

Interview with AXEL SCHLOSS
Holocaust Oral History Project
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Begin Tape 1, Side 1.

Q: WHERE WERE YOU BORN, AXEL?

A: I was born in Plauen, Volkland, Germany.

Q: THAT WOULD BE EAST GERMANY, NOW?

A: Yes, it is.

Q: AND WHEN WAS THAT?

A: 1933, January 21st.

Q: YOU WERE BORN IN 1933.

Q: HOW LONG DID YOU LIVE IN PLAUEN?

A: I lived till about age six there; well age five. And then I was put on a children's transport from Koln to Brussels, Belgium, where I had some relatives, who picked me up at the train station and took me to their home.

Q: HOW ABOUT YOUR PARENTS, HAD THEY ALWAYS LIVED IN PLAUEN?

A: No, My mother was born in Berlin, and my father was born in Darmstadt. I had a sister, and she was born in Berlin.

Q: SO THERE WERE JUST TWO OF YOU, TWO OF YOU CHILDREN AND YOUR PARENTS?

A: Yes.

Q: DID YOU HAVE A LARGE FAMILY IN PLAUEN, UNCLES, AUNTS, COUSINS?

A: No. My family, there were only the four of us in Plauen.

My father got a job at (Herman Tise), the Department store.

Q: OH, (TEES, HERMAN TEES), BIG DEPARTMENT STORE?

A: Yes, We had some friends of the family, that were friends of the treasurer of (Herman Tees), and he got the job in Plauen, through them.

Q: WAS YOUR FATHER IN THE BUSINESS? DID HE HAVE SORT OF BUSINESS BEFORE HE WAS EMPLOYED BY THE DEPARTMENT STORE?

A: Not that I know of.

Q: NOW, WHAT RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND DID YOU HAVE? WERE YOU OBSERVANT JEWS?

A: Jewish, Orthodox. It's kinda hard to say, between Reform, NOT REFORM, Conservative and Orthodox.

Q: DID YOU GO TO SUNDAY SCHOOL WHEN YOU WERE SMALL?

A: I was too young, but I think my sister went.

Q: YOU WERE ABOUT FIVE YEARS OLD, RIGHT?

A: Yeah.

Q: SO YOU DIDN'T GO TO ANY SCHOOL, NO KINDERGARTEN OR ANYTHING?

A: No.

Q: SO, YOU WERE TAKEN TO BELGIUM, BY WHOM? WHO TOOK YOU TO BELGIUM?

A: We were put on a transport. A (Jewen) children transport from Germany to Belgium in 1939.

Q: 1939. AND YOU LEFT YOUR PARENTS BEHIND?

A: Yeah, I left my parents behind, and they tried to make it quite a few times across the border. The last time they finally succeeded.

Q: WHERE TO?

A: To Belgium. I still remember my father having the tsfelitz, what do you call it? You know the tallis and the tsfelitz.

Q: OH, TEFELLIN?

A: Yeah, the tefellin. And the Germans caught him at the border.
And I think they cut em up in pieces, I still remember them sitting on the mantelpiece in Belgium after the war, all cut up.

Q: NOW WHAT YEAR DID YOUR PARENTS MAKE IT ACROSS THE BORDER?

A: 1939. They made it a few months after we left Germany.

Q: WHAT ABOUT YOUR SISTER?

A: She made it too, she made it with me actually.

Q: YOU TWO WERE ON THE TRAIN?

A: Yeah.

Q: SHE WAS MUCH OLDER?

A: Yeah, she was five years older than I was.

Q: THAN SHE WAS ALREADY TEN YEARS OLD WHEN THE TWO OF YOU LEFT, RIGHT?

A: Yeah

Q: WHERE EXACTLY IN BELGIUM DID YOU GO TO?

A: To Brussels.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED THEN AT THE TIME?

A: I remember very well. I remember getting on the train in Germany. Then going through the border. I was trying to hand an S.S. troop some chocolate, because the only way my parents were going to get me to go anyplace was if they fed me enough chocolate to get me sick. I was sick of it already.

I got to Belgium and I met these relatives, which I had never met before. I was going to stay with these relatives and my sister was going to stay with some other relatives, which was fine, until I got ready to go to bed. And then I did not want to have nothin to do with it. I raised hell. They had to bring my sister back. We slept the night, the four of us in one bed I still remember that. I held on to dear life to my sister.

Q: WHO WERE THE OTHER TWO THAT YOU SLEPT WITH?

A: Uncle and Aunt.

Q: OH, YOUR UNCLE AND YOUR AUNT?

A: Yeah.

Q: SO THAT WAS IN BRUSSELS?

A: Yeah.

Q: HOW LONG DID YOU STAY IN BRUSSELS WITH YOUR UNCLE AND AUNT?

A: I stayed there, until my mother and father came from Germany.

Until they escaped out of Germany. I knew exactly, I think it must have been a few months. Then we moved together, my parents got an apartment. We moved back into the apartment.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER IF YOUR PARENTS MANAGED TO GET SOME MONEY OUT WITH THEM? THAT YOU COULD LIVE IN BELGIUM?

A: No, we almost lost everything. We bought everything furnished for the house, was bought on the black market, at the flea market and everything else. The place where we had wasn't very nice. It had mice and everything else. And, bedbugs! I hate em.

Q: I DON'T BLAME YOU! SO, DO YOU REMEMBER HOW LONG YOU STAYED THERE IN THE APARTMENT IN BRUSSELS?

A: I don't exactly remember. I started school there. And then, we decided to move to another part of Belgium, which was Anderlecht, which was a Jewish community in Belgium. And, we lived on Boulevard (La Gavission.)

Q: WHEREABOUTS IN BELGIUM WAS IT? DO YOU REMEMBER?

A: It's close to the (Guarde Medi.) That's the central train station. That's where Paul (Shwartzback) was living. We stayed there until the war actually started.

Q: WERE YOU AWARE AS A CHILD, AT THAT TIME, ABOUT THE NAZIS AND WHY YOU HAD TO LEAVE?

A: No.

Q: IT DID NOT REGISTER?

A: As as matter of fact, I remember one thing in Plauen.

One kid called me a dirty Jew, and I called him a dirty Jew right back. I didn't know what the hell it meant.

Q: YOU WERE NOT AWARE THAT THERE WERE NON-JEWS?

A: No.

Q: GOOD STORY. WHAT KIND OF SCHOOL DID YOU GO TO IN BELGIUM?

A: Just a regular elementary school.

Q: IT WASN'T A JEWISH SCHOOL?

A: No. Before the war, I remember going a few times to synagogue with my father, and after the war that all stopped.

Q: WHAT DID YOUR PARENTS DO IN BELGIUM, THEN?

A: Trying to find jobs. Germans, who were refugees, could not get jobs in Belgium. So, my mother used to sew slippers, and that's how she made a living. I guess we got some money from the Jewish Community or something there.

Q: WHAT ABOUT YOUR FATHER?

A: He couldn't find no job.

Q: IT WAS PRETTY HARD LIVING?

A: Uhhuh.

Q: DID YOU HAVE ENOUGH TO EAT?

A: Yeah, I think so. I think that my mother always provided us.

