

There. Pause.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

Wait 10 seconds.

I'll give you two. Any time.

OK. It's June 19, 1991. We're at Temple Beth Shalom interviewing Abraham Grossman for the Holocaust Oral History Project. My name is Peggy Coster and with me are Tanya Zatkin and John Grant as the producer. OK, why don't we just start out today by going over who was in your family?

My family consisted of my father, my mother, and four children. So it was Jacob, the eldest, and then was Bernard, and I was the youngest son. And there was one girl by the name of Tzili.

And she was older or younger than you?

Beg pardon.

She was older a younger than you?

No, she was the youngest.

And when were you born?

I was born in March 21, 1925, in GÅ¼strow in the province of Mecklenburg in Germany, East Germany.

Could you spell that Gus--

G-U-, two things on top, S-T-R-O-W. In the province of Mecklenburg.

OK. Was there a lot of years between your older brothers and you?

My eldest brother was born in 1920. Bernard, the middle brother, was born in 1923. And I, as I mentioned before, in 1925. My sister was born in 1930.

What did your father do for a living?

My father was-- he had a shop where he sold everything to the surrounding villages and the agricultural workers. But he also manufactured jackboots, the shafts of the boots, and then he had them, the lower parts, he had them made by a shoemaker. So we used to carry them to the shoemaker, and he used to attach the lower part the sole and then they were sold to either in the shop or even they were sold in quantity to surrounding shops.

These jackboots, are they same ones that the Nazis wore?

Exactly the same. They look the same exactly.

Did he sell any to the Nazis?

Well, the Germans, I suppose, were members of the Social Democratic Party. And they were all Nazis, I suppose. And whoever came into the shop, they were sold to.

So you didn't sell them to the army?

No, they were-- he had no contracts with the army whatsoever, but he sold a lot. I remember he used to sell them-- even there were sometimes fairs. So he used to put up a stall and sold them at fairs, and I know he sold a lot.

So, actually, before they were the German army boot or whatever, they were just the ordinary German boots?

Yes. The Germans, I think it was fashion. Many workers in certain professions used to wear those kind of boots, so I don't think it had any kind of connection, Actually, with the Nazis. They were just born in Germany in those days.

Were you raised in that town?

I was born in that town, and I lived there until the age of either 11 or 12, I don't remember. I think until 1937. And I went to school there. And in 1937, things got so bad, and my father had died in 1936. So I was sent away to a bigger town, to the town of Szczecin which is, today, Poland. It's called Szczecin today. And I went into a kind of a hostel for boys, and then I attended a Jewish school in Szczecin

Was the hostel connected to the boys' school?

Eh, no, not directly, but the director, he and his wife taught in the same school. But it had no connection, financially or otherwise, with that school.

How big was the school?

I think maybe between 400 and 600 children? Quite a big school.

Did all the boys live in a hostel?

No, no. The pupils who attended that school were from the town who lived and were probably born in the same town of Szczecin and they went to that school. The only persons who went out of the town was the hostel, maybe 50 or 60 children, boys, and they attended the same school.

Did you-- when you were at this school, that was after the Nazis already had a lot of power, so--

Yes.

Did you encounter-- and it was a Jewish school, so did you encounter a lot of antisemitism from the surrounding townspeople?

Yes, very much so, of course. I remember the day when the names of every male Jewish person-- to his name was added the name of Israel. If my name was Abraham Grossman-- but it was not Abraham in those days, it was Adolf. So my name was incongruent. It was Adolf Israel Grossman.

And the girl had to take the additional name of Sarah. If she had her own name, then Sarah was added. And that was kind of a thing to accentuate the fact that they were Jewish. It was a kind of a directed way of making Jews feel that they are lower than anybody else.

And the antisemitism in the town was like anywhere else. I encountered it in the streets. I encountered it wherever I went. We had it all the time.

What specifically? Were there anything specific?

Well, how can I express myself? It's the usual things. You went on the streets. If somebody knew you were Jewish, they used to go and taunt you and shout and yell after you, you dirty Jew, whatever.

But I remember the 10th of November, the Kristallnacht. I had to go-- on my way to school, I passed the synagogue, and the synagogue was in flames. And I didn't quite know what to make of it.

So there's a big crowd there, and I mingled amongst the crowds. And I was blond. I don't think I looked particularly Jewish, and nobody took any notice of me.

And I saw the fire brigade. They were not putting the flames out, but they were trying to keep the flames from spreading to the neighboring houses. And I stood amongst the people. And I noticed especially that a young woman holding a baby in her hand, and she looked so ordinary. And I thought maybe she would have some compassion on her face that the House of God was burning, but not so.

She said-- I remember the words like today-- she said, it's about time that the Jews know what the Germans are, she said in German because this is a translation. But it seems to be-- in my mind, it's never left me when she said that because it made such an impression on me that a woman holding a baby would look on and look on without compassion, without pity, that a synagogue should be burning. And while I was standing there, an elderly Jew. In fact, his synagogue was a conservative synagogue. It had an organ, and that was a beautiful synagogue.

And an elderly Jew with side locks and a beard came running out of that synagogue, out of the burning synagogue, carrying a Torah scroll. He saved it from the flames. And a big, burly SS man came up to him, pulled him by the beard, and threw him on the floor. And the Torah fell on the floor, and it opened up.

And he got hold of the elderly Jew by the scruff of his neck and commanded him to dance on the Torah scroll. And he pulled out a revolver and held it to his head. And I was wondering in my mind, is this person going to either die or is he going to do what he's being told?

But now I understand that the saving of one's life is even more important than the Torah, so he danced. Like a zombie, he danced on the Torah in a very stiff sort of manner. And it shook me to my very core when I saw that.

And I was only about-- I had just had bar mitzvah. I remember because my tallis and my tefillin were inside the synagogue, and they went up in flames. So I lost those.

And when I looked on this picture, this man dancing on the Torah scroll and this terrible SS man in uniform and the death skull on his cap pointing the revolver at the temple of this person, I know that is the day I became a Zionist. At the age of 13, I thought to myself that if the Jewish people do not have a state of their own, if they do not have an army, if they do not have their independence, then something is wrong with this world.

So I continued and went to the school, and everybody apparently already knew what was happening. And that very day, that very time I came in, the director of the hostel I lived in, he gave a lesson. And he pulled out a book, and he read a story to us. He hadn't read even two lines, suddenly the door burst open, and two Gestapo men came inside. You know, typical Gestapo men, slouch hats and raincoat.

They went straight to him, pulled the book out of his hand, and asked, what are you reading? And he said, I'm just reading a story. So they took the book and flung it into the corner in a very most brutal way, got hold of him, and dragged him outside.

Outside was a truck already loaded with the rest of the teachers, and they pushed him onto the truck. And later on, he was sent to Sachsenhausen, a concentration camp. He was released later, but he came back somewhat broken with his hair shorn off.

I was very, very much affected by this sort of thing I'd really never encountered except the thing I just told about, this Jewish person who had danced on the Torah. But, really, I'd never seen anything like it. And it affected me to such an extent it has really never left me.

When you said that now you understand that it's important to save your life, does that mean that at the time, you felt like

a Jewish man shouldn't have danced on the Torah?

Ah, it's a difficult question, but I felt, I was praying, that he would do what the SS men told him. I didn't want him, God forbid, to be shot. It would have even been worse.

Even now that I'm, of course, grown up, I have the same kind of concept, that it is more important that life should be saved than the Torah scroll. After all, the Torah scroll is holy to the Jewish people. We revere it, but I think life is more important. The Torah scroll can be remade, it can be rewritten. Your life can never be resurrected ever again.

So the teacher went ahead and acted like it was a regular day even though all this stuff was going outside?

I'm sorry. Can you repeat your question?

So the teacher just kind of went on and acted like it was a regular day until the SS men came in?

I'm sorry. You have to make your-- clarify your question.

I guess I'm thinking-- I guess that's one way of handling when all this stuff is going on outside and there's really nothing you can do about it, that's how the teacher handled it was to just kind of go on as though it was a regular day, or did you talk about what was going on outside?

Oh, no. I remember I was a child full of energy. I was bursting with energy and was always joyful. All these things had no meaning to me. It absolutely didn't affect me even though these things were--

First and foremost, I didn't even know that other things were a part of one's life because since I remember, we've always been mistreated, and I thought that's how the world goes around. I had no idea that things were different. So I was somehow conditioned to that kind of treatment.

But this particular treatment was more than I had ever experienced, so it affected me. And it affected me in such a way that it probably made my life and my whole concept of thinking that I wanted to go to a Jewish state. And, in fact, in 1948, when the Jewish state was founded, I made my way illegally on a Romanian cattle boat, and I came to take part in the War of Liberation. I took part in that one and other ones.

But I think this was the effect that [INAUDIBLE] on me. I never wavered from it ever, that I wanted very fervently a Jewish state, and I put this into a realization. I did go, and my two sons were born there into my country.

You said the SS men acted like a typical SS man. What was a typical SS man?

In the town I lived in GÃ¼strow in Mecklenburg, which I had mentioned before, we had a bar opposite our house. And there were lots of going on in that bar day and night, lots of noise. And I sometimes used to go in there, make my way in there in order to-- I was just a little bit of a kid who liked excitement.

So I used to go in, and I saw these people drinking. The bar was filled with the aroma of tobacco and beer. And I saw all these people drinking and drinking. And then sometimes they had a fight. And sometimes they were thrown out into the street, and the policemen came. All these people who drank mostly, and when in 1933, the SS was founded, they were the first to be in uniform.

They became big to us, big machers. you know, they felt important. They had a uniform, and they had black boots. And they were given-- probably Hitler and his stooges, they needed these kind of people, these brutal people.

And these were probably the stereotypes at first. Later on, many more went into the SS. But in the beginning, were those low types, those drunkards, those people who had no jobs. And when they were given a uniform, a wonderful black uniform with a big belt and a strap across their chest and a pistol, and then they felt great, they felt big, they felt important.

Did they have very many shows, marches, or--

Oh, yes, very often, very often. They used to march through the streets of the town, the little town I came from. And they used to sing those terrible songs about how they're going to finish off the Jews. One particular song comes to my mind. It goes something like, when Jewish blood spurts off our knives.

