Interview with ALLAN HERSKOVICH
Holocaust Media Project
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Interviewers: Helen Lang
Gene Ayres
Transcriber: Katherine Wayne

MR. AYRES:

Q TODAY IS MAY 26TH, 1990. I AM GENE AYRES, INTERVIEWING MR. ALLAN HERSKOVICH AT THE HOME OF ALICE HAMBERG, 2826 PIEDMONT AVENUE, BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA. ALSO WITH US IS HELEN LANG AS AN INTERVIEWER.

MR. HERSKOVICH, LET ME ASK YOU TO SAY YOUR FULL NAME, PLEASE, AND YOUR BIRTH DATE AND WHERE YOU WERE BORN.

A Okay. Allan Herskovich. Previously my name was Adolf, and I was born on April 20th, 1916 in Zagreb, Yugoslavia.

Q NOW, WOULD YOU TELL US HOW -- TELL US THE MEMBERS OF YOUR FAMILY IN ZAGREB AND THEN JUST GO ON TO WHAT IT WAS LIKE AS A YOUNG MAN IN ZAGREB BEFORE THE GERMAN INVASION CAME.

A Well, in Zagreb, there were about 12,000 Jewish people. At that time, population was approximately 250,000 at that time. My family was quite religious, orthodox Jews. My father was an industrialist, in textile. We had a large family of seven children before the war, five boys, two girls. So I was a student. I was supposed to be an engineer, which was interrupted, and my brothers were all working with my father. He was very big in his business.

My sisters were married, one before the war to a German emigre, German Jewish emigre, and the other sister

also got married and she moved to the site of Hungarian border, which later we will see is part of this story.

Now, before the war, the life for us was extremely good. We have not felt any -- just about any antiSemitism. I don't remember any cases and I had -- slight here and there, but not really that it would bother me. I associated all my life with sports with other people who were not Jewish, they were very friendly to me and to my family, so there was no problem in that respect.

Until it came -- until the Germans came. Then there were people -- people who knew me did not bother me at all even if they were sympathetic to the so-called free Croatia, but they were realists and actually, they even helped me to run away.

Now if you're interested to learn all about that, but the story was that when the Germans came, it was very fast. I volunteered into the Army, but I haven't had any chance to even get a uniform on. Not that I knew much about guns; I didn't know anything about it, but I felt my duty, whatever.

And when the Germans came the second day, it didn't take them much. They killed a lot of people in Belgrade, even though the city was declared an open city. They were mad at the Yugoslavs and they killed about 30,000 people there in about two days. My father also had a business over there in Belgrade, also in textiles, and one of my brothers was running that business and he told me all these stories about useless machine gun and bombing. The city didn't have

any guns to shoot back at the planes, nobody.

In any event, then when they came in, naturally we already knew all the stories. Especially myself, I'm experienced through travels in Germany. I was there three times through my sport. I represented Yugoslavia in table tennis and I do speak German quite well and traveling over there, I've seen the Germans being very enthusiastic about Hitler. It's not like you read here, "Oh, they didn't know about it." Oh, they were all celebrating and drinking and -- I'm talking about 1937, '38, '39 when I was in Germany.

Now, coming back to the day when they were there already, only about a month, they were taking hostages, the more prosperous Jewish people in the community, and put them in prison and asking for money, gold. They're asking essentially for gold. They were hostages. "If you give us whatever, how many hundreds of kilos of gold, you will be released."

And naturally, everybody was trying their best, believing naively I guess and in fact, they released my father after a week in prison with orders to take him back again after a week, the Germans.

But they had collaborators, so that they were leading -- the collaborators are doing the mean stuff, beating up and all that.

Now, I knew that we had to run for life, so my brother got some kind of -- with some German officer who was not really a mean fellow, he sold us a piece of paper, maybe four-by-nine, size of an envelope. There was a swastika on

it and typewritten the name, my name, Allan -- no, Adolf at that time, Adolf to impress the facists. I still had my name, but Herskovich, I spell it in a German way, H-e-r-s-c-h-k-o-w-i-c-h, so that the local Croatians wouldn't know I was an illegal German and in fact, before I run, you know Jews had to carry a sign in the front, in the back, a yellow piece of cloth with a Mogan David, a Jewish star and the letter "J", means , meaning Jew, so you couldn't walk. If anybody knew -- knew you didn't have the thing on, you're in danger, whatever, for your life, so you carried that on.

By that time, to run away and never be noticed, to the railroad station -- especially me, I was known in the city, so I got this little piece of document, this swastika with my name, et cetera, saying I'm going to the city of Split, on the Adriatic side, which was owned at that time by the Italians, which we knew were not in character with the Germans.

So you hoped for a life, to save your life. So I called a taxi to my home to pick me up and to drop me off into another house which I knew some friends were living. The entrance is awfully big and I know usually there's nobody there in the big entrance.

So he dropped me off. In the meantime, I had already called another taxi, so when I came out of this house, I took my signs off. He saw I was Jewish and he took me to the railroad station.

Now, I knew the timing was so perfect to come

there, only five minutes before the train goes; tickets, I already had, my gentile friends bought it for me, and I was getting my two suitcases. By the time just about three or four feet before I stepped onto the train, I saw the man in the military uniform. He says "Hey, mister." My heart, dah, dah. "You dropped your gloves." Since then, I don't wear any gloves anymore. I mean, I don't -- I would be caught. But anyway, it wasn't funny; I felt my knees trembling. I pretended to be calm. My heartbeat.

So I went on the train. A gentile girlfriend -- look what people have to do -- gave me a little -- her little cross, said "Put it out. First thing, hang it on." So I was in the thing, I was hanging there like the Pope, a little cross there. Just so after an hour of that in train, there's already no dangers. All this owned by the Italians then, the city of Karlovac. Once I was in there, I knew I didn't have to worry about the Germans, but look, I'll tell you this, right on that city, where is the border between German Occupation part and the Italians, but it was free traffic, I see a good friend of mine, a Jewish fellow, still looking who is traveling, and I had to hide myself from him not to be recognized, that everybody knew I was Jewish. Not to be recognized as such, as a Jew, so that I just retreated back in the back and did hide until I got to the city of Split.

Now, there, my older brothers, they're from Belgrade also, we already knew we were going to try to meet over there in Split, which was on the coast owned by the Italians. We all had money, and we were free to move around

the city. The Italians had their facist groups, at night you had to be at home, but you knew you're not in danger for life but until one day, they picked us up and put us in prison and I want to tell you that in Zagreb before that, before I run away, I was taken for a night in prison, beaten the hell up. You can see my marks here and here, wherever, and then next they came to these friends who were talking about how to save me.

They went over there and said, "What are you doing to my friend here?" "But he's a Jew." "He's a Croatian, he's with us," and they showed him my uniform, it says Croatia. I was playing for Croatia. Most of the people were peasants, really peasants. I don't think they knew how to read, these guards, and since these people were known people, one today is a superior judge, the other one is a professor in Switzerland in the University of Basel, so they were somebody. Even if they were young, they were known in the city. So when they said that, oh, they let me go. But I was blue already, I could hardly walk. When I got to Split maybe a couple of months later, I was still bruised and I was healing in prison, right on Yom Kippur, which means I was about three months free, I suppose, in Split. It still took me to heal a lot.

Then they put me in prison. I was fasting. And it was about 50 days, me and my brothers. The reason for Italians to put us in prison was -- they didn't do it really, you know, in a mean way. So anyway, we were trying to run away to South America and we bought some passports,

documents. The only falsehood about it was not our name, nothing. They predate it like if we would have gotten it before the war, because they were -- they kept to formalities. If you were having it from before the war, "Well, we let you go, but because you committed a big crime," trying to save our lives, we are put in prison and then we were -- there was a real trial. A trial in the court. You see, it's incredible today when I think about it, and there we had a lawyer and the lawyer told me, "You just say yes or say no." I didn't say a word, and then what was the -- the first time I felt a little better about it, there were some facists there, Croatian facists in the court. They hear us talking, that we were just going for no other reason just to save our lives, they were booing. This is so -- the Croatian facists under the Italian occupation, we're being tried -- we're Croatians being tried by the Italians, they were booing us. To me, it was incredibly absurd and hurt. Hurt badly.

Okay, then when we were finally let out of prison, we were sent to an island of Korcula. This is about maybe three hours approximately by boat. It's a very pretty place, but there, you couldn't escape. You were on an island, but it was again a lot of people -- even maybe -- I cannot remember, maybe 200 Jewish people were there approximately, interned, and all of us had some money. Those who didn't have were supported by us to give them food, which was very cheap, and what we had to do is just walk around freely. At night, you had to be at home. The Italians just absolutely don't bother us at all.

Then this was in '41, exactly, in '41. I was there in '42, beginning of '42. My father was in business with this Italian industrialist in Milano. I even remember the name, , they were Jewish people, and we wrote to them, my brothers who were quite older than I was, and they knew -- they had dealt with them and they intervened in our favor, because the Jewish people in Italy during Mussolini's time, they were free like when we are free here. Doing the business, nobody was bothering them at all.

So anyway, they intervened for us in Rome and they let us go out of the little island of Korcula and I at that time was with my brother and his two sons and they -- to give you how Italians are really good-natured, in my opinion, we're by ourselves. They gave us a ticket into the occupied zone in Yugoslavia by the Italians. Alone, no guard, no nothing. We went by train up from Split, Trieste, to Rijeka and back into Asti. This is where we're supposed to report; we had another two brothers there already, and this is what we did and there, again nice little city, maybe 60,000 people, but one part I want to interject is that my brother told me -- I came free as I came, as my brother said, older brother -- they picked him up in Yugoslavia and men, women and children, and they came into Italy in chains and the Italians see people in the 30's, 40's, 50's, they said "These are people, these are not gangsters." They see them on the railroad. They started to make like a noise and protest in horror. "How can you do this to these people? They aren't criminals," the Italian people, my brother told me that, and

boy, right away, they let them into the city and also they felt guilty and found them places where to stay and they were -- since then on, life was still, into '43, very good over there in Italy, but I was caught -- I fell in love with an Italian girl, Jewish girl, by the way. We are even still in contact today. She is a grandmother.

