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3 Interview with: Ernie Hollander  
4 Holocaust Oral History Project  
5 Date: February 22, 1989 Place: Oakland, California  
6 Interviewer: Howard Feldsen  
7 Transcriber: Alice Grant

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10 Q COULD YOU TELL US WHEN AND WHERE YOU WERE BORN?

11 A I was born in Czechoslovakia, in the little town of  
12 (Oh-sha-va). It's near a big Jewish community (Moon-kacha),  
13 that's the closest city, and I was born in June 25th, 1925.

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15 Q WHERE WAS YOUR FAMILY FROM?

16 A My family are all from Austria, Hungary. My parents and my  
17 great grandparents -- great, great, great grandparents coming  
18 from Spain in 1492. When my original name was that time, (El-  
19 ner-ka-verr), that means in Hebrew to God we hope. And my great  
20 grandparents when they left Spain, they settled down in Holland and  
21 they lived there for about 100 years.

22 And then, my great grandparents moved from Holland to Austria,  
23 Hungary and they bought there a little farm and they couldn't  
24 pronounce the name, they were just telling this is the Hollanders  
25 and my name became Hollander about 200 years ago.

26 Q AND WHAT KIND OF WORK DID YOUR PARENTS DO?

27 A My father had a mill. We had a mill, flour mill and we made  
28 flour oil and different kinds of flour, corn flour, white flour.

Q AND YOUR MOTHER?

A My mother was a housewife. She had 8 children of her own and  
she had a twin sister who died at age 33 and left 7 little children.

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Hollander--2

She adopted all 7 children because my uncle was very poor. He was a rabbi, a (A-ma-la-bid). He was teaching (Hi-derr) and he didn't make enough money to support a family, so my mother adopted all the children. So, she raised 15 children.

Q IN YOUR HOUSE?

A In my house.

Q AND DID YOU GO TO SCHOOL?

A I went to (Hi-derr) at age 4. Probably I start (Hi-derr) and I went 4, 4:30 I got up, went to (Hi-derr) till 7:45 or so, 8:00 I went to public school till 1:00. One o'clock from public school stayed back to (Hi-derr) till about 6, 7:00 at night. Seven days a week.

Q SEVEN DAYS?

A Seven days a week, we went to (Hi-derr). (Sha-bus) we went to (Da-bin) not too much ( ? ) mostly (Da-bining).

Q WOULD YOU SAY YOUR FAMILY WAS AN OBSERVANT FAMILY?

A My family comes from all rabbis. Including my father, my uncles, all of them very religious. Extremely religious.

Q YOUR FATHER WAS A RABBI AND RAN THE MILL?

A Yeah.

Q DID YOU WORK WITH YOUR FATHER AT ALL?

A No, I was too young to work.

Q DO YOU EVER REMEMBER BEING IN DANGER IN YOUR TOWN BEFORE THE WAR?

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4 A I remember in 1939, the Hungarians came and took over.  
5 Actually, in '38 the white Russian took over the little (Ka-pa-tia  
6 Mountain) where we lived and they were there for only about a  
7 half a year or so, and they were very big anti-Semitic, very big.  
8 They took away a lot of Jewish stores and made a lot of trouble.

9 And in 1939, the Hungarians came over, and took over my town  
10 and also the whole area. And for the first two or three years,  
11 it was not too bad but after they started to collaborate with the  
12 Germans, the (Yi-losh-es) and the Jewish people got in danger.  
13 They deported some of the Jewish people. They caught a Jew with  
14 a beer, they used to take him into the police station, tear hair  
15 by hair out. So, our life start to get in danger really in 1941.

16 Q BEFORE THE WAR, WAS YOUR LIFE VERY MUCH DIFFERENT?

17 A Yeah. Czechoslovakia the Jewish people were very, very good.  
18 They had high positions in the government, high positions in the  
19 towns. Ninety-nine percent of the Jewish people had stores and  
20 the other population -- the (Goyan), what we call, they had farm-  
21 ers and they went to chop wood and stuff like that. They used  
22 to sell wood and livestock and chickens, stuff like that. They  
23 used to raise and sell to the Jewish people.

24 Q WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT LIFE IN YOUR HOUSE WITH 15  
25 CHILDREN?

26 A Fifteen children, is nothing. We also had a big (Ya-she-ba)  
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Hollander--4

in my city that from the whole area maybe from twenty towns, kids came to the (Ya-she-ba), regular (Ya-she-ba). And we had everyday two to three people from the (Ya-she-ba), young people who--that was the style in Europe, that if somebody came to the (Ya-she-ba) he ate everyday in a different house. And my mother had many more, three or more everyday still boys.

On Saturday, a lot of people went to town and they got stuck in town. They went to poor people for different reasons. My father used to go out the last one from the synagogue and all these people were left in the synagogue. They didn't have where to go for (Sha-bus), he just took them home. Pious people my parents, that I never met somebody else such a pious people.

My mother used to every Thursday night, she didn't sleep. She baked a whole night (Hallus) cause we had in our community some people who were rich ones and they became poor, they went bankruptcy or for different reasons, they were ashamed to go begging.