Q: WHAT ABOUT SCHOOL? DID YOU NOTICE ANY ANTI-SEMITISM IN SCHOOL AT ALL?

A: No, not while I was in school.

Q: HOW MANY GRADES DID YOU STAY IN SCHOOL?

A: The first one. I made the first one, five times. I never finished it actually.

Q: WOULD YOU CARE TO TELL US ABOUT THAT, WHY?

A: Okay, I started the first grade, and then the war started, and I couldn't go anymore to school, and then the meantime the whole war. Then I started first grade again, after we got liberated, and I had to wind up in the hospital. I had (latiner), which is ringworms so I had to be put into isolation.

There was another time, because the Belgium always had there little flight between the Flemish and the (Walnese.) I got caught up in that one time, because I spoke German, and German is pretty close to Flemish, so I started it again. It just kept going, and I never graduated out of the first grade.

Q: BUT, WE ARE TALKING NOW ABOUT BETWEEN 39 AND 45, WHEN YOU WERE LIBERATED, RIGHT. THAT'S SIX YEARS?

A: Yeah, a period of seven years. I think I was still in first grade.

Q: YOU MUST KNOW THE FIRST GRADE REALLY WELL?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: BUT YOU DID NOT STAY IN BRUSSELS ALL THAT TIME, DID YOU?

A: From, what time to?

Q: YOU CAME THERE IN 39 BEFORE THE WAR?

A: From 39, till probably till 1943, the fall of 43, I was in Brussels. In the fall of 43, we got arrested by the Germans, and were sent to (Marlin.)

Q: WHERE IS THAT?

A: (Marlin) is a camp, where after they got you there, they got you all together and sent you to Auschwitz.

Q: ONE OF THOSE (SONNERLAGERS) WHERE THEY COLLECT THE PEOPLE AND THEN TRANSPORT YOU?

A: Right, I was at Marlin.

Q: IN BELGIUM?

A: Right in Belgium. They had a selection, and I was one of the ones selected.

Q: FOR WHAT?

A: I don't exactly know, but they took us to (HR Lefell), where there was a fortified farmhouse where there were a lot of other Jewish kids.

Q: WHAT ABOUT YOUR PARENTS?

A: They stayed at Marlin. And January 20th or something like, they were sent to Auschwitz.

Q: AND YOUR SISTER?

A: My sister too. My sister was five years older than I was. I was about possibly ten already. She was already pretty old to go with; these were all young kids that they had there.

(My sister went to Auschwitz. And I stayed there till June 1944, where we had a chance to escape out of there.

Q: OUT OF THE CAMP?

A: The way it happened is they put us in the barns, (animal barns.) They had trap doors for the manure to be thrown out when it was a barn, and they had those wired shut. Some of the kids managed to get one open. That's the way we got out.

Q: MAY I ASK YOU REFERRING TO "THEY" WHO IS "THEY"?

A: The kids.

Q: NO, "THEY" PUT YOU INTO THE FARMHOUSE, WHO IS "THEY"?

A: The Germans. It was a fortified farmhouse. It was a chateau. And then there were walls all along the chateau and the rest of the walls were all stables and everything else. And the Germans lived in the chateau and we lived in the stables.

Q: HOW MANY OF YOU WERE THERE? HOW MANY CHILDREN?

A: I don't exactly remember. I don't. I thought maybe thirty of us escaped or something like that. The last time I was back in Belgium, I got a list of all the kids. It wound up being 120.

Q: FROM THAT SAME FARMHOUSE? YOU DIDN'T KNOW THERE WERE 120 THERE?

A: I thought there were 30 of us who escaped.

Q: DESCRIBE YOUR DAY IF YOU REMEMBER IN THE FARMHOUSE.

A: In that farm usually we got up pretty early, I don't exactly remember the time. We had some sort of something for breakfast I think it was potato soup or something like that or whatever they could find. Once in awhile we used to get bread, but the bread was funny. It was black, and when you pulled it apart it was almost kind of spider-webbed. I don't remember.

We were pretty well left to ourselves for a whole day, just the case. We did a lot of things to keep ourselves occupied. We fought between each other an awful lot, until we found out it wasn't any good to fight, because the winner would get beaten up by another child. There were no winners. There only were losers.

Q: WERE THERE ONLY BOYS?

A: No, there were women there, girls, but we kinda kept separate. So, finally at the end we just didn't fight among ourselves. I think we started more caring about each other.

Q: WERE YOU HUNGRY?

A: Yeah, oh we were hungry, I want to tell you.

Q: IN SPITE OF BEING ON THE FARM?

A: I remember some time when I got a chance to eat some grass, I ate some grass.

Q: ON THE FARM THEY MUST HAVE HAD FOOD?

A: Yeah, but the Germans kept it all.

Q: KEPT IT ALL, THEY WOULDN'T GIVE IT TO YOU?

A: No.

Q: DID YOU HAVE ANY CONTACT WITH THE FARMER?

A: No, not at all. I think some of the kids once in a great while had, but not much. I remember some of the kids getting sick. They had some sort of infirmary, but once you got sick we never saw you again. I remember some kids had appendicitis and that was it. There was no medical treatment or nothing.

Q: DID YOU SUSPECT ANYTHING?

A: No, we didn't suspect anything actually. I didn't even know about my parents. I thought after the whole thing was over I was gonna get back with my parents.

Q: WHEN DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT YOUR PARENTS?

A: I think probably just a little bit right after we got liberated. I think it started all coming into focus and everything else.

Q: HOW LONG WERE YOU ON THE FARM?

A: Well, I was maybe about, at the most about six months.

Q: AFTER YOU LEFT THE FARM WHERE DID YOU GO?

A: When we escaped out of there, the villagers saw actually what happened. They just rounded us up and took us to where there was a girls school, and had us sleep on a mattress of straw in the girls school. The girls school had a high wall of brick around it in the courtyard, so the Germans couldn't see. They kept us there for a couple days. Till the Belgium lookout came to pick us up, and took us to the next town of (Parwayvonbo,) and there we were distributed amongst the civilians who hid us until we got liberated Sept 6, 1944.

Q: THAT GIRLS SCHOOL, WAS IT CATHOLIC?

A: No, it was just a regular elementary school.

Q: SO, YOU DIDN'T GO INTO ANY CONVENT OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT?

A: No.

Q: AND DO YOU REMEMBER, WHEN YOU LEFT THE GIRLS SCHOOL, YOU WENT TO A PRIVATE FAMILY?

A: Yeah, they took us first by truck, to (Parway) to a place. Well, that place was Catholic. Actually, it was Sisters of Charity. And they kept us in this place and called us all out. Well, they called us one by one. Stuck us with families.

Q: WHAT LANGUAGE DID YOU USE?

A: French. We spoke French there.

Q: YOU LEARNED THAT IN SCHOOL?

A: Yeah, I spoke fluently French till I came to the United States.

Q: BUT DID YOU GO TO SCHOOL AT ALL?

A: Yes.

Q: YOUR FAMOUS FIRST GRADE?

A: Yes. It was all in French.

Q: NO WONDER YOU HAD TO REPEAT IT MANY TIMES.

