
23 et cetera. They needed a draftsman. So my captain
24 said I've got just the man for you. They called me
25 in and said you are going to G3, you are being

1 transferred. Then I had a drafting board and I had
2 an eight hour day and I was drafting.

3 INTERVIEWER: Did you get any
4 training?

5 A. No. I just learned as I went. My
6 sergeant was an architect. He said when you get
7 out of the Army, he said you go into architecture.
8 He said you are gifted. You've got what it takes.
9 So after I got through the Army, I had a pretty
10 good job except when we had to go to the field, two
11 weeks in the field. Because I was in the
12 headquarters you would see the big truck with all
13 the officers in it. I ended up being a bazooka
14 man, I carried a bazooka.

15 So I don't want to give you my life in the
16 Army. It was all right. It was cold in Germany.
17 I never became very friendly with the Germans. I
18 still hold a big grudge on the Germans.

19 INTERVIEWER: (unintelligible)

20 MR. MORENO: He was hiding and --

21 INTERVIEWER: In Paris?

22 MR. MORENO: In Paris. Any young man
23 who would walk the streets of Paris, the Germans
24 would grab him. You should either be in the Army
25 or working for the German factories. You shouldn't

1 be walking the streets of Paris. So he would stay
2 indoors most of the time. He got caught once in
3 the street by two French militia men. They were
4 like the French Gestapo. They wore black uniforms.
5 They had like an inverted V. I don't know if
6 you've ever seen it. It's like a V. It was the
7 French militia. They were Vichy French. They
8 arrested my brother. Even though he had false
9 papers they asked him how come -- what's he doing
10 in the street? How come he's not in the Army or
11 working? He gave them some sort of story that he
12 was very sick, blah, blah, blah, and he had a very
13 expensive wrist watch. He gave them the wrist
14 watch and one guy liked the sunglasses, he gave
15 them the sunglasses. They said get out of here, we
16 don't want to see you again. He managed to live
17 through the war staying in that basement with my
18 mother.

19 INTERVIEWER: (unintelligible)

20 MR. MORENO: My brother was a lucky
21 guy. Just before I left for the arm he found a
22 wallet in the subway. In that wallet there was
23 about 100,000 francs. He and a friend found the
24 wallet. It must have belonged to some German
25 person because there was a business card in it but

1 only money and one business card. They spent the
2 money, the two of them. They said look, there was
3 a big stack of bills. Where did you get that?
4 They said we found it in the subway. My mother
5 said without that I don't think we would have been
6 able to survive. So talk of luck. What else can I
7 tell you?

8 INTERVIEWER: How long
9 (unintelligible).

10 MR. MORENO: Two years. I was
11 drafted for 18 months but because of the Korean
12 month they extended it.

13 INTERVIEWER: And you came back?

14 MR. MORENO: I came back.

15 INTERVIEWER: Los Angeles?

16 MR. MORENO: Los Angeles. I went to
17 school on the GI bill at night and worked for an
18 architect during the day. I went to the VA. I
19 told them I wanted to go into architecture. They
20 said we can place you as an office boy in an
21 architect's office. I said that's fine.

22 INTERVIEWER: You went to school?

23 MR. MORENO: I started with City
24 College. Then I used to take some courses at USC.
25 The rest I did by learning in an architect's

1 office. I had to earn a living. I got married and
2 had two children.

3 INTERVIEWER: Where did you meet?

4 MR. MORENO: A friend of ours got
5 married. At a wedding. When we were in that
6 little town, the Americans liberated the town, the
7 French underground took over the town.

8 INTERVIEWER: The farm?

9 MR. MORENO: At the farm time. The
10 French underground went after the priest, arrested
11 the priest because they said he collaborated with
12 the Germans. He would talk to the Germans, was
13 very friendly with the Germans. We found out they
14 were going to shoot him. So a lot of young Jews,
15 we ran to the underground and we said wait a
16 minute, if it wouldn't be for him we would all be
17 dead. We were Jewish. He took us, cared for us,
18 never said anything to the Germans. Because we
19 spoke to the underground they let him go.
20 Afterwards, it was funny to see how he saved our
21 lives and at the end we saved his. It was quite
22 shocking.