So, we knew in town already and when we got up Friday morning to go to (Hi-derr), 5:00 or so, my mother had already made 4 packages -- we were four brothers, and each one had a route to deliver to these people (Hallus) for (Sha-bus) flour a little bit and oil because we had that in the mill. But, she baked a whole night (Hallus) every Thursday night.

Q THERE WERE 4 BROTHERS IN THE FAMILY AND 4 SISTERS?

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Hollander--5

A Four sisters.

Q AND COUSINS, YOUR COUSINS WERE WHAT?

A Seven, they were four sisters and one just left to America just before Hitler, she left to America and there was three boys.

Q WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT WHEN THE WAR STARTED?

A Well, a lot of peoples in 1943 already had a feeling they said, whoever cannot produce Hungarian citizenships they took them away to the (Yester) and the (Yeper) and they killed hundreds and hundreds of peoples so a lot of people already went in hiding in 1942.

Q SO UNTIL THAT TIME, YOU WERE UNDER THE HUNGARIANS?

A Under the Hungarians. We were all the time under the Hungarians. There was a different government took over later that they collaborated with the Nazis. Till we had (Ho-lit-mikos), the president in Hungary, the Jews were not too bad off. They kept jobs, positions this was after the new government came in Hungary, in 1941 or '42, I don't remember exactly.

Q SO YOU WERE STILL GOING TO SCHOOL?

A I was still going to school in 1942.

Q AND WHAT HAPPENED THEN?

A In 1943, I finished school. I was 14 years old, you know in Europe you only went to 14 to school, and I went to Budapest. I had a friend who was two years older than me, and he wrote me

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Hollander--6  
a letter with all these good things that it's a big city, Buda-  
pest was over 2 billion people in those days. And, he said why  
don't you come out we find you a job and a young boy, I tried to  
get something different. And I left to Budapest and it was tough  
to get a job in the beginning, very hard. Finally, I was able  
to get as a apprentice in a bakery and I finally got a job. And,  
I came home the last -- in 1944 for (Paser). Just before (Paser),  
Passover, I came home. And, already people already knew what's  
going on a lot of things in the world.

See, the way we lived then, in Europe, in my town, like  
maybe 150 years ago here in America, we didn't have no radio, we  
had no newspaper, we had no -- it was very hard to commute with the  
world. You know? We just knew whatever the government, the  
Hungarian wanted us to know. Otherwise, it was very hard. But,  
the word got around that they're already killing people already  
in Poland, but we never knew about Auschwitz, stuff like that.

So, when I came home for Passover, the last day of Passover,  
7 day of (Paser). We had about a hundred families or so, in my  
little town. And, we had the (Jan-da-ma-ree), the police. They  
called it the (Jan-da-ma-ree). And we came home from the syna-  
gogue, lunch time and a policeman was already waiting by the door  
on each Jewish home. They knew exactly where the Jewish people  
lived. And, they gave us ten minutes to pack. Whatever we can  
pack. Now, what can you pack in ten minutes? I remember

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Hollander--7

my mother, grabbed, she had a few dollars. She stuck it in a jam, jar of jam. She had a few gold rings, she stuck it in a piece of bread. Maybe that we going somewhere, for money, for gold or silver you can always, maybe, get something. But, unfortunate it didn't work like that because they took us to the synagogue, and a whole week they were gathering the rest of the Jews from the little towns, and they brought them all to a big synagogue in my city.

And, one day there was two (Yi-losh-es) they called them. They were Hungarians these special kind of soldiers, like the SS troops in Germany. They had (Yi-losh-es) in the Hungarian government. They had two swastikas, not one, two, double. And they pulled out about 20 kids or so. And, one of them happen to be my brother. And, they put them against the wall, and the guy says like this, "you see I have here lots of knives--bayonets. These kids will be killed first, if you don't take out your gold and silver and diamonds, whatever you're hiding it. Because I know he says, that you are hiding it."

So, when a mother saw that the child was there, she grabbed right away, and people went in the pillowcases, they start to take out money and gold and silver. And, one minute, the table there was full, full of -- so they took everything away. Nothing left. We were there for six days I believe. Then they took us to a bigger ghetto. To (Moon-gash), that was the capital city of

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Hollander--8

(Ka-pa-tia Mountains). And they gathered over there maybe 20 thousand Jews. And (Swart) exactly (Swart) we were 6 weeks so from (Paser) to (Swart) is 6 weeks. They start to transport us to Auschwitz. So, from there the whole family, my whole family went to Auschwitz. We came to Auschwitz, we were there for 3 days.

Q YOU CAME BY TRAIN?

A By train, it took us about 5 days. When my father saw the cities we looked through -- we were about 100 people in a cattle train. No water, no nothing. They throw us in a little bread everyday and we had to fight, because whoever caught it you know it's was very hard to -- he took a piece bread, this guy took a piece of bread. And finally we came to Poland, when my father saw the cities in Poland he was scared already. He said, "I don't like it." cause he heard that they killing Polish Jews, that's what we knew. We didn't know about Auschwitz.

