

Yeah, I wanted to go back to that period where you were in the labor camp continuously. Did people keep coming and going? Were people allowed to leave?

Well, there was more or less the same people there. Sometimes they got transferred to another campsite. Then maybe some new people came, but this was very infrequent. When you say, were they allowed to leave? The answer is no. Unless they were transferred to another campsite.

What would be the reason for the transfer? That a person may have another friend in another camp, which he found out about it, and could he be united with this person?

I see. They would let people do that?

They would do that, yes.

And these were all males, no women?

All males.

Yeah. And then how was it that you were able to leave after a number of months there? More than a year.

By going to the police department and pleading with them to let me get out of camp and to work as a volunteer.

How did that idea come to you?

I--

Had you heard of others who did that?

No, I haven't heard of others I wanted to work in the culinary field. I knew I couldn't get a work permit as a baker. And I felt if I'm gonna learn something else, it will be useful later on in life. Then I'll know how to cook as well, and that's what gave me the idea.

How long a process was that, to talk them into allowing you to leave?

Oh, it took a few weeks before I appeared personally at the police department and stated my case. And then it had to go to Bern, which is the capital of Switzerland. And so they let me know after maybe a month or so that I was able to leave.

So you left in--

September '42.

September. '42.

Right.

And what did you do then?

Then I worked as a volunteer in a restaurant, where I-- during the weekend, I was usually off in this labor camp. And I appeared there personally. And I said, could you use me? I am a learned pastry chef and a baker, and I would like to work in the kitchen. And who wouldn't want to have someone who works for nothing?

Sure. And they never could give you anything or never did give you anything?

Yes, they gave me about 20 francs a month.

What would that amount to?

\$6 or \$7. But I could sleep there, and I had my food there. But I didn't get any wages.

Could you eat well?

Well, I ate with the rest of the kitchen crew. Sometimes it was good, sometimes it wasn't so good, depending on the restaurant.

Sure.

Right.

And how long did you work in that restaurant?

I worked in that particular restaurant for about four months. Then I wanted to improve myself, to go to a more prestigious restaurant. And I applied there, and they naturally took me, too. And I worked there for maybe another period until I had to go back to a labor camp. And when I came back, I applied for a job in a first class hotel in Basel.

In fact, it was that hotel where Herzl stayed doing the first Zionist Congress. When you see the picture of Herzl standing on the balcony, that was the hotel, called The Three Kings. And I worked there until I had to go back to labor camp again.

And what were you learning?

How to cook soups, potatoes, meat products, salads, the general thing which you learn in kitchens.

Would you have any difficulty if they wanted you to make pork and things like that?

I would have no difficulty, but I never was asked to make any pork dishes.

Was the first class hotel more generous than the others had been?

They were.

They were?

They got me three times as much money. And when we got married, the boss even paid for the room we lived in.

No kidding.

So he was-- but then, here we go again, 1943 it was, when I worked in this hotel. And the war was already changing, and so they were more lenient.

What kind of feeling did you get for the Swiss people?

When I was there I felt pretty comfortable. And I must say, the Swiss people, the older Swiss people were anti-German. That goes way, way back, even before the war. They called the Germans [GERMAN], which means pig German, something like that. They were never fond of them, the ordinary people.

And since I could melt into the surrounding, due to the fact that I spoke the language like a native, I had no animosity toward the Swiss. Naturally, I resented the fact that they wouldn't let me work. And that's why I was glad to leave

Switzerland very fast. But I had no animosity against the Swiss.

They were-- like there was a chef, there were two chefs who were anti-Semitic, executive chefs. But then I worked with a Gentile colleague of mine. In fact, I still correspond with this person today. I was invited to his house three years ago, and we invited him back last year in our house he was here.

And he was very understanding, and--

This was a Swiss citizen?

Swiss citizen, Gentile.

Yeah.

And--

He knew your situation?

He knew my situation, was very understanding. He was very kind. And when he heard this chef making those anti-Semitic remarks, he says, what a stupid person this guy is. So he was very kind.

Did you have any knowledge then of the policies of the Swiss government about letting Jews in or not letting them in?

