Interview with CARL HAMMERSCHMIDT
Holocaust Oral History Project
Date: 11-14-90 Place: San Francisco, CA
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MS. BACKOVER: Today is Wednesday, November 14th, 1990. I'm Judith Backover of the Holocaust Oral History Project of San Francisco.

Today I'm interviewing Carl Hammerschmidt. Also with us today are Peggy Poole and Judy Colligan.

GOOD MORNING, CARL.

A: Good morning.

Q: I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU TO BEGIN BY TELLING US WHERE AND WHEN YOU WERE BORN.

A: I was born in Berlin on February 18, 1914.

Q: AND CAN YOU TELL US WHAT LIFE WAS LIKE IN BERLIN AS A CHILD?

A: Well, it was a nice place. Everything was all right, but then came the inflation and it was difficult. Then afterwards Hitler came, and you know what that mean.

We had a big family, and a niece of mine, with her children, and we -- and I, my parents and my sister got out, and all the rest of the family vanished, and that was it. There was nobody left.

Then in '39 we left Germany. My father was in prison for eight weeks. He had an export business, and the money didn't come in, so they locked him up. They are afraid he would leave Germany and collect the money, and

they waited until the money came in. And that's the reason he left; otherwise he never would have left. He said, "Why should I leave? I am a better German than Hitler. He isn't even a German. Why should I?"

So we left in '39 over Holland. We had to catch a boat in mid-stream. It was a German ship in Antwerp. It was in Antwerp. We got it in [ ]. We had to take a boat to get on it.

Then we stopped in England, and a German purser and captain signed the paper for my father to get a loan with the life insurance he had in England. So, not all Germans were bad, you know.

Same year, I was in Panama, and we intended to go to Bolivia. We had everything packed. We had a five meter lift and 16 boxes, and we had a free harbor in Hamburg, and after they left, war was declared. We never saw anything of it. Everything went back and vanished. So we intended to go to Bolivia. We bought a visa in France from the consul. When we came to Panama they said, "That won't get you in. That country gave out much more visas than it was entitled to."

So we had one month's time in Panama with transit visa. We found out how we could stay there and -- they said, "If you work three years in agriculture you can stay here; otherwise, back you go." So we stayed in Panama for three years, and after three years we had to extend it

for another three years. And in '41 we got a visa from friends of my father to go to the States, and we went to the U.S. consulate, and he said, "We are so near war, I can't let anybody in anymore. You have to wait until the war is over." And that was the end of it.

In Panama the life was -- I don't know. We bought a small farm, stayed there for six years. It was very hard. We had about ten -- it was a coffee farm. We had about ten -- what do you call it -- hundred-pound bags of coffee. It was a crop. The government bought it, or you could keep one bag for yourself. And they paid you ten dollars in advance, and three or four dollars in the end of the -- when they sold it.

And we had to pay -- we had to catch baskets, it's about twenty baskets, larders, to get three and a half larders of finished coffee that you can sell the beans. There's a lot of work involved in it.

You have to clean the trees, and you have to pick them. Then you have to [ ] them. Then you dry them, and after they are dried you have to take the [ ] skin off, and then they are ready for sale.

We had a house on the farm. The roof was sheet metal. It was all rusted. The floor, you could go right through it. We lived there for six years. We brought some people there, and they fixed -- he bought, cut some lumber on the farm, and we fixed the house up and we lived in

there. And we had windows there, but no glass or nothing. Toilet, we didn't have -- to build one. Water, we didn't have. We had to build a well, dig a well. It wasn't very easy.

Then that money what we got from -- didn't make it most of the time. We had three horses, and they want to eat, too. So we had a heck of a time. We bought these 15-ounce tins of sardines, four dozen for a dollar. That's what we lived off sometimes. Rice, sometimes we couldn't afford it. We bought it from the mill for the horses, the -- what do you call it -- the broken rice and the shells, you know. We ate the rice, and the horses ate the shells.

Then we had sugar cane. We had pineapples. We had bananas on the farm. And we planted grapefruit, naval oranges, and we made something out of the farm. It took us six years, but it wasn't bad.

It was a rough time, that's all I can tell you. No electricity for sure. The water was about a hundred yards from the house where we dug the well. We had to carry it, and that was it. Electricity, nothing; gas, nothing; telephone, nothing. It's a different world, but we made it.

In '46 we came to the States. We stayed in New York for -- we landed in Florida, and I thought: Tropics, phew. It was nothing. Florida is a mess. That heat -- we stayed there from 10:00 o'clock at night to 7:00 o'clock

the next morning. We are sweating all the time. We didn't know what to do. I wouldn't go back to that place if you give me a ticket for free.

Then we stayed eight years in New York, and my mother worked in a [ ] hospital for about six years of that time. She enjoyed it. I started a job there in a furniture factory for $35.00 a week. And then I came here. I couldn't get in the job I had -- I worked in Germany in photography, commercial, and a dental technician, but I couldn't get in here; nothing possible.

They said, "We need somebody that makes one certain part of everything." They put me in a place like a fox, you know. There were six people sitting here, six on this side, and a conveyor belt in the middle to develop the copies, expose the copies, and they fell in a tank. That was it. Get me out.

I made it for twenty minutes and I said, "Good bye," and that was it. That's the job they wanted to give me.

