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INTERVIEW WITH: HARRY HANKIN
HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
DATE: OCTOBER 17, 1991 PLACE: SAN FRANCISCO, CA
INTERVIEWERS: GENE AYRES, ZUZANA GOLDSTEIN, JUDITH ANTELMAN
TRANSCRIBER: REBECCA FELKER

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MR. AYRES: I am Gene Ayres, an interviewer with the Holocaust Oral History Project of San Francisco, California.

Today we are talking with Harry Hankin. Assisting in the interview is Zuzana Goldstein and Judy Antelman. John Grant is producer.

BY MR. AYRES:

Q GOOD AFTERNOON, MR. HANKIN?

A Pleasure to be here.

Q WOULD YOU START PLEASE BY TELLING US THE DATE OF YOUR BIRTH AND WHERE YOU WERE BORN?

A I was born on the 19th of June, 1915, 12:00 o'clock in the afternoon, or in the morning, and at that time the first time in history the French bombed our cities, the first time an airplane flew over a city and dropped bombs, which was unheard of in 1915.

I was born in -- Ludwigshafen an Rhine where the biggest chemical factory in the world is located, IG Farben. It used to called Badische Aneline, which means,

1 in other words, pollution, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

2 And I went to school I. I went to
3 Gymnasium, when they call here in America high school. I
4 had five years of Latin, I had English, German history, and
5 I had a good Jewish education, which in Germany must be a
6 must because Jewish religion is a must, is the first
7 subject on your report card.

8 Here in America you have English or history.
9 In Germany the first was religion, religion in school.

10 Q YOU'RE FROM A JEWISH FAMILY; IS THAT CORRECT?

11 A Yeah. My father came from Russia. He was born in
12 Minsk. My mother was born in Germany in a little town
13 about 20 miles out of Ludwigshafen.

14 My mother's family I can trace back to the
15 15th century. The Jews lived in Germany at that time.

16 My father's family in Russia you couldn't
17 trace back.

18 Even when my father married my mother in
19 Germany he had no papers, so his mother had to swear that
20 her son was born on that -- I always kidded my father, your
21 mother never knew when you were born. He said it was about
22 five weeks before Chanuko, that's how they done it. She
23 had to swear that that was her son when he married my
24 mother.

25 Q WHY DID YOUR FAMILY LEAVE?

26 A My father left Russia because he had a feeling he was

1 inducted in the army, and once you're inducted as a Jew in
2 the army in Russia that was a certain death. So he fled
3 overnight over the border and went to Stuttgart where his
4 older sister lived. That's why he went.

5 If his older sister would have gone to
6 England or America he would have followed, that was a
7 common thing in these days.

8 And Germany at that time was like America,
9 it was on top of the world and a wonderful life in Germany
10 for the Jews, you know.

11 Q YOU SAID ONCE A JEW IS INDUCTED INTO THE RUSSIAN ARMY
12 IT'S CERTAIN DEATH; WHY IS THAT?

13 A Well, the Jews in Russia were always persecuted. You
14 heard about the progromis which always happened, and when
15 the Czar was in trouble he initiated a program so they
16 wouldn't listen to his troubles, it wasn't his fault, so
17 the Jews are at fault. The Jews were always scapegoats for
18 centuries.

19 If you trace it back in the middle ages when
20 crusaders came they were the scapegoats. When the black
21 death came in Europe they were blamed for the black death,
22 but the people didn't know because the Jews through their
23 religion, through the purification of their -- washing
24 their hands and keeping clean, which is a Jewish law,
25 naturally they weren't affected by the black death like the
26 non-Jews. So they blamed the Jews for it.

1 It was an easy thing to blame somebody, and
2 the Jews were blamed for everything else. Even nowadays,
3 anything goes wrong it's the Jews.

4 Q IN YOUR FAMILY WHEN YOU WERE BORN WAS IT A RELIGIOUSLY
5 OBSERVANT FAMILY?

6 A No. My father was a free thinker. He didn't believe
7 in religion too much.

8 Q AND YOUR MOTHER?

9 A Well, moderate. They were business people, you know.
10 I mean we children had a good religious education because
11 it was a must. You couldn't -- there was no way out. You
12 had to be two hours on Tuesday and two hours on Thursday
13 and had to go to temple on Saturdays, you know. It was a
14 must. There was no question. I'd rather play soccer,
15 but --

16 Q YOUR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, WERE YOU IN PUBLIC SCHOOL?

17 A Yes, public school.

18 Q PUBLIC SCHOOL?

19 A Yeah.

20 Q FINANCED BY --

21 A No. The public school in the first three years was
22 financed by the county or state.

23 No, as a matter of fact, the teachers were
24 all state employees, so the Rabbi in Germany was a state
25 employee.

26 Q AND THE RABBI CAME TO THE SCHOOL AND TAUGHT YOU?

1 A The cantor -- we had no Rabbi. We had what we call a
2 cantor. He taught religion.

3 Q AND YOU WERE IN SCHOOL WITH OTHER --

4 A No.

5 Q -- OTHER RELIGIONS?

6 A No. Separate, everything is separate.

7 Q EVERYTHING IS SEPARATE?

8 A Oh, Catholic, the Protestants, the Jews.

9 Q THE WHOLE SCHOOL IS SEPARATE?

10 A No. The religious school is separate, but in school
11 you're all together. There's no difference in school.

12 Q WAS THERE EVER ANY DIFFICULTY OR ANY -- DID YOU NOTICE
13 ANY DISCRIMINATION AGAINST YOU?

14 A When Hitler came.

15 Q I MEAN AS A CHILD?

16 A Well, we were still different from other people, they
17 didn't consider us equal, you know. Never. You'll always
18 be an outsider. That's the way I feel, and I felt it all
19 the way. Even the German Jew wanted to be German first
20 then Jew by religion, but it didn't work out.

21 Hitler didn't make any difference whether
22 you were eighth Jew or 16th, if you had any Jewish
23 background you were a Jew, and you know what happened.

24 Q DURING THESE CHILDHOOD YEARS BEFORE HITLER -- YOU WERE
25 BORN DURING WORLD WAR I, AND THEN STILL A SMALL CHILD IN
26 THE EARLY '20'S?

1 A Yeah.

2 Q AFTER THE WAR WAS OVER?

3 A Sure.

4 Q DO YOU RECALL HOW IT WAS IN GERMANY IN THOSE DAYS? DO
5 YOU RECALL ANTI-SEMITISM ALL AROUND YOU? WERE YOU IN A
6 LARGE COMMUNITY OF JEWS?

7 A Medium large I would say, but it was always dormant.
8 If they could give you a little nudge, you know, they would
9 always say something.

10 When we were in high school they made fun of
11 us, things like that. And I know my brother had a friend,
12 a Jewish friend who was a very big young man and my brother
13 was a little guy like me. And the other guy, well,
14 insulted him so his friend took care and beat the hell out
15 of the other guy.

16 I always had fights on the street. I never
17 took a step back. I never took a step back. I don't care
18 how big the guy was, I always fought.

19 And I was what you would call Zionist
20 indoctrinated. When I was 12 years old I joined the
21 Zionist's movement, and we got the feeling it's not the
22 right place. The only place for us is if we have our own
23 homeland like Israel now, at that time it was called
24 Palestine.

25 When I talked to my father when I was 14,
26 15, I said, you know, "Hitler will take all of Europe and

1 will take everything." He said, "What do you know from
2 politics? You're too young to understand politics," you
3 know.

4 And the German, the elders, the elders said,
5 "Hitler will last four to six weeks, that's the most."

6 Q DID YOUNG ZIONISTS LIKE YOU THINK DIFFERENTLY?

7 A Yes. We said he would take over the whole -- drive us
8 out or do something. We had that feeling, you know, I
9 always had that feeling, Hitler would do something. Read
10 Mein Kampf, that's all you have to do.

11 Q HAD YOU READ MEIN KAMPF AT THAT POINT?

12 A I read a little bit about it. I didn't have to read
13 it. I saw what's going on.

14 Q YOUR FATHER, WHAT SORT OF BUSINESS WAS HE IN?

15 A My father was a manufacturer. We had -- we
16 manufactured cigarettes by hand, tobacco business. Then
17 later on when the machinery came up we had to give up
18 because he had 35 women making cigarettes by hand. When
19 the machinery come up it was too tough for him.

20 So we had three stores, outlets, tobacco,
21 cigarettes, you know, all that what you have here, pipes
22 and liquor, whatever.

23 And then later on he gave that up, and then
24 he sold oil to an oil company, which was a big thing in
25 Germany because Germany doesn't have oil, so they imported
26 oil from America. My brother was there. My father -- told

1 my brother why don't you join me, you know.

2 He was a very good businessman my father,
3 very smart man. No education except Jewish education, what
4 they call a Cheder. He spoke English, English later when
5 he came to America, he spoke German, he spoke Russian,
6 Yiddish, spoke French and wrote in German perfect, you
7 couldn't even tell he wasn't a German. Language was the
8 same as ours, the same dialect. He talked like we did. We
9 couldn't tell he was non-German, not on his language, not
10 on his looks or appearances, you couldn't tell the
11 difference.

12 And he came to America, luckily, in 1939,
13 the last ship out of Genoa, Italy, made it with my mother
14 and my sister, came to America then.

15 And my brother came in 1938, and it was --
16 he left the very day I went to Dachau. He left for England
17 to go to America. What happened that day was -- see my
18 father was Russian, and the Russian quota for America was
19 the best quota because very few Russian people went to
20 America in the late '30's, in the early '30's.

21 And I was a German because I was born in
22 Germany, but German law says what the father is you are.
23 American law says where you are born, so American law I'm
24 German.

25 My sister and my mother went to the Russian
26 quota. My sister was under 21, I was over 21, so no good.

1 So on the day of the Kristallnacht my father
2 and I went to Dachau together and I was six weeks in
3 Dachau.

4 Q DID THEY COME FOR YOU?

5 A Yeah, oh, yeah.

6 Q EXPLAIN ABOUT THAT.

7 A They came, but we -- lucky enough the local police
8 came, not the SS. We were lucky, they knew my mother,
9 father, you know, he was a very well-known business man.
10 They said, "We will accompany you up to Dachau, then the SS
11 takes over, so you better make sure you're not doing
12 anything unusual, otherwise you're in trouble."

13 Q WHAT WAS THE PRETEXT FOR ARRESTING YOU?

14 A Yeah, well --

15 Q WHAT WAS IT?

16 A Well, see what happened actually the Jews -- the
17 Polish Jew in Germany were driven out and were sent to
18 Poland, and there was a young man called Greenspan, and his
19 parents went to Poland in no-man's land, it was a terrible
20 thing, all the Polish Jews -- so Greenspan went to in
21 Paris, he went into the German consul and killed Von Rath
22 and that was the so-called pretext.

23 And they said that the anger of the whole
24 population and they burned the synagogues and blah, blah,
25 blah. Now, the funny thing is when we came into Dachau,
26 into the concentration camp the inmates which were

1 communists, homosexuals, whatever, some of the communists
2 came from the town we came from, they knew my father,
3 businessmen, said we knew there was something big coming.

4 We made all the preparation, we put bunks up
5 and straw and -- but didn't know what it was, but we knew
6 there was something big coming. So you're going to tell me
7 that was the anger of the population? That was a
8 well-prepared thing, and that Von Rath just was the
9 trigger, the trigger that boom.

10 And the irony of the whole thing is when the
11 Jews were released from concentration camps they got fined
12 billions of marks for the damage they had done to the
13 synagogues, you know, I mean absurd. And nobody cared.

