

Interview with HERBERT ANGRESS
Holocaust Oral History Project
Date: 4/30/89 Place: Cotati, CA
Interviewer:
Transcriber: Susan Aronovsky

Q: THIS IS AN INTERVIEW WITH HANS ANGRESS ON 4/30/89 IN COTATI, CA IN HIS HOME. HE IS GOING TO SPEAK NOW ABOUT WHEN HE WAS BORN.

A: I was born in April of 1928 in what now is West Berlin and really don't remember too much of the early years so when I was 4 or 5 years old the fascist regime was already making its weight felt. So I was aware of the hostility toward Jews that had come out, earliest out.

Q: AT AGE FOUR OR FIVE YOU WERE AWARE OF THAT? YOUR PARENTS WOULD SAY THINGS, OR-

A: Yeah, it was talked about and I overheard, and I remember the day in 1933 that Hitler was elected, we were on vacation in a suburb of Berlin and I remember my parents were really upset about that. Then I was 5 years old and of course it didn't come all of a sudden.

Q: OK, THEN SO YOU HAD BROTHERS AND SISTERS?

A: I had two older brothers. One was 5 years older than I was, the other was 8 years older than I was. And the difference between us in age makes a lot of difference. My older brother very recently went back to live in Germany, which I simply couldn't do. He was born in 1920

and felt very German and he felt rejected by Germany. I never had that problem. I had never had any positive feelings of Germany.

Q: SO IN 1933 YOU WERE 5.

A: Yeah

Q: AND THEN, THEN SLOWLY STEPS WERE STARTING TO BE TAKEN IN BERLIN AGAINST JEWISH PEOPLE, YOU WERE AWARE OF THOSE.. AS A SCHOOLBOY?

A: Yeah, well, when I was 6 I was enrolled in a regular German school. As far as I remember I was the only Jewish kid in the class. For instance, in the morning when the, at assembly, that was 1934, and they started all of us would sing the German national anthem and were doing the fascist salute and, of course, I was not allowed to do it and neither did I want to do it. So I was surrounded by all the people doing their thing and it was a bit heavy to stand there quietly, also I was proud of it. I didn't want to salute the flag and neither did I want to sing the German national anthem, the fascist -

Q: YOU WERE -

A: I think you asked the question that I was torn, that I could not do it and yes, I was torn, I could not do it. But I didn't want to do it, anyhow but it was still strange, and -

Q: WHAT DID YOUR PARENTS SAY ABOUT THAT?

A: Well, very soon I was taken out of the school and put into a Jewish school. I was there not more than half a year.

Q: AND THIS JEWISH SCHOOL WAS SPONSORED BY THE STATE OR THE JEWISH PEOPLE HAD TO ORGANIZE THAT?

A: I would guess that it was a private Jewish school. It was called the Joseph Lehman Schule, but whether the state actually paid for it or not I really don't know.

Q: SO, THAT WAS 1934, THEN YOU DIDN'T GO TO SCHOOL VERY LONG AT ALL?

A: Oh, no, I did go to school as long as I was in Germany, we left in 1937.

Q: FOR HOLLAND?

A: Yes, first to England and then back to Holland.

Q: I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW THE STEPS THAT YOUR FAMILY FELT THE EFFECTS OF, AND WHY THEY FINALLY SAID THEY HAD TO LEAVE.

A: My father was a banker and I think in early 1937 there was a German edict that Jews couldn't be bankers anymore. So, basically his chances for a livelihood were taken away. And that's when he decided that we had to leave. And he was not going to pay the, what they called the (Ifluchsteue), the tax which was paid. You had to leave your life's earnings behind in order to leave the country. You were allowed to leave but you had to basically leave everything behind. And my father felt he needed the money to start

over again somewhere else.

So on May 27 we split up and my mother and my elder brother and myself took a train to Holland and then to London. My father went to, I think, Czechoslovakia, and my brother was also supposed to go to Czechoslovakia and ended up going to Holland. And all of us caught because people that my father had employed were told that we were leaving and somebody got scared and informed the German authorities that we had left. They thought that there was enough time elapsed, that we were safe out of the country but, because of bad weather, my father and brother were both supposed to fly but the plane didn't take off.

So word was out to look out for a family of five Angresses. Then my brother came to the border. Somebody looked at his passport and said, "Angress, Angress, Angress, you are going with your family"

Q: TO PASS TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA?

A: To Holland. Yeah, I think so. I think we went to Holland

Q: AND YOUR BROTHER WAS MAYBE THIRTEEN OR SOMETHING?

A: No. I was 9 at the time, so he was seventeen. And my father travelled to the Czech border by train and basically walked across the border.

Q: OH, AT SORT OF A NON-OFFICIAL CROSSING POINT, JUST A

FIELD OR SOMETHING?

A: No, it was a train station, I think. One side was Germany and the other side was Czechoslovakia. Again, that I only know by heresay. Obviously I wasn't there.

Q: SO, WHY LONDON? WERE THERE SOME RELATIVES THERE?

A: Quite frankly, I don't know why my parents chose to go to London first but it seemed to be a logical springboard to figure out from there what to do next.

Q: AND DID YOU STAY WITH SOME FRIENDS , CAN YOU REMEMBER?

A: We stayed in boardinghouses. And I think during the 4 months we lived in London, we moved about 6 or 8 times. But it was a good feeling to be out of Germany.

Q: AND HOW ABOUT THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE?