Then I learned refrigeration in New York. I came out of school after half a year. Everybody asked: "You got five years' experience?" I didn't have it. I couldn't say yes. I would get a face like that, you know.

I started installing air conditioners in the windows, and then later on I worked in a big apartment house with 200 apartments as maintenance. Then I came

here. I worked at two big companies for five, six years each, and then, "Good bye."

As soon as you get your three week's or four week's vacation you are too expensive, so they farmed the work out, close the department up, and half a year later they open it up as new crew, and that was it. [ ] number one, and the captain, the admiral; the same thing. I was disgusted. I worked in a small company afterwards.

There isn't very much more to tell you, I think. Ask a question if you want anything else.

Q: I'D LIKE TO GO BACK TO PRETTY CLOSE TO THE BEGINNING AND ASK YOU TO TALK ABOUT YOUR CHILDHOOD.

DESCRIBE WHAT IT WAS LIKE; WHAT YOUR FAMILY LIFE WAS LIKE, WHAT LIFE WAS LIKE BEING A YOUNGSTER IN BERLIN.

A: Oh, we had a nice family life. We were my father, my mother and my sister. My sister left in '36 already. She went to South Africa. She got married in Holland, and then she went to South Africa. She has four children; I never married. And that was it.

We went to a synagogue every holiday and every weekend in Berlin, and we had a synagogue in our house in Panama, too, when we lived in the town. Afterwards, after we moved up in the hills, that was the end of it. We got [ ] together with some Turkish Jews there.

I don't know what else you want to . . .

Q: WHAT KIND OF EDUCATION DID YOU HAVE AS A CHILD; WHAT KIND OF SCHOOL DID YOU GO TO?

A: I went to public school and then, what do you call it -- gymnasium afterwards. I was 25 when we left Germany. I was sick in the meantime in Germany. I had a -- what do you call it? I had an infection in the spine. They put me in bed for a year and a half, in a cast from here to here [indicating]. It was no fun. That was '35, '36. Then the doctor said, "You can't drive; you can't write; you can't lift; you can't do this, you can't do that."

I could do everything on the farm. There was no choice. Then the roads in Panama, I'm telling you. We were up in the hills about twelve hundred meters. Roads from the farm down to the village, clay and rocks.

Every winter we had to go down, and during the rainy season the houses were sliding on the -- back down the hills. That was it. No roads, no paved roads, and the [ ] you [ ] you cut off the side of the road and filled it in again for the next season, you know. Yeah, It was about a half an hour trip from the farm to the village.

There were some nice people in Panama, some Americans who had a hotel. We sold them eggs sometimes, and we bought oranges and stuff like that, you know, twenty-five cents a dozen eggs, a dollar for oranges, a hundred naval oranges; potatoes, a hundred pounds, a

dollar.

We had a problem with growing things, then came the wind. It twisted everything off. It wasn't easy. Then came the deer, and they ate the vegetables. That's the way it goes. That's farm life.

Anything else?

Q: WHEN DID YOU FIRST START NOTICING, WHEN YOU WERE IN BERLIN, WHEN DID YOU FIRST START NOTICING THAT THINGS WERE CHANGING, THAT LIFE MIGHT BE A LITTLE DANGEROUS FOR THE JEWS?

A: It was in '31, something like that, just started already, but '31 -- and '33 they got on -- you couldn't talk. You had to look around, somebody around.

It wasn't easy, I'm telling you. A lot of parents vanished. The children said in school: My father said such and such, and he vanished, and that was it. Never saw them again.

It wasn't easy. I think that's about it.

Q: WHAT WAS SAID IN YOUR HOUSE?

A: Huh?

Q: WHAT WAS SAID IN YOUR HOUSE WHEN THINGS STARTED TO CHANGE? WHAT WAS THE DISCUSSION LIKE?

A: You couldn't talk much outside. We was afraid, that's all. We never know. Somebody said you did such and such, and you never know you come back or not.

Q: SO HOW AND WHEN WAS THE DECISION MADE TO LEAVE

GERMANY?

A After my father was in prison for six, eight weeks, about, we intended to move. Then you had to get all the papers that you paid your taxes and that you can get out. And then you had to leave with ten marks. That's about two and a half dollars. That's all they gave you for a person. That's all you could take out.

And my father had a heck of a time to get the people to pay. They wouldn't pay. He had some money outside, and some business friends came. He paid their bills in Berlin, and they kept the money for him outside, and sometimes we got it and sometimes we never got it.

There was one guy who took something out for us to Amsterdam and they locked him up before we left; he was in prison. We couldn't get to the stuff, and that was it. There was money involved. There was jewelry involved, and some suitcases. We saw them, but we couldn't get them out because we didn't have an authorization. Then money what was outside was mostly used to pay off what the Germans wanted.

My father said, "Why don't you take the merchandise and sell it, do whatever you want to do with it." They wouldn't take it. They want the money.

So most of the money we had outside was used to pay the bills off. But my father had life insurance in England -- I told you before -- and we got about a thousand

dollars out of that, and the Germans were very nice on the ship.

But another thing you can't understand, there was one colored guy, a lawyer from Trinidad on the ship, and they wouldn't let him eat with us [ ]. There was, what, six or eight families on the ship, refugees. You have to [ ] after that.

