

This is the Holocaust Oral History Project interview of Alfred Amkraut taking place in San Francisco, California, on March 18, 1993. My name is Sylvia Prozan. Assisting in the interview is Nigel French. Alfred, when and where were you born?

I was born in Saarbrücken on September 21, 1926. Saarbrücken, at that time, was under French dominance as a consequence of World War I when the Saar was assigned as a protectorate sort of, of France. In '35, there was a plebiscite in which the Saar became German but it became German two years later. So there was this interim, and I think we'll get back to that time and the interim time and the time after that.

Who were your parents?

My mother was Clara. My mother was born in Austria, which then became Poland. And in fact, the region where she was born was, I think, predominantly Polish, even though historically it had been Austria for a couple hundred years. But the peasants in the region spoke Polish, and there was little German spoken, as I understand it, in the place. She was born in Ryglice. It's a small village of about 400 people, she told me. I've never seen Ryglice.

Her father was quite well-to-do because he was the manager of the countess. In many of these little towns in Poland there were noblemen of the old nobility who had large landholdings and who were practically owners of the towns or employers of many of the people in the towns. And he was the manager, so they were well-to-do. On the other hand, her grandmother ran a store also. I think the grandfather died when she was quite young. I had a picture of the grandfather somewhere. It was very interesting picture. We don't have it anymore. And at that point, my grandfather and grandmother took over the business, although her grandmother was still running it also.

The grandmother had, I believe, six children. I could count them. And my grandmother had four daughters and two sons. And the grandmother, in fact, the grandmother's children were born, the last children of the grandmother were born at the same time the first children of my grandmother were born. So my aunts and my great aunts were of the same-- several of my great aunts and several of my aunts were of the same age. My mother was also of the same age. My mother was the second of the six.

And the store, as I understand it, became their livelihood after the grandfather died. And then I don't know whether the grandmother died or wasn't capable of running the store, but long before World War I my grandparents left for Germany. I guess economic conditions weren't too great. My grandfather on my mother's side was a Talmudic scholar and not much of a businessman. He thought he was, but he wasn't, and tried to establish a business. I don't know what the grandmother's capabilities were as far as business goes. At any rate, when they left, they took their oldest daughter with them and my mother at age 13 was left in charge of the other children and of the store.

So what she told me was that at age 13 she used to do business. And the business was done, as I told you before, it was done in Bolivia on credit. So nobody had cash money. The cash came in after they sold the merchandise. They lived off the profits and they reinvested a little bit of the cash and then they had to buy new merchandise. So they were always a bit in the hole. And so at age 13 she was recognized as somebody who can sign IOUs. She went in and bought merchandise in the wholesaler's market, which was in the big town. I guess a big town's name was Tarnov. Tarnov was the nearby town. And she must have done that for about four or five years when the parents in Germany had enough substance to bring the kids to Germany. And they settled in Frankfurt. This is my mother's family.

My father's family, I knew all four grandparents, actually, when I was a kid. And my father's father, well, both were in business of some kind. And I don't know exactly what they did in Austria. Which they never called Austria, always called it Poland or Galicia. It was Galicia. And my grandfather was a-- that grandfather was a Hasid and a Hasidic type. I don't know that he was-- he learned a lot, but he was very much into his rebbe and into religion. And he used to tell me rebbe stories when I was a kid. And they came and settled in Saarbrücken. And again in this case, I'm sure the wife was the business person. I think she was pretty good at it.

My father, when he was 12, was sent off to yeshiva in Hungary. But he had an uncle in a place called [PLACE

NAME]. And he used to tell stories of the yeshiva. It was a life a little bit like a dorm in the college except they had to somewhat fend for themselves. And they had people in town who fed them or else gave them some money. And most of the kids who went to yeshiva didn't have a lot of money in the background, so my father used to tell that when he was 13 or 14 he was in charge of buying the food for the group. The group seemed to live in something like a dorm. He didn't like this much, so he bought not very good food and got out of the chore.

And then he used to tell me that to make some money they used to stomp on grapes to make wine. Apparently, that was one of the ways of-- I mean, that was one of the parts of winemaking then. I guess they did have presses, but the best line was made by stomping on it with their feet. And they and they made a little bit of money that way when the season came around.

I don't know when he left Eastern Europe. He must have just before the war. During the war he was in Holland and Luxembourg. He wasn't particularly eager to be drafted into any armies, so he spent the time in what then were somewhat neutral countries. And after the war he came to Saarbrücken. He had two siblings, two sisters. They both settled in Saarbrücken. That's why we all were there. My mother's sister, one of my mother's sisters, also settled in Saarbrücken. The rest of the family lived in Frankfurt. The older sister married in Frankfurt and they were quite well-to-do. They had a leather goods store, and I'll tell you a little bit more about the leather goods store later. And they had two girls, both of whom are alive, both of whom live in Israel.

Coming back to the family on my mother's side, of that family only three branches were left alive. My two uncles and one aunt were killed in the Holocaust with their children. Well, only my aunt had two girls whom I have some pictures. And on my father's side, well, let me stay with the sisters for a minute. So on my mother's side, the survivors were my mother and two aunts.

Could you tell us their names?

Well, of the survivors one was Rachel Diller. And the other one was Selma Wind. The Jewish names are a little bit different, but we didn't use Jewish names. We used interesting German names. Although, they all had spoken Yiddish in the background. They all were brought up in Yiddish, but when they came to Germany they all shifted to German. There was relatively little Yiddish spoken in the house. Every once in a while when somebody came from Eastern Europe they spoke Yiddish, but there was some resistance, actually, to speak Yiddish. It was an acculturation obviously happened long before Hitler.

We were at my aunts and their children. So I told you about Rachel Diller. Rachel Diller went to England. They had the two girls in England. And then the older girl eventually moved to Israel when she was not a girl but she was married. She's married to somebody who was a chief rabbi in Denmark, and then they moved to Israel eventually. And he still is. He still goes back to Denmark every year and was in charge of a yeshiva but then retired now. And the younger sister married an optometrist. Her name is Gerdi. The other's name is Shweta. Gerdi married the optometrist in England who also did all sorts of other business and is quite well-to-do and they move to Israel about five or six years ago.

The last sister, Selma, had two children. One is an ophthalmic surgeon in Jacksonville. She married somebody in France. Her husband's name was Itzah. There's a Yiddish name. Itzah was in business in France, also clothing business, and the little town called Lance. And had two children, as I said. One is now a surgeon and the other, the daughter, also lives in Israel in Haifa. And she's a schoolteacher married to an engineer.

They didn't emigrate. They lived in France till the beginning of the war and then were caught in the transport and were on the way to Poland. And he's quite sort of a survivor type, clever fellow, so he bribed an SS man on the train-- he had some money on him-- to let him off. And they were let off near the Swiss border and got across the border and were interned in Switzerland and went to Israel quite soon after the war.

On the other side of the family, my one aunt, her name was Sima, had two sons. She was very well-off and one of the sons became a doctor and one a dentist. The dentist decided just after he got his degree that he didn't want to stay in Germany. He's still alive. He's in Israel and he was sort of a man-about-town type and

had a lot of good friends among the Germans. And one of his good friends was high up in the Nazi party and had warned him to leave Germany. He said, this is not a good place for you to stay. So he told me, in fact, just recently.

So he went to Israel in '35, I believe, and eventually set up a practice and did very well. His brother was not so clever, unfortunately. Became a doctor in Hamburg. Married also very rich woman in Hamburg, and he was killed by the Nazis. The story was that he had a heart attack, but apparently the story that he may have had a heart attack in conjunction with the pogrom night. We don't know the exact background. The wife and child were killed in the Holocaust.

And the second sister was Golda. And they lived in Saarbrücken, as I said, and had one son called Izzy. Izzy was a very good friend. We grew up together. And they stayed in Germany after we left and they were also killed in the Holocaust. So that's the family.