I mean, even then, I realized it's-- I mean, it doesn't seem even logical to me that anybody who has a wife and children would even think of when Jewish blood spurts off our knives. I mean, it seems ludicrous to me that anybody would sing such a song. Where was the decency?

They practiced religion. Every Sunday, they went to the church, and they listened to the pastor. They sat in the aisles, and the pastor was in the pulpit, and he preached. And I'm sure they kept the Ten Commandments. But treating the Jews in the way they did, that seemed to be in a different category.

On the one hand, they kept, I suppose, a decent family life. And I'm sure they loved their wives in most cases and their children. And yet, they looked at the Jews as something completely different.

They were able to differentiate between living a kind of a middle-class, bourgeois life and then treating the Jews, that was a different story. Now whoever can explain that, but I'm not able to. It doesn't make any sense to me.

Do you remember any more of the "Horst Wessel" song?

Oh, yes. I know them all.

Can you sing it a little bit?

Yeah, I know. I can sing it. I won't sing it to you, but I'll say it to you. [SPEAKING GERMAN] in German?

How about in German and--

In German, and I will translate to you if I can. [SPEAKING GERMAN] It is something like-- [SPEAKING GERMAN] the flag's high [SPEAKING GERMAN] the rows are closed [SPEAKING GERMAN] these are the stormtroopers [SPEAKING GERMAN] with quiet, solid steps [SPEAKING GERMAN] comrades who were shot by the Communist [SPEAKING GERMAN] March in spirit together in one row. And then, of course, the German song which is Sudeten national anthem. It's called "Deutschland, Deutschland Ä¼ber alles," but that wasn't a real Nazi song. But there were so many Nazi songs, terrible.

Do you remember the words to any more?

Any more songs?

Any Nazi songs.

Yeah, I do. Wait a minute. Let me think a minute. Yeah. [SPEAKING GERMAN] We marched through Berlin. We fight for Adolf Hitler. The Communists killed them one by one. Attention, keep the streets free.

Something of that sort. You know, silly, stupid, really nonsensical songs. And everybody used to sing them. They were so-- every time they sang, cheering with these songs, even then, they seemed stupid to me, even as a child.

Do you remember any more?

Yeah, but I haven't got them quite ready. I'm sorry. If you would have told me before, I would have prepared them.

Actually, if you can remember any more, maybe you could next time.

Yeah. I'll gladly even sing them to you although I haven't got a good voice.

Oh no. That's no problem at all.

Yeah, yeah.

So, OK, next time.

Yeah, I will prepare you some songs. I have them all.

What did-- so you heard these songs your whole life, actually, from a very young age? What did that do to your self-esteem? Did you take it personally?

As I said, you know, I was a child who was so full of energy, and I was playful, and I played with Gentile friends. It really didn't have much of an effect on me. I suppose it was part and parcel of my life to hear those songs.

I remember when Hitler used to speak on the radio. So we had a neighbor who had a radio shop. So he used to put up in our street, all along the street, he used to put up these microphones, the other end of the microphones.

The loudspeakers?

Loudspeakers, so everybody-- not many people in those days had radios. They couldn't afford them. So he put a loudspeaker so everybody was able to hear the speech of Adolf Hitler.

And I remember, I didn't really understand what he was talking about. But what I do remember, he was always-- every sentence was intermittent with accusations against the Jews, that the Jews are the instigators of all the troubles in the world, they caused the First World War, they caused the unemployment, and they caused that people have no homes. In the end, he used to shout, [SPEAKING GERMAN] Judah, perish.

And somehow it was frightening. And when he used to speak, then we always used to go into our homes and closed ourselves and be-- in a way, we were frightened. So although I wasn't a frightened child, and my parents weren't frightened at all, but for safety's sake, we didn't venture out into the streets on those occasions.

What might happen if you did venture into the street?

Oh, some person would have probably attacked us. Not the whole population. I doubt it. But some of these persons I mentioned before, those people who drank. And, as I said, there was a bar opposite our house, and they could have come out, and maybe beat us up or something of that sort.

I remember one occasion, if I may tell the story, it was a Friday night, and the whole family sat around the table. There were Shabbos candles on the table. There's a beautiful tablecloth on the table and two challah on the table, a goblet of wine. My father had just finished making the kiddush when suddenly, we heard a tremendous crash outside. So we all left the table, went outside, and there we saw a burly fellow.

He heaved a big-- one of those tree trunks which were used to split wood on for making kindling. Everybody had it in their yard. We used to split kindling on this thing. He took it and threw it into our shop window, and he was threatening us.

Later on, we found that he had been drinking, and he ran out of money. And so the bar owner refused to serve him any more, so he blamed the Jews. He blamed the Jews that he had no more money. So he took one of those things and threw it into our shop window and threatened us, to kill us.

Anyway, my father being a very impetuous man, ran outside. He was two heads shorter than him. He lunged out and hit him in the face. And the man fell like a log. He was in a stupor, in any case.

So the police came and dragged my father to the police station. And they kept him there for one day and two days, and my mother-- they were Polish citizens. They emigrated from Poland to Germany because Germany in those days was a liberal country, and it was a country where people could make a decent living like many immigrants came to this country, to America.

So many Jews from Eastern Europe went to Germany to improve their situation because Poland was a terrible country. Terrible country. The stories I heard about Poland in my childhood mind, it made me feel that it was a terrible place to live in.

So my mother contacted the Polish consul in the nearest town and after a few days, he arrived, and she spoke to him in Polish, explaining the situation. And I saw the scorn in his face, this condescension when my mother spoke to him. Anyway, when I mentioned this to my mother and I said, look, this man, he had a kind of expression on his face as if he was saying, or thinking at least, the Jews cause nothing but trouble.

So I told my mother about the impression I had upon that man. And she said, [SPEAKING YIDDISH]. He can go and be buried, in juicy Yiddish. Anyway, he got my father out, and then we realized that Germany was getting really, really bad for the Jewish people. And my mother always spoke to my father and said, let's leave, let's go to Palestine, let's go to a Jewish country.

My father always used to say, oh, [NON-ENGLISH] come and [NON-ENGLISH] go. And, you know, this Hitler, is a mishugenah He'll go like the rest of them, and we'll prevail. But, of course, it didn't happen, unfortunately.

Was your family an observant Jewish family?

That's a very difficult question to ask. I don't think consciously they were so religious, but coming from Poland, from a very poor family was endemic to be religious, to keep the laws, to keep the halakha. And so they kept all the Jewish customs, but I don't think really they understood what religion really meant.

I'm different today. If I would be religious, it would be because of conviction. I would have maybe thought about it or read about it or discussed.

But I think in my parents, it was a question of habit. Their parents and their parents and their parents and their surroundings were always religious. And to be not religious in those environment would have been rebelling, like jumping out of the circle.

I think that would have been impossible, not to keep kosher and not to keep the Shabbat. I think that's the only reason they kept the laws, the Jewish laws. But I don't think consciously they were really religious. Again, I think it was a question of habit.

And what is your-- what do you do now? You said if you were religious.

Oh, you want to know about my conviction about-- again, it's a very profound, very difficult question to answer. But I do go to synagogue every Saturday. And there are several reasons for it.

I believe there's nothing else for me. And besides, I live in the diaspora. I don't live in Israel, and this is my connection to my Judaism.

And I look very, very strongly to be amongst Jewish people. Therefore, I go every-- it's very interesting to listen to the sermons of the rabbis. It gives me a tremendous lot.

And I look at my Jewish fellowmen, and I have great gratification. I think, without being too overmodest, I think we are

a great people. There's nothing wrong with us.

So when I go there, I usually take the [NON-ENGLISH], the Tanakh the portion of the Torah which is being read, and I study and I read and I find in my religion many things which can be found. I find many things in it.

What did you mean by there's nothing else for you?

Well, I suppose we have all gone through stages, every single person goes through stages of kind of developments. I know when I was 16, I lived in England, and I belonged to trade unions, and I became a member of the Communist party. And then I became a member of the Fabian Society, which was founded by Bernard Shaw. And then I became a socialist and all kinds of things.

I think nothing ever really stuck except my Judaism. That's the only thing that I think that remained very strongly within me. It is unshakable.

Did you have a large extended family?

What does it mean? Like? Well--

Like cousins--

Yeah, well. I really know very little. My parents never spoke about their family. I know they had parents, of course, on my mother's side and my father's side and their brothers and sisters, but I'd never met anyone.

But I did meet-- and with your permission, like to tell you the story. My father had a brother. His name was Max, Max Grossman.

And when I left my mother, she handed me a note and said, look, this is the address of your uncle, your father's brother. He lives in Paris. And I kept it with me all the time, not realizing that one day, with this note, I would find him. And the story was as follows.

Let me first tell you in a few words how we got to Paris. My father, my parents-- I wasn't born then-- they decided, at one stage in their life-- I think it was 1923-- to go to Palestine. And they went to Palestine, and they stayed there only half a year. They weren't able to acclimatize themselves to the climate and the food and the conditions. They thought it wasn't for Jews, so they went back to Germany.

And on the way back on the ship-- and his brother Max also went with him, with his family-- one of his children got sick. And they went off the ship in Marseilles in France, and the child was hospitalized. And the child got well and then he went to Paris and he stayed there with his whole family.

In the meantime, some other children were born. My father went back to this town, GÅ¼strow, where I was born. And then I was born.

In 1944, I joined the army, British Army, and then I had a transfer to the Jewish Brigade. And then I was stationed in Germany. I was stationed in Germany in a town called Bielefeld in Westphalia. And our duties was to guard trains going all over Europe with ammunition, with prisoners, with provisions, all kinds of things.

And I had a very good friend. He was very close to me. And one day, he received a notification that his brother had survived a concentration camp, and he's in the South of France. And he received leave to visit his brother, and I asked him, are you, by any chance, going through Paris? And he said, yeah, I'm staying about a day in Paris and then I'll take a train to the South of France.