Oh, yes, I did.

You did? What did you know?

I knew that they wouldn't let Jews in.

How did you know?

Well, for one thing, when they rejected my parents' entry. And no more refugees were coming in after, when the war started.

The boat was full.

The boat was full. That's right. So primarily because they wouldn't let my parents come in. And so it was generally known that the Swiss-- what they called it the *Äoerberfremdung*, too many foreigners in this country. Which was directed mainly against the Jewish people.

I guess they were the ones who needed to flee the most.

Yes. Possible.

Was that good times, working in this first class hotel?

Yeah, I enjoyed it.

Yeah?

I enjoyed it. I always enjoyed what I was doing, whether I was baking things or in the kitchen. I was eager to learn something. And it was nice.

What was your social life like then?

With those Jewish people on the outside. And as I was saying, this Gentile person, which we met every now and then. But mostly Jewish people.

Yeah. What would you do with him?

Oh, I would go to the movies. He would invite me to-- he was married, and we went to his house. And was nothing of an extended situation, but we got together in a leisurely manner.

Yeah. He liked you, huh?

He liked me. To this very day, I think he likes us.

Where does he live now?

He lives in Switzerland.

Still?

A small town, right.

When did you meet your wife?

I met my wife in 1943. She is the sister of a cousin of mine. And when she came to Switzerland, I had the occasion to meet her. Actually, it was in 1942. That's when I saw first her, when she came to Switzerland.

1942.

In 1942, when she came to Switzerland again. So I was visiting my cousin. And in fact, he was on my customer list, so I delivered bread and rolls to him.

And did you heat it off right away?

No, we didn't. I was aloof. She was aloof until later on. I knew I was coming to the United States. We're going back now to 1943. As a matter of fact, it was in January 1943 when I told her that I-- well, it was the fall of 1942.

Her sister asked myself and my cousin, which I-- through the bakery, to take her out to movies and for dancing. And we did. And then I told her that I go to an English club in Basel, to perfect my English.

You were already readying yourself for coming to the US.

That's correct. And she said, oh, I'll be interested to go there, too, because I want to learn how to speak English. Because I want to go to America after the war. So would you teach me English? And I said, yes, I will. I was strictly on a teacher-pupil basis.

And then later on I--

Now, she told me that you said to her, yes, I will teach you, but only if you're really serious.

That's correct. I told you, it was strictly teacher-pupil. But then I fell in love. She was a very beautiful woman. Even today, yeah. And then in 1943 in January, I asked her to have a date with me. And then I asked her, would you want to be my girlfriend? And that's how it all started.

Had you had a girlfriend up to that time?

Not a steady one, no.

So this really changed your life, huh?

Very much. Very much, yes. I felt finally I belong somewhere. I had an attachment, which I didn't have up to then. I knew people. I got together, but there was no intimate feeling of comfort until I met my wife.

So love really crosses borders, doesn't it? Because this was two refugees in a country that you didn't belong in.

That's right. So we had a common destiny.

Were you in contact with your brother during the war?

No. He was volunteering in the Navy. He was a CB. And he spent five years in the war in Guam. It was only after the war that the contact was rearranged again.

Was it that you weren't able to know where to write him, or?

I didn't know where he was. And I guess he couldn't write here, because the United States was-- the war was with Germany, and I don't think any correspondence would go through between those two countries.

The United States didn't have correspondence with Switzerland?

I didn't get any correspondence. No.

Did you know anything about the whereabouts of your parents at that time, 1943?

In 1943, there came a letter from my mother, to my uncle. In fact, I was working in the bakery. And he came and he said, your father's dead. And he gave me that letter from my mother, where she said that father died of a pneumonia.

Pneumonia?

Pneumonia, right. And it wasn't until after the war that I knew the true circumstances of the death of my parents.

That wasn't the truth.

That was not the truth.

In the letter?

That's correct.

Did you have a clear idea about the conduct of the war, being in Switzerland? Did you know what was happening?

