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Interview With ERNEST GLASER

Holocaust Oral History Project

Date: 10-16-90

Place: San Francisco, California

Interviewers: Sandra Bendayan, M. Barnette, Alyssa Friedman.

Transcriber: Karen Barron

1 Q TODAY IS OCTOBER 16, 1990. AND I'M SANDRA  
2 BENDAYAN. I'M HERE AT THE HOLOCAUST LIBRARY DOING AN  
3 INTERVIEW FOR THE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT. I'M HERE WITH ERNEST  
4 GLASER.

5 WOULD YOU TELL ME WHEN AND WHERE YOU WERE BORN, AND  
6 YOUR ORIGINAL NAME?

7 A Okay. It is considerably different from  
8 what my name is now because I was born in Berlin with-- until  
9 recently was West Berlin -- on March 2, 1924, and given the  
10 name of Hans Alberto Glaser, to which in later years, as you  
11 will find out, Hitler added the name Israel. So when I came  
12 here I changed the whole thing to Ernest Glaser, and no  
13 middle initial even.

14 And you want me to go on from there?

15 Q TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR FAMILY.

16 A Well, let me go back further than that.  
17 Let me talk about my parents and my background in that way.

18 On my father's side, my father was born in an area  
19 that is Poland today. It was Pomerania. And it was the  
20 eastern part of Germany. It was in a little town, village,  
21 really, called Plata, which is near a town call Szeged. And  
22 that is near a town, Stettin. And that is Szezecin, which is  
23 Poland. He came from a family of three brothers and two  
24 sisters. And his father died when my father was very very  
25 young. So that I think my grandfather died when he was 37, so

1 that my grandmother was left to be, really, a destitute  
2 widow.

3 My great grandfather lived in Gdynia. I do not  
4 think he was well-to-do either. But he took my father in and  
5 essentially raised my father. The rest of my family was  
6 divided up. One uncle was sent to an orphanage, another uncle,  
7 I believe, was sent to some relatives. And all of them had to  
8 start living for themselves when they were about 12 years  
9 old, 12 or 13 years old. My father, that was Morris, or  
10 Moritz, my father was brought up, as I said, by my  
11 grandfather. And my father went further than, I believe,  
12 grammar school. He then went, or was sent, I should say, to  
13 an apprenticeship in the town of Stettin. And I mention this  
14 because it is kind of a part of the rest of my life because  
15 he was apprenticed to a Jewish dry goods merchant. And he was  
16 working practically around the clock. The son of that  
17 merchant became a rabbi who bar mitzvahed me and later on  
18 married my wife and I in the United States. So it is a long  
19 way around, but it is kind of interesting. My father came out  
20 of that into -- somehow he -- I do not know whether he had  
21 the money to come to Berlin. But, early on, he was about 18  
22 or 19, he came to Berlin. And somehow he must have known his  
23 way around because he became a, what I would call a  
24 management trainee at a very large department store in Berlin  
25 called Helmantine's. And that department store was very

1 instrumental, really, in developing a whole group of young  
2 merchants in Berlin. It was kind of an alumni association to  
3 have started in Helmantine's. He left that position as an  
4 assistant buyer and went into business for himself.

5 In the interim, I should say, my dad was also in  
6 the military, drafted. And I went through the usual two or  
7 three years that were necessary to, you know, get your draft  
8 data done with.

9 My mother comes from a totally different  
10 background. My mother came from a background, having lived in  
11 Germany for several hundred years, in Germany in an area  
12 called Saxony, North Saxony. She was from a town called  
13 Cologne. And that is close to Chemnitz, which is now called  
14 Marxstadt, I guess by now again Chemnitz. She went to the  
15 equivalent of a gymnasium, which was a high school, which was  
16 a private school, which was, I think, a religious  
17 organization that had sponsored it because she told me many  
18 times that whenever she went to classes in the morning there  
19 were first the prayers said. Then she had the certain excuse  
20 to not attend the prayer meetings. But she was part of the  
21 Christmas choir and knew more Christmas songs, I think, than  
22 she knew Jewish songs, although my grandfather was quite  
23 religious.

24 Q WHAT WAS THAT FAMILY'S NAME?

25 A Friedlander.

1 Q FRIEDLANDER?

2 A Friedlander.

3 My grandfather's name was Max Friedlander. And I  
4 knew my grandfather on my mother's side. He died when I was  
5 about five or six years old. And I to this day remember  
6 sitting on his lap and having a good time with him.

7 Q YOUR GRANDFATHER ON YOUR FATHER'S SIDE,  
8 WHAT WAS HIS NAME?

9 A His name, Jacoby Glaser. Glaser. And, as  
10 far as I know, he had red hair. That is all I know. Which  
11 some of my cousins children have. And perhaps that is where  
12 it came from.

13 First of all, she completed high school and learned  
14 French and English in high school. So she was, from  
15 educational standpoint, by far at a higher level than my dad  
16 was. But my dad was a self-made man. And he carried that all  
17 the way through to his old age.

18 Q DID YOUR FAMILY HAVE A RELIGIOUS PLAN OF  
19 ANY -- YOU SAID YOUR MOTHER'S FAMILY --

20 A They had a religious point of view which  
21 was my father had a very strong nonreligious point of view. I  
22 was brought up, as I said, by my grandfather who was  
23 Orthodox, and also a very very strict person. My father was  
24 beaten up for the smallest infraction. And that turned him  
25 off. He also was turned off by religious school. He had

1 apparently been trained in (Krada) because my father was well  
2 familiar with all the prayers, he just did not want to  
3 practice them. He raised me, but I was taught with the  
4 phrase, "You don't need to kiss the god's feet. All you have  
5 to do is obey the Ten Commandments and you are a good Jew."  
6 And, really, basically he did not change until he died.

7           My mother also came from a religious background,  
8 although she was not really familiar with all the practices.  
9 She could not care less, really. But my mother was a person  
10 who followed my dad in whatever he wanted to do.

11           Well, I'm jumping ahead a little bit. But, from a  
12 religious standpoint, I went first-- let me think. My  
13 religious training really started with the man who was the  
14 son of the boss my father had when he was an apprentice.  
15 Because this gentleman went to rabbinical school in Berlin.  
16 And he lived with us. And his name was Manfred Wasinski, Dr.  
17 Manfred Wasinski. And he was a man who became very famous in  
18 Germany as a rabbi. He settled in Madison, Wisconsin, and had  
19 a reform congregation in Madison, Wisconsin. I mention this  
20 because at the time in Germany, although there was the reform  
21 movement had started in Germany, it was very very small. And  
22 the predominant belief of our friends was what they called  
23 the liberal faction, which was essentially conservative in  
24 this country in its practice, the same amount of Hebrew  
25 prayers and so on. Now, this gentleman, Rabbi Wasinski, and I

1 were very close friends. And I was at the time no more than  
2 maybe ten, 11 years old. Every morning when he was shaving I  
3 had long philosophical discussions with him. And he kept this  
4 kosher salami. This is kind of an anecdote I'm telling you  
5 because it kind of delineates the person he was, and where I  
6 picked my beliefs up. I think he already had been ordained at  
7 that time as a rabbi. And he was an assistant rabbi at one of  
8 the temples. And so he had people coming up to our apartment  
9 continuously. And I noticed he had a big kosher salami there  
10 that he would offer some people slices of the kosher salami.  
11 And I confronted him one time. I said, "You eat our food in  
12 our kitchen, in our dining room. And why do you keep kosher  
13 salamis?" And his point was, I'm a rabbi. I chose to be a  
14 rabbi because I felt that that is what I wanted to be. But  
15 I'm at heart a social worker. And I'm dealing with people's  
16 problems. I have to establish a rapport with these people  
17 that they have faith in me. So I have to put up a front with  
18 them because they expect a rabbi to eat kosher. And if that  
19 is what pleases them, as long as I can help them, who cares.  
20 A very pragmatic approach. Obviously, so much of my early  
21 upbringing, really, came from this gentleman.

22 Q YOU SAID A LOT OF YOUR RELIGIOUS  
23 UPBRINGING CAME FROM THIS RABBI WHEN YOU WERE GROWING UP.  
24 FROM WHICH OF YOUR PARENTS DID YOU GET THIS?