I said, look, I have an address of my uncle. But I don't think he's still alive. He's probably been deported. He has a family. I don't know exactly how many children, but if you have nothing to do, just have a look.

So he went to-- he met his brother and after about 10 days, he came back, and he told me about terrible stories his brother had told him what he had gone through and, you know, he'd survived. And then I asked him, do you go to the address I gave you? And he said, yes, I saw your uncle and his children.

I said, you saw my uncle and his children? He said, yes, he's still at the same address. So I can't believe it.

What do they look like? He said, well, he's got four sons. And he looks very much like you, he said to me, the uncle. I said, I can't believe it. And what about the mother? He says, they're all there.

So I went straight to my commanding officer and asked for leave, and he didn't want to give it to me. So I went to the window and the officer, got myself a pass. But it wasn't necessary because he came to me the very next-- few hours later. He said, you know, there's a train going to Paris and if you want to be part of that train to guard it, I will put you on that train. I said, of course.

So I went on the train, and it took a long time to get there. They used to stop and they used to change wagons and so forth. But eventually, I arrived one night. I arrived in Paris. That was just after the war in 1945.

I remember it was in January. It was very, very cold. I had caught a cold in the meantime.

And the trains were drawn by coal, and there's smoke coming out of the chimneys. I looked as black as anything. I needed to shower badly, and we had no way of washing for those then.

So we were quartered in an army kind of a hostel. And I remember I want to take a shower. There was no warm water. It was icy cold. It was January.

I had no choice. I had to take a shower, so I washed myself. Nothing much came of the cold water, but somehow, I had a semblance of a human being again.

And the very next morning, I had a map of Paris, and I walked towards that address, and I found it. And I remember it very clearly, it's a Jewish part of Paris where all the people lived who worked in textiles. So I came to that house, and I saw the number. And I went inside. Very old house, steps were all worn away from usage from hundreds of years.

And while walking up the stairs, a person came down. And I looked at him, and he looked at me, and he looked very familiar to me. He looked like one of my family, I know. Very handsome young man. He must have been about-- well, I was about 18, he must have been about 22.

And when he saw me in uniform, of course, and he had heard from my friend that I'm around and that I might be-- and he assumed that I might be coming one day. I might make my way to Paris to see him. Anyway, I walked up, and he made a turn, and he came after me.

And I knocked on one of the doors, and the men came out reeking of alcohol. And I said-- I don't speak French-- I said, family Grossman? He said, upstairs. He showed me, and I went upstairs, and he came behind me.

And I knocked on the door, and I heard the noise of sewing machines there. When I opened the door, there was a little apartment, with 3, 4 sewing machines. And they were all sewing, you know, those foot things. They are sewing things.

Then I saw my uncle. My God, he looked exactly like my father. They were not, of course, twins, but they were very similar.

And he looked at me, I looked at him, and he immediately recognized me. Probably I also had a resemblance to his family. And, of course, his joy was great.

And immediately, they packed the machines away. They were pushed under the bed, and the clothes were rolled up and

put up. Everything was so-- it was so small, everything.

And he had two girls. Regularly, he sent them home on vacation. And then we started to-- He was so happy. So immediately, she served a wonderful meal.

Oh, yeah, it was first of January. It was New Year. And they put a bottle of wine on the table and, of course, they poured themselves wine. I remember big glasses. They drank it like water.

I couldn't manage more than this. That was my portion. I couldn't. And my head started to spin.

Anyway, I stayed there about three or four days, and it was a wonderful reunion. These were the only relations I have ever met, and they were all communists, by the way. They were all convinced communists, but in later years, when I lived in Israel already, they all came to Israel. They had all changed their minds. They had discarded their communism. They all become very pro-Israel. In those days when they talked to me, they only condemned Israel, not Israel, Palestine in those days. But thank God, they all came to visit me in later years.

How did they happen to survive if the same part where they lived in before--

No. I don't know. I asked my uncle what made him-- he went to Vichy, France, you know. France was divided into an independent Vichy, France. And he took all his family to Vichy, France, and there they lived on a farm.

And some of his sons, I think two sons, even joined the Maquis, the French underground, and they survived. And then when the war was over, they all came back. He paid the farmer. He told me that he paid the farmer lots of money to hide him because afterwards, the Germans took over that part of France as well, and they did the same things they did with the Jews of Vichy, France, they did with the rest of France.

But he was able to hide, and he came back. And he came back to the same apartment he lived in. But he told me that the apartment he lived in, that wasn't really his apartment but the apartment downstairs. It was very much bigger. But in later years, he got that back.

Both of your parents were from Poland, right?

Yes.

You said you heard some horrible stories about Poland. What stories did you hear?

My parents spoke very little about their childhoods. I gleaned from a remark and some words, I gleaned that they had to start work at the age of 11 or 12. They had no money. Their parents had no money to send them to school. They could neither read nor write.

My father only knew how to read and write in Hebrew, in the Hebrew vernacular, the writing. But in Latin, he didn't know. I had to read all the letters on newspapers. Both of them couldn't read or write. And they told me that two or three had to sleep in one bed, and the Poles always used to taunt them and to antagonize them.

The reason my father really came to Poland, to Germany, was that his father, my grandfather, my paternal grandfather was a glazier. So he used to strap some glass on his back, and he used to go through the towns of Warsaw proclaiming that he wants to repair windows. One day, a Pole came and beat him up and broke all his glass.

So my father heard about it, and he went after this Pole, and he beat him so much he thought he had killed him. So that night, he fled Poland and went to Germany. And then he pulled my mother over, and he married in Germany.

So all this stories, terrible. It left a terrible impression upon me, this life in Poland, this poverty and the squalor and the ignorance. And it seemed very black to me, Poland.

In fact, to save my life one day this concept of Poland-- would you like me to tell this? And it was in 1938 when-- I might have told this story. I don't know about Herschel Greenspan. Did I tell the story?

Yeah, but tell it again.

And the Germans decided to take all the Polish nationals, the citizens, and evict them from Germany to Poland. To cut a long story short, I was on that transport. And I was sent to Poland.

And the woman saw me at the frontier, and she said, where are your parents? And I said, my parents aren't here. I came from this hostel in Stettin.

And she said, have you got a passport? I said, I have none. And she said, well I'll say that you are my son, and I'll take you over the border and then you go to Warsaw and you'll find your relations or even your parents probably crossed the border at a different place. So I agreed.

So she took me over, and the official just stamped the passport. It didn't even count her children and me, and I was over in Poland. And then all these things came back to me, these memories of Poland, these remarks by my parents, and so forth.

And I went up to her and said, look, I'm going back into Germany. I'm not going to go to Poland. And she said no, what's the use of going back to Germany? Germany is no good.

I said, no, I'm going back to Germany. So I went back to the frontier, and I spoke to the Polish official, and I was sent back to Germany, to Stettin, but I came home. And eventually, I was sent to England.

If I would have remained in Poland, I would have either ended up in the Warsaw ghetto or in Auschwitz. So this decision saved my life when I was only 13 years old.

Were you caught between the two borders at any time? The German and Polish borders?

No. The Germans-- there were a few who didn't have any passports, and the Poles didn't want to take them because they had no passports. The Germans took them back, and they went back on the train from the town, then from their homes where they came from. And we went back where we lived. But then, of course, soon after was the Kristallnacht and then things started to roll, you know. And after the Kristallnacht, I was sent to England.

How much time did this take, this going to Poland and back?

About 48 hours. Maybe 24 hours because they took me-- the Gestapo came about 2:00 o'clock in the morning, took me to the jail. Everybody was there. Next morning, we were sent on a train to the border. So probably 24 hours. And that night I came back again. I was sent back.

Did they give you food?

Yeah. They gave us sausage and all being Polish. As I explained before, nobody ate that nonkosher food, so nobody would touch it. I remember that German said, when in need, even the devil eats flies, so you better eat that sausage. But nobody would touch it because all the Polish Jews in those days were mostly religious or at least they kept kosher. But I don't remember beside that that we got any food. I don't think so.

How did people treat you on the train with the other Jewish people? How did people treat you --

Yeah.

How was that [? train? ?]

There were families there. I was by myself. I was by myself. They had food. I don't remember that I had -- It's too long ago to remember the small details.

But there were families, you know. Father, mother, and their children and lots of crying and lots of confusion and lots of unhappiness. People being taken away from their homes, being sent to Poland where they came from years ago, and full of premonitions and full of fear. I remember there was a lot of hysteria going on in that train, lots of noise, and lots of crying and weeping.

Did any of the children get together

With children--

Other children on the train?

Oh, that's-- I don't remember. I cannot remember. There were lots of children, I do know. But I was-- in a way I was terrified by this action, you know? And I didn't feel too much like playing.

I was concerned with what's going to be. Where I'm going to be and so forth. Besides, I was there by myself. I was the only one who was by himself. The rest were all with families.

Where was your mother and your sister?

Oh, they were also-- later on, they were sent in another frontier crossing, and they also had no valid passport. So they also were sent back. They came back and then they met me instead. They came to Stettin, to that hostel, and then suddenly, the doorbell rang and there she was. Only to be later sent away to Auschwitz, but that's another story.

How did the-- did the Poles shout insults at you, or --

No. You see it was a frontier. There were no Poles. But on the other side in Poland, we went into a kind of an inn.

And I don't think there were any Poles in there except the owner who was selling whatever tea or coffee or-- I don't remember. Or sandwiches maybe. I don't remember that exactly. But there were no Poles in that inn. It was filled with the Jewish people who were being evicted and waiting for the train to take them to Warsaw.

When you were on the train with all these other families, did anybody kind of see that you were alone and take you in?

No. Only when we arrived at the frontier. And I was standing there by myself, and I must have looked a miserable little-- very, very sort of pale and cold. And this woman took pity on me. She came to me, and she looked at me. And when she looked at me, she started to cry. She started to cry.

She felt a lot of compassion for me. And she asked me, where are your parents? And told you this. I said, they are not here. Anybody you are with? I said, no, nobody. And then she offered to take me over the border to Warsaw and then maybe find my relations. And thank God I came to a decision not to continue to Warsaw.

Did you have any money with you?

No. None.

How did you get the train fare back?