Well, yes, we were informed. The Swiss being neutral, they always brought the reports from the headquarters of the Allies and the headquarters of the Germans. And we heard on the radio when Hitler was speaking. In fact, I remember in '42, I was in labor camp when Stalingrad was on. And there was this radio blaring, giving this [? furious ?] speech, and we're going to take Stalingrad. You can rely on that.

So we were pretty scared while we were there. Because we were fearing an invasion of the Germans in Switzerland.

And they looked invincible then.

Oh, yes. Nothing could stop them. Holland-- five days. France-- three weeks, three weeks. Greece, Norway. Everything is just-- well, even when they went to Russia, it seems that this is endless.

So when you went back to labor camps after that, it was only for a three month period.

That's correct.

And would you do the same thing that you had done before?

Right.

At the same place?

Not in ChampÃ©ry. In ChampÃ©ry there was no street building. There I worked somewhat in the kitchen. I helped do the kitchen. And there was some odd works which we had to do, cleaning out storage area, something like that. ChampÃ©ry was pleasant, because the war was towards the end, and the people who run the camp, they were very friendly. And they just were there because they had to be there. They didn't like it anymore either.

You mean the people who were--

The Swiss who were--

Administering.

Right, right.

Now, this was the same camp you'd been in earlier?

No, no. That was the last camp I was in. Until the war's over.

OK. This was very relaxed?

Very relaxed.

And what kind of work? In the kitchen?

In the kitchen. I did most of the work there, doing a little odd work, carrying lumber around, whatever.

Were they building roads there?

No, there was no building there. In fact, when my wife came up there, she and I we went mountain climbing together. There was a mountain called the Dents du Midi close to this camp. And we climbed that mountain with a Swiss guide, went up there. So it was pleasant. Yes.

Did you know anything about the whereabouts of any of your relations?

Not until after the war.

Nothing until after the war? Nothing came through?

No.

So you just kept this arrangement, nine months off, three months in labor camp until the end?

Correct.

And then what? What happened?

Then we were released from the camp, which was in May 1945.

Now, you were actually in the camp at the time?

Yes. The war was over on May 8, and I was in the camp, all the bells were ringing. But there was no jubilation.

No?

No, there was no jubilation. Because by now we knew what happened.

How?

There was a person from a Zionist organization. His name was Mr. Sokolov. He gave a talk. He came up to the campsite. And he gave a wonderful speech in which he explained the catastrophe which befell the Jewish communities in Europe. And that is how then we found out what took place.

See, the German-- the American armies liberated some of these concentration camps during the war. The Russians liberated the camps-- labor camps-- concentration camps during the war. So now it became known. And so--

Was the first that you knew from this speech?

I think it was before then yet, when the Americans liberate these camps and when they spread in the news what happened in Europe. So there was no jubilation. There was sadness. We were glad it was over, but you couldn't be happy about the outcome.

And how did you discover the fate of your parents?

A letter from a woman, a Gentile woman, was sent to me. How she found out my address I don't know. And that's when she explained the entire catastrophe which happened. And--

Now, was she from the--

She was in Stuttgart, where my parents-- well, I jumped something here. From Schwäbisch Gmünd, when that congregation was dissolved, the Oberrat put my father to Stuttgart, because there were a few Jews there left yet. He was-- in the meantime, he became he was ordained as a rabbi. And he was the last rabbi of Stuttgart.

And they were forced to live in very small quarters with other people. And this woman wrote me the letter what happened to my parents.

Your mother must have given her the address, huh?

Most probably, most probably, yes, before she was deported.

So she let you know that they were deported from Stuttgart.

They were not deported from Stuttgart. My father committed suicide when he found out they're to meet at a certain place for transportation, he and my mother tried to end their lives by opening up-- cutting off their wrists. And my father died from it. And my mother was saved.

She went to a hospital. She was discovered before she had bled to death. And she recuperated to be sent to

Theresienstadt. And in Theresienstadt, she stayed there for, I think she was put there in '44, maybe five or six months before being sent to Auschwitz. And that's where she perished in October 1944.

And this woman who wrote you knew all of that?

She knew everything. Because she knew that the ambulance came, and the whole catastrophe she described then what happened.

Yeah, but I mean, she didn't know that your mother went to Theresienstadt and then to Auschwitz, did she?

