

Interview with ALEXANDER KATTEN
Holocaust Oral History Project
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Interviewer: Peggy Coster
Transcriber: Tracy Hill

My name is Alexander Katten. I go by Al, so that's what you can use.

Q OKAY, AND I'M PEGGY COSTER, AND I'M INTERVIEWING HIM, AND WE'RE IN SAN FRANCISCO. THE DATE IS JANUARY 27, 1990. WHERE WERE YOU BORN?

A I was born in Berlin, Germany. I am one of the 36 children that survived underground in Germany, itself.

Q WHEN WERE YOU BORN?

A I was born the 18th of September, 1935.

Q WHAT ARE YOUR EARLIEST MEMORIES?

A My earliest memories of what we went through under the Nazis was the Kristallnacht. I remember my father taking me to the kindergarten, and on the way, I was surprised at all that damage, and nobody wanted to tell me what had happened. And that was a funny thing: A German policeman who heard my questions, and my father says, "oh, he told me there was a big storm last night, didn't you hear that?" That's how they told the kid, to cover up what really happened. They couldn't tell a child of four years what had happened.

Q DID YOU SENSE THAT THEY WERE LYING TO YOU?

A No, I don't remember that I did that. The real bad part started with my sixth birthday.

Q WHAT HAPPENED?

A Because from then on, I had to wear the yellow star, and I was being persecuted by other kids.

Q WHAT WOULD THEY DO?

A Well, I couldn't play in the park; and in only certain areas, you couldn't sit down on a bench in the park. They had these signs, "Juden Verbotten", written on them. And you didn't have to wear the star until you were six years old. Before, you didn't notice it so much, but then, you do. You know, kids can be very cruel. So for, actually, for a year and a half, I wore the star; until in January of 1943 we went underground.

Q HOW OLD WERE YOU THEN?

A I was then about seven years old.

Q WERE YOU WITH YOUR PARENTS THE WHOLE TIME?

A Yes. The thing is, my father was very proper. He was a Prussian officer, and he didn't want to go underground; but my mother finally said, if we don't--at that part, I only know from them telling me afterwards; I was too small to be part of that discussion--my mother said, if you don't, I'm not going to be deported. And so, we had first a place that we were supposed to be in East Prussia on a farm; and the lady that was going to hide us there, about a week before we were going to go up there, died. And there was an old gentleman who lived in the eastern part of Berlin--and we used to live in the western part of Berlin, and now it's West (Schuderberg), and he lived in (Freidrichsheim), which is in the eastern part of Berlin--and he used to come--he was by himself--he used to come to our house a lot for dinner and so; and my father had helped him. He had developed some item, some patented item, and he had helped him to get a patent; and so he was a good friend. And when we told--we were talking about that when he was there--and he says, "well, what she can do, I can do. If you are willing to live in my small place, I can

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hide you away";and the man had one room and a kitchen; and the bathroom was halfway up the stairs, outside, which was in the old tenement buildings in East Berlin that way. We got the living room, he lived in the kitchen, and that's how we lived there.

Now, my mother had papers as a (Miss Savald), and I was supposed to be her illegitimate child. **

Q SHE HAD PAPERS AS WHAT?

A As (Miss Savald). We had a friend, (Miss Savald), in the western part of Berlin who have her birth certificate; and with this, we went to the post office. In Germany at those times, you had two different kinds of papers that were legitimate: a Kennkarte or a postal I.D. card. Now, the Kennkarte was much more checked when you got that; but you could take a birth certificate and go to the post office and get a postal I.D. card. So she gave her the birth certificate, and we went to the post office and got a postal I.D. card under that lady's name; so, she had papers with a real picture on it. So, when we went there, we went as (Miss Savald), and I was her illegitimate child, and my father went as (Jan Hartken), a Belgian force worker. **

He had purchased a Belgian passport, but that picture wasn't so good. The one thing was, before my father went underground, my father was working for a (seaman), and he had to work at night. And one time when he got his company I.D. card--they got new company I.D. cards every two or three weeks--and one time when he got his I.D. card, it was not in pen, but in pencil; and my mother confiscated it right away; and he had to go back the next morning and say he lost it. And what she did, she erased everything, and she **

put (Jan Hartken's) name in there. So officially, he had papers that he was working as a force worker; because the Jews and the force workers had the same I.D. cards for the factory; and officially he was working at night.

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My mother always told that what she did during the war was repair stockings, women's stockings, and she had a machine to do that. And in Berlin, in the eastern part of Berlin, they had direct current; and the western part, they had alternating current; and we were telling them that to do the machine, that to do the repair, she could only work with direct current; and she came during the day, and she was working in this friend's house to do the repairs. And supposedly, in the evening, my parents went away; my mother supposedly to West Berlin to where our apartment was; my father supposedly to work. And when everybody was asleep, they snuck back in. And for example; then when we had the bombing raids, I had to go down where I stayed with the overseas gentleman--that was a Mr. Hiller--and my parents stayed upstairs, even during the bombing. They could not go down because they officially were not here; and that's how we basically survived.

I mean, there are a lot of stories what happened during this underground. For example; I mean, you had in each building, you had a Nazi that was a house ward, and in each block you had a Nazi that was a block ward. The biggest complaint that was not a person, was not even a Nazi, but he was very like a Nazi. He complained to the officials that this German woman was going around with this Belgian force worker, and he was there during the day; and when they were off, he was sleeping during the day. So, when there was an attack there in Berlin during the day, he used to help the older people in the building to go to the basement. So, the Nazi house ward, he protested: It was not only

good that the guy's here, he helps the people in the other side work, you know; and so we got away with that.

I officially played with the kids, but I didn't go to school there. I couldn't officially go to school, so officially, I went to school in West Berlin, where our apartment was. So, my father took me out in the morning to supposedly take me to work--my uncle. We used to go to the park and he used to study with me. They didn't want my education to be thrown away. So, officially, I went to school then.

Q YOU TOLD THEM THAT YOU WERE GOING TO SCHOOL, BUT YOU WEREN'T REALLY?

A That's right, yeah. My father studied with me, so I wasn't any dumber than they were.

Then there was a lot of interesting stories. For example; we went into the street car one time, and my father used to speak in broken German. He spoke fluently in French; as a Belgian he had to; but he spoke broken German. I used to correct him. That was a game we would play. When there was something, then I used to say, "Uncle Jan, you have to say it that way." And he asked me something in the street car one time and it was broken, and I tried to explain we were playing our act. Two S.S. officers explained it to him in perfect French.

Then we had a big scare one time. This is what we were talking about before. We were in the subway--and my father was an officer in the first world war--and one of the people that had served under him in the first world war was a Gestapo official. And we were sitting in the subway, and the subways are divided. It's just like BART here; where there's a small compartment and

a door; then a big compartment and a door; and then a small compartment at the end. The guy in charge of the Nazis walked in and saw my father and turned white; and my father was also scared, because the guy knew him. The guy came to our part of the compartment; he stood there; he checked one or two people; he stopped there; and the rest of them, he says, "oh, I checked these already"; and they went out. So, he did cover up. Even so, this guy, at the end of the war, the Russians grabbed him because he was a big Nazi, and he was accused of having actually killed several Jews in Berlin, himself. But, for him, my father was the German officer and decorated hero.

Q DO YOU REMEMBER HIS NAME?