Then we stayed in Kurasau [phonetic] for a week, about. We couldn't get any passage from Kurasau to Panama. The ship left only -- went only to Kurasau, and we stayed there a week, and then we went a big --

Nobody got seasick on a small ship. It was about three-and-a-half thousand ton. Afterwards we got in a seventeen thousand ton, and my mother was seasick from start to the finish. She says, "That's the last time we go on a ship."

Then we stayed about two, three weeks in [ ] first. Then we went to Panama, and from Panama my father went up in the country. It's about 18 hours in a station wagon on a gravel road to get to the capitol of that province where the coffee growing part of Panama is in the north, and he bought a farm, six acres.

There should be about seven thousand trees on it. There were two thousand trees on it. The rest was all dead and way up high. Nobody could reach them, you know; overgrown, never used for over seven years. There was only

bush left, nothing else. Some trees were barely alive, you know. It was a hard time.

Anything else?

Q: WHAT DID YOU AND YOUR FAMILY KNOW ABOUT FARMING WHEN YOU GOT TO PANAMA?

A: I didn't know nothing about farming. My father was in -- by Berlin they had -- my grandfather had a farm. That's what I know, but I didn't know anything about farming, especially coffee. Who knows something about coffee? You live and learn, that's all. You have no choice.

Anything else you want to know?

Q: YOU SAID -- YOU MENTIONED THAT THERE WAS A SMALL SYNAGOGUE OF SORTS IN PANAMA?

A: We had one. All the Jewish people in our neighborhood came together for the Holy Days.

Q: ABOUT HOW MANY JEWISH FAMILIES OR INDIVIDUALS WERE --

A: And we had one family wanted to -- had to farm, too. They came to us, and the lady came with [ ] gloves picking the weeds, you know. That didn't work out too good.

And then I was selling dry goods in Panama for about a year for a cousin of mine who lived in Panama City. He had a business there, wholesale. And one day shortly before Christmas I sent them telegrams about the orders, that they get them in time.

There was a customer by the name of [ ] and they figured out that this [ ], and they had perfumes with code numbers, numbers and letters mixed, so I was a spy. So they locked me up.

(Interviewee laughs.)

I was in prison for about seven days. I said, "Gentlemen, if you want to see where the numbers come from, here's my sample. Look at them."

"No, we don't do that. We checking it out ourself."

So I was in prison, very nice prison; running water, electricity. Marvelous, I'm telling you.

(Interviewee laughs.)

And I knew the cops there, and I told them, "Go up to my parents and tell them I wouldn't come home for a week, about, but -- they went up there, too, and told them. So the funny part happens, too.

I had all the merchandise with me, you know, the samples, but they said no, and that was it. I had a good time. When I want to go to eat, I got company. You go out to eat, the cop was on my side, and that was it. I didn't mind.

And my father had problem with -- he cut wood, and he got a splinter in his leg, and then he got varicose veins and he got maggots in it, and that was awful. [ ] probably when he came here.

And he was maybe about eight weeks in quarantine in the -- not in quarantine. In the Canal Zone, during the war they picked all the Germans up, you know, and my mother was all alone on the farm, and it was the time to pick the coffee. It wasn't easy for her all alone.

But we had good care there in the camp in the Canal Zone. I can't complain. My father saw a doctor there. We had an old doctor in Panama, too. He was over eighty. He was visiting customers on horseback. It wasn't -- it was fun, sometimes, too. It wasn't all sad, you know.

Anything else?

Q: TALK A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT BEING PUT IN THE CAMP AND IN THE CANAL ZONE. WHO WAS THERE? HOW MANY OF YOU WERE THERE? WHAT DID YOU DO THERE?

A: We didn't do anything. We didn't have to do nothing; just waiting our time.

There was a Swiss man lived up there on the farm, too, and they picked him up, and he was crying his heart out. He said, "I'm neutral. What do you pick me up for?"

[interviewee laughs]

It was comical situation, too, but then they let him go. And the camp was crowded, but they took good care of us. They gave us lots to eat. My father got

doctor's care, and I couldn't complain.

But, I'm telling you, 18 hours in the station wagon is no fun. That's about 400 miles, I think. You can figure out how nice the roads are.

They can't go with the ship. We shipped some stuff in the ship. Sometimes the ship turned over. It happened. But other things happen.

That's about all I can tell you, I think.

Q: HOW MANY PEOPLE WERE THERE TO WORK YOUR FARM BESIDES YOU AND YOUR PARENTS? DID YOU HAVE HELP?

A: We had to in the start. We had to have help, because we didn't know anything what to do. They showed us how. We had to scrape the trees and get all the -- what do you call it -- this -- I don't know what they call it. You have to scrape the trees to clean them up, you know. The animals are there and [gesturing] -- scratches. Wasn't no fun, I'm telling you. You were itching all over. It was difficult, but we made it. We lived through it, and that was it. That's the main thing.

My father died, was 92. My mother just made a hundred. And that's about it. In '69 my sister came here from South Africa with her children, and some of them went back to South Africa. One son stayed with her.