25 A I do not think we ever talked about what

1 we considered religious. But our practice was one of being  
2 really like holiday Jews. Very similar to reformed Americans.  
3 It is a very similar situation. At the age I'm talking about  
4 now, ten years or so, 11 years, before I was bar mitzvahed,  
5 the practice was really one of-- I do not think I-- that my  
6 family observed any Shabis. We did have candle holders. We  
7 did have all the paraphernalia necessary because my father  
8 had bought some. I do not know where they came from. But  
9 they did not use them. And we very much were, I would not  
10 call, integrated from the point that we had a lot of  
11 nonJewish friends. Although my mother had a very close friend  
12 who was half Jewish, and my father had a very good  
13 relationship, very close relationship. I will talk about that  
14 later with a number of non Jews, probably more than was Jews.  
15 But my father did not really have any very very close  
16 friends. He didn't. What changed things, of course, was the  
17 Hitler years. But there also happened to coincide with my  
18 growing up, my coming close on the bar mitzvah time because  
19 at age ten -- and I'm getting ahead of the story in a way --  
20 but at age ten you are going from grammar school to high  
21 school. And the decision had to be made as to where would I  
22 go. By that time it was 1934, one year into the Hitler  
23 period. And my parents had first thought it would be the  
24 right thing to do to go from the grammar school, which is a a  
25 public grammar school in which we had quite a number of



1 Jewish kids, to a public high school. But they had a quota.  
2 And the quota was somewhere around, I believe, two percent. I  
3 may be wrong on that now. But, at any rate, you had to go in  
4 and take an exam as to whether or not you are qualified to  
5 get in. And then if you were good enough they would accept  
6 you, provided that they -- you know, they took the best ones  
7 that they had from among the Jews.

8 Q TWO PERCENT?

9 A Two percent religious. Which meant one  
10 person in the class was Jewish.

11 Q ONE PERSON?

12 A One person.

13 Q WAS THIS TWO PERCENT INITIATED AFTER THE  
14 HITLER --

15 A Absolutely. There was no restriction  
16 before that. There was no restriction before that. So it  
17 happened I was accepted. And then my parents went through  
18 that thinking together with Rabbi Wasinski should we really  
19 send him to that school as the only Jew in class? And then he  
20 decided that is not really the way to go. But my parents were  
21 not very well-to-do. And private school was expensive. But at  
22 the same time they wanted to send me to the best school  
23 possible. So, really, through the interceding of Rabbi  
24 Wasinski I think my parents got a preferred rate at a very  
25 very good high school, a Jewish high school, private school.

1 And it was also a school which was a Jewish school. It was a  
2 school for religious. It was not Jewish school. In other  
3 words, it had no Jewish program. It had religious training  
4 in the afternoon for those that wanted it. But there were  
5 many who didn't even go. It was a very Zionist school. And  
6 that made a big difference. But it was not a religiously  
7 Jewish school, although there were lots of those around, too.  
8 And then I started taking classes in preparation for being  
9 bar mitzvahed. And that changed my whole outlook and the  
10 ambience around the house because my parents felt that, if he  
11 really wants to be bar mitzvahed, we ought to go along with  
12 the gag. So there was the other aspects of it: was that by  
13 1934 people began to pick up their Judaism. Things were  
14 getting tough. And, let's face it, people were often not  
15 practicing the Judaism because they were afraid of other  
16 people looking down on them, neighbors looking down on them.  
17 On holidays or Shabis they went with the talis bag. And I  
18 remember distinctly many of them would carry their talis bag  
19 in a brown paper bag so that people thought they went  
20 shopping. But who were they kidding? They had their black  
21 hats on and they had their dark suits on. On normal days  
22 people don't run around in those kind of things. So they  
23 weren't kidding anybody but themselves. Once the government  
24 by edict said you are Jewish there was no reason to hide it.  
25 Now there was a question, do you believe in it. And when

1 people start getting into personal problems somehow it helps  
2 to have something that you can believe in. And I think  
3 nothing brings Jews closer together than external problems. I  
4 mean, that has been an axiom for two thousand years.

5 Q SO YOU ARE SAYING THERE WAS A SUBTLE  
6 ANTI-SEMITISM GOING ON ALL ALONG?

7 A Anti-semitism, as I experienced it was  
8 not virulent, as far as I was concerned. Sure somebody called  
9 me a dirty Jew sometimes. But kids call people names all the  
10 time. So that was nothing unusual. I had nonJewish friends  
11 from grammar school that I played with every day way into the  
12 years when we were teenagers. But, on the other side, I went  
13 to this Jewish school on a street car because it was in  
14 another part of town. And at the station where I had to wait  
15 for the street car there were essentially window boxes with a  
16 wire in front so you could not break the window. And the  
17 newspapers where pasted there, the daily papers, I think was  
18 a daily. Was a virulently anti-semitic rag called Edition  
19 Toma. And I in waiting there read this every day. Or I do  
20 not remember whether there was a daily or a weekly. But,  
21 whatever it was, every time there was a caricature picture of  
22 a Jew on the front page, and it was very obvious that there  
23 was not one good thing to be said by this paper about the  
24 Jews. They were responsible for all the ills in Germany. So  
25 there was no question at that time-- and this was in 1934--

1 there was no question in my mind as a kid that there was  
2 anti-semitism. But I personally cannot really say that I was  
3 exposed to anti-semitism at all.

4 Q EVEN IN THE YEARS WHEN YOU WERE YOUNGER,  
5 SAY BEFORE HITLER CAME TO POWER, DO YOU HAVE ANY SENSE OF --

6 A The climate of not really anti-semitism.  
7 The instability of the times I remember distinctly. I  
8 remember, for instance, my mother and grandmother were very  
9 very avid walkers. Every afternoon they went out and  
10 schlepped me around too. I remember at the Sevenia Flats,  
11 which was not far from where we lived, 1932, near 1932,  
12 police standing with some carbines because there were some  
13 protests going on. And I also obviously saw a great deal of  
14 the graffitti that was all over the place. But there was also  
15 Communist graffitti, there was Socialist graffitti. I  
16 remember there were the (Drifala), which was three arrows,  
17 which was, I think, a very left wing Communist group, as I  
18 recall. I may be wrong on that. There were all kinds.  
19 Everybody had a little emblem that they stuck on walls. And,  
20 wherever people stick those things. You know, wherever.  
21 Windows, wherever they could stick there. So there was a  
22 great deal of political activity. And there was also a lot of  
23 street-fighting going on between the outer right and the  
24 outer left, meaning the Communists on the one hand, and the  
25 brown shirts on the other. But almost all of it was away from

1 where we lived.

2 Q DID YOU LIVE IN A JEWISH AREA?

3 A Well, we lived on the periphery of a  
4 particular Jewish area. We lived two or three blocks away  
5 from (Kaufaustem) which was very much a Jewish area. But the  
6 area where we lived was, although there were quite a number  
7 of Jews there, it was not very Jewish. When we are talking  
8 about where I was born, I do not really know that area now as  
9 to, you know, don't remember what it was. Obviously, I was a  
10 baby then. Let me think. We moved to a place which was a  
11 gorgeous apartment, a very big apartment, with, I think, five  
12 or six huge rooms. That was around 1930 or so. Maybe 1931.  
13 And then that was a relatively good area. And that must have  
14 been the time that my parents were doing financially well.

15 Q FINANCIALLY WELL?

16 A Right. And then when things started going  
17 badly, which was really preceding Hitler, as I recall -- and  
18 somewhere I have a record exactly where I lived when -- but  
19 at that time, then, we moved to a, as I say, periphery. It  
20 was peripheral because it was not far from where the trains  
21 were running. So there was some noise there from the trains.  
22 And that obviously lowered the value of the properties. So.  
23 And so where we lived, that was also a large apartment, but  
24 not in the best area anymore. And then into the Hitler period  
25 the landlord, who happened to be Jewish, decided to divide

1 the apartments into those that were accessible from the  
2 front. See, the way they built apartments in Germany, and  
3 still do, is an apartment would have a front entrance for  
4 people who are the, you know, the renters, and the servants  
5 come up the back way. And the back way was the garden. It  
6 was like a huge atrium. And it would have its own staircase  
7 up. And so what the landlord did was to divide it in half,  
8 the apartments. Fix up the back to be maybe one bedroom or  
9 two bedroom apartment, and lower price. And the front would  
10 be, then, the smaller apartment, but still more desirable  
11 one. We kept the front one. But it was not that Jewish an  
12 area.