A No, I don't. But that way, the funny thing is; a lot of Nazis, sure, they hated Jews because they were told Jews are the enemies of Germany. A lot of Nazis did not hate the Jews as Jews. They were told they were their enemies.

Now, with my father, he knew he was a good German. This guy knew; so he, instead of having to deal with it, he simply ignored it; and it's a surprising thing.

Q I'M A LITTLE CONFUSED. IF YOU DON'T MIND ME ASKING FOR VERIFICATION: HE PROTECTED YOUR FATHER BY NOT--

A He never checked his papers. He never let the others check his papers. He just stood there and said, I checked them already. It was a most surprising thing. But my father, after the war, he was the assistant chief of police after the war.

Q YOUR FATHER WAS?

A Yes, and he found papers about the Gestapo. But about other things that had happened in Germany--the Russians confiscated it afterwards--but in there, there were papers. For example; the S.S. from (Camp Verbot) had petitioned Hitler-- which was () of the S.S.--had petitioned Hitler not to have Jews that have decorations from the first world war wear the yellow star because, you know, they wore the decoration in the button hole, and it looked bad. So, Hitler ordered, instead of them--my father had the actual paper where it was ordered on them--Jews, as of right now, are prohibited to wear the decorations from the prior wars. See, he went the other way; and so, that's the way things worked in Germany.

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Q WHAT ELSE DID YOUR FATHER FIND IN THESE PAPERS?

A Oh, my father had complete things of the (Air War) of Berlin; of the Kristallnacht, where the Nazis at the time said the people rose up and destroyed Jewish businesses. My father found the direct orders where what group had to go. They found, afterwards, claims that from this S.S. airman, he tore his pants by tearing down the bench in the synagogue, and he wanted to be reimbursed. All these things my father found.

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Q SO, THEY FOUND, LIKE, EXPENSE REPORTS?

A Yes, expense reports, and orders, and everything. There was complete proof that it was ordered from above.

Now the Russians have all of that. If they still have it or destroyed it, I don't know; but that was confiscated in 1944 when my father was arrested by the Russians.

Q HE WAS ARRESTED BY THE RUSSIANS? WHY?

A Well, my father was, after the war, the assistant chief of police in Berlin, and he had to work with all four allies; and to get uniforms, or to get equipment, or weapons for the police, the allies were working against each other. So, when the Russians gave something, you went to the Americans; if the Russians gave something, you have to do the same thing; or if the Britains gave something, you went to the Russians and said, well, the British gave something; you have to give. The Russians considered this violation of the Russian espionage law. That's what they accused him of; and they also accused him of helping Russian soldiers to escape to the West.

Q ACCUSED HIM OF WHAT?

A Well, it could be true. After the war, you know, a lot of Jews from Poland that came out of the concentration camps really had a hard time to leave the D.P. camps in Germany because they didn't have papers. They didn't have German papers; they didn't have Polish papers. They were what they called (schadlos), without a country; and for them, it was very difficult to emigrate to the United States, or to Canada, or to other countries if they were considered (schadlos). So, a lot of them came to my father, and he sent them over to the passport department, and he says, listen, if you can help them, help them; and when a high officer tells them to help, they help. So, what happened in all probability--we never know for sure--was that some Russian officer that had deserted from the Russian Army camp told them that they were Polish Jews, and they got papers that way. So, that's what they accused him of, and he was sentenced to three times 25 years of hard labor; and he spent seven and a half years in () in East Berlin.

Q AFTER THE WAR?

A That was after war; in '49 to '56. That's how the papers--when they arrested him then, they took all these papers; and so, we don't have them anymore; because those would be nice documents to show how the Kristallnacht really worked.

Q WHAT I WANT TO DO IS GO BACK A LITTLE BIT. SO, WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN KRISTALLNACHT AND WHEN YOU WENT INTO HIDING?

A Well, my father was in the Kristallnacht time, he was on forced labor, building the (Heren Geren) in Berlin; and once that was built, he was sent to (Zemets) as a force worker. That was in a way our luck, too, because that was very important work for the war effort, and so we were put back from being deported; otherwise, we wouldn't have been able to stay in Berlin until 1943. And when I was six years old, I went to the Jewish grammar school.

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Q THAT WAS IN '41?

A That's right, and I went there one year, and then Jewish schools were forbidden. Actually, before that, you were prohibited from going to another school, but you had to go to a Jewish school; and after that, the Jewish school was prohibited, and that was the end of it. I went to the first year of school, and then we were not allowed to go to school anymore. My parents studied with me.

Q WHERE WERE YOU LIVING?

A We were living in Berlin and (Shunberg)..

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Q HAD YOU BEEN FORCED TO GO INTO A JEWISH GHETTO?

A No, no. In Berlin, there was nothing like that. There was no Jewish ghetto in Berlin. You could stay there until they deported you.

Q I GUESS THE REASON I WONDERED IS BECAUSE ONE OF THE BOOKS I READ, IT WAS ABOUT JEWISH PEOPLE WHO MANAGED TO SURVIVE THE WAR IN BERLIN, AND THEY TALKED ABOUT HAVING BEEN FORCED INTO A JEWISH GHETTO IN BERLIN.

A Okay. Well, that was something people were put in from small towns. They were brought to Berlin and they stayed together in a certain area. I don't know exactly of my own knowledge that we ever had to leave our apartment; and it was surprising, actually, because we were living on (____ Strasse),

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and across the street was the navy department; and they had taken all the houses, all the apartment houses, and made the navy department there for the-- and so, they let us live that close. But, we were actually warned that we were going to be deported.

Q WHO WARNED YOU?

A I don't know. I have sneaking suspicion--my father never talked that much about that--that it was the same person that let us go by there in the subway; and he got from him a seal to put on the door. You know, when you were deported, they got a seal to put on the door.

Q YOU MEAN A GESTAPO SEAL?

A A Gestapo seal. And when we left--my father only spoke about it later--I remember we had to go out, to be out of that apartment by a certain time; and he left there, he put the seal on the door. We went by subway to the eastern part of Berlin where we were going to be underground. And what I've heard from neighbors later, after the war, they were saying; well, the Gestapo had come about an hour later and they thought another person had already picked you up. So, they didn't realize even that we had disappeared.

Q SO, YOU HADN'T EVEN BEEN PUT ON THE LIST OF PEOPLE THAT
DISAPPEARED?

A Not for a while. We were on the list of people that disappeared
after a while, but by that time we were settled in.

Q AND SO, WHEN YOU WENT TO THIS APARTMENT IN EAST BERLIN, YOU WERE
ABLE TO LIVE THERE THE WHOLE REST OF THE WAR?

A That's right. We were lucky. We lived there, all three of us in
one room; but compared to other people, we had it made, really. I could go
out. I could play with the kids. I just had to be very careful what I said.

Q HOW DIFFICULT WAS THAT?

A I tell you one thing; my parents really indoctrinated me how
important it was. My mother always tells me; I was very sick one time, and
even under fever I said to my father, "Uncle Jan." Actually, the biggest
problem I had after the war was to say "daddy" again. You know, for me it was
Uncle Jan.

Q AND YOU GOT ALONG WELL WITH THE PEOPLE IN THAT APARTMENT?

A Oh, yeah. I was a kid like every other, and I had to go along with
everything that they did. I even--the house ward came along, and they had
these cans to collect for the war effort, and all the kids had to take one. I
took one too when they went around collecting. I couldn't be different.

Q SO, YOU DID EVERYTHING THAT THEY DID?

