

Do you have many people going through?

Interviewing?

Mm-hmm.

I interview quite a few, but how many people have we been interviewing?

Well, only a couple since we've been here. In fact, Harry's the second person.

So in total interviews what are we up to now? 1,200, 1,400?

No, we're about 1,500.

1,500 interviews? So far. Are we ready? OK, you were just talking about your family, your parents. And I think that it's important to hear about that in terms of your reaction to World War II. So why don't you continue with what you were talking about, your dad and helping other Jewish people?

Oh, sure. I--

What did your dad your father do?

My dad was a junkman. Horses, horse and wagon, and horses and wagons. And he dealt in anything-- scrap metal, iron, anything to make a dollar.

And where in Russia did he come from?

My mother came from Kyiv. My father came from Odessa. In '95. They had two children. They had seven more when they got here. My dad built his house in 1895, and it's for sale on the market for 250 some odd thousand right now.

It was built so good. I sold it in probate when they passed away. It passed-- my dad passed away within one year and one day after my mother in '46. And then I probated the house for the family. Probably '48, '49.

And still in existence. It's nice. Been fixed, two different owners. And just-- I just-- it came on the market. Because I'm in real estate, so I know it.

[CHUCKLES]

How long have you been in real estate?

I see it. Hmm?

How long have you been in real estate?

Since '54. 41 years. My partner and I started the same day. Then we separated, and then we got together again. You know the Sax Company, Sax Realty? You know Steve Sax over in Marin? He's involved in the synagogue.

His dad and I started it. His mother's still alive here. You know his sister, Susie? She's a teacher over there. Her name is Kaufman. He's the head of the Sinai, Eugene Kaufman. She's a doll if there was one.

So you had been mentioning about your father. And was yours-- was yours a religious family?

Oh, super religious. Well, my father and his brother and his father built the first synagogue in San Bruno. And many

years later, the father was gone, they moved it to another location in San Bruno.

San Bruno, they always called us out the road, because McAllister Street was Jewish. McAllister, Golden Gate, there was a [? heavy set. ?] It was just like in Brooklyn, the Jews.

It was wonderful. Thursday night was the best show in the world to be done by the chickens and the fish. And the Jews were fighting, and it was wonderful. Really. We had a hell of a good life.

And we used to go on a horse and wagon. Later on with a car. And then as I say, the synagogue, the ground was sold, so they moved it up to another location. Still there, but no more synagogue.

There are no more Jews out there. Just a few maybe here or there. And the one woman who maintained it passed away. So some other church organizations bought it. And the funds went to the Hebrew Benevolent.

My dad and his synagogue started-- I don't know whether you know San Francisco Hebrew Loan, Hebrew Free Loan? My dad and his little Jewish members with nickels and dimes and quarters started out on San Bruno Avenue.

I told him-- they used to call us the Jews out the road. And any time Jewish people came from back east or someplace out of town with a family, they didn't have a bean, used to end up at my father's house, [PERSONAL NAME] Weinberg.

We used to put them up. Then we used to put them up another fellows' places, and we used to feed them, clothe them, do what we can. Then they went out and got jobs. They used to get a horse and wagon and go out and junk. Anything to make \$0.03.

I knew them all, you know. But they fought so much with my dad. They just took his life away. It's just not worth it. And that's why I say I'm a Jew. I go to synagogue. But they're not going to get me.

I have a real religious Orthodox salesman in my office. He ain't worth a hoot. Nothing.

No?

I don't deal with him. I did the 25th Avenue Synagogue. I helped them get the building in the back for the school years ago. I gave no commission. You know, do what you can.

But the family out the road was a good Jewish area. We had two synagogues. So they fought that, too. [LAUGHS]

Jesus. We used to have good time in the holidays. We used to play ball out there, in and out. And we knew everybody. It was wonderful. We had a good life.

These kids don't come near it. Didn't have the cars. We could run around and do what we wanted. And we all stayed together because we didn't have cars. As soon as cars got plentiful, I come back from the army, I'm the only one in the family living in San Francisco.

Eight brothers. Was one dead. Seven brothers and sisters, and everyone's gone. And I stayed here. I like it.

By the time that you got back from the war, everybody had split?

They were all gone but me, my wife and I, and two kids. One girl, and then I had another one within a year after I got back.

What was your response to the Nuremberg trials?

To my what?

What was your response to the Nuremberg trials? Do you recall watching them?

Yeah, I watched it, but it's the same old joke they get on too much. It's no different than the Simpson trial. Stall them and push them back and forth. And I mean, they never got near-- the big guys, big ones got away.