A: Well, I had always - my parents saw to it that from early on I had English lessons.

Q: AND THEY COULD SPEAK ENGLISH?

A: After a fashion. I found out how little I really knew once I got there. But we managed.

Q: AND THEN WHAT DID YOUR DAD DO? DID HE FIND SOME WORK WHEN YOU GOT TO LONDON?

A: No. At least I was told that it was very hard to get a work permit in London and we were just trying to get to Montevideo. We almost had it made and then the consul changed and the new consul wanted to be bribed and my father wasn't about to bribe them. So that fell through. The United States had a quota system and that

didn't seem to work and so finally there was a possibility of going into a partnership with somebody in Amsterdam. Of course, that was the biggest mistake we ever made. But that is hindsight now.

Q: AT THE TIME YOUR DAD AND MOM FELT HOLLAND WAS A SAFE PLACE?

A: No, they just hoped that, like in the First World War, it would remain neutral. My father felt very uneasy about going back to the Continent.

Q: AND SO HE TOOK ALL OF YOU BACK? HE DIDN'T LEAVE YOU IN LONDON?

A: No, we all went back to Holland after the 4 months in England.

Q: AND THEN YOU HAD TO LEARN DUTCH?

A: And then I had to learn Dutch! And then it was very interesting, especially after you first had to learn English. I made quite a few boo-boos!

Q: AND SO DID YOU STAY THERE DURING THE WAR, ALL THE WAR YEARS?

A: My oldest brother was being trained in Germany on a Jewish farm. It was called("Grossbrasen") and it was in Breslau which is now I dont know what it is now. And the theory behind it was that agriculture was universal and this was an alternative to Zionism. I mean , you had ~~the~~ Zionists all headed for Israel. My parents were not Zionists and many other Jews were not Zionists and so this was an

alternative.

And many of the kids that were trained at that farm actually scattered all over the world. You find them now in Australia and South America, North America, Africa. And some of them, of course, also ended up in Israel, but probably not a very high percentage.

Q: THAT WAS YOUR BROTHER'S DECISION TO GO TO THAT FARM?

A: No, that was my parents' decision. They knew, early on, that there was no future for Jews in Germany.

Q: SO HE WAS THE OLDEST AND HE WAS SEVENTEEN OR EIGHTEEN ON THAT FARM?

A: Right.

Q: MEANWHILE, YOU WERE BACK IN HOLLAND WITH YOUR-

A: No, that was before we left Germany. He came along with us to Holland. But the group of the farm, the leadership, also had left Germany. Most, at that time, they were trying to find places for them overseas, right away. So my brother left in early 1934 for the United States. He found a sponsor and started farming and as soon as the war broke out, he joined the army and ended up in the Second Airborne Division jumping, on D-Day, on London.

Q: IS THIS THE ONE WHO NOW RETURNED TO GERMANY.

A: Yeah, he is back in Germany.

Q: BUT AS FOR YOU, YOU WERE STAYING IN HOLLAND AND WENT TO SCHOOL?

A: I was staying in Holland and went to school. First to

chool where I was supposed to learn Dutch but didn't know many Dutch because it was full of little German Jews speaking German!

Q: IN AMSTERDAM?

A: Yeah, it was. Holland was one of the few countries that left its borders open to the German refugees till the very end. So it was full of them. Most other countries closed their borders totally or partially.

Q: BY 1939 OR EVEN SOONER?

A: Sooner than that. But Holland has a history which goes way back to the Inquisition of having open borders and being a refuge for basically persecuted people regardless of what religion they were. In those days they were Protestants.

Q: WHEN YOU WERE LIVING THERE, YOU WERE AWARE OF WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN GERMANY, YOU COULD HEAR THIS ON THE RADIO?

A: Of, yes, I was very much aware of it, I was aware. In '37 things were already pretty drastic in Berlin.

Q: DID YOU SEE YOUR PARENTS' FRIENDS TAKEN AWAY, OR THINGS LIKE THAT?

A: Not in Germany. The actual "taken away" part only started later. I saw it in Holland, of course.

Q: WHEN DID IT START IN HOLLAND? BY WHAT YEAR?

A: Well, I went to school in Holland, to regular school from '38 to '41 and then I left to the Jewish school in '41 and '42 and actually my class was fortunate. We started out with 23 and had about 7 survivors out of 23.

It was way above average.

Q: BUT DID YOUR FAMILY HAVE TO LIVE IN HIDING OR COULD THEY LIVE OPENLY?

A: Well, my father was arrested in 1942, I think. Because he left Germany and took our money and all. That was a criminal offense. And the Germans caught up with him and on the day of the invasion, the Germans invaded Holland on May 5th, 1940, he knew that that was the end of him. He was totally dejected and tried to get out of Holland to England. But that wasn't easy and there was an opportunity to go on a U-boat. He should have done it. But with the family it sort of sounded a bit wild.

Q: THAT HE ALONE WOULD GO ON THAT U-BOAT AND LEAVE YOU?

A: Yeah.

Q: WELL, SO THEY JUST STAYED, YOUR PARENTS DECIDED JUST TO STAY?

A: Yes.

Q: BUT DID THEY HIDE?

A: My father did not. He was arrested before. We went into hiding for a few days and I don't know why we came out of hiding again. But that was before the real deportation started.

Q: MAYBE THEY HAD HEARD SOMETHING?