14 But you know Hitler shouldn't have been in
15 power. The trouble was France and England let him walk in
16 to the Rhine land, that's when it started. They couldn't
17 care less.

18 He was -- the Japanese walked into
19 Manchuria, the Germans and the other went into Spain,
20 nobody said anything, and that's the whole crux of the
21 matter. If they would have put their foot down there would
22 be no Hitler. There was nothing but England and France
23 thought Hitler was good because he would fight Russia.
24 People don't understand all this, but didn't work out that
25 way.

26 Q WHEN YOU WERE ARRESTED AND TAKEN TO DACHAU

1 KRISTALLNACHT, WAS THERE AN EXPLANATION THAT YOU WERE
2 THOUGHT TO BE GUILTY OF SOMETHING? WHAT DID THE POLICE SAY
3 TO YOU AND YOUR FATHER?

4 A "You're arrested."

5 Q THAT WAS ALL?

6 A Actually, they couldn't because -- my father wasn't
7 German, he never had the German nationality, they made a
8 mistake to arrest him, so they couldn't care less. Who is
9 going to fight for you. Who is going to stand up for you,
10 nobody in the world, you know.

11 And the people didn't believe it. The same
12 with the Holocaust, even nowadays there's a lecturer in
13 Wisconsin, a professor saying the Holocaust never existed.
14 I'd like to meet the guy, give him a piece of my mind, but
15 they won't let me.

16 Q WHEN YOU WERE STILL A YOUNG --

17 A 22, 23.

18 Q EVEN BEFORE THAT, IN THE DAYS BEFORE HITLER CAME TO
19 POWER DURING THE 1920'S, DO YOU RECALL WERE YOU OLD ENOUGH
20 TO RECALL THE TERRIBLE INFLATION?

21 A Oh, yes, I never forget, never ever, every little city
22 printed its own money. One day I come to my father's shop,
23 he said, there's a whole basket, I mean a basket like a
24 wastebasket full of money, see what you can do.

25 So we kids we went the street, we went one
26 store to another. Finally one store took it and we got

1 raspberry, you know, those red raspberry candies. We had
2 raspberry candies for six months. But we took the money.
3 The money was worthless. You could paper your room with
4 it, that's all, even that wasn't good enough.

5 Q WAS YOUR FATHER'S BUSINESS ABLE TO STAY AFLOAT DURING
6 THOSE --

7 A Not really.

8 Q NOT REALLY?

9 A We suffered terribly.

10 Q THIS IS IN THE EARLY 1920'S.

11 A Yeah, inflation, yeah.

12 Q DO YOU RECALL WHETHER THESE ECONOMIC CONDITIONS,
13 WHETHER THERE WAS NAZI RISE TO POWER?

14 A Oh, yeah, they took it for them, it was gift of God,
15 you know, the inflation and all that. And as I said, the
16 World War I because they had so many traitors and all that,
17 you know how it is. Always blaming somebody else.

18 Q DO YOU RECALL THAT ANTI-SEMITISM INCREASED?

19 A Absolutely, absolutely, because say inflation or the
20 economy, the Jews are always blamed for it, you know.

21 Q DID YOU LIVE IN AN AREA THAT WAS MOSTLY JEWISH, OR DID
22 YOU --

23 A Oh, no, no, there was no such thing as a Jewish area
24 in Germany. Maybe in Berlin, but not in Germany, no.

25 Not like here in New York or in
26 Philadelphia, or in Cleveland, Chicago where you have

1 Jewish sections or Los Angeles, no, that wasn't the case.
2 In Berlin maybe, you know. We were only one percent of the
3 whole population.

4 But you know it's a funny thing every Nazi
5 had a good Jew so actually we are 68 million Jews in
6 German. If you figure it out, 68 million Nazi's.

7 Q WAS YOUR FAMILY HARASSED AT ALL, YOUR MOTHER WHEN SHE
8 WOULD WALK DOWN THE STREET, OR YOUR SISTER?

9 A No, no, funny enough, we were never harassed. That
10 never happened really. That never occurred to us. We are
11 lucky in that respect.

12 Q WHEN DID YOU FIRST BEGIN TO NOTICE THAT THERE WAS A
13 VERY STRONG ANTI-SEMITISM AND VERY STRONG MOVEMENT, PERHAPS
14 IN THE EARLY DAYS OF --

15 A Yes, I can recall that very well. We were, with the
16 Zionist movement. We had an excursion and we met in the
17 north of Germany from all over Germany for the Zionist
18 movement, and we had fights with Nazi's. We had some guys,
19 big guys, they wouldn't take a step back, but there were
20 fights already with Nazi's, 1929, I was about 13, 14 years
21 old. You know, 14 years old.

22 Q WHAT CITY WAS THAT, DO YOU RECALL?

23 A Near Kassel, near Kassel in Germany. I forgot.

24 Q AND YOU HAD NO TROUBLE IN BELONGING TO THE ZIONIST
25 MOVEMENT?

26 A No.

1 Q THEY DIDN'T PROHIBIT YOU FROM DOING THAT?

2 A As a matter of fact, the Nazi's looked favorably at
3 the Zionist movement because they figured take the Jews out
4 of Germany and send them to Israel, you know, Palestine.

5 Q WAS PART OF THE ZIONIST PROGRAM AT THAT TIME TO MOVE
6 PEOPLE TO PALESTINE?

7 A Yeah, oh, yeah. When I got a little bit older I
8 trained, I had a trade, you know, then I learned, it was in
9 the machine business, you know, mechanics.

10 Then later on I had to go to agricultural,
11 but then I went into Thuringen and I stayed there for a
12 couple months, but then the Nazi wouldn't let us work
13 anywhere, so I had to go home.

14 Then when I got home that was in '37, '38,
15 before the Kristalnacht I worked on putting cobblestones in
16 the streets, you know. I had to do a little bit of work.
17 So it was more or less already slave work, slave labor for
18 Hitler. They wouldn't let you work anywhere else. My
19 father's business went kerplunk, nothing.

20 Q DO YOU RECALL WHERE YOU WERE, OR DO YOU RECALL THE DAY
21 THAT HITLER BECAME CHANCELLOR OF GERMANY, JANUARY 1933?

22 A Yeah.

23 Q YOU WERE ABOUT 18, OR ALMOST 18?

24 A Yeah. It was a sad day.

25 Q DO YOU RECALL THAT DAY?

26 A Oh, yeah, I recall everything, but nothing we can do.

1 What can we do?

2 Q DO YOU RECALL YOU TALKED ABOUT IT WITH YOUR PARENTS,
3 YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER, OR YOUR FRIENDS?

4 A Sure, six to eight weeks, that's all, he won't last.

5 Q AND DO YOU RECALL ALL YOUR JEWISH FRIENDS BELIEVED
6 THAT?

7 A All the elder people, most of them, I would say about
8 80 percent of the Jews believed he wouldn't last because at
9 that time in Germany you had about 14 different parties,
10 you know, every party went down under after so many months.

11 So they figured wishful thinking, but it
12 didn't happen, unfortunately it didn't. And he made true
13 what he said in Mein Kampf. He took Czechoslovakia, went
14 into Holland, he went into Denmark, into Norway and
15 Austria. As a matter of fact, Austria they were happy when
16 he marched in. They were bigger Jew haters than the
17 Germans. People don't know that, but it's a fact. They
18 committed more atrocities than the German non-Jews to the
19 Jews.

20 Q WHEN HITLER BECAME CHANCELLOR YOU WERE ABOUT 18 YEARS
21 OLD?

22 A M-hm. (Affirmative)

23 Q DO YOU -- WERE YOU OUT OF SCHOOL BY THEN?

24 A Yeah. I left, got a job because I wanted to go to
25 Palestine, I could smell trouble, you know, and I started
26 -- a Jewish fellow, Russian Jew he was the biggest expert

1 in threshing machines and steam engines, and I went with
2 him as an apprentice, you know, and we went all over
3 Germany repairing stuff, you know, things like that.

4 And I had a very good foundation, and when I
5 came to England, when I left Germany in 1939, January '39 I
6 came to England, the joint committee from England and
7 America they let us work. I was a gardener, and we worked
8 at the estate of the cousin of the king and 40 refugees all
9 geared for Palestine.

10 And we were trained, you know, gardening and
11 things like that. Then my parents came out of Germany and
12 went to America. The committee says, look, Harry, we have
13 a feeling you rather go with your parents to America. I
14 said, "Yeah, sure I would." How about giving your
15 certificate to somebody else more needy than you because
16 obviously with my reference I was pretty much in line,
17 first in line to go. I said, yeah, okay.

18 So they shipped me up to Manchester, and I
19 got off the train, went to the committee, they sent me
20 somewhere, I got a job making raincoats for the army
21 working with naphtha, non essential, they make raincoats
22 for the army. The smell got right in your -- to your
23 stomach. Everything smelled of naphtha because naphtha was
24 smeared, it would stick the rubber together, it was a
25 miserable job. And that's where I met my wife. That's
26 when all my trouble really started. (Laughter.)

1 Q LET'S GO BACK TO THE GERMANY A LITTLE BIT.

2 A Yeah.

3 Q NOW YOU'RE A YOUNG MAN ABOUT IN YOUR EARLY 20'S,
4 HITLER IS IN POWER IN GERMANY AND YOU'RE WORKING AS, I
5 GATHER, A KIND OF MECHANIC FOR --

6 A Yeah.

7 Q WHAT WAS IT LIKE FOR A YOUNG MAN IN GERMANY IN THOSE
8 DAYS BECAUSE HITLER BEGAN TO PASS LAWS?

9 A Yeah, sure.

10 Q DO YOU RECALL ANY?

11 A Oh, yeah. See we were -- we had Jewish organizations,
12 Zionist organizations, and we had sports where we played
13 soccer and pingpong, this was Jewish, so when we had what
14 you called a cafe where you went Saturday nights. It was
15 Jewish people, we were always Jewish oriented, so we didn't
16 mix too much with the other people because, first of all,
17 we couldn't. Then the Nuremberg laws you couldn't look at
18 a non-Jewish woman cross-eyed, they'd put you in jail.

19 Q EXPLAIN A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THOSE IF YOU WANT TO.

20 A Yeah, but it never happened to my brother or me
21 because we were always in Jewish circles, so it didn't
22 apply to us, but lots of people. You couldn't have a maid
23 under 40 in your house when the Nuremberg laws went in
24 effect.

25 Q A NON-JEWISH MAID?

26 A Yeah, non-Jewish maid.

1 Q THE NUREMBERG LAWS FORBAD --

2 A Mixing oh, yeah.

3 Q -- IN A MARRIAGE?

4 A Oh, yeah, or sexual relationships, oh, yeah, you're in
5 trouble, you're in big trouble, they put you in the
6 concentration camp.

7 Q DID YOU HAVE ANY ACQUAINTANCES OR FRIENDS WHO RAN
8 AFOUL OF THE NUREMBERG LAWS?

9 A No.

10 Q YOU WERE A YOUNG MAN?

11 A Yeah. No, I couldn't recall, my wife she knows
12 somebody who ran afoul I think in her neighborhood.

13 Q DID ANY OF THESE LAWS AFFECT THE WAY YOU MADE YOUR
14 LIVING OR THE WAY YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER MADE THEIR LIVING?

15 A No. My father was a salesman, he done well because he
16 was a good salesman.

17 Q HE COULDN'T HAVE BEEN A DOCTOR, COULD HE?

18 A Well, not -- well, that's --

19 Q DO YOU RECALL THAT THE LAWS FORBAD CERTAIN
20 professions?

21 A Yeah, yeah. A doctor couldn't have non-Jewish
22 patients I think. It's a long time ago, you know. Hard to
23 remember.

