

Beginning here, so that we can put the slate on later. And we are going.

Today is January 28, 1998. We're at the Berkeley Hillel at 2736 Bancroft Way in Berkeley, California. We are interviewing Arnold Marque. My name is Peter Ryan, interviewer, and Matt Binder is doing the videotaping. Could we begin by my asking you where and when you were born?

I was born in a town called Crailsheim in Germany on March 31, 1921.

Where is that?

Crailsheim is in Wurttemberg, which is somewhat close to Stuttgart. It is east of Stuttgart, slightly northeast of Stuttgart.

And in relation to say, Frankfurt or Berlin, where would it be?

Well, Stuttgart is south of Germany, and Berlin is northeast.

OK.

So I think there is a distance of maybe 250 miles. Frankfurt is somewhat closer, but Frankfurt is then on the northwest side.

So this is in the southern part?

It is, yes.

Above Bavaria?

Yes, it's above Bavaria.

OK. How many people were in your family?

There was my father, my mother, my brother, and I. You are speaking about immediate family?

Yes.

Your brother was older?

My brother was four years older-- is four years older than I am.

OK. What did your father do?

My father was a cantor and teacher of religious subjects in Crailsheim.

How big a town was it?

Very small, I would say 15,000 to 20,000 people at that time. How many it is today, I haven't got the slightest idea.

And did they have a synagogue in that town?

There was a synagogue, yes.

And he was the cantor?

He was the cantor and the teacher.

Teacher of?

Of religion.

Religion.

Right.

And your mother was a housewife?

My mother was a housewife.

And what kind of living quarters did you have?

As I recall, I were three years old when we left Crailsheim. But as I recall, there was an apartment house, which was comfortable.

Where did you move when you were three?

From there, we moved to Tubingen, which is a university town. And my father was then officiating there in the same capacity.

How big a city was that?

Tubingen was, at my time, about 20,000 people. And it's a very well known university town, and the student body in those days was about 3,000 people.

And did you live where in Tubingen?

In Tubingen, we lived in an apartment. We had a six room apartment house. And my parents were not wealthy, but he had a pretty steady income.

I think I should explain something to you about my father's position. In Germany, there was a roof organization. The German expression was called the [NON-ENGLISH]. [NON-ENGLISH] translated means the-- let me just see how I can translate that.

They were the organization who hired the teachers and the cantors in this region of Wurttemberg, and my father was employed by them. The main seed of that [NON-ENGLISH] was in Stuttgart, and that's how my father got this job in Crailsheim. And then he was transferred to a bigger congregation in Tubingen.

So he didn't actually work for the synagogue?

No.

He worked for this umbrella organization?

That is correct, yes. Is it OK for me to drink coffee? Can you open up that for me, please?

Now, can you tell a little about the background of your father and mother?

Yes, my father was born in Galicia in a town called [PLACE NAME]. And his father was also a shochet and cantor, and he was transferred to Hanover in Germany. And my father then went to Wurzburg. That was the teacher seminary in

Germany, where he became a teacher and where he was taught cantorial studies. And then, as I was saying, he was employed by this Oberrat, these various congregations in Tübingen, in Germany.

Where is Galicia?

Galicia is close to the Austrian border. At one time it was Austria, and then it was in Poland.

Do you know how far back the family goes that you know of?

I think of my father's side it goes back a few generations go to Russia. And then they moved west to Poland. On my mother's side, there was a long, long line of German Jews. In fact, I had an uncle who perished in the Holocaust. We traced back the family for my mother something like 400 years. So they stayed there for a very, very long time in Germany.

In Germany.

That's correct.

Yeah.

My mother was born in Gotha. That's the state of Thuringen, close to Erfurt.

Close to what?

Erfurt, E-R-F-U-R-T.

Erfurt?

Yeah. And her father was a cattle dealer, and they lived very comfortably. She had a brother who became an attorney. He was very well known in this region. They all perished during the Holocaust.

Could you just say a little about what your father was like?

My father was a scholar. In fact, he got his PhD in philosophy at the age of 54. And he got his rabbinate, he became a rabbi. He was ordained as a rabbi in 1933. And he was a very fine teacher.