I hope she doesn't find out about it. Oh, she knows. Anyway, they are married, very nice people. Her husband, nice person. They live in Milano today.

But anyway, they caught me one evening, since I told you before in evening, we had to be -- we had to be home. And home was we rented a room and you paid room and board. We paid for it. We had terrific food. Italian food is very good, and we had the money most of the time, and they caught me on a night out and throw me in prison again. I'm a prisoner for the second time now.

And then they transferred me. I was getting in prison in Florence. See, it's an intellectual city, make me an intellectual gangster in prison, and then to southern Italy, which is . It was called a concentration camp. This is almost not too far from Sicily. Maybe a hundred, 150 miles from it.

Now, when you say concentration camp, sure it was a concentration camp, but nothing -- nothing like I heard it was in Germany, because we were there about 2,000 people, most of them Jewish, but not all of them Jews. There were even some Italians who were arguing with Mussolini. I say arguing, because nobody was shooting at Mussolini, but they

were in jail for more than 20 years there, Italian people under Mussolini.

So we came there and saw there were mostly Yugoslav Jews, Czechoslovakian Jews. Those people who were able to run into Italy were lucky, and there again, one of my brothers -- two brothers, we came, three of us together in that camp. My sister, who was also in the city of Asti, stayed there. They didn't send her, because she was not caught out at night. She gave -- she had a cute little girl and she just gave birth to a boy in 1943. I don't know exactly -- do you remember when Mussolini was saved by the Germans? Now Germans, actually, they took over the government in Italy in 1943. Now, she gave birth to the boy, Roberto, who lives in Switzerland now, he's a doctor. Not a medical doctor. He's minerals, whatever. Nice fellow.

And she -- the Italians came and told her the Germans are looking for him. Can you imagine, they're looking for children? The girl was two years old, the boy was just born, and they helped her -- they hide her, in winter now; this is February. He was born -- it was probably in '44, I guess, yeah, and in the meantime, with the baby, one, two days old, they went by train, by carriage, by any way they could, to the Swiss border. Now, her husband, I told you he was originally from Germany. His name is Hamburger, but he came from Frankfurt.

And the two little babies, the Swiss people were refusing. They didn't let them in and he told me, my brother-in-law told me he seen the Germans only three, four

hundred feet down there, from the border, so if I go back, what do I risk? So he goes forward. "No, you have to shoot us. We are not going back." With two babies in front of you, I guess, the Swiss fellow let them in and then they stayed there and they came free after the war and became very prosperous in minerals and all that stuff and the son and the daughter grew up over there. And my niece got married and she has four children. Now she became already a grandmother. Imagine becoming a grandmother at the same time I became the first time a grandfather here.

Q EXCUSE ME. WERE YOU IN THE CONCENTRATION CAMP WHEN THE WAR ENDED?

A I was -- yeah, right. In 1943, I was lucky to be at the tip of Italy, which was liberated first. By the end of '43, I was liberated. I was free. I was really lucky. The war was going on for another year and a half or two in other places, so -- my oldest brother was hiding in northern Italy all this time with two sons while I was lucky to be liberated, and then I was in the city of Bari. I remember the Germans still were bombing; the American troops were already there, bombing and machine gunning the place. I tell you, Americans in the concentration camp, they see a camp with guards around it, they probably thought that it was a military base or something. They machine gunned us, us, prisoners, and I see the bullets coming and I don't remember that anybody got killed. I think people got shot. I don't remember anybody being killed.

MS. LANG: HOW LONG WERE YOU IN THE CAMP IN THE SOUTH OF

ITALY?

A I was not too long, maybe a year. No, less. Probably eight months.

MS. LANG: WHAT WAS LIFE LIKE THERE?

A What was bad about it, if you want to look for something bad, it was very hot. There's not enough water, because there were four faucets running outdoor and maybe 2,000 people, and if some Italian guard was mean, he would go there and wash himself for 20 minutes, while we were in line, there with a little bottle in our hand to fill it up with water.

So this would be the bad part of it, but food, we had plenty. Food, we were baking cakes, anything. There were people -- we were able to buy. People had money, so the Italian guards, which as I told you, was very human, even the guards in the concentration camp, they made money on it. That's -- everybody works for money, if you can.

So they brought us flour, eggs, anything, and I remember that if we couldn't -- in the barracks, which were maybe 30 people, there were beds, straw beds, mattresses. It was dangerous to cook anything there, but where we were cooking, we were in the toilet. The expression.

It's a cement room, maybe -- oh, this size, maybe 10-by-20, so there was, oh, maybe -- there were the seats, but there was only maybe six feet this way, but this was cement, so you somehow -- you arranged yourself, blocked out the other part and you were -- there you were able to cook and bake, whatever. This was in this case in my barracks,

and I had absolutely no hunger.

MR. AYRES:

Q DID YOU HAVE TO WORK?

A No, no, no. The only thing was bad again was bed bugs, mosquitoes. Watching my brother get malaria there; I didn't. I actually -- again, through sports, we played the Yugoslav team against -- not only Jewish, but also Yugoslav. Not all Jewish -- against the Greek team who were prisoners also in the same camp, and I participated in volleyball; we played that. Later on, I played exhibition for Italian officers in table tennis. So it was nothing mean, like my father and my sister and others too. That's a different story.

Were there any questions you can throw me back on?

Q WELL, THAT -- THAT SEEMS TO TAKE CARE OF THE CAMP, UNLESS YOU HAVE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WANT TO SAY ABOUT THE CAMP. ANYTHING ELSE AT ALL? DID ANYBODY -- DID EVERYONE SURVIVE THERE, TO YOUR KNOWLEDGE?

A Oh, in that camp, it was not dangerous for life, no. No, no, no, no people --

Q NO DISEASE?

A I think you interviewed somebody who was in the camp, Dana Carlevy who you interviewed. She lives here in San Francisco -- in San Mateo. She was in the same camp I was in southern Italy, that part. No, no, no, nobody was -- actually, we got all kinds of shots, I remember. Italians gave us antiviral, polio shots. Various shots they gave us, malaria.

Q AFTER YOU WERE LIBERATED AND THE WAR WAS STILL GOING ON IN EUROPE --

A Oh, yes.

Q -- WHERE DID YOU SPEND THE REMAINDER --

A Right away, since I do speak other languages, I was right away being there engaged by the Americans. I looked for a job and also, most of my money, I made through tennis exhibitions. I went to the camps. They were shooting right at us. I was playing table tennis or being an interpreter and gradually, as the troops moved to the north, this is where I wanted to go, to the north to find my brother and his children and my sister and so on, but this took about almost two years before I reached them also. Rome was liberated; I lived in Rome for a year. Always with the piece of paper, stateless. I was stateless.

I didn't feel like going back to Yugoslavia, because it would have been too sad. Most of my family were killed, my two brothers and a sister, my father. My mother -- you're not supposed to say, it was lucky she died before the war. It was lucky she didn't have to suffer through all that stuff.

Q YOUR HOMELAND, YUGOSLAVIA, WAS NOT YET LIBERATED, AM I CORRECT?

A My homeland, no, no no.

Q DO YOU WANT TO GO BACK NOW TO THE FAMILY, YOUR FAMILY THAT REMAINED IN ZAGREB?

A Nobody one remained in Zagreb. Nobody.

Q TELL US THEN WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM.

A Okay. Let's see, my father, since he was religious, for him it was almost -- this is too bad, that part -- the must was to go there where there are some religious families. One of my sisters married into Sombor, a city not far from the Hungarian border, and this was occupied by the Hungarians. At that time, it was not dangerous for life. It was dangerous, but it was not so as another city, and he was so religious, he wouldn't even shave his beard off to try to hide, so he came over there in Sombor, and lived with my sister for quite a while, who had at that time two children, and then they run into -- later on became dangerous, a little village like that, a city maybe of 60, 70,000 people, Sambor, and then they went to , Hungary, and there later on, as I was told from my different friends and family, were picked up and sent to Auschwitz, where they were killed in the gas chamber, my father.

Q YOUR FATHER AND --

A My sister and the babies. Their babies were -- I'd say in that year, they were probably three and four years old, five at the most.

Q AND DID ANY OF YOUR BROTHERS OR SISTERS END UP STAYING BEHIND IN ZAGREB?

A No, nobody. We all run. I don't know -- some friends who were marrying, intermarrying, somehow stayed behind, although this was also not a reason to feel safe, but this wife -- there's some people who were able to stay through the war hidden, but it was -- it's a big burden. It was very, very, very, very bad. A lot of people are taken --

now, my younger brother, while I was still in Yugoslavia, they called it when they were picking up the young people, "We want the Jews to learn how to work." It's always the same thing, like we're doing nothing.

So they picked up the young fellows, they were at that time, and the tough luck was he was in Switzerland to go to school, he was in Switzerland. My father sent him over to Switzerland and for some silly and terrible mistake, he wanted to be together. If he had stayed in Switzerland, he would be safe, he'd be alive. So he came home only two weeks before the war and then he was taken to that camp with all young people, couple of hundred from Zagreb, and they were killed, thrown into a ditch one after another, 200 of them. I mean, I was told by some friends who survived. I have seen these people just two years ago, who told me the stories. I don't want to tell you the details. It was too gruesome, even he said. I don't want to upset you, this is what happened. Now you can imagine whatever you want --

Q THIS WAS A CAMP NEAR ZAGREB?

A Yeah, right, a camp -- I don't know, I cannot -- no, it was -- I forget the name of that little place. There were some -- and people who had means, the Germans knew who they could take, so bring the fellow and told them whatever you could find on a Jew, you could take, on a Jew. Clothes, took clothes off them, but the Germans took everything from -- I remember the story -- this seems like a story -- when they came to our home, they came to the house, we had a big house. It's an apartment really, and they put a

guard, a Croatian guard, in the front of my apartment, my home, my family's apartment, and the fellow -- and in front of the house, they had a German truck and they loaded all the furniture into Germany and in the meantime, they had one supervisor, a Croatian, who set down, and the room is empty and he brought a pail of water, but he said water, it was full of beer. He was drinking, and I guess he was a little bit tipsy or -- and he knew of me as a sportsman, but he tells me -- and he gives me his gun in my hands. "I swore today, I'm sorry about it happening, but I swore to this, with this," what he meant, "that we're going to follow the rules of the new Croatia," and I gave it back right away to him and I said "I don't want any guns. I don't know anything about guns. I don't want to be that."