No, that she didn't know. She just told me what--

She knew what happened to your mother when they found her.

That's right, that's right.

That was quite something for her to do that, hmm?

The war was over, and I guess she was plagued by the memory of what they did to people.

And your brother, how did you get into contact with your brother?

He wrote to me after the war, in 1945. And he was then released from the army. He was living in New York, [? got out from ?] the Navy. And so we started contacting again. And that's also when I told them that the parents died during the Holocaust. He wasn't aware of that either.

And then we asked him to help me to come to the United States, together with family members of my wife. They got together. She gave him the address in order to put up enough affidavits to secure our permission to enter the United States.

How many were there?

OK, there was one, two, three-- I think three relatives on my wife's side, plus my brother. They put up the affidavits for four. OK. And we didn't have any money. We didn't have the money to pay for our trip. So they put up the money. They sent it to the H-I-A-S, the HIAS, if you're familiar with that. And they made the payment for the transportation to the United States.

And how many of you came? You and your wife and--

That's it. And my wife was expecting our first child. So she wasn't her fourth month when we came here.

And when was that?

We left Switzerland on February 5, 1946. And we went to Belgium. The French would not let us pass without a transit visa. And our visa for entering the United States was only valid for about three months. So we finally were able to fly with the Sabena, which is a Belgium airline. They sent over some officials to Switzerland to negotiate the opening of transportation between those two countries.

And they took on about three or four people in that little, small plane. And so we went over France to Belgium. The visa never arrived until we were here in the United States from the French.

The visa that allowed you to go?

The transit visa to go through France, which we had applied for.

I see.

It did not that come through until six months later.

So you were in Belgium for how long?

In Belgium we were for 10 days. Because we had to wait to get transportation, which was on the Liberty ship. I presume my wife told you the story about how we got here.

You tell it.

Me? OK. Well, we went to Brussels. And from there we went to Antwerp. And then we had to wait until they told there was a passage available on the Liberty ship. And we were in contact with the travel agency until they told us the ship is sailing on the 12th of February.

And so we went to the docks, and we boarded the ship, which was tremendous, huge ship, until we were on the ocean, naturally. And then we bought it on February 12. And then we had to stay there for a couple of nights, because they loaded the ship with sand. Because there was-- it was-- otherwise would be too light.

And then we finally went and left Antwerp. And on March the 2nd 1946, we finally arrived in New Jersey.

So like about three weeks?

16 days.

How did it feel to leave Switzerland for you?

I was very happy. As a matter of fact, the Swiss consulate was on the Main Street in Zurich. And then I knew we had our visa. I was in front of the door, and I yelled out loud, now, all the Swiss can--

[LAUGHS]

I was very happy to leave. Because I had hoped now to start a life. I was now 24 years old, and I felt very strongly that I was mistreated by the Swiss, by not letting me work.

Being held back.

Held back.

Yeah.

And I felt once I'm rid of that limitation, I'll make something of myself. So I was very happy to leave.

Now, by that time you had spent about 16 years in Germany and about--

Nine years in Switzerland.

Nine years in Switzerland.

Correct.

If I were to have met you then and said, what are you, what do you think you would have said?

You mean occupationally or?

No, no, no. Nationality.

Nationality? Well, I was stateless.

Stateless.

I had no passport of any kind.

Did you feel that way, stateless?

Yes.

Not belonging to any country?

That's correct. That's right. And I had no nationality. I was a Jew, but no nationality.

Did that feel bad or?

I didn't care. I didn't care.

You were used to it.

That's right. You were used to being without any rights, without having any proof of existence, so to speak. And I just hoped for better times.

What did America mean to you at that time, coming here?

Well, America was known to me by the movies, which I went very frequently in Switzerland to get used to the English language. And it was a glamorous country. Everything was-- every woman was beautiful, and all the houses look gorgeous, and the cars look great. Hollywood.

So that was America to me. And again, I was repressed for so long that nothing could be worse than what I went through, could only get better.

So what was it like when you landed?