So, finally we arrived in Auschwitz and ah--

Q WHAT DID YOU SEE THERE?

A We didn't see too much. What we saw is, there was --

Q DID YOU ARRIVE AT NIGHT?

A No, we arrived during the day. They told us to go to the right. My father, my brothers, myself, and my younger brother to the right. My mother and three little sisters -- I had three sisters, about 10, 8 and 6. They went to the left right away. And my mother they were pushing also to the right. The



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Hollander--9

right meant to go to like to work to a labor camp. My mother wouldn't give up the kids, cause she was holding two kids in the hand, and the third one was running after her. So, this Nazi comes hits her in the head with a rifle, that's the last time I saw my mother, and little sisters.

After three days, they needed a transport in (Allenbush). They were building a railroad over there and they took my father and my brother and myself, we went to a labor camp. We were there close to a year.

Q WHAT DID YOU DO THEN?

A First when we came in we worked all just carrying cement all day long. Six days a week 12, 15 hours a day, it was the worst. Certain jobs had to be done daily. I was lucky after maybe a week or so, I saw it was too hard to work, and I tried to get out of it. So, one day they asked who is a blacksmith. Me being 14½, 15 years old, I said what can I lose. And, I raised my hand, I'm a blacksmith. So where they needed a blacksmith to work like we had hundreds and hundreds of shovels and picks and all kind of equipment that we worked. And, if a handle broke down, that was my job to fix it. So, from there on I had a pretty good job. Not only had a good job, I think it helped me to survive because there was one guy who was in charge, he was not a Nazi. He was just an older man that he worked for the company.

We worked for a company the name was (Otto Trabis). And

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3 he really felt very bad about all this thing about the Jewish  
4 people getting killed, and he used to sneak in little pieces of  
5 bread and give me once in awhile. So this way I was able to get  
6 a piece for my father, a piece for my brother and it helped us  
7 a little bit better, easier to survive.

8 My father was working in a saw mill. He was making the  
9 ties the wooden ties, and I think it was in February, end of  
10 February sometime. His job was to push the icy wood, the wood  
11 it was very icy -- those days because it was very cold, into  
12 the saw, and make these ties for the railroad. And it was very  
13 cold so he found two racks and he put it on his hands like to  
14 hold icy wood; and as he pushed the wood, he came too close to  
15 the saw one of the racks in his left hand got loose, pulled in  
16 the rack, pulled in his left arm, and cut-off up to the wrist.  
17 Two minutes later they shot him. They didn't kept nobody, no-  
18 body if he couldn't work.

19 Some people they were really sick, high temperature and  
20 they went to the -- it was like the Red Cross building there.  
21 They didn't call it the Red Cross, they called it something else.  
22 And, if somebody came over there and said, " I'm sick, I have  
23 temperature," they let him stay there. But, when we came back  
24 from work we never found those people. So people use to go out  
25 with high temperature to work, because they knew if they stay  
26 in the building, they stay in the tents, you never, never see  
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Hollander--11

the evening. We had 32 thousand people in that camp working,  
big camp.

Q THIS WAS IN 1944?

A Nineteen, the beginning of 1944.

Q HOW LONG WERE YOU THERE?

A We were there 11 months in that camp. And from there after  
in the beginning of April the Russians came too close already  
to where we were. Cause that was Austria where we were and the  
Russians came closer and closer and closer till one day they tell-  
ing us to get ready. We came out and we started in a death march.  
They were taking us I believe, to Dachau, it's 6, 7 days walking.

Cause everytime we came to this area the Americans came, the  
other side the British came. From where we were the Russians came.  
And, they just kept us moving, and moving, and moving. And we  
walked five people in a row. And, if one person just stayed  
behind a little bit or walked out, they shoot him, they gave him  
a bullet. And what we did we always kept wagons with us. The  
food a little bit and water because there was a lot of Germans  
with us they had to eat too. So, there was a couple of wagons  
that if some people they shot them we put them in a wagon, or  
we had a whole bunch of them, a big, big -- like a hundred people  
maybe, they made a big ditch out of town -- cause we went to towns  
too, and they just throw them in the ditch. I remember seeing one  
man sticking his hand out. He was mumbling, " don't bury me, I'm  
alive." they just covered him up, they just covered up everybody.

(1616)

Then finally walking 5 days, to the fifth day we got liberated by an army of black soldiers. I tell you, that was something too because I never saw in my life a black person. And, we were more scared for them, when we saw them than from the Nazis. We thought they were out of space people or something (France's very youth) something like that. I never heard about black people, I never saw black people. And, they were very nice to us they start to throw us milk, those can milk and chocolate, and all kinds of goodies, meat, cans of meat and we start to eat and half of the people died right after that, because they got poison of the stomach.

See, we didn't eat just bread and water for over a year. So, here we start to eat right away regular food and fat food, but it took only about two days and then they put up like a field hospital. The other army came in and they didn't give nobody any more food.

Q THESE WERE THE AMERICANS?

A That was the Americans, yeah.

Q HOW MANY OF YOU WERE THERE?