Well, "I understand," I told him. In the meantime again, the same friends who later took me out of , they came, different friends, they're still friendly, and they came. The way it was, their apartment, there was a window where we could go on the terrace and from this terrace a little bit up and you come to another stairs. It would seem like to the guard who was there staying that people on the upper floors are going, too, so we filled up all the things I could, suitcases full of clothing, give it to my friends, so he took it up there, then he walked down like it was his. They didn't bother him because he was not carrying the sign. He was not a Jewish fellow. Then later on before running, I went to them and picked up my stuff, but it's not all. How did you carry the money? You couldn't carry money

on yourself.

Actually nobody did. First, you had to buy dollars, if you bought any -- any price you paid you could. Just because the local money wasn't good anymore, and in the suitcase in between the skin and whatever it was glued into, there were diamonds and the dollars so we can survive. It was our money and naturally, we divided everything, the brothers, the brother who had children, he had more, and for me, it was sufficient for everything until after the war, all the money.

So -- and I didn't go -- my friends did not know, I have to tell you the truth, there was money in it. Just my clothes.

And I almost made a silly mistake. I put clothes that if you would open it, you would see, it's better to throw away the clothes. Why is he saving? Naturally, they didn't look at it. Anyway, good clothes also. All through the war, I had good clothes. All through the war, because later in the cities, before I went to the concentration camp, in Northern Italy, Asti, as I mentioned before, we were dressed all the time like any Italian or anybody else and we were free. The Italians were friendly.

There was an Italian Jewish community there. They were reserved, but they were friendly.

MS. LANG: IN FLORENCE?

A No, in Asti, Asti. Florence, I only met Florence during prison, so this was -- so this was on the other -- the end transportation, which I never was happy in prison. I

resented it badly; then the camp. The camp, it was a camp, you were free moving, because there were a lot of people in your own shoes, you know.

MS. LANG: I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THE PART THAT YOU SAID ABOUT THE CROATIAN GUARD OR WHOEVER HE WAS OFFERING YOU HIS GUN.

A The man -- not outside, in the house, in our house. Like we are sitting here. Now, he and I were alone in the room. Now, he was drinking, but he had tried to carry a gun. He was a policeman in civilian clothes and he's telling me, "I swore with the gun," which means -- he says he's an

2257

to show that he's a patriot, but if he had a bullet in it or not, I don't know. Maybe he wanted to see if I'm an idiot, and there was no bullet in it, you know. But I just gave it back to him, the gun.

MS. LANG: WHAT DID HE WANT YOU TO DO WITH IT?

A I don't know. He just -- I have no idea If he wanted me to do anything or not.

MS. LANG: HE SAID "TAKE IT"?

A No, no, no, no, he didn't say "Take it." He said "I swore to the gun," whatever it means. You can interpret that. No, he didn't tell me to take it and save yourself. He didn't say that, no, no, no. Or it could have been a trap, I don't know, because I gave it to him. I didn't have it in my hands ten seconds. It was -- I was not brave in nature, or else I would be stupid, because you know in the middle of the city, you couldn't run anywhere. Those who were brave, they run to the mountains and in the mountains,

it was easier to be brave. It was a big step to do it, although a lot of our friends did go, but then the Germans could not use their tank and their planes. Then they were not so brave anymore. The brave soldiers were not so brave anymore in the Yugoslav mountains, because they are -- our people were used to it and move better.

MR. AYRES:

Q DID YOU NOTICE IN ZAGREB IN THE FEW MONTHS YOU WERE THERE BEFORE YOU LEFT THAT THE CROATIANS WERE SEEKING OUT SERBS AND KILLING THEM, ALONG WITH JEWS AND GYPSIES? DID YOU NOTICE THAT?

A I had -- no, not really that many gypsies there, that I remember about at all. I knew that Serbs were -- but it was only three months when I was there and you were mainly concerned about yourselves, but you did hear that.

But in any case, it was dangerous for us. Like I had a friend who was a Moslem there. Usually they were ice cream parlors they had over there, they had Moslem people and they see my sign, they chased my sign. My sign, because I'm a Jew, he chased me, so I had to run.

But also I had too many cases. For example, I remember two fellows, I knew them. They were walking the streets and the Germans grabbed them, threw them in the car, took them to one of the villas. They all go by the best villas. They took it over, they took anything over. They emptied the city, by the way, the Germans. In two days, the city had no goods left. I remember when walking, in the city -- in the first place, I didn't have the sign yet. I walked

next to a candy shop. Beautiful, big candy shop there. was the manufacturer of these candies, Jewish fellow, very nice man. They came there, in two hours they emptied the whole thing, and you know how they paid? I look at the truck, they had like a roll of toilet paper, printed money, so they, zip, took it out and there's the money. What you could do with the money, nothing that you couldn't do with toilet paper, but it was just printed money. This is the way they emptied everything.

I remember they took -- also, they brought -- my father had the business, wholesale textiles, and also 60 meters approximately, selling materials like that, for shirts, all materials, plenty of it. They blocked the street off and the local stupid fellows, collaborators, they helped them load that stuff and take it to Germany. They emptied the shop naturally and it didn't take them too long. Only one morning, they loaded it.

The moment they came, they told -- they wanted to find the local collaborators, "Now you are an employee -- employed by your father and your father is also employed by our government," and they gave us some paper salary. Now again, in coming back to that, the store was emptied. We knew it was going to be emptied soon and I asked my father, "Listen, can I go and steal some merchandise before they do so I can sell it and run away," and I had some gentile friend and he rented the , a small apartment, under his name and we took it, maybe, you know, 40 of these rolls of material, so I can sell it and run off with some money,

and he was a good friend, but his brother was an opportunist and so when I came there two days after I brought the material there, two days I went there to see it, all this material is just to the ceiling, suddenly there's only two, three rolls left, so I told him "What happened to my merchandise?"

So his brother tells me, "What do you mean, your merchandise? You Jew."

And I really understood you better be -- even if he's the brother of my friend, I knew I better be quiet, so "I'm sorry, but I thought -- I thought I would ask," and I left right away. This fellow, by the way, later was shot as a mean fellow, the -- not my friend, but his brother was shot, because he did other things just as bad.

Naturally, by that, I understood I better go, I'm in danger from a brother of my friend who knew me for years. I was always a friendly guy, so personally I didn't have anybody there against me, but this told me clearly I better go. This is when I decided.

Q WHEN YOU LEFT, DECIDED TO GO, YOU HAD MONEY IN YOUR SUITCASE AND STUFF?

A Yeah.

Q WHAT SORT OF MONEY, CURRENCY DID YOU BUY?

A Dollars, dollars, dollars.

Q AMERICAN DOLLARS?

A Dollars, dollars, dollars.

Q YOU COULD BUY THOSE IN ZAGREB?

A Sure you could buy. Sure you could buy. My father

was doing it. I was not too much involved personally. My older brothers -- usually in European families, the elderly made the decisions, the younger follow, whatever. So there were plenty elderly. I was one of the younger ones alive, and a younger brother and sister, and the younger, they were killed.

Q WHEN YOU WENT BACK TO ITALY, DID YOU STILL HAVE AMERICAN DOLLARS?

A Oh, sure.

Q WERE YOU SPENDING THEM?

A We had money, sure, changed them.

Q CHANGED THEM TO LIRA?

A Changed them to lira, sure. All after the war -- very -- for me, it's funny today, that once -- one of these trips I did, they followed me outside at night. The Italians took me to prison, they undressed me, but I had a money belt. Completely, but not my shorts and not my undershirt, and the money belt was under it. At that time, maybe I had approximately maybe -- in those days, it was a lot of money -- $2,200. For a dime, you ate a lunch, so that was -- and he did not notice it. You could imagine what would have happened to the money, and he didn't see it.

Then they send me -- then they send me to southern Italy and they sent me in the concentration camp and then liberated, as I told you before, by the Americans in '43, whatever, September.

MS. LANG: WHY DIDN'T THE REST OF YOUR FAMILY TRY TO GET TO SPLIT ALSO AS LONG AS THAT SEEMED LIKE THE SAFER PLACE TO

BE AND YOU WERE GOING THERE? WHY DIDN'T EVERYONE --

A It was not easy to -- well, some people run and later I found out some people run to Ljubljana, Slovenian part, which also was operated by the Italians, so there's no "You go free." You had to run and hide away. You couldn't let the Jews go, like today you go to Russia. You couldn't do that.

MS. LANG: BUT DID THEY NOT THINK IT WAS TIME FOR THEM TO TRY? IT SEEMED LIKE THEY PROBABLY WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO --

A You're in a way right and I give an example of my brother, my oldest brother. He was a little bit authoritarian. This is the old Jewish tradition, the oldest son is the boss after the father, so he didn't understand the situation. I told him, I came in to say goodbye and he was there with my father, so are you going -- it sounds a little bit mean, he said "Why, are you going to play table tennis now? Nothing more serious to do?" Well, "At least," I said, "to save my life. Please don't stay here. I know it's dangerous. You're lying to yourself," and in fact right away, two weeks later, he came to Split, my brother, same brother, with two children and his wife, and my father stayed there and as I told you, to the northern part, to the Hungarian border.

MS. LANG: WHY DID HE DECIDE TO DO THAT?

A To do what?

MS. LANG: YOUR FATHER, TO STAY AND THEN GO TO THE NORTH?

A As I mentioned, because he wanted to be where more religion is available and my sister was married to a religious family in Sombor, close to the Hungarian border. They had tradition. This is just a tragedy, that I said "Come to Italy." We were right, absolutely so right.