I would like to get some names with this rich history that you've given. Your mother's name was Clara. What was her maiden name?

Dankowitz.

And the name of your maternal grandmother and grandfather.

My maternal grandfather was Dankowitz. My maternal grandmother was Weg.

And the first names?

Motel or Mordecai Dankowitz. I think he called himself Markus in Germany, but not after Germany. After he left Germany, he called himself Motel, I think, in Bolivia. My grandmother's name on my mother's side was Rivka-- Rebecca, Rivka. On my father's side, Benjamin is my grandfather's name. And my grandmother's name was Yehudit, Judith, but Yehudit was the Yiddish name.

On your mother's side, when they came to Germany, who is the oldest daughter that they took with them?

Recha.

And your mother stayed behind, and who were the four that she stayed behind with?

Well, it was Toni, Selma, Heinrich, and Jakob.

And we know about Selma and Recha and your mother. What happened to Toni?

She was killed in the Holocaust. I'll tell you about that because that's part of the story of the persecution, if you want me to go into that right now, or else we can go back to the background.

Why don't you go ahead?

OK. Well, in some time a few weeks before the pogrom night, and you probably know, it's part of history, all Jews of Polish extraction, of Polish nationality, I wouldn't say extraction, there's a difference. And in fact, I'll tell you what the difference is right now. Because my uncles who came from Poland, my great uncles-- I had two great aunts in Germany also. One was also Recha and one was also Clara. They were stateless. They had no passport. And being stateless meant considered Polish and were not transported to Poland. In that three weeks before, and I don't remember the exact date, Back to my history, I had left-- I was studying in Frankfurt because there was no good Jewish school in Saarbrücken and I'll tell you a little bit about the Jewish school in Saarbrücken, as much as I remember about it.

So in my I lived in my aunt's house and at about 5 o'clock in the morning a bell rang and somebody came in and said, you should be ready in x hours, I believe it was about three hours, to be transported to Poland. And you will be put on transport and you will end up in Poland. We are transferring Polish citizens. At the

time they weren't saying Jews, they were transferring Polish citizens to Poland. And my uncle, having a leather goods store, immediately took a cab, went to the store, brought seven or eight suitcases and filled them all up.

And so when they came-- and there was no limit on what you could take. They said, take your suitcases because you may never come back. And they didn't tell you anything about what was going to happen with what you left. So they filled up the suitcases. And when they came back to take us to the station on some trucks. We had lots of suitcases. As we went, they put us on the train and it took a day and a night to get to the Polish border. I was a kid, 12. Yeah, I just had turned 12. And as I recall, I stood up. There was no place to sit.

And on the way, as we got in the morning, we got into Breslau. I remember like today the Jews in Breslau had organized a station where they were feeding people. There was no food on the train either. And I was very tired and I kicked a cup that was lying on the floor. And one of the women was very upset about that and said, you're being fed here with the cup, and how come-- so this is one of the memories I have-- how come you kick cups? I couldn't care less about the cup.

But at any rate, we were transferred to the Polish border. As we came to the Polish border, I assume that my parents may have communicated by phone with my uncle, I don't know. But as we came to the Polish border, we met my parents. And so we formed a group. And my parents had only one or two suitcases, but we had all this huge mass of suitcases. And we were led, there were maybe 20,000, 30,000 people there, but we were let through some kind of an underground passage. And we're supposed to end up on the other side at the border, although later I heard that it was still about a mile or a mile and a half to the border and they walked. And a lot of people had suitcases, discarded the suitcases.

But my uncle's suitcases didn't let us advance very fast. And so we were in this underground passage, completely full of people, and we advanced very slowly. And somewhere the next before nightfall I believe we were told you may go back to your homes. And what had happened is that the Poles had started transporting Germans back to Germany because they weren't particularly happy about Germany putting all of those, I suppose, Jews, but they would have done it lots of other Polish citizens on their side. They had to take some kind of a retributory measure, and the Germans stopped this transport.

And my aunt Toni and her husband and two children were lucky. They got across. Now the story was that you couldn't get back to Germany once were in Poland, Germany wouldn't let you get back. But people did manage, and I don't exactly know what the trick was. Or maybe they had to promise that they would leave Germany after some certain time. And so she and her husband stayed in Poland and were caught in Poland. And he used to write back saying that he's better off in Poland where he had lots of family. And he went back to his hometown and his parents were quite prominent and had property. And so he did quite well for a while with that. So this is what happened to Toni.

My uncles, Heinrich and Jakob, Heinrich was a very accomplished fellow. He was chess champion of the region. But very accomplished in all sorts of ways. He was a writer, he was a painter, he could do all sorts of things except find himself. He wasn't particularly interested in either getting married or becoming rich, so he stayed in Germany and was eventually transported. We don't know very much about how that happened and why that happened.

Jakob also was trapped in Poland and never got back. We didn't have much dealings with Jakob. I haven't told you that until now but of course you must from the background that the family was very Orthodox and Jakob was not. Neither was Heinrich, actually, but Jakob had married a non-Jewish woman, which was a big secret which I only found out as we left Germany because she came and wanted us to take something. So he was a black sheep of the family and we had no dealings with him. And so this is what happened to Toni.

Now, what happened to the other side of the family, the people who went in the Holocaust, it was Golde. And I can't tell you much about it. They stayed in Germany after we left and simply were caught in the Holocaust. It wasn't that easy to get out. Getting out, as you must know after many interviews, was tricky. My father had, in '35 after the plebiscite when we knew that the Saar was going to become German, my father and uncle in Germany had long talks and the uncle in Frankfurt said, don't worry, Hitler has just used

this Jew thing as a means to come to power and we think that he's going to forget it all. And business is very good here, business will be good there. Don't worry about it.

But they did worry about it and he actually put in for an American quota. For some reason, he only put in for himself. He didn't put in for the family. Because it was thought that whatever happens it's not going to happen to the wives and kids. It's going to happen to the men. They're going to go there and start making a living and then they will bring the wives. Because nobody counted on war, and certainly not counted on the Holocaust. So he had this quota number, and it took maybe 3 or 3 and 1/2 years till that came through. And he could have gone to the States, but he couldn't have taken the family. And at that point in time it was already clear that we were going to leave Germany. And he didn't want to leave by himself, he wanted to leave with us.

How did I get into this train of thought? This was my father. How did I get into that?

Your father and your Frankfurt uncle were discussing--

Oh, were discussing, yeah.

What was the name of the Frankfurt uncle?

His name was Leo. He was a husband of Recha.

And your father was--

My father's name was Jonas. I don't know if I told you that. OK.

Leo was the one who said business is good, don't worry about it. This is just a passing thing.

Right.

But your father decided to put in for the American quota just for himself.

Yeah, I guess I'm not really being very systematic about this.

Just tell names of each uncle.

All right. And so my mother's uncle, his name was Chaim, and he was a husband of the other Recha, my mother's Aunt Recha, had a brother in Bolivia. And this is how we got to go to Bolivia. And the way to get a visa to Bolivia at that time, actually, I think it was relatively simple, just having somebody there. Later on, you had to bribe somebody to get there, which we did in '40. So I don't know what I left out of this story or where I am.

You were talking about your the father's side of the family.

Golda stayed in Germany. Well, they stayed in Germany for a number of reasons. They weren't very well off and it took a lot of money to get out. And so they stayed.

Who was her husband? Where did she live?

Oh my god. She lived in Saarbrücken. Her husband-- her last name was Lowleit, but I don't remember the husband's name.

Did she have children?

She had one son, Izzy. I mentioned him before.

And that was your Aunt Golda. What did her husband do for a living?

Also in business of some kind, clothing business of some kind.