He had published a book which I know called, the translation means "The Concept of Faith in Judaism." And I was told he had published some other books yet, which I had no knowledge of. So he was very scholarly . Orientated

Would you have family meals?

You mean the families they--

They would all eat together?

Oh, yes. Yes. That was-- I'd like to ask you why you ask me that? Isn't that a normal thing that the family eats together?

Sometimes families do, sometimes families don't.

OK, no it was a very close family. Yes. It was close family.

Was there a lot of talk?

Yes, and since my father went to university we invited a lot of students. Non-Jewish students even, who participated in

very lively discussions about Judaism and theologies in general, et cetera. Yeah.

And tell me a little bit about your mother, what she was like.

My mother was a housewife. She was very active in keeping an orderly household. In those days you could have a maid, but she always worked with the maid. And she was a kind person.

She had lots of friends wherever she lived. And she was active in the Jewish and the women's league of the synagogue. And as I remember her, that she was a typical Yiddish mama, very concerned about the family, the well-being.

Did she come from a big family or small?

There were three children, her, a sister, and the brother who was the attorney.

And how about your father?

My father had, I think there were seven children. One of his brothers lived in Switzerland. He became a Swiss citizen. Before World War I he got there. In fact, as we progress in our interview, and you hear about my odyssey. I went to Switzerland to my uncle's bakery and became a baker there.

And then he had a brother who volunteered in World War I and was killed in World War I. He had two sisters, aunts, that I both knew them. I both knew them. He had-- well, I think about six or seven children, something like that.

Tell me about your early schooling.

I went to school in Tübingen, in elementary school. And after four years of my schooling I made the examination to go to the gymnasium, which is the high school.

How old were you then when you passed that examination?

10.

10.

Right. And then I stayed in gymnasium for two years, and then Hitler came into power. I went, let's see 21, 30, yeah, two years later Hitler came in power. And life became--

Now, both the early school and the gymnasium, were they mixed classes?

Yes. They were mixed classes.

There was no separation?

No, no.

And it wasn't a Jewish education?

No, it was public schools. Except the gymnasium is not public. For that you had to pay.

At age 10, was that when they kind of separate people into who's going to go on to higher education--

That's correct.

--and who's going to do trade?

Right, you've got to pass an examination in order to get into the higher education.

Was there a lot of anxiety about how one is going to do on that?

Certainly, if you want to make sure that you have made it. You had to pass the test.

Did you pass with flying colors?

I think I did, yes. Yeah.

So you went to the gymnasium for two years?

Two years, and then Hitler came. And then my mind was directed towards fear of being beaten up.

Did that start right away?

Yes, it started overnight. It started overnight, January 30th, 1933, and then February the 1st already you were the Jew. Because the preliminary work of the Nazis was anti-Semitism to a large extent. You heard of Der Sturmer, that's this paper. And so my mind was no longer orientated towards studying, and my grades came down.

Then my father said there is a other school called Realschule, which prepares you if you want to become an engineer, or in the more technical fields. And I then went to that school.

What was going to be the advantage of that?

It was not as academically orientated. We had to learn Latin and algebra and geometry and so on. And in the Realschule it was not as stringent curriculum.

But you'd still be the Jew?

I'd still be a Jew, yes. And I stayed in the Realschule until I was 16, in 1937. And that's when I went to Switzerland.

Now, they weren't kicking people out of schools then?

No, they didn't kick people out of schools then. The only thing I recall is there was a community bath, a swimming pool. And there were big signs on it, no Jews allowed. That I remember. You couldn't go to the parks, because the park benches said Jews are [NON-ENGLISH], which means not welcome. So it was a difficult time for a young boy like me, or young men like me, who had some Gentile friends, that overnight dissipated, they left.

They stopped being your friend.

In fact, I had a very good friend who saw me once on the street and he waved to me to come into a niche somewhere where nobody could see us. And he said to me, Arnold, I cannot greet you anymore. I cannot have any more contact with you, because I am a member of the Hitler Youth now. I had to join, and they forbade me to talk to you.

That must have been hard.