The Germans did it. The Germans put me on the train, put me back. In fact, when I arrived back in Szczecin, this office was still open with the officials who did the sending away. They were still sitting in there.

And I knocked on the door, and I came in. And he thought I was a German child. I mentioned before I was very blond.

And when I told him that I had been on this train, he said, OK, you can go home. I said, well, I'd like to phone. And so he gave me few pfennigs, and I phoned.

And this director of the school, he was still up, you know. He was so worried about me. And when he heard my voice on the phone, he said he was so happy.

He said, you come towards the hospital, and I'll meet you. I'll come towards the railway station. So this German official gave me some pfennigs and I phoned. And so we met, and I came back again home.

Excuse me. Can I get some can I

Ask it

Start with that one.

Let's say at any time or we're all set.

OK, so I was curious because your memories of the antisemitism in Poland and from your parents' memories is so scary and dark and overwhelming and yet the antisemitism that you're describing in Germany at that time was ongoing and daily and very menacing. And it's interesting, that contrast.

My answer to that question is that Germany was my life and Germany must not-- we didn't suffer any poverty. We had always-- we had a good life materially. My parents were well off.

We had a shop. We always had enough to eat. We had nice clothes. And we had a nice house, and the house was furnished. It was our own house. And I went to school.

And, as I explained before, the antisemitism that I encountered in Germany, it was sort of part of my life. I didn't know any difference. But in contrast, Poland it seemed such a life full of troubles, full of poorness.

People never had enough to eat. There was no such thing as a child going to work in Germany at the age of 11. The earliest a child could go to work was the age of 14.

And, of course, schooling. My parents had no schooling. And Germany was a very well-organized country, and this whole antisemitism wasn't so virulent. It was here and there somebody used to abuse you, insult you, but it wasn't every day. It wasn't every day. Sometimes somebody and then--

And we had German friends, too, who used to come into our house. And my mother used to talk to neighbors. And I used to go into shops. So it seemed the kind of an ordinary life we led.

So we knew the outburst of antisemitism, there was no-- how can I explain it? There was no fear of anything happening to us in those days. OK, it happened. And my parents were even used to that sort of thing in Poland. And I saw it in Germany but only from time to time. It didn't happen every day.

But sometimes, things were pretty tough for me in the German school, very tough. I remember an incident. One day, my mother went to Poland to visit her parents and when she came back, she brought a sausage, a kosher sausage. Did I tell you that story? And it was a wonderful sausage, and it was full of garlic and I love that sausage smell to high heaven.

So the next day, my mother made me sandwiches to take to school. And she put a very generous portion of garlic on my sandwiches, and I took it to school and put it under my desk. And that morning, a kriegler came, and he was our art teacher. And he had a limp. And he was wounded in the First World War, and he blamed the Jews for having this limp. They were the cause of his infirmity.

So in the olden days, when the teacher used to come in, then all the children used to get up and we used to say in unison,

good morning, Herr teacher, Herr Lehrer, used to bow down, that sort of thing. But he was already in SA uniform. And when he came in, he raised his hand, and he was going to say, Heil Hitler. But he didn't quite manage the Hitler because he said Heil and then he smelled the garlic. So he wasn't able to finish the Hitler.

So he pulled his nose up and he immediately knew who was the perpetrator. So he started to play cat and mouse. He went from desk to desk to smell and left me to the very last, and I was sitting there squirming. At last he reached my desk and then he looked under the desk. He pulled out the bag of sandwiches and held it very far from his body so that he shouldn't be contaminated by the garlic because garlic was a food the Germans said is endemic to Jews. They love garlic as if the Germans didn't like it, but that's a different story.

So he took those sandwiches between his thumb and his forefinger, and he took me by the scruff of the neck and propelled me to the door, opened the door, and kicked me with his foot out of the door. I slid across the corridor against the wall, and I held my head. And he threw the sandwiches after me. So I cursed him, that monster, under my breath. And I went home, and I told my mother this story.

So she took her hat, and she took me by the hand and hurried back to school and had an interview with the director of the school. And I remember like today he said, Frau Grossman, there's nothing I can do. We are living in hard times. So that was a story about the garlic sausage.

How old were you?

I was about 11, 11 and 1/2. And from that day on, the children in the school used to accompany me home. And they, in unison, used to chant verses against the Jews, you know, Jews with long noses and long, dirty fingernails and so forth. And then the next morning, they waited in front of my house in order to accompany me home again to school and that went on for quite a bit. And then my mother decided it's about time to go to a Jewish school because it was getting too much.

But that wasn't every day. It was occurrences. And we took it in our stride. You know we were conditioned to it. Actually, I personally didn't know any difference.

That's the way the world went around with me. I didn't know that there was any-- I thought it was the way Jews lived. That's it. We had to take it.

But then, of course, today I've undergone a metamorphosis. I wouldn't take nobody from nothing. I mean, even to think that I would tolerate any kind of treatment of that sort is so alien to me that I mean, it wouldn't occur to me that I should even tolerate or agree to such treatment. I mean, it won't happen to me again or to my children or to my grandchildren to nobody, or to no Jew.

Last time you said something about some antisemitic verses kids in Poland yelled at you?

In Poland? No. I was never in Poland except on the frontier. Only in Germany.

OK. I don't remember what it was like, so I won't ask it now. You mentioned about, last time again, about how there were two streets your family lived on in Warsaw that became famous. Why did they become famous?

And I heard that my mother lived in the Nalewki and my father lived on the Krochmalna I had, as a child, my father used to speak in Yiddish. Then they spoke Polish only when they didn't want me to understand what they were talking about. But Yiddish, I speak and understand very well. Indeed, it's very close to German.

So very often they talked about the Nalewki and the Krochmalna And I came across these two streets later on, and they were part of the Warsaw ghetto. And I read several books on the Warsaw ghetto, and I came and I saw maps and there the two streets were right in the ghetto. So then I assumed that my parents lived in the Jewish district of Warsaw, in the poorer district. Even in films I sometimes saw the streets, you know, slums and the Warsaw ghetto, so I recognized them.

What was life in your family like?

I think my father had a kind of frustration. He wanted his children to become doctors and lawyers. I didn't think we could make it. I didn't think we had it in us.

And besides, he was a simple man as I described before. He didn't know how to read and write. He never went to school except maybe to trade and to learn how to read a prayer book.

But fundamentally, he was not an educated man. Neither was my mother, but they had this cleverness of simple people. They knew how to shape their lives and to make a good living and they're very good, in a way, good merchants.

And, you know, he bought a house, and he bought another house, and he had a nice shop, and he raised his family. There was nothing wrong with that. But he never went to school, but like all Jewish parents, they wanted their children to become something.

But we had some kind of conditioning because in the school, my learning was stunting. I couldn't even think of learning because I was always thinking of what is going to happen next, what is the teacher going to be next, and what are the children, my fellow pupils, what are they going to be next? I could never really concentrate on learning. I was stunted completely.

My whole thoughts were focused on only, I hope it's going to be-- this class is going to be over, and I'm going to be able to get home without my fellow pupils accompanying me home and shouting these terrible verses after me. And the next day again I said, what is the teacher, he always makes terrible remarks about the Jews. So my whole mind could not be concentrated on learning at all. That's happened to my two brothers as well. My sister, I don't know, I don't remember.

It followed me very long in life since I didn't have the fundamentals of learning. Any child, I think, it's the most important years of his life and he gets the rudiments of learning, which I didn't have. I just couldn't study.

But in later years, thank God, I think I got a little bit of wisdom, maybe [INAUDIBLE]. In fact, I educated myself, I think. I read a lot and what I do is I think a lot. So I'm always thinking, so I read a lot.

And thank God I think I'm late bloomer so I got some knowledge and some wisdom, so to speak, in later life. But I was never able to fulfill the dreams of my father to become something. So I think my father was a little bit frustrated. He saw that his children couldn't be that what he wanted them to be.

He was also an impetuous man. He was quick tempered, but he never touched his children. But I think the whole question of livelihood under those circumstances were a strain on him.

But we had nice Shabbatot, and we had nice holy holidays and so forth. On the festivals, you know, we all went to synagogue and so forth. My father sat down with us in order to learn a little bit of the Tanakh of the Old Testament. Although I don't think he was such an expert, but he wanted us to learn.

But it was a middle-class family. It was lots of love in our family. I think there was nothing out of the ordinary. It was enough within the framework of our family except of course the surroundings were tough.

In fact, I know when I told you I went-- last year, I went back to the town I was born in after 50 years. And I looked around and all those memories came flooding back to me, and I saw the same streets. They hadn't changed. Same cobblestones. In fact, I saw the same people. I saw, of course, there was a new generation there. And there were people of my age.

I went to the school in order to find out-- pupils, you know, fellow students. But I wasn't able to because the records were not there and it was too long. The contemporary director, principal of the school, he said he didn't have any records of-- I was trying to find somebody to speak to him and maybe remind them of what they did to me.

Anyway, I wasn't able to, but people didn't look any different to me, and I don't know whether I'm wrong or whether I'm right. Given the same circumstances, I think nothing has changed in Germany. It could happen again. It happened before not so long ago.

But, you know, no change except in myself. I was a changed person. I was-- in the olden days, when somebody used to speak, hushed Jewish people. They used to say, don't talk so loud. You're making [NON-ENGLISH]. The word [NON-ENGLISH] means you're creating antisemitism. Don't dress too ostentatiously. Don't do this and don't do that, you know. We were a frightened people.

And I was motorcycle racing in the two days I was in my friend's house. My friend took me there. And I looked at the people. I was the only Jew who had ever come back to the town, the only person.

And I looked-- you know, he didn't know what he was talking to me about, motorcycle racing. But I'd seen once or twice. That was enough for me but again and again, it had-- nothing to me. You've seen once, you've seen them all.

So my mind was one thing. And then I saw my parents and, you know, those memories came flooding back into my mind. And I looked at these people. When the races were over, there were a million beer bottles lying there, all pointed towards me.