Then you had your uncle Leo in Frankfurt. He was in the leather goods business at a store, downtown Frankfurt in a very expensive section.

And his wife?

Was Recha.

Another Recha.

No, no. That was my mother's sister Recha. My mother's oldest sister, Recha. Recha lived to be 95 years old.

Did they have children.

Yes, I told you about those two. They had the two daughters who went to Israel.

They eventually went to England. They went to England, and then one daughter went to Denmark and then to Israel. And the other one went to Israel just fairly recently.

Your father had another sister as well.

The other sister. She was a mother of the dentist and the physician that I told you about. Her name was Sima. And Sima was a very accomplished businesswoman and had a lot of money. And after the son went to Israel, they felt that they really didn't want to be in Germany. The other son was in Hamburg, so they had no great reason to stay in Saarbrücken. And they picked up and went to Israel and they had bought a house in Jerusalem, a house with five apartments, which was a big, big thing and is even much more now. And all their children and grandchildren are very well-to-do.

What do they do?

The grandchildren? Oh god, if you have several days I can tell you all about the rest of the family. But I can tell you what they do. My cousin Israel has three children. One took over his dental practice, which in Israel before was sort of a gold mine and even now is very good business. He also had a business of making false eyes. He was the only one in the Middle East who made glass eyes. Eye disease is very predominant in the Arab countries, so the Arab nobles, the emirs, came to him to have their eyes replaced. And the daughter took over that business and so she is also very well-to-do. And the other daughter married a lawyer and contractor in Haifa who has property and businesses. And they're well-off. And in fact, actually only one of those, only that last daughter is still religious. The rest of them are not.

But on my mother's side, these two daughters, two daughters of Recha, are both very religious. And the daughter of Selma is sort of in the middle. The son is not. The son is as religious as I am.

Your father and siblings were just those two sisters.

Those two sisters.

All right, let's go back a little to some of this history. The business that your mother was left in charge of was--

I don't know much about it. I think it must have been notions or a number of different things and probably was a little store, a catchall little store like this in a small town.

Did she ever speak about any incidents or experiences she had or concerns?

No, not in her youth. No, no, there was--

When she was left alone.

Actually, it sounded like there was little antisemitism, if you're meaning antisemitism. I don't think there was much antisemitism. When she was very small she went to a cloister school. The nuns taught them how to read and write and basic skills. So I don't think there was much animosity in the small town. They were always, and in fact we were always, even in Germany, very separate from the general population. Until I came to the States, actually, I had a hard time thinking of a non-Jew as somebody who has the same desires, feelings, interaction with his children and so forth. And they were, of course, even more so separate.

Did your mother have any help in raising you children.

No. Surely not.

Did she feel the burden--

She didn't think of it as a burden. She said, I've got something to manage. She was a manager.

Did she ever speak of any problems that she had in raising her siblings?

No. It wasn't that many of years, I think three years that she did this, so no. Other than talking about the fact that she was recognized as a person whose credit was good, she didn't speak about it, or we didn't discuss that part of her history very often, not very much.

She was 13. How old was the youngest that she had charge of?

The youngest must have been very young. No, maybe my grandparents took the youngest to Germany. The youngest must have been a baby two years old or so. They took her to Germany. So she was left actually with only three, with Toni and the two boys.

Was she a good cook?

My mother was a very good cook, yeah. I don't know where she learned it. They were all good cooks. It was part of being good cooks. She told the story when she got married it wasn't a match. It was a match, but it wasn't a match in the sense that the matches were made in the old country or even now maybe among Hasidim that the fathers agreed, you get married, and then the bridegroom would see the bride under the chuppah. And they had gone out together and so forth. But apropos of what was I telling you this story?

It wasn't a match for your mother and father.

I know, but I was telling you that for some purpose. I forget the purpose.

It was part of the culture to be a good cook.

Oh, yes, right. Thank you. So she said that her mother-in-law came and watched her prepare the meal for Shabbos and she passed. So it's particularly she looked at how she made challahs. And that was the final test, the [NON-ENGLISH], was how do you make challahs. So that was part of-- regardless of how good a businesswoman she was or whatever, she had to be a housewife capable of fulfilling all the duties of a housewife. Cooking was the prime duty of the housewife.

How did your mother and father meet?

Well, there was a match of some friend. I don't know exactly how it was, but people I think in that generation never met face to face. Although my mother was very straightforward and certainly they knew that they were meeting because of a possible match. And she always knew whoever she went out with that this was a possible match. And from the way she tells it, she was in charge. I mean, if she had wanted to, she was a very good-looking woman. She could have married anybody who she had gone out with, but she chose my father.

When you say "go out," what was going out?

Well, going out with some-- what I have it very formal. I think they may have gone for a walk in the park occasionally, but they usually went out to an opera. This was the acculturation thing. She didn't even know what an opera was, but in Germany they went to the opera, they went to the theater. And it was a test. She put people to the test to see whether they had a little bit of culture.

For example, in Germany, the more exotic food stores were called [GERMAN]. [GERMAN] because there were colonies, so they imported things from the colonies. And she told me that she went out with somebody and went by a [GERMAN]. And she asked them, why is this called [GERMAN]? And he had no notion. And she immediately stopped that relationship. So she was looking for somebody who was at least intelligent or informed or acculturated.

Your father fit the bill.

Seemed to, yeah. They were very much, as far as I can tell, in love, yes. He was a bright man. Going to the yeshiva implied that he was a good student. And he had been around and he had been in Holland, he had been in Luxembourg and been in Germany for a while and certainly picked up a lot of what was going on.

You mentioned that your mother's father was well-to-do, he had managed some lands.

Grandfather. Yeah, he managed the land for the counties of the place. He managed not just the lands, he managed her estate.

What was his name?

Oh. I should know, but-- I think it may have been Abram. I think I was named-- one of my names is after him. He may have been Abram. Because this is how the name, you know. We were named after somebody in the family who had died. And since both my grandfathers were alive, I must have been named after one of the great-grandfathers. And I think that may have been Abram.

Did you ever hear the name of the owner of the land, the countess?

No.

And you said other than managing the land as he did other things as well?

No, I think that was his occupation. But as far as I know. My great-grandmother ran a store. That's what I told you. His wife ran a store, which then my mother took over.

Your father's father was Benjamin. And the mother--

Yehudit.

--Judith.

Judith.

What do you mean by Hasid?

Well, I mean, in Germany there was no such thing, but he had been a Hasid in Poland. A Hasid, of course, is somebody who follows a rebbe. And he was a Hasid of the Sanzer Rebbe. And there are still, today, Hasidim of that-- the Sanzer Rebbe. Of course, that old Sanzer Rebbe is long dead. But there is a dynasty. And I don't know exactly who now is in charge. There was a dynasty that went away from Sanzer.

But a Hasid is a very religious person who believes that the rebbe is the intermediary between him and God. And so what they used to do, if they had the wherewithal, and it took very little wherewithal, as soon as they

had the minimal subsistence, the next thing was they gathered up money to travel to the rebbe on a holiday. So they weren't at home on the holiday, they were at the rebbe's on a holiday, on the yom tov that is.

And so he would eat at the rebbe's table and listen to the rebbe's talks and sing. You know what. It's well-known what Hasidim do, I guess. They sing and they dance a little. And they-- well, Hasidism as such was created by the Baal Shem Tov at the time when there was a need to bring Judaism home to the people. Because Judaism had become one of two things. Either it was intellectualism or the people who went to the yeshiva and studied and knew the Talmud. Or the people who barely knew how to read and had very little connection, they were just following by rote the religion. And so what the Baal Shem Tov brought-- although, that's not what he said was the purpose-- but what he really brought is religion home to the common man.