A: I stayed there until 1947, I mean till 1945. Then in 1945 there was the first medical check-up. They found out I had ringworm and isolated me and took me to the hospital in Brussels.

Q: WHO IS "THEY"?

A: The director and the adults of the orphanage that we were kept with. After we got liberated there were some Jewish adults who came and they took care of us. At the same time there were some American Jewish that were there too, to supply us and things. And after I got out of the hospital which was in 1946 I was sent to a place called (Pfoffelsaw) in Belgium. There they had a medical doctor who was Director of the orphanage, and his assistants. There were a couple of Jewish soldiers from the Palestinian Jewish brigade that were there with us.

Q: SO YOU WERE LIBERATED BY THE AMERICANS?

A: Yeah, by the Americans.

Q: WERE YOU SCARED DURING THE WAR?

A: Of what?

Q: AIRPLANES?

A: I was too stupid to know better.

Q: A CHILD?

A: That's probably why I survived. Being a child, I was too stupid to know. Being innocent, at that time I didn't know what was happening, and as long as I didn't know what was happening I wasn't afraid.

Q: TRUE. SO WHEN THE AMERICANS CAME DID THEY FEED YOU CHILDREN?

A: Yeah, well the people in Belgium, in the town of (Parway, Vombon) fed us, but at that time they were rationing themselves, because they couldn't get no rations on anything for us! Actually, the list of the children I had that were with me was from the potato ration, and it was after we got liberated, because there were no rations assigned to us.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER THE CHILDREN WITH YOU? DO YOU STILL KEEP IN CONTACT?

A: One of them, I remember. He is now in Pennsylvania. I talk to him, but we don't communicate much. He was two years older than I was.

Q: THAT WAS A LOT AT THE TIME, WASN'T IT?

A: Yeah.

Q: WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF YOUR FAMILY? YOUR UNCLES AND AUNTS?

A: They all died in Auschwitz. I only have two cousins left. One, who still lives in Germany, and one who lives in England. He's about ten years older than I am.

Q: WHERE DOES THIS COUSIN IN GERMANY, WHERE DOES HE LIVE?

A: Oh, my cousin is a woman, and she lives in Cologne. The thing with them is they actually converted to Catholicism long before. That's why they somewhat survived, but they were taken into a labor camp.

My cousin in England was with me in Belgium when the war started. But, the Belgium police arrested them, because they thought he might have been a German spy. Got sent to France, and as he told me, he actually got liberated by the Germans. Then, he was in France, then they give him a train ticket to go back to Belgium. And from what he told me, he says, he got back in to Belgium and he didn't like the situation there, so he forged a ticket to get back into France. In France, he was in the Vichy part of France.

At the end they came looking for Jews and things like that and he hid someplace, on a farm. He was working on a farm, and the people told him that the Vichy French came looking for him. He got his things together and took off for the border for Spain. Crossed the border in Spain, got thrown in jail in Spain, and I think something happened and wound up in North Africa. They wanted him to join the French Foreign Legion, no way did he want to join the French Foreign Legion. He finally found somebody that was going over to the British Consulate. He told them he liked to see somebody at the Consulate about

joining the British Army, which finally they came looking for him. He joined the British Army, and I think he was put in the Pioneer Corp, which he didn't like at all. Finally, they wanted some volunteers for the British Commandos and he joined that.

Q: DID THE DIRTY WORK I GUESS?

A: Yeah.

Q: SO, HOW MANY MEMBERS OF YOUR FAMILY DID YOU LOSE DURING THE HOLOCAUST?

A: My father had ten brothers and ten sisters, all of them, and some of their children. There's only three of us left out of the whole family. My mother was I think an only child.

Q: TEN BROTHERS AND SISTERS?

A: Ten brothers and sisters all together. But one of them, that I know of, died in the 1st World War fighting for the Germans.

Q: SO, YOU WERE LIBERATED, AND YOU WENT TO ANOTHER FAMILY, DID YOU SAY?

A: No, we went back to the camp, there.

Q: OH, BACK TO THE CAMP.

A: They housed us there. And, the Americans as a matter of fact were staying with us at that time. December 1944, a little bit before Christmas, I got a bad stomach cramps, and they had a doctor check me out and I had appendicitis. So, they had to pick me up and take me to the town of Namur, where they took my appendicitis out. On my way going back to the orphanage, after the appendicitis, I remember the Battle of the Bulge just started and it was a cold winter.

The Germans practically had dropped, and were going through hell at that time. Then, I came back to the orphanage. I stayed there till the spring, I think, when they discovered I had (latiner).

Q: WHAT YOU CALL RINGWORM?

A: (Latiner) it's ringworm.

Q: THAT IS A LATIN NAME, IS IT?

A: I think that's it. I don't know. It's how I heard it said in France.

Q: SO, WHERE DID THEY PUT YOU, IN THE HOSPITAL?

A: They put us in the hospital, which was run by the Belgium authorities. I don't exactly know what happened, but the place was pretty bad. They just threw us all in one room, with no furniture or no nothing. A bunch of kids, didn't know what to do there. I don't know what the hell they fed us. They had a little dormitory, and the sheets on the bed were made out of paper... paper sheets. Finally, somebody from the Red Cross came looking at the place. They found out that the Directors were hoarding a lot of the stuff that was supposed to be going to us.

Q: THE FOOD?

A: To the children. They took all the kids that were from the orphanage. There were about six of us, and took us to someplace separate, and put bunk beds and everything else together. We had more nurses, than we had when there was a whole bunch of kids, there for the six of us. We had all kinds of soap. At that time, every time we had to go to the doctor, a military staff car came and picked us up and took us to the doctor.

Q: AMERICAN MILITARY?

A: Yeah, or an ambulance, one or the other. Right! There they treated us with x-rays so we lost all our hair. After I got cured, I got sent back to (Pfoffelsaw). The kids were moving, already alone at the time. They moved some of the kids, who were very Orthodox Jews. They moved them back into altogether with some real Orthodox Jews, which I wasn't anymore or anything like that.

Q: HOW LONG WERE YOU SICK?

A: I don't remember. It must have been three to six months. I was quarantined.

Q: SO THEY SENT YOU BACK TO THE ORPHANAGE?

A: Right.

Q: WHAT HAPPENED IN THE ORPHANAGE? HOW LONG DID YOU STAY THERE?

A: Until late 1946, my cousin who was in the British Commandos started looking for his family and my family. I guess I popped out of the barrel. I was still alive. So, him and the aunt in Belgium came to the orphanage. I remember it was a Sunday and I was sitting playing chess with some other kids. We were sitting in the dining room, which we used for a recreation hall. Everybody sort of stopped, when my cousin the British Commando came walking into the room, cause he had a green beret on, and everything else, the whole shmear. This friend of my says, "heh, A British Commando," What the hell! I didn't even know. They just stood there. Everybody looked at them. I didn't recognize them, couldn't recognize them.

Finally, after awhile the Director of the orphanage called me over, he says, "What's a matter, don't you recognize your uncle." No! I remember when he was a small kid I used to take candy away from him.

Q: HE WAS YOUR COUSIN OR YOUR UNCLE?

A: No, he was my cousin, but I used to beat him up.

Q: SO, HE WAS ABOUT YOUR AGE?