And I said, my God, I said, you just tell these people the Jews are the cause of all your troubles. For 50 years, you had communism. And for 50 years, you were deprived of the good things the West did. And you have no work, and you have no state, and you've got these terrible Trabant cars you're driving. And there you see in the West that they drive those beautiful cars, and they make a wonderful living. It's Jews. It's the Jews who had fought, so I felt that and--

Did you actually hear that when you went there?

No. No, there is a phenomena there. I met a friend. Actually, a friend of my brother's. He was older as me. He lives opposite our house.

And you know, seeing each other was a tremendous experience for me. And he was very close to the Jewish community there because his father was a kind of a socialist communist, and he always played with the Jewish children. And he brought back so many-- he had so much knowledge about the Jewish community and what we did as children.

He amazed me, what he knew. I only thought that I knew them. But he came out with such things, you know, I was amazed. Really, truly, I was amazed what he knew, that he should have kept these memories because to me, they were close. And to him they must have been just sort of not important. But he knew them all. So what did you ask me?

Oh, if you had actually heard--

Oh, yes. Well, he introduced me-- he's a well-known personality there. Everybody knows him. And he introduced me practically to maybe a hundred, a hundred-fifty people. He said, this is Ali Grossman, and he was born in this town, and he is an Israeli, and he lives at the moment in America.

You know, there wasn't a single question. Really? How is America? How is Israel? When did you leave? When did you come back?

There was no reaction whatsoever on part of the Germans. And he must have introduced me, as I said, to many, many people. They just said, hi.

In fact, he introduced me to an elderly man whom he told me he had been in prison for about 15 years for killing people, Jews maybe. But he said, well, you know, maybe-- he tried to excuse him, but I was standing right next to that man. And he looked an ordinary man to me and ordinary face, and then he was for 50 years in prison for murdering Jews.

And I was standing right next to him, and he had been released from prison. He had served his time. And he introduced me to him, and there was no reaction. He wasn't frightened, he wasn't embarrassed, nothing.

But one incident I'd like to tell you about. The day I left, I had rented a car in Hamburg and driven with that car to this East German town. And it had West German marking, of course, on the car. You know, the-- and I had it in front of the inn I was staying in, a kind of a hotel, kind of a family hotel.

And I was lugging my suitcases out and stowing away into the boot when two elderly men passed, and they saw this West German sign on my car. One came up to me, took hold of my hand, and shook my hand, says, where you from? From Munich? From Frankfurt? From Hamburg?

I said no, I'm from Jerusalem. In German, of course. He said-- went like this, in an elderly way says, where you from? I said, [SPEAKING GERMAN] Jerusalem. I'm from Jerusalem. He said, [SPEAKING GERMAN]. I said, I repeated again, [SPEAKING GERMAN] Jerusalem. I'm from Jerusalem, Israel.

So he turned to his companion and said, [SPEAKING GERMAN]. He's crazy, he's nuts. And he walked on. He thought I was nuts. So that was the only reaction I had from being introduced to--

Why do you think he thought you were nuts?

I don't know. It was so incongruous to him that somebody should come from a country like Israel to this town. For the last 60, 55 years, there had been no single Jew in that town. I was the only one, the only person ever to have returned to that town.

And when that happened, he was also a younger man. And I know it went on his head that anybody should be still alive and come back to the town, I don't know. I have no idea.

But an interesting thing, I wrote a letter to the mayor. I didn't bring that letter. I promised to bring it last time and pictures, but could be another time. You know, complaining about the fact that he knew I was coming because I asked him to arrange lodging for me. And he had done it, and he knew the day I was coming.

And I really thought that he would invite me to his office and speak to me. Welcome. We'll send the press, even, you know. After all, no Jew had ever come back. It's an occurrence. Well, it didn't happen.

So I wrote a letter. I have also translated it into English. Maybe it would be interesting to read.

Anyway, that letter was published in the local newspaper in German and a maid of ours-- she must be 90 now-- read that letter. And one of her children wrote me in tearful letter. You know that she-- before she died, she wants to see me.

So that was the only kind of reaction I can tell you about. So as if would have been no Jewish community there. Not a single person who had known any Jew or my parents except, of course, my friend who lived opposite. But, really, nobody.

Did he talk to you about the war in those times?

Yes, he talked a lot about it.

What kind of-- what was the-- what kind of relationship did you develop? What kind of things did he talk about?

Oh, he, first of all, talked about his army service, that he was a mechanic, and he served in Italy. And then he was captured by the Americans and incarcerated in some-- and then he came back. And he hated the Communist regime. In fact, one of his sons tried to flee East Germany to get into West Germany. And he was caught at the border, and he was imprisoned 3 or 4 years for that. So he really hated the communists.

But otherwise, in a way, he was a kind of a patriot. He took me to a museum, and there was a local sculpture. And he showed a sort of pride that the sculptor was born in this city. So I felt that he had some pride of his town. After all he lived all his life. But otherwise, I--

Did he express compassion for what had happened to the Jews?

No. You know, I have sometimes spoken to people about what was done to my people very often, and I spoke vehemently about it, you know, accusingly. And it always turned out sour. Nobody liked it. Nobody liked it when I spoke, you know, when I expressed myself forcefully.

I said, you know, the time of reckoning hasn't yet come between the Jews and the Germans. The time will come. The Jews have a long arm, and we have a long memory. We shall never forgive. And don't you worry. Your time-- you know, that sort of thing.

I was very, very-- and I felt I was in his home, and he took me to his children's home, and they avoided talking about it. And I felt that I had made this mistake of people -- and I estranged people for that. I mean, not that I care so much, but sometimes, you are together with people, it's, in fact-- but let me put it this way.

I was in-- after the Six-Day War, I went to Germany. And I went into a traveling agency and then, of course, the whole world was behind Israel. You know the Six-Day War, they admired the Israeli army and what this little Israel had done to beat so many armies in six days.

So the man, I asked him about the fare to Israel. He said, are you from Israel? I said, yes. And he was so enthusiastic about Israel. And then I started this tirade against Germany. And he said, you know, I understand you, but Israel needs friends. But if you talk like that, you will estrange people.

It taught me a lesson. I can't do much. I mean, if I would give a speech or I have an audience, then I can say what I want. But I felt the man was right. It's no use just letting myself go and giving vent to my feelings. And it won't get me nowhere.

So there I was in his home. And there I was in his children's home. And the children were even born after the war.

And I know he was a good man. I know his father was a good man. His father was always for the Jews. He never put in his window, for instance, the sign which everybody had, we do not serve Jews or dogs or something of that sort. So something can be said for his family.

So if I would have brought up the subject of the Holocaust, I think I would have estranged him. I would have brought in an aura of embarrassment.

You're talking about the friend back in your hometown now?

Yeah, yeah. I think it was an opportunity to talk to him. I felt that he was a patriot, you know. After all, he grew up in the town, and his children were born there. However bad it is, you have a feeling for your country. I think it's a good thing, actually.

But I never spoke to him about the Holocaust. He asked me where's your mother? Where's Tzili? Where's your sister? And I said, they died in Auschwitz. And he said, your mother was so beautiful.

You know, she liked him. She always gave him to eat. She called him. She called him Bubi. He said, I didn't remember that.

She sent him sometimes to the ritual slaughter to take a chicken to be slaughtered. He explained to me how he slaughtered the chickens. And he explained it so well exactly how it happened. Anyway, I felt that it wouldn't serve any purpose at all to speak to him about the Holocaust.

I did speak to a pastor about it. A pastor was very interested to meet me. He left me a message. He heard that I was in town, and he had a very nice church. And we had long discussions about this.

And then I accused Germany. And he was a very compassionate man. I think he was a just man. And he was also too young to have taken part in the Holocaust definitely. But he was a child and maybe a little bit younger than me. But definitely not at the age where he could have done anything.

And he was full of compassion. He tried very much to resurrect the memory of the Jewish community, to put up a monument to resurrect where the synagogue used to stand. It was burned, of course. Part of the cemetery is still standing and where they used to bring the dead people to be washed. What is it called in English? [INAUDIBLE].

Not-- be ready-- in Jewish custom, a person who is dead is being prepared for burial. He's washed completely and then a shroud is put on him. And a man gets a tallis and he's prepared. So they have in the synagogue, in the cemetery they have a kind of a building. So he gave me pictures of all these things, which I have.

But my friend told me the following story, which I have written in the letter to the mayor, that after the Kristallnacht you know the Night of the Broken Glass, they took all the Jews, the remaining Jews of the town, and put them on the Jewish hearse. He said, you had a beautiful hearse. I don't even remember a hearse which was towed by horses to the cemetery from the synagogue where the dead person was put before, you know, for every-- to pay respects and then it was put on the hearse, and it was transported to the cemetery.

So they put all the Jews, the remaining Jews, on the hearse and had the two most prominent Jews put instead of the horses and made them pull it to the town while all the population jeered and cheered. He told me that story. I wasn't present then, of course.

So what kind of things did the pastor say?

What did he say? First, he wanted me to recount all I knew about the Jewish community, which was very little because I was too young. But I remembered most of the names. But he had all the lists of all that, including the names of my parents, which he had taken out of the marriage certificates all the taxes but I don't know, he got them all out. And he gave me that list.

And he had pictures of the synagogue from the inside and the outside. He had pictures of the cemetery. He had pictures of that building where the dead are prepared for burial.

And, in fact, I wrote my letter-- I wrote to the mayor, and he asked the mayor for an interview because he wanted to speak to him to get funds in order to put up a monument or even to get Russian Jews to settle in that town. He was going to do something. So when he came to the mayor, the mayor showed him my letter.

He didn't know that I wrote that letter, so he was very much touched by my letter. I will, maybe if there's an opportunity, I will bring that letter next time. I'll show it to you.

And he spoke to me about the terrible crimes the Germans had committed, which is unforgiving. He was, in my opinion, a true Christian in the very true sense of the word, a man of compassion, a man of forgiveness, a man of deep thought, profound thought. And his biggest wish was to visit the state of Israel, he and his wife. And he knew also about, of course, all the details about the Holocaust. And he couldn't forgive himself what his people had done to my people.

In fact, he wrote me several letters after I returned to America. He went to one of the West German towns, and he went to a synagogue. And he took part in the service. He was very much moved and touched by the service. The letter was full of his experience in that synagogue.