Terrible. First of all, the voyage coming to America was miserable, because we were terribly seasick, just unbelievable. So we finally landed in Hoboken on the pier, and it was dirty, and that's America. It was disappointing in a way. My brother met us on the pier, and he had an old car, a Hudson with dents in the fenders. And it was--

You thought he'd have a Cadillac.

Yeah. It wasn't glamorous. Let's put it this way. And--

Did you recognize him?

Immediately, sure. In fact, I was on the outside on the-- what do you call it? The wheel? The reel? And there was my brother down there, and we waved to each other. So.

What was that like?

Oh, we greeted each other. We kissed. It wasn't very emotional.

No?

I'm here. Matter of factish, we're here. So.

I mean, what you had gone through wasn't easy, and not many people were able to do that. And he was in the war for five years?

That's right. Well, we met and said, we're glad you're here, you know.

Yeah.

So-- but it wasn't emotional, as I recall. I don't think we shed any tears. It was just--

Maybe it was the age, huh?

Possible.

Yeah. So what did you do in America?

Well, New York was a very difficult situation, because there was a housing shortage. And my brother and his wife and three-year-old child lived in a basement accommodation. And that's where we took our first domicile. So there we were, three-- five people in one room, sleeping next to each other. No bathroom. To take a shower, there was a bathtub.

The dishes had to be washed in the bathtub. There was no sink. It was a miserable, miserable situation.

How long?

As I recall, we stayed there maybe two months, something like that. Or maybe less than that. I don't recall. Anyhow, we then, through her family, were invited to stay with them for a little while.

Where did they live?

They lived in Brooklyn. And then my brother then announced that he bought a house in Brooklyn somewhere. And now he has room for us. Now, his wife was quite a pretty miserable person. I think she was schizophrenic or something like that. And she was anything but kind to us. In fact, outright mean.

So we moved from one place to the other. Family members of her--

You did go and stay in his house, your brother's house?

Then we went to that house, too. But we were hardly in there when the fighting started again. And she said what do I need that for? Now I have my own place, and now I had to have you people here again.

So we went to another relative. And the longest in New York we lived was in Astoria, in a place where the superintendent of an apartment house was very, very favorably inclined with the family of my wife. And he remembered all the good things which happened to him once he was in Germany.

And he said the daughter of Leopold Braunschweig, which was her father's name, is not gonna be on the street. And he cleared his bedroom and moved into a little storage area, where my wife and I stayed with the baby. The baby was born then already. Linda was about four weeks old or something like that.

So he took us in, and there we stayed until I left for San Francisco. Now, what I did in New York, I worked as a pastry chef at the St. Regis Hotel.

At the Waldorf?

No, St. Regis. St. Regis Hotel, not Waldorf.

OK.

Yeah. And I worked as a pastry chef until I left to come to San Francisco.

Was that-- did they pay reasonably?

Oh, they paid me going wages then. All about \$46 a week, which was in those days enough money to support a family.

How long did you work there?

About-- let's see now-- seven months. Yeah. I arrived in New York on the weekend of Thursday. And on Monday, I started working there.

So you had enough credentials, experience?

Oh, yes.

They just took you right on.

Well, they asked me about my credentials and my experience. And I said, I don't have any in the United States. And the chef said, well-- I said, let's just give me a chance. I'll prove myself. OK, you've got a job. And him and I never regretted it. Him and I never regretted it. Yeah.

So then why did you decide to come out here?

The relative-- one of the relatives of my wife, we discussed the Barton factory in New York, candy factory. And she told me that the factory was formed by-- founded by a guy by the name of Klein from Austria. They came as refugees in the '30s to the United States. And the women, before leaving Australia, learned how to make some candy, some chocolates.

And in their own kitchens, they made those candies, and they sold them in the high rises. The men went out with little cellophane bags and sold it. And that's what became eventually the big [? Barton ?] concern, which had something like 90 stores in New York alone, and Boston.

And when she told me this story, I said what Klein can do I can do. And I want to make my own stuff. And she was kind enough to give me all her rations of sugar and eggs. And I realized I needed chocolate coating. And chocolate coating was on a quota. You couldn't just buy it. And I looked in the yellow pages for Nestle chocolate.