13 Now, let me go back a little bit, if you don't  
14 mind. Is that all right?

15 Q YES. IN FACT, I WAS GOING TO ASK YOU.

16 A We got kind of side-tracked, right.

17 Let me think as to where we left off with --

18 Q YOU WERE DESCRIBING --

19 A That is right. That is right.

20 Now, my father set himself up in business right  
21 around World War One. Even though he had gone through the  
22 draft, he was trained as a, you know, a foot soldier,  
23 infantry. By the way, if you want to, I still have my  
24 father's military pass going back to 1902 or something like  
25 that. So, by rights he would have been drafted. But he was

1 able to convince the military that he was the sole earner  
2 supporting two sisters and a mother, which was true, and so  
3 he should be deferred on a draft.

4 Q WHAT WAS THEIR NAME? YOU MIGHT AS WELL.

5 A My grandmother's name was Amy. And she  
6 died around early '30's. My aunt, one of them was Hannah, who  
7 was a war widow from the First World War. Married, three  
8 kids: three boys; and then was widowed and was on a pension.  
9 And that is important because that was the reason she stayed  
10 behind and finally wound up in Auschwitz, we believe. And  
11 another aunt by the name of Paola which was also living with  
12 my grandmother. So there were three women in the household.  
13 And my dad before he married was the only man in that  
14 household. So he supported them. My two uncles were on their  
15 own. One of them was in the military as a, what they call a  
16 sanitarium. In other words, he was a first aid --

17 Q MEDIC?

18 A Medic. That is it. And the other one was  
19 in business for himself and somehow managed to stay out of  
20 the war, too. And I think I would call him a war profiteer,  
21 or whatever you call these guys, that, you know, bribe  
22 somebody in the military. My father did the same thing later  
23 on because things got tough when they started drafting  
24 everybody they could get hold of because they were running  
25 short of people. And he had a sergeant that was on the take,

1 my father. And he told me that the guy wanted to go out to  
2 dinner constantly. And my father had to foot the bill. And  
3 down the road, somewhere around 1917, this sergeant told my  
4 dad, "Well, you better start limping or something because it  
5 just looks too strange that a guy like you is allowed to go  
6 around." And the story my father told was the neighbors said,  
7 "I knew the war was over when Glaser stopped limping." So--

8 Q By the way, mention the uncles' name,  
9 too?

10 A One was Martin and one was Max. So there  
11 were three aunts. Max, Moritz and Martin. And they were very  
12 similar in their appearance. As a matter of fact, there was  
13 an uncanny resemblance even when they were several years  
14 apart. And they never got along with each other very well.  
15 All life long there was an animosity, there was a love/hate  
16 relationship between them. And, to this day, really, it is  
17 only the cousins. The children of that have picked up by  
18 themselves to keep the family together. And I have a  
19 relative, a cousin in Indianapolis. I have a cousin who is  
20 Martin's daughter. I have a relative in Washington DC who is  
21 Max's son, another one in New York who is Max's son, and  
22 three cousins in this area here who are Hans' kids. And my  
23 father essentially became the father for Hans' boys because  
24 there was no man in the house.

25 Now, my father, as I said, set himself up in



1 business after the war. Before the war, actually. And all  
2 through the war he was in business. I don't know exactly what  
3 kind of business he was in. But he presumably was in the same  
4 business he was in afterwards, which was a very specialized  
5 business of rope and twine and sisal for the agricultural  
6 trade, for the upholstery trade, and the hardware. And he was  
7 manufacturers' representative. Very few people in that  
8 business. Let me think for a minute. Yes. My father, as I  
9 said, took care of his two sisters, lived with them and his  
10 mother. The thing was, if you were single and Jewish, I guess  
11 even not Jewish, there had to be some kind a dowry. And there  
12 was, of course, not much money around. So what happened was  
13 that when my aunt started to go with a fellow who was of the  
14 marrying kind my father took him into the business as a  
15 partner in lieu of a dowry. And so the name of the company  
16 changed. It lasted all of about a year and a half to two  
17 years. They could not get along as business people, and they  
18 split the business, and one started taking one part of the  
19 country and another the other. But they stayed together, not  
20 as enemies. I mean, they played poker at least twice a month.  
21 And there was no animosity there. But my father was traveling  
22 then a great deal. And traveling salesmen in those days  
23 stayed at the same hotels, especially Jews. They start  
24 meeting each other. And the reason I go into this is that's  
25 how my mother met my father. Because my grandfather was also

1 traveling. And I should go into the background a little bit  
2 of that. But it was my grandfather who brought my father home  
3 to meet my mother.

4 Q AND YOUR MOTHER'S NAME?

5 A My mother's name was Erta.

6 Q ERTA?

7 A I was named after her as Ernest.

8 And on my mother's side, by the way, there were two  
9 sisters and two brothers. One was Eric and one was Harry.  
10 Have kind of an interesting background. Eric was a very  
11 strong-willed person. Very much a go-it-aloner. And a  
12 person who knew exactly what he wanted most of his life. I  
13 say most because toward the end of his life he-- after he  
14 married -- he was a bachelor until his '50's, and then things  
15 started to change all of a sudden a little bit.

16 By the way, both my uncles, Harry and Eric, went to  
17 high school. And so, obviously, my grandfather must have been  
18 able to afford sending four children to high school, which  
19 was not cheap. And my uncle came out. And my mother was the  
20 oldest.

21 World War One was either just beginning or it was  
22 right prior to it. My uncle volunteered for what would be the  
23 equivalent of the Green Berets in this country, which was  
24 very unusual for a Jew. And he became what they called a  
25 Yeager and had a fancy uniform to go with. I have a picture.

1 It is a very very spectacular uniform. He went through the  
2 training and everything, and was sent to the French front and  
3 was in hand to hand combat. And had to kill the Seinganese  
4 and had a nervous breakdown. And that was the end of the war  
5 for him. He was sent to a medical facility. And then when he  
6 came out he was decorated with the Iron Cross First Class,  
7 which was very unusual for a Jew to go through.

8 My other uncle was a pacifist at heart, so it is  
9 just the opposite. They stuck him into the artillery. And he  
10 said, "I swear to god that I never hit anything because they  
11 always told us what the range was, and I always raised it a  
12 few degrees. So I know I did not hit anything." And he was my  
13 favorite uncle. And I spent a lot of time with that family.

14 Q WHAT WAS YOUR AUNT'S NAME?

15 A My aunt was Agnes. She never married. She  
16 had an affair with an Iranian that did not go good, and she  
17 committed suicide when she was-- I do not know how old-- but  
18 it was in 1928, I believe.

19 The whole family moved to Berlin around 1908. 1907,  
20 1908. My mother had graduated from school and started to work  
21 in Prague where she went to school and was born. The town was  
22 famous for lace, manufacturing lace, and exported lace  
23 worldwide. And she worked for one of those outfits called a  
24 foreign correspondent, which men she did French and English  
25 correspondence for them because they exported.

1 Q WAS IT UNUSUAL FOR A WOMAN TO HAVE A JOB?

2 A No.

3 Q NO?

4 A No, not prior to being married. I mean,  
5 it was unusual later on if she would have worked after she  
6 was married. But not as a single individual, no.

7 She went then to Berlin and worked for a couple of  
8 companies in the same kind of a job. So she had, I don't know  
9 how good a job, but a good-paying job. But it was somewhat a  
10 prestige job for a woman. And my uncle always told me that my  
11 mother was too fussy with men, none of them were good enough  
12 for her. I have a feeling the reason was she was a person who  
13 was basically very insecure and very shy and was afraid of  
14 getting married. She had a suitor who was not Jewish, and  
15 that would have brought on all kinds of problems with my  
16 grandfather, as it did later when my uncle married out of the  
17 faith. And so my mother was the oldest and not married. And  
18 that did not sit too well with my grandfather, and so he was  
19 looking around for somebody.