A: No, he was ten years older than I was, but if he didn't let me beat him up, his mother would beat him up.

Q: THAT WAS ABOUT THE TIME WHEN YOU SHOULD HAVE HAD YOUR BAR-MITZVAH, RIGHT?

A: Yeah! no, nobody, no one, none of us there, had a bar-mitzvah. That's one thing. The only religious thing we had was Hanukah.

Q: REALLY?

A: They took us on trucks to go to Brussels for a Hanukah party. I remember still during the war, after we got liberated, the American army took us by buses to the (Murer) to have a Hanukah party for us. I remember them having it in a convent and there was a tall ceiling with a tall crucifix on top of there and the Americans were talking how the hell we gonna get this crucifix off of here, because it must have taken a crane to put it up. If it wasn't so damn high. They finally decided to put a sheet over it.

Q: IT WAS SMART. WHAT KIND OF THINGS DID THEY DO AT THE HANUKAH PARTY FOR YOU? WHAT WAS THERE?

A: I remember at the Hanukah party the ones the Americans had for us, that was the first time I had peanut butter sandwiches.

Q: CONGRATULATIONS! INDOCTRINATION!

A: Yeah, I had it before anybody else in Belgium had it. Then they had some sort of show for us, puppet show or something like that. They they had a movie of cartoons. They they took us to a turkey dinner, and with ice-cream. That was it.

Q: NO HANUKAH CANDLES?

A: No, there was a war on.

Q: DID YOU MANAGE TO SAVE ANY PICTURES FROM HOME AT ALL?

A: I got some pictures from after the war, but not from... Well, I got a picture of my mother and my sister that I got from Belgium from their archives. That's all.

Q: SO HOW LONG DID YOU STAY IN BRUSSELS, THEN?

A: When?

Q: WELL, AFTER LIBERATION? AFTER YOU WENT TO THE ORPHANAGE, RIGHT?

A: I went back to Brussels, just for the hospital. That's all. Then I was sent to (Pfoffelsaw.)

Q: HOW LONG DID YOU STAY THERE?

A: Almost two years.

Q: THAT WAS 1947?

A: Right, December 1947, I came to the United States.

Q: WHO SPONSORED YOU IN THE UNITED STATES?

A: Arthur A. Newhouse.

Q: HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE HOW YOU CAME OVER HERE?

A: Well, let's put it this way! We were put on a troop transport, it was called the U.S.S. (Marlene Marlane). It was full of guys, wives, and children of Europeans who fought in the American army. When we got to the United States they were sent one place and I got picked up by a relative of Arthur A. Newhouse, who took me to their home. I stayed with them one or two weeks and then they put me on a train from New York to San Francisco and that was the only time I got scared.

Q: REALLY, WHY?

A: I didn't know how to speak the language.

Q: WELL, WHAT IMPRESSED YOU FIRST WHEN YOU FIRST CAME TO THE UNITED STATES? I ASSUMED YOU ARRIVED IN NEW YORK?

A: Well, when I came to San Francisco, what impressed me of everything was, this place didn't exist. We had so much food, clothing, and everything was so nice and clean-looking and everything else. It was like a fairy tale. The other thing is, it was right around Hanukah and Christmas time and since I was in an orphanage everybody used to invite us to one party or to another or something like that. I didn't believe it. Does this go on every day, one party after the next. It was very strange.

Q: YOU HAD A RELATIVE IN SAN FRANCISCO?

A: Yeah, Arthur Newhouse.

Q: I THOUGHT HE PICKED YOU UP IN NEW YORK? HE LIVED IN SAN FRANCISCO?

A: He lived in San Francisco.

Q: SO HE FLEW TO NEW YORK?

A: No, he didn't flew. They put me on the train by myself.

Q: OH, BUT WHO MET YOU IN NEW YORK?

A: Some relatives of his.

Q: OH, SOME OF HIS RELATIVES. I UNDERSTAND. I THOUGHT IT WAS HIM.

A: No.

Q: THAT WAS QUITE A TRAIN RIDE WASN'T IT?

A: That's what I meant, I was the only one. It's a lucky thing that the woman next to me knew how to speak German and English. And so, she helped me through the whole trip. Otherwise it would have been tough.

Q: I SHOULD SAY, WITHOUT ENGLISH.

A: I wouldn't have been able to eat.

Q: DID YOU GET SOME MONEY?

A: Yeah.

Q: SO DESCRIBE YOUR FIRST YEAR OR SO IN SAN FRANCISCO.

A: What's there to describe. It was at a constant go. It was party and school. They put me in the 7th grade for one month, and I wound up in the high 9th.

Q: SO YOU ACTUALLY JUMPED FROM 1st TO 7th GRADE?

A: Yeah, I never finished the middle grades there.

Q: YOU LEARNED ENGLISH VERY FAST.

A: Oh yeah, about six months after that I was here I knew how to speak English pretty well.

Q: AND THEY PUT YOU INTO 7th GRADE. THEN YOU JUMPED TO 9th GRADE. WOW! THAT'S PRETTY GOOD. AND YOU CONTINUED LIVING WITH YOUR RELATIVE HERE?

A: No, Arthur Newhouse was a bachelor. And he was afraid that he couldn't take care of me. So, he put me in Homewood Terrace which was a Jewish orphanage asylum here in San Francisco and I stayed there. I didn't like the place very much so when I became eighteen I joined the United States army.

Q: GOOD FOR YOU.

A: Out of one hole into the other hole.

Q: WHERE DID YOU GO IN THE ARMY?

A: I was at Fort Ord for about basic training and then two years up at Alaska. And then came back and then I was taken Camp Hill Colorado in the mountains in Colorado. And then I got discharged out of there.

Q: HOW LONG WERE YOU IN THERE?

A: Three years. I got my American citizenship while I was there. And after I came back I had a few odds and ends jobs. And then I worked for six years with the Bank of America. And I worked for another couple other jobs and then I worked for Levi Strauss for the last twenty years.

Q: GOOD FIRM.

A: Excellent firm!

Q: DOING WHAT KINDA WORK? WHAT KINDA WORK DID YOU DO FOR LEVI STRAUSS?

A: I was computer operations all time. Main frames. We used to say a computer, it meant a main frame. It didn't mean, nowadays if you say it, it's just a clerk typist.

Q: WHEN DID YOU GO BACK TO YOUR HOME TOWN FOR THE FIRST TIME?

A: I went there last year. I been a few times before to Europe, but last year was the first time I decided to go back to Plauen.

Q: WHY DID YOU NOT GO BEFORE THEN?

A: I didn't exactly have the desire. So many other things I wanted to do. But last year I realized I better start getting my birth certificate and all that stuff together. So I had to go back. Cause I wrote them before, oh about five or six years ago, about my birth certificate. They wrote me a letter back. They never heard of me! So this time, when I went back and I told them my name, it was right at the top of the book.

Q: WHAT WAS YOUR IMPRESSION OF PLAUEEN, WHEN YOU WENT BACK?

A: Plauen! The town looked like the war never existed. Everything was pretty well rebuilt, the way I somewhat remembered it. Except it was dirty. We talked to some people and they told me it was 80% bombed so...