And later on the Hasidic, I mean, neither the Baal Shem Tov nor his followers were unlearned. The rebbes were learned men. And in fact, there were directions like the Lubavitcher which put a lot of value on learning. But there were also directions in which the value of learning was not emphasized. Not that it was deliberately de-emphasized, but it was not emphasized. But the value of interaction, praying with sense, with the dedication, what they call [HEBREW], was emphasized.

You said that he told you rebbe stories. Do you remember?

When I was a kid. No, the rebbe stories I don't remember, but I remember that he told me rebbe stories, particularly when I was a kid and I was sick. He would sit for hours and tell stories about the wonders of rebbe. The rebbe stories were the wonders, I mean, what the rebbe had accomplished, what he could do, how he helped people. You can read these stories in many places, but he had stories of his own experience, or the stories he'd been told about his rebbe.

When you were sick and he told you these stories, where were you? Were you in bed?

In bed. I remember that. When I was six years old, I had rheumatoid arthritis and inflammation of the heart valve, and that kept me out of school and in bed for a year. In bed maybe for a half a year. I remember sitting up with 100 pillows behind me. And I don't remember his telling me stories then, but I'm sure it was then also. But later, a couple of years later, I remember when I was sick with some childhood disease, and he's sitting at the bedside and telling me these stories.

What kind of business did your father's mother engage in?

Also clothing. I think they started being peddlers when they came to Germany and then had some kind of store in the house. This was what most people-- most people that I know of in the family and outside the family did when they came from Poland. Now, my grandfather on the other side didn't do that. He opened some kind of a-- he learned something about dye-cutting leather, and he opened a little factory, probably financed by one of my aunts. But that was a little bit later. It may have been a little after the war and she already had made some money.

But this grandfather, well, when I knew him they were retired and they were in their 70s. But they had started as peddlers and ended up with some kind of store. I think my father took over and we had stores in Germany. I remember a store in the house that sold both wholesale and retail. But the customers, which had been made by my grandmother, maybe even by my father by going out in the countryside and offering wares, then came to the house. My father didn't go out with wares on his back, but I think when he was a young man he may have and established this clientele which then came to buy.

Why was it decided to send him to the yeshiva?

I don't know why. He must have had what they called a good head. And so anybody who had a good head, there was a significant attempt to send them to the yeshiva. I don't know what his grandfather did. His parents were obviously not very well-off. But in the family-- and the grandfather may have been reasonably well-off. In the family there was, for example, an uncle who had a printing establishment in Przemysl that were printed-- prayer books that are printed by Amkraut] in Przemysl-- very old.

So part of the family was capable of supporting. And the uncle-- he went to not-- well, there was an uncle where the yeshiva was, who obviously supported him part of the time. So that may have been another reason, of course-- was could you-- when you were 12 years old, could you be supported in some way?

What other stories did he tell you about the yeshiva. You spoke about the--

Not much. My father died when I was 15, and I didn't explore his life that much. My mother didn't tell very much. My father did occasionally, and what I remember is what I remember from before I was-- from before he died, what he said on occasion. And he would have probably loved to tell me more if I had had the desire to ask for more. That desire would have come a lot later.

Your mother and father married in Saarbrücken.

Either that or in Frankfurt. I don't really know, but my father at that time I think was already established in Saarbrücken. Because his sister, who was really the strong person in the family, came to Saarbrücken.

What year were they married?

Well, I was born, and my sister was born in '24. They were probably married in '22-- 1922.

What's your sister's name?

My sister's name is Hansi.

Where did you live in Saarbrücken? What were your living conditions like?

I don't-- I left Saarbrücken officially when I was 9 to go to study in Frankfurt. But I remember a little bit. We lived like everybody else in apartment-- a very nice apartment. We lived in several apartments.

Where we lived was to some extent conditioned by the fact that we had the business in the house, so the apartment had to have enough room to accommodate the goods, which most of those were materials. In the latter day, the goods that I remember were all basically all materials which my mother went to buy in factories in an Eastern part of Germany, where the main textile factories were, and then brought them-- shipped them home, and then we sold them both wholesale and retail.

So the last place a place-- the place that I best remember, of course, is when I was oldest-- was very much downtown Saarbrücken. And it was also perhaps conveniently about three blocks from the synagogue, which was important on a Saturday, because we had to walk to the synagogue.

Actually, my Aunt Sima had established a little what they call a shtiebel, a little synagogue, for my grandfather, because he couldn't walk to the official synagogue. And well, I could be here all day if I keep going into this, but there was a difference between Jews who came from Eastern Europe and Jews who were native German Jews. There was a significant difference.

There was some discrimination, and there was also almost a different ethnic-- ethnos. The Jews who came from Eastern Germany prayed. First of all, the Hebrew is different from the Hebrew-- the pronunciation of Hebrew is different from the pronunciation of the German Jews. And they had a little bit different way of praying-- a little bit different arrangement of the prayer book.

And so they had their own congregations, their own synagogues, had their own way of singing. And so my grandfather-- neither my father were very comfortable in the German style synagogue.

So in the German-style synagogue, there was also an Eastern European shtiebel. Shtiebel means a little room actually. But they set a room aside where they would pray in this manner.

But for my grandfather, this was too far. And my aunt who could afford it set up a little synagogue near where they lived. She rented a room, and they bought a Torah-- a Torah scroll and put it in that room. And

they had services there at least every Saturday. They may have had services every day. I'm not sure.

So occasionally we went there. It was a long walk for us, but it wasn't [INAUDIBLE] for my grandfather. And most of the time we went to the other place. On the high holidays, I think we went to my grandfather's.

But I was-- my grandfather died when I was maybe eight-- seven or eight. So I have relatively dim memories of that.

Did they have enough for a minyan at these services?

At his services yeah, because there were enough Jews living around. And most of the Jews, even when they were not strictly Orthodox, would tend to go to shul on Shabbos. It was also social affair particularly in the Eastern European community, so they saw each other.

Can you remember anything about that shtiebel that your aunt set up?

I vaguely remember what it looked like. And there was more than one. One was on the first floor. One was at ground floor. I don't know whether-- the one on ground floor I remember particularly on the high holidays, they may have rented a larger place for the high holidays. The one on the top floor was quite a large room with a few benches and tables.

The shtiebel have tables. People don't sit in benches facing in one direction. They sit around tables usually. And so they had tables.

And the one that I-- the second one that I remember was on a-- gave onto a yard, because I remember playing in the yard. And it was pretty boring-- four hours of services, and the kids weren't expected to stay in. So we always played in the yard, tried-- I mean, presumably were asked to make as little noise as possible.

I don't know what else I remember, not that much more of that. The people there were somewhat Hasidic in the mode, but not everybody was, of course. My father was not. And, in fact, my family-- the family in England-- the Orthodox part of the family is what they call Misnagdim. They oppose Hasidim. They think that Hasidism is not the right-- I mean, it's exaggerated and under the form of practice. It undervalues learning, and they value learning.

You know, and there was, of course, a little bit of-- there were Hasidic groups, which were-- because they were in groups sort of dealt with each other in different ways than they dealt with the rest of the world. So not everybody loves Hasidim. I happen to.

What did your-- how did your grandfather dress?

Always wore a hat, of course. He had a beard. Now, there were two grandfathers. The one in Frankfurt was, quote, "modern man." He dressed normally, but always wore a hat. And the one in Saarbrücken-- the Hasid-- I think he always-- I think he also-- he may have had a long jacket, but he didn't have the Hasidic garb.

He may have had a haluk, you know? [NON-ENGLISH] is a Hasidim wear. I mean, the typical Hasidic garb is a medieval garb, where they wear a kaftan which comes down to here. And then they have a sort of string-- a rope around the middle. I know it's traditional, but the rope supposedly separates the unholy from the holy-- the dirty from the clean, or whichever way you want.