Really hard, really hard. You were isolated.

Did you know many Jewish families?

Well, certainly. Tübingen had a very elite Jewish family circle. They were either merchants, or academics, attorneys, doctors. It was a high class congregation. And actually, due to the occupation of my father, we contact every family and

we got together.

Was your father being harassed at that time?

I say something terrible, unfortunately not. Because if he would have been harassed, maybe we would have left. My father was never touched until his very death.

So he felt that it was OK? That it wasn't great, but it was OK?

My father, as scholarly as he was, he was not street smart. He mentioned when Hitler took power that he's not going to last long. And he felt that by assimilating to the German way of life, anti-Semitism will disappear. So he was no Zionist, and he just believed in the decency of the German people.

Yeah. Well, it was certainly a very common belief at that time.

Common, yes. But there were some exceptions.

Yeah. But a lot of people thought Hitler wouldn't last very long.

That's correct.

Had your father served in the armed forces at all?

When World War I broke out, being a teacher, he was excused for a long time. Towards the end he was then called up. But he never saw more action. So I would say in answer to your question, no, he wasn't in the military service.

So how did it come about that in 1937 you went to Switzerland?

OK. I went to school. In fact, my father's wish was that I go to the teacher seminary in Wurzburg, where he graduated from. And he asked me to take the examination to be admitted to that school, which I did, which I passed. And then a week or two weeks later after that, I came home to the place where we lived.

In the meantime, incidentally, the congregation of Tubingen was dissolved in 1934 because a lot of these Jewish people left, and the Oberrat didn't think there was justification to having a full time teacher there. The congregation was more or less closed down. And then my father was transferred by the Oberrat to a town called Schwäbisch Gmünd, which is maybe about 50 kilometers away from Tubingen. There were some more Jews living there, and that's where my father still officiated. And they had their own synagogue. In fact, I was bar mitzvahed in that time.

And so the telephones were taken away from the Jewish homes. We had no more telephone. And I came home from school--

Radios, could you have radios?

No, no radios and no more telephones. It was all [NON-ENGLISH], as the Germans called it. And I came home, and I saw a little card hanging on the doorknob saying that there's a phone call from Basel, Switzerland.

And my parents were not home, so I went to the post office and I called back, and there was my brother. And he said very impatiently, why don't I get an answer? And I didn't know what he was talking about. So he told me that my uncle had the opening of a baker apprentice, and he suggested that I go there. And I said I hadn't known about this. Well, I wrote a letter already three weeks ago to the parents, or two weeks ago.

Now, where was your brother calling from?

From Basel. He left Germany in 1933, because he was beaten up. And so as a young boy, he took a bicycle and he went

to Switzerland, and he stayed there. He wouldn't come back anymore.

Did he do that on his own or with--

He did this on his own, against the wishes of my parents.

Pardon?

Against the wishes of my parents.

Against the wishes of your parents.

But he was determined to stay in Switzerland. He wouldn't go back anymore.

Did you have any experiences like that, where people tried to beat you up?

I wasn't beaten up to the extent that I was hit. And at one time, I recall they carried me away in the schoolyard and they tied me to a board and spread my arms, and said that's how you crucified Jesus. I wasn't persecuted to the point where I had physical damage or physical suffering.

Emotional?

It was primarily emotional.

Yeah. Would they call you names?

Oh, they called me names. They treated me very, very unkind. You got to see that the psychology of those young people now, they all had to join the Hitler Youth. And there they were told about the Jews, how bad they are.

And so it was a free wheeling situation for those kids to let out their hatred against the Jewish people. They were 14, 15, 16 years old. That can be brainwashed overnight. And so that was-- I felt it on a daily basis.

Did you feel in danger?

Yes. I was afraid sometimes going home from school that they would be waiting for me to beat me up, which never happened. Anyhow, coming back in to how I got to Switzerland. And when my parents came home that evening, I questioned them about this letter. And they said--

Now, negotiations had been going on about doing this for you, but you didn't know it? Is that--

There were no negotiations going. My brother made a negotiation with my uncle.

That's what I mean.