There's not that many cars and they got enough to eat, but they don't have the convenience of anything we have here. Basically, they're living like just a little bit after the war. The hotel we had was a closet. There was no shower,

no bathroom. There was a communal toilet seat.

Q: YOU MENTION "WE" WHOM DID YOU GO WITH?

A: My cousin and I.

Q: I SEE. WHAT WAS YOUR RECEPTION IN PLAUEEN? HOW WERE YOU TREATED BY THE PEOPLE IN PLAUEEN WHEN YOU WENT BACK?

A: In Germany, the officials very nicely. As a matter of fact, when we got to City Hall we talked to them and they all came over and talked to us. Then we had one of the officials of the town took us to where I used to live. The house was bombed. As a matter of fact, they found that out at City Hall, because they got where all the houses used to be. Then they took us where the synagogue used to be, which was burned down. I remember that being burned down.

Then they took us to the Jewish cemetery, which is pretty well kept up. And the Jewish museum right next to it. There's a plaque where the synagogue used to be, that this is where the Jewish synagogue used to be.

Q: DID YOU VISIT ANY OTHER PLACES IN GERMANY?

A: No.

Q: BUT YOU WENT TO BELGIUM?

A: Yeah.

Q: WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO VISIT THE ORPHANAGE AGAIN? DID YOU GO BACK TO THE ORPHANAGE?

A: In Belgium?

Q: YEAH?

A: When, after the war?

Q: AFTER THE WAR?

A: After the war, after I got back, we got mattresses and everything else. Boy, that was life for us. Never had mattresses. Before that we slept on straw most of the time. The food was pretty regular and everything else. The kids used to share with one another. There was no stealing. On the other hand, there was nothing to steal. After awhile they built little lockers for us with kind of curtains so we could put a few of our personal belongings. The personal belongings you put in your pocket, that's all. There weren't many of those either. The clothes on your back weren't your own anyway.

Q: DID YOU EVER RECEIVE COMPENSATION FROM GERMANY?

A: No, I don't want it. It's blood money.

Q: WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE REUNIFICATION OF THE TWO GERMANY'S?

A: Well, I don't think that much, I mean it's one country.

The only thing I got a say is, my cousin, while we were in Germany, and I, he got pretty mad at them, he says they were living too good.

Q: WEST GERMANY?

A: Yeah.

I agree with him somewhat, but that's their business. The only thing I would like them to do, is once a year everybody in Germany must wear a black armband. They must go to work, but everything is closed. Anybody who is not wearing a black armband gets fined 100 marks. It's one way to commemorate the Holocaust that they did. That's the only thing.

A: The one thing, what I was taught in the orphanage, after the war is that vengeance doesn't get you anything. The only thing is look at the idiots who did it. You gotta be better than those idiots. We used to have this (techno-glutinous horse) where it came from.

Q: ARE YOU AFRAID OF A UNITED GERMANY?

A: No, I'm here; they're there.

Q: FOR THE WORLD, I MEAN, THE REPERCUSSIONS?

A: I'll tell you something. No, I think we'll poison ourselves, before we start another war, with pollution.

Q: POSSIBLY!

A: I said that a long time about that before we have nuclear war with the Russians, we'll probably poisoned ourselves to death.

Q: YOU TOLD ME BEFORE YOU'RE GOING BACK TO BELGIUM TO DEDICATE A PLAYGROUND. YOU TELL US ABOUT IT A LITTLE BIT.

A: Well, three years ago I wrote a letter to Mayor Feinstein telling her what happened in Belgium. And I asked her to give me a letter of recommendation for the village, which I had made into a plaque. And when I went back I presented the mayor of the town with it. After the ceremony I sort of found out they needed a playground and I decided this would be something more tangible to give the people of (Parway). So, when I came back I contacted the Jewish Community Federation and asked them if they could help me. They said yes, that they would help me by collecting the money, because through all the legal ramifications. Then I found out the Jewish Community only can collect the money but they can't transfer any money. So, I had to go to the B'nai Brith. And I called the local B'nai Brith and they

A: said, no they couldn't do anything about it, because they're not a charitable organization, they're an association. So we finally contacted B'nai Brith International in Washington, D.C. and they said, yes that they could handle it. We finally got that all straightened out all the legal ramifications figured out. Then I started asking my friends put ads in the Jewish Bulletin and different things to collect the money. I collected \$17,000. That's all that the town needed for the playground.

Q: RIGHT HERE IN SAN FRANCISCO

A: Yeah, San Francisco, Bay Area.

Q: WONDERFUL!

A: I got a couple thousand dollars from the Koret Foundation, one thousand dollars from Levi Strauss Foundation and I put in a thousand dollars, and nickels and dimes everywhere.

Q: THAT'S A WONDERFUL THING YOU DID THERE! SO YOU'RE GOING BACK?

A: Yes, I'm going back.

Q: YOU'RE INVITED?

A: Yeah, I've been invited to the dedication of it!

Q: WHEN WILL THAT BE?

A: August the 4th.

Q: YOU'RE EXCITED?

A: Yeah, I guess.

Q: I BET YOU ARE! GREAT! WELL, THAT'S CERTAINLY A WONDERFUL THING YOU DID! WONDERFUL!

A: You asked me if I remember anything of Germany? There's little bits. I remember when I was about five or six. I remember Krystal Nacht. I remember there was some sort of

A: doing in town, Hitler Jugend was out there with their drums and the whole damn thing. I was fascinated with it. I never seen it. My parents grabbed me. I was screaming, why the hell you taking me away, I want to see this.

Then I found out, the next day me and my sister went for a walk and we went to walk by the synagogue. I remember the synagogue being a very beautiful synagogue, was completely burned. It used to be on a platz and in the contra platz was a church. The church was intact. The synagogue was burned.

I remember us walking downtown. The shops of all the Jews, on the famous street in Plauen, all the Jewish shops were broken windows with white wash Jewish stars and Juden written on them.

My father never was arrested. I heard that some of my other family members in another parts of Germany were arrested and sent to Dachau, and then got released. But, that's about all I know.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER DID DACHAU MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU? DID DACHAU, THE NAME, MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU? DID YOU KNOW WHAT IT WAS? DID YOU KNOW WHAT A CONCENTRATION CAMP WAS?

A: No, not until way after the war. I went to Dachau last year.

And I went to Auschwitz three years ago. There's a big difference between Auschwitz and Dachau. A big, big, difference.

Q: WHAT IS THAT?

A: Okay. Auschwitz was left pretty well the way, when the Russians got in there. They actually just burned down a few buildings because they had typhoid. But the rest of the buildings are pretty well standing.

A: The place hasn't been done or anything to it, not that they cleaned it up or anything like that. They just to keep the grass down. It pretty still smells of death.

Dachau, they tore down all the barracks except one barracks up front, that they rebuilt. That's just to show what it was like. They had the gas chamber, and things like that, but it's more, I don't know. It looks completely different than Auschwitz.

The other difference which we found out was to get to Dachau from Munich is only three subway stations outside of Munich. I mean the subway just takes you right there. And, I couldn't imagine that the Germans didn't know about it. Auschwitz, it's out in the countryside. It's pretty close to Cracow, but it's about one hours drive from Cracow.