So they wear this. Some of them wear it all the time. Some of them wear it only when they pray. And I guess this doesn't do it. We have to have that rope. I don't remember my grandfather wearing that ever, but it's possible that he did. My memory is not that--

Who are the city itself was Saarbrücken?

I was back there a couple of times now. It's maybe 300,000, 400,000. I think at the time it must have been

about 100,000 to 150,000. It was a fair-- for the time, a fair-sized city.

Do you any idea how many Jewish people were there?

No, would have to be a guess. I would say at least 500 families.

And do you know how many synagogues there were?

There was only one synagogue, and there were maybe two or three shtiebel-- maybe more. I don't know of this. I don't know too much of this. My cousin Israel knows every step and every stone, and he probably would know the answer. I don't.

Was this synagogue an Orthodox synagogue or a--

The synagogue was Orthodox. Yeah, the synagogue was Orthodox. In fact, there was a women's section and a men's section. And was Orthodox-- it was that separation down to the last days. I don't remember, and I wouldn't possibly not know if there was a conservative synagogue in Saarbrücken or a reform. In Germany there was not that much difference between conservative and reform, as we're seeing now. There may have been a reform synagogue some place.

Was the synagogue--

We wouldn't have passed by that reformed synagogue. That was out of the pale, you know? It wasn't something that you talked about even.

Was the synagogue established by the German Jews? It wasn't for the Jews?

That had been established by the German Jews, yeah.

What kind of religious education did you have?

In Saarbrücken-- well, I was-- as I told you, I went through fourth grade. Elementary school in Saarbrücken-- I can tell you about the school. The school is sort of interesting.

But in Saarbrücken we had a Hebrew teacher who came to the house, but taught us only Ivrit. He taught us Hebrew and not scriptures and so forth.

And I don't remember what I learned in that area before I went to Frankfurt. Now, when I went to Frankfurt, I went to the religious school in Frankfurt, which was Samson Raphael Hirsch School if you want.

Yes.

Samson Raphael Hirsch-- H-I-R-S-C-H. And this was a strictly Orthodox German-- German Orthodox school. And we had probably-- we had five hours a day instruction. We must have had at least one to two hours, let's say on the average 1 and 1/2 hours of religious instruction there. But that wasn't enough.

And in the afternoon, the school went from 7:30 or 8:00 till 1:00 or 1:30. I think it must have been about five to six hours. In the afternoon from 3:00 to 5:00, we had what's called yeshiva-- a lesson of Talmud. And that was every day.

And on Saturdays we went in for a couple of hours to relearn what we learned during the week. So we didn't have a lot of free time. And there was a very intense learning now.

This yeshiva that I went through was also-- the teacher was a great scholar, who was a Lithuanian. Lithuanians are supposed to be the scholars. They're supposed to be the outstanding scholars. And that was rivaled by the German yeshiva. There was a yeshiva-- the German-- it wasn't rivaled, because it was-- where I went was a small place.

The yeshiva that was attached to the Orthodox synagogue there was a large yeshiva run by a family called Breuer. The rabbi was Breuer, and the head of the yeshiva was Breuer. And they have a congregation in New York now. That is a continuation of that congregation.

So we were always thinking that we learn a lot better and a lot more intensively than these guys. But that was a religious background.

What was the name of your Lithuanian teacher?

Oh my god.

What did he look like?

Oh, he looked quite normal-- had little beard. He had written a book, so I should remember. Something like Litvin or some-- I couldn't tell you for sure.

What do you remember about him?

Well, I remember that he was a true scholar. One has the image of the cheder, if you've read about the cheder, where the teacher is sort of a tyrant who doesn't know a lot and beats up on the little kids or else has some kind of a drill. And the cheder was much below what we learned.

And this was the next level. I don't know how that looked in Eastern Europe. But he had I think a reasonable didactic approach. He had certainly-- the book that he wrote was didactic. He selected portions of the Talmud. Talmud is very difficult-- very difficult document. So then he selected portions to introduce children to the Talmud-- was very interested in children. He was obviously interested in teaching. I don't think it was just a living for him. It was a dedication for him, and he was very well respected.

He had a good sense of humor. And again, as I remember this endeavor in general, that was not so common. That may have been a little bit rare to teach with a little bit of humor. I was fascinated by it. I was liked that. I always liked the Talmud.

You mentioned elementary school in Saarbrücken that you went to.

Yeah. Oh, I wanted to tell you about that. Yeah. Well, for the first two-- the first years I told you I was sick. I didn't go to school. The second year I went to public school. Actually, I was enrolled in public school, remember, before I got sick.

That was a German public school. It was before Nazism. There was very little feeling of Nazism there-- of persecution. The only time I felt anything was when the kids were studying the religion. Religion was obligatory in that school, and of course it was Christian religion. And we were free not to participate, but we weren't free to go anywhere.

So I was sitting in that room-- was seven years old and listening to all of this. I was allowed to read something else, but how can you help but listen? And I had a very good memory. I remember when the teacher asked some questions, and nobody answered. He said, well, let's ask Amkraut, although I wasn't supposedly in that class at all.

And every once in a while when we get out in the yard, the kids would say, ah, you Jesus killer. But it was sort of almost joking. There was a little bit of seriousness about it.

What year was this?

This was '35-- '34 or '35-- '34 probably. No, it was '34. It was before the plebiscite.

Then the Jews became a little bit concerned about the kids going to public school and created this Jewish school, which was quite-- it had quite a few kids and went through fourth grade. The German system was

that at fourth grade, there was a separation. I think it still is.

Some people went on to what they called high school or middle school, which then led to high school graduation, or they had a special test called Abitur. So you either made the Abitur or went to the other kind of school, which was only eight years, which prepared you for an apprenticeship, and you became a craftsman. If you want to become professional, you had to go to the 12-year school. But the division was made after the fourth year, so elementary school was four years.

And so they created this Jewish elementary school. I don't know what kids did who were beyond that. And so my sister and I went. My sister actually went to the German public school longer than I did, and she had maybe at least one good German friend. I never had a German friend.

And that school was continuously contracted. Even while I was there, I was there through fourth grade. So by the time I was in fourth grade, which was in 1936, the school had four classes in one room, which was a little bit difficult to handle. So we may have had two four classrooms.

What were you taught there?

Oh, all sort of subjects-- normal subjects, relatively little Jewish subjects. It was a Jewish school. We had Hanukkah celebrations, and maybe before Passover we'd learned a little bit about Passover. I don't remember enough about it. I know that there was very little Jewish taught there.

I would say that half the Jews in the town weren't particularly interested in Jewish studies. After '35, and particularly after '37, became impossible. After '35 the antisemitism started growing a bit. I must say as a child, I didn't feel very much antisemitism, not even when I went to Frankfurt. Until it increased significantly in '37 after the Nuremberg laws.

And at that time, there were signs that appeared in all of the stores saying Jews not desired. Jewish persons no desired. Jews not desired-- Juden unerwünscht.

So in Saarbrücken, there was no obvious need to take the kids out of school until maybe-- general school until maybe '36. But in '37, that school had contracted a lot. A lot of people had left in '37. I don't know why in the Saar that contraction was so significant. A lot of the people in my acquaintance were caught in the Holocaust-- had not left. But I remember that the school contacted. So we are in the school.

Did you have any special friends at the Jewish school in Saarbrücken?

Yeah, some. Some.

Do you remember their names?

Not that well. I remember a girl I sort of had a crush on. Her name was Dershowitz. And a fellow who was a friend-- his name was Siegel-- Monte Siegel. It was Ruth Dershowitz, Monte Siegel. I don't know who else.

My wife is going to hear about the crush. I don't think I told her about it. But I was eight years old, so at seven years old wasn't much of a crush.