But I didn't know it, and he told my parents in a letter that uncle had an opening for an apprentice. And they did not show me this letter. In fact, they hid it for me. And so when I questioned them, they mentioned yes, we know, but father thought that-- oh, my brother then took an apprenticeship as a cabinet maker, because Switzerland wouldn't allow you to work there.

We couldn't go to school because you couldn't send out any money anymore, my parents couldn't send any money. So the only thing which was possible is to work as an apprentice. And my brother started apprenticeship as a cabinet maker. And so my parents felt that one tradesman is enough. He said finish your schooling at Wurzburg, and then we all go together to America to my brother. That was my parents' idea.

Now, in Switzerland when you became an apprentice, when you finish your apprenticeship, could you then get a job?

No, they would not allow me to work for wages. Therefore, I continued to work as a volunteer in restaurants. So I learned how to cook, too. And I did this until war ended.

So your parents position was keep on with your education, and then we'll all go to America later?

Right.

Then what happened?

Well, I then mentioned to my parents that no, I'm leaving right now. And from one minute to the next I decided to leave school and go to Switzerland.

And what was your thinking?

My thinking was get out of Germany, because I had no more friends. Many emigrated and I told you my conditions were, where I was isolated and I didn't feel that life was bearable to stay there. And I would rather go and stay with my brother in Switzerland.

In the class that you were in in school, how many Jews were there?

None, I was the only one.

You were the only one?

Right.

Would the teacher try to protect you, or?

Never. In fact, I tell you a occurrence. We went for day hikes sometimes, the school. And so we gathered at the railroad station to take the train to go to the destination from where we would hike. And when I got to the railroad station that morning, and my mother had packed me a little knapsack with lunch and so on, all the kids moved away from me like I had leprosy.

And then we went in the train. Nobody would sit next to me. I was completely isolated. And then arriving at the destination, again I walked by myself. And even the teacher, who saw everything, would not even come close to me.

And when we came home, I hadn't eaten anything. And then my mother, when she unpacked my knapsack, she said what happened? So I told them everything what happened. I broke out in tears. And this gives you an idea of the emotional situation which befell me in those days.

And the kind of constant pressure that you felt under.

Well, I was isolated. I had no more social contact, no more social life.

Did you know why they thought Jews were so bad?

Well, I think that this is a theme that would take hours to explain. One thing which is maybe a simplification is I think the church itself taught that the Jews have crucified Jesus. That's how it's the beginning. And then actually, Jews were made the scapegoats of the Middle Ages, the past, and I don't have to go into this if you're familiar with. So when you ask me why do I think that there was such anti-Semitism, Catholic church had a great deal to do with it.

When they said things to you about being a Jew, did they mostly talk about killing Christ, or did they have other things

that they threw at you?

Well, the Jews were the bloodsuckers, and the Jews were the pigs, and the Jews were not clean. And that just really a people who didn't deserve any recognition.

So it was a relief to leave Germany?

Oh, gosh, as I say, I left immediately. I said, I don't want to stay.

Now, what month was that?

July.

July, '37?

1937.

And you went to Basel?

Right.

To your brother?

Correct. Well, to my uncle, actually.

To your uncle.

Yeah.

And?

And then I started my apprenticeship as a baker. I got there on a Thursday--

With him?

With my uncle, because he had the bakery. I got there on a Thursday, and on Monday morning at 3:00 AM I was up, because bakers started working at 3:00 AM. Which was difficult, but you're young and you can adapt yourself.

How did it feel to be there doing that?

Well, I missed my schooling. In fact, I took books with me and I still did some studying, algebra and geometry. But when you work from 3:00 in the morning until about 12:00 in the afternoon, it's a long day.

12:00 noon?

12:00 noon, then we had lunch, which is the main meal in Europe. And then I could lay down for a couple of hours, or three hours for that matter. And then in the evening had to get up again in the bakery to make the sponges for the next day's dose. And this was six days a week, because this was a kosher bakery.

So on Shabbat there was no work done, except in the evenings after sundown we had to start working again. That means in wintertime we started early. In summertime, we started late on account Shabbat was finished with sundown. And then we had to do our work, sometimes we worked in until 2:00, 3:00 in the morning.