23 INTERVIEWER: When you were liberated
24 did the woman who owned the farm find out that you
25 were Jewish?

1 MR. MORENO: No, we never told her.

2 Why? Why rub it in if you want to say that? We
3 thanked her, my mother thanked her. I understood
4 that she was getting a check every month from some
5 group, some Jewish group, which I didn't know until
6 afterward. She was a nice lady. She understood
7 that we were in trouble.

8 INTERVIEWER: (unintelligible)

9 MR. MORENO: Probably from the
10 United States, for all I know. I have no idea.

11 After the war we were in the Boy Scouts,
12 we regrouped, the Jewish Boy Scouts regrouped and
13 we found out that the -- a lot of people were
14 coming back from concentration camps to Paris
15 through the railroad station and so they asked the
16 Boy Scouts to go help readjust those people. Of
17 course, I was hoping I would see my dad. So we
18 went there and we saw some of these poor people
19 come back, they were barely able to walk and
20 because I could speak Spanish, there were a lot of
21 people who spoke Spanish, Spaniards, we tried to
22 help them and, of course, they had -- they were
23 infected and we had white powder all over us
24 because they didn't want us to catch any disease
25 because these guys came straight from concentration

1 camps to Paris. It was really terrible. That was
2 our job. Every other evening we had to spend four
3 hours at the railroad station to help the people.
4 There was a Red Cross there to help the people.
5 There were mostly a lot of Jewish organizations
6 trying to see what they could do.

7 INTERVIEWER: (unintelligible)

8 MR. MORENO: To put them someplace,
9 send them to hospitals, give them blankets, try to
10 make them feel comfortable. They didn't know what
11 to do. A lot of people didn't know what to do with
12 those people. That's when the Hagannah decided
13 we're going to ship them all to Israel. Of course,
14 it didn't happen that way. That's what they
15 wanted.

16 INTERVIEWER: (unintelligible)

17 MR. MORENO: Yes, find lodging.
18 There was one group called HIAS. They did a lot of
19 good in Paris, children, people who didn't have any
20 money, families. In those days after the war,
21 there was so much disarray, nobody knew what to do
22 with those people, even the French government
23 couldn't handle it all. They were coming from all
24 over Europe, particularly a lot of people from
25 Poland, Germany, Czechoslovakia. They didn't want

1 to have anything to do with that part of Europe.

2 They all came to France.

3 They had no place to put them. They used
4 to close schools so they could put cots and hold
5 them for a few months. It was really rough. I was
6 only 15, 16 years old in those days, I didn't know
7 what I could do but a lot of Jewish organizations
8 came in. I think from New York also they started
9 coming in and helping. It was very bad for those
10 people. You would think after the war there would
11 be somebody waiting for them, but there was nobody.
12 They came back from concentration camps to look for
13 their family. There was no family. They try to go
14 to their homes, some stranger lived in it.

15 INTERVIEWER: (unintelligible)

16 MR. MORENO: About two years ago. I
17 have a letter from the Red Cross. We knew from
18 people who came back from Auschwitz who said they
19 had seen our father there. But he was taken so
20 early, he was taken in 1941. The war lasted until
21 late 1944. We don't think he survived. But then
22 my sister made inquiries in Los Angeles. She had
23 gone to Israel and they had a big group over there
24 who had done some research and the Red Cross
25 finally wrote us a letter saying that yes, they

1 have found documentation about my father and two of
2 my cousins who when they left Drancy, when they
3 were taken to Auschwitz, which convoy number and
4 everything.

