OK. OK. This morning we're interviewing Helmut Bates. This is the Holocaust Oral History Project at 400 Brannan St, San Francisco, California. Today is December 28--

27.

27, 1995. I would like to start if we could by getting your birth date and where you were born and telling us about your family.

OK. I was born in Berlin, Germany, on April the 22nd, 1919.

And could you tell us about your family?

OK. My family-- from my mother's side was a prominent family in Berlin whereas my father's side came from Halle an der Saale in Germany. My parents actually were related because they met at the reunion because their great grandmothers happened to be sisters, and that's how they met. She was 12 years old, and he was 13 years old. And ever since that time, they stayed friends and later on married.

And my father became a lawyer. And from my mother's side, the family owned paper factories whereas from my father's side in Halle, they owned a department store. I mean, both families were long time in Germany.

Actually, the family tree goes back 300 years, which is more than many Germans can say. And so it was when Hitler came, for many of our family, was we couldn't understand that the guy who came from Austria could tell people who were living in Germany for that length of time that they are not Germans. So it was hard for my father to leave Germany, actually.

How many people were in the family?

Well, I had a brother, Till, who lives in San Jose now, and that was my immediate family then. I had my grandparents there and an uncle and aunt.

I had an uncle, great uncle, who owned a Rittergut in Silesia. And there well-to-do people. We all had-- because when people lived that long in one place, even if they leave one silver spoon each time, it accumulates. So my family was-- we were considered us well-to-do people.

And the good part in my family was, my father was very wealthy at one time. He could also live when he didn't have very much because he was a very intelligent man. He wrote books. He was a doctor of music, a doctor of psychology, a doctor in all kinds of other things. And he had lots of friends. So he was always invited. So we had no problems. He got together with people like Einstein and Thomas Mann and those people who, in that time, meant something to the world. So I met also from Thomas Mann the kids, Erika Mann and Klaus Mann. And I got around to in that way.

And I mean, I grew up in Berlin. First, we left on Dusseldorfer Strasse 19 to 20. That was in Wilmersdorf. And there was close by a garden colony. I don't know if he owned it. But there was a garden for us kids to play always in.

And then later on, we moved to-- my father was a criminal lawyer. And my mother didn't like that very well because he had the biggest practice and that time am Alexanderplatz, he had about 60 people employed. And he was not home to often. She didn't like that. So he decided we move to Kurfurstendamm, which is the corner [INAUDIBLE] Strasse. And he opened the practice with another lawyer. And he became a lawyer for the movie industry and entertainment business because he was quite an entertainer himself. So that was better for the family.

We all lived in a 12-room apartment there on the second floor under his practice. And the front was five rooms I believe. And so we had a very good life. And I went to school naturally. And in [INAUDIBLE], I went to the Kaiser-Friedrich Gymnasium. I was not a very healthy child. So my parents decided to send me to the Odenwald Schule which is in the Black Forest. Odenwald is next to the Black Forest. They sent me away to get stronger.

And I stayed for a year. And we traveled, by the way, quite a bit. My parents every time we went on vacation, they took us along. My parents were very modern. So we went four weeks on vacation. So the first week after we were there, my father left for a week. And then the next week, my mother left for a week. And we stayed with one of our parents. And together at the end we stayed together for the rest of the vacation. And we had a wonderful time with them.

And when I was a little bit homesick, I decided to come back to Berlin. And my mother got pneumonia. In that time, they didn't had those antibiotics. And she passed away with being 39 years old.

And how old were you?

I was about 12. And so my aunt took us to Halle. She had a big place there, a big villa. And she had three kids there. And they had ponies and everything else in their place. And my father, in the meantime we found out, got also very sick because of the loss of his wife because they were very close. But then, he recuperated.

I came back to the-- I had to get a private teacher to get back into my class because that Odenwald Schule was a democratic school. The kids came from all countries of the world. And the reason was that many kids from ambassadors and from business people, who went in Germany, they didn't know what to do with their children. They sent them to that school. It was an international school. It was a very democratic school. Even a kid like myself who was 10 years old could outwit the owner.

But as I used my own subjects in their time, they were not matching up with the Gymnasium and, therefore, had to go to private teacher. I took him half a year to get me into the class where I belonged. And that's how I started out.

My father always tried everything under the sun to give us. But somehow, we didn't become spoiled kids. He taught us always to had about five mark in our pockets, so in case we went away and couldn't come back. We could show the taxi man that we had some money. Besides, the order was after four o'clock, we had to call in to see where we are. Besides, he always ate with us the dinner or lunch.

Even after your mother died?

Yes. Always.

He discussed with us all kinds of subjects and--

Like what?

Well, what politics and everything which came in his mind. And he also taught us manners. So for instance, one day I remember distinctly. There was a big salad bowl. And he put his hands in the bowl and got out the salad and put in his mouth. So we kids naturally said, well, my golly, you can't do that. And so we learned table manners. And that's how he taught us.

He was a very interesting man. He was not very practical man. Any subject he didn't know, say, for instance, we went to a party. And they talked about stars or handwriting or something like that. And the next day, he bought himself some books. And he read that up. And the next time we went to the similar thing, he knew more than the rest of the people. I mean this was horrible.

He had a photographic mind. Probably speed reading he learned by himself because he could read the book in no time, which I couldn't. And he knew practically everything what he read and could quote out of those books. And not only that, when I read it, he told me, you didn't read it right. You didn't see the semicolon or the question mark or something like that. So I was corrected very often.

So for people like my brother and myself, who were average intelligent, it was hard to take this man. But we loved him. And as I was always very practical, I overcame this. You could get an inferiority complex with him, really. Other people

would have. We didn't.

Why do you say he wasn't practical?

He wasn't practical. For instance, I sent for the holidays once a shoeshine kit which I thought was nice. He was in New York in that time already. And I was in the Army. And I thought it's a nice present to clean, brush his shoes. And so he wrote to me, in that time you didn't fax anything, that he couldn't use that thing because there was no instructions written.

All right. So I went and got the instructions and sent back the instructions. And then, he still couldn't get it. I said, my golly, you put a battery in and push the button up, and it works. I mean in those things, he was very impractical. Or when he wanted a room in a hotel, for instance, he visited me also during my Army time in Seattle once after he divorced his second wife.

He wanted to rent a room. So he spoke very good English but too high for the people who rent a room. He wanted actually a room with a bath. Or he said in such a way that that guy couldn't understand. And I said, he wants a new room with a bath and finished. So I mean, in those things he was not very good. That's what I'm talking about.

But he was so accomplished and competent.

Other things he was very good. Yes. I mean logic and logical things and in law, he was terrific.

But it was hard as a child to be with someone so competent you said?

Yes. And he could sit with us, suddenly and shut himself off because he had thoughts in his mind. I mean you saw him there, but he wasn't there actually. In those things, that's the only things. But otherwise, he was terrific. And he had a sister who was in Halle. Like I told you, after our mother passed away, she took us in for a while with her three sons. And she was nine years younger than he was, a lovely aunt of mine.

What was that like for you, after your mother died, and you went to Halle?

To Halle, we went only for a few weeks. But then, we went back to Berlin. And I continued my school until I got such beautiful grades, which I can show you, that I couldn't continue the schooling. The reason was very simple. I found that out just now by the way, that the teacher in our class was a little bit ahead of time. Half of our class was Jewish because where we lived. And they came all from that neighborhood, Kurfurstendamm, where most people were lawyers, doctors, or higher officials from kids.

And our class, when we started in [INAUDIBLE], was half Jewish. There were 40. When I just got a report from my class, when I left, it was about 33 people. And all of them were also nearly half Jewish. But this teacher, I found out now, who gave me those beautiful grades, was a little bit ahead of the time. He told already the parents get their kids out. If you don't want to get out of the country, get out.

I mean, he was not Jewish. But I didn't know that. I got it just now from a fellow who is in Berlin. I have even there. I can show it to you. He was a little bit ahead of the time. I couldn't understand with some of the grades that I could get into the next class. But he had to put me in the next class because I wasn't that bad. But then, finally, and over the [INAUDIBLE] was impossible. So I figured with German failure, with handwriting failure, with all the other subject's failures, I had to get out.