Well, the other difference too, which probably makes a difference is Poland is such a poor country, when you get. And Munich, Germany is a prosperous country when you're there. So, it's a big difference too, in lifestyle.

Q: BUT, BOTH PLACES HAVE A MUSEUM, DON'T THEY?

A: Yes. I didn't actually see that much of the museum, actually.

Q: IN DACHAU?

A: No, no. I went to the museum, that's right. They got pictures, and I brought some books back, which I donated to the library. And some books from Auschwitz too.

Q: WHEN YOU WERE IN AUSCHWITZ, DID YOU USE THE ARCHIVES TO FIND OUT ANYTHING ABOUT YOUR FAMILY?

A: Yeah. I found out about my mother and my sister. What transport they came on, and what # they had, but that's about all they had. It's very scanty.

A: I found actually more out when I went to the Belgium archives, cause there I got my mother and my sister identity papers. I couldn't find anything about my father, because my father was taken prisoner by the Belgium themselves. And then shipped over to France, as they thought he might have been a German spy. But, it seems that the French, they don't want admit actually anything.

In the papers they don't say where he got transferred to or where he got sent to, Auschwitz or whatever. I think they got some papers that the (Polvos) Marshall in the United States Army dug up for me, that he was sent to Auschwitz. I don't remember which transport it was, from where in France.

Q: CAN YOU TELL US, BY PIECING TOGETHER THE INFORMATION YOU GOT FROM VARIOUS SOURCES, WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR MOTHER, YOUR SISTER, AND YOUR FATHER?

A: My mother and my sister from (Marline) were sent directly to Auschwitz on the 21st transport. There was a separation, and there were so many people could go to slave labor; and some other people went I think directly to the gas chambers. I think my mother and my sister probably went directly, because they were not in that good of health. My sister was pretty young, and my mother already had a heart attack. And she was probably suffering from muscular dystrophy. So, they probably went directly to the gas chamber. My father, I guess he worked as a slave laborer in France, and other places. I don't know exactly.

Q: CAN I ASK YOU TO BACK UP TO WHEN YOU WERE ON THE TRANSPORT? THE ORIGINAL TRANSPORT THAT TOOK YOU FROM PLAUE. DO YOU REMEMBER BEING GATHERED TOGETHER?

A: No, we just all showed up at the train station. And they loaded us onto a train. Just children, there were no adults that I remember. We just rode along from Cologne to the border. And I, being so full of chocolate I was offering some chocolates to the S.S. men at the border. And all the kids were "Hey." What the hell, I was five years old. I didn't know any better.

Q: HOW LONG DID THE JOURNEY TAKE?

A: It took us about, we left around 11:00 or something like that, and we got in the evening into Brussels.

Q: WERE YOUR PARENTS ORDERED TO BRING YOU TO THE TRANSPORT?

A: No, it was voluntary.

Q: YOUR PARENTS PROBABLY WANTED YOU TO GO OUT OF GERMANY!

A: Yeah, somebody in the German government arranged to get the children out of Germany.

Q: BUT, NOT THE GERMANS?

A: I don't know who did, but I remember at that time, my mother had to sell all the furniture already, and everything else in Plauen. And, she stayed behind in Plauen to get everything sold up. My father took me and my sister to Cologne. And, we got to Cologne, then we went to see my grandfather. I remember the last thing going to see my grandfather. I don't think I got along too well with my grandfather. He wore a beard. And I couldn't figure out, why the hell a man should wear a beard.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER THE DATE OF THE TRANSPORT?

A: No, I don't.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER HOW YOU SPENT THE HOURS ON THE TRANSPORT?
AND, HOW MANY CHILDREN WERE TRANSPORTED WITH YOU?

A: No, I just like to watch, looking out the window.

Q: YOUR FIRST TRAIN TRIP?

A: No, it wasn't mine, but I always do. As long as I'm movin
nothin bothers me as long as I got the window to watch out of.

Q: YOU SOUNDED LIKE YOU WERE A PRETTY CONTENTED CHILD?

A: Yeah, no, my parents loved me. They treated me okay. I
think I got slapped one time in the face by my mother. That's
the only time. She threatened to have my father come beat
me up, which I always was, "Boy, I'll behave." My father
came back and she never told him. I never got the beating.
Only one time I remember my father being mad at me. I was
making a pest of myself at dinner time. And he told me that
I should keep my mouth shut and eat with my mouth closed. Now
I always remember that. I always eat with my mouth closed.

Q: YOU MENTIONED THAT YOU WENT TO THE SYNAGOGUE BEFORE THE WAR,
YOU REMEMBER YOUR FATHER TAKING YOU, BUT...

A: Yeah, just me and him, used to go in Germany to the synagogue
on Saturday. I remember seeing things in the synagogue. And,
after we moved to Belgium we went a few times to synagogue
there too. There were a couple synagogues we went to; one was
a real old one, one was another one. I don't remember if they
are there anymore. In Germany in the synagogue I think the
last time we probably went to synagogue was on Hanukah 1939,
or 1938 Hanukah. I don't know, the years at the the time...

Q: DO YOU GO TO SYNAGOGUE HERE?

A: Here, once in a great while. I used to go more regularly when I was in the army. But that was another thing. That made me get out of k.p. duty or something else. I'm not that religious anymore.

Q: DID GOING THROUGH YOUR EXPERIENCES DURING THE WAR CHANGE YOUR VIEWS ABOUT JUDAISM?

A: No, I don't think so. I sort of had an attitude all my life. Even my friends that I met here in San Francisco, said, "don't speak so loud, keep it to yourself." I've never been ashamed to be a Jew.

Q: YOUR JEWISH FRIENDS TOLD YOU?

A: Yeah, well it was a very strange thing with the Jewish friends of mine here in San Francisco. They didn't want everybody to know that they were Jewish, just until the Six Day War. And all of a sudden after the Israelis won the Six Day War, they became. It was different with me. You took me or you left me, one or the other.

Q: WHY DO YOU THINK IT TOOK THAT LONG, ALMOST FORTY/FIFTY YEARS TO BRING THE STORIES OF THE HOLOCAUST OUT INTO THE OPEN?

A: That's kind a hard. That's an individual decision. I didn't particularly talk much about it until just last maybe five years or so, and I figured it's about time we said something more about it. Just in case it happens again, which it happened again in Cambodia. So, it doesn't seem like we never learn our lesson.

Q: DO YOU HAVE A FAMILY HERE? DID YOU EVER MARRY?

A: No.

Q: YOU HAVE NO CHILDREN? IF YOU HAD CHILDREN, WOULD YOU HAVE TOLD YOUR CHILDREN AT AN EARLY TIME ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES?

A: Probably. My background is European. They probably would have asked me about my background. The only thing I did that I remember very clearly, when I was in the service in Colorado, and I got my American citizenship papers. It says what former country did you come from? And I argued with the judge, stateless! Boy, we went through that argument for awhile. So they finally put Germany, stateless. And that's it. But, he had to get the German in there.

Q: WELL HE HAD PROBABLY WANTED TO KNOW EXACTLY IN WHICH COUNTRY YOU WERE BORN, EVEN IF YOU DIDN'T WANT TO BE A GERMAN.