A We got liberated only about 500 people from 32,000. I never know what happened to the other ones. Some of them we were sleeping a lot of times at night and walking in the day. Other times walking at night and sleeping in the day, I don't know why. And, a lot of times people just couldn't get up. They

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3 were sick, and tired, and hungry and I don't know what they did  
4 to the people, we just kept marching, those who could march. And,  
5 I think that helped my brother and I also a lot, because we had  
6 a little extra food. Was able to always to get a little extra  
7 food.

8 Q HOW?

9 A During, when I was in the labor camp, I was able to get a  
10 little extra food like from this guy that I told you, he was the  
11 head, he was the watchman of the place where I worked. He always  
12 used to sneak in a piece of bread, or a piece of potato, or some-  
13 thing. So, when my father came home from work and my brother, we  
14 used to share it always.

15 Q AND OF THE 500 WHO WERE LIBERATED, HALF OF THEM DIED AFTER  
16 A FEW DAYS?

17 A Half of them died after a few days, they got sick, they got  
18 belly typhus they called it, I don't know. It's from food poison-  
19 ing. From regular food, like if you -- it's like a baby you know.  
20 If a new born baby you were start to feed it right away, it could  
21 never make it. I have very bad ulcers since then too, but at  
22 least I survived.

23 Q DID YOU REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME YOU SAW THE SOLDIERS?

24 A Yeah.

25 Q DID THEY TALK TO YOU?

26 A No, they didn't talk nothing, they just came with tanks.  
27 They just passed us and as they were passing us they threw all  
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kinds of goodies. Chocolate, and chewing gum and milk and those I never met really, they just kept going, kept going. Then, other soldiers came and they already came with hospitals with all different things with doctors, and they start to treat right away the people.

Q AND THIS WAS NEAR, WHERE WAS THIS?

A That was near (Klatz).

Q IN GERMANY?

A I think it's Austria, it's Austria.

Q AND WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR GUARDS?

A Well, the guards start to run away, and there was some Russian people that were together with us in the concentration camp they not Jewish people, I don't know how they got into our camp. And, they were running after them, and they caught them and they just torn them to pieces.

Most of them were killed by those Russian people. And then, the American came those who they caught, well, they just took them away. They put them in jail or they put them on a trial or something.

Q WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?

A What happened to me ah, we were about two months in (Mood-darf), they had over there -- it's also in Austria. They had a camp from the -- it's like the U.N. something similar, (Dom-Shur), they called it, I don't know. Its -- they got -- any guy

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Hollander--15

who was in concentration camp was able to go there, they gave you a bed to sleep, they give you clothes, and they give you food. And then, a lot of them came from Israel right away, the (Sha-him) and they start to talk to especially young kids cause the government, the British government in Palestine that time let in kids under 16 without a quota, otherwise there was a quota.

So, they especially tried to get all the kids to go to Israel, cause they didn't need no quota number. And, I had a friend, a girlfriend, that her brother was in the British brigade, Jewish brigade, -- in the British Army, and he found her so, he talked us also to go to Israel. So what happened that time I was hot for Israel, a Zionist just coming out from the concentration camp I figured, well if I go to liberate Palestine you know there will be no more Holocaust again. And I went to Israel, but they had to make me a little bit younger because I was over 16, already.

So, they made me younger a few years I was able to get into Palestine without a quota number. So, I came to Palestine and --

Q HOW DID YOU COME?

A Through the Israeli, through the (Ha-ga-na) you know, they were able to smuggle you in.

Q HOW?

A To smuggle you in, you know. To get you in without the

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Hollander--16

British would even know about it.

Q HOW DID THEY DO THAT?

A Ah, they at night they had little boats that they unloaded. I happen to come with a British boat. I was dressed as a British soldier, and I had a false pass that I am going for leave to Israel. So does my friend's sister, also we went on a British boat.

Q WHERE DID YOU LEAVE?

A We left (Sha-la-roo-ya). We went from Austria, we went to Holland. From Holland we went to a little port in France, (Sha-la-roo-ya). We went from (Sha-la-roo-ya) it took us about five days to get to Palestine. When I came to Palestine, they right away came from different (Kee-boots-keem), and they took certain people to different styles of (Kee-boots-keem). Now, I went into a (Kee-boots), and I don't like the (Kee-boots). I -- for me it's like -- I felt it's another concentration camp. They tell you when to eat, they tell you when to go to school, they tell when to go to work, and I -- I just came out from a concentration camp and it was not my cup of soup, and I left, next day. And I went to (Na-tan-ya), where I stayed for about a half of year, and then I lived in (Haifa) for 5 years, 5 and a 1/2 years, where I met my wife, we found out we come from the same town, we got married November the 29th, 1947 when Israel became a state, the same day.



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Q THAT'S WHEN THE UNITED NATIONS ESTABLISHED --?

A The United Nations, yeah, yeah. And, six years later my brother always wrote me these crying letters, we are only two left now, and we went through hell, and hell and --

Q WHERE WAS HE?

A He was in America, he came to America.

Q DID YOU EVER GO BACK TO YOUR TOWN?