That's what I-- I don't. I remember my best friend was my cousin-- I told you about him-- in that school. The school in Frankfurt-- I had friends. I had a number of friends, but I don't remember their names.

I remember one, because we were sort of rivals for first place in the class. And so his name was Max Arendt. He's in Israel, and I met him. I met him last year. We had a little talk, but had little to say to each other actually after all that.

What happened to Ruth?

I don't know. I don't know what the fate of most of these people were.

How many students were there in the Jewish school in Saarbrücken?

Well, I have a picture of my class when it started, and there must be 40 kids in that class. So I would say there may have been 150 kids, 200 kids to begin with. In the end, there must have been no more than 50 or 60.

Why was that?

Well, people left. Either they moved to Germany or they moved out of the country. And as I say, the emigration must have been greater from Saarbrücken than it was from Germany proper.

Well, people had a chance to-- see, emigration wasn't all that easy in terms of getting permission to live in another country. My uncle from Frankfurt, for example, managed to go to England on what they called the capitalist visa. You had to have a certain amount of money. And if you had that money, which may have been \$100,000 in those days, they would give you a visa. So that was one place you could go to if you had money-- if you had a fair amount of money.

After the plebiscite, there was a condition that whoever wanted to could move to France. And I have a feeling that quite a few of these people ended up moving to France.

There was also-- I remember a migration from Eastern Europe through Germany, which may have impacted on the Eastern European Jews in Germany somewhat, so that they moved. They were survivors who had moved from Eastern Europe, and for them to move was not as difficult as it was for the German Jews who had lived for generations in Germany. So I think many of them moved on much more easily.

But I remember from Eastern Europe, we had guests practically every week. My father was very guest friendly, and when somebody came from East-- my mother was not and was upset about this. But whenever guests came from-- people came from Eastern Europe, then they asked who will house these people for a couple of nights. Because they went, and they went over the border illegally. So they came from-- I don't know how they had gotten into Germany from Eastern Europe, but they must have gotten there illegally, too.

And most of them were easily spotted. They looked like Jews, had beards. But somehow got through the net and got to Saarbrücken, which was on the French border on the other side from where they came.

And so yeah, I remember many times guests in the house, even though I was at home in those days only on vacation. So I was at home maybe three months out of the year. And part of the time, we went to vacation elsewhere. So even in this a little bit of time I was home, they were always-- there were frequently people.

Who was at your Passover Seder?

Oh, the only Seders I remember-- the only Seder I remember was the last one in Germany, actually. I don't remember my Seder so well. And that was in Frankfurt, maybe the year before. But it must have been 1938. My parents came to Frankfurt for that Seder. Both my sister and I were in Frankfurt going to school.

And at that Seder, the whole family was in my uncle's house. That is the whole family that was still in Germany. There was my family. There was my uncle's family, there were my grandparents-- my grandparents on my mother's side. Possibly there were other people, and I don't remember. I don't remember well.

The Seders at home, I think it was just us. It may have been-- my aunt who lived in Saarbrücken might have joined-- probably did. Our house was the sort of main house in Saarbrücken, so they would have come to us probably. But I don't remember the Seders that well.

What do you remember of the 1938 Seder? Was this your Uncle Leo?

It was my Uncle Leo, but my grandfather was the one who conducted the Seder, of course. It was in my Uncle Leo's house.

Your Grandfather Mordecai?

Mordecai-- Motel. Yeah.

Did you live with your uncle? Did you actually stay with him?

I stayed with Leo for two years, and I think my mother paid, because she wouldn't take it. But they didn't need it. And so the third year I moved to an aunt who really didn't need the money, and I preferred living there. That was my aunt-- my mother's Aunt Recha. I lived with my Aunt Rachel first, and then on with my mother's Aunt Recha.

Can you remember anything about that Seder? Was it an unhappy one?

No. No. Yeah, I can remember one thing. It was very hard to get kosher wine. And we came from synagogue and had to pick up the kosher wine somewhere. We got maybe two bottles-- was a big thing for the Seder.

And I was a kid, and I wanted to have-- I wanted to carry a bottle. So reluctantly they gave me a bottle, and I grabbed it. It was wrapped in paper, and it slipped out of the paper and was a big disaster. It was a great tragedy, because we had to do the Seder with one bottle of kosher wine.

At actually the Seders at home, I think I remember my father made his own wine. He bought grapes and put it through. As I told you, he had wine experience, so he made his own wine. Yeah, I don't remember a lot.

Well, what I remember, of course, that as kids who were trained in the school to ask questions. At the Seder you're supposed to ask questions, so we studied for the Seder a lot. This was a German school, so they prepared you very well for that chore.

And so my grandfather wasn't much for questions. He said stop already and-- Motel.

He stopped you? Were you permitted to ask the question?

I was permitted to ask, but he didn't have much patience for answering. He was hungry. So while he was a scholar, he was not-- he was not mellow. He had his ideas, and his ideas prevailed. And so his idea was you go-- the Seder was just something you had to do. But it wasn't something that wasn't necessarily fun. And so he went through it. I do it differently.

How do you do it?

Oh, well we sing and we try to tell stories and try to interpret a little bit.

Did your mother have a separate set of dishes that she--

Oh, yes, there was Passover dishes. There were milchig and fleishig. She had four sets of dishes.

What kinds of things would she cook-- your mother?

What she would cook? Probably little influenced by German-- cooked just about everything. I don't-- nothing unique-- boiled chicken, gefilte fish which she made herself, some kinds of food that were a little different.

She would make noodles herself, a little differently from the way-- I mean, I don't know whether if you make noodles these days-- pasta-- I suppose you have a machine or something. But she would roll up the dough and then cut it so that there were long strips of noodles. And then she would cut those.

The only special food I remember was something called nunt, which she made for Passover-- for Hanukkah-- for Purim. Nunt I think was made for Purim. There was another thing for Hanukkah that was called Komish broyt. That was some more or less hard concoction with cocoa and with almonds. It was real hard, sort of a

cookie type, but in long pieces. It looked like a brioche-- like a baguette, but it was harder.

And then the nunt was honey, and sugar, and also nuts, and was sort of chewy stuff. If you wanted some ethnic foods, I have no idea how ethnic these ethnic foods were. And she would make frequently-- she didn't call it that, and I don't remember how we called it-- galarita. You know, a gelled dish which you make by boiling chicken's feet, which gives you the gelatin. And then you put in a little garlic, a lot of pepper. I forget what-- something must have provided the protein there, but it came out as a gel, which tasted rather good. You can get it in Jewish delis probably, and I don't even know what they call it here.

So that's a kind of-- but she didn't-- I don't think she made a lot of the kinds of-- she didn't make kugel. She made something akin to-- she made what they called a chalant, but this wasn't a cholent. And she didn't make tzimmes, so didn't make much ethnic food.

Can you remember anything special about celebrating the high holy days?

Nothing so special. We got new clothes for Passover, like was--

Like, what you got, personally?

A suit usually, something-- or a pair of pants. The high holidays as a kid, I remember very boring-- the services very boring. As kids we sort of skipped out and were under no obligation to stay-- fooled around outside. We stayed for a little while.

The high holidays, we would come in for the shofar. We would come in for-- on the other holidays, we would come in for the blessing of the kohanim. And because I remember always being there, you were not supposed to look. So I remember being very careful not to look at the kohanim. What else? Nothing much, nothing special.

When you say we, you're talking about your cousins?

Kids. Kids, yeah.

Who were the kids?

Well, I don't remember. One is Siegel I told you about. He's the only one I remember by name. Actually my cousin-- they were not that religious. He didn't go to school that often. His father was not particularly religious I recall. There were all these kids around.

You mentioned taking vacations. Where did you go?

We would-- well, the vacation I remember-- well in the latter years, after '36 he went to France mostly. We went to the beach-- Paris Plages-- or we went to Belgium to the beach. We usually went to the beach. Or we went to the mountains or to the mountains in Alsace nearby.