A Everything that the other kids did. We didn't have as much food as
most of the others had, because we didn't have any food stamps. There was a
rationing in Germany, and my parents bought most of the stuff on the black
market. And once in a while, there were some people that knew where we were;

that we were underground; and this (Miss Savald), the one that gave her the papers, came visiting us about once a week, and they collected some stamps so you could go to a store around the corner and use it; because if you never went there, that would have looked funny. But, we still didn't have as much. I mean, other people didn't have much, but we had less; especially at the end, about the last six months before the end of the war. The Germans had very little to eat, but we were living on cabbage and carrots, on red cabbage and carrots for six months; breakfast, lunch, and dinner. And you know, it took me many, many years before I started to eating red cabbage and carrots again. Well, I eat them again, but it took me a long, long time. I mean, but we survived, and that's the important thing.

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Q YOU SAID THERE WERE A LOT OF STORIES. CAN YOU REMEMBER ANY OTHER STORIES?

A Well, like I said, we were out visiting a family outside of Berlin the day that they had that big (____) attack on Berlin, and some of Berlin was bombed. And during that attack, we were living in the back. The tenement buildings have one front house, and one in the back. The front part of the house was bombed out; and the biggest problem was that now, we had to go--to get out, we couldn't go through the front. We had to go to the next building, and they had a wooden walk; and that created a real problem, because when you wanted to sneak back in at night, you know, when you walk on wood there was noise, and people could hear you. So, my mother told them, told the people that the relatives of hers from the East that had flown from the Russians were living in her apartment, and she was staying overnight now. Then, she could come to the basement. And my father put a big bandage on his foot for quite a

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long time; that he was supposedly injured at work; that he didn't have to go to work for a while; that he was sick. So now, they could come to the basement when there was attacks because they could go out, but they couldn't sneak back. There was no way; it was so loud.

Q IF YOUR MOTHER COULDN'T GO DOWN TO THE BASEMENT BECAUSE SHE WASN'T SUPPOSED TO BE THERE--BUT WOULDN'T PEOPLE RECOGNIZE THAT IF SHE SAID THIS WAS HER COUSIN, THAT IT WAS NOT HER COUSIN?

A No. What had happened was that what we were saying is our relatives from the East now lived in her apartment, and she stayed now here to be able to work these stockings; that she wasn't going home anymore at night to the apartment because there was somebody there. That way, now she could come to the basement with us when there was an attack. And a few days later, my father had put a bandage on his foot and was supposedly injured.

Q WHAT OTHER STORIES DO YOU REMEMBER? LIKE, WHAT PEOPLE? IS THERE ANYBODY IN PARTICULAR THAT STANDS OUT IN YOUR MIND AT THIS TIME?

A Well, the people, the two people are (Miss Savald) and Mr. Hiller; the guy that hid us. They both aren't alive anymore, but those are the two that really saved our lives, really. And I tell you honestly, I don't remember the names of the people in the building or so. Some were friendly to the force worker; others were not. But this was a working class neighborhood of Berlin, and there were very few Nazis there. I mean, some of them are members of the Party, but that doesn't mean they were Nazis. **

We also--this person we had in the front building owned a bakery, and my mother helped in the bakery. When he needed help, she helped him. So, we got some extra food; but he didn't know we were Jewish. But he was already anti-

Nazi, and he got a few times into trouble with them; but always got out of it again. Actually, I stayed friends with him. The guy just died this year.

Q SO YOU STAYED IN CONTACT WITH HIM?

A They were living in East Berlin, and we stayed in contact with them because they were good to us. But they weren't good to us because we were Jewish; they didn't know; but they were good to us because they were human beings. And like I said, most of the people around that neighborhood were not Nazis. Even the night house ward was a member of the Party, but he was not a, per se, Nazi; and we had another guy in there that wasn't even a member of the Party, and he was a real Nazi.

Q AND YOU HAD TO BE REALLY CAREFUL WITH HIM?

A That's right. He was the guy that wanted to get this Belgian out.

Q WHAT DID HE DO TO GET THE BELGIAN OUT?

A Well, he went to the police and said, this German woman is carousing around with this Belgian force worker, and that is not right; and he went off. And the Nazi house ward was the one that told him; listen, I'm glad that the guy's here during the day. He works nights. When we have an air attack, he helps the older people to the basement; somebody younger and stronger to help these people; and that's how we got around it. And the funny thing is this: The house--the Nazi, the member of the Nazi party, the Russians arrested him after the war, and my father couldn't help because we couldn't find him. The other guy that was a real Nazi, but wasn't a member of the Party, he became a big Communist big shot.

Q HOW DID YOU FEEL WITH ANTI-SEMITISM; THE REMARKS YOU WOULD HEAR, BEING FREE?

A Okay. The real remarks on anti-Semitism, I had between 1941 and January of '43, when I had to wear the yellow star. I mean, heck, I got on my birthday, with my birthday present in 1941 I got a yellow star. You know, from that day on, I had to wear it; and the kids that were nice to you before, would tell you what they were told. Even the ones that liked you, their parents said, no, you can't play with him; because if they would let them play with the Jewish kid, some guy might report them to the Gestapo, and they were in trouble. And you could only play in the areas that were permitted for Jews. So, you couldn't let--For example; in the park they had a sand box. With the star, you could not play in there. It was not allowed. You couldn't sit on the bench, like I said before. There were certain other places you could not be. As a Jew with a yellow star, you could only shop between 4:00 and 5:00 o'clock in the afternoon; and that was the only shopping time. Other times, you were not allowed to go into a store, and that was bad. I mean for a kid, how could a kid understand that? But once we were underground, you don't hear anti-Semitic remarks unless there is a Jew there. You know, people don't talk-- When the Christian kids were sitting together, they don't talk about the Jews. That didn't come up unless a guy was kind of walking around with a yellow star.

Q SO, WHEN YOU USED TO PLAY WITH THESE KIDS AFTER YOU -- A It never came up. It never came up, because there was no reason for it. You might hear a remark like (), "as much noise as there is in a Jewish school"; but that's a remark you hear. You hear it in Germany; you even hear

it now, and you heard it before. It isn't really anti-Semitism. You hear it from Jews. But the thing my parents always said was, if there is anything, don't react. After the war I definitely reacted.

Q WHAT DID YOU DO?

A Well, when the war was over I had to go back to school; and when I was in school the teacher thought he was doing a nice thing, and he was telling the kids how I had suffered; and one of the kids had remembered what they were told before about the Jews and he called me (_____) during the break, and I beat him to a pulp. He had to go to the hospital, I was so mad. And I nearly got in a whole bunch of trouble for it. The only reason I didn't get in trouble was because of the position my father had; because the Germans are very afraid of officials. Because the next day, the kid's father came about how I could beat him up, and the teacher told him what he had said; and this guy couldn't understand that I beat him up that much, and he was going to beat me up. So, the teacher told him who I was, and the guy was apologetic and left.

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Q HOW DID YOU DEAL WITH ALL THAT ANGER SINCE THEN?

A Well, I don't have that much of an anger, I could say. I mean, if somebody says certain words, until a few years ago that was fighting words; like, "damn Jew," or things like that, where they put it to the religion; that was fighting words. But it had nothing much to do-- It's just that the idea when I was a kid, I couldn't do anything about it; and I remembered that. I was persecuted by other kids for being Jewish. But now, I can do something about it, and it doesn't always mean that I'll win the fight.