A most curious incident happened when I had this interview with him. It took me a few hours. I went back to my friend's home and just when I entered, the telephone rang. And he phoned and he spoke to my friend. I didn't know what

he was talking about.

And my friend turned to me and said, look, the pastor wants to see you again. It's very important. Could I come tomorrow at 10:00, 11 o'clock? I said, well, you know I'm leaving tomorrow at about 12:00. I'm going towards Hamburg again to catch a plane to Israel and return my car, but at 10 o'clock for half an hour, it'll be fine.

So and he told him that I'd be coming at 10 o'clock. So on the way there, I saw a flower shop, and I bought some flowers for his wife. That was part because I felt that he was a decent man, and I also wanted to show to him that, I don't know, I have the feeling that if such things can be done to people, there must be something wrong with those people. Maybe they have horns.

Maybe I had to prove to him that I have at least the same culture as he has, and part of that culture is to bring flowers to his wife. I needed to prove that to him, that I'm a human being. Maybe it's a negative kind of view. I don't know, but I needed to prove to him that we have the same mannerisms, same culture, as they have had.

Maybe he'd forgotten about it. Maybe because of all the things he has read and heard, there must be something peculiar about this. I want to show them that I'm an ordinary person with ordinary manners, and I look the same as he does, and I don't, as I said, grow any horns because some people have the understanding that Jews have horns, something wrong with them.

Anyway, I came there and I brought flowers to his wife. And she was very moved by it, that I bought her flowers. And she said to me, look I have to ask you a very important question. But I could answer.

I said, well, you haven't asked, I don't know. I'm really not an expert on the Jewish religion. I have a general knowledge about it, but please ask.

She said, look, we intend to go to Israel. We will be saving to go to Israel. The first thing we'll do, we want to go to Israel.

But my father is Jewish, she said. He lives in a village nearby, and he also survived the war. And, of course, I'm Christian. I'm the wife of the pastor. How is Israel going to receive me?

And well, that was a simple answer. I said, Israel is going to respect you and receive you like any decent human being. It makes no difference in Israel what color, creed, or religion you are.

Absolutely, this question is I can answer you 100%, you come to Israel, if you want to mention that your father's Jewish and that you are Christian and that you are married to a pastor, we treat you with complete deference and respect. There'll be absolutely no discrimination against you. And if you don't want to mention it, it's also fine. Nobody will ask you.

So she was very pleased, and she gave me a kind of a-- from the scriptures, from the New Testament and kind of for the journey, some kind of a prayer. She said, I haven't got anything else to give you, so I would like to give you this. I said, this is more precious than any present you could have given me, your wish that I have a safe journey. So she embraced and kissed me, and he embraced and kissed me. So it was very, very moving.

When you said that, I don't know, when you talked about those beer bottles all pointing towards you and you said that you just felt like, when you were in East Germany in this town, that the same thing, just how the Holocaust could happen all over again, what gave you-- did they talk, did you hear anything antisemitic?

No, none.

What gave you that impression?

None because I was reminiscing. I was thinking back of days of yonder, and I was-- And they looked the same, the

children there and the young people, the young girls and the young men, they looked the same. They looked no different. They were blond and clean and everything.

And a little incident. I had too much of this motorcycle racing, so I went to the side somewhere-- there were some trees, and I laid down, and I fell asleep. I felt I was very tired.

I couldn't sleep at night there because of the memory and because of the bad food. I didn't eat any meat there, only the cheese. But the cheese was so bad. It's unbelievable that cheese could be made in such a fashion.

Anyway, I had a tough time there with sleeping and eating. And I lay there. And suddenly, a policeman came up to me and knocked me with his foot. He said, get up.

And I opened my eyes. I didn't know where I was from. I had fallen asleep. And he said, get up. He probably thought I might have been drunk and fallen asleep in under the trees.

And I got up and said in German, what do you want? He said, [SPEAKING GERMAN] where are your papers? I said, what do you want my papers for?

You know, it is customary that a German, if he's asked for papers, then he shows his papers, by another German. And I don't take any nonsense of that sort of thing, you know. I'm an Israeli.

He said, I want your papers. I said, well, I have no papers. He said, what have you got? I said, I've got a passport. You show it to me. Very curt sort of thing.

Well, I pulled out my Israeli passport, and he looked at the side. It's on one side. It's in Hebrew and the other is in English. And he said, what is this, what is this? I said, well, have a look on the other side, you'll see.

I was very sort of gotten annoyed with him on purpose. And he said, Israel? I said, Yes. He said, what you doing here?

I said, I don't understand. What's your business what I'm doing here? You see I have a visa? I'll do what I want.

So he called another policeman. And they talked, [SPEAKING GERMAN]. He's in Israel. Leave him. And they walked off. You know so very reminiscent of the treatment by the Nazi regime, also that sort of thing. They just, you know--

But all these small things, in fact, this motor racing was also done when I was a child. That was the only diversion there. There was one cinema there, no nothing, no theater, no nothing there. I don't know what the young people do. I don't know.

I asked my friend, what do they do? What can you do? They go to the bars and drink. Now when you go to the bars and drink, what goes in, you know, comes out. When you drink and you drink enough, and you run out of money, and the beer isn't just good quality the way it should be, then you have to find a scapegoat.

So all this, I saw in my life. Hopefully, nothing will ever happen. But then I'm susceptible to very much on my guard concerning Holocaust and security. And in Israel, we are only thinking of security. So my whole being is conditioned on these things, you know?

What will happen when I have children, I have grandchildren, and my sons go to the army? And time to come, my grandchildren will have to go to the army. So my whole concern is about-- it's about security and about antisemitism, which is a very important factor in my life.

So when I looked at these people, hopefully nothing will happen, but my parents said that can never happen. The Americans say it can never happen. I don't think it will happen.

But Germany was as good a country as America, liberal. It was an enlightened country. It was a wonderful country to

live in. Jews were tremendously rich, tremendously educated. They gave so much of their intellect and of their skills to Germany as a state and as a society that it was not feasible even to think that Germany would do what they did.

So what can I say? I say, I have to be strong. I have to be united. I have to believe in my own destiny, in my own strength, and I can't rely upon anybody else. I don't think any agreement or any pact is worth the paper it's written on.

We have to be strong. We have to be united. And we have to take care of ourselves fundamentally, that's what I think.

When you were in the East Germany when you went to visit, what was your impression of the difference between East and West Germany?

That's a very nice question. You see, when I passed the frontier into East Germany, and I drove that Volkswagen, West German Volkswagen, and I had the music on, it was German. The commentator was talking in German, and they were even talking in Platt, which is the vernacular which I used to talk as a child.

Platt German, they speak that in Mecklenburg. You won't, if somebody speaks German, he will not understand that. It is almost a strange language.

So it came back to me. It came flooding back to me, and I saw the trees and the woods. And those trees who didn't even speak when this was happening to my people. All these familiar surroundings came flooding back into my mind, and I was shaken by my approaching my town.

And I saw very soon the signs, 30 kilometers took us 25 minutes to GÃ¼strow and then 10 k -- And I had always recurring dreams that I would be returning. And I would come to my front door, and I was about to enter our house. And I always woke up. I was never ever able to enter my home.

And then I was approaching it, you know. I was approaching it, and I said, either you'll have an accident, or you'll have a heart attack. You will never do it.

And I came-- suddenly I saw GÃ¼strow, the sign. That was a sign of the town where I was born, educated. So I got out and took my camera, and I photographed the sign said GÃ¼strow, you know, [INAUDIBLE] Schwerin.

Saw a woman pass, and I said, where is the center of the town, the Marktplatz? That's where the city hall is and the church. You know, the center of the town. She said about a hundred meters.

I couldn't believe it. I said, now when I go in the car, the car won't start. So I went in the car, and it started. It was a beautiful, new car.

Two minutes later, I was in the center of the city, and I looked around, and everything is just the way it was, cobblestones and the old houses, only more decrepit, everything no paint, everything was peeling. And I didn't quite-- and the street from our house is just a minute from there. But I didn't quite know how to approach it.

So I asked a man passing by, tell me where is the Baustrasse? He said, just go here. It's right there.

So I went, drove my car around, and there it was. I saw Baustrasse] in this Gothic script. You know how the Germans write. Baustrasse, I said. I can't believe it. I'm in Baustrasse.

So I drove along the street to the very end, and I didn't see our house. Didn't see our house. I couldn't, I didn't see it. I said, my God.

But our house was right next to a big, huge commercial school and opposite was the fire brigade. How do you say it in English? Fire station.

I didn't see the fire station with its big doors where the truck used to drive out, an old Daimler-Benz. And I didn't see

that. I didn't see it. So I went back and didn't see it again.

And there was a man standing there. I said, I thought I might have made a mistake. I said, where's the Baustrasse? From where to where does it go?

He said, from right where you stand to where your eye can see, not far, maybe 400, 500 feet. It's, you know, not a very long street. I said, but there was a fire station. He said, well, it's right there. I said, there was a commercial school. But didn't you see it? It's right there.

And I sat down, and I put my hands in my-- my face into my hands. I said, like, take care of yourself because my heart was sobbing into my throat. I was so moved by this being there. I'd reached it, you know. It's as if you'd reached Mount Everest or something.

So I went slowly and there I saw the fire station. There was this big gates, and I said, well, just diagonally across must be our house. And there it was. Number 34. I saw 34.

I said, Oh, my God. This is the house where we lived in. But the show window had been taken out and two windows, all of them in the living room were put in.

And I parked my car opposite, and I looked at that house. The same handle, and I remember we had a huge key to open the door, these old-fashioned keys. And the same lock was there. And I said, look, my parents had touched this, and I touched this as a child.

And I saw two people were living there. There were two bells and two names. So I rang and rang, and nobody answered. I rang the second. Nobody answered.

Suddenly, a young woman came up, and she started to ring. I said, you don't have to ring. Nobody's rang.

And she said, who are you? Well, I said, this is my house. I was born in this house, and I lived here until the age of 11.