A: Yeah. I don't know exactly what it was and I think it was 1 or 2 weeks that we went to the southern part of Holland and lived with a family there for, I suppose, a couple of weeks and then went back home again. And then, one day the Germans came and wanted to arrest him

and he wasn't home and told us they'd be back the next day, giving us basically 24 hours to make a decision whether we wanted to go in hiding or not. And my father decided that it would be better for the rest of the family if he would surrender. Which, in retrospect again, was a mistake.

Q: SO THEY CAME?

A: They came and arrested him and he spent time in jail in Amsterdam and Berlin. Unfortunately his sentence wasn't long enough so that when his time was up he was sent to Auschwitz.

Q: YOU MEAN IF HE HAD HAD A LONG SENTENCE HE WOULD HAVE JUST STAYED IN JAIL?

A: That is a possibility that was against German mentality, you know, you go by the book.

Q: AND HIS CRIME WAS TAKING MONEY OUT OF GERMANY?

A: Yeah, I don't know exactly how long the sentence was but I knew that by the end of '43 or beginning of '44 he would come out and we were obviously making efforts to get him back but we also were told that the chances for that were pretty nil. Which it turned out to be. And he probably died on one of the marches early in '45.

Q: WHY DO YOU THINK THAT?

A: Somebody who did not want to tell me exactly but wanted to tell me something. Anyhow, I'm not sure.

Q: SO, HE WAS STILL COMMUNICATING , HE WAS WRITING?

A: No, that was after the war, somebody that came back. And that's strictly hearsay. I never talked to anybody

about this.

Q: SOMEBODY WHO HAD KNOWN HIM?

A: Yeah.

Q: ON A MARCH?

A: Right.

Q: SO THAT WAS 1942 THAT HE WAS PUT IN PRISON?

A: '42. Supposedly he was still alive by the end of 1944.

Q: AND THAT WAS ALWAYS THROUGH HEARSAY THAT YOUR FAMILY COULD GET SOME WORD?

A: Well, no. That was after the war. We did not hear anything from him anymore once he left the Berlin prison in '43.

Q: DID YOUR MOM GO AND TRY TO VISIT HIM THERE?

A: Not in Berlin. Thank God that wasn't possible. In Amsterdam, yes. But he wasn't very long in the Amsterdam prison.

Q: AND HOW DID YOUR FAMILY, WITHOUT MONEY, WHAT WERE THEY DOING?

A: Well, we had a store in Amsterdam. That was what the partnership was all about, lingerie. And in order for the Germans not to take the store we made a basically a false sale and some non-Jew took over the store and gave us some money monthly to live on. And I don't know how long exactly that money kept on coming but as long as we didn't go into hiding till it was September 1943 there seemed to be enough money to live modestly.

Q: AND YOUR MOM WASN'T WORKING THEN?

A: No, she did not work.

Q: SO, IT WAS YOU AND YOUR LITTLE BROTHER AND YOUR MOTHER. DID YOU LIVE IN AN APARTMENT?

A: We lived in a apartment then, and then until early 1943, The same apartment that we had lived in all along in Amsterdam. And later on in '43, we were forced to move to the ghetto. It's part of Amsterdam.

Q: IT WAS CALLED (RESTERBOCH)

A: No, no. (Resterboch) was _____
No, this was the Amsterdam Jewish quarter. It was the eastern part of Amsterdam.

Q: SO TELL ME ABOUT THAT, TELL ABOUT HOW THE ANNOUNCEMENT CAME AND HOW YOUR FAMILY DEALT WITH IT.

A: Well, while we were living still in the (Pilostradt Street) we survived several raids by the Germans. I think 13 times the Germans tried to pick us up at certain times. We escaped one way or the other.

Q: JUST NOT ANSWERING THE DOOR?

A: Skipping out the back door, or sometimes just pure guts. My mother was a gutsy lady and she recognized the Germans for what they were and took Hitler's boot Mein Kampf seriously. She also instructed my brother and I, "If you ever get caught, keep your eyes open and take the first opportunity to run." That you may get shot but that's a hell of a lot better than what you would find at the end of wherever they were to send you.

Q: BY THAT TIME WAS THE DUTCH JEWISH COMMUNITY, DID THEY KNOW ABOUT AUSCHWITZ AND EVERYTHING?

A: No, that knowledge, the first knowledge of extermination came late in '42, I think. There was a group of young people, and my brother was among them, to report to the station, the so-called work camp. And my mother's response to that was, "Work camp, my eye."

And we had 2 young people living with us, two young women who, they were also German refugees and without parents at the time. And both those young women and my brother got a notice to report to the station. And that's when my mother frantically looked for a way of getting my brother exempted. And when she got for him the job at the Jewish Consul, in Amsterdam. So he was exempt. And the other 2 girls reported to the station at the time and, of course, about 2 months later we got the death notices. That whole group went to Monthausen.

Q: THEY ACTUALLY SENT DEATH NOTICES?

A: In those days, for that particular bunch, they did.

Q: REALLY? DID THEY SAY "CAUSE OF DEATH?"

A:

Q: THEY WOULD SAY THAT -

A: Yeah, or usually "disease" and sometimes "tried to escape" but they were standard things. Of course, that was only for that one bunch.

Q: HOW OLD WERE THOSE GIRLS? TEENAGERS?

A: Older than that. Early '20's.

Q: AND THEY HAD BEEN WORKING? THEY HAD FOUND JOBS?

A: Yeah, household jobs, it was very difficult for Jews in those days to still have jobs. I mean, it was all

shut down basically.