20 Q HOW OLD WAS SHE AT THE TIME?

21 A Let me think. My parents were married in  
22 1923. And she was born in 1894. So she was 29 years old. That  
23 is relatively old. And my father had been also engaged to a  
24 lady who was not Jewish. I say also because my mother at  
25 least dated somebody who wasn't Jewish. And, from what I was

1 told, that she was of the impoverished nobility in Germany.  
2 So it was obvious my father was looking toward upgrading his  
3 social status. And, because of my mother's training and high  
4 school, and even though they did not have any money, he was  
5 upgrading himself from that standpoint because he always had  
6 an inferiority complex, a very strong one when it came to  
7 education. Although he really trained himself, he spoke a  
8 very good German, and he was, for all practical purposes, a  
9 fully educated person, but it was self-taught. But he never  
10 spoke a foreign language until he had to, to learn English.  
11 And he never really mastered English very well. So they were  
12 married in 1923 on May 29. By the way, the same day that my  
13 son was born, the oldest. And that was at the height of the  
14 inflation in Germany. So the dowry that my father received  
15 from my grandfather got him as far as the train station. And  
16 they keep the one bill I still have of the hotel where they  
17 stayed the first night, which went into the millions of marks  
18 for itemized one egg and breakfast and the room for the  
19 night. It was just such a horrendous figure. I forget how  
20 many millions of marks they were.

21 Q IT IS REMARKABLE YOU HAVE KEPT THAT.

22 A They kept it and I framed it.

23 Q SO MANY MOVES.

24 A It is incredible what kind of packrats my  
25 parents were. We still have the bills from the electric

1 company in Shanghai. And it is incredible. But it is of  
2 interest, you know.

3 Q IT IS.

4 A Because it helps you put the mosiac  
5 together. And you forget things. And before coming here, for  
6 instance, I went over some of the material that I dug up and  
7 refreshed my memory on dates. And it puts together much  
8 easier if you have dates and have something to hang your hat  
9 on.

10 Q ALSO, IF YOU HAVE ANY OF THESE DOCUMENTS  
11 OR PICTURES THAT ARE RELEVANT TO WHAT YOU ARE SAYING YOU CAN  
12 STOP FOR A MINUTE AND HOLD THEM UP, AND AT THE END WE WILL  
13 GET PHOTOCOPIES OF THEM.

14 A I have the marriage certificates of my  
15 parents. I also have a katuba. I forgot to bring that.

16 Q A KATUBA?

17 A You know what a katuba is?

18 Q NO, I DO NOT.

19 A A katuba is a Jewish marriage  
20 certificate. And it is a very simple one, not a fancy one  
21 like they now have. At least it proves that both my parents  
22 are Jewish. And it shows the Hebrew name of both of them. It  
23 is written in Arabic, and so it is-- Anyway, that is one of  
24 the things I have, and I should have brought. I forgot. And I  
25 will send it to you. I will be glad to send it to you.

1           They came back to Berlin from the honeymoon. And I  
2 do not know where they went. And they moved to an apartment  
3 on the fourth floor. So, obviously, there wasn't much money  
4 around. It is walk-up. And four floors up is a long ways up.  
5 And I'm not quite sure as to where that was located. My  
6 mother became pregnant almost right away. I was born on March  
7 2. So it was a very fast operation. And I was born in  
8 (Patloskitrasa) which was not far from an orthodox temple, by  
9 the way. And I was born at home, which to people today is  
10 something almost unheard of. But my father told me as to how  
11 I was born. He had called the doctor and the doctor told him,  
12 "Well, boil a lot of water and get a lot of newspapers out  
13 and I will be over in a little while." And that is how I saw  
14 this world, I suppose, reading the newspaper.

15           Q           WHAT ABOUT THE WATER?

16           A           I don't know about that one. But I do not  
17 mind water.

18           And then I think we moved to another place not long  
19 after that, probably the Strasser. Also way up. And the  
20 reason I know about it, my cousin, who is a few years older,  
21 like seven or eight years older than I am, always let's me  
22 know it to this day he schlepped me up all eight floors to  
23 help my parents when I was a baby.

24           Q           Did you continue to have a close  
25 relationship with your family, the relatives in Berlin?

1                   A                   Everybody was in Berlin. Close  
2 relationships is a relative thing. Pardon the pun.

3                   On my father's side it was an on again off again  
4 relationship. They were broiders half of the time. I do not  
5 know if you are familiar with that word. That means they are  
6 not always on speaking terms. They were also on speaking  
7 terms, my father with my aunt, and my uncle by marriage. But  
8 the three brothers were not on the greatest speaking terms. I  
9 take that back, my uncle Martin did not live in Berlin. He  
10 lived in a little town, at Wurzburg, which is a half hour  
11 away. On the everyday side there was a close relationship. My  
12 mother was close to her mother, to my grandmother. My uncle  
13 was a bachelor and lived with his mother. My other uncle  
14 married out of the faith. And my aunt did not convert  
15 because my uncle wasn't religious. My grandfather kicked him  
16 out of the house and shed (schiffer), which is, you know,  
17 what you do when you lost somebody permanently. It was  
18 obviously a very very trying period for my grandmother and  
19 for the rest of the family. It was my mother who brought them  
20 back together again. And it wasn't much later that my  
21 grandfather died. Interestingly enough, well, my aunt and  
22 uncle had a daughter. And my aunt, I do not know whether she  
23 converted or not. But she certainly became Jewish in  
24 practice. She baked a better (hallah) than -- what we called  
25 (bashas), over there -- than my mother did. And they kept



1 Shabis services then properly and practiced. And she  
2 immigrated to South Africa. So she was very Jewish, at least  
3 in practice. I do not know whether she converted.

4 Now, my own experience then as a young tot, I  
5 talked about my mother having a very close friend who was  
6 half Jewish. I think I'm wrong. I think she was Jewish  
7 married to a non Jew. They had a daughter by the name Helga.  
8 And Helga and I were within a month or two of the same age.  
9 The mothers met each other in the park with the baby buggies  
10 being next to each other, the same thing that is happening  
11 the whole world over, including this country. And the two of  
12 us, Helga and I grew up as kids together and were very close.  
13 As a matter of fact, years later when I was about ten or 11,  
14 Helga took me for a walk and showed me what she wanted to  
15 have for her wedding present when we got married. I must have  
16 been all of 11 or 12 at the time.

17 Jumping way into the future. My parents stayed in  
18 touch with -- Mrs. Rama was her name. They left for Holland.  
19 And then were caught up again by the Nazis in Holland, even  
20 though he was not Jewish. He protected his wife all the way  
21 through the war. Interesting thing about it is, I lost total  
22 touch with Helga. Helga married a person by exactly the same  
23 background, also half Jew. It is an interesting situation how  
24 people find each other. So that was one friendship I had.  
25 Probably the oldest friendship I had and lost track of. I had

1 a number of friends who were not Jewish on the street where I  
2 lived. And we played together on the street. At the time  
3 there was a very popular game where you had-- you have to  
4 remember that Berlin was one of the places where auto races  
5 took place. There was the (Aurus), which was a very famous  
6 auto race. And every boy that was his salt had his favorite  
7 race driver and favorite car. So there were little model cars  
8 sold, and we would make our racetrack in the middle of the  
9 street. And you pushed that little track, and, you know, the  
10 way you put some weight in it with paraffin or lead  
11 determined how well your particular race car did. And you  
12 took on the persona of your favorite racetrack. My one car,  
13 (Achola), I remember, he was a very famous driver. He was  
14 driving a Mercedes Benz or an Alfa Romeo. I forgot which of  
15 the two. And so that was one of the entertainments we had. We  
16 had a number of games that we played as kids. You know, the  
17 cowboy and indians game was very popular. We had the pistols  
18 with a dart that had a suction cup on it, you know. And one  
19 of the things that they had-- well, guns were big, as they  
20 always are with kids. And we had little pop guns where you  
21 bought the strip-- I still see -- a red strip with --

22 Q CAPS?

23 A Little caps in it. And that was a big  
24 thing.

25 But we had something that I have never seen since.

1 And that was a potato gun. Now, it was a gun that looked like  
2 a gun. And the barrel was a steel barrel. And it had a  
3 trigger. And the trigger, I guess, was pulled back when you  
4 stuck this thing into a potato. That means you would compress  
5 the air in it. And then you break it off and you had a little  
6 plug of potato in that thing. And then when you pulled the  
7 trigger it shot about maybe ten feet. It didn't make any  
8 noise, as I recall. I do not think it made any noise.