She lives in Southern California now. Too much arthritis here. She's had no arthritis down there. I don't believe it, but maybe -- I mean, she lives near the

ocean, too. How can it be? There is no arthritis here? [ ]. I don't know. She says when she comes here, after three, four days it starts in again. She want me to move there. Nothing doing. I don't like the heat. They can have it.

In Panama the climate was very nice; sixty, not more than seventy [ ]. It wasn't bad at all.

But they say: Tropics, Panama, hot.

We bought, what do you call these things, avocados, a hundred for a dollar. You buy one, a dollar. Potatoes, hundred pound, a dollar. We had a crop, and we ate the small ones, that's what we ate. Now [ ] the big ones. And that was it. It was nice in parts, sad in others, you know, but everything works out.

My father got a lot of houses in Germany, and somebody said you can get something from the Eastern sector, but I heard somebody said no, you can't get nothing, but --

Did you hear anything about it?

MS. BACKOVER: WHAT I'VE READ IS THAT THERE WILL BE A REPARATION PROGRAM OF SOME SORT.

A: [ ] West Germany has to pay for East Germany, too, huh? It's what comes out of it, huh? But, you know, I don't have any, hardly any papers about it. I know where the houses are.

But I don't know what my father -- what kind of arrangement my father --

I have no idea. How I can make application for restitution? I don't know.

Q: DID YOU EVER RECEIVE ANY REPARATIONS?

A: I think my father got something. He went over there to Germany once in '52, and he arranged something for the Western part, but the Eastern part, there was nothing at that time, so I don't know what to do. What kind of proof can I bring them?

I got some letters from lawyers about the places he had, but that's about all. I know the house where we lived, there was nothing left of it.

The only good thing was that we got kicked out by the sister and mother of Field Marshall Rommel, of our own house. We lived in Berlin on Culverson Dam. We had a big building there with two elevators, a big corner building.

Anybody of you know Berlin?

It was near the, what do you call it, Cabaret de Comica, if you know what that is.

Anyhow, the house got bumped. They took us to court. We didn't leave Germany fast enough. They want to move in. We had to move out.

My parents lived in a maid's room as an apartment in our own room home. I lived with an aunt of my

mother till we got out. But the house got bumped. I was happy. At least they got -- they had nothing left. My father [ ], and that was all.

I can show you the house. I got it at home in a picture. And in some houses I got, they didn't pay the taxes and they took off. We couldn't do anything from the outside. The one was supposed to pay the taxes didn't pay the taxes and they took it over. And that was it.

What I can do today, I don't know. There are three houses in the Eastern sector what, as far as I know, are unsold. They just got vanished, and that was it.

At that time my father was saying you couldn't do anything about the Eastern part. There was no way. Yeah, it's not easy.

Anything else?

Q: WHILE YOU WERE IN PANAMA DID YOU -- WAS THERE A DISCUSSION ABOUT LEAVING PANAMA?

A: We had our affidavits in '40, already, start of '41, what I said, and that's what I told you, and the consulate said, "We are so near war won't let nobody in no more." We had to wait until the war was over.

The chance was there to get there, but we couldn't get in until maybe in '46.

Q: BUT WHY, AFTER YOU HAD BEEN IN PANAMA FOR SO MANY YEARS, DID YOU DECIDE TO FOLLOW THROUGH AND LEAVE?

A: It wasn't an easy life, I'm telling you. We barely

made it. Climate was fine, but to make a living wasn't easy.

I went around on Sundays and made -- take pictures for the natives, three pictures for fifty cents, to get some money. Kerosene lamp, wrap paper around it, developed it in sardine cans, you know, made copies. It wasn't easy. But you do everything. You have to make a living one way or another, right?

Then you had to ride around the whole neighborhood, find the people again, you know, to deliver them and get your money. Some vanished. What can you do?

They needed ID papers, you know, from the government, and I made pictures for them, got a few dollars every week, and that was it. It helped, but the condition to make the picture, that wasn't . . .

That's about it. Any other questions?

Q: CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THE -- COMING TO THE UNITED STATES, YOUR TRIP TO THE UNITED STATES?

A: Oh, we came to the [ ], and then we got an apartment in the lower East Side for ten dollars a month; toilet outside, the bathtub in the kitchen.

My parents worked in a hospital. My father and my mother worked in a hospital, and I worked in that furniture factory in the start.

Then later on we moved to 67th Street, and after three years or something like that we moved to

Washington Heights as subtenants in [ ] an apartment. And from there we left New York.

My sister had sent a son. He was 15 -- let me see. It was 14 years when he came to us. And about, maybe 20 years ago he got sick. Something wrong with his blood, and they can't help him. They don't know what to do. He can't work, but he worked about twenty years here.

And then they say as long as they don't have a name -- but all the doctors agree for the sickness: We can't give you any Social Security. He can't get nothing.

That's America. You come in illegal, you get everything you want. You come here legally, you can't get nothing. You figure it out, I can't. Is that normal?

(Interviewee laughs.)

It's funny. He worked for Coca Cola in the East. They lived in the East for nine years, I think. He worked for Coca Cola; then they moved to the South in Atlanta, I think. And then they came here. They stayed here awhile, and then they moved to New Mexico. Then they moved to Southern California, back to New Mexico, and then to here and -- I don't know. Now they stay in Southern California.

That's about all I can tell you, I think.