Q YOU ACTUALLY WOULD PHYSICALLY FIGHT?

A I've done that for a few years, and I learned to control my temper. But I don't have a hatred against Germany because as much as we suffered from Germans, there were enough Germans that also were different, that helped us. And I've learned that it is not the German people that did this to us, it was the Nazis, and the Nazis were only about five percent of the population. So, you cannot hold a whole nation responsible for what the Nazis did, because they could not do anything about it. If they would have said something, they would have been persecuted just like we were. I mean, if a German said something, that the Nazis were doing something wrong, he went to the concentration camp; and people were afraid. Dictatorship has that kind of control over people.

Q WHERE WERE YOU WHEN BERLIN WAS LIBERATED?

A That's a nice story, too. The building where we were hiding away was one block from the (Schundheis) Brewery in (Friedrichsheim). The (Schundheis) Brewery was the last defense bastion of the S.S. So, the Russians were on one side; the Nazis were on the other side; and we were in the middle. We could not leave the building, because anybody going across the street--there was a side street there that was open firing ground--and the Nazis, anybody that was going across the street with a white arm band, the Nazis shot; and anybody going across the street without a white armband, the Russians shot.

Q YOU WERE STUCK.

A We were stuck. And what we did is; we got through a drainage pipe to the building. (Indicating) This was a street; here is the (Schundheis) Brewery; here was the Russians. This was one street. The place where we were

was like this. Now, we went through a drainage pipe to the buildings here, across that street. There was no firing. We could also get across there, but you didn't want to take a chance. You didn't ever know what was happening. And my father then went through that; and there was another building bombed out; and he went where the Russians were. With a white armband, he went to the Russian Kommandantur; to the command center. That's where he had to get authorization for food. So, he stood there in line, and when he came up, he showed him his I.D. card; his real I.D. card with a "J" on it. So, they knew he wasn't a Nazi, so they put him to work right away.

So, he was first working with the civil commander of Berlin.

Q WHEN THIS HAPPENED, HOW LONG WERE THE NAZIS AND RUSSIANS STANDING OFF AGAINST EACH OTHER?

A Oh, I would say a little over a week; about ten days.

Q AND SO YOU HAD TO STAY IN YOUR APARTMENT BUILDING MOST OF THAT TIME?

A Oh, yes. We stayed in the basement there, because we didn't know what was going to happen. I mean, everybody in that building was down there. But my father went--I went through it after the second day, also--and he brought back food; so we had food.

Q AND HOW DID YOU GET WATER?

A The water was not shut off for some reason. That was not shut off. So, we got food, and then my father had to go back; and he worked for the commander. And he brought extra food back for us because the Russians gave it to him; so, we were really well off. He brought back special I.D. cards for my mother and myself. So, once the Russians got the Nazis out of there, then

we could go across the street. But again, food was delivered to the building. I mean, you had to pick it-- you got an authorization, and then you picked it up; and everybody got that divided. But across the street there, there was a German school that was where the Russians were, where the Russian troops were quartered after the Russians had taken over. Now, with my I.D. card, I could go in there, and I used to eat with them.

Also, because of his position, right away they had a Russian guard at the building so he wouldn't have any problems with any Russian soldiers. Because the biggest problem after the war was that a lot of the younger girls were standing in the door, and they were teasing the Russian soldiers; and then when they came in the evening, then they screamed rape. Basically, if the Russians wouldn't have known that the girls were there, they wouldn't have come. And there was a lot of problem with that, but our house was protected because we had a guard there.

Q THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE EVER HEARD IT KIND OF BLAMED ON GERMAN GIRLS.

A Actually, I tell you; in Berlin--I'm not talking about the countryside where the Russians walked in, but in Berlin--the Russians were pretty--well, they didn't have the kind of troops there that they had before. These were mostly people from the Russian part of Russia; not the Mongolian part of it. This is where the biggest problem is. But, a lot of these girls, if they wouldn't have shown themselves in the door, if they would not tease these soldiers during the day, they would not have come. They would not have known they were there. I mean, when you look at that, a lot of that happened that way.

Q OKAY. WHAT WAS YOUR FATHER'S JOB?

A He was a civil town commander of Berlin, directly, then. I mean, he was in charge of the civilian part of it first, and then when they formed the Berlin police, he went to the police.

Q AND HE GOT A GOOD JOB THERE.

A Oh, yeah.

Q WAS IT HARD FOR HIM WORKING WITH THE RUSSIANS?

A No. I tell you one thing; they were our (greta); they freed us, in **
a way. You know, at the time, we were happy that they were there. And the Russian soldier, himself, was basically in the same kind of the situation as the German soldier. He couldn't open his mouth either, because they had the Kommissars around. If they said something--we had Russian, Jewish Russian officers visit us in our home, and privately, they told us that they were Jewish; but they also said, don't ever tell anybody, because if they, if the Russian hierarchy would have known that they were identified with being Jewish, they would have lost their rank and everything. I mean, the Russians were just as anti-Semitic as the Germans; actually much more.

Q SO, YOU'RE STILL LIVING IN THE SAME APARTMENT BUILDING?

A Yes, we lived for a few months there, still, and then we got ourselves an apartment.

Q WAS THAT HARD?

A Not for my father.

Q HE CAN MOVE ANYWHERE HE WANTS, HUH?

A Yeah. But we got an apartment and then we--

Q AND WAS THAT IN--

A It was very close to where we had been underground, because the gentleman, he didn't want to leave his apartment, and he came for all meals to our house, and everything. I mean, heck, we wouldn't abandon him. I mean, he saved our lives. We could never repay that.

Q SO, WHEN YOUR FATHER WAS THEN ARRESTED BY THE RUSSIANS, HOW DID HE GET BACK FROM THE LABOR CAMP?

A Well, he was arrested in '49. In '56 my father was released and deported to West Germany, where my mother was.

Q HE WAS DEPORTED?

A Yes, from East Germany.

Q SO, WHAT HAD YOU AND YOUR MOTHER BEEN DOING ALL THIS TIME?

A Well, we at that time, when my father was arrested, we had another apartment in Pankow.

Q WAS THAT IN EAST OR WEST BERLIN?

A East Berlin. And we survived. Let's say it this way: My mother was in charge of the kitchen of the old Jewish old age and children's home in East Berlin, and in 1953, it looked like I was going to be arrested.

Q WHY?

A Because I opened my big mouth.

Q WHAT DID YOU SAY?

A Well, there was things going on, and there was a discussion--I was forced to take an apprenticeship because I was politically unsatisfactory to keep on going to school, with my father being arrested--and they would discuss things about people being arrested without a cause; and I spoke up and I said, "heck, my father was arrested

without a cause." So, they didn't like that, and there were certain other things.

Q WHAT OTHER THINGS?

A Well, at that time, there was no wall, and I went to West Berlin a lot; and I brought West German, West Berlin papers and things like that back. So, in January of '53, my mother and myself, we escaped to the western part of Berlin, and then went to Dusseldorf.

Q WAS THAT DIFFICULT?

A Not at those times. It was open; there was no wall. And I actually carried everything that was movable out of the apartment because I had my work. I had to go--when I went by the (autobahn), I had to go from (East) Germany to East Germany, but I had to go through one station in West Berlin, and so I used my card--I had a monthly card--and I used to put stuff in the corner and sit it here. Then when we got to West Berlin station, I carried the stuff out, and I left it with some friends over there. But when I started to move the sewing machine, my mother put a stop to it. And then we left.