And then, I started to work. I got myself a job right away. I got to job in a company in Berlin. And I worked there, I think, for a year. I still have the place.

How old now?

I was 15 or 16 years old. And I had to attend a school. When people go before they're 18, they have to go to a

Handelsschule. That means you have to attend another year of schooling, besides your working. And I went to that school. And also there I got beautiful grades. That means in exercises, I was very strong in that time. He had to give me really good, nearly good.

Nearly good?

Yeah. But in accounting, which we had a subject, and bookkeeping I failed. Whereas the test that the company who-- when I left, they give me that I was very good. I always was in accounting and everything good. I mean that shows where you could see that the Nazis didn't want you to get jobs. Therefore, I mean, when you have such a thing to show, naturally, that people wouldn't hire you. But I was already hired.

So my father, through his influence, I could go to Hamburg because he had friends there who had a big company. And he felt that maybe I could learn as a businessman more on that company. So I had to pass a test in Berlin because Hamburg was a Notstandsgebiet. That means there were so many people unemployed, that they didn't really wanted new people in. And that was Notstandsgebiet number one. So that was the worst one.

But I had to pass a test. That means I had to smell some stuff. I had to put the keys in the right keyhole or some stupid things. But I passed it because I didn't have anything to lose. I still had that other job. And so I was able to go to that company in Hamburg for a year. It was a permission.

And during that year, I had a wonderful time in Hamburg because this company was the second largest company of its kind in hair, bristle, and fiber. That means they bought the raw products from China, from South America. All those things like hair and that, it was all natural stuff. And then, they sold it.

And what happened, they made me a court clerk. That means I made counteroffers. And I went to the international court. And I had to prepare the counteroffer and check it with a secretary and send it to China. Or they had private courts. They had security in the private courts. And sometimes, if it didn't break, then something was wrong.

Now what happened once to me was on a Friday one day-- on a Friday once, they rushed me to make a counteroffer for some bristles. And what happened was that on Mondays hell broke loose because the guy-- it was only one word, means 17, I don't know, shilling or something like that for something.

But there was one letter wrong. So therefore, he took his private court and found out to buy 50 cases of Chongqing bristles, assorted things, to buy that. And he was lucky enough to corner the market and get those 50 cases. And those companies said, we didn't order that. But they got all excited. And so they said, well, we didn't order it. But they said, yes, the private court shows that you ordered it. And I was lucky enough.

But in that time, you see, when you send stuff overseas, you were obliged to-- that was an honor system because you couldn't write letters back and forth and put a print on. So therefore, this company was-- actually, it was a very wealthy company. So they were stuck with 50 cases of Chongqing bristles and so on. So they called first the secretary in

And she said, yes, she typed it. And then, that court called me in and said, yes, I made the mistake. I overlooked one letter. Instead of "I" she made a "T" at the end or something like that. And I blamed myself. And I figured they fire me. They didn't fire me. The boss said, we rushed you. And I made the mistake, just the opposite, I mean, from most companies and the other part of the world.

So anyhow, what happened was, the war broke out there in China. And suddenly, they hope to get the stuff out. And sure enough, it came out via Shanghai. It still came was the last big shipment which came out to Europe. And they were so happy to get it. Everybody got a bonus.

By the way, this company was a Jewish company. And in Germany there was a law that if you give instead certain taxes, you give that part to your employees, certain things. We rather paid a little bit more money and give things to the employees than paying taxes to the Nazis. So everybody got a huge bonus besides. And the sour deal went very well. So that was my biggest mistake I ever made, I guess, in my life. So that's--

This was 1937?

Yes. And then, already in Berlin, my first boss had a girlfriend. I was lucky I got out of the company because my first boss had a girlfriend for 15 years, a very lovely lady. But she happened not to be Jewish so, therefore, he was arrested for Rassenschande. And he left Germany then too.

And my boss in Hamburg at that time bought a flower stand for his wife's best friend and got arrested for Rassenschande. Had nothing to do. The man was 72 years old. And naturally with money right away, he got himself out. So he went right way out of England. And my other boss, who got me in more or less, Mr. Weiser, he also left for England. They all left.

And thank goodness they didn't extend my stay in Hamburg because I really didn't want to stay anymore because the company really became under Nazi supervision. So I went back to Berlin. And I got once more a job in the [INAUDIBLE] that actually through friends and jewelry company which was custom jewelry company, which was a wholesaler, who sold to Woolworth's. You know, Woolworth's In England and everywhere, they sold their stuff.

And so one day in November, I think, ninth-- one day, I wanted to come home. And I always drove-- I had a bicycle. In Berlin, you could bicycle very well. And I took my bicycle everywhere. And on the way home, I surely-- they cracked all those windows at that time. That was at Crystal Night. And my bicycle also got busted because I went into one of those glasses.

And so I went home. And that day, we all three, my father, my brother, we got into a different direction. My father left that day. And my brother and I, we stayed with that lady who kept our house. She was a Jewish lady. But she was married to a Christian man. So we went to them first.

And then, after a few days, we went by bicycle to our three aunts. We had three aunts on the [? Polkstrasse ?] near the castle, the castle from the emperor. And they lived where the Spree is. And they were together about 270 years old, so we figured we are fairly safe here. And sure enough, we stayed with them for a while.

My father, in the meantime, moved to his friend. That was his secretary. She was quite a few years younger. And my father was actually a ladies man. He never would have married again because he was very close to my mother. Besides, he had no reason to because he always had girlfriends.

But this one was his secretary. She was a lovely woman. She's still around. Her name was Hilde Michaelis. And he moved in with her. And then afterwards, they got married. We were not there because that happened all through that things. And we came back to our home. We found out that nobody was looking for us. And then, we really tried to get the hell out of Germany.

Could we go back just a little bit.

Sure.

When did you begin to become aware of the Nazis?

When the Nazis came in 1933, everything got over the rough. But you see, we had in that time so many different governments in Germany that my father, very poor German actually, figured it blows over. But we never realized when Hindenburg took Hitler as his chancellor, through the influence of his nephew, that this guy would get after the opposition, kill everybody. And then, it became dangerous.

And then my father, this I never forgave him, had in that time in Switzerland $100,000 because through his work he was able to have some money there. And we three, my brother, I, and my father we had our passports. I was 14 years of age. And I told my father, let's get out of here. We can go to Switzerland. We don't need anything. We have enough money.

So my father-- there was a new law. That was called a Devisen law because you had to report what you had in foreign countries. No. My father showed me black and white, he wouldn't last two or three years with that or something like that, that it didn't last. And therefore, he thinks, he will tell it. And sure enough, a few months later, he was advised to bring this money in because Germany needed foreign money. That's how they got it.

We could have come to the United States without any problems. We could come under a capitalistic visa here and no problems because when you have that much money, you can come in here, nowadays too. So I was crying. I said, if our mother would have lived, you would have done that. But he was so pro-German and whatever.

And besides, the other problem was, he was a notary. Now in Germany notary and notary here are two different things. Number one, only lawyers in Germany can become notaries. And besides, as he was also in the Army during World War I, he could become a notary within five years. Whereas everybody else as a lawyer had to be 10 years.

Now the notary there is an official stamp. So he felt he belonged to the government in the sense. It was an honor. The money part was not important. But it was an honor for him to be that. That's another thing. They didn't take it away right away. I wish they would have taken it. Finally, they took it away. So then, he felt also out.

Besides, I as a son of-- that called Frontkaempfer, that means people who were fighting in World War I, got also exceptions. So I could stay longer in school and all those. Despite they made it miserable because suddenly they started with Heil Hitler and those things. We couldn't do that. And we had advantages because Hitler thought, and he was quite wrong, that most Jews are cowards anyhow.

Therefore, there won't be many in the Army. And he was very much mistaken because most of the Jews, like everywhere else, did their duty too. And they were not cowards. There were some cowards. But I mean not the majority. The majority served their country. And they were also in the German Army. He really thought they're all cowards. Later on, you can see it in Israel, how many cowards are there.