Q: I WANTED TO ASK SPECIFICALLY, DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT BICYCLES? YOU NEEDED A LICENSE TO RIDE ONE, OR A PERMIT?

A: No, they came and Jews simply had to surrender the bicycles, period.

Q: SO, YOU ACTUALLY HAD TO RIDE YOUR BIKE SOMEWHERE AND TURN IT IN?

A: Yeah, which I didn't do. I gave it to a friend of mine.

Q: IF YOU WERE CAUGHT, I MEAN, IF LATER YOU WERE RIDING THAT BIKE...?

A: We weren't allowed to ride a bike. Could not be seen with a star, riding a bike. Unless you, I think my brother was allowed to keep his bike because he was working for the Jewish Consul. And basically doing the dirty work for the SS.

Q: YOU MEAN, FINDING OUT WHERE THE JEWISH PEOPLE WERE LIVING AND...

A: No, no, that he didn't do. During the raids they were along to carry packages. They were not acting as police, they were acting as a support group. That, of course, made the Germans jobs easier because it prevented panic. And, to my mind, that was the biggest mistake that the Jewish Consul and the Jews in general did. Is to try to prevent panic all during the war. Anything to prevent panic. Panic was the only thing that would have saved people.

Q: YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT THE (JUDENRAT?)

A: Yeah.

Q: FOR AMSTERDAM?

A: For Amsterdam. They were a particularly cowardly bunch unfortunately. And, of course, the leaders of the (Judenrat) survived, all of them.

Q: WERE THEY NORMALLY VERY WELL EDUCATED PEOPLE WHO WERE IN THE (JUDENRAT?)

A: This particular bunch was.

Q: ALL FROM GERMANY OR SOME WHO HAD BEEN DUTCH ORIGINALLY?

A: Some were Dutch. And, of course, with Dutch I am a little more lenient because they were really a little bit more naive, they didn't know the Germans as well. My mother had no illusions. The Dutch often think though that it can't get any worse and, which basically, I appreciate. They simply could not imagine that people could be as brutal as the Germans were.

Q: BUT, BY THAT TIME, THERE WERE GERMAN SOLDIERS IN THE STREETS?

A: Oh yes. Amsterdam was full of them. And they did a good deal of their brutality right on the street and many people were, if there was any defiance of Germans, they just rounded up a bunch of people and shot them down. Right in the streets.

Q: RIGHT ON THE STREETS? WHAT WOULD BYSTANDERS DO? RUN?

A: What could you do? Yeah, it was scary. I mea, I never actually saw that but I did hear the shots of one execution that took place. I don't know exactly what to

call it, one particular day.

Q: SO ALSO ABOUT AMSTERDAM. I'VE SEEN PHOTOGRAPHS. THEY DIDN'T HAVE LIGHTS AT NIGHT?

A: During the last year or so all the electricity and gas was turned off.

Q: NIGHT AND DAY?

A: Night and day, yeah.

Q: SO PEOPLE HAD TO BURN WOOD?

A: Yeah, and wood was extremely scarce. It was very interesting. For instance, we had to cook on a 3 gallon can. Inside was a 1 gallon can and you put that contraption on the stove and you built your little fire. No, the 3 gallon can was the outer can and the quart can was the inner shell. And you built your fire in the little quart can and then the draft, the pot was on top of that. It didn't have top or bottom. And so you needed very little fire to cook your food, whatever food you had.

Q: SO WHAT DID PEOPLE USE, COAL OR WOOD OR...?

A: Well, coal was not available and wood, whatever you could scavenge. You know, people tore down houses where Jews were not living anymore, were empty. They'd cut down trees, telephone poles, electric poles. There was no electricity coming through anyhow. Whatever fuel we could get, and it wasn't much. Usually enough to cook but not to keep warm.

Q: AND YOU HAD TO WEAR A LOT OF CLOTHES?

A: You wore a lot of clothes and you took cold showers.

Q: WAS IT DANGEROUS ON THE STREETS AT NIGHT, THAT YOU COULD FALL INTO THE CANALS?

A: Well, there was a curfew to begin with. At 8:00 everybody had to be off.

Q: BUT IF IT'S PITCH BLACK YOU CAN'T SEE ANYTHING.

A: Well, yes, but it's never pitch black. People were aware of the canals. I don't think too many people ran into the canals.

Q: DID THE STREETCARS STILL RUN OR DID THAT STOP TOO?

A: That stopped at one point because there was no electricity anywhere and streetcars couldn't run.

Q: SO THERE WERE JUST BICYCLES BY THAT POINT?

A: Yeah. The period when there was no electricity occurred while I was in hiding.

Q: SO WHEN DID THE HIDING BEGIN?

A: Well, we are jumping.

Q: I KNOW. I JUST WANTED TO KNOW A LITTLE ABOUT AMSTERDAM DURING THE WAR.

A: Well, I love the Dutch and I love Amsterdam. I get annoyed when, during the Holocaust lectures, a statement is made that the Dutch were not as decent, as human, as the Danish because in Denmark very few Jews got persecuted. And the Dutch, well, 90% of the population was wiped out. And my answer to that is it wasn't the Dutch that wiped them out, it was the Germans. And the Danes hadn't left their borders open to Jewish German refugees, so there were many fewer Jews to begin with. The other thing is the Danes had 5 miles or 10 miles of waterways to Sweden. The Dutch had the British Channel, to England. You couldn't send people across the Channel in rowboats. I mean, I talked here one time, I said, "You know it's like going

from Rohnert Park to Santa Rosa, it's one thing. And from Rohnert Park to Sacramento is another." There's a difference there.