And I felt since I am coming from Switzerland and that's a the Swiss outfit, maybe I can do something there. And I excused myself from work, and I went downtown Manhattan to the Nestle office. And I told them what I wanted. And I was introduced to a gentleman who was in charge of bulk sales.

And when I told him what I wanted, he said, come on in. I want to talk to you. And he said, don't start your own candies here. Because Americans have different tastes than the Europeans. For instance, marzipan is not very popular here in the United States.

And he said, if you're interested, I have a job for you in San Francisco. There's a candy manufacturer who is looking for someone. And he's an elderly gentleman. You have a great opportunity to be associated with that firm. If you're interested, I will write to him, and I will give him your name and address, and you can correspond.

And that's how it started. And I was somewhat scared to come to San Francisco. On the other hand, I felt I'm a baker. That will be eaten everywhere, so what can I lose? We had no furniture. We had no belongings so to speak of.

So it was an easy-- We had no apartment to give up. So it was an easy matter for me to make this transit. And that's how I came to San Francisco, because we came to an agreement.

Did you work for this older man?

Oh, I did. I worked for him about-- first as a candy maker apprentice, because I didn't know American candies. And it wasn't easy either, because the superintendent of that factory, a first class confectioner of Hungarian descent, he was there for something like 35 years. And he made certain demands to this owner of the factory, which he wasn't willing to agree to.

And so there was strife between those two. That's where I came in. So I was in the middle, and it wasn't easy. I had to learn everything by stealing with my eyes what's going on. But about nine months later, I went to the boss and I told him, I'm ready to take over the factory as superintendent. And then this other man left, and I became superintendent.

And I worked for this man for about eight years. And I had hoped I would be associated with that firm, but it never came to that.

Why not?

He had a wife who was considerably younger, and she didn't think that she wanted to have a partner or a successor. And he always told me that--

She wanted to be the successor?

I thought I would be the successor.

No, she.

She did not want me to be successor.

Did she want to be the successor?

I don't know. But anyhow, it never came to-- in fact, I put it point blank to him one day. His name was Wilson. I said, Mr. Wilson, what's my condition and my situation in your factory? Can I become associated with you? And he always put me off by saying, you're impatient, wait and so on.

So after a while, when our third child was born, I decided to change. And I went to See's Candies. And they knew me, but I didn't have an opening for superintendents. And Safeway had a huge factory in San Jose called Tuxedo Candy. And they want to hire me as a division chef, something like that. And I didn't want to do that either. It would have been doing the same thing, like jelly beans and stuff like that.

And coincidence would have it that an insurance agent was invited to our house to give me a quote on my car insurance. And he told me when we discussed my situation, he said, I have a feeling you would succeed in the insurance business. And he asked me to take an aptitude test with his boss. They always were looking for new agents. And that's how I got in insurance business.

So I left the candy factory in 1954, and I went into the insurance business.

You worked for a company?

I worked first for a company called Farmers Insurance Group. And I became a district manager. I was running a district office in Richmond, in San Francisco. And then again I felt I was hemmed in. I wanted to be independent, and I took out my broker's license, and we started up our own firm. And I asked my wife to work temporarily for me until I'm established. And that temporary job lasted until I sold my agency.

When was that?

11 years ago.

So you've been retired for 11 years?

Semi-retired.

Semi.

Right. I'm still active in certain areas.

You don't work now.

Oh, yes.

Oh, you do. You work a little bit.

Life insurance, health insurance. And I'm doing what you call estate planning work, meaning that in the advanced underwriting field, whenever it comes. But I don't solicit. But things do come my way every now and then.

You miss being a baker?

I do a lot of baking at home. In fact, I do all the cooking and all the baking at home on a daily basis. And I love it.

How has America been for you?

Excellent. Excellent. I'm very grateful about the opportunities. Sure, we had to do the work ourselves. It didn't come easy. No matter, what we did came easy.

But the opportunities are here. And we have done very well financially. In other areas, too, we were able to raise our children properly, give them a good education, live in decent circumstances. So America has been great. And the people themselves, which I appreciate most.

Do you feel American?