5 INTERVIEWER: (unintelligible)

6 MR. MORENO: Never heard from them.

7 One came back and he died right after the war. He
8 was very sick.

9 My father had -- my father was a
10 shoemaker. He had made a hollow heel in a shoe for
11 my uncle and he had put some gold coins. He closed
12 the heel and my uncle in the concentration camp was
13 with those shoes and was able to bribe a lot of
14 those people for food and he's the only one who
15 came back. The other two uncles died. So that's
16 about it. And I became an architect.

17 INTERVIEWER: How did you
18 (unintelligible).

19 MR. MORENO: Well, when I came here
20 after serving in the Army I got my brother to come
21 here a year later. Then when I came --

22 INTERVIEWER: (unintelligible)

23 MR. MORENO: Yes, he wanted to come.
24 Then I tried to bring my mother. My mother wasn't
25 born in France so she could not come from a French

1 port. After I got out of the Army I went to the
2 Immigration people and said I want to bring my
3 mother to this country. They said sure. Here is a
4 form. They said where are you from? I said
5 France. They said where was your mother born? I
6 said Turkey, Constantinople, Turkey, Istanbul,
7 Turkey today. The guy put his pen away. I said
8 what are you doing? He said forget it, she has to
9 come on the Turkish quota. If she waits her turn,
10 it will take about 60 years before her turn comes
11 up because the quota from Turkey is very small. I
12 said I can't bring my mother? He said that's it.

13 I went to the architect's office and one
14 of the architects said his father was an
15 ex-senator, which I didn't know that. I explained
16 to him what happened and he said give me your name,
17 I'll see what I can do for you. He talked to his
18 father. They wrote a letter to two senators in
19 California stating that I had served two years in
20 the Army, that I was eligible to bring my mother
21 here and the way they got around the quota, they
22 said we don't want any preference for Mrs. Moreno
23 but we would like her to come under the French
24 quota because she lived in France all her life. We
25 just want her to come under the French quota.

1 So the senator passed a bill, a special
2 bill, just for my mother asking that she be allowed
3 to come under the French quota. Meanwhile I had
4 told my mother go to the American consulate, put
5 your name in there. She wrote me back and said
6 they won't even let me through the door. They
7 don't know me. They can't do nothing for me they
8 said. Well, the bill got passed. Eisenhower
9 signed the bill. He was president then. Then my
10 mother gets a telegram from the American embassy in
11 Paris come right away. She went there. The doors
12 opened up. She was in front of the actual consul
13 and he said are you Mrs. Moreno? She said yes. He
14 said I don't know what your son did in the
15 United States but I got a letter here from
16 President Eisenhower that says you can go to the
17 United States under the French quota any time and
18 there's no line on the French quota. You can leave
19 tomorrow.

20 So I've got my family here.

21 INTERVIEWER: Did your mother like it
22 here?

23 MR. MORENO: Yes, she liked it here.

24 INTERVIEWER: Did she have trouble
25 learning English?

1 MR. MORENO: Yes, she had trouble
2 learning English. But she liked it. She would go
3 back to France every so often to visit, but she
4 liked it here. She died here. No, she died in
5 France on a vacation. She was in France on a
6 vacation and she died there. She had a massive
7 heart attack.

8 INTERVIEWER: (unintelligible)

9 MR. MORENO: Wonderful. Very good.

10 INTERVIEWER: (unintelligible)

11 MR. MORENO: France isn't what I
12 thought it would be. A few French people helped
13 the Jews, but very few. The majority didn't care.
14 They saw Jews being taken away. The only people
15 who did something was the French underground which
16 they had their own problems. They didn't care
17 about the Jews too much. So the Jews were pretty
18 much, the French Jews were pretty much left to
19 themselves. Thank God for the Jewish underground.
20 A lot of these young men in the underground got
21 taken by the Germans.

22 INTERVIEWER: (unintelligible).

23 MR. MORENO: I understand he made it
24 through the war. I never saw him again but he made
25 it through the war. I heard from my friend. He

1 told me that he was all wait. I never did see him
2 again. I would have loved to see him.