Q: SO LET'S GET BACK TO THE BEGINNING OF HIDING, WHEN THAT BEGAN AND THEN AT WHAT POINT YOU LEFT EUROPE.

A: First we had to move to the eastern part of Amsterdam and lived for a few months in the ghetto and then my brother who, because he was working for the Germans, got the information that tonight, whoever is left in Amsterdam is going to be picked up, of the Jewish population. And my mother said, "OK." And, believe it or not, she ordered a taxi in the ghetto. And we took our stars off and each had a suitcase and whatever little we could take and went to a friend of a friend of ours who was a German, non-Jewish woman. And in her house was a sweatshop where people were sewing furs for soldiers in the front.

And it was a weekend when all this happened, so there were no people there. So we spent the first night on bags of fur as beds. And the lady had a boyfriend who was a German police officer. Of course, he wasn't supposed to know that we were there. It was again typical of my mother, jumping into the hottest seat possible.

Of course, by and large the Germans did not expect the Jews to fight back or to do anything against the orders. They didn't expect that Jews would do things

like this. My mother was very cognizant of that fact and so she felt that was a very safe place to be. There was a lady who was sleeping with a German Nazi and we were in a room, I mean, we had to be very quite and it...

Q: DID HE LIVE THERE?

A: No, he just came to visit and I think he spent that night there, so we had to stay in that room until we got the "all clear." And then we were parceled out to different families. And we were fortunate enough, we were sort of taken under the umbrella of the Dutch underground at the time. And they were the ones who determined we were not going as a family, it was much safer one at a time. "So we are passing you out and you are not going to know from each other where you are. Because if the Germans catch you, what you don't know you can't tell."

Q: SO DID THEY DO IT BY NIGHT, SMUGGLE YOU BETWEEN HOUSES OR SOMETHING?

A: Well, we didn't have particularly Jewish looks, we just moved around quite freely.

Q: WITH THE SUITCASES?

A: I don't know whether we - yeah I think we actually did carry our little bit of belongings. I only know that I ended up again with a different friend. It was actually the same friend of the family whose friend we stayed. I stayed there all night and then I stayed with the original person for 2 weeks. But she lived in a large studio apartment, so that couldn't be a long term solution.

And I don't really know where my mother and my brother went. My brother moved around an awful lot. My mother ultimately went into hiding in the same boardinghouse that we lived at first when we came to Holland. And that house, it was a boardinghouse and it was taken over by the Germans, by German officers. And she ended up making their beds and, like I say, she was a gutsy lady.

Q: SO SHE WAS HIRED TO WORK THERE?

A: Well, she was in hiding basically, but also she moved around quite freely and it took guts but, again, the Germans didn't expect Jews to do those sorts of things. They were not suspicious of her at all.

Q: BUT THEY KNEW SHE WAS JEWISH?

A: No, no, no, no. They thought she was just a German maid.

Q: I SEE. SO THIS WHOLE TIME, WHILE MOST OF THE JEWS WERE IN THE GHETTO, YOUR FAMILY WAS ABLE TO HIDE?

A: Well, at that time, very few Jews were left in Amsterdam anyhow. I mean, that was in late '43. Most of the Jews had been deported. I think between 180,000 and 200,000 Dutch and German Jews were deported.

Q: AND THE ONES WHO WEREN'T WERE SUPPOSED TO GO TO THE GHETTO AT THAT POINT?

A: Yeah, whatever was left in early '43 had to move into the ghetto. And then, shortly after that, was liquidated. It just made it easier for the Germans to round them up. They didn't have to cover all of Amsterdam. The ghetto

was right in the canals. All they had to do was pull up the drawbridges and they had them trapped.

Q: SO YOUR FAMILY JUST CONTINUED TO HIDE IN DIFFERENT PLACES THROUGHOUT ALL THE ...?

A: Yeah, I was fortunate enough that I ended up with, again through the underground, a Dutch family where I stayed for the rest of the war.

Q: HOW DID YOU KNOW THEM, OR HOW DID THEY KNOW YOU?

A: I didn't. Through the Dutch underground.

Q: THEY SENT YOU THERE?

A: They had a network and knew which families were willing to take in people. And they supplied me with false ID papers. I did not go to school but I could move about quite freely and was fortunate in contrast to the way Anne Frank had to do. By the way, she was a schoolmate of mine.

Q: OH, YOU KNEW HER?

A: I didn't really know her. I was a sophomore and she was a freshman and I'd seen her but I didn't know at the time that she would be famous.

Q: WELL, DID YOU WRITE A DIARY?

A: I did not write a diary!

Q: THAT'S WHAT YOU FORGOT TO DO!

A: I don't think I had the talent!

Q: BUT SHE WAS A REAL THINKER TYPE? SHE REALLY ANALYZED EVERYTHING?

A: Yeah, but the way they, her family, went into hiding

was almost asking for trouble.

Q: IT'S AMAZING THAT THEY STAYED SEVERAL YEARS IN THAT HOUSE.