To the point with a caveat. When Nixon was in power, or when the McCarthy era took place, I-- we had a watchful eye, what's going on. Because I have learned that even what happened in Germany didn't happen overnight.

If somebody would have had the experience like we had, if my parents would have had this experience, they would have known it's time to leave. And we are watching the events which happened during the McCarthy period, how far will it go. And when you say how I feel American? As long as I'm treated humanely and it's within the laws of decency and humanitarian endeavor, I feel very American.

Would I give my life for America? Under the circumstances, I would say yes. There would be a war, and I would be asked-- well, it's hypothetical now, because I'm beyond that age. But I think this country is worth defending. It has incredible [? principles. ?].

Some of those things like the McCarthy era scared you, huh?

Yes, it did, it did.

And Nixon.

Nixon, too. Yeah.

Were you ready to pack your bag?

Our oldest son advised me to get rid of all our belongings and be ready to pack. We weren't quite ready yet. In fact, we had some good friends here. He was an attorney, who also pointed out to me, you know, I think the situation cannot be compared with what happened to you in Germany. There are too many checks and balances here to make sure that these conditions are not overtaking the events.

Now, when your son was advising you to get ready, he wasn't advising you to flee as a Jew?

Maybe as a Jew. Yes, as a Jew. He was then in Berkeley, a student in Berkeley. And you know what happened, the free speech movement and so on. It was a very tremulous situation there. Yes.

But a lot of good came out of it.

It sure did. That's when I had renewed confidence. Even today-- has nothing to do with what you are interviewing me for-- the situation with Mr Clinton, even if he were to be forced to resign, this wouldn't be the end of the United States. So somebody else would be taking over.

Now, I remember when I first met you two weeks ago, you talked about going back to Germany, to the place where you had grown up. Could you talk about that?

Sure. German communities made it a policy to invite their former Jews who survived the Holocaust.

How would they know about you?

That's a very good question. How would they know where I am? Let me think for a moment. Yes, I know now. After the war, there was a woman by the name of Lilli Zapf, who wrote a book over the history of the German Jews in Tübingen and during the Nazi period. And somehow she got my name and my address, and she asked me to correspond with her to let her know how I fared and what happened to me. She knew about my parents.

And I think it's through that Lilli Zapf, who was an amateur writer.

An amateur?

An amateur.

Not a historian.

Not a historian.

Yeah.

But she did wonderful. I have the book here. She had gotten in touch with us. And I guess that's how the town of Tübingen found out about my whereabouts.

Did she live there?

She lived there until she died, yes. I think she fled to Holland during the war, and somehow she was underground. Non-Jewish woman.

Non-Jewish?

Non-Jewish woman, yeah.

But she had to be underground.

I guess she was underground. She was against Hitler right from the very beginning. Right.

So when did the town get in touch with you?

When they got in touch with me? I think the first time was in 1981.

Had you gone back?

No, I hadn't gone back.

You hadn't gone back up to that time?

No, no.

How did you feel when you got that letter?

I had mixed feelings, very mixed feelings. I felt, to me Germany is like a cemetery. My emotions ran very high about not going back to Germany.

Ever?

Ever. But then we discussed it, the invite, both my wife and I. There's a new generation now. They should know what happened to us. And we decided to go. And I gave a talk at the meeting there, and I told them about my feelings.

This was in Germany?

That was in TÃ¼bingen, yes.

What did you tell them?

I told them what they did to us can never be forgotten. We cannot forgive, either, how we are deprived of our youth, of our belongings, our families. And the only silver lining is a meeting like this here, where we can tell you, and that the young people will learn what happened to us. And we asked whether we can go and visit schools, such as the gymnasium where I went. They had an arrangement, where they had the students there, and these students asked us some questions. They were not too many participants, but some were.

And these young people, they couldn't grasp what happened. How is it possible that a civilized nation could become so barbarous?

That must have been very emotional for you.

It was very emotional. There were-- lots of tears were shed. We went by the old area where the synagogue stood. The only thing that was left there was a fence. And next to it is a fountain, where they made some kind of an inscription about here stood the synagogue which was destroyed in 1938.