A No, No. I cannot go back to my town, the Russians won't let you in there. You can go to the capital city to (Un-war) and that's as far as you can go. I don't know why, they don't give you a reason, but where I was born, you cannot go there. Well, any how my brother --

Q WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU IN 1948?

A In 1948, I fought in the liberation war. I happen to be in the (Ates-le) at that time, in the (Ir-goon). When I came to Israel I went right away into the (Ir-goon).

Q HOW DID YOU MAKE CONTACT?

A I had a friend who was in the (Ir-goon), and he told me all about it and you know (Na-tan-ya) in 1946, and '45 and '47 even 99 percent of the people belonged to the <sup>Ir-goon</sup> (Ir-goon). So we living in (Na-tan-ya) I had a friend there, so he told me all about it. I said, "sure, I like to fight, I want to get the State of Israel." And, ah in 1947 in the beginning, I had a very important job. I helped with blowing up the police station in (Hi-pa)

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3 that over there the police had the names and the pictures of all  
4 the (Ir-goon) people, and that was the main thing to do, to blow  
5 it up to destroy all the pictures and the papers. And, I lived  
6 in (Hi-fa) for almost 6 years.

7 Q SO, YOU WERE INVOLVED IN THAT OPERATION?

8 A Yeah, that was the only operation I was involved all the  
9 years, in the (Ir-goon), while I was in the (Ir-goon). Little  
10 things we did, but not anything important.

11 In 1948, when the regular survivors established, I went  
12 into the (Ha-gan-na) and I fought in the (Moo-show-lash), one  
13 of the worst places.

14 Q WHERE IS THAT?

15 A That's before the Iraqis, that's near the Jordanian border  
16 but those days the Iraqis was there, and the Iraqis never took  
17 nobody in prison. If they caught a Jew they kill him right away.  
18 It's the (Moo-show-lash), one of the worst places. I was three  
19 times wounded in the Army. This was one of the reasons I came  
20 to America too, cause I needed a lot of medical help that I  
21 couldn't get in Israel. We didn't even have penicillin in those  
22 days. My brother sent me once penicillin air-mail to Israel.

23 When Jerusalem was blocked-off, my company went out to  
24 (La-troon). (La-troon) is the main fort where they had to go  
25 through to get to Jerusalem. And people, the kids were dying  
26 from hunger. The kids were dying for a little milk, cause they

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Hollander--19

couldn't get only by air -- those days there was not too many planes yet to drop, so we tried to free (La-troon). My wife was in the ninth month pregnant already so, I wrote a letter to my superior officer and I told him I came to Israel, and right away I went into the Army. I never had a chance to work to save up a little bit money, my wife is pregnant the ninth month already, and I ask him to give me leave to go to work a little bit to make money to at least to be able to buy a crib and clothes for the baby, when it's born. So he was very good and he gave me five weeks. The five weeks my battalion went out to (La-troon) and four people came back from the whole battalion. From 160 people, the whole (ga-doot), the whole company was killed.

And those few that were left they came out without arms, without legs. So that was my luck, and I had a daughter, my daughter was born, and I named her (Bra-ha) because it was a blessing for me that I didn't have to go to (La-troon). And, I was 2½ years in the Army and then I came back home and started a new life. Back to work, raise a family.

Q AND WHEN DID YOU COME HERE?

A I came here in 1950. I got a call from the American Council. See, I had all the time a quota number, because as I came to Israel, right away my family sent me papers to come to America, but I refused to go, I didn't want to go. But then, I was wounded and my daughter was a baby, it was the (Sen-na in Israel.

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3 And, all those people who know about (Sen-na) they know what it  
4 is.

5 Q WHAT IS IT?

6 A (Sen-na) is that we got two eggs a week for the baby, we got  
7 two quarts of milk a week for the baby. The only thing was enough  
8 is bread and potatoes. No food sometimes went through 5 months  
9 before we got piece of meat. Was very hard, everything, sugar  
10 was rationed, oil was rationed, milk was rationed. Milk was the  
11 worse because only babies got milk, eggs and milk. And, not being  
12 100 percent healthy, and my daughter didn't have what to eat  
13 practically, the council called me up that if I don't go to America  
14 then I lose my quota number and I would have to wait for a new  
15 number.

16 So, I decided I would go to America and see maybe I work a  
17 couple of years here then go back, and in the meantime it's al-  
18 most 38 years and I'm still here. I still plan to go back to  
19 Israel.

20 Q WHAT KIND OF WORK DID YOU DO IN ISRAEL?

21 A In Israel, I was a baker, that was my trade, like in Hungary  
22 yeah learned the trade in Hungary and worked in Israel and also  
23 worked in New York and Oakland. I had the first kosher bakery in  
24 Oakland. But, I sold it about 20, over 20 years ago and I went  
25 into the scrap metal business. Right now, I'm in the scrap metal  
26 business. But, here in Oakland I started a brand new life. It's  
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3 it's -- when I came to Oakland the first week, I heard that in  
4 Alameda there's a big Nazi party, the headquarters was in those  
5 days in Alameda, and they're burning synagogues, and they're  
6 burning Jewish institutions, I just couldn't understand that. I  
7 couldn't, now how can that be its impossible. They burning the  
8 (Shoo-la) in Redwood City.