So that prolonged our stay in Germany. Now after that Crystal Night, we started everything under the sun to get out. And they were all the possibilities. I learned farming because my uncle had that Rittergut. And I was in Odenwald Schule. I grew some vegetables and all that stuff. So we applied to Australia, my brother and I. I still have those records.

We applied to go to Palestine. We learned a little bit Hebrew and got documents from the Jewish doctor that we are all healthy and everything else. And what they wanted to do with us, wanted to take us to Sweden and go put us on board of the ship there and smuggle us to Palestine. Then, my father had a splendid idea because I had an uncle who left Germany already in '34, that was the uncle in Halle.

He was in the toy business. And he didn't like Hitler in the first place. He also was in the Army. And he talked too much about that. And he was afraid of his family that something might happen. So he went out already to America. But they went to Japan to open business. The reason he went to Japan, I figured that out later on by myself, was I had a cousin who was not mentally retarded but due to a stroke before I was born, he had limitations.

That means he couldn't write too well. He couldn't [INAUDIBLE] those things. And he had to live in Germany with the governess of my father's and my aunt's was the governess. He also lost his wife early. And therefore, there was one lovely lady. Tawei she was called. Tante Weisse, Tawei, was her name. And she took care off in that Villa for that boy when they left. But then they decided to, because Hitler was against those people to destroy, he wanted to save his son. So he already opened a company here in New York. Then, they went to Japan and opened an export company there.

Now my uncle went on our behalf to Tokyo. And he said to them, look here, I need my family for my business. Besides, they have affidavits to come to the United States. Now, the reason we got the affidavits is actually because my father married that Hilde who had lots of other relatives already in America. And therefore, that was an advantage besides. Besides that, they were good friends. We got affidavits.

And therefore, the Japanese could understand that because the Japanese people are family-loving people. They could understand they need family. OK. So that's how we legally, we were four people, came to Japan. Only in that time,

another couple could come to Japan. All the other people were already there. There were lots of foreigners there, also from Germany. But they were all before Hitler's time already there as business people or other professions, like doctors and so on.

And we legally got to Japan. Because all the other people who-- or you had another chance to get out. And there was China. That's where my wife comes in. You will interview her a few weeks probably. So she was only out. And as we suddenly had something in our hands where we could get out all together, we went out all together. That meant we were able--

Now another thing is that in that time I was in Hamburg, I was a volunteer. So they paid me from my room, for some food, the company. I got bonuses like I told you and besides, some pocket money. My father sent me every month 250 Mark, which was lots of money, because he remembered from the student time that he was always broke. And therefore, I probably needed it.

But I was just the opposite. Not only I kept the 250 Marks each month, I also had the other extra monies put side. I had a wonderful time besides all that money. And I saved it. So I had very close to 4,000 Mark saved up. And every time Hitler spoke, I took the money from the accounts.

Now when I came to Berlin, I was the one only who had cash, whereas my father count were on-- they could take out only so much for living. They knew how much he needed and so and so they permitted him. So we could always buy certain little extra things through the cash I had. That was very lucky. And that helped us a lot.

When we left-- and for instance, we had a big library. My father had thousands of them, maybe 10,000, I don't know, a unbelievable library in Berlin. That Berlin room there, once 200 people were sitting in that room for a lecturer, also who was very sick. And from the music room that somebody had that lecture. So we had a library which was unbelievable. And the books he write. It was not only a show. And so I hope I don't get off the subject.

Were you able to take much out of Germany?

Yeah. Now comes the things. Now, they have got married. And Hilde bought herself new things, new furniture, all very nice things, English furniture. We had some lamps, Chinese lamps, beautiful, very expensive, ones that were made from lambs or who knows what. We sold soon our outfits. They came to sell all our stuff, the drapes, and everything else.

And whatever we wanted to take out, her father was to look to see that it gets in the lift. That was called lifts. We had lifts. A lift, I don't know how big that is, but it's a huge affair you can put the whole household in. And we had a lift in the half. Now, we also had a big piano. Those huge pianos?

Grand piano.

Grand piano, my father had naturally. And that was sealed, waterproofed, and everything else. That was sealed. And everything was made ready after we left. We left. We were allowed to take two trunks out. Everything was counted. Every button was A guy inspector came. Thank goodness that inspector was a former friend of my father too. So he overlooked one button or so.

But before what happened was, we had some jewelry. And I was very happy. My father gave me two or three rings he had as a kid, or he had. And at that time, it was sealed already. Everything that was sealed with things. And then, what happened was in France that-- I don't know. It was an ambassador who got shot. And suddenly, they took everything off, including the already paid, sealed jewelry.

My brother and I had to bring all the silver which was very heavy. We brought it. My father didn't want to have anything to do. With we bought that and got a receipt for it and also all that jewelry we lost. It was not important. So anyhow, we got out. And what we did was, he could book the trip. He could get board money for the ship. And it was a Japanese ship.

Now what we did was, we left Hamburg April 3, 1939. It happened to be Passover which was a good day to leave. And we went to Southampton and arrived there and went to London. We four, my stepmother, I mean, I don't call her stepmother, but Hilde, and my father. We all lived in different places with friends for nine days. I thought 14 days, but my passport said nine days because British, I can't stand them either in that time, they put in the passport exactly that I could stay those 13 days I had permission because to board that ship.

Now, the ship was the Katori Maru. The Katori Maru landed already before in Hamburg. My stepmother, Hilde, went to a Japanese photographer studio there and bought two Leicas. And at that time, Leica was one of the best camera in the world. And she paid them and hoped that guy would put it on board for us. Because once you left Germany, they can't do very much.

And sure enough, when we boarded the ship in London, the purser had us two Leicas. And we had two Leicas extra. But we left all with 10 Mark each. That was our cash. That means my 10 Mark were several dollars, $2 or something. My, I have that still in passport, nine Mark and 93 Cents, whatever I got. And everything is registered. I can show it to you.

And we went to London. I was at the people that my boss, Mr. Weiser, I was at his place. And he had a lady who liked to help people who left Germany. And so I went to that lady. And she said, where you going? I said, I'm going to Japan. So she gave me a 50-pound note. She said, I want you to have that because-- she was a Christian lady, but very nice. And she ran a gentlemen's apartment or something like that. And she gave us the 50.

Now, the thing is as we were in England, which was an advantage, we got in our passports that we could leave the ship on every British port. Whereas the people who later boarded in Naples, didn't had that. They couldn't get off board. But the Jewish committee in every port came on board and gave presents, that means food, or combs, or certain items. They came on board.

How long was the trip from Hamburg to Japan?

43 days. But I tell you, it was a wonderful time for us, actually. First of all, we had wonderful weather. Number two, we suddenly could relax after all that ordeal. You have to get really-- I mean, it's a strain on you, everything, in spite it was a pleasure to get out. But we got relaxed. We had a nice cabin. My brother and I had a nice cabin that was a part freighter and part passenger ship. There we, I think, 100 people on board and also another class, third class, or something.

And the food was excellent. Really, I mean, nothing was wrong there. The captain or the crew sometimes entertained. Or we entertained ourselves. We played games on board. We had a library. We got the news. And when we went on those different ports, we went out and saw things. So we had a marvelous trip. It was a terrific trip that 43 days.

And our friends, like in England, we got together once. I saw a little bit of London but not too much really in that few days. We once got together. But all in all, it was a very relaxing trip. Now, I don't know why we had tuxedos with us. But we bought tuxedos. For what I-- maybe Hilde thought we might need it as waiters or something like that. I don't know.

But up to this day, I don't know, you buy other things and clothing. Like I said, everything went through the guy who packed it with us. And so on board of the ship, there was a night April 29, the emperor has birthday. So therefore, I put on my tuxedo for the first time. We had a wonderful affair. It was a lovely affair.

But the second time, it happened before Hong Kong. We got the vaccination shot. And I had a little gland swollen. And the ship doctor gave me some powder. I said, I can't use any aspirin because as a kid I suffered migraines. And I was probably a drug addict already in that time. And I took too many of those.