Would you have been allowed to go to school if you could have afforded it?

I don't know. But there was no possibility because my parents couldn't send out any money. And schooling in Switzerland, just like in Germany, the higher learning was not public. You had to pay for it.

What was the understanding that you had about your parent's situation and what they were going to try to do?

In the beginning, I correspond with my parents. In fact, the bakery was closed on Passover. Because it was a kosher bakery there was no bread baked, so the eight days of Passover. It was the only time I had a vacation.

And in 1938, Passover 1938, I went back to Schwabisch Gmünd to visit my parents. And he still offici--

There was no trouble about documents or anything?

No, I had my passport. I could go back and forth, so that was OK. And my father officiated again in this congregation, which got smaller and smaller because people went away. And in 1937, the spring 1937, you didn't think that Holocaust was possibility.

In fact, when the Holocaust was in full swing and you heard about it in Switzerland, we denied it. When we were told that people are being gassed in Poland, we thought it was just a terrible rumor. You wouldn't believe it.

Propaganda.

Propaganda, yes. And so when my parents were in Germany they thought that eventually they have to emigrate, but there's no hurry.

And this is in '37?

'37. And you finish your apprenticeship now, and then we all go to America again. So this was the idea. So there was no urgency. That only came after the Kristallnacht, 1938. Then it became an urgency.

Did you hear about Kristallnacht at the time?

Sure, I was in Switzerland then.

And did they print it up in the newspapers?

Oh, certainly. That was publicized, yes.

And what was it like for your parents? Do you know? Were you able to--

I don't, I don't. Because the last time I was in, was in spring '38, and the Kristallnacht happened in the fall of '38. I only found out later on what happened, that the synagogues were burned down. Even then, my father was not arrested. They arrested lots of people, and you'd think that as being the Jewish leader at the congregation he would be, but he was not touched.

Nor your mother?

Neither my mother. But they had to give up their apartment, and they had to move in into a place which belonged to another Jewish person right across the street. And that was the beginning of their disowning their belongings and whatever civil rights they had left.

The synagogue was burned?

Oh, yes. The synagogue was burned down.

What was it like for you in Switzerland to hear what was going on in Germany?

My thoughts were how can I get my parents out? And I approached Jewish people, wealthy people in Switzerland. Because Switzerland, in those days, would still admit Jews if someone would get a bond of 50,000 francs or something like that per person. And I went to some relative of my uncle who was very well-to-do. And I asked him if you could put up the bonds, and he refused to do that.

In fact, I brought with me a document, which I'll show you later on, where I made myself a petition to the Swiss government to let my parents come in, which was refused. And I have this document here. It is we deny the immigration of your parents, because it is undesired at this time. That was the explanation.

Did you see a lot of your brother in Basel?

My brother went to the United States in the same year I came to Basel. I came there in July and he left for the United States in November 1937.

How was he able to do that?

OK, he came home usually once a year on vacation whilst he was in Switzerland. And the Swiss government asked him to leave after his apprenticeship.

After the apprenticeship?

Right, which was finished in 1937. And he came home and he said to the parents, do we have any family in the United States? And my mother said oh, I recall, there was some-- her maiden name was [? Freudenthal. ?] I remember there was a [? Freudenthal ?] who went to the United States. Where this person went, whether this person is still alive, I haven't the slightest idea.

With this little information, my brother had a glorious idea. He went to the Salvation Army in Basel, and he said you have branches in the United States. Could you contact them and ask them if they could find out if there is a [? Freudenthal ?] somewhere on the East Coast, New York, wherever. A real stab in the dark, unbelievable.

And Salvation Army did write back, saying they discovered a [? Freudenthal, ?] [? Sol ?] [? Freudenthal ?] in Baltimore, Maryland. And gave him the address, and he wrote to them. And they wrote back to say yes, they are from that family. I think he was second or third generation, but he is financially not in a position to put up an affidavit.

But there was a very benevolent person in Baltimore. The name was Myer Strauss. He had a department store chain, and he helps young people. And through this person they got the affidavit, which enabled him to come to the United States. Unbelievable story.