24 Q OVERALL THEN AS HITLER WAS IN POWER FOR PERHAPS FIVE
25 OR SIX YEARS IN THE MID TO LATE 30'S HOW WAS LIFE? WAS IT
26 GETTING ANY TOUGHER FOR YOU?

1 A Oh, yeah. Sure.

2 Q CAN YOU REMEMBER ANY WAYS IN WHICH LIFE BEGAN TO GET
3 BAD FOR JEWS IN GERMANY?

4 A Well, in the later years they started to close down
5 the business, they had to sell it to the Aryan race, which
6 was a so-called super race. Oh, yeah, that happened. And
7 Jews were -- how should I call it? -- they couldn't even
8 make a living anymore. They really went after them
9 economically, you know, and it was a terrible time. The
10 Jews want to get out, then the Kristallnacht started, that
11 was the coup de grace.

12 Q THAT CONVINCED A LOT OF PEOPLE?

13 A Yeah, it was too late. Way too late.

14 Q WERE JEWS BEING ALLOWED THE LEAVE GERMANY THEN?

15 A Yeah, after, Kristallnacht when you had a permit to
16 leave they let you go. There was no objection. You could
17 take your clothes. I had one dollar on me when I left,
18 that's all.

19 Q THERE WAS A LIMIT TO WHAT YOU COULD TAKE WASN'T THERE?

20 A No, you couldn't take any money anymore.

21 Q I SEE.

22 A In the early years they let you go out and take some
23 of your money, say in the early '30's, but later on it was
24 tough.

25 Q DID YOUR FAMILY HAVE ANY FRIENDS --

26 (Pause in tape.)

1 BY MR. AYRES:

2 Q MR. HANKIN, YOU WERE AT A POINT IN THE LATE 30'S WHEN
3 YOU WERE DISCUSSING HOW LIFE WAS GETTING MORE AND MORE
4 DIFFICULT FOR THE JEWS IN GERMANY. IN YOUR OWN FAMILY WAS
5 IT GETTING MORE DIFFICULT FOR YOU AS A YOUNG MAN AND YOUR
6 FATHER AND MOTHER?

7 A Yeah. My father and my brother, I couldn't support
8 the family because I couldn't make any money, but they
9 could still go out and sell, you know, until my brother got
10 this affidavit to go to America. And he left on the very
11 day I was -- my father were sent to the concentration camp.

12 And they wanted to stop him at the border,
13 but he was smart enough. He sat in the train on the
14 border. They put Dutch train on instead of the German, and
15 he was sitting in the toilet, so they took him with the
16 Dutch train over the border. So he as lucky, otherwise
17 they would have put him in the concentration camp too.

18 He had a permit to leave and had everything
19 ready for America, and then he -- after a year or so he got
20 an affidavit with some relatives and friends in America to
21 get my parents over. And I was in England.

22 Then I got married in England, and I had to
23 wait a few years until he got economically stronger, you
24 know, my father had a job in America and worked, he was an
25 old man, he worked, and finally they sent us an affidavit.

26 We had two little children, four and five

1 years old, and we came to America. That was the best thing
2 I ever done.

3 Q STILL BEFORE YOU LEFT GERMANY, STILL IN THAT PERIOD OF
4 TIME, AND YOU HAD, BY VIRTUE OF BEING IN A ZIONIST
5 ORGANIZATION, YOU HAD A -- SOME SORT OF PERMISSION OR
6 PERMIT FROM GERMANY TO GO, TO LEAVE AND GO TO PALESTINE, AM
7 I CORRECT?

8 A Not really. If you had a certificate from Palestine
9 to come they let you go. That's the other way around. If
10 you had a permit from some other country to leave they let
11 you go.

12 Q YOU HAD A PERMIT FROM PALESTINE?

13 A No, I had a permit to go to England, but anywhere if
14 you had a permit to go a America, affidavit or to, who
15 knows, Spain, Italy, they let you go, they wanted to get
16 rid of you. But I couldn't go nowhere. If the Zionist
17 organization wouldn't have secured a permit for me to go to
18 England I would have been stuck in Germany forever.

19 Q THEN WHEN KRISTALLNACHT HAPPENED AND THEY CAME TO YOUR
20 HOME --

21 A Came next morning.

22 Q THE LOCAL POLICE?

23 A Yes, local police.

24 Q THAT'S THE DAY YOUR BROTHER LEFT?

25 A Yeah. They took us in the local prison and marched
26 into the train. The train took us to Dachau, then the SS

1 took over.

2 Q ON THE TRAIN DESCRIBE HOW THAT WAS. WAS IT IN A
3 PASSENGER CAR?

4 A Yeah, it was a passenger train, that was a passenger
5 train.

6 Q AND IT WAS A JOURNEY OF HOW LONG, SEVERAL HOURS?

7 A Oh, yeah, took quite awhile. And then in Dachau we --
8 laid us on the straw, you know, overnight. And then the
9 next day when we got prisoners' uniform and shoes, you
10 know, had to give everything away, what you had on you.

11 Q ON THE TRAIN YOU WERE UNDER GUARD?

12 A Oh, yeah.

13 Q WERE THE TRAINS CROWDED OR --

14 A No. Passenger, everybody had a seat on the train,
15 that I remember.

16 Q BUT WAS THERE ANY BRUTALITY THAT YOU CAN REMEMBER?

17 A Not on the train. See, when you came into Dachau, we
18 marched, all we done is march from 6:00 o'clock in the
19 morning, run, march, you know.

20 And my father was a little guy, shorter than
21 me, and I always kept him in the middle. I said, "Don't be
22 nosy." He wanted to see what's going. I told him always
23 in the middle because the big guys they hit them.

24 I saw, when the snow was there, I saw naked
25 people, a group of naked people, and they put cold water
26 hose on them, you know. From a distance I saw that.

1 Q BECAUSE THIS WAS IN -- GETTING TO BE IN NOVEMBER?

2 A In November.

3 Q DECEMBER?

4 A December, yeah.

5 Q IT WAS COLD THERE?

6 A Yeah. I got out between Christmas and New Years. I
7 got out, and my father left about eight, ten days before
8 me. And then I got home, and my friends were, hey, we got
9 a permit for you to go to England. So I prepared, took all
10 my clothes and everything.

11 Q HOW WAS IT THAT THEY RELEASED YOU?

12 A I don't know why they released me, have no idea why
13 they did it, why they released my father ten days before
14 me. There was no rhyme or reason for it. They wanted to
15 finally get rid of us, I don't know why.

16 Maybe somebody said we have a permit for him
17 to go to England, you know. You can't tell, you never know
18 what those Nazis think.

19 Q DID YOUR FATHER HAVE A BUSINESS WHEN KRISTALLNACHT
20 OCCURRED, OR WAS HE SELLING AS A SALESMAN?

21 A A salesman.

22 Q SO HE HAD NO BUSINESS, STORE?

23 A No. They couldn't. There was no physical destruction
24 really because --

25 Q DID YOU SEE DESTRUCTION THOUGH IN DOWNTOWN IN YOUR
26 CITY?

1 A No, I didn't. I didn't even go to the synagogue. I
2 didn't want to see. We knew everything was up in flames,
3 but I was -- I came out between Christmas and New Years,
4 and on the 26th of January of left, so I had to prepare,
5 get my clothes, you know, everything, had all my clothes
6 ready and no money, one dollar I had on me, that's all.

7 Q DID YOU LEAVE MONEY BEHIND?

8 A No, me I didn't have any money. I couldn't earn any
9 money.

10 Q THE ONE DOLLAR YOU TOOK WAS THE ONLY DOLLAR YOU HAD?

11 A My brother left with a lot of money, he was a
12 cracker-jack salesman, but the non-Jew was so decent when
13 my father went to concentration camp my mother took the
14 train to Frankfurt about 90 kilometers away. The man paid
15 her my brother's commission, he was a very decent man.

16 Q AND HE WAS A GERMAN?

17 A Yes.

18 Q NON-JEW?

19 A Yeah, very decent man. My brother worked for him.

20 Q DO YOU REMEMBER HIS NAME?

21 A No.

22 Q DO YOU REMEMBER THE NAME OF THE COMPANY OR THE FIRM?

23 A Not the slightest idea. So many years, you know.
24 Over 53 years, next month, 53 years.

25 I'm going talk about it in the temple where
26 I belong. I talk. Every year on Kristallnacht I talk,

1 tell the young people what it was going on, what happened,
2 so forth and so forth. They can't believe these things.

3 Another thing, not only Jews, I mean
4 American Jews or American non-Jews, Americans are very
5 gullible, you believe everything. But they couldn't
6 believe that a thing like this would happen. You tell
7 people this happened, they can't believe it. They say -- I
8 have friends that have numbers tattooed in here
9 (indicating), you know. I was one of the lucky ones, you
10 know, I mean, quote and unquote.

11 Q YOUR PARENTS LEFT?

12 A In October 1939.

13 Q THEY LEFT BEFORE YOU DID?

14 A Yeah. No, I left in January '39. My parents left
15 October 1939, the last shipment out of Genoa out of Italy.

16 Q TO ENGLAND?

17 A To America. My parents went to America, I went to
18 England.

19 Q YOU THEN ASSUME THAT YOUR PARENTS BECAME CONVINCED AT
20 THAT POINT THAT THINGS WERE NO GOOD IN GERMANY?

21 A There was no more convincing. There was -- the
22 handwriting was on the wall 40 years ahead of time, but
23 people didn't want to believe it.

24 Q DO YOU THINK MOST JEWS IN GERMANY AT THAT POINT WERE
25 CONVINCED THAT HITLER WAS BAD?

26 A Yeah, now they were desperate, you know.

1 Q WERE THEY STILL ABLE TO GET OUT, SOME OF THEM?

2 A Some could, but the most they couldn't, no. See no
3 country opened the door. The only country who let you in
4 under any pretense was England. Was a funny thing this big
5 America wouldn't let anybody in, but England -- my friend
6 had a visa going to Siam, he didn't want to go to Siam. In
7 England they didn't say nothing, he became a British
8 subject and lived happily ever after.

9 I could have been a British subject. My
10 kids were born in England, so -- but my parents and my
11 wife's sister were in America. So in 1947 we left England
12 for America.

13 MR. AYRES: So now is a good time if you have
14 question about the German period to ask them.

15 BY UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE #1:

16 Q I WOULD LIKE TO GO ALL THE WAY BACK TO YOUR GRADE
17 SCHOOL. YOU TOLD ME THAT YOU WERE IN SCHOOL WITH OTHER
18 CHILDREN WERE NON-JEWISH, BUT THE JEWISH PEOPLE, JEWISH
19 CHILDREN WERE TREATED DIFFERENTLY. IN WHAT WAY IT DID
20 MANIFEST --

21 A Well, they weren't treated differently, I would say,
22 but the -- what do you call -- the other boys in school,
23 you know, they -- some of them, not all of them, treated
24 you differently.

25 But I would say in the early years it wasn't
26 so rampant, you know. Only when Hitler came up, you know,

1 they joined the Hitler youth movement, then they were more
2 aggressive, naturally.

3 Q AND THEN LATER ON YOU SAID THAT WHEN YOU WERE -- WHEN
4 YOU WERE TRYING TO MAYBE TELL OR EXPLAIN TO, AS YOU SAID,
5 TO ELDERS OR OLDER PEOPLE OR TO YOUR PARENTS THAT THE
6 DANGER WAS IMMINENT, THAT YOU AS A ZIONIST FELT THE DANGER
7 WAS IMMINENT, ON WHAT DID YOU BASE THOSE FEELINGS YOU SAID
8 THAT YOU FELT?