And suddenly, I broke out with a big lip and my eyes closed up and those things. So I got allergic to that. And since that time I've got allergic to it, I never had a headache. So this guy gave me the power. I said, I don't need any aspirin. He said, there's none in. So therefore, what happened was, there must have been something in because I suddenly couldn't breathe.

He had to give me a heart injection to relieve me from breathing. And I had a girlfriend there on boars. She found me that way. So therefore, the second time around, I looked more Japanese than the Japanese because my eyes were all swollen with a tuxedo. That's a funny story.

So when we arrived after 43 days in Kobe, I met my uncle at the pier. He embraced us, kissed us, and said, I have to go on the other pier. I'm going to America for a shopping spree. That was the last time I saw him. And sure enough, he never came back to Japan, when we arrived in May something.

And my aunt who was a very pretty lady, she was the first lady in Japan who run a business, as far as I'm concerned. Because in Japan, men run businesses. So what she did, she was a very bright operator. She had a manager who she told to him that I pay you more.

But everything we decide together beforehand, say we buy things, or sell things, you will tell what to do. But we discuss it beforehand. And so in order to save face, that guy naturally agreed to that. Then he said, well, why not suitcases, or goggles, or whatever it is, and so on. So that's how she did the business there. And she run that business.

And first when I arrived there, I helped in that business because he she actually used me for those goggles because they sent oodles of goggles to America, also, funny as it seems, to Woolworth's. And I had to inspect them if there were too many bubbles in or other flaws. And as I'm a little bit nearsighted, I could see them better than most people. So when I saw too many, we rejected the work and got into something else. That's how I started.

And then after quite a few months, I realized that my aunt really needed me. I mean, she got along very nicely without me. So I told my father-- My father had also a friend in another company. That was Gerber and Company. It was an international company. And they were German-Jewish people who once had lawsuit in Germany with him. And he got me into that company. So I was employed there.

And five months later, as the war broke out in Europe, there was a British company who shipped to South Africa to the Black people, mostly those colored clothing, huge company, lots of color. But I was one of the first people they had to let go because I was the last one employed and to save face, they let me go. But they were very nice to me. They even paid me my wages under the table for quite a few months longer.

And in that time it started that-- because nobody could get out of Europe. The only way out of Europe was via Siberia. And there were many Russian-Jews in Kobe. And they said, we have to start something because people will show up via Russia. They come to Kobe to go to America or China, to Shanghai, or South America or Philippines. And we have to make a committee.

And they hired Mrs. Hochheimer to start. That Jewish lady I know too very well. She started the committee there. And naturally she needed help. So as I had time and a the bicycle too, I went to the train stations whenever, I think, twice a week or so. I really forgot. That's so long ago,

I went to the train and picked people up, sometimes 20, sometimes 30, whatever came in. Then, I had a Japanese outfit which took their trunks. And then, we walked to the committee which took usually an hour. So we were eight o'clock to the committee.

And the committee looked at people's passports over, or papers, and some people got stuck there, and put them into hotels for the nights. And saw to them that they get fed. And some people, their visa expired because it took them too long to get out. So they needed somebody to go to with their passports to Tokyo.

And my father, in the meantime, and his wife got jobs in Tokyo. By the way, we had a very nice house in Kobe. My aunt rented us a house close to her. She rented a beautiful house for us, all furnished. And my brother went to a missionary school. He continued schooling. And my father naturally couldn't find jobs. It was very hard. And finally they got jobs, so they went to Tokyo.

And so I went with their passports and all that stuff by train, that bullet train, to Tokyo. Now, it took a day. And the nice part in Japan was I didn't have to worry because nobody would have taken anything away from me. That means because you were protected. Secret service were all around you. Could leave your trunk on the station, not like here, and nobody would take it because somebody looked after. They knew that.

And when people asked me for my card. They exchanged cards. They wanted to know who I am. That was all secret service. I knew already. Then, when people told me, you have a camera? And I said, yes. Why don't you take a picture from that? I knew there were installations not to take pictures. I mean, they wanted you to. I said, no, I'm not taking this. I mean, so you knew they were secret service.

So even if you go on the train with those valuable papers, you didn't have to worry that anybody would take them. So I got there. And then, we give that to the authorities there. Sometimes, I could take them back right away the next day, and sometimes not. Sometimes, it took longer because it took longer to get new visas or something like that.

So some people got stuck there. And now, the nice part was because some people didn't want to sleep on floors-- There are some hotels where people had to sleep on mats. And some people got some money from their relatives in America. And otherwise, they were--

I didn't feel to live this way. So we rented also in our house some of the rooms. So we made some extra money, my brother and I. And then, there was a couple once stuck there. And the committee threw them out because their remark was, you better take us because we have relatives in Tokyo, which they had was true, I found out later on. But the committee didn't go for that because they figured, everybody should go down the line.

And so they went to the station. And I helped them to get their tickets. And they said, there's such a nice fellow there who helps them in Tokyo. It was different in Kobe. In Kobe were the Russians-Jews in the majority. And Tokyo were the German-Jews in the majority. And they heard about me. And they knew me. So they asked me if I would come and help them over there.

And that was a paying job. And that means that--

What kind of help?

They needed me. One thing, many people who came through that trip via Russia, their main luggage never was on board at the same time. Because they could take their hand luggage and little things, but the main luggage, which was sometimes much, much bigger, there was not enough room. So sometimes it came a week or two weeks later.

And what I had to do was to take their receipts for their luggage. I had to take down where they're going, where they wanted to have it shipped. And that's what I did. So I took them. And then, they promised me actually the sky because that was all their belongings. Thank goodness I didn't need anything. And where they wanted it shipped.

So every morning after the trains came, I went with the Japanese expediter down to check the luggage. Some trunks they needed repair, not many but most of them were OK. And then, we looked if there is all the luggage together. And then, we shipped it wherever they went. And that was my duty.

And I was two months in that [INAUDIBLE]. That was a formerly export company. He meets us in Yokohama as a committee. So in two months, I shipped 4,000 pieces of luggage out. And it was a success story. And that committee was adjoined. They're very satisfied with me, hopefully, naturally.

They paid the trip for me on third class here to America. They also paid half the trip of my brother. And then now comes the story about the Leicas. My Hilde said, you know, we have those Leicas. We need some money to go to America. So as I was living in the YMCA in Yokohama, I mentioned that to some fellow if he knows of somebody who would like to buy some Leicas.

And next morning, he said, yes, I have somebody who would like to. How much it is? And I gave an outrageous price. I

thought because I get a counter offer, and it'll be half of who knows what. So what happened was, he came, yes, we take it for that price. So suddenly, I was acclaimed as the best salesman in Japan. I got that money which was naturally very helpful to the family.

Besides, when we were on the trip to Japan, we had board money I mentioned. And we bought some-- what was it? Not whisky and other stuff, a whole case of Scotch, British stuff. 12 bottles we bought with our money because we couldn't buy many other articles anyhow because we were very few people from London to Naples, until the main people came through.

We had a case. And that case stayed for us for quite some time. And one day, I found somebody to buy it. And I said to my dad, look here, we got terrific sum. That sum will take care for us several months living. And I'm going to the case. And a bottle is out. I said, what happened here?

I mean, I was 12. And my father said, yeah, here's half a bottle. I enjoy that too. Was I mad. I said, you could have bought some sake for it. But I mean, I can't understand what's this money anyhow. But he enjoyed that too. That's how we got some money too.

Then, I wanted to tell you before we entered Japan, we were in Shanghai. We had some ladies who took us in tow. They were ladies, married British ladies, married to Japanese business people. And they liked us. And they took us along. And they took us to the exchange in the streets for our money.

So we had our 40 Marks, or whatever it was going, on to 50 Pounds note. We got so much money suddenly in the exchange that we really could live for three months with that little money we had in Japan.

Was this the black market?

The black market. But I only see even so. There you can see. Now in that time what I paid at the YMCA was 25 yen a month. Nowadays, you can't even get a cup of coffee for it in Japan, or something like that. It's unbelievable how things changed. And so those things that helped us a lot, the Leicas and the Scotch whisky helped us to come here.