In the years before, I remember going to the [PLACE NAME] near Frankfurt. And usually we took a room in some-- either in a private house or the [NON-ENGLISH]. My mother would cook. Occasionally, we'd be in a place where there was a Jewish restaurant. That was not too frequent. Belgium once-- I remember that-- we ate only in Jewish restaurants-- and maybe in Paris Plages. I remember specifically two Jewish restaurants.

We would stay there. The German vacations are six weeks-- summer vacation, six weeks. s So we would go for at least five or six weeks. That's just my mother and the kids, sometimes with her sister and the kids, sometimes with the other sister and the kids, although not very often-- with Toni and the kids most of the time, not so much with Recha and her kids. They went different places. Occasionally, we would meet.

My father would come maybe one out of those six weeks, and not all the time, but a number of years. We went to Paris. I remember the World's Fair of 1937 in Paris-- very impressive.

What do you remember?

Of the World's Fair?

Or Paris.

Oh, Paris?

In '37.

Oh, I remember lots in Paris. I remember I think we must have been there on the 14th of July, you know that national holiday. Because I remember dancing in the streets-- little band set up and people dancing around.

I remember going to a cafe at night. I guess in '37 I was 11, but there were kids 3 and 4 at 10:00 at night, and I was very surprised at that. I remember the sand and beautiful-- the World's Fair was along the sand. I remember very large, very elaborate buildings, waterfalls, the decorations that you have at World's Fairs.

I remember getting into conversations and a little bit of English. I had learned English in school and was very good at it, so I had to practice my English and went to the English pavilion. I was talking about football-- soccer ball with some of the people there.

And what else do I remember? Just the feel of Paris. Probably when I now would tell you what I remember, it would be in retrospect. I was in Paris many times, and I like Paris very much. So I remembered a lot of Paris, and I don't know how much of that goes back to that visit in '37.

It was probably the largest city you visited up to that time.

Yes, it was, but that wasn't all that impressive as a large city when Frankfurt was a fairly large city with a lot of traffic.

What was Frankfurt like?

At what point in time? Frankfurt-- well, I don't know what to go into. But you just want descriptions of cities. I would give you more descriptions of feelings. But you want to go to descriptions of cities?

I would like both of those.

OK. So Frankfurt, at the time, was a very, what I thought, beautiful town. When I was 10 or 11, I didn't have a bike, but my cousins had bikes which they never used-- girls' bikes. And I would take the bike, and I would go for a bike ride for hours and hours.

I don't remember now, because I told you I had these classes, only I don't remember when I had the time to do that. But I remember many, many rides around the town, around the parks, and even outside of town. And I would go for 10, maybe 15 miles and come back, and it must have taken a long time as a kid. Because I remember even once going to Bad Nauheim, which is probably about 10 miles or 15 miles away.

And in general, it was a very pleasant town as a town. It's not quite as pretty now. I've been back there a couple of times-- become a lot more industrial and quite a bit bigger. And I remember it prettier than it is now.

Now back to feelings. Well, when I was very young, I didn't feel anything in particular about the surroundings, about the atmosphere. I told you about the kids calling me Jesus killer. That didn't bother me too much.

When I then went to Frankfurt, I remember that a little bit better. There was always some degree of caution in '36, '37. But I didn't feel persecuted, if you wish. It didn't filter down to me.

In '38, it may have been part of the Nuremberg laws. I became very cautious. When I saw an aggregation of kids, I would stay away. I would go to the other side. I would make big circles.

In '38 after the pogrom night, what they call Kristallnacht, it became extremely oppressive. Then we were very careful. Then we knew that we had-- I mean, I felt as a kid that we have absolutely no rights, that anybody anywhere could do anything to you, and there was no recourse.

Still, I always felt somewhat protected. My parents were there, and they were going to do something. I didn't know what they were going to do, but I tried to avoid situations that might be tricky or dangerous.

You didn't ask me about the specific events. I don't know if you want the specific events of the Kristallnacht. I was in Frankfurt, and I remember it very clearly. We had come back from Poland about two weeks before that, and you remember that the presumed reason for the pogrom-- for the burning of the synagogues-- was that a Jewish boy in Paris had killed an embassy employee, I think a second ambassador or somebody with a foreign name, so it was some [NON-ENGLISH].

And that reflected back to me that the people were very afraid on that day that the fellow will die and something will happen. But nobody prepared for anything.

When I woke up in the morning, I heard a lot of noise around. And I looked out of the window, and there was some yelling. I don't know exactly what. In the house where I lived, there were-- and I lived with my Aunt Recha-- actually, Aftergut is her name-- with the second aunt-- with her mother's aunt at that time.

In the house there were several Jewish homes, and we heard them break into the home below us. But nothing happened to my uncle at that moment. And about half an hour, an hour later, for some reason I was asked to or was taken to the other uncle's house-- Uncle Leo's house.

And at about-- maybe my mother had arrived already. My mother traveled during the night. They were not supposed to attack any Polish Jews, because they were not-- they were nationals of a different country. And in Frankfurt they didn't. But in Saarbrücken, they did. And my father was taken.

And my mother told the story that the Nazis knocked at the door, and they knew that something bad was going to happen, so they barricaded themselves in a room. And what she said is that an SS went threw something until she had a very swollen lip when she came to Frankfurt. He may have hit her, I don't know.

But my father was taken, and my mother was hysterical. And I had never seen my mother hysterical in my life. Because I was telling you about my feelings and when I started feeling a little bit insecure. My mother was always the strong person of the family and always the manager. This was the first time I saw her in this state.

But she calmed down, and she went to the Polish consul, and she wasn't the only one. But they besieged the consul, and the consul finally took steps. And a day later, my father was let go, but and he came to Frankfurt also. And he showed me his whole right side was black and blue.

And my father died in '41, and the diagnosis-- he died from a stroke. We had gone to Bolivia, to La Paz, which of course is very high, and a lot of people had high blood pressure then. But probably my father's problem was that his kidney was damaged at that point in time. So that was the point when it was obvious that we were going to leave Germany.

Now as far as feelings go from that point on, I really didn't feel very secure. I hesitated to go where I had to go. I certainly didn't take any long bike rides anymore. And I was quite happy when we left Germany.

We left Germany on a Saturday actually, which was a traumatic event for me, because we had to go by train and then by boat. And this was the only boat that was available. It was very hard to get a boat. And my father, from whom I took my religious instruction, said this is to save your life, and you have to do it. But I remember I felt extremely uncomfortable riding a train on the Shabbos.

So actually, I should tell you more about feelings, because it has some impact on how the generation after you feels about America, and how people like me feel about America. I went to Bolivia from there, and I never felt unoppressed.

In Bolivia, it was xenophobia. But because most of the foreigners were Jews, it was really antisemitism. And this prevailed. This was very strong. There was a strong German colony, which may have fostered it a little bit. But the people were really anti-Semitic, xenophobic.

I remember two incidents. One was not to me, but a friend who caught a thief in his store. And he grabbed him, and immediately a crowd formed. And they said, let's go, and they beat this Jewish fellow so that he ended up in the hospital.

Similar thing happened to me. I must have been-- actually, I must have been 19 or 20. It was on a carnival. Carnival is a big deal in Bolivia. They have three days of celebration, and they got a bit crazy.

And I was walking with my mother, and a man came up and hit her on the head with one of these-- I don't know if you've ever seen that. They have things to hit with, and these things have a heavy end where you hold on, and on other end, you wouldn't feel much if they hit you that end. It's a little bit like a fly swatter.

Well, he hit her with the heavy hand. He held her, and I got very mad. And I started out after him. Within three seconds, there was a crowd of maybe 30 people, and said Jew, let this man go. And they were menacing me.