3 INTERVIEWER: You would have thought
4 he would have gone to Israel?

5 MR. MORENO: You would think so.
6 That guy did so much good, it's unbelievable.
7 There's always one or two persons that rise to the
8 top, takes over and manages to try to help people.
9 Where would I have gotten false papers?

10 If I hadn't joined the Boy Scouts group I
11 would have been gone. Gave us food, tickets, sent
12 us to -- the farm saved our lives, literally saved
13 our lives. They took chances, I hate to tell you,
14 they took a lot of chances. The Germans were
15 smart. When it came to the Jews, they were smart.

16 INTERVIEWER: (unintelligible)

17 MR. MORENO: At the beginning it was
18 like a game, try to outsmart the Germans.
19 Thirteen, 14 years old, guys walking around with
20 uniforms, you know. Until we realized that after
21 they took my dad, we realized (unintelligible).

22 INTERVIEWER: (unintelligible).

23 MR. MORENO: Everybody was scared.
24 Yes, they were scared. They all took off their
25 stars, went underground, hiding in cellars. A lot

1 of French tried to go to free France. We had a lot
2 of people, friends of ours, went to free France and
3 they got caught in free France by the French, by
4 the so-called free French, got taken by the Vichy
5 government. A lot of people went to Spain, escaped
6 to Switzerland, but Switzerland wouldn't take the
7 people. They were weren't very helpful either. I
8 understand some went to Spain, through the Basque
9 country, but not too many. There weren't that
10 many. The so-called Vichy French, they were just
11 as bad as the Germans. There was no place to go.
12 Spain, even Spain, Franco, you know, not much
13 better.

14 INTERVIEWER: Did you go back?

15 MR. MORENO: I went back once 45
16 years later. When I was in the Army I used to go
17 from Germany to Paris to see my mother and sister.
18 I went there quite a few times. But after I got
19 out of the Army I didn't go back for 45 years.

20 INTERVIEWER: You had no interest?

21 MR. MORENO: I just didn't want to go
22 back. I didn't have any inclination to go back
23 there. Then after -- about three years ago I
24 decided maybe I ought to go back and see my
25 cousins. So my daughter and I, we went back the

1 first time in 45 years. It was different.

2 INTERVIEWER: (unintelligible).

3 MR. MORENO: I was going to, but then
4 I didn't have a car and I didn't go to the farm. I
5 didn't even know if the lady would still be alive
6 and the son didn't know me. He was a baby. No, I
7 didn't go back to the farm. I went back to the
8 beach where my father used to take us, to Normandy.
9 We drove up there. (unintelligible).

10 INTERVIEWER: (unintelligible).

11 MR. MORENO: I went to see my school,
12 I went to see where my dad's store used to be.
13 Sad.

14 INTERVIEWER: (unintelligible)

15 MR. MORENO: No, closed down, run
16 down. It looks so puny now. When I was a kid, it
17 was big. (unintelligible). That and I've always
18 liked the United States. So I consider myself
19 100 percent American.

20 INTERVIEWER: (unintelligible).

21 MR. MORENO: Very good, did a lot of
22 high rise buildings, did a lot of research and
23 development.

24 INTERVIEWER: (unintelligible)

25 MR. MORENO: No, not here. But I

1 enjoy it. It's good work. (unintelligible).

2 INTERVIEWER: (unintelligible)

3 MR. MORENO: 1981.

4 INTERVIEWER: (unintelligible)

5 MR. MORENO: Good. I was in an
6 architect's office, very large architect's office
7 in Los Angeles. We had about 200 architects. We
8 did mostly (unintelligible) projects.
9 (unintelligible). Mostly research and development
10 work. (unintelligible). Had to lay off a lot of
11 people. I got laid off. After 36 years in the
12 firm I got laid off. I (unintelligible). Anyway,
13 after that I told my wife, that's it, I'm retiring.
14 All I'm doing now is odd jobs. I enjoy
15 (unintelligible).

16 INTERVIEWER: (unintelligible).

17 (Because the balance of the videotape had
18 such poor audio quality, the transcript of it stops
19 here.)

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