MS. LANG: WERE YOU AND YOUR BROTHER LESS RELIGIOUS?

A Well, I was more of a -- I was absolutely -- I don't know if you know what a is. When I was ten years old, I was sent to Czechoslovakia, a small community near Bratislava, a very strong Jewish religious community, and I was sent there for two years, high school and mainly religious education, and I guess my nature was a little bit of a rebel. I never liked "Don't ask questions." I was too inquisitive. I asked so many questions I got hit. I didn't like it, so then naturally, I started questioning more and this all took me away. For good or for bad, I became irreligious, which I'm today no more so. I'm extremely, extremely Jewish, more national feeling -- religion national feeling than religion itself.

Now, I the Jewish God not to defend us. On Yom Kippur, they say , which means "God, why did you forsake us, why did you forget us and all these things happened?"

BY MR. AYRES:

Q DO YOU KNOW WHAT YEAR IT WAS THAT YOUR FATHER AND SISTER AND THE BABIES WERE TAKEN FROM ZAGREB?

A That was in '40 -- end of '44.

Q END OF '44?

A '44, has to be. I don't have documentation of it. Sure, oh, they didn't try to miss anybody. They couldn't let them go. It was already -- the war was already -- Italy was already liberated, Rome was liberated. I mean, you knew the trend, but they had to rush to kill. Himmler and those people, they really had to -- this is why the Swedish fellow in Budapest, in Hungary -- what was his name?

Q WAHLENBERG?

A Yeah, was active in that. Everybody had seen it, even Germans had seen it.

Q WERE YOU ABLE TO COMMUNICATE, WRITE BACK AND FORTH TO YOUR FATHER AND SISTER IN --

A No, no.

Q -- BUDAPEST?

A No, no, no, we didn't.

Q COULD YOU COMMUNICATE WITH THEM WHEN THEY WERE STILL IN ZAGREB?

A No, she was in Sombor. No, you could not. You could not. You could not.

Q Couldn't write a letter?

A No, no, no. I only could find out through friends of mine, gentile, certain things, you know. "Your father left," things like that. "This has to be written so that nobody suspects" or whatever.

Q THE GERMANS CONFISCATED ALL YOUR FATHER'S GOODS?

A Everything, everything, everything. Everything, everything.

Q HAS THERE, SINCE THAT TIME, EVER BEEN ANY

REPARATIONS FOR THAT?

A We were demanding -- when we were in Italy, liberated, there was the Yugoslav government of Tito. They told all the people who run away, mostly Jewish, who had to run away, if they -- whatever they lost, to ask from Germans -- what do you call it?

Q REPARATIONS?

A Reparations, yeah. They call it , which means doing it good again, which they never could for me and, we applied, and "People, why are you coming to me for dollars? People, who are you?" My family never got anything. It came, I guess, to Tito, the Yugoslavs. If they got it, they kept it. We didn't get anything. But I never bothered with the money, never, never. I mean, to be honest, it would be better I had had it, but it never bothered me. I never was hungry.

Q DID YOU EVER GO BACK TO ZAGREB AFTER THE WAR?

A I was -- I was -- before I came to this country -- again, because of the table tennis, I played after the war for Italy, and I went to Budapest -- this is in 1950. I came here in September. This is 1950 in February, and then the Yugoslav national team asked -- asked the Israeli team to make a tour in Yugoslavia. Now the Israelis asked me if I would make the team stronger or weaker, whatever. And this is why as an Israeli performer -- and I only had still this piece of document -- I was able to go into Yugoslavia and play for Israel. Actually, that was into Telaviv. I have some documents about it, and I played in Belgrade and Zagreb,

and they asked me questions. At that time, you had to watch it wherever you were. They knew who I was. But they asked me "What is your political opinion about Yugoslavia," and you had to be really careful, so I said "This is too complicated for me. I'm not too smart about it. Talk to me about girls and sports, I'm good at that." Politics, because wherever you talk to the person, something may escape and then you don't know, you know, it could be -- this is still in 1950. They had a lot of trouble there. Not in -- the Germans destroyed everything. Everything. Because I remember when I invited -- I lived in Torino after that with the Italians as citizen and I invited the Yugoslav national team and their wives to come Italy, and I organized everything. What they had to buy there, needles, threads, pencils, the basic -- the basic things they had to buy. They had nothing.

Q HOW DID YOU -- YOU WERE A STATELESS PERSON STILL IN TORINO?

A In Torino.

Q HOW DID YOU GET PAPERS AND EVENTUALLY COME TO THE UNITED STATES?

2954

A There was a document which you got from Switzerland, a stateless, actually, a document of some organization. Red Cross, it could be.

A piece of paper with my picture on it, stateless, in Italian . I speak quite Italian, . I traveled since '50 -- '57, '58, '59.

No, '47, '48, '49 and '50, the last one that I played in Hungary, and it was a piece of paper, put Scotch tape around a piece of paper to it and put the visa on it. It looked like an old torn book, so I had no citizenship at all and I didn't feel like -- after what I had seen in Yugoslav, I didn't feel like going back. It's too sad. It really reminded me, every corner, of my friends or my family and they're gone, mostly killed, you know.

Q HOW DID YOU GET TO THE UNITED STATES?

A Then I reapplied, but the point is I applied right away when I was liberated in '44. '44, I applied, so I mean, I had to wait in Italy almost seven years to get a permit to come to this country. Makes me extremely mad, because any Cuban gangster or whatever, they come to this country, criminals, and me, I was on the side fighting, Yugoslavia was on the side of the Americans fighting the war against the Germans and me as a native Yugoslav, I had to wait seven years to get my permit to come to this country.

So this is a little bit -- so I had to waste my time, although I had a good time in Italy. I could not plan the future in Italy.

MS. LANG: WHY DID YOU WANT TO COME TO THE UNITED STATES?

A Well, when you -- I had a very good life in Yugoslav before, don't misunderstand that. That life is gone. It's a Communist system. My family is gone. It's too -- even if it would be the same system, you lose everybody --

MS. LANG: BUT YOU WOULDN'T HAVE WANTED TO STAY IN

ITALY, FOR EXAMPLE?

A Somehow, something bothered me, although I liked Italians a lot. I made a lot of friends, very friendly. Even now, when I come there, my children, they were surprised how friendly they are, but it was not -- Italians had their own problems, overpopulation. They had their own purpose and no, by the Italians. There was something that bothered me. I see some Italians doing bad things in the occupied zones. The Mussolini black shirts, beating up people. But I mean some reason was there. I want to go away, far away, leave it behind me, but I had to wait too long. That's terribly long, to wait six or seven years.

MS. LANG: WHAT YEAR DID YOU COME OVER?

A End of '50, September. But this is a lot.

MR. AYRES:

Q WHERE DID YOU STAY WHEN YOU FIRST -- WHAT CITY DID YOU GO TO WHEN YOU FIRST CAME HERE?

A New York, and it was very interesting when I came to New York, there was my brother living already -- he was already here a year in Brooklyn, Coney Island, actually, and they told me I have to go to Omaha. I said "Where is Omaha?" "Nebraska." I said "Where is Nebraska?" Whoever heard of Nebraska in Europe? We heard about California, but Nebraska --

I guess they didn't want everybody to settle in New York, I suppose, so right in the middle of the winter -- boy, is it cold in Nebraska, and there again, right away I met people. I went to sports again; I became a champion after

two weeks. There just happened to be a tournament there in Nebraska and then I met a man, a Czechoslovakian fellow, man who was in his 50's, and his wife. They liked me a lot. They didn't have any children. He was very rich, he was a dentist. He had miles and miles of land of corn. Showed me all the time. He wanted to do everything for me, send me to school and everything, but something about my independent nature and I decided no, I wanted to go back to New York, whatever, try to start my life. It's too bad, I don't even remember his name. Very good man.

But then in New York, I see the confusion, the difficulties and people not having time to be a little bit friendly, because everybody has to run after his own livelihood, I better go away. If I have to do -- dig the ditches -- there's a little pride in that also, because I come from well-to-do family. Doesn't mean fine family, well-to-do family. Of course, it was a fine family, to go -- if I have to work, whatever, busboy, waiter -- which I did, and I hated it -- I will do whatever I have to to break through and slowly -- I tried to use my languages, because I speak a lot of them, and didn't work out, for the CIA. They told me "Can you be here for Italian? Can you be here for Germans? Can you be here at the same time?"

I said "No, you can only use one language at a time." So they say "You're not a big part in that," so anyway, it was too -- it's tough on your mind because you work with your mind. It's very hard.

So then I decided to come -- why to California?

My -- my own imagination. I wrote to many Jewish communities in this country. I remember Jacksonville, Florida answered, San Francisco answered. I think Los Angeles Community Center answered. Some of them, you know, I told them I speak languages, I'm a sportsman, I'm young and healthy, I want to work, whatever work, it doesn't matter. I want to start my life. San Francisco answered; Jacksonville, Florida answered. "You come here, we'll be happy to help you out."

I came -- I never went there, because again, my independent nature, I'll find it myself, but just inviting you and telling you they will help you, friendliness was good for me, and then I started to work again as a waiter at night. I wasn't the best, but I remember once I dropped ten steaks. They told me "You're a nice guy, but a lousy waiter." They were right, and in the daytime, I was wholesaling silks, silkscreen materials and some sewing machine parts, metal parts and then slowly I ended up working for Macy's. Then I became after six months department manager; after three years I decided to become independent, and since then, I opened my little line of electric shavers and clippers, selling and repairing them, 14 shops for my family and myself, and I'm still working today in the same thing, same field. My life was very good.

Q I NEED TO KNOW, I LOST COUNT OF YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS. HOW MANY SURVIVED THE WAR?

A We were five brothers, two sisters. The war, we survived four, three brothers and a sister. The sister is the one who run away to Switzerland with her two babies. The

younger sister perished with my father together. The younger brother, he perished with the boys who they threw down the mountains, with another couple of hundred Jewish boys. The prime, the prime -- everyone maximum educated. We had nothing but educated kids over there, nothing but.