9 A I just had that feeling, I can't tell you why.
10 Premonition, you know. I just felt it wasn't our place in
11 Germany, we weren't recognized as German, we were
12 different, quote and unquote, you know. But we spoke
13 German like the others, we learned Latin like the others,
14 we learned English and French, whatever. We had history.

15 Talk about German history, it was a funny
16 thing about history. History is the biggest liars in the
17 world, all history. You look at the German history, you
18 read -- I remember very vividly in the first world war
19 there was a big naval battle on Scapaflo. You might have
20 heard about it. In Germany it was the biggest victory
21 ever. I come to England, I read history in England, it was
22 a stand off, there was no victory for nobody. So whoever
23 writes history lies, quote and unquote. Because they look
24 with a different eye. The German looks at this, the
25 English and American look this way.

26 So history, whoever writes it best, whoever

1 writes it best wins.

2 Q SO WAS IT BASICALLY THAT YOUR PAST GENERATION FELT
3 THEY DIDN'T WANT TO LEAVE GERMANY WHILE YOU YOUNGER PEOPLE
4 FELT THAT THERE WAS A DANGER? WAS IT THAT ALL YOUNGER
5 JEWISH PEOPLE, OR JUST PEOPLE WHO WERE ZIONISTS AS YOU
6 WERE?

7 A No, the Zionists mostly, you know, the German Jews
8 didn't look kindly at the Zionists, they thought we were
9 nuts, quote and unquote, they called us. What a rude
10 awakening they had.

11 Q GOING BACK TO YOUR SIX WEEKS IN DACHAU, YOU WENT VERY
12 QUICKLY OVER THAT PERIOD, AND YOU NEVER TOLD US WHAT
13 EXACTLY HAPPENED WHEN YOU ARRIVED TO DACHAU, AND WHAT WAS
14 YOUR DAY LIKE IN DACHAU?

15 A Well, you were in concentration camp Dachau they
16 started on train, gave you prisoners' garb, and shoes and
17 you started marching. That is all we done morning, noon,
18 and night, march from 6:00 o'clock in the morning, break at
19 12:00, got some sloppy soup or whatever they gave you, and
20 a piece of bread, and then you marched again until 6:00,
21 then you had coffee and some other junk food.

22 BY MR. AYRES:

23 Q WERE JEWS KEPT TOGETHER IN DACHAU?

24 A Oh, yeah.

25 Q NOT MIXED UP WITH COMMUNISTS?

26 A No, all the Jews were together. They bunks were

1 prepared already. they knew what they were doing. They
2 couldn't say it happened spontaneously like they make to
3 believe it happened because the Jews were angry at the
4 Germans.

5 They done it on purpose, they had to
6 prepare. The guy said to me, to my father, "This was
7 prepared for weeks ahead of time." What triggered it was
8 when Greenspan killed Von Rath, that what triggered it, but
9 it was prepared.

10 Q WHAT DID YOUR PRISON UNIFORM LOOK LIKE?

11 A Garb, you know, the striped, striped.

12 Q STRIPES?

13 A And nothing else, just pants and the jacket. And it
14 was cold, I'm telling you, it was cold. We were close to
15 the Alps, and I had frostbite here and it still hasn't
16 healed in 53 years, still have it.

17 BY UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE #1:

18 Q IF YOU SAY YOU WERE MARCHING ALL DAY LONG, WERE YOU
19 MARCHING IN CIRCLES?

20 A Who knows, all over the concentration camp.

21 Q JUST MARCHING BACK AND FORTH?

22 A Yes, nothing else.

23 Q ALL THE INMATES OF THE CONCENTRATION CAMP?

24 A Only the Jews.

25 Q ONLY THE JEWS?

26 A Only the Jews. The others they don't labor. The

1 inmates were already overseers, you know, they had a high
2 position, very high position already.

3 BY UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE #2:

4 Q WERE YOU AND YOUR FATHER SEPARATED?

5 A No, we were together. We slept together, we slept
6 together and my uncle too, my mother's brother. My uncle
7 he fought in the first World War, and he was a veteran. He
8 got wounded in the first World War and he thought he was
9 safe. They knocked his teeth out and sent him to Dachau
10 just the same doesn't make no difference.

11 BY UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE #1:

12 Q WHO WERE THE OTHER INMATES, THEIR RELIGION OR
13 NATIONALITY? WHO WERE THEY?

14 A The Jewish or non-Jewish?

15 Q THE NON-JEWISH.

16 A Non-Jewish I think mostly I would say communists,
17 socialists, or homosexuals, you know. Or that's -- I would
18 say.

19 Q WOULD YOU KNOW WHAT THE RATIO WAS AMONG THE JEWISH AND
20 NON-JEWISH INMATES?

21 A (Witness shakes head.)

22 Q AT THAT POINT ABOUT HOW MANY INMATES WERE IN DACHAU,
23 WOULD YOU KNOW?

24 A Oh, thousands.

25 Q THOUSANDS?

26 A That is hard to say. First of all, it's a long time

1 ago, you know, and you don't want to remember really. But
2 it has to be brought out, has to be put on television. The
3 people have to know what's going on, and the children and
4 children's children should know what really happened, you
5 know.

6 It's a funny thing when my children grew up
7 we never talked about it, but my grandchildren know more
8 about it than my children, and they talk about the
9 Holocaust in Sunday school, and the grandchildren
10 interviewed my wife, you know, what she experienced in
11 Germany. My sons, they didn't want to know, we didn't want
12 to talk about it. You know.

13 Q WERE YOU AT THAT POINT PHYSICALLY MISTREATED, APART OF
14 THE PART OF YOU HAD TO MARCH ALL DAY LONG, DID YOU
15 ENCOUNTER ANY BEATINGS?

16 A Oh, yes, they beat. If you were six foot tall you got
17 a beating when you march. Little guys like me they didn't
18 pay no attention. I was always in the middle. I wouldn't
19 go on the outside. My father wanted to look, he was nosy.
20 I pulled him over and said, "Don't go, they beat you up."

21 Q WHAT WERE OTHER REASONS PEOPLE WERE BEATEN?

22 A No reason whatsoever. If they felt like it they beat
23 you up, the Nazi's.

24 BY UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE #2:

25 Q WHEN YOU WERE RELEASED WHAT WAS THAT LIKE? DID
26 SOMEBODY COME TO THE BUNK AND SAY, OKAY?

1 A Go to the office, and I covered this up, I stood like
2 this so they couldn't see the wound (indicating), otherwise
3 they wouldn't have released me. I got out. Lucky.

4 Q DID THEY PUT YOU ON A PASSENGER TRAIN?

5 A Yeah. Then we went -- we went from Dachau to Munich,
6 and in Munich there were some Jews at the station they knew
7 right away because they took all our hair off, we looked
8 like a billiard ball. And they gave us coffee and cake and
9 all that and gave us the ticket to go home.

10 BY MR. AYRES:

11 Q THOSE JEWS AT THE STATION WERE THEY HASIDIC, DO YOU
12 KNOW?

13 A Munich.

14 Q NO, THE JEWS AT THE STATION.

15 A Yeah.

16 Q WERE THEY HASIDIC JEWS?

17 A They were from Munich, yeah, yeah, there were some
18 left. They knew what was happening, you know. But it's a
19 funny thing, the non-Jews in Germany they never knew there
20 were concentration camps, they're lying through their
21 teeth, biggest liars in history, the Germans.

22 Q YOU SPOKE OF THAT YOUR UNCLE HAD HIS TEETH KNOCKED
23 OUT?

24 A Yeah.

25 Q DESCRIBE HOW THAT HAPPENED?

26 A They saw him on the street, they knew, you know, he

1 was walking, the Nazi's got him and just knocked the hell
2 out of him.

3 Q THIS WAS AT KRISTALLNACHT?

4 A He want to see my mother, see, he wanted to walk.
5 They got him and knocked his teeth out and sent him to
6 Dachau.

7 Q YOU SAID "THEY GOT HIM," DO YOU KNOW WHO THAT WAS?

8 A The SS.

9 Q THE SS?

10 A SS.

11 Q NOT THE SA?

12 A No, the SS, was at that time. What difference does it
13 make between the SA and SS, they're all the same. They
14 only had different uniform.

15 BY UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE #2:

16 Q WHILE YOU AND YOUR FATHER WERE IN DACHAU WAS THERE ANY
17 PROBLEMS IN YOUR HOME? DID YOUR MOTHER OR SISTER TALK
18 ABOUT THEM BEING BOTHERED?

19 A No, no, there was no problem. They didn't interfere
20 with the women, that they didn't do.

21 But there was no money. You couldn't -- my
22 mother had to go to Frankfurt about 90 kilometers to get
23 money from the company my brother worked for. Was hard to
24 live, money was scarce.

25 And, see, what happened when my father left
26 he could take all his furniture that belonged with him but

1 no money. He had to leave all the money in Germany,
2 whatever he had. He couldn't take any money out.

3 BY MR. AYRES:

4 Q HE COULD LEAVE IT FOR YOU, COULD HE NOT, THE MONEY?

5 A No, they wouldn't let you take any money out
6 whatsoever. I think he got \$10, if I'm not mistaken, for
7 the whole household, you know. But I think my brother got
8 \$10, I got one dollar to get out.

9 Q WHEN YOU WERE RELEASED AND WERE ON THE PLATFORM AT
10 MUNICH DO YOU RECALL WERE THOSE JEWS WHO MET YOU THERE, DID
11 THEY MEET EVERYBODY WHO WAS RELEASED?

12 A Oh, yeah they met everybody. They made sure to give
13 them comfort and coffee.

14 Q DID THEY BELONG TO AN ORGANIZATION OF SOME SORT?

15 A Could be. I don't know.

16 Q A ZIONIST ORGANIZATION?

17 A No. Any organization, there was a lot of the Jews,
18 non-Zionists organizations who done good, you know, but
19 when you come out of concentration camp the only thing
20 you're glad you're sitting in the train to go home,
21 whatever, you know.

22 Q WHO PAID FOR YOUR FARE TO RETURN HOME?

23 A I think the committee.

24 Q THE COMMITTEE?

25 A Yeah, I think so. I can't recall exactly.

26 Q THE GERMANS DIDN'T PAY?

1 A No, I don't think so. As a matter of fact, you know,
2 the German Jews got fined for burning synagogue and
3 smashing a glass the insurance company, Goering, sued for
4 couple of billion marks the Germans for damaging the glass
5 the Nazi's destroyed.

6 BY UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE #2:

7 Q WHAT WAS THE PREVALENT LANGUAGE SPOKEN IN YOUR HOME?

8 A German, strictly German. My father wouldn't talk
9 anything else, wouldn't talk Yiddish, wouldn't talk
10 Russian. He spoke Russian fluently, now we could use it.
11 You know.

12 Q WAS THAT POLITICAL?

13 A No, no. My father wanted to be like the others. He
14 came in 1902 already. He was a young man, he was 20 years
15 old when he came to Germany. You know, he went to -- my
16 father was a window dresser in Russia, and the boss, Jewish
17 fellow, sent him to Munich to the trade school to get new
18 ideas as a window dresser. So he had to learn German so he
19 spoke already German. He spoke German in Russia already.

20 So when he came to Germany it wasn't too
21 difficult for him to talk German because he learned when he
22 was studying in the trade school.