9 Q THAT WOULD BE POWERFUL, I SUPPOSE?

10 A Yes. But harmless. You could not hurt  
11 anybody with it. I mean, what is a potato plug going to do to  
12 you? I mean, it is this big.

13 Q YES.

14 A That was a big thing.

15 I will give you a few impressions that still stick  
16 in my mind today of what it was like for a kid at the time.

17 Of course, we went up to grammar school, and, like  
18 I said, where a goodly number of, I mean, Jewish kids in the  
19 class. The teacher's name was Lis. And he was not Jewish. He  
20 was bored and he was close to retirement. And he was one of  
21 the strictest people I ever ran into in my life. Fair, but  
22 strict. The Jewish mothers loved him because he kept those  
23 little brats, and he kept them in line. There was, of course,  
24 capital punishment for kids, meaning that they did not kill  
25 them, but they damn near killed them for the smallest

1 infraction. You were called up to the front. And he had a  
2 reed, really, I mean a rod made out of flexible-- I guess-- I  
3 do not know what you call. But it bent very little. It was  
4 either bamboo or something like that. And you would have to  
5 bend over, and, depending on how severe the fraction was, you  
6 got one, two, three, up to ten, you know, beatings on the  
7 back. And we tried to smarten up and use a piece of cardboard  
8 in your pants so it did not hurt so much, and we had to take  
9 the cardboard out because it sounded different with the  
10 cardboard in. So, for the smallest fraction. It was not  
11 brutal. But we accepted it. That was the way it was. And it  
12 was a question of, you know, all kids do things, all boys, a  
13 little, do things that are daring each other. And so some  
14 were beat up more than others. I think I got a little bit  
15 more than my ordinary share. But I did not mind it, really.  
16 And the class was about, my guess would be somewhere around  
17 40 students, of which there must have been about maybe ten  
18 that were Jewish. One of them I'm still in touch with. He  
19 lives in Washington DC, who found me about 20 years ago. And  
20 I will get into that some other time. But, so, he turned out  
21 to be my best friend at the time. And we got through grammar  
22 school. I think my friend was first in class and I was  
23 second or third. I don't remember. Then was always a  
24 competition between us. But I was not a great student. It was  
25 just it came easy to me. Then started going to the Jewish

1 high school. And it was harder to-- you know, the subject  
2 matter was harder, and I had to study to really keep up with  
3 the class. And I was relatively lazy and easily bored. I  
4 fell behind pretty badly. My parents excused it in part-- in  
5 Germany you went-- school started in April, and I was born in  
6 May. So I was with, really, a much older group in my class  
7 than the other ones. And so I was, perhaps, they thought, not  
8 mature enough. Tried to hold me back and catch up with the  
9 other class. That didn't work out. I finally flunked out of  
10 high school. By the way, I never completed high school, even  
11 though I went to Stanford graduate school. But that is much  
12 later in life, with much more maturity. So we --

13 Q BY THE WAY, WERE YOU AN ONLY CHILD?

14 A I was the only child. Born on Sunday.  
15 Which is very meaningful to Germans.

16 Q IN WHAT WAY?

17 A You are going to be a very fortunate  
18 child if you are born on Sunday. My mother told me that many  
19 many times. And other (bubameisters) said if your teeth are  
20 far apart you are going to travel a lot, and, obviously, mine  
21 are far apart.

22 Q THROUGHOUT THIS HIGH SCHOOL PERIOD, I  
23 MEAN, DID YOU NOTICE WHAT WAS GOING ON POLITICALLY AROUND  
24 YOU? WERE THERE COMPLAINTS TOWARD YOU AS A JEWISH PERSON AND  
25 ANYTHING ELSE YOU COULD SEE?

1                   A               Yes. First of all, I told you I was  
2 watching these, looking at these newspapers. But I always was  
3 aware of the fact through school. We were not unshielded at  
4 school from what was going on. And we were not shielded  
5 either from watching-- well, one of the ways we knew there  
6 was something that was totally out of the ordinary was that  
7 there was some practices in Jewish households that were  
8 unique. For instance, my parents also unplugged the telephone  
9 when they started carrying on sensitive conversation,  
10 figuring that somebody might monitor them. Whether there was  
11 any realism to this, I don't know. But that is what they did.  
12 We had a shortwave radio and listened to radio Strassburg,  
13 which had German news, to find out what was going on. And you  
14 don't do that. You know. NonJewish did not do that kind of  
15 thing.

16                   Q               YOU MEAN JEWISH DID THAT?

17                   A               No, nonJews didn't do it. Jews did  
18 because they wanted to know the truth about what was going  
19 on. They were a little more, obviously, interested. And also  
20 more concerned. Then the conversation around the house was  
21 different.

22                   I should go back a little bit. As a kid we had a  
23 maid who was almost like a second mother. She came to us as a  
24 young girl, not a housekeeper, really. Really, I guess a  
25 housekeeper/mother's aid, really. And stayed with us. She

1 brought me up as much as my mother. And Ali was her name, Ali  
2 Lintner. And we were very close. How close, kids were dressed  
3 by a maid until eight years old. I mean, it is incredible.  
4 And some of them even older. And I do not know how long it  
5 was. And she was the Santa Claus in the house. By the way, we  
6 had a Christmas tree. Not a cross on top and not an angel on  
7 top. We had a little like a-- well, I forgot. What do they  
8 call it. You know, the Russian orthodox church --

9 Q A (ganschma)?

10 A That is it. That was on top. I remember.  
11 And at first we had regular candles, real candles, that were  
12 lit. And Christmas was a big thing.

13 Q Was this very common in certain Jewish  
14 households?

15 A Very common. Very common. There was a  
16 saying, (manses nismal sa natchsen), meaning you shouldn't  
17 segregate yourself so. That was a good part of it. Then later  
18 on we had both Hanukkah and Christmas. And then finally no  
19 more Christmas. But Christmas was really singing songs that  
20 did not contain-- had no reference to Jesus. We had  
21 Tannenbaum, for instance, which, of course, does not refer  
22 to-- it is a pagan symbol going back to the times before the  
23 Christian was there in Germany. And we did not see anything  
24 wrong with it. My parents never saw anything wrong with it.

25 Q What was the evolution of moving toward

1 Hanukkah and banishing Christmas at all?

2 A Hitler. Hypocrisy. And they did not  
3 assume you were Jewish. You were not Christian. It did not  
4 make any sense anymore. Also, probably, as you got older  
5 there was not that aura about-- first of all, I found out who  
6 Santa Claus was. Ali was Santa Claus. So that was an  
7 obvious situation. And then also it was not something-- I  
8 think it was just like my parents would say,  
9 (yahpatzitchness). It is not the thing to do.

10 Q Your parents spoke Yiddish?

11 A No. Yahpatzitchness is also German.  
12 German Yiddish and Yiddish is different. As a matter of fact,  
13 there is a whole vocabulary that has been put together in a  
14 little booklet. I saw it just the other day. And Rabbi  
15 Weinberger put it together, I think, in Hebrew Union College  
16 in Cincinnati. Published it. It is a different language,  
17 which is an interesting subject, by the way. How do you know  
18 who is Jewish? And you knew. You had a sixth sense. You grew  
19 up with that. You could tell a Jew from a nonJew pretty  
20 quickly. And how people find that, I don't know. I guess it  
21 is the same thing in this country. But somehow people find  
22 themselves pretty quickly. Now, many of the German Jewish  
23 words crept into the German language. Mind you, German Jewish  
24 writers were popular writers, German artists were popular  
25 artists. What happened there is similar to what happened



1 here. You listen to television and radio and you get an awful  
2 lot of Yiddish words in the English language. Same thing  
3 happened in Germany. When Hitler came in he not only tried to  
4 get rid of the Jewish influence, but of all foreign  
5 influence, you know. German words were replacing French words  
6 in the German language, or English words. Telephone became  
7 (frantzbrusch), because telephone was a French word, I  
8 suppose. And there was a different ambience that evolved in  
9 the Hitler years among religious.

