

[MUSIC PLAYING] Any time.

OK. Today is July 23, 1991. I'm Sandra Bendayan here, interviewing Paul Benko. This is interview number four. And we had left off with you returning to New York from California to be with your aunt and uncle. So that's the place to start.

My aunt and uncle were Martha and Louis Freedman. And they lived on East 88th Street, just between First and Second Avenue, in an apartment house. They had moved during the war. And they found a tiny apartment for three teenage kids. It was a two-bedroom apartment, three teenage kids. And they immediately took me in.

There were two boys, named Franklin and George Friedman, and their daughter, Charlotte were my cousins. And they embraced me in the family. They tried to make my passage to life as unspectacular as it could possibly be. They didn't make exceptions. They didn't make special rules. They didn't treat me any differently than their children.

And I was unaccustomed to American ways, to say the least. I had lived for a while essentially on my own during my stay in Paris when my adopted parents had left.

I think I discussed how I came here through Ben and Jane Rochelle. And Ben and Jane Rochelle were in show business. And they were traveling around. And essentially, they helped me get in the country. But they couldn't be responsible for me on a day-to-day basis. So that's why I stayed with my aunt and uncle.

There, my aunt immediately dragged me down to Stuyvesant High School. Our first meeting was very dramatic, because my aunt resembled my mother very much. And she happened to be wearing a green suit at Pennsylvania Station, where she met me.

And also, I was overwhelmed by the resemblance. And she recognized me immediately. I didn't wear a boutonniere or anything like that for a recognition signal. But as soon as I got to her house, that's when the incident with the policeman happened. I had just gotten there.

She fed me some lunch and promptly dragged me down to Stuyvesant High School. And the people at Stuyvesant High School-- Stuyvesant High School is one of three high schools that one takes an exam to get into in New York. At that time, it was Stuyvesant, Bronx High School of Science, Brooklyn Tech were those three.

And they gave me the admission test, even though it wasn't the exact date. And they admitted me even though I couldn't solve problems involving inches and feet. And I just crossed it out. And I said the international methods of measurements were centimeters, meters, millimeters, and such, not inches. And they were very helpful.

And Stuyvesant High School turned out to be one of the most wonderful experiences in my life. They had a wonderful teaching staff. And there was a spirit to the school that had nothing to do with rah-rahs, or football teams, or soccer teams, or whatever teams there were. They really recognized the students who were intellectually curious and who were accomplished.

It's the student who solved the most difficult math problem was the most famous student in the school. It was the student who came up with an original solution to a classic physics problem was the most famous student, the same thing in biology.

And most of the student body was interested in engineering. And so they leaned heavily into math, physics, and also mechanical drawing, and such things. But they didn't neglect the humanities at all.

In history class, in one class, I remember, we sat according to political parties from left to right. We had two semesters of history, one taught by an admitted leftist, and the other one taught by an admitted rightist. They were quite ethical in their presentation.

And they had very, very high standards in this respect also. So just because it was essentially a science school and an all boys school didn't mean that the other things were neglected. And the students really competed in the sense of getting more information to the classroom, rather than less.

They were very, very tolerant of individualistic behavior, unlike European schools entirely. Students did talk to teachers, did disagree with teachers, which was unthinkable in European life.

In my first week there, somebody literally objected to an explanation of atomic structure, because they presented the simplest explanation, and left the room in anger, and slammed the door. Such behavior, you know, I expected mass executions on the spot. I thought I'd be thrown out of school together with all other members of the class. And I'd never be able to darken that institution's doorstep again.

But they didn't. The instructor just turned around and says, what he says is partly true, but we have to start someplace. And since most of you haven't had this before, we're going to start with the simplest model.

Anyhow, the instructors were absolutely wonderful. I can still remember my economics instructor, for example-- you'd expect that in science, it would really be very up to date because it was a science high school. But my economics instructor, for example, had half a semester of theoretical economics and half a semester of consumer economics.

And I learned about such things as Consumers Union and such. And on the other hand, in the theoretical side, we read Veblen in high school. And it was a very, very exciting place to be.

And the school also provided me with speech correction, because in New York, schools tend to encourage the young students to lose their accents, because they feel this is a negative aspect when hiring is done. And I developed a limp while I was there. It turned out that I had a bone fragment in my foot.

From what?

From wearing wooden shoes and probably stumbling and hitting it. But it was diagnosed by a physician who comes from my own hometown who was then in New York and examined me. He then told me I'd have to go to an orthopedic specialist.

The physician's name was Frank Gruber. He was born in Cluj. He came from a very poor family. And the congregation in Cluj made it possible for him to go to school, so that he slept in some people's houses. And then he got meals in other people's houses. And he eventually went to school in France. And he was supported. And he was a student of Madame Curie.

Really?

Yeah. He became a radiologist. And then he came to the United States with his family. And he was responsible for developing an early method of photographing ulcers by lowering balloons in the stomach.