A: And I remember this last time going over to Germany. I went to exchange money at the Cologne train station. I remember him looking at my passport, "Oh, German, gasp.." Yeah, but I got kicked out of the country I told him.

Q: HE SAID TO YOU WITH AN AMERICAN PASSPORT, THAT YOU ARE GERMAN?

A: Yeah, because Schloss, German name, and everything else.

Q: WHAT IS THE NEXT BIGGEST CITY NEXT TO PLAUEN?

A: Between Nuremberg and Dresden are the two biggest cities between. Nuremberg is in West Germany and Dresden is in East Germany.

Q: HOW BIG A CITY WAS PLAUEN?

A: Over 120,000.

Q: TODAY?

A: Yeah, it always was. The town didn't have that many Jews. From what I understand, it only had 102 Jews in the whole town.

Q: DOES THAT BELONG TO SAXONY?

A: Yeah. Volkland is part of Saxony. It's on the German border between East and West, it's about thirty miles or something like that.

Q: MR. SCHLOSS, YOU MENTIONED THAT WHEN YOUR FAMILY ARRIVED IN BELGIUM, YOUR FATHER NEVER FOUND WORK? CAN YOU TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THE ATMOSPHERE IN YOUR HOME WITH YOUR MOTHER WORKING AND YOUR FATHER NOT.

A: It was a little stressful, if I remember right. But the whole house where I lived were Jewish friends. From what I understand, one of my next door neighbors in Belgium, he remembers my family because we came over to their place. My parents probably ate him out of house and home.

Q: HOW OLD WERE THE CHILDREN WHO LIVED IN THE ORPHANAGE WITH YOU?

A: How old?

Q: WHAT WERE THE RANGE OF AGES?

A: Well, they were pretty young. During the German time you couldn't be over fifteen, because if you were over fifteen, you went shipped to Auschwitz. That was the working age. They would take you, put you in one of the slave labor camps.

After that, they were seventeen. Some of the pictures I got, some of the kids looked like they couldn't be more than three or four years old, when at first they looked like five years old from some of the pictures.

Q: WHEN DID YOU FIRST HEAR ABOUT YOUR PARENTS? WAS THE NAME AUSCHWITZ MENTIONED AT THAT TIME?

A: No, that I got much later. I think I got that when I did my research here in the United States through the army. I heard some of the kids mention something in Belgium that our parents went... you know.

I remember some of the kids. We made a couple of crystal sets at the orphanage. We were pretty good engineers. We even took explosives and made firecrackers out of them.

Q: CRYSTAL SETS, YOU MEAN?

A: Radio crystal sets. We used to listen to the news. They used to have a program, where they used to call off the names of the survivors. That's how we found out some of the kids had still survivors coming out of the concentration camps, cause they used to announce them.

Q: THEN YOU HEARD THE WORD AUSCHWITZ AT THAT TIME OR BEFORE?

A: I don't know if I heard it then. I don't remember. After the war, we got papers and things like that in French. And we saw some of the pictures that came out of Dachau and Bergen-Belsen and places like that.

Q: WHERE DID YOU THINK YOUR PARENTS WERE ALL THAT TIME?

A: I don't know. I had no idea.

Q: TO YOURSELF, I MEAN?

A: To myself, I don't know, because I always thought we were going to get back to Belgium, Brussels and we were all going to get back together!

Q: YOU TALKED EARLIER ABOUT YOUR ESCAPE WITH THE OTHER CHILDREN. CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE ESCAPE? DID YOU HELP PLAN IT? AND THEN AFTER?

A: I don't exactly remember. It must have been somewhat in the afternoon sometime. I was standing outside getting a little sun, and there was no commotion going on. But somebody opened it. I don't remember who or what. But, one of the guys grabbed me, and we just crawled through the space. And there we were outside. I just followed the crowd. I said, "now

A: what the hell I'm doing outside. It's nice to be outside, but now what the hell do we do."

Q: AND WHAT DID YOU DO?

A: We just followed the crowd.

Q: HOW LONG DID YOU RUN BEFORE YOU CAME TO THE VILLAGE?

A: We didn't have to run very far. We actually just walked. We took a leisurely walk.

Q: WHO WAS SUPPOSED TO BE GUARDING YOU?

A: Well, you see, the funny part about the whole damn thing was, as I told you, this was a fortified farmhouse. The chateau was there with a main entrance. Then they had two side entrances. One that was on to the street, on to the highway; and the other one in the backyard, to the fields.

Well, the backyard, that door they closed down, because it was a high wall. They figured none of us kids were gonna get out of there. So they just locked it and never left it guarded, because they locked everything. On the front of the place they had a guard. They didn't guard us that much. They used as few people as possible. It was lucky that somebody got the wires loose.

Q: WAS IT A GERMAN GUARD, OR A BELGIAN?

A: I don't exactly remember. I think they mostly were Flemish from Flanders. There were a lot of them in the S.S. They were pro-German.

Q: SO, WERE YOU SCARED? WERE YOU FRIGHTENED AT ALL BEING OUTSIDE IN AN UNKNOWN AREA?

A: Yeah, we were a little. It's like I told you. I was too stupid to know any better.

Q: YOU SAID THAT THE VILLAGERS TOOK YOU TO A GIRLS SCHOOL,
THE FIRST FEW DAYS?

A: Yeah.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER THE NAME OF THE SCHOOL?

A: No. There were two schools. Because you remember in Belgium at that time, the schools that were public, were separate, one for the girls and one for the boys. And I know where the boys school was at. I saw that one after the war.

But the girls school, and I remember it, I had to describe it to everybody, cause the last time I went back, because nobody knew where the hell it was. Because now both schools are together. I finally found it. It's just a private home now, with still the fence around it. But, it's a private home. I knew exactly how to get there, but the townspeople didn't even remember. They sometimes come back and says, "Geez, what a memory you got."

Q: YOU SAID YOU WERE TAKEN THEN AND PLACED WITH A FAMILY?

A: No, we were taken by truck by the Belgian underground to the next village. We were in (Aywaille), which is about two or three kilometers from one another. Then we were taken to the town of (Parway-Bonbom), where we were taken to a place. Then they called the people to come and pick us up.

As I remember, as I even talked to a couple people. The mayor of the town at that time was a German sympathizer, but he took two Jewish kids in his home.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER HIS NAME?

A: No.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER THE NAME OF THE PEOPLE WHO TOOK YOU IN?

A: Yes.

Q: CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THEM,

A: Her name was Madame de Pass. She died just about a couple years ago. Her son is still alive, who's married, and they had kids, and they had grandkids.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER ANYTHING ABOUT YOUR LIFE LIVING WITH THE DE PASS FAMILY?

A: Yeah. I remember some of the things, when we first got there.

I spent a lot of time at the telephone exchange, which was just across the street from where I was living. I didn't know they used me. They used me to translate from French into German and from German into French, when the Germans spoke on the telephone, because they wanted to know what was going on. I was the only kid out of the whole bunch who spoke German and French. So they used me.

After we got liberated I became pretty bad. I started running all over the damn country, "Freedom, Freedom." That was it. I ran all over the countryside.