23 And then later his older sister was in
24 Germany and they were in the tobacco business making
25 cigarettes, so he got the idea through them, so he married
26 my mother, but my mother lived about I would say hundred

1 miles, so Ludwigshafen was a big industry. He opened up a
2 factory and a store, and in the store window he had a man
3 sitting there making cigarettes with a red fez, you know,
4 like the Arabs wear, what do you call the --

5 MR. AYERS: Fez?

6 MR. HANKIN: The red fez, however you pronounce
7 it.

8 The police came and he had to stop because
9 the electric train went through that street and the people
10 come from the factory blocked by the hundreds watching this
11 man. So you know in Germany you opened the store from --
12 if you don't close the store at 5:00, 6:00 o'clock you get
13 fined. You know, they're not like in America where you can
14 leave your store open all night. No. There were rules and
15 regulations.

16 You move from one house to the other and you
17 don't report it you go to prison. If you don't report from
18 one street to the other street or from one town to the
19 other town you have to report that, even pre-Hitler. Not
20 like here in America, this is different.

21 BY MR. AYRES:

22 Q YOUR FATHER WAS A YOUNG MAN IN HIS 20'S. WHEN HE CAME
23 TO GERMANY HE WOULD HAVE BEEN PERHAPS NEARING 40 AT THE
24 TIME OF WORLD WAR I. WAS HE --

25 A He was 23 -- 14, 12 -- he was about, yeah, early 30's.

26 Q WAS THERE A POSSIBILITY THAT HE WOULD HAVE GONE INTO

1 THE ARMY FOR GERMANY?

2 A No. See he would have been interned being a Russian,
3 but he had so many non-Jewish friends who say -- vouch for
4 him, and he delivered cigarettes to the army, so they left
5 him alone. He would have been interned. By rights he
6 should have been interned because he was Russian.

7 Q HE NEVER BECAME A GERMAN CITIZEN?

8 A No, and he, when the Bolsheviks came in he denounced
9 his citizenship. We were state-less, no nationality. But
10 to American law I'm German, so --

11 BY UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE #1:

12 Q WHEN YOU CAME TO DACHAU WITH YOUR FATHER WHAT DID YOU
13 THINK WAS GOING TO HAPPEN? WHAT DID YOU TALK ABOUT WITH
14 THE OTHER INMATES? WHAT DID YOU EXPECT TO HAPPEN?

15 A I tell you, it was very, very difficult thing. You
16 know, you didn't know. You were in no-man's land. You
17 couldn't figure out what's going to happen to us. You had
18 no idea what, anything. They could put us on (can't
19 understand), let us go next day, you never know. No idea.

20 It was -- we just lived in no-man's land.
21 It was a terrible experience, you know. You didn't know
22 what to do, you couldn't move, you know. You were lucky to
23 be alive, that they didn't kill you there.

24 Actually later during the war when the real
25 concentration -- that was different, they methodically
26 started to kill the Jews by that time it was quote, and

1 unquote, a little easier, but --

2 BY MR. AYRES:

3 Q AT ANY TIME WHILE YOU WERE IN DACHAU DID THEY EVER SAY
4 TO YOU, "YOU ARE BEING CHARGED WITH THIS KIND OF CRIME"?
5 DID THEY EVER TELL YOU THAT THERE WERE ANY CHARGES AGAINST
6 YOU?

7 A No, no. Not that I recollect, could be, you know, a
8 long time ago.

9 Q BUT YOU NEVER HAD A TRIAL OF ANY KIND?

10 A No.

11 Q YOU WERE RELEASED?

12 A Never had any, no.

13 Q SO IT WAS SIX WEEKS FOR NO REASON THAT YOU CAN THINK
14 OF?

15 A Yeah. And people ask me, "Where were you?" I said I
16 was skiing in the Alps, you know, so --

17 BY UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE #2:

18 Q WHAT DID THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT LOOK LIKE IN DACHAU?
19 WHAT WAS THERE?

20 A Barracks, barracks, bunks, nothing. Barbed wire,
21 watch towers, machine guns, dogs, SS, you know. The whole
22 schmere, what you saw, you know the pictures, only they
23 didn't kill us on sight, they marched us all day. They did
24 really know what to do, I don't think they did.

25 BY MR. AYRES:

26 Q TO YOUR KNOWLEDGE WAS ANYONE TAKEN FROM DACHAU AND

1 PERHAPS IF THEY WERE FROM POLAND OR SOME OTHER PLACE PUT ON
2 A TRAIN AND SENT? DID YOU HEAR OF ANYTHING LIKE THAT?

3 A Not that I know, but there were lots of suicides, lots
4 of people committed suicide.

5 Q BY MOSTLY THE JEWISH PRISONERS?

6 A No the Kristallnacht -- at Dachau some guy drown
7 himself, some hung himself.

8 Q IN DACHAU?

9 A In Dachau, yeah.

10 Q WERE THEY MOSTLY ELDERLY PEOPLE?

11 A Yeah. I was the youngest, I was the youngest.

12 Q SO WHO WOULD, YOU AND YOUR FATHER --

13 (Pause in tape.)

14 BY MR. AYRES:

15 Q MR. HANKIN, BEFORE WE GO FURTHER, WOULD YOU PLEASE SAY
16 THE FULL NAMES OF YOUR PARENTS, YOUR UNCLE, YOUR BROTHER,
17 AND SISTER?

18 A My father's name was Hirsh Hankin, my mother's name
19 was Charlotte Hankin May Rothschild, from the poor
20 Rothschilds, not the rich Rothschilds. My brother's name
21 was Alfred, and my sister's name Wera. My brother, my
22 sister live in America, both married.

23 BY UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE #1:

24 Q I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW HOW MANY TIMES A DAY DID YOU EAT
25 IN DACHAU AND WHAT DID YOU EAT?

26 A As far as recollect I think we had coffee in the

1 morning with a piece of bread. In the afternoon we had
2 something, I don't know what, and at night at 6:00 o'clock
3 we had something else, very little.

4 Q WHAT WAS IT, DO YOU REMEMBER?

5 A (Witness shakes head.) Can't remember. I know coffee
6 and bread, that's all I remember, and soup.

7 Q DO YOU REMEMBER FEELING HUNGRY?

8 A I can't remember. Have no idea. Such a long time
9 ago, you know.

10 BY MR. AYRES:

11 Q DURING YOUR SIX WEEKS DID YOU LOSE WEIGHT?

12 A Yeah I looked very skinny, you know. I -- even in
13 England through the war I looked skinny. The flesh parts
14 of America got me big and fat.

15 BY UNIDENTIFIED MALE:

16 Q LET'S SEE, YOU SAID WHEN YOU WERE IN -- GOT INTO
17 DACHAU YOU REALIZED THAT THE BUNKS HAD BEEN PREPARED IN
18 ADVANCE. WHAT WAS IT THAT MADE YOU UNDERSTAND THAT THE
19 BUNKS HAD BEEN PREPARED IN ADVANCE AND MADE YOU UNDERSTAND
20 THAT IT HAD BEEN PREPARED FOR A ROUND UP OF JEWISH
21 PRISONERS? WHAT IS IT THAT MADE YOU UNDERSTAND THAT?

22 A First of all, the inmates explained it to us, you
23 know. They say something big is going to happen we knew,
24 but we couldn't tell what is going to happen, why we put
25 the bunks up. Now we know why we did because you coming
26 in. Also many Jews, you know.

1 And some of these guys came from the
2 hometown where we lived, they knew my father was very well
3 known in town, so that's why. So this burning of the
4 synagogue was really systematically, methodically thought
5 out by the Germans, by the SS, or Hitler, and nothing to do
6 with the anger of the German folk. Bunch of malarkey, you
7 know, liars. They have been lying all through history.

8 Q DID THE PRISONERS TELL YOU HOW MANY WEEKS OR MONTHS
9 BEFORE THIS POINT THEY HAD PREPARED THE BARRACKS?

10 A Oh, yes. They said we prepared for months ahead of
11 time, we done that a long time ago we prepared, we just
12 finished, they just finished by the time we came.

13 Q AND THE PRISONERS WHO WERE FROM YOUR HOMETOWN AND KNEW
14 YOUR FATHER, WHAT WERE THEY IN PRISON FOR ALREADY?

15 A Communist, they were.

16 Q FOR POLITICAL ACTIVISM?

17 A Yeah, political, all political. See, my father was
18 the secretary of the soccer club, and so he was well known,
19 you know, soccer in Germany was it, and they knew him. And
20 then they met me, said your name is Hankin, is that
21 so-and-so, and so I said, "Yeah, my father is right there."
22 Oh, yeah, they knew.

23 Q YOU MENTIONED THAT THERE WERE SOME SUICIDES BY PEOPLE
24 WHO WERE TAKEN TO DACHAU?

25 A Yeah.

26 Q AND YOU REFERRED TO A MAN DROWNING?

1 A Yeah.

2 Q CAN YOU EXPLAIN TO ME HOW SOMEONE DROWNED IN DACHAU?
3 WAS THIS SOMETHING YOU WITNESSED OR HEARD ABOUT?

4 A No, I heard more or less, I couldn't see. I didn't
5 see it.

6 Q BUT IT WAS CERTAINLY A SUICIDE?

7 A Yeah, true suicide. I recollect the people mentioned
8 one hung himself, and how he done it I don't know.

9 Q BUT YOU DIDN'T WITNESS EITHER ONE?

10 A No, no, no.

11 Q LET ME ASK YOU ALSO AT THE VERY BEGINNING OF THE
12 INTERVIEW BEFORE WE STARTED YOU SAID YOU WEREN'T GOING TO
13 HOLD BACK IN THE INTERVIEW, AND I WONDERED WERE YOU -- DID
14 YOU HAVE ONE OR TWO OR THREE INCIDENTS IN MIND THAT YOU
15 WERE REFERRING TO THAT YOU COULD TELL US?

16 A No, not -- I'm looking more at history, what happened
17 to the Jews in Germany to the crusades and things like that
18 and the inquisition in Spain, that's what I was referring
19 to. Because all these years for anything bad happened they
20 blame the Jews, see. And that's a very sad situation.

21 When the crusaders went to liberate
22 Jerusalem they killed thousands of Jews, in Russia on the
23 (couldn't understand) they killed thousands of Jews, when
24 (couldn't understand) came to I think it was in Paris,
25 Schwartzbart, a young man caught on the street, shot him,
26 killed him, he got free. French let him go free. I was a

1 kid when I read about it in 1925. That was a big thing,
2 the guy went free after killing this guy. People don't
3 know these things.

4 The Russians now there's no difference
5 between the Russians when the Czar was on, they have now
6 they have Pomyat, whatever they call it and they blame
7 everything on the Jews now. Even the communism they blame
8 on the Jews.

9 BY MR. AYRES:

10 Q SO YOU WERE RELEASED FROM DACHAU AND PUT ON THE TRAIN
11 BY THE JEWS WHO WERE WAITING FOR YOU ON THE PLATFORM?

12 A Yeah.

13 Q AND YOU GO BACK TO YOUR HOME, AND DO YOU THEN PREPARE
14 VERY QUICKLY TO LEAVE GERMANY?

15 A Oh, yeah.

16 Q DESCRIBE WHAT YOU DO AND HOW THAT HAPPENED?

17 A I had to get all my clothes together, make sure I got
18 the right clothes, and went to the doctor for an
19 examination, made sure, you know, everything was right.
20 And on the 26th of January I left and came to England, then
21 the committee met me at the train in England.