A: I think it was a year, but of course the longer you stayed... It was just - I sort of integrated but they always stayed as a, something that shouldn't have been there. I mean, they were living, they were living in an office. People don't live in offices. That was... No, with me, I was supposedly an orphan from Rotterdam. My parents supposedly were killed in the raid of Rotterdam. The family took me in and so that sounded like a fairly plausible story. I have a hunch that many of them sort of doubted it, but most of the Dutch were decent. I mean there was only 10% of the Dutch that were German sympathizers, and the Dutch hated them. I was in hiding in the western part of Amsterdam which was really the labor part. And labor was, generally speaking, either socialistic or communistic, and did not want very much to do with the Germans.

Q: SO, YOU JUST HAD A NORMAL LIFE IN THIS FAMILY?

A: Not normal. I mean...

Q: WHAT DID YOU DO ALL DAY?

A: They did get a tutor for me who, at least for a while, so that I did try to keep up with my studies.

Q: DID YOU HAVE FRIENDS THAT YOU COULD GO SEE?

A: No, no, no, no. That I couldn't do. Also, I was

part of the extended family. It was a large family, and they all knew what was going on. But they were all adults.

Q: AND THEY TALKED ABOUT ALL THESE THINGS AT THE DINNER TABLE?

A: Oh yes. And the person where I was hiding was, he joined the Dutch underground and basically, one was supplying information to the British. There were 2 different groups. And one helped people in hiding. And I was pressed into service as much as I could. For instance, people that were in hiding needed to be supplied with coupons. You couldn't buy anything without coupons. And so the Dutch underground raided a coupon center. Every month, they had to come up -

Q: THEY BROKE IN AT NIGHT?

A: Yes, of course. And since there were coupon centers all over the country, the Germans never knew which ones they would raid. So they took turns.

Q: SO WHAT WAS YOUR JOB? TO DISTRIBUTE THIS STUFF?

A: Well, for one thing, they had to be clipped and put on sheets of paper. Sometimes. Sometimes people just got the whole coupon and did it themselves. Others were in hiding and couldn't go out. They had to put all the cheese coupons on one page and all the butter coupons on another page and all the textile coupons on the third page. And then people just got the cheese and got the butter and got the textiles for those people and then brought it to them. But it had to be done so that it looked authentic. And so I did a lot of pasting and cutting.

Q: BUT YOU WEREN'T DOING DELIVERIES?

A: I did some of that. Especially toward the end. And it was interesting. For instance, I was never supposed to know addresses or names. So they drew street maps for me exactly how I -

End Side A

Begin Side B

A: I didn't need any TV excitement and I was with a family that was in the midsts of it. Things were black and white. There was no grey in those days. There were good guys and the bad guys. And I was obviously amidst the good guys, and it was a good place to be. It was scary, yes. I knew that, you know, there was a chance that I would be caught and I knew what the consequences would be. I also knew what the consequences for the whole family would be so there was a shadow over it all. But there was also an excitement which was incredible.

Q: SO WHEN YOU GOT UP EVERY DAY THERE WAS A LOT TO DO?

A: No, not a lot to do. I was expected to help in the household and make beds and do the dishes, help clean house, and when I could help distributing things. And I went out on walks by myself. I mean, I had to .. Since I had false papers, they decided it was alright for me to go walking. But usually by myself. If I got caught that the family wouldn't be implicated.

Q: DID YOU READ A LOT?

A: I did read a lot, yes.

Q: DID YOU GO TO LIBRARIES, HOW DID YOU GET BOOKS?

A: They had a lot of books. And I also spent a lot of time making little flags. You listened to the BBC which was, of course, open. And so we knew what was going on and we had a huge map of Europe on the wall. And I had American flags and Russian flags and German flags and I moved the armies around.

Q: ACCORDING THE THE BBC?

A: According to the BBC reports. And especially when they closed in on Germany, it was great fun.

Q: CAN YOU REMEMBER THE BATTLE OF STALINGRAD?

A: Oh yes. And Holland was of course a pathway to Berlin for the airplanes. And it was an incredible feeling to have all of the thousand bombers overhead. I mean, people cannot realize what it is to all of a sudden have a thousand planes overhead. It was, of course, music to my ears. And once in a while one of them got shot down. I remember one day, one plane was crippled and the pilot and the crew bailed out and the Germans were shooting at them. I heard later on that they all survived and some of them actually avoided being captured and made it back to England. Others were captured. The plane, I looked at the plane and the 4 engines were dead and the darn thing seemed to come right straight at me and then at one point it veered around and crashed someplace else.

Q: THIS IS LIKE IN A FIELD OUTSIDE?

A: No. I was in the city of Amsterdam and, yeah, there was an open field in front of us so I could see fairly far. But then there were houses in an open field.

Q: SO, IT CRASHED INTO THOSE BUILDINGS?

A: It crashed into a house, into a street actually.

Q: SO THIS HOUSE WHERE YOU STAYED, YOU STAYED THERE ALL THE WAY THROUGH TO THE END?

A: Yeah.

Q: BUT YOU DIDN'T HEAR WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR MOTHER AND BROTHER?

A: Well, I knew that they were safe. I mean, I did not know where they were but there were ways of communicating.

Q: THROUGH THE UNDERGROUND.

A: Through the underground. I didn't know how it was done and I didn't want to know how it was done. But once in a while . My brother almost was caught once. My mother never was. But both of them, they were pretty darn skinny after the war. There wasn't much food to last a year. And I, again, was fortunate because I was, the family where I was in hiding, was in the underground and...

Q: GOOD SUPPLIES?

A: They did get some extra supplies from the underground. Primarily potatoes. They'd get a sack of potatoes every once in a while. And she was, the woman was very creative. And we lived at the edge of town so she went often out trading with the farmers. What they wanted that she had,

for food.