Q: WHAT ABOUT THE LANGUAGE DIFFICULTY? WHEN YOU WENT TO PANAMA --

A: I had eight months of Spanish lessons, and then I

came there, I couldn't ask for a glass of water. That's the way it goes. Yeah.

Well, you learn it. It isn't that bad. The natives have to teach you. You show them to say. It works out all right.

(Technical difficulties.)

Q: WAS ENGLISH THE SAME WAY? DID YOU GET A CHANCE TO GET ANY ENGLISH AT ALL WHEN YOU WERE --

A: Oh, in Germany we learned English, but French, I never liked. We learned Latin and Greek and -- por que? No use for nothing.

No, we spoke English before in Germany. My mother learned in Germany, too. We learned more languages than we needed, but Spanish, you get Spanish at that time.

My mother went to school in the Italian Consulate learning Italian. It helps a little, but not much. No, Spanish isn't so hard to learn, what, two thousand words and you have it. You can make conversation, you know.

They don't speak -- talk much anyhow. "Mucho trabajo" is the main thing what they say, you know, means "Too much work," you know, "Poca plata," very little money. That's what you hear mostly.

We have to pick coffee. You know five-gallon tins? You need twenty with picked coffee to get three and a quarter out in the end. And they use baskets. They need

about twenty baskets to fill one five-gallon can. And you have to pay them twenty-five cents to, in the end, up to forty cents a can, these baskets.

There isn't much profit in coffee. For a good farm, a young farm, if the trees are low, it's easier. If you have high trees, you know, they don't like to pick them. It's too complicated. If you cut them down, you know that you can reach them. But our trees were way up there in the sky. They were grown too far up, you know. We didn't trim them.

All you got out was ten bags a year in the start. You got to fourteen, fifteen afterwards, but how can you make a living with fifteen dollars and fifteen bags.

Can you live off it? See, you know what I mean? It's a hard life. That's all I can say. Not easy.

Q: WHAT DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE WAR WHILE YOU WERE IN PANAMA?

A: Well, we got papers from a friend of ours down there. He would give us some papers. He was an American. He had a hotel in the town, in the village, and we sold him stuff and he gave us papers and stuff like that.

He retired in San Antonio. That was his hometown. But he died already.

There was quite a few Americans there. There were Swedes up there, too. They had a farm. Everybody

went there to see it. I never got there. My horses went there a hundred times, but I never went up there. I never had the time to do it.

We rented horses, a dollar a day. You had to go down in the morning and bring the horses down, go back in the afternoon, pick them up again. You had to make a living one way or another, you know.

And the rainy season, you could hear the rain coming. Not like here. You hear it coming from way off. And then that sheet roof, you know, that metal roof. It sounds good [laugh]. No insulation in between, you know.

Well, we fixed the house up pretty good with trees we had on the farm. They came and cut them with a hand saw, you know [gesturing], with a long blade from about the wall to here [indicating]. And we cut them.

I have to bring you some pictures from the house one of these days. I come over and show them to you. Now I know where you are. I don't have to look around, "Where is it?

I went all the way to the back there, you know, that door where it said where you are, and then east right here at the front, and I made it.

Q: DID YOU HAVE -- DURING THE WAR WHILE YOU WERE IN PANAMA, DID YOU HAVE ANY CORRESPONDENCE WITH GERMANY OR WITH ANYBODY YOU KNEW IN EUROPE?

A: We didn't need anything more. They all vanished.

That was it.

Q: WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU HEARD SOMETHING FROM ANYBODY?

A: Start of the 40's

Q: WHAT DID THEY TELL YOU?

A: When the Kristallnacht wars -- they picked my uncle up, and then we moved over to his place. They didn't catch us that way.

And he lived in England and died there afterwards, after the war. But my mother lost one brother and four sisters, and my father lost three. We don't know where, how, nothing.

They tell me, letters that we get, "Can't you get us out?" How could we? We barely made it out ourselves. How do you get a visa if you don't have any money and you can't give a guarantee for anybody? How can you do it?

You can make it hardly for yourself. It was difficult. That's about it.

Q: WHEN DID YOU FIRST START TO FIND OUT AFTER THE WAR WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO THE REST OF YOUR FAMILY?

A: My father tried to find out when he was in Germany after the war, but you couldn't find out much.

When he was in prison, and the police in Berlin -- every Friday night were the blood baths there; then they had to clean it up on Saturday morning.

When we left, my father and myself went to the travel agencies to find out if he can get any passage. And in the end, we got it. We called my mother. We have to meet on the railroad station. She came from home, we came from downtown, and we left that way. What else could we do?

The next day my father needed about, from five different finance districts, guarantee that he paid his taxes for different houses, you know. Every district has a different tax place, and you have to have them all, otherwise they wouldn't let you out.

So we left on the 15th, and the 15th was the deadline for that. Then you had to wait another three months before you get another one, you know. It wasn't easy.

They want to know you paid all your taxes before you leave. What can you make with two and a half dollars when you leave a country?

You live and learn, that's all. Something else?

Q: YOU MENTIONED WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR UNCLE ON KRISTALLNACHT. I WAS WONDERING IF YOU COULD DESCRIBE WHAT YOU SAW AND HEARD AND LEARNED LATER ABOUT KRISTALLNACHT?