So he came in 1937?

He came in November, 1937, right. So I was with my brother from July to November, and we had a very, very close relationship then.

There was four years difference?

Four years, yeah.

That was enough not to be rivals and competitive?

Well, then I was 16, he was 21. So and he was very kind at that time to me. In fact, today I realized if it wouldn't be for him, I wouldn't be sitting here today and talking to you.

Why do you say that?

Because I wouldn't have left Germany.

Oh. It was really his initiative that made it happen?

Exactly. Exactly. Yes.

So he left in November of '37?

Correct.

And you continued on doing your baking?

Right. Until 1941.

Until 1941. What was that like for you?

Well, it was hard work, but I enjoyed my work. It was nice. I didn't get any pay, but you're young and you take these matters as that is life. That's the way it is. And you live in hope it's going to change one of these days.

Would your uncle give you some money from time to time?

Yes, he gave me two francs, which is equivalent today of about \$1.50 a week. But then I also was carrying out rolls and breads on a bicycle, and I had a big basket on my back. And I went from house to house to deliver the rolls and the bread. And sometimes people gave me tips. The big tips only came around Christmas time. That's when I made a fortune of 80 francs.

Did you get to know and have friends there?

Yes. Lots of young people there, some of them related to this bakery, so the wife's side. And I became active in the stylistic Hashomer Hatzair, which is a left-wing Zionist movement. And we got together, we had discussions.

And then the uncle had a son, or has a son, my brother's age. And I became very close to him and he was very kind to me. And through him, we were able to have a very nice social life. We met girls, we met young people, and it was pleasant.

Were these mostly people who had come from Germany?

No. No, they were mostly people who were born in Switzerland.

Switzerland?

Right.

Did you know any people who weren't Jewish in Switzerland that were close to you?

No.

No.

I don't think I had any Gentile contacts. It was all Jewish people.

Were you religious?

Well, through my father's house I became, here they would call it conservative. I was never orthodox. I sang in the choir in the synagogue, so I went to synagogue every Saturday and every holiday. I don't think I ever was religious. I always had my doubts about something like an agnostic attitude, which was confirmed that I'm right when the Holocaust happened.

You were right before your time. So the war broke out in September of '39. That didn't affect your situation?

No, I just remember I heard the September, the war broke out, but there was no war action until May the 10th, 1940 when the Germans started the attack. That's when we heard the cannons as well.

But and then there was rationing of food in Switzerland, but I worked in a bakery and there was always enough bread and food available. But other than that, it didn't affect me. Except--

So you actually heard the invasion of France?

Yes, I did. I did. I heard the cannons. Except that my fear for my parents naturally increased tremendously, about their safety.

Were you able to hear anything from them or get any word to them?

Yes, there was still correspondence, but then it was strictly censored. Every letter--

It was what?

It was censored. Every letter that came in--

Censored.

Censored yeah, was opened and--

Did you get any feeling for what was happening for them?

Yes. I had not that there was a plan of annihilation, that I didn't feel. But I just felt no more congregation, how are they going to make a living? In fact, there was a time in 19-- I think it was '39 yet, before the war broke out, I said to that cousin who was so kind to me, I said you know, I'm going to go back and get my parents. And he said you're crazy. If you do that, you never will come back again. But I was about ready to see if I could save them.

Illegally?

Illegally, yes. Which would have been suicide.

So things began to change in Switzerland after the Germans invaded France? More rationing?

Right.

And the Swiss army, were they on alert?

They were on alert, yes.

And did any of this affect the course of your daily life?

Well, you may have heard about the labor camps which were instituted in Switzerland in 1941.

When?

Labor camps.

In '41?

In '41 . You haven't heard about it?

No, I've heard.

OK.

You tell us.

OK, well, I was called to go to labor camp in 1941.

When?

I think it was in July '41. And I stayed there continuously until May 1942, no September '42.

Now, had they made a law in Switzerland that created these labor camps or what?

Yes, there was a law by the Swiss government to institute these labor camps.

And was this publicized?

No. It was kept very secret.