10 As I said, at the time I became much more religious  
11 and I brought flowers for my mother and I dragged my father  
12 into the temple on Saturday mornings. I mean, it killed him,  
13 but he went. And it came back to him, you know, because he  
14 was raised with it. And I brought home a great deal of  
15 Jewishness. My mother started baking (hallah), we had Shabis  
16 observance, not that we were so much Shabis, but we were at  
17 least recognizing Friday evening. And we went to temple  
18 Saturday mornings. That lasted all of about three or four  
19 years for me.

20 Q THAT MUST HAVE BEEN QUITE LATE INTO THE  
21 '30'S, THEN.

22 A Right. I was bar mitzvahed at 13, so this  
23 was in 1937.

24 Q AND THREE OR FOUR YEARS AFTER THAT EVEN?

25 A Let's say a couple of years. About 1939.

1 By 1940 I think I was out of it. The immigration to Shanghai  
2 really was the one that changed things in that regard.

3 Q SO DURING THOSE YEARS OF THE MID '30'S OR  
4 THE LATE '30'S THE ANTI-SEMITISM OR THE CONTROL OF ALL THINGS  
5 JEWISH WAS BECOMING MORE AND MORE INTENSE?

6 A Absolutely. Absolutely. The segregation  
7 started. Well, first of all, the Nurnberg Laws were passed,  
8 I believe, in 1934. And the Nurnberg laws started changing  
9 the whole relationship between Jews and nonJews. Then there  
10 was also a change in the attitude of neighbors. Although,  
11 again, we personally did not happen to feel it, others did.  
12 There was a shortage of food. Let me go into this a little  
13 bit because it explains the times and the relationship-- or  
14 the lack of discrimination that existed. My parents, and I  
15 think Germans in general do that. To start with, they  
16 established relationships on a one on one with the small  
17 merchants that they bought with: the grocers, the green  
18 grocers, the butcher, the dairy store and so on. That was  
19 important for them because they got good service and they got  
20 good quality, they felt. It became important without them  
21 realizing what they were doing, establishing a close  
22 relationship with these people, because in later years,  
23 starting around 1935 and 1936 when shortages started coming  
24 in my parents had this relationship. And the merchant would  
25 prefer to favor always the people that were their regular

1 customers. So we would get our quota of butter, for instance,  
2 or eggs, and then the lady would say, "I have a little bit  
3 extra. Do you want a little bit extra?" If there would have  
4 been real anti-semitism they would not have done it. That is  
5 my point. No, sir. We went out to the cemetery every so  
6 often. Somehow my parents never thought about going to a  
7 florist a day early and getting the flowers because they went  
8 out on Sunday. So they had the Blue laws. Stores were closed  
9 on Sunday. But my father always went to (Halipat), who had  
10 the flower store, and he knocked on the back, and he wanted  
11 to have flowers to take to the cemetery, that kind of stuff,  
12 to have something extra. And Mr. Lipper never minded it. We  
13 had relatively little problem as far as shortages were  
14 concerned. My father traveled into the countryside and came  
15 home with all kind of sausage and butter and eggs and bacon  
16 and, obviously, we did not live kosher in those days. I do  
17 not eat bacon today. But others did.

18 Q WERE OTHERS AROUND YOU HAVING DIFFICULTY  
19 GETTING FOOD, THOUGH?

20 A Yes. People who did not have connections.

21 Q DID YOU NOTICE ANTI-SEMITISM WITH YOUR  
22 SCHOOL MATES?

23 A No. Play mates call you dirty Jew, but  
24 they call you other names, too. And I don't think they knew  
25 what it really meant. Of course, that was before Hitler, you

1 know. But, no, I cannot really say that I did. And it was a  
2 relationship which was perhaps different from any others.  
3 Well, I will get into it later. My father had a personal  
4 relationship with a nonJew, and it saved our lives. It was a  
5 unique relationship with us. I do not know.

6 Q IT WOULD SEEM LIKE IT WOULD BE BECAUSE BY  
7 THE LATE '30'S THINGS WERE GETTING TOUGH.

8 A Were getting difficult. Let me get into  
9 it because it fits into the discussion. As I said, my father  
10 traveled a great deal. And by the early 30's, I guess it was  
11 1934 or 1935, there were a number of the hotels on the road  
12 had signs in the window, (unavetch) which means restricted to  
13 Jews, you know. And, so, there-- my father ran into  
14 situations that where he knew the man, the inn keeper. The  
15 man would say, "Oh , you can come in. I know you. I just have  
16 to put this in the window because of the National Socialists.  
17 The party chief here told me to put it in the window, but it  
18 doesn't apply to you." Others would, you know, "Nothing  
19 doing. I cannot put you up." So, becoming more and more  
20 difficult for my father to be on the road for a whole week at  
21 a time as he was before. His main competitor was a man who  
22 was not Jewish. As I said, there were not many people in that  
23 particular business in that area. His main competitor was not  
24 Jewish, but my father knew him very well. And he was a  
25 reserve officer from the First World War. And this man

1 approached my dad somewhere around 1934, 1935 when things  
2 started getting tough and told him, "Look, you have  
3 difficulty traveling, and my business is growing. Why don't  
4 the two of us get together, and you be the inside guy and I  
5 will be the traveling guy. That frees me up to do the  
6 traveling, and you run the office." He, by the way, had  
7 joined the Nazi party somewhere around 1933 or 1934 for  
8 business reasons, he said. So that was on a handshake, no  
9 contract. And the deal was when things blow over we can make  
10 up our minds whether we want to stay together or not. My  
11 father went to work there, went every day. And they traveled.  
12 And it went fine for maybe a year or two. Then one day my  
13 father could sense that there were things not going right.  
14 One day the fellow came to my father and said, "Look, I'm  
15 having a lot of pressure from the party that I'm employing  
16 somebody who is Jewish. And I tell you what, don't come into  
17 the office anymore. I will send you the check home. And, you  
18 know, we will worry about it afterward as to how we will  
19 settle up on this when things are all over with." And that  
20 money came like clockwork. As a matter of fact, this is the  
21 craziest story you will probably hear in your interviews. My  
22 parents had the opportunity to leave with my uncle in 1936  
23 for South Africa and never did because why should I go to  
24 some place else. Everything is going to be fine over here.  
25 This is just going to blow over. This guy is crazy and it is

1 going to blow over. We were avid vacationers. Every year we  
2 went on vacation. We made a place in Brno in 1938. 1938. And  
3 then it turned out that they had some anti-semitic incidents  
4 in Brno, so my parents looked around. And, of course, the  
5 only other place to go to would be outside Germany on  
6 vacation to Czechoslovakia because you could speak German  
7 there, and it was close by, and it was not that expensive. Be  
8 you needed foreign currency, you needed Czechoslovakia  
9 Coronas. He talked to this fellow because he knew that this  
10 man's son worked for the German bank. That man's son got us  
11 foreign currency to go on vacation in 1938. And we were there  
12 for over a month, all over Czechoslovakia. And I remember at  
13 that time I was old enough to know what was going on around  
14 me. We went to the (Gotanoischool) and Prague, had a great  
15 time. Read in the German Press in Czechoslovakia that there  
16 were some Jews were arrested in July because there was the  
17 first-- how should I say-- the first moves on the part of  
18 Hitler to scare the Jews to leave the country. And because up  
19 to then people that were sent to concentration camp had  
20 political affiliations of one kind or another. Whereas, in  
21 July, as I recall, of that year prominent people were picked  
22 up who there were no good reason for picking them up other  
23 than to pass a reason on that there were was no future for  
24 Jews in Germany. When my parents read about this in the paper  
25 they discussed it. And I remember them saying they probably

1 had some criminal background or something, that is why they  
2 were picked up. Not scared at all. We had valid passports. At  
3 that point we could have taken all the money we had, which  
4 was not a hell of a lot, or valuables, which was not a hell  
5 of a lot, because we had valid passports, German citizens for  
6 five years, passports, and go from Czechoslovakia, or  
7 anywhere else. No. We went right back to Germany.

8 Q DID YOUR PARENTS EVER CONSIDER LEAVING  
9 GERMANY UP TO THAT POINT?

10 A Yes, they considered it, and dropped it  
11 because for a while there was my Uncle Harry, who was always  
12 more the enterprising individual, said "I'm getting out of  
13 here!" And his wife was not Jewish. And my father said, "You  
14 don't know what you are reading!" And, "You are crazy!" And  
15 my uncle decided that he was going to go to South America  
16 because in Paraguay you can get some acreage from the  
17 government homesteading. And my father said "I'm going to  
18 South Carolina, and some place in the country, chasing  
19 bears." I don't know what it is about.