A: Well, we saw the damage afterwards, all the synagogues are burned. Then the stores, they broke the windows and stole whatever was in it.

(Loud noise.)

Got another earthquake? Did you see that movie, Earthquake, yesterday, the day before yesterday on TV? Oh, it was awful.

[ ] stayed awhile, but [ ] came out again. They moved after they came out to England, too.

Nobody was in the [ ] wanted to stay in Germany, you know. They had enough. If they got a chance, they all left. My father didn't intend to leave, neither. If he wouldn't have been locked up, I don't think he would have ever left. He said, "Why should I?"

I don't know anything else to tell you.

Q: WHERE WERE YOU ON KRISTALLNACHT? WERE YOU AT HOME OR AT WORK?

A: Yeah, at home. Yeah.

You know in -- I saw in Germany before we left, already they had a telephone with TV combined. You could see the people on telephone -- on television from the phone, by phone. Here they're still in the experimental stage.

That's all I did. I don't know anything else.

OTHER INTERVIEWER: Q DID YOUR FATHER EVER TALK ABOUT HIS TIME IN PRISON; WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO HIM? WERE YOU THERE WHEN HE WAS ARRESTED?

A: No, I wasn't there. I was working at that time. I was learning dental technician at the time. But whatever

I learned didn't do me any good. Couldn't get into it. They want people who do one certain things and nothing else.

They don't know anybody who knows the whole process of making false teeth, you know. You set them up, you press them, or you do something, but know it all; it's no good.

The same thing in photography. If you make copies, fine. But do the whole process, huh-uh. You are too independent when you can do it yourself. You can make yourself independent. They don't like that. Competition.

I had everything packed up. I could have worked in it, but I never got anything. That was it. I could buy it here. Huh-uh, forget it. I made porcelain crowns and everything, but, no chance. I took courses and everything, but it didn't do me any good. So I started anew, and that was it, to learn something here.

And then they said, "Oh." I had a teacher in refrigeration school. He said, "I got a shop." I tell him I work for New York company for five years. I says, "How can I?" I get a face like that. I made it anyhow.

Any more I can tell? I don't know.

BY MS. BACKOVER: Q YOU MENTIONED THAT YOUR FATHER WENT BACK --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- TO GERMANY AFTER THE WAR?

A Yeah.

Q: HAVE YOU EVER BEEN BACK?

A: No, I don't intend to go back. I don't know anybody there. What's the good of it? I don't intend to go back.

Tell me, you get kicked out once, you want to go back and get a second kick? I don't. Once is enough, I think.

My father went only for pure business. That's all. They wouldn't see me again. I don't want to be invited there, neither. [ ] of people went there got invited. I would say, "Huh-uh, thank you." I am not interested. Who would I see there? Somebody I don't know? For what?

I got an appointment in Switzerland with somebody at the turn of the century, if we make it. I lived there about five months in San Martin. That's -- I don't know how to explain it to you -- near San Moritz; made some friends there, said we meet at Tucson. I may go there, find out if -- find somebody there.

Q: WHEN WAS THAT THAT YOU LIVED THERE?

A: In '34. '35, something like that. When my nephew was born, my mother went to South Africa. First child, you know, my sister. And then when her daughter's first child was born we went down there, too.

First we went to Israel two weeks, and then two weeks South Africa. In Israel we had mid-summer. Then we

came to South Africa, mid-winter. No, we spent the months on the road, and it was all right.

Now they are grown up, out of school already. Her daughter we saw when we went down there. She went to Israel in a kibbutz for half a year from the school in South Africa, and their brother got sent there, too, last year to Israel for half a year.

But they are afraid. They don't know what to do, you know. That's a family of four. Then they have his -- you got his mother there, and he is a druggist. How can he support all these people, you know. [ ] It isn't easy.

He had his own shop, and now he is working for somebody because it doesn't look so hot, you know.

OTHER INTERVIEWER: Q CARL, YOU WERE WORKING IN PHOTOGRAPHY BEFORE YOU LEFT GERMANY?

A: Yeah, commercial photography.

Q: WERE YOU WORKING FOR A COMPANY? DID YOU HAVE --

A: He had a -- what do you call it -- got a place in our building. I had it easy, after I was sick, you know. I didn't do too much, so I learned it, had it easy in the same building, you know. Then later on I took that course in dental technician. That was way out. We left Germany, too, after I was three-quarters through the course. And today, everything change. I wouldn't know what to do today. Too many advances.

At that time we worked plastic, and they heated it up and press the teeth, and today, I don't know what they do. You have to learn everything all over again if you want to do it. But, too old. No sense.

After I broke my hip the first time I had to retire. He told me, "Want to keep on working, you'll last five years. If not, last ten, fifteen years." I said, "Good bye. I retire."

Then two years ago I went up to Tahoe, boom, second leg. No sidewalks, no light. I didn't know who to sue [laugh]. Cost me forty-nine hundred dollars to come back in an ambulance, you know.

Yeah, see, funny things happen to you. When I broke the first hip was funny, after I broke it I went up, rested awhile, went down again, started to work. But I started, and all of a sudden I couldn't move anymore. I was [ ] in the boiler room. I had to yell. I couldn't move. It must not have broken it completely, and then all of a sudden it happened.