9 Q WHEN WAS THIS? WHEN DID YOU ARRIVE?

10 A I arrived in 1961, in Oakland. So it was -- I got so -- it  
11 just everything came back to me, what I wanted to forget about.  
12 I never wanted to talk about the Holocaust, I never wanted to  
13 remember even. I would try to get it out of my head, and here I  
14 come to America and I see its again, it's again starting up. Well,  
15 I said, I was a young boy, we got to do something about it. We  
16 got to organize things.

17 That's went into my cup, first we should organize a Holocaust  
18 survivors group. A group from 80, 100, could always do more than  
19 one. And, we did organize the Holocaust group, and we did an  
20 awful lot of things. We sent over 200 thousand dollars to Israel  
21 for building for those soldiers who don't have homes. They come  
22 home for vacation, so we buy them rooms where they can come and  
23 sleep. It's like a hotel and we buy all kinds of -- a room cost  
24 about \$3,000 to fix in. We put in a radio, and a T.V. and records.  
25 And all kinds of -- they can spend two or three days of their  
26 vacation.

27 Our (Tick-wa-tain-er) Club is the Holocaust, we have rooms  
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3 all over Israel. We have about 20 different rooms already. And,  
4 two of good members died. I think you interviewed Mrs. Bromberg,  
5 Helen Bromberg, two days ago. Her husband died, we bought a whole  
6 wing in a hotel. It's about 6 rooms, in memory of Irvin Bromberg.

7 And, then, I invited a lot of people to talk about these, the  
8 neighbors, the JDL, and the ADL, and the more I -- people came to  
9 talk to us the more I found out about these things. And, I said,  
10 "I have to do something about it." I was always a man who couldn't  
11 look at something unjustice is done, since I'm a kid.

12 And, I said I better go start to talk to schools, maybe that  
13 will help. And, I did get in touch with the Holocaust Library in  
14 San Francisco, that I'm a board member over there, and I got some  
15 slides, different slides from different concentration camps. And  
16 that's what I'm doing for about 20 years now.

17 Now, I go to high schools and I talk to kids and I give them  
18 my story, I tell them my story, what I went through, and then I  
19 tell them the story about the Holocaust. And I tell them also  
20 about the Klu Klux Klans and about the Nazi parties, about all  
21 these skinheads who still say -- claim there was never a Holocaust.  
22 And those the non-Jewish kids they don't know too much about it.  
23 They know what they hear or see on television. But, this way I  
24 feel if I tell them my story, and they see a Klu Klux Klan story,  
25 at least they can make up what one of the two which is right or  
26 which is wrong. If we will not do these things, then how will  
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2 the word go around? Especially to the non-Jewish community. So,  
3 I'm working very hard to spread the Holocaust to schools to children  
4 to even to clubs. I speak to a lot of Rotary Clubs. Just spoke  
5 last week in Rotary Club in -- past Richmond, what is that little  
6 town there? Can't think of it, past Richmond you go over the  
7 freeway about the third or fourth exit after Richmond, Pinole,  
8 Pinole. And, I'm invited to talk next week to a Catholic school.  
9 I spoke in a lot of Catholic schools in San Francisco. And what  
10 made me really happy was that I was invited in Dublin to speak.

11 Now, you know in Dublin its right now the area where all  
12 the Nazis are moving in. It's the headquarters is in that area  
13 in the tri-valley. And, I was invited to talk to the whole school  
14 so, I spoke to the principal, made arrangements, came out one  
15 Friday. Came out one Friday morning, it was about 8, 9 months  
16 ago and the principal tells me that he is scared I should talk  
17 to the whole group. And, he told me openly why, because I asked  
18 him. He said, " I tell you we don't have enough security here  
19 just in case a riot should start." Sixteen year-old kids, a lot  
20 of skinheads over there, a lot of Klu Klux Klan, a lot of Nazis.

21 So, I told the principal I don't mind to talk to five kids  
22 at a time, and I will come till the whole school will be taken  
23 care. So, I came about five Fridays, every Friday because Friday  
24 is for me easy to take off. And, I talked to the whole school.  
25 Then, the kids said, " gee, I didn't know that that can be true."  
26 Kids came to me talked to me. I was suppose to talk to a quarter  
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3 till twelve. Some kids asked to be excused from lunch, cause  
4 they wanted to ask me more questions. Usually what I do it's  
5 an out program, that there's slides to show about 20 minutes.  
6 My own story takes about 15, 18, 20 minutes or so. And then,  
7 we leave 20 minutes for questions. There were so many kids that  
8 asked questions that they asked the teacher to skip their lunch  
9 because they want to make more homework about it. So, it looks  
10 like it helps a little bit. Because who knows how many years  
11 we will be still around the first generation. Once the first  
12 generation is gone, that's it, who will tell the story?