So they just came, they sent you a letter or?

They sent me a letter. I have to report to such and such camp at such and such time.

And where was the camp?

It was close to Basel. It was called [NON-ENGLISH]. And that's where I reported at, I went there.

Now, did you report every day, or did you have to live there?

I lived there.

You had to-- so in other words, you had to leave the bakery?

The bakery apprenticeship was finished.

It was finished?

Oh, yes.

What were you doing then?

I worked as a volunteer in hotels.

In hotel.

Right.

Being a waiter?

No, in the kitchen.

In the kitchen.

To learn how to cook.

How long had you done that?

Well, I often and on, first of all, because I spoke the Swiss dialect like a native that I went to the police department and I begged them to let me out. And there were many discussions, and the end user was you don't understand our mentality. And that was about the end of it.

But by applying for volunteer work in hotels, I only had to be then every year for three months in labor camp. And the rest I was able to work in those kitchens.

Now, was this-- you went to the labor camp in July of '41?

Right.

Until?

September '42.

September '42, continuously?

Continuously.

And then you worked out this arrangement where you could work nine months in the hotels and three months in labor camp?

Correct.

And you had to do this through the police?

Sure.

Yeah.

Yes.

And Switzerland is the only country that has two police departments, one for foreigners and one for the natives.

How were you able to convince them that this was a good arrangement?

I think it was salesmanship, and the fact that I spoke their language. The Swiss are very chauvinistic if it comes to the language. If you speak their language, you accept it more easily than if you don't.

So describe what the labor camp was like. You arrived there in July? I arrived in July, then I got my work clothes and my shoes. And then I was assigned to a bunk. There were three layers. We were about 100 people there.

Were these all foreigners?

They were all Jews, refugees.

All Jews?

All Jews. There was one Gentile, and he was Black. He came from Germany. That's the only Gentile I knew was in this labor camp.

And we had to sleep on these bunks they were right next to each other long, rows on straw. We got a blanket. In wintertime it was not heated, it was very cold.

Would you get an extra blanket in the winter?

Most people we did, yes. We didn't freeze. That's right. It was only terribly cold when we had to go to work. In, fact, when the Earth was frozen we had to use dynamite to break the ice off before we could take again, because we are building a street there.

The food was very scarce. Mainly potatoes and cabbage because that they could grow in Switzerland. It was a kosher restaurant. We had no meat. Eggs were rationed to a point where we got maybe once a month a couple of eggs. Bread was rationed 250 grams a day, but lots of potatoes and lots of cabbage, that we got.

So who ran the camp?

The Swiss.

The army, the police, the civilians?

It was civilian, but there was-- we needed a truck who was moving the Earth from one place to the other. He was a military person. The camps were under the jurisdiction of the police department.

Did people try to run away?

I don't think so, because the war was on and you couldn't go anywhere else. You were dead, you were in Switzerland. There was no barbed wire. Where would you go?

Another part of Switzerland.

And how you make a living, how do you eat?

They didn't take your passport away, did they?

No, I destroyed my own passport in 1938, when Switzerland asked the German government to stamp the passport with a J, a red J so they could distinguish between who wants to come to Switzerland who was Jewish, who was non-Jewish. And there was a Swiss consulate in Basel. And when I got my passport renewed and I saw the J, I just tore it up in front of the thing and that was the end of my passport.

No more passport?

No more passport.

Was that going to cause you trouble later?

No. The Swiss government, who gave me a state permit when I came there legally in 1937, changed that status to transmigrant. And they issued me a passport, some sort. In fact, the color was yellow, orange, something like that, which had to be renewed every six months.

Every six months I had to go to the police department. And every six months I say any legal means you have to leave Switzerland, you must leave. But the war was on so there was no way of leaving.

But they would keep saying?

They always said to us every legal means. In fact, it was stamped into this paper that every legal means you have you must leave Switzerland.

How far would they investigate that, whether they were any legal means that you had or not?

They knew the war over. Where else would you go? I mean--

So it was a pro forma thing that they had to say?

It was a pro formu, that's right. What was that year like for you in the labor camp?