I've been reading a lot of books. My daughter's very good in that. She gets a lot of stuff about the Hebrew-- Israel and the war. And I read a book, The Seventh-- something, Seventh Sin, was it? Hitler's wife, they had gotten her out in a secret tunnel.

And after the war, they discovered a very interesting book. I just finished. I think it was The Seventh Chance, or Seventh--

It was really a good interesting book. I bumped into it. And let's see. She was still alive after the war. The Americans, two people discovered it-- an Englishwoman and an American. They found the tunnels, and they got it.

And I'm reading books all about Israel and everything else. But I learned so much Israel from this Avram-- I forgot his last name-- Bernstein. I learned so much about Israel. I just couldn't imagine, believe it.

And that's the reason I went twice. First time, I took-- my wife couldn't go. She was too sick. I took my 14-year-old grandson. He was very capable. We had a good visit, good time.

We saw everything. Two or three years later, I took my daughter and grandson and two granddaughters, five of us. I planned a tour here through a tour guide. And it was a very, very bad experience, but we saw-- they saw a lot.

Never go through a trip there were the private drivers. Baloney. I went TWA. That's the right way to go. The tour guides are no good because you're dealing with personalities. And they didn't feel good, they didn't show up.

His wife was going to have dinner 5:00, he had to be there at 5:00. He stopped everything, and we didn't go here. My kids didn't see Jericho on the second trip. Can you believe it? After all the-- what they read, and that donkey couldn't make it?

I could have killed him. If he wasn't Jewish, I'd have beat his brains in with a shovel. He was such a nasty guy, but a Jew. [LAUGHS] Over there, they really take Americans-- wow, do they hit the Americans.

Of cost me \$50 to have a contact put in my eye, American dollars. And he wouldn't deal with me. I said, hey, he was too busy. I says, I can't see. I got a contact. You're a businessman. So am I.

It's an emergency. You do it. I'm not leaving the store. And no one else will get in the chair until you do it. And I meant it. He was from Canada. He lived right in Jerusalem. We had an appointment. And he refused to do it.

But he gave my-- the nurse gave my daughter a bent eye, said I'm taking over. Forget it. Get the doctor. [WHISTLES] Do it. He did it. He said, pay downstairs-- \$50. They really rip it into the Americans.

[LAUGHS]

It's no different than anybody else.

[LAUGHS]

But like I say, TWA tour gives you everything you want to see. We got into Mea Shearim. I don't know whether you've been there or not.

Did you go to Yad Vashem?

I was everywhere. Sure, Yad Vashem, I've been there two or three times. Yeah, sure. But if you've never been to Israel, if you ever get there, be sure you go and see that Mea Shearim.

A real Orthodox country. They hate the Jews. They hate Americans. We're supporting them, but they hate us because we're not religious. And we were told by our guide, because we could see big Nazi signs on the wall there. We were told by our guide that they were for the Nazis during the World War II. They wanted to teach the Jews that they have to come back to real Jews.

It's an experience. You can't go in that area with short sleeves or short anything. You have to have everything covered all the way down. We almost had a riot. I had to grab this one Hebrew over there, a Jew. I grabbed him because he was going to fight with our guide.

I'm older than the guy, but he's going to fight with him. I grabbed him. I pulled him away. I really swore at him. Get out of here! You leave us alone. We took off, walked to the bus two blocks away.

And a whole bunch of Jews start chasing us. And we're all Jews. But it was an experience. I never could believe a Jew would be a beggar. I couldn't believe it. It's hard. I can't believe a Jew would be a beggar, and you'd give him, and he thanks you.

They cleaned. Kids all go to school. Very clean. All the plaits. But they're nasty, rotten, cheat, I'm telling you. I couldn't believe it.

The bus driver said we may have trouble so let's go anyway. We had 23, 11 Gentiles 12 Jewish people on the tour. It was wonderful, really good. Kind of nice. I want to go back, but I cannot.

My youngest daughter and her husband are the only ones that haven't seen it, but his practice doesn't let him go way too long, you know. But one day he'll go. My family grew up. We had our problems, but not bad, you know. We had a couple of them marry out of the religion, but they accepted it. What can you do, of course.

My two grandchildren, daughter and her sister and brother married out of the religion. What can you do? One, the daughter had her-- the granddaughter had her boyfriend or her husband go right through the entire service and converted at Temple Emanuel. Nice kid.

And the other one didn't, of course. What can you do? You have to accept it. Breaks you up. My oldest daughter worries the hell out of me, but she's a big girl. I can't do anything. 62.

Who is?