22 Q HOW DID YOU LEAVE AND -- GO THROUGH THAT.

23 A We left -- I left on train to Holland, and from
24 Holland I took little boat across the channel, the worse
25 storm in the channel in years. Oh, I never forget that.
26 That's the only time in my life I really prayed dear Lord

1 let me die. Really. So bad. You couldn't believe it,
2 little ship, oh, it was terrible. My head was on the sink
3 the whole crossing. So bad, it was terrible.

4 Then in Harwich, we landed in Harwich, the
5 committee got you, put on a train to London, and then you
6 got you in London again, took you to Hostel, you know,
7 until you got --

8 Q THE NAME OF THE COMMITTEE?

9 A Jewish committee, the joint committee from Americans,
10 but mostly were Zionists young men, you know.

11 And then next day they took us to the train
12 and we went to Surrey in England where the estate of the
13 king was located, and we worked in the garden for the king.
14 Big estate, oh, my God, you never see anything like it. He
15 had about 20 gardeners, who knows.

16 Q THE NAME OF IT, DO YOU REMEMBER?

17 A Pardon?

18 Q DO YOU REMEMBER THE NAME?

19 A The Earl of Athol, Earl Athol, A-t-h-o-l, Earl, cousin
20 of the king. He rescued us. One time he came to the
21 committee, it was joint from British and American, he
22 supplied the money and everything, you know, we had no
23 money.

24 But my brother had a good friend in London
25 who was well established already, he sent me stamps and
26 money. I was never short of anything because he was my

1 brother's best friend.

2 And then after a year or so later I went up
3 to Manchester, as I mentioned, and worked in non-essential
4 making raincoats for the army where I met my wife, and we
5 married the next January, on the 26th of January we
6 married.

7 Q YOU HAD BEEN IN ENGLAND ABOUT -- NOT YET A YEAR WHEN
8 WAR BROKE OUT?

9 A Yeah.

10 Q DO YOU RECALL WHAT YOU WERE THINKING AND FEELING WHEN
11 GERMANY INVADED POLAND IN SEPTEMBER OF 1939?

12 A Yeah.

13 Q DO YOU REMEMBER?

14 A I said to the English people, it's the beginning of
15 the end, don't worry, we will win the war they said. I
16 couldn't figure it out, with nothing they had nothing they
17 weren't prepared. Do you know people don't know that.
18 They put, you know, the English Channel they put whole
19 trees out there, looked like guns, so the Germans thought
20 they were big guns. They were hollow trees out there.
21 They weren't prepared. They, as a matter of fact, they
22 called us German Jews war mongers because we told the
23 committee they're prepared for war.

24 Where I lived they are making airports
25 underground, they put the airplanes underground so you
26 can't see them. I saw it with my own eyes. You German

1 Jews are war mongers.

2 In the beginning, you know, January,
3 February and I couldn't talk English very well, you know,
4 unfortunately, and then when the war broke out we went on
5 trial. Tribunal. I was declared a friend of England
6 because my father was Russian.

7 So they -- the judge said if I could I would
8 intern you. I said -- you know me, I always have an
9 answer. I said, "Your Honor, you can't." I said to myself
10 you so-and-so, I could hardly speak English -- now explain
11 state-less to an Englishman, that's the eighth wonder of
12 the world, they don't understand what it means.

13 We had what we call Nansen passport, you
14 know, so explain in broken English to a judge in a hick
15 town what a Nansen passport is with broken English.

16 Q ON THE QUESTION OF YOUR HEARING YOU HAD WERE ALL
17 ALIENS SUBMITTED TO SUCH A HEARING?

18 A Oh, yeah. Same situation, my friends who worked
19 together, one -- some to Canada, some to South Africa, some
20 to Australia. They were shipped out, and some of them were
21 interned on the Isle of Man.

22 And then later on I heard some of -- now I
23 talk to the people here in America I meet. They were in
24 the -- what they call the pioneer corps, you know, they
25 built tractors and cranes and all that. They had a special
26 corps, Jewish people in England, they didn't give them the

1 English nationality.

2 Q WERE SOME OF THEM DECLARED UNFRIENDLY?

3 A Oh, yeah. My wife was non-friendly alien, oh, yeah.
4 She had to leave. She lived in Liverpool, she was working
5 in a household as a maid, and when the war broke out she
6 was German and -- wait a minute, she had no J, and they got
7 suspicious because all the German Jews had a J in their
8 passport, and she didn't. And she spoke English fluently,
9 and oh, boy, the judge he said she was a spy. You know.
10 Suspicious, because why no J.

11 She says well, I left in '38, there was no J
12 in the beginning of '38, and then they all shipped them to
13 Manchester because it was in the middle. And she get a job
14 where -- I worked making raincoats for the army, that's how
15 I met my wife.

16 Q SO ONCE YOU WERE DECLARED A FRIENDLY ALIEN --

17 A I could travel, but I had to have a permit.

18 Q AND YOU COULD WORK; IS THAT CORRECT?

19 A Oh, yeah, there was no restrictions.

20 Q SO THE ONLY RESTRICTION YOU HAD WAS THAT YOU HAD TO
21 GET A PERMIT IN ORDER TO TRAVEL?

22 A Yeah. And another thing is they didn't want to let
23 you work in very high classified stuff, you know. They
24 want to be careful because they didn't know whether I was
25 German, Jew or -- they didn't know. They were confused,
26 utterly confused. And that day my wife came to Manchester

1 the Germans invaded Belgium, sank Prince of Wales, Hood got
2 blown up.

3 And the English, my wife said, "How can you
4 win a war?" Don't worry, we will win the war. I couldn't
5 figure out how they going to win this war. I couldn't
6 figure it out, and still can't figure it out, but they done
7 it, thank God.

8 Q AND THAT FIRST YEAR WHEN THINGS LOOKED VERY BLEAK FOR
9 THE ALLIES, GERMANY WAS WINNING EVERYWHERE, DID YOU STILL
10 HAVE RELATIVES IN GERMANY OR EVEN RUSSIA?

11 A No, Russia we don't know. Russians relatives this is
12 a dark side, we don't know from nothing. Really, my mother
13 had a sister and my uncle were left, that's all I know.

14 Q WERE YOU IN TOUCH WITH THEM AT ALL?

15 A After the war I had sent some goods to my aunt, yeah,
16 I --

17 Q THEY SURVIVED THE WAR?

18 A Yeah. I think my aunt died of a natural death. My
19 uncle I have no idea what happened to him because I had a
20 friend who was in the American army and he came to the town
21 we lived later on, and we played soccer together. He
22 stayed with us overnight. He told me, "I saw your aunt."
23 His mother and my mother were distant cousins, so we had a
24 little relationship we kept all these years. He knew our
25 children when they were babies and he lived here in
26 Chicago, and we went together, you know, contact.

1 But it was very tough to live in England and
2 to have the fear over your head that people will come in
3 any day, you know, that would be curtains for us, you know.

4 But the English survived thanks to the RAF,
5 to these young men in the air force. People don't realize
6 it, these young men saved the world. They went up, we made
7 instruments for that aircraft, the Spitfire, it was a very
8 famous airplane, single engine airplane at that time, but
9 the most famous they went up sometimes and pressed the
10 button to get the ammunition and there was nothing in there
11 left so they rammed the German airplanes, like the Kamikaze
12 pilot.

13 Then later the English Air Ministry invented
14 a little instrument, a clock, you wound it up. When you
15 pressed the button the machine gun, the clock went down.
16 When the clock went to zero you turn around and refilled,
17 so it saved many lives and many airplanes. And it was
18 highly skilled work.

19 And my brother's friend was the manager of
20 the company, and his uncle was the owner and he called me,
21 I was in Manchester, and he was down south. He called me
22 one day and said, "We can use a man like you, why don't you
23 come." I got clear everything, no muss or fuss. I started
24 working there.

25 Q THIS WAS CLASSIFIED WORK?

26 A Oh, yeah, highly classified.

1 Q ABOUT WHEN, WHAT YEAR WOULD THAT BE?

2 A '42 I think.

3 Q EARLY, FAIRLY EARLY?

4 A Yeah, I started '42. Yeah.

5 Q DO YOU RECALL WHEN GERMANY ATTACKED AND OVERWHELMED
6 BELGIUM AND FRANCE AND NORWAY?

7 A Oh, yeah, very well.

8 Q AND WERE YOU LIVING BASICALLY OUT IN THE CITY, WERE
9 NOT COMPELLED TO LIVE IN ANY SPECIAL BARRACKS?

10 A No, no. The English treated us very well, you have to
11 give them credit. We got the same rations, we had two
12 little children, they gave us rations like the English. We
13 had so much tea, you know English tea, they leave their
14 wife for a cup of tea, you know. And they had tea, and my
15 next door neighbor his brother had a farm. We gave him
16 tea, he gave us chicken and eggs and butter. We didn't get
17 fat, we were on a steady diet.

18 Q YOU WERE A YOUNG MAN, WAS THERE EVER A POSSIBILITY
19 THAT YOU WOULD BE CONSCRIPTED INTO THE ARMY OR NAVY?

20 A No way, they couldn't do it. There was no way they
21 could do it. I was married and had children, the second I
22 worked a very, very highly classified work, you know. So
23 there was no way.

24 Q AND YOU WERE NOT A BRITISH CITIZEN?

25 A No. I could have become a British citizen if I wanted
26 to, but I left for America in 1947.

1 Q YOU WERE LIVING IN OR NEAR MANCHESTER?

2 A In Manchester.

3 Q AT THE TIME OF THE BLITZ?

4 A Yeah. Oh, yeah, we had --

5 Q DID THE GERMAN PLANES COME OVER?

6 A Oh, yeah. We used to go at night to bed in clothes,
7 have your clothes on and no shoes, in the bed without shoes
8 and without jackets in case the alarm goes. The English
9 weren't prepared. They made air raid shelter, no roof on
10 the air raid shelter, they weren't prepared.

11 Q DID YOU HAVE TO GO TO THE SHELTER?

12 A Oh, you must, it's a must. But we had, in England
13 they have a cellar, so we went down the cellar. Sometimes
14 they say you had to go to the air shelter, but the cellar
15 was pretty safe. And mostly in Manchester was fire bombs.

16 See, you can't imagine if you haven't lived
17 through a bomb blast, is so funny you wouldn't believe it.
18 I saw a house completely destroyed except one wall. The
19 wall had one mirror hanging and a bathtub. Now you figure
20 out how a bomb -- the mirror was still hanging on the wall
21 in the bath, but everything else was obliterated. You
22 never know when it's going to hit, it's fate. So, you
23 know, it's tough.

24 Q AND WERE THERE EVER ANY CLOSE CALLS?

25 A Oh, yeah we had close calls, yeah, very close calls in
26 Manchester.

1 Q YOU AND YOUR FAMILY ESCAPED?

2 A Yeah, but later on we went down south. Between London
3 and Oxford, right in the middle, nobody knows, little town,
4 nobody knows, sleepy little town, nobody knows what's going
5 on here.

6 But I found out after the war there was the
7 biggest depot of gasoline underground in Aylesbury,
8 gasoline, we didn't know. One bomb would have -- we would
9 have gone like a rocket.

10 Q AS THE WAR IN GERMANY -- NOT IN GERMANY BUT ELSEWHERE
11 HITLER ATTACKED RUSSIA?

12 A Yeah. I remember I listened to that on the radio.

13 Q WHAT WERE YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT THAT?

14 A That's the end of Hitler.

15 Q DID YOU TALK --

16 A Yeah, that's the end of him, Russia is going to get
17 him.

18 Q WHAT DID YOUR FATHER THINK? WERE YOU IN TOUCH WITH
19 YOUR FATHER DURING THAT TIME? HE WAS A RUSSIAN CITIZEN.

20 A No, he -- not at that time we could not, it was tough
21 to write letters because they were censored. Everything
22 you wrote you had to be careful, you know, you couldn't
23 write politics or things like that because they screen
24 every letter.