She said, who are you? I said, I'm from Israel. And I'm Jewish. This is the house of my parents.

So she said, yes. She said, you've come back. As if she were saying, you're still alive. She might have thought every Jew was dead.

I said, yes. I'd like to see inside. Who's living here? And she said, well, there's a girl with a child living downstairs and a girl with a child living upstairs. We had about eight or nine homes upstairs and downstairs.

And I said, and who are you? And she said, oh, I'm an insurance agent. I need to see those people. And then she suddenly started to cry. And I said, I'm so sorry for you.

I said, don't be sorry. Why should you be sorry for me? What we Germans did to the Jewish people, she said to me. You know she must have been about 28,

30. I said, well, what can we do? There's nothing we can do about it now. Maybe you should teach your children to be concerned and not to practice any of the things your parents did.

I said, you know this street? I used to play in this street. This was my street. And you see all the surrounding? This was mine. I said that's where I grew up.

You know, she really cried, tears were running down her cheeks. I said, you know my heart is full of terrible memories here. My parents went into Auschwitz. They died. My little sister died.

But I said to her, well, the only thing you can do now is to educate your children towards understanding towards the

Jewish people and to make up to the Jewish people what the Germans, what you Germans have done. Anyway, that [INAUDIBLE] answers your question.

Did you get inside the house?

Oh, yes. But it took me two days. Then I went back. Then I only went to the inn. Then I went to the inn.

And the woman, I had written her that I had delayed my coming for a little bit because it was Pesach. I made a mistake. So I wrote, I'll be coming three days later than the established date which we had fixed upon.

And when I came in, she asked me, who are you? And I said, my name is Adolf Grossman. Oh, she said, yes, yes. We reserved a home for you, but unfortunately, we have only a home now with two beds. You'll have to pay more.

I said, there's no problem. It was so cheap. I supposed East Germany, then it turned out it was West Germany. Even then, it was so cheap.

So I said, no problem. But why didn't you answer my letter? She said to me, you know how long it takes to receive a letter?

I didn't quite believe it. But when I sent picture postcards from my town to various people here, it took about two months to reach. It's crazy. There's something wrong with the whole system.

Anyway, so I went into the shower to shower. I had been from San Francisco to Germany to Frankfurt and from Frankfurt to Hamburg and from Hamburg to GÃ¼strow. I was 24 hours on the way and, you know, I wasn't exhausted because I was full of excitement. But I need to shower, so I said, have you got a bathroom? She said, yeah, here. So I went in there and undressed.

I'm in the shower and opened the water, and two drops came out. So I dressed and I said, what's wrong with your shower? She said, Herr Grossman, that's what we've got. We got no materials. We have no craftsmen, no people who can repair anything.

You see those tiles? We waited seven years for those tiles. But you have a little bit more cold water, she says to me. If you can wash cold, that's fine.

So again, I washed with cold. There was no hot there. Two drops only. So I changed clothes. And I left my car there, and I walked towards our house.

On the way, I went into a restaurant. I said, I'll eat a bit. I'll find something to eat. And I looked at the menu. It was all in marks, and I didn't have any East German marks on me, but I only had dollars and a few West German marks, which I had from my previous trip. I had some West German mark.

I said, do you accept dollars? She said, no, no dollars. I said, well, do you accept West German marks? She said, oh, yes.

So it said, maybe a meal. I said have you got anything vegetarian? So she gave me potatoes and some cheese and some vegetables, really awful food.

And when it came to paying, I gave her West German marks, but West German marks are three times as much as one East German mark, but she cheated me there. I was pleased that she cheated me. It only showed to me it's not only the Jews who cheat but also the Germans. So it wasn't really very much.

So after I had eaten, I went to the house of my friend, and I knocked on the door and, you know, nobody answered. So I opened the front door and there was a hallway there. The plaster was falling off the walls. The banister was hanging in the -- And the stairs were all crooked.

So I walked up, and there was a door, and his name was on there. [SPEAKING GERMAN] And right next door was an outhouse, kind of the toilet. It was terribly primitive.

So I knocked on the door and a woman's voice said, who's there? And I said, I did not-- what shall I say? And then she opened the door. I said, can I come in? She said, yeah, I opened the door now.

And there she was, an elderly woman. She was cooking. And there was a sink, a cast-iron sink with a cold-water tap and a little geyser for hot water. A little geyser for hot water. You know the geysers? It's a hot-water heater. It's called a geyser.

And by the way, I asked him later, tell me, have you got a shower? He said no. For 50 years, I've been washing over that cast-iron sink with the geyser.

So I said to the woman, [SPEAKING GERMAN]. She said, I'm Frau [Personal name] She said, well is your husband [Personal name] Yeah. Well, could I speak to him?

So she said, [Personal name] And I heard a gruff voice from the living room. What do you want, [SPEAKING GERMAN], he said. [SPEAKING GERMAN]. You have a visitor. He said, I got no lots of visitors.

I hear him. You know, he was fed up with life. He said, but he wants to speak to you. [SPEAKING GERMAN]. Leave me in peace. He said, [Personal name] come, somebody wants to see you.

So suddenly he appears in the doorway of the kitchen. He was dressed in physical training shorts, what you call the shorts. And he had a vest on, a sleeveless vest, horn-rimmed glasses. And he looks and looks and looks at me.

And he says, Ari. He recognized me. I can't believe it, Ari, he said like that. We were children when we had seen each other. I was 11, and he was about 14.

He took me, and he lifted me up, embraced me and kissed me, and he carried me like this into the living room. I don't believe it. I can't believe it. I can't believe it.

I sat down on that decrepit sofa. It was all worn out. It was a horrible living room, like a poor person. And they had a shop a repair bicycle shop, I mean. But everything was in disrepair there.

So we talked, and we talked, and we talked, and he made a plan. He gave me a book where he wrote me, you know, dedication. And he wrote at the end, shalom and so forth, you know.

And then he suddenly burst out. He said, the only decent people still around in this world are the Jewish people. He hated everybody. He hated everybody, all the Christians and all the-- everybody, the communists, and the socialists, and the capitalists. The only decent people in this world are the Jewish people.

But he meant it. He meant it. I mean, you could see that he was annoyed with everybody. So he made me a plan. And I went home to the-- very excited.

I couldn't sleep. It is [? second ?] that night. I was staring at the ceiling. I saw the Jewish community pass and my parents in front of my eyes. It was-- I just couldn't fall asleep.

And then the stomach juices came up from the-- essence came out from the terrible food that people are conditioned to. [INAUDIBLE] that food. I wasn't. I'm used to good food.

So the next day, we went everywhere. And then I said, you know, I'd like to take out a birth certificate. My birth certificate, which I have still, has a swastika on it. On my birth certificate. I don't want a swastika.

So we went to the ministry of whatever it is where they take our birth certificates. And there was a stamp of the East German on it. It's a kind of a compass with the hammer, whatever it is.

So my birth certificate number hundredth. She found it straightaway, and she gave it and she said I want 5 marks.

I said, you'll get no 5 marks from me. She says, why not? I said, well, if you wouldn't have done what you did to me, I need no birth certificate. You better give it to me for nothing.

You can have it. I didn't pay for it. I mean, 5 marks is nothing, maybe \$0.60, \$0.70. It's just a question of annoying them.

So we went everywhere all day, and he said you see this meadow here? And I didn't think even that he knew. You remember where those cows were and the milk that's used to milk the cows? And we used to come with cups, and they used to put the milk in there. And we used to drink a lot. You remember that?

He remembered the smallest nuances, the smallest details, the things I thought I wouldn't even mention to him because-- then he mentioned, you know who lived there? I said, no. He said, you know the Members of Parrot? Oh, I'd forgotten about that Members of Parrot.

We used to live in-- there was a kind of-- we had to pass in a kind of a passageway where we used to play hide and seek. And every time we passed the door of that lonely old man, the parrot used to shout [SPEAKING GERMAN] in German. Halt, who goes there? Halt, who goes there? Such a shrieking, squeaky voice like a parrot.

From time to time, I used to go into the man, and I used to run errands for him. So he used to give me some sticky candies, which I used to exchange with my friends for marbles and frogs and bugs and so on. Anyway, I said, my God, I'd forgotten about that parrot. And then he reminded me of so many things which were latent in my mind.

But many things I remembered, didn't want to mention, and he mentioned them. He remembered every Jewish person in that town. Amazing memory, but the fact that he remembered the things which were close to me and not close to him, that amazed me completely.

So I stayed there for five days. They were eventful days. And the only trouble is I couldn't express myself. I was numbed. Usually, I'm fully [? tired. ?] I can speak, I can explain, I can think.

I was completely numb there. I couldn't speak. I couldn't think. I was-- as if my head was in a vise. A kind of euphoria in the bad sense.

In shock.

Pardon?

In shock.

It wasn't real shock, but there was a numbness about me. And then I walked through the streets, and I saw hundreds of people walking there. And I said, these people live in this town?

People going to work, coming from home, going shopping, standing in line for those ridiculous supermarkets. There's terrible wares in them, terrible food in there. In fact, one morning I went-- I always went for five days to his home to eat breakfast with him. I didn't really want to, but he insisted.

It was really a good thing. Where could you eat? There's no facilities. Like, you can't even compare it to-- I mean, if I compare it to America, there's no comparison.

So one day, I went into a kind of a store. I wanted to bring him something. I didn't want to come empty handed, always

eat. And I bought things and I was really-- I looked at these wares.

There were a few things from the West like yogurt and a little bit of cream and so on, you know. Bread was gray. It was-- butter wasn't butter.

So I bought quite a few things, and when I paid for it, she said, why don't you take the things? I said, well, haven't you got a bag? She said, no, you've got to bring your own bag.

I said, I haven't got a bag. So I man said next to me, buy a newspaper and put it in the newspaper. I bought a newspaper and put it in the newspaper.

So it boggles the mind to think. You can't compare it to the West. You can't compare it to Israel. Israel is the West. I mean, you get, like here in America, you get wonderful foods and the things, the bags you put in is the standard of America.

And they got these ridiculous machines where they punch in the money, and the bell dings, and these ornament things like 50 years ago. They haven't got these computers they have today. Doesn't exist.