And fortunately a couple of the neighbors who were also Jewish came, and they stood on my side, and we were confronted by this crowd. So just to tell you what the feeling in Bolivia was, it was not one of freedom or where you could say anything you wanted to.

I couldn't say-- in fact, I was in an American School for a year while my father was still alive. Later on, we couldn't afford it. And there was an English club, and I spoke English very well. So kids who spoke English well were induced in the English club.

And in order to be induced, and not before you were induced, you were examined by a group of teachers and students we spoke to you in English. And so I at the moment forgot that there were students there. I thought there were American teachers there. And then they asked me, how do you like La Paz? And I said, not that well in English.

And from that moment on, I was significantly ostracized in that school. The kids came and said, how can you say that? We saved your life and all that stuff. And at that time I must have been about 14 or 15, and I didn't make all that much of an impression. I hadn't thought very much about it.

So when I came to this country, I mean, I almost felt the first steps, and I know why I felt it. Because in the first steps, you don't know that you're in a free country. I mean, I felt the difference very strongly, very significantly.

And I tell then my children who have all the criticisms you can have about this country. I don't think, in fact, that anywhere else in the world you can get away with what you can get away with in this country, either socially or politically. And I mean England, and I'm in France, and I certainly mean Switzerland, which is, quote, "a free country." One would not be as free to say and do things as one is here, so I very much appreciate it-- the possibility of landing here.

Anyway, I had to get that in so if my kids ever watch that they should hear that. I've told them that before. My sons-in-law may be not as convinced of this as I am.

I don't know what else to tell you. What would you like to know?

Do you want to go back to the night of the pogroms.

Yeah.

When was that?

Well, it was the 9th of November of '38.

In November of '38.

9th of November.

9th of November.

Yeah.

And Kristallnacht.

Kristallnacht, yeah.

You said the night of the pogroms was before Kristallnacht.

No, no. It was Kristallnacht. It was-- yeah. Well, it was in Nachten, the night, and then the day. They started before daybreak, so I think that was the night that-- yeah, they started before daybreak.

When you and your uncle and aunt went on the train.

That was being transferred to Poland, and that was weeks before that.

Weeks before.

And the Kristallnacht was a consequence of that, at least as the Germans constructed it. It may have come in some other way, but it was the killing of this embassy attaché that brought that-- that gave them the official excuse.

Now also after that, my uncles-- both uncles who were stateless-- the husband of Recha was Chaim, and the husband of Clara, who was Berish-- were taken to the concentration camp in Buchenwald. And, of course, we knew that that was-- it wasn't the concentration camp of the later days. It wasn't an extermination camp, but it was a very obviously unpleasant place with beatings.

And it was called protective custody by the Germans. They said they were taking the Jews into protective custody after this Kristallnacht, because the populace was going to do them harm.

And what happened to the husbands?

Well, then they had to show-- in order to be released, they had to show that they had visas to leave Germany. One never got a visa but went to Shanghai. That was in one place in the world where you can go into without any visa. And since they were stateless, they had trouble. They had passport, but they had stateless passports. They had trouble anyway getting visas.

The other one came to Bolivia-- had a visa to Bolivia, but somehow, whether it was a monetary question, didn't manage to get out until after the beginning of the war. And they got out in January of 1940. We left in July of 1939.

In January of 1940, they got onto the Patria, which was sunk in the Mediterranean by, I think, British ships. But they got off. They were rescued, and they went back to Italy and took some other ship a month or two later, and eventually ended up in Bolivia.

Their son, however, who also went to England with the Kindertransport-- you had written about

Kindertransport. One of their sons then was on the way to Australia, and that ship was sunk, and he died then.

Right. The morning that you were ordered out of Germany--

Yeah.

--what were your thoughts at that point?

Not much-- not very much. Oh, I probably-- I didn't feel very unhappy about that. It was a trip. I felt a lot more unhappy 12 hours later when I hadn't slept and I was standing up. But at the moment, I don't think-- I don't even-- I mean, the adults must have been quite upset, but it didn't translate, not that I know of.

I remember-- I mean, they weren't allowed to take any objects of value-- any gold objects. And they were told to take no money. So I remember my mother-- not my mother, my aunt putting 20 marks-- didn't have any money in the house-- 20 marks in the lining of my coat. But that didn't make much of an impression on me. I don't recall being particularly upset about it.

And then you met your mother and father at the Polish border and eventually were told you could go back.

Yeah.

Where did she go back to?

Back to Frankfurt, and they went back to Saarbrücken. And then eventually-- I don't remember the events that well. But I think the school-- I don't know. I don't think I stayed out the school year in Frankfurt. I must have-- the body of that school year I went back to Saarbrücken with them. At that point, everything pretty much fell apart.

But you were in Frankfurt for Kristallnacht.

Yeah.

And your mother came?

The day after-- the morning after.

Did she stay with you until your father was released?

Yes. Well, she went she may have gone back and forth to bring him to Frankfurt. My father came to Frankfurt after he was released.

And you all stayed in Saarbrücken?

No. And he was very upset, because he had a lot of German acquaintances in Saarbrücken. And they had paraded them. This beating happened in the streets. They had paraded the Jews through the streets and had beaten them. And this was maybe his town a little bit. Until then-- from then on he wanted out.

Did he talk to you in detail about what had happened?

No. No. He said he was beaten, but he didn't talk about the detail.

Do you know how long he was held?

Only one day. That whole thing happened in a few hours.

And after, what do you remember about Kristallnacht-- about the destruction of places?

I remember a few days later going by. I mean then-- but one of the things I should tell you is that I was always identified as a Jew when I was a kid. I never really knew why everybody knew I was a Jew. But I wore my head covered, not with a kippah or with a yarmulke, but with a beret. And we all wore berets. And so that must have been a way of identifying a Jew, but other people wore berets, too. I guess kids didn't a lot.

At any rate, as I went a few days later, maybe two days later, on a bus, and we went by the smoldering ruins of the synagogue, I remember Germans in the bus sort of shaking their head about it and turning to each other and shaking their head, but not saying very much.

So I mean, maybe the bulk of the people weren't really happy about this. I would imagine that the bulk of the people at that time weren't excited about too much

in accord with that part of the measures that were taken. Although as I said-- and I don't know whether it was an obligation-- a lot of the stores had signs saying Jews not desired here. And as a kid-- and that happened in the-- I'll have my sister look at the tape and see whether she remembers the dates a little bit better. I don't know exactly when that started. But I remember distinctly, for example, wanting to buy some candy from candy-- not store but sort of a stall was in the street. They had used to have candy stalls, well, like you have newspaper stalls, they had candy stalls. And with a sign on the stall-- Jews not desired here.

What did you do?

I didn't buy candy. When I saw the sign, of course I didn't do any-- I didn't go there. But not every store had it.

Were the people on the bus shaking their heads in disapproval?

That's what I remember-- just an impression. But I seem to remember that there were some people. I don't know how many. Some people I looked at were shaking their heads in disapproval.

OK. Now, when you came back to Frankfurt, which aunt and uncle were you with?

Came back from where? From--

Poland.

From Poland, I was with Recha-- with my mother's Aunt Recha.

Which aunt and uncle stayed in Poland?

That was Toni and her husband who lived in Saarbrücken.

Do you have any other recollections of the night of Kristallnacht?

No, I think that's about it.

You were sent from your Aunt Recha's home to your Uncle Leo's?

I don't even remember how I got there. I don't have a recollection of that. I know that when my mother came-- or maybe my mother was there already when I went there. Possibly my mother was there already. And they may have called me to come over, because my mother was there-- not to come over. They wouldn't have told me that my mother was there.

My sister also. My sister lived with another relative down the street from where I lived. It's possible that she picked me up and we both went, but I can't tell you the detail.