25 Q YOUR CIVILIAN LETTERS WERE CENSORED?

26 A Oh, yeah, sure, everything was censored, but I figure

1 that was the end of Hitler because Napoleon went into
2 Russia, he couldn't do it, Hitler couldn't do it either.
3 Nobody can do it, you can't beat Russia in Russia, no way.

4 He made the same mistake, he should have
5 learned from Napoleon, thank you God we had Hitler for that
6 because his generals didn't want to go, he wanted to go.

7 Q DO YOU RECALL AS A JEW LIVING IN ENGLAND WHEN YOU
8 FIRST LEARNED ABOUT PLACES LIKE AUSCHWITZ AND TREBLINKA AND
9 THOSE OTHER PLACES, DO YOU RECALL WHEN YOU FIRST LEARNED
10 ABOUT SUCH THINGS?

11 A I cannot recall how I learned, but we knew about it.

12 Q BEFORE THE WAR WAS OVER?

13 A Yeah. We knew about it, but vaguely. We really
14 didn't know for sure, you know. After the war we found out
15 when we met friends in America, especially in America, and
16 saw the tattoo with the numbers, then we really got to
17 know.

18 Q SO YOU DON'T FEEL THAT YOU REALLY UNDERSTOOD WHAT WAS
19 HAPPENING TO THE JEWS FULLY DURING THE WAR?

20 A Well, we had a feeling, and some news trickled
21 through, you know. There were murders. My wife's father
22 was in Auschwitz, he was in Theresienstadt first, and with
23 the last transport they sent him to Auschwitz and gassed
24 him. We found that out through the Red Cross, but after
25 the war you really got the real story.

26 Q DO YOU RECALL WHEN THE BRITISH FORCES -- YOU MIGHT

1 HAVE HEARD THIS BEING IN ENGLAND -- LIBERATED
2 BERGEN-BELSEN?

3 A Yeah, we heard about it, yeah, sure, over the radio.

4 Q DID YOU EVER SEE NEWSREELS, LIKE MOVIES?

5 A I think they show. Yeah, but after the war things
6 came out in the open more. During the war it was hard,
7 they wouldn't say too much, you know, they didn't want to
8 rock the boat, but after the war naturally then the stories
9 came all over, especially here in America. We heard more
10 in America than in England.

11 Q WHILE LIVING IN ENGLAND AND DURING THE WAR WERE YOU IN
12 TOUCH WITH OTHER JEWS WHO WERE ALSO THERE IN ENGLAND, AND
13 WERE YOU -- DID YOU ASSOCIATE WITH THEM?

14 A Oh, yeah, yeah, sure. We had where we lived in
15 Aylesbury, we had quite a few Jews worked for the company,
16 the boss was a Jew and the manager was a Jew. And his
17 brother-in-law, you know, it was a friend of mine, we lived
18 the same house in Germany like me who worked at that
19 factory. So we were quite a few.

20 Q THE BOSS WAS A BRITISH CITIZEN?

21 A No, he was a German Jew, a Polish Jew as a matter of
22 fact, a Polish Jew who lived in Germany. I don't know he
23 got his British citizenship now. I would have, if I wanted
24 to, oh, yeah, sure. You had to be a home owner and have
25 four witnesses. That's all. I was a home owner, I owned
26 my home, and I had four people who would vouch for me,

1 easy. I could have been British, but I figured I go to
2 America, why go through all that process.

3 Q SO YOU'RE EMPLOYED BY THIS COMPANY THAT IS ENGAGED IN
4 SECRET WAR WORK?

5 A Yeah.

6 Q MAKING THESE INSTRUMENTS?

7 A Yeah.

8 Q FOR --

9 A For the air force.

10 Q FOR THE AIR FORCE.

11 DID YOU HEAR -- WOULD YOU HAVE HEARD
12 ANYTHING THEN ABOUT BOMBING RAIDS AND ACTIVITIES, AIR CORPS
13 ACTIVITIES?

14 A Oh, yeah. We knew that because when they invaded the
15 Normandy, the British and the Americans, the sky was black
16 from airplanes, I've never seen so many airplanes coming
17 over our house.

18 And during the war we knew right away, I
19 said they're going to my hometown, they're going to get it.
20 When they came over this way, I said they are going to
21 south of Germany, and then on the radio they bomb so-and-so
22 and so-and-so, we knew, we could tell when they came over
23 the house.

24 Q DID YOU EVER HEAR ANYBODY AMONG YOUR FELLOW JEWS SAY,
25 WELL, WHY DON'T THEY BOTTOM AUSCHWITZ AND STOP ALL THIS?

26 A No, no.

1 Q ANYTHING LIKE THAT AT ALL?

2 A No, not at that time. After coming here why didn't,
3 yeah.

4 Now we came out a big thing about that, why
5 didn't they, should they have, that's not here nor there.
6 Now it's too late.

7 Q YOU LIVED IN GERMANY AS A CITIZEN, ALMOST A CITIZEN
8 BEFORE YOU HAD TO LEAVE. DID YOU HAVE ANY FEELINGS AT ALL
9 ABOUT THESE AIRPLANES THAT WERE GOING OVER THERE TO BOMB
10 YOUR HOMELAND, GERMANY?

11 A Germany wasn't my homeland, I just lived there.

12 Q BUT YOU LIVED THERE A WHILE, BUT IT WASN'T YOUR
13 HOMELAND?

14 A No, not to me because when I worked here I had a young
15 man talk to me one day, and about six four, big guy, German
16 fellow, said, "Aren't you proud to be a German?"

17 I said, "What you talking I'm American Jew,
18 what you talking about Germany?" I said, "Look, don't talk
19 to me about Germany. The good Germans are six foot under
20 like your father, your uncle, and all your relatives.
21 These bastards should be buried." He never talked to me
22 again. I said big deal.

23 BY UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE #1:

24 Q DURING THE TIME YOU LIVED IN ENGLAND WHAT WAS THE
25 ATTITUDE OF BRITISH PEOPLE TOWARDS YOU AS A JEW FROM
26 GERMANY BEFORE THE WAR BROKE OUT, DURING THE WAR, AND THEN

1 AFTER THE WAR?

2 A They treated us perfect. The English, you must say,
3 you must give them credit. They treated you well, they fed
4 you well. Their foreign policy stunk for Palestine, that
5 had nothing to do with the English people, that was the
6 foreign policy. But we had rationing the same as English
7 people, did not discriminate. England was the only country
8 who took in refugees without asking questions.

9 Q THE GENERAL POPULATION, YOUR NEIGHBORS, FOR EXAMPLE,
10 OR PEOPLE YOU MET IN THE STORE, ON THE STREETS --

11 A To them I was a German because I spoke with a German
12 accent. They wouldn't even know what a Jew is, they think
13 we have horns. These children, you know, in the
14 evacuation, they send them to Scotland, they never saw a
15 Jew, they didn't know what a Jew is, no idea.

16 (Pause in tape.)

17 BY MR. AYRES:

18 Q WHILE YOU WERE IN ENGLAND BEFORE YOU LEFT FOR THE
19 UNITED STATES YOU MET YOUR WIFE, WOULD YOU TELL US HER NAME
20 AND, WOULD YOU TELL US HER NAME AND THEN DESCRIBE YOUR
21 FAMILY AND THE FINAL DAYS IN ENGLAND?

22 A Well, I met my wife in Manchester in June 1940. We
23 got married in January 26th, 1941, and we had two children.

24 Q THEIR NAMES?

25 A Michael and Leslie. Leslie they told her was a girl's
26 name, but Leslie Howard, my wife likes Leslie Howard,

1 that's why she called him Leslie.

2 Then finally my parents and my brother and
3 my sister got settled in America and they said it's time.
4 And her sister lived in America too, my wife's sister in
5 America. It's time to get there.

6 And so we left, and her mother-in-law, my
7 mother-in-law lived with us, you know, her mother, actually
8 her aunt. Her father -- her mother died early 1933, and
9 then he -- her father married the aunt, you know, the
10 sister.

11 She lived with us in England and we left
12 together for America, same boat. We went with two little
13 kids four and five years old. From England we went to
14 Denmark, from Denmark we went to Sweden, and from Sweden we
15 take a boat to America, you know. After the war it wasn't
16 so easy to get passage for five people.

17 And we went to New York where my parents
18 lived, and stayed in New York until Labor Day. I couldn't
19 take it. New York was -- my kids, too big, everything too
20 -- we lived out in the country, you know, kids go running
21 around, and we were too confined.

22 So my wife's sister said, "Why don't you
23 come out to California?" That's one of my better decisions
24 I made in life, and we went to California. I came here on
25 a Thursday and I started working next Tuesday, I had a job.
26 When they saw my references from Germany and England and

1 America, I worked in New York for a couple weeks, you know,
2 and I had a job.

3 Q WHAT JOB WAS THAT?

4 A I worked Marchant Calculator, they made mechanical
5 parts.

6 Q LOCATED IN?

7 A In Oakland, Emeryville actually. I worked for them
8 and later I got a job for Caterpillar, the big tractor
9 outfit, the last 17 years I work for Caterpillar in quality
10 control, had a very good job there.

11 We are very, very active in Jewish
12 community, my wife is very active in Hadassah. I'm very
13 active in the temple in Alameda, men's club and religious
14 committee.

15 Q WHICH TEMPLE?

16 A Temple Israel in Alameda. We've been members since
17 1947, so we are the old timers now.

18 Q THAT'S NOT AN ORTHODOX?

19 A No, it's reformed.

20 Q REFORMED.

21 A Reformed.

22 Q DID YOU REAR YOUR CHILDREN IN THE FAITH?

23 A Oh, yeah. My children, my oldest is 50 and the
24 youngest is 49, so -- and they have children. My oldest
25 has two boys and my youngest has two girls.

26 Q AND THEY'RE ACTIVE --

1 A Oh, yes, active. The oldest grandson is going to get
2 married next year, he's 23 years old, so we're looking
3 forward to that. It's a happy occasion. We just
4 celebrated our 50th anniversary last January, my wife did,
5 I didn't, but -- (witness laughs).

6 Q HAVE YOU IN THE YEARS SINCE THE WAR RETURNED TO EITHER
7 ENGLAND OR GERMANY?

8 A I was -- I stopped over in Germany one night because I
9 couldn't get a flight to London, from London to Israel. I
10 wanted to go to Israel, and I wanted to stop, and I wanted
11 a British airplane to take us from here to London, then I
12 wanted to go from London to Israel.

13 I said to my wife, "I better make sure we
14 got everything." I called the travel agent, no English
15 plane, you have to go to Germany. I said, "Oh, God."

16 So I went to Frankfurt one night. And then
17 in '87, yeah, '87 my wife gets a notice she should come to
18 her home town, they're making a memorial plaque for the
19 synagogue that was destroyed. They will pay for the stay,
20 but won't pay for the air fare. So we went there
21 reluctantly.

22 Q HER HOME TOWN?

23 A Yeah, Norden lost Friesland. They treated us very
24 well, but I had a funny feeling.

25 Q YOU DIDN'T FEEL AT HOME IN GERMANY?

26 A No, no. They always ask me how come you speak such

1 good German. I said, "Well, my parents only talked German
2 to me."