Q: YOU MENTIONED THAT YOUR GRANDFATHER HAD A FARM?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: DID YOU SPEND ANY TIME THERE AS A CHILD?

A: Huh-uh, never did. We went on a farm during the depression when they had that in the 20's, you know, we lived on a farm for awhile, my mother and my sister and myself. We couldn't get anything in the city.

My other grandfather died of starvation. You couldn't get anything to eat. He was only 71. That was in the 20's. You figure it out. My grandfather, he died at 71. My mother's mother died at 39, and she's a hundred. You figure it out.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT IT WAS LIKE IN 1933 WHEN HITLER TOOK OVER, WHAT EVERYBODY FELT AND TALKED ABOUT?

A: Yeah. I think everybody was frightened. That's all. They didn't know what to do. After they read his book, what he intended to do, a lot of people sent their children out. They stayed and never made it, too. My cousins' in South Africa, and her mother sent out both children. They came out, but parents didn't make it.

And this is [ ] father -- had a daughter in Israel. They went there and didn't like it there, so they both came back, and they vanished, too, and that was it.

He was in the fur trade. He said, "There is no business for me down there." Who wants a fur coat in Israel [laugh]? They shouldn't have them here, neither. I gave my winter coat away. I didn't need it here. Doesn't get that cold.

Q: HOW DID LIFE CHANGE FOR YOU AND YOUR PARENTS AFTER '33?

A: It was kind of rough for awhile. What can you do?

Q: CAN YOU GIVE US SOME EXAMPLES?

A: I told you what happened; how we moved like we did in Panama, and how we lived. What nice housing.

(Interviewee laughs.)

Once or twice we had to go down to town a week, get new supplies and stuff like that, rain or shine, doesn't make any difference.

No, the climate, I can't complain. It was very good. Not tropical at all. After we got the first earthquake we had to look hard, and we could look at it. Not far away. It was about three hours from earthquake to Costa Rica, the northern part of Panama.

Oh, you got some shakes. That's when we learned the first earthquakes. Rattled dishes and stuff like that, but no house fell together. It wasn't that bad.

BY MS. BACKOVER: Q WHEN DID YOU COME TO SAN FRANCISCO?

A: In forty -- '54, '54 San Francisco. We had an apartment, and the renter lived below us, and after awhile I said, "Huh-uh, we have to move out." Don't like that sound, somebody trampling on our floor -- on our ceiling.

Q: WHY DID YOU COME HERE? WHY DID YOU MOVE TO SAN FRANCISCO?

A: A son of a cousin of mine, he was studying here at Berkeley, the university. He said, "I can't understand. Why do you stay in New York? There is a much better climate in California."

My parents weren't convinced, so I packed them in the car on my vacation. I took them over here. Two months later we moved. And they didn't say no. They say, "It's good move."

(Brief pause.)

BY MR. GRANT: Q YES. I HAVE A COUPLE OF QUESTIONS. COULD YOU TELL US WHAT THE SCHOOL WAS LIKE THAT YOU ATTENDED WHEN YOU WERE A BOY?

A: Nothing special. I don't know. What do you mean?

Q: WHAT YEAR DID YOU START SCHOOL, AND WHAT YEAR DID YOU FINISH SCHOOL? HOW OLD WERE YOU?

A: Well, about 17, 18 when I finished, and started, was six.

Q: WAS IT A PUBLIC SCHOOL?

A: At first a public school and then gymnasium, what they call high school here. What they call it? I don't know.

Q: WAS IT MIXED RACIALLY AND RELIGIOUSLY, JEWISH AND NON-JEWISH?

A: Yeah. Oh, yeah, both mixed.

Q: WHAT PERCENTAGE OF THE SCHOOL WAS JEWISH AND WHAT PERCENTAGE WAS NOT JEWISH?

A: Oh, about maybe 80, 90, 85 percent not.

Q: WERE THERE ANY PROBLEMS BETWEEN THE JEWISH STUDENTS AND THE NON-JEWISH STUDENTS IN SCHOOL?

A: No. No, didn't have any problems.

Q: WAS THERE EVER ANY ANTI-SEMITISM IN THE SCHOOL? DO YOU REMEMBER ANY INCIDENTS?

A: No, nothing specific.

Q: ANY SMALL INCIDENTS? CAN YOU REMEMBER ONE SMALL INCIDENT OF ANTI-SEMITISM YOU COULD TELL US ABOUT?

A: I don't remember anything, not worth talking about, huh-uh.

Q: HOW ABOUT SOMETHING THAT ISN'T WORTH TALKING ABOUT? TELL US ONE OF THOSE.

A: [laugh] I really don't remember anything serious at all.

Q: WHAT ABOUT SOMETHING NOT SERIOUS, SOMETHING SMALL, CASUAL?

A: It was either/or. There was nothing in between.

Q: WHAT WAS THE NAME OF THE SCHOOL YOU ATTENDED WHEN YOU WERE A LITTLE BOY?

A: A public school.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER THE NAME OF THE SCHOOL?

(Brief pause.)

Q: LET ME ASK YOU: WHAT WAS YOUR FATHER DOING ON THE DAY THAT HE WAS ARRESTED?

A: He was in a business.