Well, as I was mentioning to you, I met some wonderful people there.

Friendships that--

Friendships developed, yes.

Yeah. That survived after?

Yes, in fact, there is one friend of mine who lives today in Israel i was a labor camp with. And there is another person in San Francisco I was in labor camp with, a man in his 80s, which we recently gained together. In the beginning very frequently, and then it fell asleep, and now we restituted that again.

The camp was a miserable place. You felt that you were deprived of any human rights. You had to be there. You were forced to be there.

What was the consequence if you said I won't do it?

They would send you back to Germany, which they had done in certain cases, when they quote, "misbehaved." The Swiss policy until 1942, Stalingrad, to a large extent, I'm speaking about the government, they assume that Hitler is going to win this war. And they just as well fall in line, because there's going to be a new order in Europe. And they want to secure their positions. And there are some very high ranking military people and politicians in Switzerland who publicly announced their belief that Hitler is going to take over all of Europe. And after Stalingrad, when they saw finally the war is taking a turn, the attitude the Swiss government changed slightly.

To what?

To be a little more tolerant. Instead of going to a labor camp in 1943, they allowed me to go to a farmer and work there for three months. And the last labor camp I was in was in 1945, shortly after we were married.

I had to go back to labor camp in a beautiful area in Switzerland, called Champéry, which is way down on the southwest side of Switzerland, beautiful mountainous area. And there was a different attitude. There was, the example is as I explained to you, we were shortly married, my wife and I. And the separation, we were married in March and in May I had to go back to labor camp.

And the separation was hard to take, so I asked the labor leaders that we [INAUDIBLE] that I had reports from my wife that she had heart problems. And I better go and see what's going on. They gave me a pass and they paid for the railroad trip coming to Basel.

They paid for it?

They paid for it. And then there was a doctor there who was very favorably inclined towards the refugees. And he made a certificate recommending a change of climate or altitude.

And with this letter, I went to the labor camp and they allowed then for her to come too. And this would not have been possible before 1942. So they allowed us to be together again. Then the war ended a few weeks later. new

Did they, in that period where you were continuously in the labor camp, were you treated well?

I wasn't beaten.

Did they run it like a company, or did they run it like the army?

I think it was run like the army. If I would have had a uniform, and be a soldier in similar conditions, I guess it would be the same thing.

Would they yell at you?

No.

Would they tell you that you weren't working hard?

At one time, I took a stone and I threw it. I wanted to see how far I can throw the stone. And just then, the technical camp leader came by and he saw me doing it. And as a punishment, I couldn't go on the weekends on my leave. So that was the only thing.

But other than-- oh, we had certain quotas, which we had to fulfill. And we, the young group, we just worked very, very hard to make that quota. Maybe about 10 carloads full of move dirt, move to load with a shovel. And then we could go back to the camp and read or rest or whatever it was.

So if you finish your quota you could--

Then, yes.

You could stop work?

That's right.

What were you working on?

A street.

A street.

We were building a street, yes.

And what kind of geography was this? Was this mountainous?

No, it wasn't-- it was close to Basel. And it was hilly, but it wasn't mountainous.

We're going to stop in a minute.

Yeah, OK. Did you learn anything?

Sure, how to build a road. I mean, I know what's necessary. You had to measure the grate to level this out. And then to put the stones at the underneath there before you put the pebbles on top of it. So when you say learn something, I knew something more about road building than I did before I went to camp.

Did you resent having to do that?

Yes, I did.

Having to be in the labor camp?

I did, because I felt here I am, a baker and a pastry chef, certified by the Swiss government. I got the certificate here. I show it to you then. And why do they keep me to that stupid work? I could do something much more useful. Something-

Didn't they need bakers in the labor camp?

No, that was just the kitchen where they made the potatoes and the soup of the cabbage. And I worked the kitchen once in a while, but I'd rather be on the outside in the fresh air.

So you preferred working outside?

Right.

Yeah.

Because you weren't going to learn much in that kitchen.

Exactly.

I think we'll take a break. We have to change the tape.

Good. I want to go-- is the tape off?

We'll resume in a minute.

Is it off?

No, but now.