3 They knew I was from America, but I always
4 had that funny feeling. You can't blame the younger ones,
5 you know, but anybody my age group, 99 percent are Nazi's,
6 I don't care what you say. Even if they deny it I don't
7 believe it. They're all Nazi's.

8 In the town I lived in I only knew two
9 people who weren't Nazi's, the doctor and the milk man next
10 door. The rest of them, all Nazi's. They all deny it.
11 The Germans are known, the biggest liars in history,
12 always, they knew from nothing, you know.

13 Q HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT WHAT'S HAPPENING IN GERMANY NOW?

14 A With the east and west you mean?

15 Q YES.

16 A That's the worst thing that can happen for the world.

17 Q FOR THEM TO GET BACK TOGETHER?

18 A Yeah. They make another war. Years to come America
19 will go with Germany to fight Russia one of these days. I
20 always said that, I hope I'm wrong. I just hope I'm wrong.
21 I don't trust the Germans, they're born to make war.
22 That's their upbringing.

23 Q BUT YOU THINK AMERICA WILL HELP THEM MAKE IT? DO YOU
24 THINK AMERICA WILL HELP GERMANY MAKE A WAR?

25 A Sure, they want to sell ammunition. What you think
26 we're making tanks and airplanes, we're not putting them on

1 the mantelpiece. A terrible thing, war.

2 Q YOU CAME TO AMERICA IN '49, WAS IT?

3 A '47.

4 Q '47. IN '48 THERE WAS THE BERLIN AIRLIFT, DO YOU
5 RECALL?

6 A Yeah.

7 Q SORT OF?

8 A M-hm. (Affirmative).

9 Q ANY RECOLLECTIONS OF WHAT YOU WERE THINKING ABOUT IN
10 THOSE DAYS?

11 A You know what bothers me most, it's a very funny
12 thing. England, you know, helped us during the war, you
13 know, English and the Americans fought Germany and Japan.
14 Japan and Germany on top of the world, and England is down
15 the drain, so is America.

16 We built up these guys, made them big, you
17 know. First we destroy them, then we build them up.
18 They're better off than we are. I don't understand that, I
19 never could figure it out, you know.

20 So I don't know. Politics stink.

21 Q YOU'VE BEEN TO ISRAEL AT LEAST ONCE?

22 A Twice.

23 Q TWICE. RECENTLY?

24 A No, '82, I think. I don't know, I forget. My wife
25 was a delegate to the Hadassah convention, so I accompanied
26 her.

1 Q WHAT WERE YOUR FEELINGS WHEN THE GULF WAR WAS
2 UNDERWAY, WHAT WE CALL A WAR, WITH IRAQ? DID YOU HAVE
3 FEELING ABOUT THAT?

4 A Oh, yeah.

5 Q WHAT WERE THEY?

6 A I think America should let Israel finish the job.
7 They would have finished the job.

8 Q YOU THINK PERHAPS AMERICA DID NOT FINISH THE JOB?

9 A No, no, they should have gone in, take care of Hussein
10 and finish him for good.

11 Q WHAT WERE YOUR FEELINGS WHEN -- DID YOU SEE
12 TELEVISION?

13 A Yeah, sure.

14 Q THE SCUD MISSILES LANDING AT TEL AVIV?

15 A Yeah.

16 Q WHAT WERE YOUR FEELINGS?

17 A You know, you want to hear the truth, you know where
18 the Scud missiles were transported from, Mercedes Benz,
19 Germany, made the trucks to put the Scud missiles into
20 Israel. And who you think made the chemicals for Hassad,
21 or whatever his name is, Germany made.

22 Q HUSSEIN?

23 A Sure.

24 Q SO ONCE AGAIN --

25 A America didn't finish the job proper. See, now look
26 at Hussein from Jordan, King Hussein, he sided with the guy

1 from Iraq, so what's happening now he comes back to
2 America, he's a good boy, they deliver weapons to him, he
3 sells them to Hussein again and he starts another war, and
4 our boys get killed for the Arabs with their own weapons.
5 That's what's going to happen again.

6 You know in Arab history they did not
7 mention one word of American or foreign soldiers who won
8 that war, people don't know that, but not one name of
9 American or English or Italian, all the Arabs, all the
10 glory, they won that big war. My foot, they couldn't beat
11 a fly.

12 Q DID IT BOTHER YOU TO SEE THE TELEVISION OF THE
13 MISSILES DROPPING ON JEWISH CITIES?

14 A Sure it bothered me.

15 Q BECAUSE YOU HAD BEEN THROUGH A BLITZ?

16 A Yes, in England. I felt that Israel should retaliate.
17 Absolutely, they should have, but they didn't because
18 America said don't do it, and they listened to America.

19 Q AND YOU FEEL THEY SHOULD HAVE ACTUALLY --

20 A Oh, yes, absolutely. Go right in and finish the job.
21 They would have finished the job, no question about it.
22 Who you remember Entebbe, when they done that, who would
23 done that, no country in the world would do that, only
24 Israel done it. Three million people, 250 million Arabs
25 around them, and they go into Entebbe and Uganda and get
26 their people out. Thank God we got Israel. We should have

1 had Israel already when Hitler started, but it was
2 unfortunate.

3 Q DO YOU HAVE ANY FEELING ABOUT WHAT'S HAPPENING IN
4 SOVIET RUSSIA WITH THE SOVIET JEWS BEING ALLOWED TO COME
5 OUT?

6 A The Soviet Jews are coming out, hopefully, hope we
7 don't make the same mistakes we made with the German Jews,
8 but Russia, they got it coming.

9 Q WHATEVER HAPPENS TO RUSSIA --

10 A It's good, whatever happens. They're just as bad as
11 Hitler. There was no difference between the communists and
12 the Nazi's; one was on the left, the other was on the
13 right.

14 Stalin killed millions of his people,
15 millions, people don't know that. He was the biggest
16 murderer in history, Stalin, bar none. He was bigger than
17 Hitler killing people, people don't know that, people don't
18 read history, you know.

19 Q DID YOU SAY YOUR FATHER WAS FROM MINSK?

20 A Yeah, near Minsk.

21 Q DID YOU EVER DISCUSS WITH HIM WHEN AFTER GERMANY HAD
22 INVADED RUSSIA, KILLED MANY, MANY PEOPLE IN MINSK --

23 A No, we didn't.

24 Q YOU NEVER TALKED ABOUT THAT?

25 A No, because we were in England, he was in America,
26 there was no communication, you couldn't communicate.

1 Q SINCE THEN YOU NEVER, AFTER PEACE, AFTER THERE WAS
2 PEACE YOU WERE NEVER ABLE TO TALK TO HIM ABOUT IT?

3 A No, we never mentioned it.

4 See, at that time we didn't talk too much
5 about it. My children didn't know too much about the
6 Holocaust, as I said before, but the grandchildren, they
7 learn it in Sunday school and school, you know.

8 Q HAVE YOU TOLD YOUR STORY TO YOUR OWN CHILDREN?

9 A Oh, yeah, they know my story.

10 Q DO THEY HAVE ANY INTEREST IN IT?

11 A I don't think so. This generation is not a good
12 generation for that, the next generation, children, the
13 grandchildren, the 20 year old Jews, you know, the 16 year
14 old, they have more feeling for it than the older ones.

15 Q HAVE YOU TOLD IT TO YOUR GRANDCHILDREN?

16 A Oh, they knew. They interviewed my wife for a school
17 project.

18 Q WILL YOU SHOW THEM THIS FILM?

19 A Oh, absolutely, if I get a copy, sure. I have a VCR,
20 I show it, invite all my friends and show it to them.
21 Absolutely.

22 I talk every Kristallnacht, close to Friday
23 night when we have services, I give speech on what happened
24 and why it happened, why it shouldn't have happened. It
25 shouldn't have happened, really, if you think about it. If
26 France and England would have put their foot down would

1 have saved six million Jews, but nobody cares.

2 Q CAN YOU GIVE US AN IDEA OF HOW MANY OF YOUR RELATIVES
3 WERE -- STAYED IN EUROPE AND WERE VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST?

4 A No.

5 Q YOU CAN'T?

6 A I don't know anybody from my father's side, we had no
7 contact whatsoever. In the '20's, you know, in the '20's
8 we had contact, I know when I was a little kid. But from
9 my mother's side I would only say her brother got murdered,
10 you know. That's all I know. Her sister was buried, so my
11 friend told me, she died a natural death.

12 Q YOUR MOTHER'S BROTHER WAS WHERE?

13 A In Germany. We had no trace whatsoever.

14 Q DO YOU KNOW WHETHER HE WAS DEPORTED?

15 A No, no idea, not the slightest what happened.

16 Q ALL OF YOUR FATHER'S RELATIVES ARE IN THAT AREA OF
17 RUSSIA?

18 A There were some in Germany, he had two sisters in
19 Germany, and they all went to Israel in the early '30's.

20 Q THEY GOT OUT OF GERMANY?

21 A They got out.

22 Q THOSE PEOPLE IN RUSSIA, DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT
23 HAPPENED TO THEM?

24 A No, not the slightest. No contact whatsoever. We
25 lost every contact in the '30's.

26 Q BUT YOU KNOW NOW WHAT HAPPENED TO JEWS WHO WERE

1 LIVING --

2 A Oh, yeah, but at that time we didn't know.

3 BY UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE #1:

4 Q YOU MENTIONED THAT YOU WENT BACK TO GERMANY ABOUT FOUR
5 YEARS AGO WITH YOUR WIFE?

6 A Yes.

7 Q TO HER HOME TOWN, SHE WAS INVITED FOR A MEMORIAL. YOU
8 SAID THAT YOU HAD A FUNNY FEELING TO BE THERE. WHAT WAS SO
9 PECULIAR ABOUT THAT VISIT?

10 A Pardon?

11 Q WHAT WAS SO PECULIAR ABOUT THE VISIT?

12 A First of all, I don't like Germans, I don't like them.
13 I know what they stand for, I know what they are, what they
14 do, and what they did. So I was -- we were both very
15 hesitant to go.

16 And they treated us cordially and very well,
17 you know, all that, but we went to Holland by car, and I
18 said, "I'm glad I'm out of Germany, I don't want nothing to
19 do with."

20 Q HOW LONG DID YOU SPEND THERE?

21 A A week.

22 Q A WEEK?

23 A Yeah. They treated -- they had performances, and my
24 wife's brother who came from Israel, they came from all
25 over the world, from Argentina, from Holland, from Israel,
26 from America, from Belgium, and all over.

1 And my brother-in-law went to high school
2 there and gave a speech, you know, about what happened and
3 so forth and so forth. But these are younger people, so
4 you cannot really blame them for what happened.

5 But as I said before, and I say it again,
6 anybody in my age group, I don't want nothing to do with
7 them, nothing whatsoever, I know what they done. They say
8 they didn't, but I know better. You know. They, oh, no,
9 no concentration camps, blah, blah, blah, and you know.

10 Q DID YOUR WIFE MEET ANY OF HER FRIENDS FROM HER
11 CHILDHOOD?

12 A Yes.

13 Q DID SHE HAVE PERSONAL CONVERSATIONS?

14 A They invited her one day over for tea, I went with her
15 to a house, you know. And then later on she got a letter,
16 there was a reunion and they invited her to go back. She
17 said, "I wouldn't go back if they give me the money to go
18 back."

19 This girl who wrote her, her father was the
20 biggest Nazi in town, now they don't know from nothing, you
21 know.

22 MR. AYRES: I believe we're finished.

23 MR. HANKIN: Good, finished.

24 MR. AYRES: You have any further?

25 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE #1: No, thanks.

26