My oldest daughter. No, she's 57. Mm-hmm. And the youngest one is 50. And my son-in-law is just 57. When they were both 50, I had the whole family for three days stay at the hotel down the peninsula. Not the Marriott, the other one. Embassy Suite.

I got rooms and stayed two nights and three days. We had a real good time. My brother came from Palm Springs, my sister from Sacramento. Everybody, really. It was 50th, you know. Sheesh. Ah, what else?

To be a Jew. I can't understand. I'm no different than anybody else. It's burns the hell out of me. I'm so upset by that.

Years ago, well, us kids, we were all the same. What, you're a Pole, you're no goddamn good. Pole? You're no good Greek. You're no good this. You're a whop. You're a this. You took it for granted, that's what we were.

That's why I can't believe all these militants. I would kill every one of them, every one of them. Why should they kill a person?

You had said something quite interesting before, during your talk about German soldiers coming up to you and asking about America.

Oh, absolutely. They all came to me.

Did they know that you were Jewish?

No. I was a soldier.

Yeah.

I was from San Francisco.

Why did-- why were dog tags thrown away?

So that they couldn't tell what religion we were.

Oh, I see.

See. But they all threw it away because they didn't want to be persecuted. They didn't know what was going on. Just everybody just knew it and threw it away. I don't see any reason for it, but I did because I didn't want Jewish-- like I say, three instances, it was common. It was known. I got away.

You said the black shirts or the SS were very different than the Wehrmacht soldiers.

Oh, sure.

How different?

The Wehrmacht were pilots. They were the pilots. The SS were the orderlies. They were the running government. They run everything, black shirt. They were the youth. The older ones was the Gestapo. That was the police department.

And then the black shirts ran the country. They were the youth country. It's a big distinction.

Well, who were the people-- who were the German soldiers that were questioning you about America?

Well, I was interrogated by-- we went through a tent. They took my name and that was it. Name and rank, whatever. That was all they asked me, and I walked out, like anybody else.

That's why I could never understand how my wife got the telegram. How did the United States government know anything about me? There was no record. So they just sent it, "believed to be missing in action," "believed to have leg wounds." Why would they scare the hell out of her?

It was the first thing that they asked me when I called from Philadelphia, when I got back to the States. How is your leg? I said fine. What was shot? My arm. I'm working here. I'm holding it right now. I couldn't believe it.

I always worked the angles. When I got some place where I couldn't do it, I looked for someone who was around, and I handled it. I always handled it.

[LAUGHS]

You were forbidden. You couldn't do this thing. OK, you're not. I don't care. [LAUGHS] I'm not a chisel, but I know my way around. [LAUGHS]

Any questions, Sean?

Oh, yeah. I just have one. You said your parents moved to this country in 1895?

Yeah.

That's right. They moved to San Francisco?

In San Francisco, yeah.

Did they-- did they ever tell you what the earthquake was like?

You know, we never even talked about it.

Really?

We never did. We never talked about those things. They had so many kids, I mean, there was so much-- we had a table. We used to sit around, 11 of us. My dad only had time to get us all to watch out, you know, and to be obedient. He was stern, but he was a good man.

I was just wondering if they had lost their house.

No. Or I'll tell you, they did. They lived down here on 6th and Fulton, with all the Jews. And when the earthquake came and wiped it out And they moved up McAllister street, and Golden Gate, and Gough, and Golden Gate, and Turk, and Eddie.

The whole Fillmore was Jewish, all Jewish. We used to have wonderful times. That's when they-- and they stayed-- instead of staying down here, they went out to San Bruno Avenue, Portola district.

There were no streetcars. It was one streetcar, but it was on the line with all cement, all sand. No cement. I'll never forget it. I used to-- Fulton, people used to fall off the step, it was high off the ground. I used to fall and roll down in the mud.

Jesus. The streets were never paved. They started doing it. God, I remember the whole thing, just like [INAUDIBLE].  
Yeah.

Yeah, my mother and father-in-law, let's say I didn't know them. Of course, their family lived here. They had three kids. She had two kids, and they moved them out to Golden Gate Park in tents.

And my mother-in-law was pregnant, very close to having the child. The government or the city, whoever, put her on a train to New York. And I don't know who she went to there, but they went on a train in New York. She had the child and came back.

And they were in Golden Gate Park. And then they moved out to Sunset or wherever. Sunset was nothing. Since it was 19th Avenue was the extent of it. And then Sunset started growing in the '20s way up.

They had the streetcar line up to 40th and Taraval, and 46th and Judah. Then they started building on both sides of it. The builders made billions and the others bought homes.

I bought a home \$550 down and \$32.50 a month. Taxes, insurance, principal interest, everything. But how much did I make a month? \$90.