And my parents could buy their tickets. And they got a higher class. My father always took a higher class than we did because he figured then we could come up and say hello too. So that's how we landed here.

Could we go back--

Yes, sir.

--and can you tell when you began to be first conscious of being Jewish, being a problem in Germany for you?

Well, it started already in school-- I mean when the kids suddenly said, Heil Hitler. We didn't say, Heil Hitler. Very simple things, we were very conscious. Why did I get mangelhaft? I figured why I got mangelhaft often in German. We wrote something. I couldn't write, Heil Hitler. If I wrote two sentences, Heil Hitler, they gave me passing. I wrote two pages and didn't write Heil Hitler, I got mangled.

That's what I understand. My writing wasn't that bad. But that were my grades. And maybe I was not the best pupil, but I should have got passing grades. I mean, I wasn't that dumb.

So you could feel it in the school?

Oh. You could feel it everywhere. I mean, when you see those guys marching around there on the streets, it's--

Were you afraid?

I was never afraid. No. Afraid I was never. In a sense I'm still not afraid. I mean, I don't try to run into something. But

I'm not afraid. Otherwise, you couldn't do a darn thing if you're afraid consistently. No. I never was. Also in the Army, I was never afraid. I didn't feel good once in a while. But afraid I wasn't.

Naturally, you have certain things where you a little bit get more shaky. But really, afraid? No. Because if it happens, it happens. I mean those things you learn.

Were you aware of the political changes going on in the country as you were a teenager and growing up?

Oh. Sure. I mean, I couldn't date a Christian girl. I mean, right away you asked, what are you more or less? Even if you were in doubt, I mean, you didn't take that chance. Because even the girls who were very nice and are Christian got in trouble. You got them in trouble. I mean, there were some girls who also didn't think about that because they were brought up that way, like here.

But then, suddenly, you started to-- I came from a family which was not religious whatsoever. My great grandparents were very religious, I assume. My great great great great grandparents were religious because I saw on the gravestone that they were high in the Jewish community. But then, my family, no. But they never intermarried.

Did you observe the holidays?

Yes. I mean, a little bit, not too much really.

Tell us a little bit about what you remember.

Well, I don't remember too much. My father didn't care too much. But we were invited sometimes from friends of my father for Passover or those things. Yes. That we did. And I know there was a guy who made the mask, a mask of people at that time when they were still alive, like a mask for my father. So he was very religious. He invited us, so we took part. I mean, we enjoyed that because it helped. I mean, he wanted to show us the differences.

But we were, ourselves, not brought up that religious. All my classmates were not that religious as it seems.

Your classmates were are both Jews and non-Jews? Right?

Yes. It was close to half the class. I can show it to you. I have the-- No. I mean, I'm sure I was part of being Jewish, that I was. I wasn't telling somebody I was not Jewish. Some people didn't say it. I always, I mean-- that is one thing I never was hiding. Like I said, I was not afraid to tell people what I am. I am. That's what I am. Hitler told me what I am.

Do you remember the boycotts of the stores?

Yes. I remember the thing when the broke everything. I remember that distinctly. From that time on, that was it. That's when we really started to get active to get out because we went to every embassy to get papers, stood in line for hours. And when you were right there, they closed it. I mean, they had no feelings for the people.

You see, that's why in that time, I mean, personally I should never hate anybody. It was the British, it stuck in my mind. When I got to Britain, they gave me a [? list ?] I still have it. Don't speak too loud. Don't do this, don't do that. That's what the Britain gave. I have it. I have it. I have it in book, I mean, saved that nicely.

You didn't like that?

No. I didn't like that. I mean, I'm coming there, inside me on top of it right away, being afraid that I talk to loud. Big deal. So that stuck in my mind as a kid. And another thing is in Britain was so interesting, when I learned English in school. When you went on a bus, they didn't understand you, they let you sit on a bus. You could go and leave the bus and didn't take the money. Here they take the money first and then you get off. I mean whatever.

Did they stop your father from practicing law in Germany?

No. But I have now a German lawyer who told me, yes. So I mean, you see, that's where my memory goes haywire. I believe, he was a notary longer than he is supposed to be. I have to ask my Hilde who Is living now in Chevy Chase, Maryland, how long he practiced notary. Because I had a German lawyer just now here who told me, it's impossible.

Also he told me about my passport something which was very interesting. He told me that guy in Japan extended my passport for another year. That was not supposed to be. I should have been stateless then.

Do you know who it was that--

I have it in the passport.

Do you know the name of the person in Japan who gave you that extra time?

No. I have it stamped in my passport. I have-- [? still have ?] passport here. So no, I don't know. Now I find out things that shouldn't have been. But maybe in that time, he was told that maybe you should extend passport from people who still have affidavits. I don't know. Maybe. I don't know what [INAUDIBLE].

In that time, I was told that everybody had for one year the passport, one year. And you had to renew it. After a year, you renewed it. And that stamp is in.

You were talking about how your father would teach you things by talking to you and eating the salad and so on. As things began to get worse in Germany, did he talk about the political situation?

Yes. Sure, we talked about it. But I mean, he obviously had always excuses for change, I mean, in the beginning, not at the end. No. No. No. No. Then, he realized, he had to get out. Don't forget now, he was married. There's another person who wanted to get out.

Hilde?

I say, got married again. There was another person. He had not only two kids, he had also another person who said, let's get out. So that's how we got out. No. Then the interesting part is that my father here couldn't get a job. You want to hear that after we landed here? Or I don't know what you want to know.

A little more about Germany before we get here.

OK. All right. Germany.

Is her name Hilde?

Her name is Hilde. Now it's-- What is her name now? Carol. Yeah. Hilde. Which, I mean, I changed my name, that's another story, from Bauchwitz was our name to Bates.

You want to tell us that story?

OK. The story is also very interesting because it happened to this family. I was born Kurt Helmut Bauchwitz. And then when Hitler came, I became Kurt Helmut Israel Bauchwitz. It's in the passport because everybody became Sara or Israel. And that's how I left Germany. And then I came to the United States.

And just before we landed here in San Francisco, my father read-- read a book about a lawyer, Bellingham. And he said that's a good name. I will take that name. So they left me here. I was already one day in San Francisco. They suddenly left me here. And so I figured, well, that's what he wanted, Bellingham.

So my first job I got-- I landed December 9, 1940. And December 20, already had a job [INAUDIBLE] from door to

door. And my name became Kurt Helmut Bellingham. And they left my brother in Chicago. And my brother didn't give a damn about what my father said. He kept his name. His name was Till. Till is a name, Eulenspiegel was a famous character at one time. It was spelled T-I-L-L. Now he spells it T-Y-L-L because Till doesn't mean anything here. And he kept his name Bauchwitz.

So my father went to New York. And as he wrote articles, already under Bates. That means he wrote it under B-A-T-Z. He figured, he makes the first two letters from Bauchwitz, the last two letters from Bauchwitz. That Z became ES. Batz became Bates. Now we had three different names in this country.

That wasn't so hot. So I had to register for the draft. Because when we arrived here, I had to do two things right. On the next day after they left me, I registered to become a citizen and registered for the draft because I was 21 years of age. And therefore, I had to go under my legal name, Bauchwitz.

And after two and a half months here, I got a notice from the President Roosevelt to join the Army because anybody from 21 to 35 had to serve in this country. So as I was not really much established, I didn't really mind to serve one year in the service. So I got drafted here February 27, 1940. I landed December 9, 1940, and was in the Army February 27, 1941, two and a half months.

I got an-- OK, anyhow, I was now Bauchwitz again. So I got into different outfits. And I wound up actually into the Signal Corps. And the reason I got into the Signal Corps was very simple because I was a code clerk in Hamburg. And I mentioned about codes evidently. That's how I got into the Signal Corps.

And I got into to Fort Lewis, Washington. That was a National Guard outfit which was activated by President Roosevelt in the first draft. He got into this National Guard outfit. That's what I got into. And there was a Signal Corps where from Portland, Wyoming, all those places, that 41st Division. It was a National Guard outfit which was activated.