13 Now, our kids the second generations are very bad off. They  
14 made ah research that 9 out of 10 kids second generation are very  
15 disturbed. Either they don't want to talk about it, either they  
16 don't even want to hear about it.

17 Q DID YOU TELL YOUR CHILDREN?

18 A I told my children, and I tell you, in a way it didn't work  
19 out for my children. I have a daughter and a son. When my  
20 daughter was four years old, we start to tell her about the  
21 Holocaust. My son, was already different. Because I see it  
22 didn't work on my kids. So, when I told my daughter that we  
23 were in the Holocaust, we were in a concentration camp, and she  
24 wanted to know what is a concentration camp. And, we told her  
25 we were like in a prison. We were -- in the back mind she  
26 always thought we were bad people, that's why we were put in a  
27 concentration camp. So, if somebody in school let's say when  
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Hollander--25

she was six years old, if somebody would ask her, she was afraid to tell, not afraid really she was ashamed to tell that her parents were in the Holocaust, we were in the concentration camp, because other kids would think the same thing that they are bad people.

Later when she was 15, 16, she understood more about it. She start to have a very guilty conscience. That, because you know how unwillingly you say always something to a kid. You see, you got everything, I didn't have nothing. "When I was your age," my wife used to say, " we didn't have what to eat." "When I was your age, we had to work 16 hours a day." Without food and stuff like that. And, that made very bad impression on a kid, on a 15, 16 year old kid.

Then, she start to get very depressed, she had start to feel bad, you see my parents didn't have nothing, look, I have everything. When she was 16 we bought her a car. I mean, I wasn't rich, but I said let my daughter have a car she is 16, 16th birthday, she have to go to school, pretty soon to college. So, I was taking the bus, my wife was taking the bus to work, but we bought for my daughter a car. So, she start to get a very guilty conscience that she gets everything so easy, and her parents had to go through.

So, when I was in Washington at the Holocaust gathering, they had psychologist and psychiatrist talking about this thing, that 9 out of 10 second generations, it didn't help them to know about the Holocaust. It made them just feel guilty, it made them feel sick, it made them feel depressed. So, I don't know which way is

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better. My son already we did different. My son is four years younger than my daughter. We didn't talk too much about it. We start to tell my son when he was 17, 18, when he understood more about it. So, we didn't even try to tell him when he was a young kid.

Q WERE YOU ABLE TO TALK ABOUT THIS BEFORE YOU CAME HERE?

A No, I tell you when I came to Israel, never talked about -- first of all I didn't had the time. I was in Army and then again in the Army, either in the underground in the (Ir-goon). I just didn't have time, and I didn't want to talk about it. We were very religious. I grew-up very super orthodox. I went every morning and night to synagogue, 7 days a week. There was no such thing in my little town, we had about 400 seats in the temple, the synagogue, and if one seat was empty, they knew the man was sick otherwise, there was no such thing that you don't go morning and night to pray.

When I came to Israel, I start to rebel. I'm sure you heard the story before already. I said to myself, now how can that be that if God is a real God and a true God, and a loving God, here I am left and my father and mother was such a pious people, they died such a horrible death. They didn't die, they were killed, they were murdered. My father cut his left arm and they shot him a minute later. My mother was hit by a rifle and maybe they took her to the crematorium alive. You know, so, I rebelled against

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Hollander--27

God very much. I didn't believe -- I had to go to work two blocks past the synagogue. I avoided the synagogue. I went six blocks out of my way, not to go to the synagogue, I was so hurt about it. But, once you grow up religion, you just cannot go away, it comes back.

When I came to New York and Oakland, I figured out that there is a God. And, God wanted maybe to take them quicker away, not to suffer, who knows, I don't know. But, I'm back to I'm religious, strictly kosher. We don't need outside any more, you know, I try to bring up my kids the best I can, my grandchildren. And, that makes me also get some much involved in our youth group.

I'm the youth advisor here for almost 30 years here almost. When I came to Oakland there was no youth group. There was BBG and AZA, but the kids didn't get there for the mental that a kid should get. You know mostly it was fun, social. So, I came to the president and I told him I would like -- that a guy also help me a little bit -- the leader man also those days here, and I said I would like to organize an NCY. An NCY is a National Conference of Synagogue Youth, it's an organization nationwide, and it's an orthodox youth. So everybody talked me out. They said, aw we tried already so many times to organize youth groups and it won't help, spare your time, spare your agony. I said, "look, what can I lose, let me try." And, I tried and we had 1963 we organized the first youth group, and we had 70 kids, 70 kids in the youth group, very active youth group. I'm taking the

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3 kids, I'm still taking them for the last 30 years to seminars  
4 and (Sha-ba-te-nem), we have conventions, national convention  
5 in New York every year, we have regional convention in California  
6 somewhere in the West coast, twice a year. We have a seminar  
7 once a year. I raise a lot of money for the kids so it's a  
8 little bit easier to take the kids, those who cannot afford it  
9 they get a scholarship, and it's a very good youth group, it's  
10 for almost three years.

11 Q YOU TOLD ME THAT BEFORE YOU CAME HERE, YOU DIDN'T WANT TO  
12 TALK ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST. WHEN YOU WERE IN ISRAEL.