[LAUGHS]

But it was all tax free. We didn't have any taxes. When I got out of high school, when I was in high school, from '25 to '28, and then from '24 to '28, I was earning \$5 a week. I used to work after school, from 2:30 till 6:00, and all day Saturday, from 8:00 until 9:00 at night. I used to get \$5 a week.

And then, when I graduated high school, I started working from 8:00 till 6:00. And we were open two nights a week until 9:00. And they did me a favor and gave me the keys. I made \$15 a week.

At Christmas time, I used to work 100 hours a week. I ran the bookkeeping machines, all credit accounts. Night and day, all the time. I used to get \$75. And Christmas Eve, we used to close 6:00.

It was a merchandise store, specialty shop, ladies. And the boss used to go home during the day, and he'd come back around 6:00, 5:00 Christmas Eve, and give us all envelopes. \$5 bonus, and we used to thank him.

You should have cut his head off. But I had a job. 1929, I got out of high school. It was the height of the Depression. And my cousin was lucky. He got-- he worked there. He was Harry Weinberg, too. I'm Harry Weinberg.

So he was Big Harry, and I was Little Harry, for a number of years. But I was lucky. Nine kids, none of them worked. I had a job. I gave my dad my paycheck until the Saturday I got married. That day I got paid and I didn't give it to him. Honest to God.

[LAUGHS]

When I went out on the Saturday Night, on Friday nights, I said, Dad, can I have a buck? He said, yes, no problem. We used to go out and go to the Bal Tabarin and dance and drink. After I got married, [INAUDIBLE], it was a weekend.

A couple, we didn't have a car. Friends had a car. \$5 a week on which to go out. Saturday evening drinking, and because we worked Friday, Saturday. Go to the Bal Tabarin, drink and dance, and go to Joe's on Broadway, and have a great hamburger. Come home 2:00, 3:00 in the morning.

Spend Sunday-- sometimes we'd go to the park, sometimes somebody'd take us for a ride. And we'd go to a movie Sunday night, and we'd have maybe a quarter or something left over. \$5, it's a fact. We had a budget.

I got married in '35. I went on a honeymoon and went flat broke. My father-- my uncle loaned us a car. My wife drove. Went to Santa Cruz. Went to the biggest hotel there.

He said, oh, you're just married. How do you know? The license and the car. A Ford convertible, two-seater. There was a bucket seat in the back. And the water went over the engine, blew over on the highway. We had to stop and put water and everything else.

We came back, I didn't have one penny left. We were there five or six days, whatever, seven days. My father in law gave me \$5. He said, go buy some stuff. We went to Little-Mann Grocery Store, which we later on-- [PERSONAL NAME] boys owned it.

And then they opened over there in Laurel Village. That's when they sold it to the big companies. \$5, I had five boxes full of groceries. Every inch, \$5.

We go to the apartment. We got a Murphy bed on with the-- Murphy bed, you know what that is? The kind that fold up in the living room. My sister and family were supposed to take care of getting my mattress. They didn't.

9:30, we go to the apartment. No mattress-- wall bed coming down. What the heck happened? So I have this very good friend of mine in the furniture business. They had a furniture store, Mark-- Fillmore and Ellis. O'Farrell.

I called Al Davis at home? What do you want? He's a good friend of my old manager. I told him, I thought you were going to put one in this week. Nobody said anything to me. OK. I need it. I have no mattress. He says, OK, I'll meet you

at the store.

We go down, and he puts a mattress on the car, and we went back to our apartment. And the next day, I called in. I want to pay. How much is it? I'll pay you off. He said, no, your manager Jack is paying for it. Maybe \$10 or \$15. You talk about fun, huh?

It was good. We had a good life, really. My poor wife was sick for a long time, at least 25 years. A bad heart. It gave her a lot of time.

You were together how long?

She passed away-- died on a lavatory, just folded over. She was at least 20, 25 years. But we had our 50th anniversary exactly the same as our original. We had over 300 to our original family, friends at Fairmount Gold Room, Sunday, too, at noontime. We had our 50th there. Same thing. 32 people from the original wedding were there. Had a couple of hundred.

And I told her I didn't want to do it, because I'd been to three or 50th anniversaries. And within six months, one of them is gone. I didn't want that to happen. I want-- let's take a good trip. She says no. Good memory, as long as I'm around.

Four or five months, she was gone. But she was really bad. But anyway, she was a good mother to the girls, a good wife. What else can I say?

Well, unless you have something?

I think that's it. Thank you very much for sharing your story.

My pleasure. I hope it isn't used as propaganda if somebody comes slit my throat. I'm not ready.