And mostly those kids came from Portland and Seattle and those things. And so I got in. I made lots of friends there because they were very intelligent people. That's why I was a Signal Corps. Now the war broke out. And so what do I have to do? I had to register in Tacoma as a classified enemy alien.

So I went down, got registered as a classified-- don't forget, I'm not one of the only ones. We had about 10,000 aliens in the Army already, some from friendly countries, some from not so friendly countries. All right.

You were considered an unfriendly country?

Non-friendly. I was an enemy country. I got registered in Tacoma, Washington. There was a lovely girl there. She took me down, stamped me, and said, look here, what you do next Saturday? I said, nothing. She said, I invite you to my house. Yes. Yes. Come to my house. All right.

So I came with that [? wish ?] to my officer. I said, look here. I can go over bridges. I can have a gun. I can have short waves. I can have this. He said, you are in the Army. Forget about it. OK? So then, I forgot about it. On that Saturday, I come to the house, to that house. Thank goodness, I brought some flowers along.

Come to this house, there were servicemen from the Navy, from the Marines, from the Air Corps, myself. We were all invited by that little lady. Who was that little lady? She was the daughter of the mayor of Tacoma, Washington. They invited all of the foreigners for a venison-- I think it was venison dinner. So I mean, I had a wonderful time with them. They were lovely people. And that's how I started.

Now this company got activated to go overseas. And General DeWitt, I never will forget that. I mean, I know that he was the commander on this course. He yanked me out of my company because I was born in Germany, living in Japan, double jeopardy. Right? My Signal Corps tried everything to get me along because I, at least, spoke a few Japanese words or could understand them. But they couldn't get me.

And I was very much offended. I really was offended. I went to my father. I said, I made all my friends that first year. I

made all my friends here in his company. Now they yank me out and I can't go along. And so I never will forget what he wrote. He said, you never know what's good for you. Whenever I was down in the dumps, I always remembered that because none of the Signal Corps came back.

They went to the Far East. They either got shot, wounded, or had malaria. Not one person came healthy back. And I went to Africa, came back healthy. So that's why he gave me the right words. Whenever I felt in the dumpster, he said, you never know what's good for you. And that's right.

So then, what did they do to me now? We got out in the casual outfit, yanked out. There were all those Germans, those Japanese, Italians in Fort Lewis, Washington. We were there, I think, only a day or two. They didn't know what to do. Should they discharge us? Or should they keep us? But they decided, which was very smart, that 99.9% would be lawyer, so they put us in different outfits.

Now what did they do to me? That was the worst thing which they could have done to me was that they put me in an outfit to round up the Japanese. I was classified enemy alien. I rounded up American citizens and Japanese aliens and brought them to Puyallup, Washington, and guarded some of my life. That's what I had to do.

And then, our government had-- that's another thing which I could never understand. It took some 20 or 30 years to compensate some of them finally, and not everybody because so many people died. And then, they didn't had enough money to give everybody. And I felt very lousy for it. So anyhow, I brought some later on after this to Idaho where they had huge camps where all the Japanese stayed. It was quite a few months.

And then, they put me in a different outfit and send me to San Luis Obispo. And there, I became an MP. Naturally, in the military police they're usually a little bit taller than I am. I was one of the smallest. But I was fairly strong for my size, thank goodness. And so they put me in. I didn't know what they were doing for me.

So first, they put me into guarding an outfit to guard the bridge in Longview, Washington, with my life. But we had to do is when people crossed that bridge, which was a toll bridge, we had to ask them, do you have a camera? Or do you have a gun? Which many people had and if they had it, we had to put that stuff into the trunks so that they could go across the bridge. And that was my duty.

And then, they put me once on the main span at night time. And a car came up. And I challenge this car because it stopped. And he said, who is there? I had to ask. That's what I learned. Who is there? And advance to be recognized. And he says, the General so-and-so. I said, advance, General so-and-so, and pointed the gun at him.

He said, well, would you have shot me if I wouldn't. I said, sure, I would have shot you. And then he asked me, what did you know about that gun? I said, I don't know very much about this gun because they just usually use pistols and Tommy guns. And therefore, just learned a little bit about it.

So he went down. He complains that that guy didn't learn the gun. But besides, he was the only one who challenged him. And I should get a promotion. That's what he said. But they didn't like me then. After that, they got me into another outfit. So I became a company clerk for a limited service because I could type. They found out I could type a little bit which I learned myself in Japan.

So I became an outfit for limited service. In some places in the country where they couldn't get people, like California had enough people, but like Oklahoma. So then, they took people with had a little finger missing or a little bit hard of hearing. They could do certain chores. And that's where I stayed for a few months too, became a company clerk there.

And I knew who was a gambler. Some people were gamblers by profession. So when they played dices and knew I went along with them to make my $1, $2 a night or something, and quit. I had a few dollars extra. Because in that time already, made out an allotment for my father because my father couldn't get a job.

And what happened was, so I supported him half. That means they took $22 out of my pay. I got $50 after the Great War broke out. And $22 they took out of my pay. And $15 the government gave. My brother joined the Army in

Chicago. He did the same thing. So my father was the richest man in that time because he got 74 bucks a month because most people didn't even make that.

With this he lived near the Hudson River in a nice apartment. He went to Columbia University because they offered him, if you made a BS degree as a librarian, then they can use him for the Office of War information. But he needed that degree. So that's why you went to Columbia. And we two sons supported our father. And that was just the other way around. Mostly parents send their kids to college. But we sent our father through college. And that is how we got started here.

Did that feel good to support him?

Yes. We always sent him sometimes extra money besides. I mean, I don't know. We managed in spite. You see, through my little gambling things, I had a little extra money. So whenever when there was a birthday or something, I sent him some too. It wasn't very much but it helped. But my father knew all the good restaurants in New York. I mean, he knew everything.

When I visited him once on a Furlough or something like that, he took me to a Chinese restaurant of eight-course dinner for $0.40 or something like that. I mean, he knew everything. A French restaurant was $0.75, excellent food. So I mean, he lived well. And he studied. And he was good in those things.

Was he happy here in this country?

Oh. Yeah, my father. I told you, my father could live with money and without money. Same thing my aunt. That's called in German Lebenskuenstler. That's people that you would never hear about something, that they had something or lost it, like many people do. Never. He was fine. He never had the $100,000, he never made during his lifetime, I don't think.

But he lived very well always and enjoyed life. My father enjoyed life very much. He later on, he became even a lawyer in this country again. I mean, so he enjoyed that. He lived his life over again because he wrote a book. He wrote a book that called-- during his Army time, the living. It's called Der Lebendige. There was verse in five acts. It was a book, you had to have a background, which I don't have. You have to know Schiller, Goethe, and all those people, to understand many of those things what he wrote.

But it's very well written, very interesting. I understand certain things. And he gives that book out. He published it. And promptly, the church and other organizations, at that time without Hitler, banned the book because it contained too much, which nowadays doesn't mean a darn thing, about sex and other things. And therefore, we had our seller. And I wrote down in my own little notes, that was a best cellar because it wound up in the cellar.

And we got each book. Each of us got the book. I have one.

What year did he publish that?

1920 or something like that. I have it. But the thing is also, one book wound up in the library in New York. And that's where the fun started with him in the last years of his life. I mean like I told you, he became a lawyer again. One guy read this book. And he wondered if that Bauchwitz still existed. And he found my father. I don't know how.

So with my father together, he discovered himself and was first published in Dayton, Ohio, at the University. And it was excerpts. And that started out the ball rolling because it was published in Switzerland and Germany again. And so my father, suddenly in the end of his life, he started his own life again, reliving his life, writing letters, writing--

Like I said, he was a lawyer. He became a international lawyer. He mostly prepared those cases like patents, or cases which international-- he prepared it, so the other people could bring it out. But besides, he was a lawyer, which he never lost the German lawyer. He became the official lawyer for the German Consulate in Boston because he moved to Boston.