Anyhow, Dr. Gruber was also very kind and very helpful to me in explaining how things worked here. And he referred me to an orthopedic specialist. But the fact is that I didn't have a lot of money. And so the school-- there was a student advisor in school, a counselor, who said, oh, we have a special fund for that. He noticed my limp, too, and talked to me.

And it turns out that the school had a fund that when the student provided 50%, the school provided 50% of the funds. And I went to see a Park Avenue specialist, who charged \$25 in 1946, early 1947. And that was a lot of money. That was 50 hours of work for me. And I had to pay it out of my own pocket. And that's when I made \$0.50 an hour.

Well, his name was Albert Shine. And he looked at my foot. And he diagnosed it correctly. And I went to Mount Sinai Hospital during the Easter vacation. And I was, again, treated very, very nicely. The social worker who did the intake interview told me that, you know, I wouldn't have to pay, because I was an indigent for their purposes.

But I was not treated as an indigent at the hospital. It was a model. I knew about Mount Sinai Hospital, because they had very famous physicians there. The doctor BÃ©la Schick is there. And he's the one who discovered the scarlet fever test. And they're really one of the more famous hospitals probably in the world.

And we had talked about it in the school that I went to. That's the kind of school it was. And so my foot was operated on, repaired there. And I haven't had any problems with it since. I took all the appropriate New York State Regents exams. But I could not take the Regents scholarship exams, because I was not a citizen. I didn't qualify for those.

And when I was graduating, which was February 1948, was the cresting of the post-war GI wave. There were a lot of GIs applying to schools. And the GIs had preference for college admissions. So it was very competitive.

I took the exam for City College in New York, because that was \$2 a semester. And I applied to a number of schools. I got into every school that I applied to. But we sweated getting into school. It's not like California, where students who really want to get into school can get in fairly easily.

Did you have any trouble having missed that time during the war of school?

Not really. I had a difficult time with-- the math, I really hadn't missed that much math, because I think math is taught an earlier stage in European schools than they're here. Writing spontaneously, I had a difficult time, because I was used to censoring myself very carefully.

In European schools, one never reveals oneself, because that can lead to arrest. The way history was taught here was very, very different. Well, all teaching methods here are very different from Europe. Well, we sat rigidly in chairs. And we were told when to take notes, and when not to take notes, and such things.

But it's much freer here. There's less direction, also, less proprieties about how homework is done or submitted. As far as content was concerned, Stuyvesant High School was first-rate.

But it was wonderful to be able to talk to a teacher without standing at attention, and first asking permission to address them, and all that sort of thing, which would have occurred in Europe. Also, in Europe, we wore uniforms, which I detested all of my life. And there was no such thing here.

The school day was very short. That was the one peculiar thing. Stuyvesant was overloaded. And so I went to school from something like 7:32 to 12:37. They ended at odd times. And then I worked at the public library in New York to support myself.

My aunt and uncle, who I lived with in New York, as I said, they took me and they embraced me in the family. And to this day, my relationships with my cousins there are closer to brother and sister than to cousins.

You said that family treated you exactly as if you were any other child.

Right.

Did you feel that they were doing that, knowing you would appreciate it or that they really appreciate your experiences?

No, my aunt and my uncle knew in their hearts what new immigrants go through. And they did give me some warning clues. One is that there is a tendency of people to exaggerate how good things were.

And particularly, my aunt was a very severe critic of the entire European culture. She used to get into family arguments about that. When people brought up the, quote, "good old times," and she would list such things. Good old times? Says, how many people were raped and never prosecuted? And this is way back in the '40s. And she mentioned the unpleasant as well as the pleasant aspects of the old life.

Naturally, I went through a period of adaptation, because in some senses, I acted as an adult when I was on my own in

Europe, and I was working with GIs. And then I had come back here and be a schoolboy again. And when I lived in LA, I think I mentioned that, and I went to high school where there's a dance every noon, and I was flabbergasted.

It wasn't that at Stuyvesant High School. Periodically, there'd be dances. And since it was an all boys school, quite a bit of time was wasted in scheming ways to get the dance going with the girls' school, which was Julia Richmond.

But I got a job first at a pharmacy on Second Avenue. And then I got a job at the New York Public Library, which helped me support myself through high school. So after a semester of living with my aunt and uncle, it was terribly crowded. They just had a two-bedroom apartment and four teenagers. It's more than I'd wish on anybody.

I did find another apartment, and I shared it with somebody else, nearby, on 80th Street. And then I ate with my aunt and uncle dinner, usually. And breakfast and lunch, I did by myself. And then they moved to California in '47.

And I stayed on in New York till I finished high school. I explored New York thoroughly. New York was a wonderful place to be in, because for very little money, mainly car fare, one could see the most fabulous sights. And for a few cents, you could see concerts in Lewisohn Stadium and wonderful plays in very off-Broadway places.

And it was a great experience. Often, I was very lonely, because my family had, by then, gone to California.

Did you have any connections to the Jewish community there or to your neighbors?