Q: WHAT DID SHE HAVE? THINGS LIKE CLOTHES?

A: Well, sometimes clothes or, for instance, there was coffee that you could get on coupons and none of us cared for coffee. So she traded the coffee for butter and eggs.

Q: COMING UP TO THE END OF THE WAR, YOU WEREN'T ABLE TO PLAN ANYTHING. WERE YOU THINKING WHAT YOU WERE GOING TO DO WHEN IT FINALLY WAS OVER OR WERE YOU JUST GOING DAY BY DAY?

A: No, that you couldn't do. I assumed that I would go back to school which I tried and it didn't work.

Q: THAT'S AFTERWARDS THAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT

A: That's afterwards. No, for one thing, I didn't know whether my father would come back. I doubted it, but I didn't know for sure.

Q: SO YOU JUST STAYED THERE UP TO D-DAY AND THEN WHAT HAPPENED? HOW DID IT END? FINALLY, YOU KNEW YOU NOW COULD FIND YOUR MOTHER AND BROTHER?

A: Right, and we did that pretty simply. I mean, we knew of each other. I mean, not directly, but indirectly through the underground. We were reunited very easily. But we didn't know where my brother in the American Army was - whether he made it or not.

As it turned out, he was probably the first American soldier in Amsterdam. And he was in Paris at the time that the war ended and he and one of his officerr, who was also Jewish and also had people in Holland, decided to jump in a Jeep and drive up. Holland was liberated

by the Canadians, by the way, not by Americans, the Canadians.

And I'll never forget the Canadians pulling into Amsterdam. First guy that I saw was a huge black dude on a Harley Davidson with a cute Dutch girl behind him on the motorcycle and with the biggest grin that you can imagine. And behind him just miles and miles and miles of trucks. That was basically the end of it and that's how I picture the end of the war. I mean, I will never forget that guy. There he was. And the Germans were still running around, still with their weapons at that point. And they'd had it at that point.

Q: SO DID YOU - HOW DID IT HAPPEN THAT YOU SAID "NOW I CAN LEAVE?" BY THAT TIME, IN 1945, YOU WERE 13?

A: No, by then I was 17.

Q: 17. SO YOU COULD JUST GO AND TRY TO FIND YOUR MOM?

A: Yeah, my mother and my brother and I were reunited fairly soon. But I mean I was on my own from then on.

Q: SO, WHAT DID YOU DO EXACTLY?

A: Well, I got a job in, of all things, a matzo factory!

Q: REALLY!

A: They cranked up right away. It was, of course, during rationing and, for some reason, matzo wasn't rationed, was freer. You could buy matzo.

Q: THROUGHOUT THE WAR?

A: No, after the war. Bread was still rationed for a long time. It took awhile to get that out so I -

Q: WERE YOU A BAKER?

A: No. I was in the office. I started filing and I worked my way up to being in charge of shipping. Then my brother did survive, I mean, the one who served in the American Army. He got a visa for us and it took till September of '47 to come to the United States and my mother remarried somebody in England.

Q: SO, IN REGARD TO YOUR FATHER, WHEN YOU JUST DID NOT HEAR ANYTHING ABOUT HIM, YOU ASSUMED THAT HE HAD DIED?

A: Yeah. And basically he didn't have good chances. I mean, once people, few people from the camps came back the chances were bad. Especially since, well, he was my age.

Q: SO IN 1947 YOU CAME TO AMERICA?

A: I was 22 years in the dairy business, 20 years in the real estate business and 4 years I managed a resort.

Q: BUT WHY AMERICA?

A: Because my brother was here. And, in Holland, I was not a Dutch citizen, I was stateless. And I didn't see any future in Holland. And America still was a country of opportunity. And my brother, my older brother, sort of took over the parent role.

Q: AND YOUR MOTHER STAYED IN ENGLAND?

A: My mother stayed in England. And I went to school for a few months. To take myself a high school diploma. I tried to go back to school after the war and people were just incredible. They treated us like they would treat any schoolchildren. "Sit down and shut up and do your

work," and I felt I had gone through a lot. I just couldn't handle it. That may have been that particular school. I mean, a lot of kids did go back to school and finished up.

Q: WAS THAT IN HOLLAND?

A: It was in Holland. No, and then I came here. I went to a private school in Massachusetts for 2 months. It was to learn English. My vocabulary was very limited and also to get a high school diploma. I had to do a bit of lying, of what I actually had had in Europe, but I got my diploma anyhow.

Q: DO YOU THINK THAT YOU ARE WELL EDUCATED AFTER ALL OF THAT? I MEAN, ARE YOU SATISFIED?

A: Yes and no. I mean, I would have been, I am now struggling with the fact that I don't have a degree. But up to this time, in the dairy business, I didn't need it and in the real estate business I didn't.

Q: LET ME JUST LOOK AT ONE THING HERE. I'VE ASKED ALL THAT I CAN THINK OF. HOW ABOUT IF THERE'S ANYTHING YOU'D LIKE TO SAY ABOUT ALL YOUR YEARS OF REFLECTION ON IT? THE WHOLE PHENOMENON AND GROWTH?

A: I realize that my story is not, I think it is fairly positive through all this. Certainly, it's affected my life. I mean, had Hitler not been, I probably would have been a banker in Berlin. Whether I cherish that idea or not is neither here nor there. But so, and the loss of my father I know has affected me because I have, basically throughout my life, looked for my mentors. And probably way more than I should have. And go hurt several

times quite severely because of it. And that's something I'm still struggling with.