Okay, these are those who died, and my oldest brother, his two boys and his wife and my -- another brother -- the other brother, the one I was with in Milan, he was still single. We went to Split, myself and a sister, who gave birth to the girl in Split, then later on the boy, and then later she went to Switzerland and stayed in Switzerland. In Italy -- the oldest brother, he ended up to go to Chile, and he -- with two boys. His wife died. The boys were maybe at that time seven and eight, something like that, and he remarried and made another children again. He could hardly walk. Boy, how he had kids. I don't know how many, nine or ten. I think he had about 40 grandchildren, which is good for the Jewish nation, and the other brother got married in Milano to a Jewish woman and they all died, all just now. In the last two years, I lost everybody. I'm the only one left.

Q YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE LEFT?

A Only one left, yeah, but in a way, you know, if you die like that, if you die in the 80's, plus European Jews, you're the luckiest, the lucky thing. It is like dying relatively normal, normal way. It's sad, but this is nature.

Q I HAVE A FEW THINGS THAT I --

A Yeah, I don't think I talked too many gruesome things, which I have in my mind, but I just don't -- didn't

talk about it, but I guess --

Q THAT'S FINE.

A If you are interested about some friends who have been through, what they did, I had a good hunch, my friends told me, "Go, go." They knew, the gentile friends, and I left, and then a week later, they were just collecting Jews, collecting, sending them an invitation -- if you didn't show up, they shoot you on the spot, I suppose -- into a big -- very big hall and then from then on, concentration camp. One which was the most gruesome was , and the fellow in charge came even to this country, through the Vatican. He was in the country -- I had to wait seven years. He collaborated with the Nazis, man in charge of a camp where several hundred thousand people -- Artukovich was his name -- where several hundred thousand people were killed, Serbians, gypsies some and some Jews, because we were not that many Jews. There was 70,000 Jews in Yugoslavia, so maybe they killed too many, but maybe 30,000 or something. I'm guessing.

And he, that son of a gun, he came to this country in 1945, he was here already. The collaborator and killer, through the Vatican. The Vatican to me is the biggest criminal society.

Q WHAT WAS THE NAME OF THE CAMP WHERE --

A

Q WHERE IS THAT?

A In Croatia.

Q CROATIA?

A He was in charge, Mr. Artukovich. Panavich was the leader of Croatia. Very interesting, I was told that he had a wife who was Jewish, that fellow. Then I guess become so zealous.

One of the friends I want to tell you, who was in this camp, to kill several hundred thousand people, this is a daily routine. They had some people who were drinking, local collaborators, liquor and big tall men. They never had seen good clothes, so they were able to take the man's -- whatever they could take away, rings, whatever, golden teeth, they would chop them up with knives; they would kill them left and right.

So this friend of mine, who was also a table tennis champion, also a very good gymnast. We do all kinds of sports. We had to do all sports, not only one. You play soccer, athletics, we had to do it over there. This was our club, Macabee, the ring I saved.

And he -- of course, he was lucky, they didn't kill him right away. One winter day, raining cats and dogs, there you are sleeping, almost embarrassed, but almost in mud, he told me, so he and three other fellows -- one was a national player for a soccer team, Yugoslavia. Soccer was a big sport over there, like here, baseball. And they jumped into the Danube in the winter, semi-frozen. They were able -- it was storming so the soldiers, the guards were, you know, not thinking about it, and I think four or five of them, they jump into the river. One later on, not shot at them, but one fellow was killed.

They went -- right away, there were mountains luckily where the partisans came. This was he told me about in '40 -- '42 already, in other words, this is, and then he was with the partisans hiding and then he became even -- no, higher than a captain. Colonel or something like that in the Army. He's still alive. He came here to visit. His daughter right away came here. I was his sponsor. She came --

Q THIS IS A JEWISH FRIEND?

3504

A Jewish friend.

Q WITH THE PARTISANS?

A He came to the partisans. Oh, I had a lot of friends who were with the partisans, but you have to be honest about it. In our nature, we were not fellows who go around shooting and fighting but when you are forced to save your life and you're going to the mountains -- I was surprised. Some boys who I didn't think would throw even a potato at somebody, they were there. Suddenly they became full of enthusiasm to fight for their lives and get away from the Germans, and they became quite heroic.

You know, they became a general or that, and I just met him -- he was a nice quiet fellow before the war, suddenly he became a violent man. To be violent, I don't mean ruthless, but he had to run to the mountains in the winter in tennis shoes, if he had that, in rocks, and he became one of the big heroes over there.

Q LET'S GO BACK A SECOND. YOU MENTIONED THE ISLAND OF KORCULA.

A Korcula, right.

Q DO I UNDERSTAND, THERE WAS NO CAMP AS SUCH THERE. YOU WERE SIMPLY ON THE ISLAND?

A No, this is an island with different cities. The only thing the Italians did, they spread us around. See, what they did, we were in prison together, me and my brothers, three brothers were in prison, and one was out, the one with the children. That really was inhumanity they showed, but it wasn't that tough.

The boy, the brother -- they sent to Italy one of my brothers in chains. I told you other civilians in chains, which later when they came to Italy, Italian civilians, they protested. The real Italians said "How can you put these kind of people in chains? Let them free."

So they send me on an island of Korcula, and my brother on the same island, on the same little city of Vela Luka. My other brother, they send him on the same island to the opposite side -- we couldn't see each other -- which is called Korcula. The same island on a different spot, so they broke us up. So this was their inhumanity a little bit, which wasn't really that tough to take, since we knew everybody was all right.

And in the villages, there was plenty of food. Fishing was extremely well. The Italians did let the local fishermen go around and fish. The Adriatic was very rich, very rich with fish. I remember once I snuck out -- I wasn't supposed to -- and I went with the local Croatians, assured they were friendly, on a barge and I came out at night and

somehow, the light over there in my little place in little island came on automatically, so my switch was on.

Suddenly they said "Who is in the room? How come the light is on?" Because you're supposed to -- because of the war, and usually, you closed the curtains or something and they found out I was away through that misfortune. They put me in jail, but again, the sergeant somehow, Italian sergeant, . It's all right.

Q YOU WERE IN SEVERAL CAMPS.

A No, they were -- I cannot -- this is in Italy. We called it , the civilian interned of the war, but we had freedom, complete freedom. We went to the beach to swim in this Vela Luka, the island. Food, we had plenty of food.

Q WERE JEWISH WOMEN ALSO --

A Yes, families, families.

Q WHOLE FAMILIES?

A Yes, families, they did not break up. Some family here, no, no, they didn't break us up there. They send us to the islands if we were dangerous or whatever.

Q AT THE CONCENTRATION CAMP --

A Concentration camp, that was -- there were different prisons.

Q -- WERE THERE WOMEN THERE?

A Yes, there were women there, some families. Naturally, it was -- there was freedom. There was not somebody who would lock you up. It was all right. It was not -- they were not watching us. They were not keeping us

pure. We had freedom, if you -- if there was availability to it.

Q SO THERE COULD BE A ROMANCE IN THAT PRISON?

A Oh, yeah, yes.

Q THE ITALIANS UNDERSTOOD THAT THEN?

A Well, they were not there. If they were all living together, something is liable to happen. There were barracks, separate barracks, men and women, but then families, they did have their own little rooms. Very tiny, but it doesn't matter. If you have a bed like this, nothing more -- that is, not that delicate, but I mean with straw and metal, this was just fine, but you know, you're not hungry. Maybe thirsty, but you are not hungry.

Q WHAT WAS THE NAME OF THAT --

A Ferramonte. Ferramonte.

Q IN SOUTHERN ITALY?

A Provincia de Cosenza. Cosenza is the city. The Provincia Cosenza, province of Cosenza. Malaria was there. We were in fenced in, barbed -- barbed wire. Not electrical barbed wires, but barbed wires. Actually, if somebody would have tried, I bet they would have got away. I don't remember ever even thinking about it, only because before the end, before the American invasion, we were -- you could see the German planes by the hundreds flying low, maybe two hundred feet from the ground, not to be noticed by American fliers who were chasing them.

They were all running and in fact, suddenly one day they came in, three or four German soldiers, and machine guns

in the camp. Luckily, they were not SS, they just came in to see what's what and they left and we decided we better go and we run into -- the Italian guards already knew the Americans should be soon here. We run away and we run into the mountains and then we had in the villages and I guess we give them whatever we had, we could slowly to sell. So they feed -- they fed us, the Italians fed us.

Q YOU --

A In the mountains.

Q YOU RAN AWAY?

A Ran away, sure.

Q JUST BEFORE THE AMERICAN INVASION?

A We run away in a railroad station and suddenly, the train -- the man let me go in the engine and I had my good clothes on. I arrived wherever I arrived black. I mean, it was all black from the chimney, from the smoke, but who cared?

And it was -- when was it? In '44. Going to that station, we didn't know this. Walking, rain, and I mean in Europe, the rains, it rains like back east, cats and dogs. Everything, everything was wet, everything. There was not one piece -- it was night, so on the -- before the thing was going, I went to the compartment there, I undress myself, squeeze all the water and I was drying the clothes on my body, but you're young, you can take -- the beating I took, I thought I would never walk. I could -- listen, I got a -- but I was lucky, because I was a sportsman. Somehow the fanaticism of sports, no, you have to do it, you have to do

it, and it brought extra energy into my body and in fact, I played in London in Albert Hall, maybe 6,000 people, I played a match and suddenly one of my knees clicking; it should have broke. You know, you play awfully fast. I don't know if you've ever seen the sport, and I jumped and the knee just gave out and I fell and I bruised -- the things moved, the tendons, like this, and it hurts like hell. You just don't have any support for the leg, you just fall. I fell on a piece of log and you hear the people, "Ooooh." They knew something was wrong. Why did I fall like that?

But then I kicked it back and it jumped back luckily and I was able to continue to play and the fellow became so nervous, what happened to me, he got nervous, not me, and he lost. Maybe I should use that trick more often, I said, later on.