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Q HOW DID YOU SURVIVE IN WEST BERLIN?

A Oh, we had help there. The Jewish community helped, you know; and then they brought us from West Germany, and I stayed in Dusseldorf for two years, and finished my apprenticeship, because I figured, when I want to do something, I want to finish it. And then I came to America.

Q WHAT'S LIFE BEEN LIKE SINCE THEN?

A Oh, I've had a good life so far. When I first came to America here, I couldn't find a job because nobody wanted to hire me because I wasn't draft age. So, I decided I'd volunteer for the draft. The next day I found a job. But, so I had to go--in April of '55 I had to go into the military, and I spent 32 years in the military, and I'm retired from the military.

Q HOW DID YOUR EXPERIENCES IN THE WAR--HOW HAS THAT AFFECTED YOUR LIFE? HAS THAT CONTINUED TO AFFECT YOUR LIFE?

A I don't think so. It's not bothering me anymore. It did a little bit after the war in Germany. I got in a lot of fights, but I'm over that. Actually, I only got in one fight in the military because of my religion.

Q WHAT HAPPENED?

A Well, I was told by certain people something about my religion, you know, in a cursed way, and I didn't like it, and so we had a fight.

Q WHAT DID THEY SAY?

A I don't want to even repeat it. Those kinds of words shouldn't even--because if this goes on T.V., I don't even want people to learn these kinds of words; because kids see it, and they learn it, and they use it, and they get into trouble. So, it's better not even to say them. Anyway, I didn't like it, and I did my part about it.

Q WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT MEDIA PORTRAYAL OF THE HOLOCAUST?

A I think that the Holocaust portrayals that I have seen were fairly accurate. The one problem I have with most of them is that they blame the German people as a whole. That is something I cannot do. I think that is wrong, because the majority of the people were not Nazis. They were just as

afraid as we were. And you see, nowadays, in any dictatorship, only a certain number of people are for them, and a certain number of people are against them, and the rest of the people want to be left alone. They just won't say anything, to be careful. I mean, heck, we saw it when we were in Vietnam. I mean, ten percent of the people were the ones that we were fighting for; the other ten percent of the people were really against it, and were fighting us; and the other 80 percent could have cared less.; they wanted peace and quiet.

Q HAVE YOUR EXPERIENCES MADE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT RACISM NOW?

A I does. I mean, I've seen what it can do when a person is persecuted for their religion, or national origin, or even the color of their skin; and that's why there is no excuse for any of these.

Q HAVE YOU ACTUALLY DONE ANYTHING TO TRY TO PREVENT RACISM?

A Okay. When you say prevents racism, the way I see it, I have fought it; but the individual case, specifically in the military. But to go out and demonstrate, I think is the wrong thing. It's not the way to convince people, because the people that are racists or that have prejudice of any kind, you can only change through education; not through a demonstration; and some of them you can never change. You can prove to them a hundred percent that they are wrong, and they will never change. But the way I look at the prejudice is a show of no education. An educated person--I mean, they might be educated in the business sense, they might have gone to schools a lot; but if they have prejudices, it shows that they have no real life education.

Q WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY LIFE EDUCATION?

A Okay. To see what life is really like; to have lived; to approach each person as an individual, not as a group. That's what the Nazis did. All Jews did this. Now, I know there are some of our Jews that say our blacks are no good, and that's wrong. The military generalize. That means you don't have any real feel. That's life education; feeling to know what's right and wrong. And sure, there are people, there are Jews that are, bad; there are blacks that are bad; there are Chinese that are bad, sure. But they are not bad as the Chinese, or the Jew, or the black; they are bad as that person; and you should dislike that person as a person, not because they are black, or they are Jewish, or they are Chinese, or they are something else. This is what most people do not understand. That is when the people that are prejudice, who really are not that smart--they might be smart. They might be a professor in certain things. They know their certain area of expertise, but they are not smart; because if they are smart, they could figure it out that it is not a whole race or a whole people.

Q YOU KNOW WHEN YOU WERE A YOUNG KID, AND YOUR PARENTS HAD TO TEACH YOU TO BE VERY SECRETIVE BECAUSE NOBODY COULD KNOW YOU WERE JEWISH; HAVE YOU EVER BEEN ABLE TO KIND OF SHED THAT NEED TO BE SECRETIVE?

A No, and then yes. It is easier for me to put on a front; and that helped my military career because I was in military intelligence. It was easy for me to do that. But, I can solve my problems myself. I don't need as much as some other people do; the thing to talk to somebody else about to solve a problem. I can sit down with myself and solve it on my own. And I think I've done very well with that.

Q OKAY. BEFORE WE END, ARE THERE ANY OTHER PEOPLE THAT COME TO MIND THAT YOU'D REALLY LIKE TO TALK ABOUT THAT WERE EXTRAORDINARY IN ANY WAY?

A Well, my problem is this: There were a lot of people at the time that I was underground, but I don't remember their names.

Q I'D LIKE TO KNOW; DID YOU SEE YOUR FATHER AGAIN AFTER WHAT HAPPENED?

A Oh, yeah. My father was released in '56, and I went over there. I was stationed for four years from '58 to '62. I was stationed with the military, with the American Army, and my father was here visiting here; and shortly before he died, he was visiting here. He actually got sick while he was here. Now, he didn't die of anything that happened by the Nazis or by the Russians. My father was in the first world war when they used mustard gas; and he had in his lungs, a capsule, a capsule of some of this gas; that broke open, and he died within three weeks.

And it was cancer-like thing created in his lung, and he had an examination about two weeks before he came here. Then he got sick here, and his lung was full of these little spots; cancerous, you know. That happened within two weeks that my father had to break up his trip here, and he had to go home early; and then two weeks later, he died. I went over to Germany then; and two weeks later, he died.

Q WHEN WAS THAT?

A In 1964.

Q THAT MUST HAVE BEEN SO AWFUL TO HAVE YOUR FATHER IN JAIL. WERE YOU --

A It was, yeah. It was bad because the problem was, for the first year, we didn't even know where he was.

Q HOW DID YOU FINALLY FIND OUT?

A Finally, they allowed him to write. After he was convicted and was in the camp, then they let him write once a month.

Q DID HE TELL YOU MUCH ABOUT WHAT IT WAS LIKE? DID HE EVER TALK ABOUT IT?

A Well, afterwards, yeah; but it wasn't easy. It wasn't that bad either. It wasn't like what the Nazis did. But, this is something you should have asked him. No, I have some things that he had written down, but--

Q HOW BAD WAS IT?

A Well, it wasn't nice, you know, but they worked. They put him to work. In the camp, they had all kinds of different things, you know, and my father was educated, so he worked--I think--in the library or somewhere else. But, there were other things, you know. I don't know that much about it, to tell you the truth.

Q DID HE EVER FIND OUT WHY THEY SUDDENLY DECIDED TO DEPORT HIM AND LET HIM GO?

A Oh, Well, he fell under one of these amnesties. You see, the Russians, they turned him over to the East Germans; and after a certain amount of time served, some people fell under the amnesty. And when they let him out, they deported him, because my mother was in West Germany. They deported him.

Q IS THERE ANYTHING MORE THAT YOU'D LIKE TO SAY?

A Well, there isn't much. I think we talked about everything.

Q I HAVE A COUPLE MORE QUESTIONS. YOU'RE A MAGICIAN. DOES THAT HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH ANYTHING IN YOUR PAST? HOW DID YOU TURN OUT TO BE A MAGICIAN?