20 "You are absolutely out of your skull!"

21 And my uncle, after having learned Spanish for  
22 about nine months or a year, decided a friend of his went to  
23 South Africa. And he went there and the Spanish there did  
24 him no good. But my father did not consider that even at the  
25 time because he felt he had a protector. This fellow would

1 let him know when things got bad.

2 Q HIS BUSINESS PARTNER?

3 A Right. He turned out to be right.

4 Q WHEN YOU RETURNED FROM CZECHOSLAVAKIA--

5 A To Berlin.

6 Q -- WHAT WAS YOUR IMPRESSION OF  
7 CHRISTIANITY?

8 A Well, the experience and not the  
9 impression is what really counts. Because ours was a  
10 different experience from probably 99.9 percent of the  
11 people. Our telephone rang at four o'clock in the morning and  
12 this man was on the phone. And he said, "I cannot go into  
13 details. I cannot tell you anything. But get out of the  
14 house and go any place where there are no men in the house. I  
15 will let you know. Stay in touch with me and I will let you  
16 know what comes of it." And we packed up and went over to my  
17 grandmother's, who was living at that point by herself  
18 because my uncle had left for America. Which is a different  
19 story that I want to get into later. And we slept on the  
20 floor, obviously, because she was in the process of going to  
21 South Africa to her son. You know, she did not want to be by  
22 herself. And so. My mother and I went back the next day  
23 figuring there is no great danger of a kid going there. And  
24 the concierge downstairs said that the Gestapo was there  
25 looking for Mr. Glaser. And my mother said, "What did you



1 tell him?" And he says, "I told him that you weren't there.  
2 And they asked where you were. And I told them you probably  
3 went to France or some place." So he covered for us. And that  
4 was very fortunate because, the way this worked, the Gestapo  
5 went around picking up people to fill the concentration camp,  
6 picking up men to fill the concentration camps. When they did  
7 not find somebody they left an arrest warrant if they thought  
8 the person was in the country. If they left an arrest warrant  
9 you had to turn yourself in sooner or later because you could  
10 not come above ground legally again, there was an arrest  
11 warrant out for you. But since this fellow said we went to  
12 France they saw no reason to leave an arrest warrant. So when  
13 the thing blew over we were able to come above ground again,  
14 so to speak, and we were legit again.

15 Q Did you have to register as Jews or what  
16 form did they have for denoting you were a Jew?

17 A I should have brought that. We have among  
18 all the many paraphernalias and documents my parents brought  
19 was the registration form you have to have in Germany. I do  
20 not know whether you still do. But at that time you do.  
21 Everybody is registered. And that was back in the (Wiermar)  
22 Republic, probably under (Kizer's) time and before. They knew  
23 where you were born, they know who lives at that place, they  
24 know your religion, they know where you work, I believe. So  
25 there was never any question on that score. And when we

1 finally left the country you could not leave without getting  
2 the (upmerdon), which means the notification that you are  
3 moving out, with a stamp on it. And that we have.

4 Q DID YOU NEED TO HAVE ANY SUCH THINGS LIKE  
5 RATION CARDS OR ANY SUCH THINGS THAT YOU WOULD HAVE TO, YOU  
6 KNOW, NEED?

7 A I do not know whether we had ration  
8 cards. Maybe we had ration cards. I don't recall. I know that  
9 there was rationing, meaning that there was so much per  
10 person. But I do not remember whether they were passed out.  
11 If we did, we did not get anything different from the rest of  
12 the Germans. I do not think we got anything different from  
13 the rest of the Germans. By the way, our maid, who did not  
14 work for us anymore by that time, came back from the country  
15 with all kinds of stuff all the time. And she was the one  
16 that stayed with us, in contact with us all the time. So I  
17 saw her at the station finally and was in touch with my  
18 parents after the war.

19 Q AND SHE REMAINED VERY LOYAL?

20 A Very loyal.

21 Q AND VERY HELPFUL, OBVIOUSLY?

22 A Right. Right.

23 Q WERE YOU WITNESS TO ANY BRUTALITY --

24 A Yes. Yes. That is the next thing I wanted  
25 to mention. And I mentioned we stayed with my grandmother.

1 And that was four o'clock in the morning when we got the  
2 telephone call.

3 Q WHAT WAS THE NAME OF THIS BUSINESS  
4 PARTNER?

5 A I do not remember. I don't remember. But  
6 I remember the name of the company that they had. By the way,  
7 I understood that he was killed within the last week of the  
8 war by a Russian air raid or something like that, the irony  
9 of things.

10 Q IRONIC.

11 A Yes. But he then told my father things  
12 were all clear again. But at that time Jews were in touch  
13 with each other. One of my uncles, Max, was in a  
14 concentration camp. Martin had left already before that.

15 Let me go back for a minute to talk about my uncle  
16 Eric because it is an interesting story. Eric was a bachelor,  
17 and had Jewish and nonJewish friends, all of them bachelors.  
18 And one day early on -- I think it was -- in 1938-- I think  
19 it was that time -- a bunch of them, probably in the  
20 springtime, were sitting on the balcony-- no. I take that  
21 back. I know exactly when it was because they picked them up  
22 right before Yom Kippur. So it must have been in the fall. A  
23 bunch of them sat on a balcony, Jews and nonJews, friends,  
24 and talking about politics. Guys who knew each other from way  
25 back when. And one of the things they talked about was that

1 there were anti-aircraft guns on buildings, and everybody saw  
2 them. Nothing unusual about it. It happens that a reserve  
3 officer was sitting on the balcony next to theirs, overheard  
4 the conversation, not knowing whether these people were  
5 Jewish or not Jewish, reported it to the Gestapo. All of them  
6 were picked up. My uncle was picked up like they always pick  
7 up people, in the middle of the night, and brought to the  
8 headquarters of the police in Berlin and interrogated. And he  
9 was a cocky guy. I mean, having been in the military and  
10 having had, you know, all this, he was very cocky. And he did  
11 not take any crap from anybody. And when they started giving  
12 him a bad time he gave it back to them in the interrogation  
13 and somehow impressed these guys. And he told them, you know,  
14 "I was in the war long before you guys were born. And, you  
15 know, I did my duty. You did not do yours yet." And the  
16 story, as it came out, was the same from all of the people  
17 that sat on the balcony. It was harmless. The nonJews were  
18 let go, the Jews were also let go, with a proviso that they  
19 leave the country within 90 days or six months or something  
20 like that. Which was his luck. Because he was forced to go,  
21 to get out. And it must have been in 1937. The more I think  
22 about it now, it is not 1938. It is 1937 because he left in  
23 1938, in March sometime. Maybe February, March sometime. My  
24 father took him all the way to Hamburg to see him off. My  
25 uncle had business friends outside of Germany who were

1 traveling back and forth. And he gave them some money to take  
2 along. So he had some money outside the country. He went to  
3 Cuba to wait in Cuba until he would be allowed to go to the  
4 United States. He was in Cuba, I think, a year. And so that  
5 is why my grandmother was by herself. And that is why my  
6 uncle had to leave. And my other uncle had left already with  
7 his family to go to South Africa. So it was really my  
8 grandmother, my mother and my father were the only close  
9 relatives together on my mother's side. And so when we moved,  
10 as I said, we moved over there to my grandmother's four or  
11 five in the morning. It must have been early morning, maybe  
12 seven o'clock or something like that, my grandmother said to  
13 me, "Let's go for a walk." And we walked down  
14 (Kofferstendam), which was the morning after Crystal Night,  
15 and, you know, it was frightening because by that time we saw  
16 the mob sitting on the sidewalks trying on clothing and shoes  
17 and pilfering stores. And the police did nothing. And we  
18 followed to where the fire engines were going. And there was  
19 (Fastanstras) Temple, which was a place -- I did not really  
20 see that, though. We did not get that close. But there  
21 were police around. Nobody was doing anything. There was  
22 also one other thing that I saw. Didn't know what it was  
23 until I was told later on what it was. The French and  
24 American ambassador were traveling in a car on  
25 (Kofferstendam) taking pictures. And I think the French

1 ambassador at the time was (Poi Cara), who became foreign  
2 minister in France after the war. But that stuck in my mind  
3 that there were the diplomatic cars taking pictures of this  
4 thing.