13 A When in Israel, I didn't want to talk about it. It's --  
14 what made me really to talk about it and do things because I  
15 not only talk about it, I physically, I work very hard, it takes  
16 hours and hours to do the things that I do, is because I saw  
17 what's going on in the community, and I just don't want it should  
18 be another Holocaust. I mean, in my age I don't think so  
19 another Holocaust, but I have children and grandchildren to  
20 worry about. Maybe great grandchildren.

21 Just look yesterday, this guy was elected to the State House.  
22 A Klu Klux Klan. He was a big man a big wheel over there. How  
23 many parties you have here in the Bay area Klu Klux Klan, skin-  
24 heads, and the Nazi party? You talk to them, now there was  
25 never a Holocaust, we don't hate Jews, we just don't like them  
26 because they get too much pity. Now they claim there wasn't a  
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Hollander--29

Holocaust, they killed 6 million Jews, and we want to get pity.  
That's why we talk about it. So, I want to show them the real  
truth because down here, downstairs where we have our monument  
it took me ten years, I worked on that to build it. And we didn't  
have those days money it took me ten years, to raise money.

Q FOR THAT MEMORIAL?

A For that memorial that we have downstairs. We have there  
about 60 members, we have a thousand names who disappeared. Me  
myself, and my whole family, I lost eight. That's just immediate  
family, not counting uncles and aunts. When we went to Auschwitz  
for my mother's side and father's side, we were over 120 grand  
children. You know I have maybe 8 first cousins, from 120. It's  
I mean 6 million I think it's easy said, I think we lost more  
than 6 million people, but those people claiming that we say we  
lost 6 million Jews because we want to get -- Israel wants to  
get from America planes and help and other things. But, that's  
what they're telling. So, please if you tell the world about it  
and you show them and you got proof about it, I got slides that  
show 10 thousand people in ( Net) that the Germans didn't  
have time to bury them. I mean not the Germans, the Jewish people  
were burying them, but they ran away.

In less than four or five days ten thousand dead people.  
And, it shows, it shows, numbers it shows the figures it shows  
the name. This is not just a story, this is not made a movie.

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Hollander--30

This is slides that American and the British government made when they liberated the concentration camps. And those pictures I take around and show them to the people, to the kids, and to the high schools and junior high schools. And then, they can make up their mind. So, if I won't do it and another 100 won't do it, you know, we'd be lost in a couple years. That's what made me in Oakland start to work for this causes. And since then I join the Jewish Community Relation Council because I also feel they do a lot of this kind of work too. So, I'm a board member for the last 20 years, I am a member of the Jewish National Fund. I organized actually the first chapter here in Oakland, cause we had together with San Francisco -- I had to organize the first American chapter from (Ha-gen-da-bin).

Because, I don't know if you know about the American International Red Cross, doesn't take in Israel as a member, they're not members. They have every ten years elections. And in 1950 when they had the first time Israel became a state, they lost with one vote to be a member of the International Red Cross. In 1960, they lost with 30 percent, in 1970, they lost with over 50 percent, in 1980, it didn't even come on the table.

So, I organized in '83, the first chapter in the bay area of American Red (Ma-gen-da-bed) and what it is, you can go give blood here in the Alameda county blood bank and if you credit it to our chapter Israel will get the plasma, if they need (Haz-mo-ha-lee-ba). Meantime we send away 4 ambulances, in eight years that

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3 we helped to raise money, and I'm pretty involved in the commun-  
4 tiy and myself. Something -- it's a day of my life now. It  
5 comes like if I don't do it, I feel worse than when I'm tired  
6 and I do it. We also help here for a lot of Holocaust survivors  
7 that are in need here in the bay area. We help a lot for the  
8 Russian Jews. We pick them up and we teach them what to do and  
9 we try to find a better apartment because when the Jewish Federa-  
10 tion brings them out, they give them the worst apartment, the  
11 cheapest, I mean they don't have no money.

12 I don't blame them in one way they cannot put them in the  
13 Skyline, Skyline Boulevard. So, what we do once they start to  
14 work, we move them, we help them, we try to get jobs, we try to  
15 go to furniture stores and sort out some furniture for them. So,  
16 we are -- I especially am involved very much.

17 Q IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD?

18 A Ah, I wish I could add alot more. But, what I would like to  
19 add to those people who don't know nothing about the Holocaust, so  
20 what I do I always prepare a very good program when I talk to  
21 especially in that area kids where I know there is Nazi party  
22 groups or skinheads or the Klu Klux Klans, and sometimes those  
23 kids, I change their minds a little bit. At least they keep an  
24 open mind, even if I don't change their mind, I keep them an  
25 open mind.

26 And, my synagogue is my life, I'm here morning and night,  
27 I am a past president of the synagogue, I'm the governor for  
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Hollander--32

about 15 years. And I enjoy to doing, I enjoy as long as God  
gives me health and courage and years, I will keep on doing  
what I am doing, I won't stop here.

Q    THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

A    It's my pleasure.