Q AND WHAT HAPPENED?

A: They picked him up and told him they have to incarcerate him until the money comes in what didn't come

in, what should have come in.

Q EXPLAIN TO ME ABOUT THE MONEY AGAIN, PLEASE.

A: He was in the export business, I told you. He had furs, he had lady's costumes, dresses, coats, and he exported them to Holland, to South Africa, to England. And the money should come in, and it didn't come in in time as it should, so they said he might go and collect, so they locked him up.

Q: AND WHAT YEAR WAS THAT, AGAIN, THAT THAT HAPPENED?

A: Thirty-eight.

Q: WAS THAT BEFORE OR AFTER KRISTALLNACHT?

A: It was before.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER KRISTALLNACHT?

A: Yeah.

Q: COULD YOU TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT KRISTALLNACHT, WHAT YOU SAW?

A: Well, we saw flames all over, and then broken windows and looted stores.

BY MS. BACKOVER: Q WHAT COULD YOU HEAR? DID YOU KNOW THEN WHAT WAS GOING ON?

A: We heard it afterwards.

Q: HOW? ON THE RADIO?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: OR DID YOU READ IT IN THE PAPER?

A: Yeah, could read it in the paper, too.

Q: WHAT WERE PEOPLE SAYING ABOUT IT?

A: What could they say? They couldn't say anything.

OTHER INTERVIEWER: Q THE SYNAGOGUE THAT YOU WENT TO IN BERLIN, WAS IT AFFECTED?

A: Yeah, it doesn't exist anymore. We went to [ ] in [ ] and then we went to [ ] temple, and that was it. It was about a five minutes' walk. That's all. The other one was two blocks away.

BY MR. GRANT: Q WHAT DID YOUR FATHER SAY TO YOU AND TO THE FAMILY AFTER KRISTALLNACHT?

A: He didn't want to move out. He said --

Q: WHAT DID HE SAY?

A: He said, "Why should I move out? I'm a better German. Hitler isn't even a German. Why should I listen to him?"

He didn't want to move out. Only after they locked him up he said, "Now it's about time." It took quite awhile to get all the papers together, and you need so many things. Then '39, we made it.

Q DID YOU OR ANYBODY IN YOUR FAMILY EVER WEAR YELLOW STARS?

A: No.

Q: THAT CAME LATER?

A: That came later.

BY MS. BACKOVER: Q CARL, THERE IS JUST ONE MORE THING THAT I WANTED TO ASK YOU ABOUT, AND THAT WAS

CURRENT EVENTS, WHAT'S GOING ON NOW.

DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENT ON GERMANY'S REUNIFICATION OR --

A: I don't know. Is that good? I think it's more trouble.

Q: WHY IS THAT?

A: Why? The Eastern part, they got everything for free. Now they have to pay taxes and everything. They wouldn't like it, you know what I mean? They don't have much, but at least they had it free. And about employment is another thing.

The State employed them, right? Now they have to look for employment. Will they find it? Can they make a living? Therefore, it's back -- the Jews, huh? You know what I mean?

Q: CAN YOU EXPLAIN?

A: What can you explain there? What's there to explain?

Q: WELL, THERE AREN'T MANY --

A: We get blamed, that's all. Don't we always get blamed?

Q: THERE AREN'T MANY JEWS LEFT, THOUGH.

A: No, there aren't many Jews left, but, I mean, even if they have a few, they have somebody to blame it on.

It looks everything's so good, but I don't think it's that hot. It's a big change for them. Not everything gets for free. That's over. Now you have to do something

yourself. If you don't do nothing, you don't live, right?

Q: DO YOU HAVE ANY THOUGHTS ON ISRAEL?

A: Well, it's very difficult to say. I don't like what [Khadaffi] wants to do, but what they are doing don't give nothing back.

I think they have to give something back to make peace there, otherwise never will be. I mean, they gave too much to Egypt back at same -- at one time, and now the others say: They get that much. We want that much, too, you know, and they can't afford to give all that back.

I never heard of anything -- if somebody wins in a war, he wins in a war; he keeps it. Have you ever heard of Russia giving something back? I never did. I mean, America took and gave back afterwards. But, if you win it in a war, it's yours. You fought for it, didn't you?

Why should you give it back? You didn't start the war. They started it, didn't they? If you agress against somebody else and take it that way, you might have to give it back. But if they attack you and you take their land, I think it's yours.

They didn't give the Jews a chance to go to the Wailing War. Now they can go to them, wherever they want to go.

They have a chance to see their -- to use their religion the way they want to. They aren't denied it. What are they complaining about? We were denied to go to

our places.

But in the end they will blame it on Israel. Now, he said, if Israel doesn't give it back, he won't go out of Kuwait, huh? What has one thing to do with the other? They are both Arabs, aren't they, Kuwait and Syria? Not Syria. What do you call it? It's Arabs against Arabs. How come? He wants to be a Hitler. He wants to own the whole oil and wants to dominate the world. That's what he wants to do, right?

BY MS. BACKOVER: Q DO YOU HAVE ANY OTHER FINAL COMMENTS?

A: Huh?

(Brief pause.)

Q: ANY OTHER FINAL COMMENTS?

MS. BACKOVER: THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

(Interview concludes.)