And one morning, I didn't want to come so early, so I went to a baker shop. I went to a baker shop to have a cup of coffee and a cake. And I just want to remember the days I had those cakes. There was a sponge cake, and napoleons, those German cakes which were wonderful in those days.

And I opened the door, and I went in, and I sat down, and nobody came up to me. There were four girls sitting at a table smoking. Everything was smoking. In America, one doesn't really smoke anymore. And they were smoking. They didn't come up to me.

And I said, after I was sitting there 5, 6 minutes, nobody came up to me, I said, can I have some service, in German. She said, not 8 o'clock yet. So the door was opened by mistake, so I didn't know.

Only at exactly 8 o'clock, one got up and said, what would you like? I said, well, can I have a cup of coffee and a cake? So she brought me a cup of coffee. You should have seen that coffee. You should have seen that cake. It was maybe a week old.

So I went up to said, This is stale. She said, well, we only bake once a week. What do you want? Said, I want nothing. It's fine. How much do I owe you?

So that was East Germany. It's coming to them. It's OK. I don't care.

So these were eventful days. I swore to myself I'd never go back. But since I received a letter from this maid of ours, so maybe I will revisit this town.

When did you make this trip?

Exactly a year ago. Was that before the reunification?

Yes. I needed a visa. I needed a visa to get in there, and a visa could be taken out in San Francisco. There's a travel agency who dealt with visas. It was quite a business to get a visa because you could not, in those days, go to any countries of the Eastern Bloc without having accommodations.

And that's why I wrote to the burgermeister, to the mayor, to arrange, to make-- I told him that I was born in the city. It's difficult for me to make arrangements for a hotel because I don't know any hotels. But then, of course, a traveling agent, he could have done that. It would have taken a long time.

So he arranged it. He gave it to one of his-- in office who deals with tourists. And she wrote me and said, we have made

arrangements for you to come to this and this inn in the Feldstrasse.

And so he knew. I told him I'd be coming from this on this date. So he knew when I was coming. In fact, when I wrote him the letter, which I mentioned already-- I'd like to show you-- I received an answer from him. It was a scathing letter against the man.

And I received a response from him. He answered that letter. And he, in fact, he said that because of the reunification, his mind was taking off. And he set my letter aside in order to answer at a later date, and he forgot about it.

And he was very touched by my letter, and he wishes to apologize. The next time I come, then he will receive me. I thought maybe he would name a street in my name, but to receive me, I'm not even interested that he should receive me.

Did you think-- [INAUDIBLE].

[INAUDIBLE].

Got 5 seconds time before you go-- OK.

I was just going to go back to your childhood before the time of Kristallnacht when the armies were marching, the SS were already marching in the street and singing the Nazi songs and the fervor. And I was just wondering, you know, when you were with the other Jewish kids if there were incidents of antisemitism or with the Nazis marching in the streets, what were your attitudes with each other? Did you talk about it or say anything about it or-- How did-- how did it affect your relation, you know, how you acted with each other?

I mentioned before that all these events and occurrences were a natural phenomena. Nazis walking down the streets and parades and bands and flag waving were part of our life. And usually when that happened, we did not dare go out in the streets because our parents told us to go inside and not be seen outside. Those were the times when usually the population was in a state of fervor and upheaval, and they were being made to-- they were told, you know-- so then it all came up, this whole thing of the antisemitism, of the propaganda. Then it really took hold.

So the best thing for us was always not to be seen in the streets usually. But sometimes, there were parades by the Wehrmacht, by the Army, so those things were a usual occurrence. But when the Nazi, the SS, or the stormtroopers, the SA, those are by the Brownshirts. The SS were dressed in black, but they used to march through the streets and usually went into our homes, and we locked the doors and locked the windows and tried to keep a low profile.

So when the incident happened that you really felt that inside, you made the decision that there needed to be a Jewish state and did you ever talk with friends about those ideas and those feelings?

Well, we used to belong to a Zionist youth movement called the Maccabi. It was also a sports kind of movement. This movement transcended all other movements. It had no political affiliation except for the fact that all the Jewish children took part in it. It was a kind of a movement for Jewish children, and it was a Zionist movement without any affiliation to any kind of specific political trend.

So we used to go on outings and sit around a bonfire, and we used to talk and somebody used to give the leader I gave a talk about. Lead, I hate that word for the lack of another word, the person in charge of us.

And he used to talk about Eretz Israel. He might have been once in Eretz Israel, and he came back with stories, which were beautiful to us because it showed us a life in Eretz Israel, the free life. And he talked about the agriculture and Jews' first time working physically which was also a phenomena to me because I didn't know any single person, a Jewish person, who worked as a laborer or as a craftsman. They were all middle-class, all intellectuals like lawyers and doctors and so forth, and shopkeepers.

But there, we suddenly heard that people work the land. They work in factories, which was completely alien to me. So he explained to us, I remember like today, that the social structure is like a pyramid, the very point at the top and a broad

base at the bottom, the broad base being the proletariat and in the middle, the middle class, and on the top, very top, the intellectuals.

But with the Jewish people, it was the other way around. It stood on its point, with the proletariat at the bottom, very few, and then the middle class and then the intellectuals, the very broad base. So he told us that it should be turned around the natural way, that it should stand on its broad base, that people must work the land.

By working, they get attached to the land, and they love the land, and they build up the land. And so that is maybe one of the reasons we [INAUDIBLE] to go to universities. There might have been an opportunity at some time.

But there was a philosopher called A.D. Gordon in Israel, in Palestine, not Israel, and he was a philosopher. And he preached this. That was his theory, that a Jew must be tied to the land and work the land and work in factories in order to be a natural people. And we listened to those stories and were enchanted by those stories. We listened very carefully, and we wanted all to go to Palestine and build up the land.

We're sort of building up the land like sitting around the bonfire and singing beautiful songs. Didn't really occur to us how hard, backbreaking work it really is to work in the orchards and the orange groves. But I suppose we built up a country, and it's a good country.

You know when you were talking earlier about being in school, about how it was hard for you to study because you were always thinking of what was going to happen to you next and how could you kind of avoid it maybe. Does that mean like with this and all of the grade school, like, did you have several teachers who would torment you or--

Not all teachers were virulent antisemites, but they were all inclined to, if not positively but-- and not actively, but they would sort have a kind of a dislike for us. And even if they didn't have this, they couldn't show any affection for us or special-- so they didn't pay special attention to us. They behaved in such a manner as to be not aware of us, so to speak.

When you say they couldn't behave with affection towards you, was that political?

Definitely. They couldn't show any kind of kindness towards us even or attention towards us. That was impossible. If they would have done that, they would have been called Jew lovers. They couldn't do that.

In fact, I remember a specific case where a teacher didn't treat me so well in school, but he came in the evening to apologize to my parents, and he said these are the times there's nothing I can do. At least he had a kind of a conscience about it, and he knew that he was not treating me the way he was treating the other children so he came and felt that he had to explain why that is. He said that he could do nothing about it.

What were the differences between how he and other teachers would treat you and how they'll treat other children?

Well, the non-Jewish children were always treated in a sort of different way. It's very difficult to explain but, for instance, when school was over, when the vacation time came along, there was always a ceremony in the yard where the Nazi flag was raised. Then the "Horst Wessel" song, the Nazi song, and "Deutschland, Deutschland $\frac{1}{4}$ ber alles," the German national song was sung and everybody raised his hand.

And we, of course, did not raise our hands. We were not allowed to, even if-- we didn't even want to, but we were not allowed to. And we could not partake in the singing of it, so for a child not to be able to take part even in that is being discriminated against and we felt that all the time.

The Christian children, the non-Jewish children, were treated as ordinary children. If he was a good pupil, probably he was treated better than the next. But we were all treated with some kind of dissent, some kind of a-- it's a little difficult to explain, but I can't say that every teacher really treated us intentionally badly.

Can you think of anything specific that you recall besides the sausage incident?

Let me just think a minute. There are not too many incidents except that one day, I had a fight with another pupil, and I broke his leg. And then I knew that I was in great trouble, so I ran away to the woods and only very late evening I returned home. I was very hungry, and I made my way into the house.

And there my parents were waiting, and they were waiting, they were frightened. I don't know exactly how we overcame this, but I know that the mood was terrible. I don't recollect today exactly what happened, but nothing good came of it. I don't remember exactly how the whole thing ended.

What kind of things would the children taunt you with? What did they say to you?

Besides what I told you about taking me, you know, accompanying me home or from home to school, not always but from time to time they used to call us a dirty Jew, or they used to call us what they said [NON-ENGLISH], which means pig Jew. Well, I can't say that they always did it. I mean, we used to play together. And we used to go, in the schoolyard, we used to, during the recession, we used to sort of have games.

So it only came up at times when maybe a report appeared in the local newspaper that some Jew had done this or something of another sort, but not always did they taunt me because we were children, and children play. And we used to play marbles, and we used to exchange all kinds of valuables like all children do. So I can't really say that this was constant. It was only at times.

Did adults ever insult you when you were on the street?

Eh, I remember one particular case. There was a neighbor, a little 3, 4 streets away, and all the shops after the-- I don't know exactly when it was, but the shops, all the stores had in their shop windows a sign which said, we do not serve Jews. So we couldn't go into shops. It was, I don't know how we managed to get food into our house, but one day, my mother said to me, go to the bakery and get some bread.

So I went and then when I was just buying the bread, this neighbor came in, and he ignored me completely. And he spoke to the shopkeeper and said, I thought you don't serve Jews. So she started to stutter and then I was taken aback.

And she said to me, you go. No, we don't serve Jews. So I walked home, and I said to my mother, she won't sell me bread.

It is difficult to recollect exactly how we got all these foods, but after time, I think it was lifted, and we were able to go to the shops again and buy food. Oh, yes, I remember down the street on the opposite side was a man, and his name was [Personal name] And he used to erect fences. And he had a big old Alsatian dog, a German dog. At exactly 2 o'clock every day, he used to take his dog by the leash, and he used to pass the houses of the Jewish people, and they used to stand in the doorway sometime.