So, even so my story by and large, it is probably not as depressing as most stories are. Still, I think my life would have gone quite differently.

Q: I SHOULD THINK SO.

A: The reason why I like to tell it is because I think there is one lesson to be learned. That I think the Jews basically had more control than they took. I mean they could have taken more control. And I'm not saying that in a judgemental way. But merely as , let us learn from it if... I don't think the same situation will repeat itself, but we have seen genocide all over the world in different circumstances. And the only reason why I have survived was because my mother was an extremely gutsy lady. I also must say that I didn't particularly like the woman.

Q: YOUR MOTHER?

A: My mother. She was not a very nice person. So, I mean that creates all sorts of . But, she was bound and determined not to be a victim.

Q: AND MAYBE IF THERE HAD BEEN MORE OF THAT KIND OF DETERMINATION...?

A: I don't think the Germans could have come near putting 6 million people away if they wouldn't have been as cooperative as they were. And, I especially blame the leadership for saving their neck.

Q: SPECIFICALLY, THE (JUDENRAT?)

A: Yes. I mean there came a point - I think it was so obvious what was happening. At that point, their justification of "Well, let's keep everything cool," and saving their neck. They actually supplied the Germans with lists, for crying out loud. My brother did not do that, thank goodness. And he worked and tried to help people escape and often they wouldn't. He offered them to get them out of there.

They were first rounded up in Amsterdam. And they did get many of them out and many of them refused. "It's going to happen anyhow and if he got out he'd be caught again." Many people were not willing to take the risk and risk had to be taken in order to survive.

I know that we took many risks. Look at my mother, making the beds of the German officers. It was a risk there. Hiding in a house. I remember one day we had a ~~road~~ in our street. And we lived downstairs and there was a garden and I jumped over a wall and jumped across, ran across to a house on the other side of a patio back there. They were friends of ours. A minute after I got inside there, the Germans appeared on our neighboring balcony. That was a matter of seconds. You had to risk. If you wouldn't take risks you wouldn't have made it.

And this is where I am appreciative of the Israelis. They are so darned cocky and arrogant. But I understand their theory, "never again." Yes, I hope that eventually

it will simmer down there and straighten out. But I understand where they're coming from.

Q: YOU DIDN'T CONSIDER GOING TO ISRAEL?

A: I was never really attracted to Israel. Primarily, my mother was not particularly Zionist, we were not really raised terribly Jewish.

Q: YOU DID NOT GO TO SYNAGOGUE OR ANYTHING?

A: Yes, we did occasionally.

Q: DID YOU HAVE A BAR MITZVAH?

A: I didn't because my father was already in prison by that time. My two older brothers did. The German Jewish population was very assimilated. My father actually came from an Orthodox family.

Q: BUT THEN HE BECAME LESS -

A: Yes, my mother was the prevailing factor there. And I have lately paid quite a bit of attention to Judaism again, but, religious-wise, I had not had time and whether you believe in a higher spirit is one thing. I cannot believe in a personal god. I mean, I can believe in a creator, but not in some being that can intervene into human lives. I think we are created to do our own thing.

Q: DOES THAT JIVE WITH JUDAISM?

A: I don't really care whether it does or not. I definitely feel Jewish, as far as, I was made to feel Jewish. I don't know whether, what I would have felt like if Hitler wouldn't have been. But he certainly saw to it that I

knew that I was Jewish and, but it was cultural.

Q: AND HOW ABOUT LIVING HERE IN AMERICA. MAYBE YOU COULD SAY, LOOKING BACK, MAYBE THAT DECISION THEN...

A: No. I was never sorry about that decision. Even so, it has been bumpy and it still is, but basically I think it's probably one of the best places on earth, if not Canada.

Bases on my experiences, the important message really is that, if you are being persecuted, regardless by whom or what or where, that you as the victim have options. And even under very adverse conditions, you can make certain choices and that those choices may make the difference between life and death. I am certainly not saying that 6 million Jews could have been saved. But I would say 1 or 2 million more could have been saved if they wouldn't have been as submissive as they were. I'm not saying this judgementally at all. I'm just saying, looking back on the experience.

Q: DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEAS OR THEORIES WHY THEY WERE?

A: I think that , I'm convinced that in the United States that wouldn't have happened.

Q: BECAUSE OUR MENTALITY..?

A: The mentality is different. And that's where I have a very hard time with gun registration. I would have felt much better had I had a gun. And even though I am certainly in favor of outlawing automatic rifles, I feel that, I don't want many people controlled by the government be the only people that have guns. And I also know that there is going to be a lot of innocent victims because guns

people are handling that are not trained or that are mentally not capable of handling them. On the other hand, I don't want to have government with that kind of power. That they can anytime basically totally intimidate the population. So I'm certain that needs to be controlled. But I do believe that the private citizenry should be allowed guns.

Q: SO WHAT IN AMERICA DO YOU THINK MAKES THE PEOPLE BEHAVE DIFFERENTLY THAN GERMANS AT THAT TIME?

A: Well, it can be said in 2 words - question authority, which Americans do and Europeans are trained not to do. I think that a lot of it is cultural. Especially in Germany I think they are very law-abiding and then it's a law that all of a sudden becomes criminal. People didn't know how to deal with it. I have no answers, I mean, I have certainly not figured out what made the Germans tick during that period.