Met-- he married his third wife. She came from Massachusetts. So he moved to Massachusetts. So when he became a lawyer again when he was 62, I think, or 60, of New York. Then, he passed the bar with 72 in Massachusetts. He probably was the oldest lawyer who ever passed that bar. And he was a lawyer from Germany. So we had a wonderful time.

I better take some water. Excuse me.

Is this a good time to break?

No. We have another half hour.

We got half an hour?

Excuse me.

Why did Hilde want to leave Germany? She was not Jewish. Right?

Hilde Michaelis? Sure. That was his wife. Sure she was Jewish. They were all Jewish, except the last one.

What became of Hilde? Let's go back to her.

Hilde? Well, Hilde Michaelis, you see that's one of the sad parts that's also from Hitler. You can see that. When my father was in Tokyo, he lived in an apartment complex. And there was a woman living who had a son, Mr. Strauss. That was a mother. And she liked Hilde. I don't know why.

And Mr. Strauss wasn't too happy with his wife. Good-looking woman, she still lives here in San Francisco. And she had two boys. And she wanted that Hilde meets her son, which she did. Now, that's where the tragic story starts. Mr. Strauss was a businessman. Besides, he worked for RCA Victor Corporation. I mean, he later on became a director, or whatever there was.

And he promised Hilde that she would save her father. He went to Theresienstadt with my aunts. Excuse me. And more or less the condition was that she marries him. That was blackmail in reverse. And she figured, well, after all, she wants to save her father. So she married him.

Did she save her father?

No. He got the papers to come out and didn't come out. But she had my father all the time. If she needed clothing to wash, or something like that, or needed money, he gave it. And this guy, when they came to this country-- That's why I said, my father visited me during my Army time. Because on April before my birthday, I know he visited me and was in Fort Lewis, Washington, when I was only short term in the Signal Corps, I got a pass. I still have that pass.

I went to Seattle because after six weeks in Reno, or wherever he went, and he sent also his wife to Reno. That guy had enough money to pay for both of them. Both of them got divorced from each spouses. But Hilde always looked out for my father, always, until he got married. And that was the end.

But my father really shouldn't have married that woman which he did. I mean, I still call her. But she's also not-- but what can I do. I mean, she was an intelligent woman, let's say it this way. That was the attraction. She was a schoolteacher writer and highly intelligent but over the board with her talent. As you know, I mean, she's a little bit crazy.

But so that's where my father went up in Massachusetts. When Kennedy moved to the White House, he moved to Massachusetts.

What happened to the relatives that you mentioned in Germany before? Were they able to get out as well?

I had an uncle. My uncle, the brother of my mother, happened to be a lawyer too. So my father was very choosy with his clients because he really didn't needed anybody but he did. I mean, so he took all of the cases he enjoyed, were a little bit enjoyable. The other ones he gave to his brother-in-law. It was my uncle.

And I didn't remember about it much, but my uncle and my cousin, both cousins, my girl cousin and my ex-wife went to France. And she stayed in France. The cousin, I still go to him in France. But his sister, who was close to nine years younger, I didn't know her to well, she wound up in Israel.

And the nice part for us is, when we went to Israel in '72, I was so happy. My wife has relatives here. I finally found that I have a cousin in Israel. So I wrote to them. And this guy, this fellow, and he works in the foreign office. His name was Carter Lievers. And he was a French writer. And he worked in the French foreign office.

And he wrote me a sad note that my cousin just passed away, 42 years old, cancer or something like that. But I met her children. So that's the relatives, my close one.

What happened to the cousin in France? Did they survive?

He survived the war. I mean, he had his own company. And my aunt had a bakery chain in Paris. She had several big-- she suddenly went into bakeries and had several chains there. And he survived. He married, had three kids. But he married a non-Jewish woman. But one of his daughters married again a Jewish guy. And the others didn't.

But I have not very much contact, except from Israel, the cousins there in contact. Yes.

What about the aunts in Paris? How did she make it through the war?

She went through the war which was-- I don't know how they made it. But they lived in Lyons too. I only know in Paris, she had that bakery chain. And I don't really too much, except I saw pictures when I was in Israel from what is her niece. Her niece, she showed me the picture of my aunt.

And the niece is a very interesting people because she was an ambassador in Romania from Israel. And she was also in Canada. I don't think she was an ambassador or something like that. But she worked for the embassy there. And her husband is a businessman.

And her brother was one of those fighter pilots during the war there. He came out and visited us. He had a wife also, a wife from French descent. She is a doctor. And they were sent by Israel to Hong Kong to open up the China market for Israel because he is a professor in economy. And then, he was sent to Beijing afterwards. Now, I think he's back in Israel. So I have an interesting family in that respect.

My uncle opened up the company here, an export company during the time that my aunt was here. My aunt got stuck during the war years with that son. And Hawaii and Japan, they got also bombed out. After the war, they needed somebody to buy pearls for the U.S. Army. And she applied for the, job not knowing a darn thing about pearls, I mean, except buying it.

And she went to the Japanese [? pearl ?] [? king-- ?] what is it? I forgot the name. It was N something. Anyhow, she went to him. And she said, you know, they might hire me to buy pearls. I don't know a thing. So he told her this black pearls costs this much. And a sarong pearls, as a cultured pearls like he invented. And he showed her. And she passed the test. And she bought hundreds of thousands of dollars worth for the U.S. Army in pearls.

And when she arrived here after the war, when I was already out of the Army, she arrived here. And she was full with pearls because he gave her that as a bonus. And she bought in Woodstock of all places, a place with some cabins on it, 3/4 of an acre with several cabins on it. She bought that all with pearls, also her first car and everything with pearls. We still got some pearls.

Was your uncle here?

Yeah. My uncle had an import company. He was a broker. In between, they get a certain percentage. They had samples. And people bought. He had a very successful business here. But my aunt and my uncle never really got together again after that war because my aunt was also 13 years younger than my uncle. And that he left her there high and dry, that probably didn't do so much either for the thing.

So this is all the sad parts of Hitler, Germany. That is part of it. And during my Army time, naturally, they had to do something with me after I was in that limited service. They put me in an outfit. I was a week in that outfit. And we were 26 guys. And suddenly, we got orders to get shipped. And we were shipped to New York area. I'm not sure what's that place, where they shipped troops out. And I was shipped overseas.

I went on the Liberty ship. Also about a month and something with a convoy of 52 ships, overseas. I was a military police. And they were all military police. And then, I found out why we 26 guys were chosen because we spoke all languages. That means, we spoke German. We spoke French. We spoke Spanish. We spoke Italian. All the languages we needed for prison escorts. That's what I did.

What year was this?

I got shipped overseas. I became a citizen in April 7, '43, I believe, in Tacoma, Washington. And then, '43, took me to Africa. And I had a wonderful time. I took German or Italian prisoners to the realigns, to the stockades. After they were taken prisoners, I had to bring them back.

The first time was not such a success. They gave me about 50 prisoners, German prisoners. In a Jeep, I had a driver. And I was the guy with a Tommy gun. And I always had a Tommy gun and a pistol. I got 50. Counted them off. In the desert, you have 50 people behind you. They walked behind you. I got there. And I lost about 15 at least.

I arrived there, I said I got a court martial-- desert, nothing. I came there. Officer-- I stuttered there with my German and English. And I was so nervous. The guy laughed at me. I said, look here. I got to sign out for 50. And that's what I brought back. He said, you did very well. So what are you complaining?

I said to him, does that happen all the time? He said, yeah, sure. But you don't also have to worry. One thing is, number one, the guys will die for thirst in that desert, or they will get picked up by the Arabs, who also have only one bullet in their rifles to shoot them, or they become prisoners again.

Next time, they gave me about 200 Italian prisoners. Counted them more or less. Brought them back. Had about 250 [INAUDIBLE], just the opposite. That's how I learned.

How did it feel for you to be an MP rounding up German prisoners?

First of all, I felt very good. But those guys accused me being a traitor because I spoke better Germans than they did. Because they always figured, even if you were born in the United States, which they didn't know, they couldn't judge, then you were from German descent. You should have followed Hitler. And therefore, you are a traitor.

So they had no way of knowing that you were Jewish.

Well, I didn't announce it. I mean, this I didn't do.