A How did I turn out to be a magician? My father, from his youth, he was friends with a very famous German magician, (Kalmach), and after the war, this guy visited us quite often, and he got me interested in magic. So, from what, age ten I've been doing magic. Then I was several years, I was living together with my wife, I wasn't allowed to do magic because she was afraid of it. And then I did it again, and now I'm very active in it. **

Q DO YOU HAVE OTHER HOBBIES?

A I have more hobbies than you can shake a stick at. I'm a collector from way back. I collect stamps; I collect owls; I collect coins. What else do I collect? I like photography, and I collect magic equipment.

Q AND NOW YOU'RE RETIRED?

A Yeah, I'm retired from the military. I have a small mail order business, and I have a consulting business, and I am a part in my wife's company.

Q WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO THE MILITARY? WHY DID YOU STAY 32 YEARS?

A Well, my father was a Prussian officer. I had military at home. I got drafted first. I volunteered for it, and I got drafted; and I enjoyed it, so I stayed in. I can't talk too much about my military career, because some of it is still under the secret act. And then I retired and went to work outside. I have a degree; I have a bachelor's degree in accounting; I have my master's degree in business; and I have a doctorate in finance.

Q DID YOU HAVE THAT WHILE YOU WERE IN THE MILITARY?

A In the evening school. My doctorate, I got when I got out. And so, I worked first as comptroller for the M.R.I., for the Mental Research Institute, in Palo Alto, after I retired; and I worked for the University of California as an accounting and budget manager; and then, I decided to go into business for myself; and I do a lot of volunteer work. I am treasurer of my congregation, I'm also treasurer of the (altenheim) in Oakland; the old age home there. And I'm active in several other organizations, because I feel I get my retirement. I can make a good living in my businesses that I do. About every two weeks, I spend a day in my wife's company and take care of all her books, and stuff like this. I do some consulting work. I'm on a retainer basis with some companies, and I do my mail order business, which isn't that much.

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Q WHAT'S YOUR MAIL ORDER BUSINESS?

A Magic equipment and gifts, but the gifts is very little, actually. Mostly, it's magic equipment, and I don't need that much time for it.

So, I need to be busy all the time. I'm the kind of person that always needs to do something, and so I do a lot of volunteer work. I have to give back something.

Q DID YOU EVER HAVE ANY CHILDREN?

A No. That is one thing I regret. Maybe I regret it, but maybe it's a good thing.

Q WHY?

A Probably because I would have spoiled them rotten.

Q WHY DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE TO BE BUSY ALL THE TIME?

A I'm the kind of person that always needs to do something. I just can't lay back and do nothing. When I go on vacation, I travel around; I have to see things. I could not spend two weeks on a beach laying in the sand; I would get bored to death.

Q SO, IT SOUNDS LIKE THINGS--YOU'RE PRETTY HAPPY.

A Oh, I'm fine. Well, I have to say this; my parents protected me as much as possible through all of that, through the Holocaust. Luckily, we went underground. I didn't go through the worst of things. It was difficult, but it was a lot easier than going to a concentration camp; because that I wouldn't have survived. And so, I learned one thing; that hatred doesn't help anything. And most of the people that have done things to us have been punished. There are some, still, that got away, but I'd rather see one get away than someone that didn't do anything get punished. And I cannot carry a hatred for a nation like some people do.

I mean, when I bought my first car, I bought a Volkswagen. My relatives got absolutely upset with me. I said, there's nothing wrong with it. Number one, I couldn't afford anything else. Number two, there's nothing wrong with it. Not all the people in Germany are Nazis.

Q YOU HAVE RELATIVES HERE?

A Yeah.

Q DID YOU LOSE VERY MANY OVER IN GERMANY?

A We lost over (70) people, of relatives on both sides. But luckily, my mother's relatives, the majority got out. They're here in California. My father's relatives, some of them got out and they were in New York.

Q DID THEY GET OUT AFTER HITLER CAME TO POWER?

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A Yeah, but before '38.

Q SO, THEY SAW IT COMING?

A Oh, yeah.

Q HOW COME YOUR FATHER DIDN'T MOVE (____)?

★★

A My father was German, very much so, and he just didn't believe this thing could happen. So, anti-Semitism; fine. That was something that we had to live with all the time. That was nothing new by the Nazis. And then he had promised his mother on her death bed that he would take care of his brother. Now, his brother got out just at the end. He got to England due to the fact that my aunt's brother was already in England; and he was a hat manufacturer, and he was making hats for the queen; so he got them in there.

Q NOW, WHEN YOU SAY JUST IN THE END, YOU MEAN JUST BEFORE THE WAR STARTED?

A Just before they stopped so that the Jews couldn't get out anymore. We had an affidavit from our relatives here, but it was too late. And heck, my father wouldn't have even gone underground if my mother wouldn't have forced him. I mean heck, what could happen to him? I mean, he was this German hero. And so, well, my mother said well, then she goes with me and he can go where he wants to. Then he decided he was going to go along with us, but she had to force him. I mean, a lot of German Jews didn't think anything like this could happen. And who could imagine that a country like Germany, an educated country could bring forth concentration camps like they did. I can still not understand that.

Q DO YOU THINK THAT PEOPLE, NOW, REACT LESS THAN THEY DID WHEN THEY FINALLY, WHEN THEY DID KNOW ABOUT THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS? DO YOU THINK

PEOPLE ARE MORE WILLING TO ACCEPT, YOU KNOW, LIKE THE CAMBODIAN HOLOCAUST THAT'S HAPPENING? THERE'S BEEN NEWS ABOUT IT, BUT THERE HASN'T BEEN A BIG OUTCRY; NOT REALLY.

A I tell you what; not many Cambodian relatives live here in the United States. Don't forget, relatives of the Jews that got killed in Germany and in Poland live here in the United States. They made the outcry.

Q SO, YOU THINK PEOPLE STILL, THEY DON'T JUST TAKE IT?

A No, and those relatives most definitely. Did you hear now about the death squads in El Salvador, and so? They have relatives here. So then you have an outcry. If there's nobody to mention it, then it is a new story, and people forget.

Q THERE IS AN EXPRESSION FOR PEOPLE, A PHRASE THAT PEOPLE USE FOR PEOPLE IN YOUR SITUATION CALLED "THE LOST GENERATION." I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'VE HEARD THAT PHRASE.

A Yes. I don't think we're lost. I don't think we're lost. I think that a lot of us have hatred still for Germany. Not everybody was in the situation like I was. A lot of the kids that survived, survived number one; because their parents paid people a lot of money. So, they don't feel like these people did it for trying to help, but they did it for profit. Other of these kids that survived, survived in children's homes. You know, in the Catholic Church, some of the nuns took children that they knew were Jewish and hid them away, but they converted them to Christianity; and some of us still are Christians now. You know, they never came back to being Jewish. Some of us came back to Jewish, and still hate the nuns. Not for--they don't (____), but they hate them for trying to convert them. I didn't go through that, and I felt that hate has to be a

personal thing to one person; not in a generality. That is something Jews have suffered under for centuries. Because pogroms in Russia and Poland, they weren't because one Jew did something. If one Jew did something, it was said, "the Jews." I mean, Hitler used that, also, as a reason for starting it. When (____) got killed, he said the Jews did that. Not that one Jew did this; one disturbed Jew. No; the Jews. And we are disliking what he did and the reason he went behind it. So, we cannot use the same reasoning for disliking a nation, because, they are putting us, basically then, in the same shoes.