On the other hand, I remembered some very pleasant things, because the most pleasant memories of my youth was in Tübingen.

What kind of memory?

It was carefree until 1933. It was very pleasant. We had an orderly life. Father was developing in the studies. We could go on vacations.

Where would you go?

Go to the Black Forest every year for four weeks. There was-- we lived on a river called the Neckar, where we did swimming in summer and fall and spring, row-boating, in winter time skating on it.

Those were good memories.

These were good memories. We had our own garden, where we planted our own vegetables and berries. So it was what you call a normal life. There was social exchange between families and children. And this was pleasant.

So I remember that. And the town itself is a just gorgeous medieval-looking place. And so I-- but the feelings were mixed, especially when I see somebody elder, somebody my age. What did you do? Where were you? So I stay away from there as much as I can.

Were the people-- I assume it was the mayor and different officials from the town, did they tend to be on the younger side?

Yes, that's correct.

So that made it easier to deal with them.

Sure, yes.

How did it feel to give that talk?

Well, it was emotional, as I was saying. We-- I think we felt that as survivors of the Holocaust, we come here now to tell you young people how we were treated-- witnesses. And this town invited us three times. And on every occasion, I gave a talk.

You were a hit, huh?

I was. I guess so. I was in all the papers in those days. And the last time I took a somewhat proud attitude.

A what?

A proud.

Proud?

Proud attitude of being a Jew. And my talk was that, look at us Jews, what we accomplished. Look to Israel, how a people who were decried as they don't want to work, they don't want to farm, they have created a state there, which is exemplary. And the Jewish people themselves, we have contributed to the welfare of mankind to a large extent, in music, and science, and medicine, et cetera, et cetera.

So that was the center of my talk this time. Not apologetic, not as a victim, not as a witness-- as a proud Jew.

How was that received?

Quite well. I think it was quite well received. I was asked by some people, do you feel like you're the chosen people? I said, yes, to a certain extent, we are. We're chosen to suffer, we're chosen to lead.

What did you talk about your second talk?

I think the first talk was the survivors, as the victims. And the second talk was about the witness.

Being a witness.

Being a witness to the events.

Now, you went the first time in '81. Second time?

I think, if I'm not mistaken, it was about three or four years later.

And then the third?

And the third was about four, years later.

They're going to invite you again?

I wouldn't go anymore.

You wouldn't?

No. I'll tell you why.

OK.

I have seen everything, and I have said everything. There's nothing further I have to add. And just to be there, to be their guest, to be wined and dined and taken out--

Not enough.

--it's not enough reason for me to go back.

Yeah. Did you feel any connection with any of the people over the course of these three visits and three talks?

There was an interesting occurrence on the second visit. I was in town to get maybe some film or whatever it was. And when I came back to the hotel where we were stationed, there was a man sitting on the table with my wife. And the man gets up, my age, introduces himself. His name was Hugo [? Baumann. ?]

And do you remember me? And I said, no, I don't. Well, we went to the gymnasium together. I was one of your costudents. And I just couldn't recollect it.

Now, those were those two years that you were in the gymnasium?

Yes. And he then mentioned to me that he was always anti-Hitler, and his two children were in Israel in the meantime, volunteers. And he wanted us to visit him in his house to meet his wife, which we did.

And then he told me the last time when I saw him, I said-- he said to me, we Germans-- he was in Russia on the front. He was a soldier. We Germans saved Europe from Bolshevism. That if it wouldn't be for us, Europe would have become

bolshevistic. And that turned me of.

I said, a man who is still that brainwashed to believe that. But then something interesting came to the surface. There was a book written by a Russian. And the book title was-- maybe it'll come to me later on. But in this book, this Russian general writes that Stalin purposely didn't let any-- didn't have any defensive lines between Germany, because they had intended to invade Germany after Germany was bleeding heavily enough to make it an easy victory.

Whether this is totally correct or not, I don't know. But suffice to say that my feelings towards this man suddenly changed. I said, well, at heart you're still a German who feels that you did some good in Europe.

And that you had a just cause.

Exactly.

Yeah.

Yeah.

We have to stop for a minute to change the tape.

All right. Very good.