So it was -- I was personally lucky, personally lucky. As a Jew, I suffered a lot. Whatever happens to them just bothers me immensely. Sometimes, I wish it wouldn't be the suffering. Maybe it's a luxury that all you American people, it never bothers you so much. It bothers me immensely, the injustice towards the Jewish people.

Q WOULD YOU SAY VERY DISTINCTLY THE NAMES -- THE NAME OF YOUR FATHER AND THE NAMES OF ALL YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS. DO I UNDERSTAND THAT YOUR MOTHER DIED BEFORE THIS --

A Just a couple of months.

Q SAY THE NAME OF YOUR FATHER, PLEASE, AND YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

A Alexander Herskovich. Then the oldest brother was Herskovich; Milam Herskovich; Regina Herskovich; Immanuel Herskovich; then Adolf -- this is me, Adolf. Some name. Then Gisella, Gita, and the youngest one was Ludavit.

From the names, you can see we used -- actually, my parents used -- Ludovit is a typical Croatian name. means , typical Croatian name, so we felt like being part of society. They want us to grow up in it and I felt very good in it.

Q YOU WERE WELL ASSIMILATED IN CROATIA?

A No, I personally felt very Jewish and I was in Jewish athletic club, Macabee, all the time there with the Jews, but I had a lot of friends who were nonJewish, yes. I don't -- yes.

Q DO YOU FOLLOW HAPPENINGS IN GERMANY AND EUROPE NOW?

A Boy, do I. I traveled a lot after the war. I was 20 times in Israel since I came to this country, because of sports. I was twice in Russia, to Siberia, and as I told you before, I even took a lot of medicine, which I found out certain Jews needed it. I met the mother of Sherinksy -- I have a picture of her sitting in my pocket -- and took a lot of medicines to those people who needed it. It was incredible how I had to do it, and I hid it away in Russia.

If you're interested in that part of the story, that I -- here a local organization gave me even the money for a telephone, because it's worth less than a penny. If I were to ask somebody for that, they'd say "You want to call up? Who the hell do you want to call up?" This is five

years ago now, I think, and they would know I want to talk to somebody, so I had with me these in the hotel in the corner, nobody was there.

I called up and I said I am friend of David from here, from San Francisco. I forgot his last name, Vosberg or something like that, and they knew right away, and he told me how he's going to look, so I said I'm going to have a red bag, whatever, and table tennis racket in my hand, like a secondhand spy or agent spy movie.

It appears to be in medicine and clothing. I took a tennis racket with me. , all those Hebrew books some people wanted, they asked for it. I gave them a lot of medicines and clothing, and I recognized him and I followed him, then he spoke to me. He spoke English also; said, "Don't say any word," a few couple of words in the bus. He had said those few words and in fact, when we changed the bus, I seen another kid. I could tell he was Jewish, still Jewish, I don't care what. He said "Don't talk to him either," you know, then he took me to his home. His name was Ratner, and his aunt lives in Berkeley. He was a teacher or professor, this fellow.

And in that family, right before Passover, right on Passover, -- I took, by the way, also half a gallon of kosher Passover wine for them for the Seder, and they have seen it. The Russians have seen it. I seen them x-raying the darn thing on the thing where we entered, they have seen it.

So I told him, "Well, I'm a religious Jew." I had a Talas with me. I was invited there. I had a letter, I was

invited. I was the only American then over there, because I was a European champion, so they invited me, so I had with me invitation. They knew that, I guess. They knew everything. Woman I guess was waiting for me already there, so they let everything through. Whatever they have seen, they didn't touch, not anything.

And I brought to that one place of this family in Russia all the medicines and they said they are going to spread out, for me not to bother to go around. I was there first night. Second night, I came for the Seder. It was extremely sad that other people, knowing here's an American Jew, came there, I should help them. I mean, what power did I have to help anybody? It was so depressing. Some people thought, you know, I can do something. I couldn't do anything.

One man spoke beautiful English, he looked like Robert Donat. I don't know if you're too young to remember the actor, Robert Donat. You remember him? And he spoke English English, but he taught himself there in Russia, some English, probably with something, tapes, and he has already two daughters in this country and he said "Please, go there, keep contact, tell them, because we cannot send" -- I mean now they're here already and I told you the same people I met in Moscow, the same people I have seen last year in Israel. I hope this year I'm going again to see Mrs. -- the mother of Sherinksy. A nice cute little lady, very -- just incredible what we have to go through just to live.

Q IN ZAGREB, AND ALSO WHEN YOU WERE IN ITALY

TRAVELING AROUND DURING THE WAR --

A During the war? No, during the war?

Q YES, BACK WHEN YOU WERE LIVING IN TORINO --

A There, you couldn't travel. No, no, no, no, this was -- later on, after I was liberated in '44, then I could travel freely as an Italian.

Q BUT YOU LIVED IN SOME ITALIAN CITIES?

A Yes. Sure, lived in Rome for a year free after the war. The war was still going on, but for me, it was after the war, I was free. Then I moved to Torino. I stayed there all this time waiting for my permit to come to go to the United States and in the meantime, I told you one of my brothers ended up in Chile, the oldest, , with two boys, and he too had trouble. Always causing trouble.

He opened a manufacturing, clothing for children, children dresses, pajamas, all the things like that, in Santiago, and he had a lot of children with the second wife, at least eight, and then Allende, when he came, whatever happened to end the Communist party and they didn't get the majority, and he was elected, but he could not fire his workers, but he depended on the government to give him the thread to sew, so now he needed let's say 50 pounds of thread, he had to stay in line all day long, his son, until he got a pound of thread. So now they work for half an hour, pays them for a week, but he couldn't fire them.

So after a while he said, "I better go away," and whatever he got for the factory, which was peanuts, he ended up in this country with all his children.

Q YOU STAYED IN ITALIAN CITIES THOUGH IN FLORENCE, WHERE YOU WERE THROWN IN JAIL; YOU WERE IN ITALIAN CITIES BEFORE YOU WENT TO THE PRISON CAMP.

A No. Yes, okay, okay -- I was in prison in Split; they took us to northern Italy. They told us we go by, so I went along with my brother and his two babies, two children then into Asti. We were there interned in the , I mentioned, we were civilian internees. We could move daytime and at night, we had to be in our home. Very private homes, we moved around like Italians. Then I was caught at night being outside, which you're not supposed to be. Then they shipped me to Florence for a day or two, then prison in the concentration camp in southern Italy.

Q THERE WERE OTHER JEWS IN ASTI ALSO WHO WERE INTERNEES?

A Yes, yes. Just -- this is what they did, the Italians. Very good, I mean it. A lot of people in different cities, smaller cities and there, they were able to live in small villages and they make friends with the Italians. Italians saved a lot of them.

Q DID YOU HEAR OF ANY JEWS BEING DEPORTED FROM ITALY, TAKEN OUT OF ITALY?

A Where to? To Germany?

Q AUSCHWITZ, TO THE CAMPS?

A No, no. Could be later on when the Germans took over, I wouldn't know that, if they caught them.

Q WERE THERE ANY JEWISH COUNCILS, COUNCILS OF ELDERS IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITIES THAT YOU'VE HEARD ABOUT? IN

ZAGREB, WERE THERE?

A Before the war?

Q YES, AND EVEN AFTER THE GERMANS CAME.

A No, no, not -- you could not. I mean, we had big communities, community organizations then, all kinds, they were strong, but then during the war, nothing. Everyone tried to hush, hush, talk to each other quietly, help each other, advise where to go, what to do, and that's it. Then everyone on his own tried to run.

Q DID YOU HEAR OF ANY DEPORTATIONS FROM ZAGREB?

A Sure.

Q SENDING THEM TO THE CAMPS AT POLAND?

A Oh, sure.

Q WHO CHOSE WHO WOULD GO?

A Whoever -- whoever they caught, actually, they put them -- a lot of them, they took to the little island where I told you 700,000 people died. Little city or village, the camp, where 700,000 people were killed. A lot of them were sent there. I don't know if anybody was sent to Germany. This is --

Q OR TO POLAND?

A To save transportation, they killed them right then and there. They were organized there, so they didn't have to do that. But what's his name, Waldheim? I know later on through the Yugoslav papers, he was in charge of people who were killing actually Serbian children.

Q IN YUGOSLAVIA?

A In Yugoslavia, that's right, in the Yugoslav

papers, and this fellow, friend of mine who run away from this camp at night through the river, the Danube river, became a partisan, he had to be a witness not only three years ago again in the court, one of the very few survivors still alive, against Waldheim, and he says after that, before, when he was told he had to come, he couldn't sleep, all this, you know, flashbacks, enormous -- you cannot describe it.

Q YOUR FRIEND --

A Chopping up with knives. I don't want to tell you the stories that I know. It's too gruesome what they did over there, too gruesome, far too gruesome.

Q DID YOU SAY YOUR FRIEND SAW WALDHEIM?

A No, no, no, he knew -- he knew, he was a partisan. He knew, there were documents. He knew he was. I read it in the newspapers, the Yugoslav newspapers.

Q YOU SAID AS A CIVILIAN BEFORE THE WAR, YOU SAW HITLER THREE TIMES?

A Not Hitler. I saw Germany. I was in Germany, traveling through Germany, and I have seen those signs "Dogs and Jews not allowed," and I played for Yugoslavia in the national team and it was -- just to see it and you just cannot believe it, that this is happening. You see all these things like that. You still did not know until '37, '38, you started to see from Austria, they start to run away to Yugoslavia. This was in 1938 already, the Germans came to Austria, and the Germans were celebrating, all of them, they were drinking beer, having parties.

It was terrible.

Q IN THOSE YEARS, '38, '37, '39 IN ZAGREB, YOU KNEW OF JEWS WHO WERE RUNNING AWAY FROM AUSTRIA?

A Oh, sure, yeah. Oh, sure. I remember I saw a picture, they took -- they came organized by train. They let them go out to Israel, a trainload of young people, and some of them I met where I played. In '37, I played back in Vienna, Baden next to Vienna, championship. I met some people over there, some Jewish people and then they were going, so we went to the station, not only because of those. We knew the Jewish people in Zagreb were organizing to bring them food and early in the morning, six o'clock, the train came by and they let them out, you know, like in Boy Scouts uniform, people in their 20's or whatever. A few -- maybe five, six hundred of them.