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Q WELL, ONE OF THE THINGS THAT EXPRESSION MEANS IS THAT THERE AREN'T A LOT OF PEOPLE LIKE YOU. THERE AREN'T A LOT OF CHILDREN YOUR AGE, PEOPLE WHO WERE YOUR AGE. IS THAT SOMETHING YOU FEEL? IS THAT A LOSS FOR YOU?

A Not very many in my age survived in Germany. I mean, in Germany, there were 36 children that survived the Holocaust underground. There were a few children that survived in concentration camps, and that's it. I mean, we were in the age group that were gassed when you came to a concentration camp. They had no use for us, and that is bad. Luckily, I don't remember my friends from those days when I went to school, because we were put into the German--in what is now West Berlin--it was where kids of my age from all over West Berlin came there to class, and there were several first grades. But, you didn't live close to each other that you could play together; that you could really form friendships. And so, I don't have any of what I can say personal loss.

My personal loss that I feel the most is my mother's sister and her husband, my cousin. That, I have a close attachment to, even though they

didn't live in the same town. But we visited them, and they visited us. They went to the concentration camp, and they got killed.

Q WHICH CAMP?

A Auschwitz. And they didn't have to. That was the worst part of it. That's the thing that still bothers me, because they had the papers to leave Germany. The problem was that two of them would have had to go on one ship, and one on another ship, and they would not go separately. And that still bothers me.

But there is no way to explain any of these things that happened during the whole Nazi time with logic. They are completely illogical, and that's why there is no way to explain anything like that. I know one thing for sure; what really happened in the concentration camps, people in Germany didn't have an inkling until early 1944. That's when soldiers came back from the front lines, you know, to home from vacation, that had come by those camps. And they were telling about the smell that smelled like burning bodies. And that's when you really had an idea that something was going on. I mean, we all figured they only have a few camps, how can all of these people that they deported be in these few camps. That didn't make sense. Then we knew something was happening, but we didn't know what. That they were being killed systematically, that inkling did not come; and the German people in Germany did not realize what was going on until early '44, when the soldiers came back and told their stories. And some of these soldiers that had seen more and talked about it, went to concentration camps, too.

Q AND YOU HEARD SOMETHING IN '44?

A In '44, yes. When my father was active in the underground, in the resistance. That's how we got some of our food from the resistance. Now, he wasn't active in the resistance as Fritz Katten, the Jew; but as (Jan Hartken), the Belgian. Because in the resistance, you could not trust everybody, either. You didn't know if they would have smuggled somebody in.

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Q WHAT DID YOU HEAR?

A Well, that when soldiers came back, and they were talking about and they said that around these camps, it smells like burning bodies. The people must be being burned there. So, they had to be killed. They had to be dead first. That was the understanding. So also, the soldiers were talking about when they were coming by there, the trainloads and trainloads were coming there, you know; and the camp wasn't big enough to hold all that. So, what were they doing with them? Where did they disappear, you know? So, that came through, and all the people finally realized that they were being exterminated.

Q HOW OLD WERE YOU WHEN YOU HEARD THIS?

A I would say, I didn't hear this. My father, my parents talked about it. I heard a little bit when they were talking about it, when he came back from meeting some other guys, and they found out. That was in '44. I would say I was about eight years old. But they didn't sit down and talk to me about that. We talked about it after the war, but that's when they were really sure. Because see, the reason my father didn't want to go underground, he figured; so what, they put him in a German camp. Fine. They feel they have to protect themselves. But nobody realized what was really happening.

Now, the Jews in Poland thought much more, because there, it happened right on the streets, you know. In Germany, it didn't happen on the streets; and when it happened, you know, there was publicized as a Jew was arrested and was trying to escape. Otherwise, they wouldn't fire on them right in the street. They'd pick them up in their apartment, and they'd let them take a little bit, and they'd put them into a big truck, and they transported them away. But they did not let the people see, really, how they treat--what was happening. Because I'm sure if the Nazis would have done that, the majority of the German people would have spoken up in the early days, when they weren't that afraid. In 1943 and '44, by that time, they were too afraid to open their mouths.

Q AND WHAT DID YOU KNOW ABOUT YOUR FATHER'S RESISTANCE WORK?

A Oh, one time, sometimes he took me along. What happened is, they met in a glazing shop, and he helped there, you know. They give him some food for that when he officially wasn't working anymore. When the glass was available, you know; and they butchered animals there, to have meat. And he took me once in a while along there. I didn't know it was a resistance. I mean heck, you can't tell a kid that.

Q AFTER THE WAR--

A I found out, we talked about that and we found out what was really happening there.

Q DID YOUR PARENTS TALK A LOT ABOUT IT TO YOU AFTER THE WAR?

A Oh, yeah. We did have to talk, and they had to teach me back that I had to tell the truth, and from now on not lie about things, and things like that. You have to tell a kid that, especially when you have a kid, now, for

two years he had to be careful of any word he said. You have to teach him now that he can say openly the truth, and you don't have to worry about that anymore.

Q DID YOUR PARENTS EVER EXPRESS ANY REGRETS THAT, LIKE, WHAT KIND--

A Why should they have regrets?

Q I MEAN, LIKE GUILT THAT WASN'T REALLY GUILT; BUT PEOPLE FEEL GUILTY EVEN THOUGH THEY'RE NOT GUILTY.

A No, I don't think so. They never expressed this. One thing is for sure; they spoiled me rotten. I was the only child, so I probably would have been spoiled rotten even without the Holocaust.

Q OKAY. IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE?

INTERVIEWER #2:

Q I HAVE ONE QUESTION. YOU SAID A FEW MINUTES BACK THAT YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND HOW A COUNTRY LIKE GERMANY THAT'S SO CIVILIZED, AND HAS SUCH AN ADVANCED CULTURE COULD CREATE A PHENOMENON LIKE THIS; AND LOTS OF PEOPLE SAY THAT. HOWEVER, YOU'RE A THINKING PERSON, AND OBVIOUSLY THOUGHT ABOUT THIS PROBLEM; AND I WONDER WHAT IT IS YOU CONCLUDE, YOURSELF, AS A POLITICAL ANALYSIS, OR HOWEVER YOU SEE IT, THAT COULD; SINCE IT DID HAPPEN. HOW DID YOU SEE THE DYNAMICS OF THAT COMING TOGETHER?

A Oh, that's very easy. The Nazis found perverts, psychological perverts. They have them every place. In this country, we put them in institutions. The Nazis put an S.S. uniform on them and made them work in those camps. The idea that the hierarchy even ordered those things. I'm a firm believer that the majority of the hierarchy of the Nazi party were crazy. I mean, that's the only explanation there is; that they were psychologically

not all together. And you can take, I mean, starting with Hitler; there's no question about it that he was a psychopath. But the thing is this: that they hid it long enough to get so entrenched in power, that they really couldn't do anything about it. Heck, you can see it now. (_____) in Romania; he was another Hitler. And the people, once they saw that some other countries did something about it, they went out into the street, too. But a lot of them paid with their lives. The problem was, during the Nazi time, there was no way they could see where they would get support. Germany was in a war, and even the people that weren't Nazis, they were fighting for Germany. You see, to be German doesn't mean to be Nazi; and they weren't fighting for the Nazi Party, but they were fighting for Germany. The same way if Russia would be attacked; the Russian people would fight for Mother Russia regardless of who's in charge. They fought for Mother Russia when the czar was in charge; they fought for Mother Russia when the communists were in charge. And in that country also, less than ten percent of the people are members of the Party. It's a phenomenon that you find every place. **

I think that for instance, if a person like Hitler elicits an idea that really can't happen, but if it could, if it would-- Let's say a person like Hitler were to come to power in America; you know, he would have more supporters than Hitler had in Germany because there are more people in institutions here, and more people that psychological problems here, and there's more racial hatred here in this country. But say, looking at the Klu Klux Klan, and the Aryan this, and the (_____) this, and the Minute Men, and all this; that even though they say they are patriots of America, they are **

really racists; and he would have a much bigger following than Hitler had in Germany, if he could come to power.