5 Q DID YOU SEE ANY PEOPLE BEING BRUTALIZED?

6 A No. No.

7 Q NO JEWS?

8 A No. I did not see it because there were  
9 not any Jews around. I did not see anybody being brutalized.

10 Q Was it fearful for you?

11 A Absolutely. It was very fearful. Any mob  
12 is fearful. And my mother was a very resolute woman, my  
13 grandmother, very resolute woman. And she took me by the hand  
14 and said, "Let's get the hell out of here." But nothing  
15 happened to us. And we came back to the apartment and told my  
16 parents about it. And, of course, there was one other crazy  
17 situation that my mother -- where my grandmother was in the  
18 household, was being dissolved. And she had furniture and  
19 she had an ad in the paper selling furniture. And every time  
20 the bell rang and the people wanted to look at the furniture  
21 there we had to get into the closet because we were not  
22 supposed to be in the place. Somebody would turn us in  
23 intentionally. So that was a very scary situation. And I kept  
24 going to school. And one of my teachers who I was very close  
25 to, my favorite teacher, a man by the name of Norfeld, a

1 science teacher, was picked up and sent to the concentration  
2 camp. And I was very shook by that because that was very  
3 close. And my uncle was picked up also, Max, to go to the  
4 concentration camp. And Max was picked up. Max was a  
5 happy-go-lucky guy. And he was able to roll with the punches  
6 in the concentration camp. So nothing much fazed him.

7 By the way, the whole Glaser family had diabetes.  
8 Not bad, but they had diabetes. They were all overweight.

9 He lost something like 40 pounds or 30 pounds from  
10 hard labor and nothing to eat. And, instead of saying it was  
11 a horrible place, he said "You know, I do not have diabetes  
12 anymore." So, you know, whether you look at the don'ts or the  
13 whole, you know --

14 Q RIGHT. YOU SAY THE CONCENTRATION CAMP.  
15 WHAT DID YOU KNOW OR HEAR ABOUT SUCH A PLACE?

16 A We did not know anything in the very  
17 beginning. As a matter of fact, it took about a week or so  
18 until people started sorting out who was where. But people  
19 knew what was going on. People knew where their relatives  
20 were. Some came out relatively quickly, some came out in  
21 three or four weeks.

22 Q THIS WAS VERY SCARY WHEN PEOPLE WERE LET  
23 GO?

24 A Right. The design of the camps was not  
25 extermination. The design of the camp at the time was to

1 scare the living bejeezies out of everybody to leave the  
2 country. And they were let out only with the proviso that  
3 they leave the country within a certain period of time. The  
4 people who were let out early were the people who had plans  
5 made already for leaving and there was no reason to keep  
6 them. That doesn't mean they did not practice brutality. They  
7 sure did. And a lot of people came out zombies, like this man  
8 Norfeld who came back to school. And that is when I knew  
9 what a concentration camp was.

10 Q DID HE DESCRIBE IT TO YOU?

11 A No. He couldn't. He was a zombie. He came  
12 back out of it.

13 Q DID YOUR UNCLE DESCRIBE IT TO YOU?

14 A My uncle described it. But how can  
15 somebody describe, you know, exactly what has happened? They  
16 did not want to talk about it. Rabbi Wasinski was in a  
17 concentration camp. And he by that time had been one of the  
18 leading rabbis in Berlin. November 9 he was arrested from the  
19 pulpit. I think it was Yom Kippur or Rosh Hashana. And that  
20 was the crazy part. The Nazis wanted the Jews to go. The  
21 reason he was arrested was that he told them to go. He quoted  
22 Shakespeare. The more (ashaclan sacoi), the more (concane).  
23 The more has done his duty, the more can go. That is what he  
24 quoted. And he was arrested from the pulpit probably because  
25 he was a leader and they wanted to get the message across to



1 the people that were following him. So by the time the big  
2 wave of November 9 came he was already in the concentration  
3 camp. And, being a leader, the important thing was that he  
4 was a man who really came through as a (mesch), as a  
5 (rheumbing) because he worked like everybody else during the  
6 day, and then the social work at night on the people there.  
7 As did other rabbis. And that was really the flip side of the  
8 experiences many of the people like my father had with the  
9 clergy who they felt were just in it for the money or were in  
10 it for prestige or something. He had a way because they were  
11 in it for a calling.

12 Q DID ANY OF THESE PEOPLE WHO RETURNED FROM  
13 THE CONCENTRATION CAMP IN THE EARLY DAYS DESCRIBE ANY  
14 CONDITIONS THAT YOU CAN REMEMBER?

15 A Yes. But I do not remember any of the  
16 details that they described. I mean, it is 50 years later and  
17 an impossibility for me to sort out what I have heard since,  
18 what have I heard then. I really can't talk about it  
19 authoritatively because I do not know.

20 So my father was in touch with this man who told  
21 him when it was all over. We went back to the apartment.

22 Q HOW LONG DID YOU STAY AWAY?

23 A We stayed a month.

24 Q A MONTH. A MONTH OF GOING INTO THE  
25 CLOSETS?

1           A           Yes. Yes. But we went back for mail and  
2 so on, and, being in touch with the concierge, went up to the  
3 apartment to see what was going on. My parents wanted to be  
4 sure that things had really blown over.

5           Q           WAS THERE ANY DANGER IN TRAVELING BACK  
6 AND FORTH?

7           A           No. It was walking. We were just walking.  
8 There was no danger whatsoever. But then my parents made up  
9 their mind because this man told them there is no future for  
10 you now; get out.

11          Q           THIS WAS LATER?

12          A           Yes. Told them, "Get out. Again, I cannot  
13 go into any details, but as a friend I tell you, get out."  
14 And when he said it, then my parents believed him. My father  
15 believed him.

16          Q           MAYBE WE SHOULD STOP RIGHT THERE AND  
17 MAYBE WE CAN START UP AGAIN WITH YOUR PLANS FOR LEAVING.

18          A           Good.

19          Q           UNLESS YOU HAVE SOMETHING MORE TO ADD AT  
20 THIS MOMENT.

21          A           I think what we can talk in the next  
22 block before we pick it up, may be interesting to talk about  
23 what the Jewish school was like.

24          Q           OKAY. I WILL MAKE A NOTE OF THAT.

25          A           A private Jewish school. This Jewish

1 school, you know, that I went to.

2 Q THIS IS WHERE THE PROFESSOR WAS,  
3 SUMMARILY. YOUR TEACHER THAT WAS TAKEN TO THE --

4 A Right. And what was social life like for  
5 a Jewish kid. That is another aspect of it. Because it was  
6 all Jewish friends. And what did we do.

7 And I would think that probably would cover it.

8 Q YOU ALSO MENTION YOUR AUNT IN AUSCHWITZ?

9 A Yes. Yes. That is a relatively straight  
10 forward story. She stayed behind and did not make it. Her  
11 kids all left.

12 There are so many stories.

13 Q THERE IS. AND IF YOU HAVE THE PATIENCE --

14 A I have the patience, if you got the time.

15 Q ABSOLUTELY.

16 LET ME ASK, YOU SPOKE OF THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS.  
17 WAS THERE ONE CONCENTRATION CAMP?

18 A Yes. There were Sachsenhausen was one of  
19 them. There was Buchenwald. And those were the two main  
20 ones. One was in southern Germany and one was right outside  
21 Berlin. I think there were one or two others, but smaller  
22 ones. But those were the ones. My uncle was in Sachsenhausen,  
23 I remember. And I also recalled some were transferred from  
24 Buchenwald to Sachsenhausen. For whatever reason, I don't  
25 know. There was also the saying that Sachsenhausen wasn't as

1 bad as Buchenwald. If that is a yardstick. I remember that  
2 vaguely. So, what I heard, by the way, was that the southern  
3 one had a lot of Australians in it and the Australians were  
4 much more brutal than the northern Germans.

5 Q AS GUARDS?

6 A As guards.

7 Q OKAY. IN THAT CASE, WE WILL END FOR NOW  
8 AND JUST BEGIN ANOTHER TIME.

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