Q: WITH WHOM DO YOU KEEP IN TOUCH IN BELGIUM, NOW?

A: With the son.

Q: HAS HE EVER BEEN OVER HERE?

A: No, none of them ever come, except the only person that comes over here was the doctor, Dr. Jaffe and she came over with her husband. She was the Director of the orphanage after the war. By the way her husband was on the same transport as my mother and sister was. But he was put to work. He's a physicist. He was a professor of physics at the University of Brussels.

Q: HE SURVIVED?

A: Yes.

Q: AND, HE TOLD YOU HAVING SEEN YOUR MOTHER AND SISTER?

A: No. I showed him the papers I had, and he said, "I was on that transport."

Q: YOU NEVER MET ANYBODY WHO CAME IN CONTACT WITH YOUR MOTHER AND SISTER?

A: No.

Q: HAS THERE BEEN A REUNION OF THE CHILDREN FROM THE ORPHANAGE?

A: No. We lost track of each other so long ago. We were separated. I think the majority probably went to Israel and had their name changed. But some of them went to Australia, Canada, all over. And some of them probably stayed in Belgium.

Q: CAN YOU ALSO TELL ME THE NAME OF YOUR COUSIN, WHO JOINED THE BRITISH COMMANDOS?

A: His name was Jack Schloss, Jacob Schloss, except when he joined the British Commandos they changed it to Jack Scott. He kept the name.

Q: HE LIVES IN THE UNITED STATES NOW?

A: No, he lives in London.

Q: I THOUGHT HE MAY HAVE CALLED HIMSELF LOCH, THE ENGLISH VERSION OF SCHLOSS.

A: Well, he had his troubles, while he was in the army occupation in Germany in Hamburg, he met a German woman. He married her and they had two kids. But, now my uncle, another interesting story, my uncle here in the United States, found out about it, disinherited completely out of the will, just completely out of the will.

Q: BECAUSE OF THE GERMAN WIFE?

A: Yeah, right. Then a few years later they got a divorce. She divorced him. I guess the only thing she wanted do was get out of Germany. England wasn't that much better off than Germany.

Q: BUT THAT HAPPENED A LOT AT THE TIME. THEY MARRIED FOR THE GREEN PASSPORT, AT THAT TIME, GREEN.
DID YOU LEARN IN THE ORPHANAGE? YOU SAID YOU WENT FROM THE 1st GRADE TO 7th GRADE? DID YOU LEARN TO READ?

A: Yeah. Writing I'm still having a problem with, but I always had a problem with that.

Q: BUT YOU BECAME A COMPUTER PROGRAMMER, SO I ASSUME YOU MUST HAVE LEARNED A GREAT DEAL ON YOUR OWN?

A: Yeah.

Q: WHO TAUGHT YOU?

A: Myself, school of hard knocks.

Q: DID YOU HAVE BOOKS AT THE ORPHANAGE?

A: Yeah, we had a lot of books at the orphanage. After the war as a matter of fact, we had a shop that we took books, old, used books; and we made them into brand new books. We rebound them so we had an extensive and beautiful library, that we just refurbished our own books. The old type of books that you used to sew the (lee) together and bind them with glue. We had a regular shop there.

Q: WHO TRAINED YOU IN THE COMPUTER?

A: Well, IBM actually.

Q: DID YOU GO TO SCHOOL HERE?

A: Yeah.

Q: AND WHAT LEVEL HERE DID YOU COMPLETE IN SCHOOL?

A: 12th grade, if I should have. I don't know.

Q: WELL, YOU'VE GOT A VERY GOOD JOB. DO YOU LIKE TO WORK THERE?

A: Well, I'm not working there anymore.

Q: I KNOW. DID YOU LIKE TO WORK THERE?

A: Yeah, I had my own shop after the war. I had my own micro-graphics section at Levi Strauss.

Q: VERY GOOD! WOULD YOU LIKE TO ADD ANYTHING ELSE?

A: I don't know. This is almost like the third degree.

Q: NO, WE JUST WANT TO HEAR EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU, THAT'S ALL. WE LIKE TO BE THOROUGH. WE'RE NOT SURE WE COULD GET YOU IN HERE A SECOND TIME.

A: Well, next time, if you let me know, I'll have to do a lot of research to get some of the papers and some of the pictures. But I don't know if you can take pictures on the video.

Q: WE WOULD LIKE TO GET ANY COPIES OF ANY PICTURES OR DOCUMENTS YOU DO HAVE, AND MAYBE I CAN CONTACT YOU ABOUT MAKING ARRANGEMENTS TO DO THAT. DO YOU LIVE HERE IN SAN FRANCISCO?

A: Yeah, I live in the Golden Gateway Center.

Q: GOOD, WELL IT'S CERTAINLY BEEN A PLEASURE TALKING TO YOU ALEX..

A: Thank you.

Q: I WISH YOU LOTS OF LUCK AND HAVE A VERY HAPPY TRIP TO BELGIUM FOR YOUR REUNION THERE.

A: It's a funny thing I remember coming here after I finished my service in the United States army. I didn't have nobody, so I stayed with a Jewish family. I remember was staying out here in the avenues someplace. I was staying with a cantor family. I was just renting a room with them.

I remember one day coming in. He was a cantor, an unemployed cantor, and he says, "if I were a young man like you, I would go to Israel and fight." And I about got so mad. I was about ready to hit him. He was this fat! old! man, who probably escaped Germany and with lots of dough. His kids were working and everybody was working and he was collecting a lot of money. They had a lot of money.

A: He probably never did anything except sing in front of a congregation. Telling me if he was a young man like me he would go fight in Israel, after I just finished the Second World War and the Korean War. I was about ready to kill him.

Q: YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO GO TO KOREA, DID YOU?

A: No, I didn't go to Korea. I was in Alaska at the time.

Q: GOOD FOR YOU. WAS IT VERY DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO GO TO AUSCHWITZ?

A: No, it wasn't. But, I noticed one thing. I heard it on TV before, there was a lot of times at night, I couldn't sleep sometimes. I started thinking. Then, I started getting guilty feelings for having survived. And I heard on TV sometime somebody had the same problems. And he said he got rid of the guilt feeling by going to Auschwitz. That's one reason why I went.

Q: AND, DID IT HELP?

A: Yeah, it did help. I don't know which helped it. But, just the biggness of what happened there. Auschwitz isn't that big actually. But, the enormity of what happened there is big.

Q: DID YOU ALSO GO TO BIRKENAU?

A: No. Oh no, I went to Auschwitz I, and to Birkenau.

Q: THAT WAS VERY CLOSE WASN'T IT?

A: I went one day to Auschwitz I, and one day to Auschwitz-Birkenau. I keep forgetting that most people, I think here in the United States, think Auschwitz is just one, but there's two. For what I understand there were two, three, four of them Asuchwitzs. Auschwitz #1 which was a regular camp with a barracks, and then Auschwitz-Birkenau which was a brick

A: building and a wooden building, where they did most of the killing. And Auschwitz #1 which had a small gas chamber.

But Auschwitz-Birkenau all the gas chambers were blown up.

Q: IT'S A SAD PART OF OUR HISTORY.

Q: THANK YOU.

A: Thank you.