Was it difficult for you to be rounding up your former countrymen?

No.

No.

First of all, I had to learn German orders. I told them [INAUDIBLE] I mean, on face, I didn't know. I mean, one non-commissioned officer told me what to do, how you tell that. So I had one word for like we have, [INAUDIBLE] about face or something like that. I didn't know that. I never learned those things. I learned everything in English.

Now, when I came into the service, my English was not very good in the first place. I learned all my English, what you hear now, that is the English I learned in the Army. I learned all the swear words first, naturally. But I knew what was right and wrong. I never used them. Even I can understand nowadays if my kids use it. But that's how it works. So I knew what was right and wrong.

I learned everything really in the Army, my English. I had guys in my first outfit, they couldn't speak English. I said, where are you from? Pennsylvania. Never spoke German. They had to learn English also in the Army. You see, we had guys from-- the little guys, I was not afraid of anybody. You asked, I'm afraid. They had respect because I wasn't afraid.

You know what they happened to be? They were all boxers. I didn't know they were boxers. So I wasn't afraid. Number one, I learned also boxing. I was not a good boxer. But I mean, I learned judo in Japan. I mean, I learned to defend myself in a way. I'm not that good. But I only say I learned myself. So I certainly think, first of all, I was fairly strong.

Another thing is that I was not like now, where you have to use a cane once in a while. I could outrun anybody. I could run away if it was too much for me. So I really that's the reason I was not really afraid. If it was too much for me, I could run. Nobody could catch me, really. That's what I felt at least. So that's all those things.

I mean, there's so many things in life people will tell you. We all have that-- There's so much. You can't put in few words.

So you were an enemy alien who was drafted into the Army?

No. I was not enemy alien. I was to become a citizen. OK?

Yes.

All right. Now, my problem was very simple this. I applied for my citizen first papers which never caught up with me. Because whenever they had the papers ready for me, I have even letters written by the officers from command. He claims, he is an American citizen, I had never claimed anything, claims that he applied. I had because I paid in that time $3 or $5 for that. I had. That's a number.

I never got my first papers. I actually only became a citizen. But I never caught up with them. They were all over. When I was in Fort Lewis, I went to maneuvers in King City. And then they sent it to San Francisco. I have all those things. I can show it to you. I mean, I have it at home. I only say, never caught up with me. So classified enemy alien you became when the war started, not before.

Yes. I see. But letting you be an MP and rounding up German prisoners in Africa, they certainly--

I wasn't a citizen then.

Yes. They certainly trusted you by that kind of behavior.

Well, sure. But the French didn't trust me. We had to take box cars with German prisoners to different places. And then, the French intelligence, that guy has an accent, I mean, I never lost my accent, and where is he from? Then they had to say, baloney, he's an American. Otherwise, we wouldn't have him.

I knew that. I mean, I didn't worry about this. But I only see, the intelligence was there that sometimes you were not trusted by others. You see, the box cars was written 32 men or human or eight horses.

Would you like to know what happened in those box cars? I can tell you stories too. I'm a guard on box car. I sit down

[INAUDIBLE]. And then, we go over mountains at nighttime.

Are you inside the box car?

No. I was somewhere else. But I was inside something which was covered too. But inside those box cars, they burned with cigarettes or cigars or whatever they had, big hole, and they fell down on the thing. And then suddenly, you open the box car up, maybe three people out of 32 in. We lost some on the way.

No court martial for that?

No. How can you? At nighttime, one train was in front and one was in the rear, he pulled up those things and then let themselves go. I mean, the question is, they survived or didn't survive? More often, they didn't survive, don't forget. Or how would you feel, you're in Casablanca and you are guarding the stockade outside. And they tell you, tomorrow you will be in the stockade.

You know why? Because they just learned through the radio, I don't know how they got it, but they had information that Franco let Hitler go through Spain. So tomorrow I would be in. But they didn't realize, the next day I guarded the president. By the way, I guarded the President Roosevelt several times. Now, if the FBI would have known that, in the first time they would really have wondered.

Because before the war started, he went to Vancouver. That's Vancouver, Washington, not the other Vancouver. There was an aluminum factory. And he came to inspect it or visit, I don't know what the reason was. They give me my famous Tommy gun and my gun pistol. I accompanied the car. Me. I mean, all those things.

I mean, nowadays, they would have said, well, how can they do that? The officer assigned me to that post. That's what I did. I wasn't the only one. But I mean, I only say [INAUDIBLE]. How would you think, when you walked on in Fort Lewis, Washington, right after the war broke out with another fellow and spoke to him. Probably loud which you shouldn't.

And guy officer come, we saluted him. We pass by. And he turned around. He said, by the way, you're not here very long. I said, yes. You are correct, sir. He said, you know I'm from German-Swiss descent. You know, he told me that [INAUDIBLE]. By the way, I'm from German-Swiss descent. My name is Colonel Eisenhower. That was the only time I got close to a president. I mean, all those little things.

So I mean, you can tell stories. When I came back from overseas, I was stationed in the Prisoner of War Camp. When I came back in Fort Lewis, Washington, I became also a company clerk for the prisoners. I paid some $3 a month on $0.40 a day if they worked. That means they got coupons for that stuff.

And the interesting part of our company was that everybody was a different nationality, so the Germans could see our country. I mean, we had Austria. We had an Indian. We had every nationality, Black, everything we had in our company. So my people, I paid I guess $3 a month and $0.40 if they went to Walla, Washington, to pick apples or some stupid thing. And I had to pay them that.

And then, the nice part was in their exchange, they could buy things we couldn't buy it in our exchanges. For instance, they had Swiss typewriters, those little ones, beautiful typewriters. They could buy. We couldn't buy it in our-- I mean, stupid things that can only happen in this country.

Then, I was once sick. I had a throat infection. And instead of sending me to some sick [? corps ?] somewhere else, no, they said, you go into the stockade. There's a doctor [? in, ?] [? sure. ?] I went into the stockade. In the stockade, the doctor is an American doctor naturally. But the heads were all Germans.

So they ask you this stupid question, where you're born? Now, what would you say? I said Berlin, Pennsylvania. I wouldn't say-- I do not get painted by the German prisoner with that red stuff in my throat. Here this country did many stupid things. And I never--

Naive.

Yeah. Very, I mean, stupid, absolutely stupid. So that's my life. So I mean, what else do you want to hear? No. I mean, when I came out of the service naturally-- I knew only two girls before I got into the service. And naturally, one got engaged. And one wrote me a Dear John letter in Africa. And I'm still friends with her, by the way.

And she did do me a favor. I didn't know anybody. And very few Jewish girls were in San Francisco in that time. Anyone who couldn't come from New York or so, regardless of pretty or not pretty or whatever, they got married right away. So I waited for-- how many years? I got out in '45. I was close to five years in the service. October 31 in 1945 I got out.

So I got a job. And then, in '47, I met somebody at a Hanukkah dance or some dance here. And so I waited for a girl. I waited for shipload from Shanghai. That's where I met my wife, at a dance. I've never danced with her. But I got the address. She just came over. Her mother was living in a hotel. And that's how I became friends.

You went to the dance knowing that?

No. I didn't know. I had to date. I went there. And how would you feel? A girl smiles at you. No. So I really went over there. I said, you must know me. I mean, but I can't place you. But she evidently smiled at everybody, I assume. So she said, she came from Shanghai. I said, oh. I went to Shanghai on the way to Japan.

But then, it occurred to me, I probably wouldn't have looked at her because a girl who's half my age in that time more or less-- I mean, I might have looked at her, but never thought of anything. So I naturally couldn't have remembered her from that time. So that's how we started.

How old were you then?

When I married her? I was 30.

And how old was she?

20. Around that time. 20, 21. And we're married 46 years. So I don't know if I told you the things you want to hear, or you--

You did fine. We probably should take a break.

Yeah. We can do that.

And we'll talk about any missing parts. We'll come back and talk more.

I thought you said you wanted to see some picture.

Yes. We'll see them at the end.

I don't know if I brought you the right pictures. I don't know. I was very fortunate.