Q IN ZAGREB IN THE LATE 30'S, DID THE JEWISH COMMUNITY KNOW THAT OTHER JEWS UP IN GERMANY AND UP IN EUROPE WERE BEING DEPORTED?

A Well, no, we didn't.

Q DEPORTED TO CAMPS?

A No, no. We didn't -- I don't remember -- no, we didn't know. I didn't know. We knew in '38, already we knew, we heard what's happening in Germany, yes, we heard it. Then my brother-in-law is a German from Hamburg -- from Frankfurt. His name is Hamburg.

This is also an interesting story. When he came to a , which means a fellow introduced a religious Jewish fellow to my sister and then they got married -- this

is about maybe six months before the Germans came. This is in 1940. They got married, and suddenly when -- under pressure -- before the war, the Croatians already took over a little bit of it. He was a foreigner -- now, he was a German foreigner. They send him to a little village outside of Zagreb, maybe an hour, interned, so he was there -- but not in prison, not in chains. He was there, he had to be there, and my sister was with him, since she was married.

Now, when the Germans came, I came -- I represented Croatia, as I told you before, also, so this is a little -- red and white squares symbol. This is -- so I had a shirt on, Croatia, and I documented that I played for Croatia, so I went to that little city, bluffing, and I told the little peasants, Croatian peasants with the guns in the pocket like that, that I came for my sister. "Who are you?" "I'm a Croatian." Showed them my Croatian document.

I don't know if he knew how to read, but he saw the Croatian symbol, he let my sister with me go, but then somehow he was thinking still. I came to the station an hour later, the same fellow came, "Let me see it again, your document."

You know, I kept cool, but fearful. But anyway, he did let us go, but listen to the circumstance, that fate. Now, my brother-in-law who is from Frankfurt, he's in a little village, now comes German troops to enter and he's on a little street somehow, comes an officer who went to school with him. "Joe, what are you doing here?" A friend, a German officer, not SS troop. "Here I am. They told me I

have to be here." "Why, what do you mean?"

Look at this, in a little village, even I don't know which one it is. Today, I've forgotten the name of the village, a tiny village. A man from Germany, who he knew, his friend, came and liberated him off. Told him "Off you go, you don't need to be here." The German was naturally more powerful than any peasant over there and away he came, right away we all, sister too, went to Split.

Q YOUR BROTHER-IN-LAW WAS JEWISH?

A Sure he was Jewish. Sure.

Q HOW MANY LANGUAGES -- NAME THE LANGUAGES YOU SPEAK.

A I speak quite well Yugoslav, German, Italian, you can consider English not too bad, Yiddish, Czechoslovakian. I had some Bulgarian, Russian, Bulgarian and any Slavic language I can probably do pretty well.

Q CZECHOSLOVAKIAN. DO YOU SPEAK CROATIAN?

A I went to school in Czechoslovakia for two years as a young fellow.

Q YUGOSLAV. CROATIAN, CROATIAN?

A No, Czechoslovakia.

Q NO, IN YUGOSLAVIA.

A Croatian, same thing, although we did write in cyrillic. We had to study cyrillic writing, which is the same as the Russian writing, but then I went to school in Czechoslovakia for two years in the religious schools. My father send me. So I learned this language, but Bulgarian is very similar, very similar. In fact, I speak Italian quite well, all right, and Spanish is very easy for me. Once you

have the knowledge -- and Hebrew is not too bad, my Hebrew. But if I have to be in Israel to get a slight fluency in it.

You grow up -- this is -- my kids used to make me mad, my two boys, when they were six, seven, eight, nine, ten, "How do you spell it?" One language, how do you spell it? I wrote in four different type of writings and I was not a genius. Old Gothic for some reason they made us study; Hebrew, cyrillic and Latin. In four different type of writings, I had to write. I was eight, nine, ten and these kids were worried, "How do you spell it?"

Q YOU SAY YOU'VE BEEN BACK TO ISRAEL SEVERAL TIMES.

A Twenty times.

Q TWENTY TIMES, BUT YOU SAY ALSO THAT YOU ARE NOT A RELIGIOUS PERSON.

A There was nothing to do with religion. I was in Israel for my people. Spiritually, I resent God being so injust to my father who did nothing else but praying every day and the things that he went through, no person should allow it unless a God should permit something like that. My sister being killed, tortured and gassed, her babies, so how could I be -- this is a man-made fantasy, God through religion. I believe there's some supreme force, but it certainly doesn't care of our idiotic behavior.

Q HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE STATE OF ISRAEL NOW?

A Tremendously. I mean, there is -- you have to, and I feel guilty at being selfish that I'm in this country. I came to this country only for selfishness. It was easier. I'm not -- and in a way, guilty, yes. Guilty, because it was

easier here. I have a lot of family there and friends and I went the first time in 1960 and since then, I was there many, many, many, many times and it's incredible. I've seen the progress.

Look, I don't know how you people see it, but I spoke to the Arabs in all these different countries, you know, not being an Israeli. They don't want Israel to exist. There's no way they want Israel to exist.

I read a report today from the Iranian president. This is -- you hear what he said, Israel has no right to exist. Jewish people have no right to a homeland. Yet they're people. Most of the matter -- my Israeli friends are not religious, they're Israeli. An Italian has to have a passport. He's an Italian, not a Catholic.

So we happen to be Israeli with Jewish as a religion. If I remember from the Torah, when I was learning, which it said in Hebrew, , people of Israel are brothers, we are Jewish. Jewish is their religion and we are people of Israel. My high philosophy of the day.

Q WHAT IS YOUR FEELING ABOUT THE REUNIFICATION OF THE TWO GERMANIES?

A Again, I did go -- I hate to go to Germany. I just went last year again. It was only merely to pick up the car that I drive in Europe, and the Germans, also talking to them in a with Germans, and I pretend I'm North American. They call American president the stupid Americans, and in fact, our policies did everything possible to advance

their country economically as they did to Japan, people who destroyed half of the world, so naturally I do not believe in German decency. I do not.

Now today all the Germans say "We are not guilty for the other people." When they're showed the picture of my sister's children, three years old, two years old, they were guilty? You killed them. Or they gave me an example, just now, I'm there on business, and he said "Yeah, but some Germans went to visit Israel and the Israelis found out they were Germans, they spit on them." I said "I wish you would have done that, spit on the Jews instead of killing them. That punishment, I would accept. Now, you are offended? Since you kill our people, now they spit on you?"

Some punishment. I thought it is much more -- they were not punished whatsoever. 55 million people were killed, not only the six million Jews. When they bring out -- they were very smart, people didn't give a damn, they don't give a damn about the Jews and of course, they talk six million Jews, constantly, you never heard about the 20 million Russians, you never know about that, so people, okay, so who cares about the Jews? But they are killed; caused the death of 55 million people. These are what the Russians told me.

What, you Americans, you are surprised that we are paranoid? Wouldn't you be, 20 million people killed? How many 20 or 30 million people lost their legs or their nose or their toes or their hands or something? So now nobody talks about that.

Constantly we're doing the building of that evil

society; they're arrogant as ever, arrogant. Mr. Kolb, if it wouldn't be taped, I would call him something else. Arrogant, terribly arrogant, and the stupidity of Reagan to go to that camp, to the cemetery of the Nazi soldiers.

Q BITBURG?

A It's crazy, it's crazy. They're making an ass out of Americans.

Q IS THERE REASON TO FEAR THAT THE TWO GERMANIES WILL COME BACK TOGETHER? IS THERE A REASON TO BE AFRAID OF THAT?

A Afraid of what?

Q EAST GERMANY AND WEST GERMANY COMING TOGETHER.

A By the Jews?

Q AS A JEW, DO YOU FEEL --

A No, but they are doing it already with their agencies. Like Libya, they're building rockets over there. In Syria, they have their scientists. A proxy. They don't have to do it themselves. "They will do our jobs." This is what they told me. "Somebody else, you don't have to worry." They will -- no, the only thing I do hope, the Russians, they have so much trouble over there -- boy, are they in trouble, economically, everything -- the papers today said they are concerned and they should be rightfully concerned, of a unified Germany, because they're arrogant SOB's.

Q WILL A UNIFIED GERMANY BE A DANGER TO EUROPE AGAIN?

A Yes, that nature doesn't stop. Look at history. Before the first war -- not only the first war; Bismarck, before that, they were constantly -- the Prussians, they were always arrogant and invading and maybe human nature is like

that. They're certainly in the top list of the arrogant and hostile and bossy people. One German may be friendly, with two Germans, you may drink beer. With four, you can start a war. They are always superior. This is what I have experienced when they talk together. Just --

Q YOUR HOMELAND, DOES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO THE SAFETY OF A JEW IN EUROPE, NOW THAT YOU HAVE A HOMELAND?

A Sure it makes a difference. It makes a difference to me, but look at what's happening in Argentina. People have to run almost naked now because you can take whatever they can, because I'm telling you, whatever this is, this is some innate fault of the Christian religion. They taught these primitive people, the masses, Jews killed the Jesus. To tell the truth, Romans came over there -- an article I wrote to the Italian papers actually. I sent them an article about it, and the Romans came
to Israel at that time, 2,000 years ago, they plundered, they raped, they robbed, they dispersed the Jews, they killed them, they hung them on the cross. Not only Jesus, by the thousands. Now they make a God out of a decent human being, now they blame us for it. It's the maximum absurdity, indecency, is the -- in the Christian religion, that part, blaming us for something like that.

Q HAS THE WAR CAUSED YOU ANY PARTICULAR PROBLEMS IN TERMS OF YOUR HEALTH OR IN TERMS OF THE WAY YOU THINK ABOUT THINGS?