This is where the thing is: The people got food in the beginning. And in a way, America of 1918, '19, can be blamed for Hitler coming to power, because America did not join the League of Nations. If America would have been part of the league of Nations, like we are now in the United Nations, Hitler could have never come to power in Germany.

PEGGY COSTER (INTERVIEWER #1):

Q WHY NOT?

A Because the League of Nations would have prevented it. The League of Nations would have been strong, and Germany would not have been treated the way it was treated. Don't forget; Germany was treated much, much worse after the first world war than it was treated after the second world war. After the second world war, the world had learned, and helped Germany to build up again with martial plan, et cetera. All the world did after this first world war was keep Germany down. And Hitler had--the people didn't work, so he put them to work; working for war. I mean, they finally thought they were making toys, but they really were making tools of war. And a lot of other things that happened that insulated Germany; a lot that really opened the ground for Hitler. And let's be truthful; the finance of Germany was prohibited from really expanding, and the only way they saw something was through a guy like Hitler. And that's where the problem was. If America would have been in the League of Nations, Germany would have been treated differently, and I don't think Hitler could ever come to power.

Q DO YOU STUDY THE HOLOCAUST A LOT?

A Yes.

Q YOU READ A LOT?

A Yes.

INTERVIEWER #2:

Q SO, WHAT YOU'RE SAYING IS THAT IT'S PEOPLE CHOOSING NOT TO ENGAGE WITH EACH OTHER IN THEIR PROBLEMS THAT CREATES THE SITUATION THAT ALLOWS IT TO HAPPEN; THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE SAYING?

A That's right. I'll tell you; very few places a dictatorship can catch hold unless there is something wrong, and it's usually from the outside. Because what they have to do is, sure, they have some supporters, but to get to power, they have to get the uncommitted people to their side for something. And the uncommitted people come to their side if they're doing something that has been happening against their country that this person says, I will help them. Hitler didn't tell them, I'm going to go to war. And most people were stupid enough not to read Mein Kampf. If they would have read the book, they would have known what he was all about. I mean, there's one thing for sure; he told them what he was going to do in the Mein Kampf. But you know, I've talked to a lot of Jewish people that survived the Holocaust. I think so far, I've met one that had read Mein Kampf before. The majority of the people that read Mein Kampf, they left Germany. My father didn't read it either. Heck, in 1933 I had a letter--I don't have it anymore--that my father wrote to his brother. He had to be on business to Munich just after Hitler came to power, and he wrote to my brother, "I give Hitler three months, and then he's gone."

PEGGY COSTER:

Q A LOT OF PEOPLE DID THAT.

A Yeah, but he was definitely wrong.

Q YOU KNOW YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT HOW THE PERPETRATORS OF THE HOLOCAUST HAD TO HAVE BEEN PSYCHOLOGICALLY UNBALANCED; HAVE YOU EVER--THERE IS A BOOK OUT BY ALICE MILLER CALLED FOR YOUR OWN GOOD, IN WHICH SHE TALKS ABOUT CHILD ABUSE, OR CHILD REARING PRACTICES. SHE TALKS ABOUT GERMANY; BUT THEY'RE KIND OF ALL OVER THE WORLD; BUT SHE SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED THE LEADERS OF THE HOLOCAUST.

A I haven't read that book.

Q I WAS GOING TO ASK YOU IF YOU'VE HEARD ABOUT IT.

A I haven't read that book. I've read several books, and they all come to the point that the ones that were not mentally imbalanced, of the leadership of Germany during the Nazi time, were opportunists. For example; (_____) was not mentally unbalanced, he was an opportunist. He was in it for the money and for the things he could loot; and you see what he did. **

Q DO YOU HAVE NIGHTMARES?

A What?

Q DO YOU HAVE NIGHTMARES?

A To tell you the truth, not anymore. My nightmares are now from Vietnam.

Q SO, YOU FOUGHT THERE?

A Yes. I was one year in Vietnam. They once in a while come back, but I've gotten over most of them, too. There was nothing you could do at the time. So, you shouldn't let it bother you. You cannot take the guilt for what other people did for either war; for either one. And that's when you-- once you have realized that, your nightmares will mostly subside.

Q WHAT DID OTHER PEOPLE DO IN THE VIETNAM WAR?

A What?

Q THE VETS?

A Listen, I tell you one thing; you would need another full tape for when I get started on Vietnam. I mean, I'm not--and I will tell you right now--
-I'm not against the Vietnam War. I'm just against the way we had to fight it.

Q MEANING...?

A Well, we weren't allowed to fight. You see, you had a war where, basically, when you saw the enemy, and you were in a certain so-called non-fire zone, you had to get permission before you could fire. By the time you got the permission, they were gone. It was a war like none we've ever fought, and none like I hope we never have to fight again. If you're going to go into war, you have to go all out, and you cannot put restrictions on your soldiers. That's putting it very mildly.

INTERVIEWER #2

Q I HAVE GOT ONE MORE QUESTION JUST TO FOLLOW UP ON THIS POLITICAL THING I ASKED EARLIER. SO, YOU TALK ABOUT HOW THE REASON IT HAPPENED IS THAT THIS LITTLE GROUP OF PEOPLE WAS CRAZY, AND THEY GOT THEIR WAY. BUT WHAT'S UNFORTUNATE AND SCARY IS THAT WE ACTUALLY SEE THE PHENOMENON A LOT IN DIFFERENT CULTURES AROUND THE WORLD. SO, IT'S LIKE, ALTHOUGH THE LITTLE GROUP IS CRAZY, AND WE CAN UNDERSTAND IN THAT WAY, THEY DO SOMEHOW MANAGE TO GET ACCESS TO POWER, AND CREATE THESE PROBLEMS. AND I'M WONDERING, IN PRACTICAL TERMS, HOW DO YOU SEE THE--HOW SHOULD THE HUMAN RACE ADDRESS THAT PROBLEM POLITICALLY, OR IN WHATEVER WAY THEY MIGHT BE ABLE TO DEAL WITH IT?

A Number one; every dictatorship in the world finds one or two groups that they can persecute where they show the other people that they persecuting these, and the other people are happy that they are not persecuted. That prevents them from actually standing up against this dictatorship, because they are so happy that they are being left alone, and they see what happens to the others. But the way you let most dictatorships, when they have a Jewish population, persecuting Jews is one thing that's based in our Torah. Jews are freedom loving, and they will speak up to it. They will not accept that you are persecuted; they will speak up, and no dictatorship can afford to have a group speak up against it. So, they always find--The Jews are the first ones they persecute for their own protection. That's it.

Q THANK YOU, THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

A You're welcome.