A Yes, it does affect you. In other words, I'm -- I have some allergies. Time ago, it would turn -- if you get

upset, it turns into asthma, into an attack, and I learned this once, you once try to conquer it and really, I was able to conquer that mentally. For five years, I didn't even see a doctor and now whenever you read -- and you read awful things, disturbing things about Israelis, that I have to keep my sanity, I mean, to keep cool, take it easy, take it easy, you can't change it. Do your best, but stay healthy.

I don't want to be unpleasant to my children, although they're not home. I mean, or to anybody else. Yes, it does affect people's health, absolutely, because --

Q DO YOU EVER HAVE BAD DREAMS FROM THE WAR?

A Years ago, yes, I had. Yes, I had, sobbings and beatings once in a while, or I even had -- you know, my family, you do have that. You do have that and it lets -- when you see those type of films on television of the concentration camps, you look at that and you don't want to look at that and maybe you see your family there, and just try to stay away from it. I enjoy the war movies, when I see the Germans are losing. That part, I enjoy, but the concentration camps are terribly tough.

My sister was a lovely, lovely, lovely girl. Nothing but laughter and joy and love. I grew up in a family full of it, but -- and it's just incredible that society permits something like this to happen and still blaming us for being the of society. This is what Iran said today.

Now, I know there's a lot of things to talk about, but --

Q BEFORE WE FINISH, WILL YOU SAY CLEARLY THE NAME OF YOUR WIFE AND THE NAMES OF YOUR CHILDREN.

A I have their pictures here.

Q AND YOU SAID THEY HAD BAR MITZVAHS?

A Oh, sure.

Q BUT YOU'RE NOT RELIGIOUS?

A Oh, the traditions I keep. I keep Seders. Seder is part of the Jewish history. I don't accept Yom Kippur, inasmuch I go there and when I read the darn thing, the book, I have transgressed, I have sinned and it tells me that and you read those things. Boy, am I lousy, according to this, what it says. Every year, do the same thing.

No, no, no, that part -- religion, , Hanukkah, Hanukkah and Passover, no, we have traditions in my home. We get together, Seders. My children, both of them are bar mitzvahed, and luckily, he married a Jewish girl. Luckily, the second fellow.

Q YOU MARRIED A JEWISH GIRL?

A I married -- yeah, her name is Dorothy Hutt Schlessinger. I met her in a bus; it was the San Francisco bus accident, I call it. I stepped on her skirt while she was sitting there and surprisingly, she noticed I had an accent, so she asked where I was from and I said Yugoslavia, and she said "My parents also." I said "Uh-oh, maybe facist." Then she told me the name Schlessinger. Oh, Schlessinger. Anyway, they happened to be from the northern part of Yugoslavia, very rich part of the country in nature. Lot of grain, lot of animals. Everything grows

there. They're nice friendly people. They died, very old, very old age. I was lucky with my wife. Very lovely, lovely girl and very patient. By having me as a husband, she had to be patient.

Q SAY HER NAME. PARDON ME A MOMENT, HER MAIDEN NAME AND WHERE YOU LIVE IN EL CERRITO, AND THE NAMES OF YOUR CHILDREN.

A Her maiden name is Schlessinger, Dorothy Hutt. She was born in Pennsylvania, I think , not far from Pittsburgh. My sons are Immanuel -- Immanuel and Elizer are names of two of my brothers who perished. He was born October 1st, 1960, and younger son is married, Joel Herskovich. He's married to Undine Pullman. He lives in Benicia. He was born in 1962, January 26th. Now he has a son, Alexander, who will be -- 27th, which is tomorrow, seven months old.

Q YOU LIVE IN EL CERRITO?

A I live in El Cerrito, right. The address, do you need it? 2512 Edwards Avenue, El Cerrito, California. Nice home, I like my gardening, all that stuff. Very comfortable. We go skiing. We have a house in Tahoe. We go there, we do sports. Oh, yeah, you have to do things to distract yourself. I enjoy life.

Q ANYTHING ELSE AT ALL THAT YOU WANT TO SAY --

A No. It's very --

Q -- ABOUT THE WHOLE EXPERIENCE? HAVE YOU TOLD YOUR STORY TO ANY OTHER NEWSPAPERS, IN SCHOOLS?

A A lot of people told me, because I was in many

books, sporting books. Not only books, international books. Part of the story in the Italian issue I have here, but everybody writes a book about those things. No, I didn't tell anybody any story, but it's very interesting. You had to have sense of humor in prison. We did silly things to survive. Educated people, not all Jewish people. They were 18 in a room. We did silly things, it was like kids.

Like we had a straw bed. You want to make it softer, destroying the mattress. You put a hole in the middle so you could soften it up. If a new prisoner came -- you wash yourself in a little container, metal container, the water they give us, so the new fellow wasn't experienced, so he put that thing with water under the straw. This is the big joke. We had to keep up humor in the prison, because this helps a lot to survive. In life, you need to have it.

Q ANYTHING ELSE LIKE THAT THAT YOU CAN REMEMBER FROM THE CAMP?

A Funny things?

Q YES, SURE.

A Well, I remember finding --

Q OR SAD THINGS.

A What?

Q OR SAD THINGS.

A Sad things, you've seen a lot of sad things. People who got nervous breakdowns, people who were wandering for a long time, searching for people from their families. I -- I always hoped maybe, maybe my sister or my father, whatever. My oldest brother -- my -- my one brother

Immanuel, who died, he was liberated with me in southern Italy. We both right away worked with Americans. He worked for the British. I did the sports and interpreting and right on my birthday -- I told him -- it was in 1944. "Immanuel, please" -- he came, he was a sergeant somehow. Naturally, he was not an official soldier, just working as a language -- I said "Stay, it's only two days. It's my birthday, have a party. Come on" He said no, he told them he has to back. He came back, two hours later he was dead. The Germans never bombed that place when the war was going on.

If he would have come two hours later, nothing would have happened.

Q What city was that?

A Lanciano. Lanciano, on the Adriatic side of Italy.

Q Killed by a bomb?

A Killed by a bomb. Look at stupid destiny. He was already free.

So I remember one of the Americans gave me my first job. Especially I made more money at table tennis than interpreting. At that time, as I told you, you eat for maybe a dime or a quarter, a big lunch. I'm talking about in Italy, in southern Italy, and he told me "Hopefully, you'll teach these people how to play table tennis." It was in 1943, beginning of '44 in southern Italy. , the name of the group forever, and two dollars an hour, and I made an expression, I was surprised, that much?

So he misread it. So, he said "Okay, we'll give you three dollars an hour." Naturally, I didn't complain. I

got more than he originally offered, but it was then -- once I was free, I just was no concern about my own life. Just I didn't know where I was going to settle.

Ended up in -- this is a beautiful part of the world, the Bay area. I just love it here. It was easy here.

Q IN CAMP, WERE THERE OTHER JEWS -- I'M TALKING ABOUT THE CAMP IN SOUTHERN ITALY --

A Yes, there was a lot of Jewish.

Q WERE THEY ALLOWED TO HAVE RELIGIOUS SERVICES?

A Yes, yes, those that wanted. Yes, there was no restrictions whatsoever there for anything. I mean, you couldn't get out. You had to keep quiet or behave, but you were able to walk around, things like that. They gave you -- garbanzo beans was the main source. Garbanzo beans, they burned it, and this was coffee. Burn a couple -- garbanzo beans, they made bread, it was heavy, you could kill somebody with it.

And I still like garbanzo beans after all that. That's surprising. In my salads, I just love it.

Q YOU HAD WITH YOU IN THAT CAMP YOUR SUITCASE, WITH STILL SOME MONEY IN THE LINING.

A Yes, yes.

Q WHEN YOU LEFT ZAGREB IN THE BEGINNING, DID YOU TAKE ENOUGH MONEY TO LAST YOU ALL THROUGH THE WAR?

A More than that. More than that.

Q SO YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO --

A Never, never, never.

Q IT LASTED THE WHOLE TIME?

A Not to show how good I am, but I had some good friends who came and I had to send them some money to help them out. You know, if somebody took their hundred dollars, that was a lot of money, things like that, so -- no, no, I was in that respect very lucky. I was not caught by the Germans. I bluffed my way out with this German document.

Q YOU HAD YOUR SUITCASE WITH YOU ALL THE TIME?

A Well, no, it was not when I was free, no. I took it out. Actually, no, even earlier, no, no, I took it actually earlier. Once I was in Italy in the little cities, I already took it out, out of the thing. In fact, this was around my tummy, which they almost found when they undressed me. Luckily, they didn't. We were really living a normal life there in the Italian cities. No problems whatsoever.

So when I was in jail, there were a lot of people, Croatian people, which were killed by the Italians because there were those naturally who protested their occupation and nobody likes occupations, and the black shirts were pretty mean. Not the soldiers, because in fact, in Italy, when I ate -- I ate the same together with the Italian officer. He was also there in the same house. There was absolutely -- bring a soldier, he would play an accordian, we would sing together, so it was just -- Italians are just incredibly human, incredibly human. Not the people they talk about Mafia. Very, very, -- their nature was just tremendous, and the Germans didn't change. It didn't change. They're arrogant. They never change.

No questions? I know I have other things, but it's

funny, I'm sure --

Q ANYTHING ELSE AT ALL YOU WANT TO SAY ABOUT YOUR LIFE?

A My previous life? Well, I suppose I've gone a normal way and everything was fine, prosperous, well. People here have a very good life in Zagreb,no problems whatsoever. In fact, I remember once I was in some kind of a dance, I don't know what happened, maybe -- maybe two sport clubs or something, suddenly they started a big fight. I was the only Jew. Nobody touched me. They were fighting each other. Can you imagine, people fighting and not touching a Jew?

So I mean, our life was very, very good until -- until the Germans came. So we had -- nobody taught America, heard of America there. We lived a very well-organized society socially, we lived. Entertaining, sports, anything, intellectually, everything was very, very, very good and, well, we were not the only ones that suffered in the war, so it seems like it's getting worse now everywhere in the world.

Probably tomorrow I will remember all kinds of stories. That's it.

Q Thank you very much.

A Thank you. I hope I didn't bore you to death.

(End of tape.)