Well, there was a lot of Jewish friends and relatives when I first went there. But generally, I did have some somewhat more distant relatives. My aunt's husband's side, Louie's relatives. And they're very kind and very generous in every way. And I got hand-me-down clothing and such. So my support was very much eased that way.

And Louie had a brother named Joe, who had a small grocery store on 89th Street between, I think, Second and Third Avenue. And he always sold me things cheaper. So they were very nice. I missed the family. And well, part of it was that I worked weekends. I worked Saturday and Sunday. I worked eight hours Saturday and anywhere from four to eight hours on Sunday. And then the rest of the week, I would work four hours at the public library.

And this is 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue. So I guess it was a blessing in disguise that I wasn't. I would have been lonelier had I had both Saturday and Sunday off. And there were times when I was lonely.

But I also learned a lot about New York. The people who worked at the public library were a very diverse lot. And Stuyvesant, by the way, was a fully integrated high school, in the sense that there were Blacks, and there were Puerto Rican students there. And some of them worked at the public library.

So we got to know each other. And I got to know some guys who played in jazz bands. And I went along with them to various jazz bands. And literally, I was all over New York. And I never felt threatened or-- and I was never afraid or anything.

The group of students that I did know generally all had great interests of some kind of or another. And it was a great education to be with them. We looked at the world very differently. I tended to be very cautious about knowing people and talking to people, because that's the European political experience is such that one does this.

But I learned the veracity of their expressions by the way they acted. They were not afraid to say, or do, or disagree such. And so I gradually understood that there is a freedom that permeates American life at a functional level, where people are not constantly censoring themselves as they speak, whereas in Europe, even in the most educated circles, there is a strong tendency to censure, particularly value judgments that involve public issues. Private issues may vary, but public issues, in particular.

Do you think that is true in the culture, say, even before the war, before the camps?

Oh, yes. Yes. Yes. In Eastern Europe, for sure. The notions of defined rights, the inalienable rights, are unknown to

Eastern Europeans. The only know rights by connection, by birth, by influence, by social status, by professional status. Those things provide rights, but not inalienable rights that are independent of connections, or status, or any political, or social, or ethnic association.

That's an entirely foreign concept. The mouse in my house, my castle, they do read it, incidentally. I heard that expression, reading in Hungarian books. But no one could put that in functional terms.

It's very interesting.

No, they wouldn't.

It sounds like that was one of the more difficult things for you to get used to was.

Yes, it was. Yeah, it was. I couldn't believe that there really was such a freedom of choice. I thought it was another con game. I mean, in Europe, we heard all these things also. But we knew they weren't true. And so it was one of the things one paid attention to one didn't question in good company.

But the students' dream of becoming something or other didn't depend upon their father's occupation. In Europe, that's specifically so. I mean, I was in graduate school with the son of a coal miner. And he didn't think it was unusual.

And by the time I was going to graduate school, I didn't think it was unusual that he went. After all, he went to school and got good grades. He passed the exams. He got an assistantship. So he's here. So why not? But if you'd asked me that in the first year that I came here, I would have said, uh-huh, and I would not have believed that at all.

Well, I did have other experiences too when I was working at the public library. There was a fellow there whose name was Mapp-- M-A-P-P-- and was a very good student, went to Stuyvesant. And he was Black. And of all the people there, we were all talking about which colleges we applied to, he's the guy who had not applied.

And I said, Mapp, why not? And he said, my father has a bachelor's degree. And he's a sleeping car porter. And I can get to be a porter without a bachelor's degree. And that was a bitter reminder and reflection of what that Black physician said to me after liberation.

But as I said, in Stuyvesant, there were Black, and there were even some Black students who spoke Yiddish, because they grew up on the Lower East Side next to Jewish families. And in fact, they spoke good Litvak Yiddish. And we would get a substitute teacher. And of course, we'd all always be talking about the substitute teacher in Yiddish.

But Stuyvesant was a wonderful preparation. And I decided to go into plant pathology. The reason I did is because when I investigated to go to various medical schools, you had to have \$10,000 down. And there were all kinds of requirements, which I couldn't have mastered. And I couldn't take the Regents exam and score so high that I would get a Regents scholarship because I was not a citizen.

So I applied in various places. I applied to the University of Oklahoma, to Norman, Oklahoma, because their tuition was \$50 a semester, even if you were a nonresident. They were interested in attracting students from out of state, I guess, too. And I found out later, that's a good school.

And I applied to Wisconsin. I applied to Oshkosh College in Wisconsin. And I applied to Syracuse University. I applied to Cornell also, because Cornell's agriculture department is supported by the state. And so the tuition was less. And I applied to Syracuse.

And I applied to Berkeley, which had the best department of plant pathology. And I was interested in plant diseases. And I was admitted to Berkeley. And I went. I graduated one day. And I left the next day. My relatives-- I had some relatives that lived out on Long Island. These are very distant relatives-- second aunts and such. They gave me the proverbial box with chicken and goodies in it.

And I got on the bus and went to California. And I thought-- by that time, my aunt lived in Los Angeles. I had the typical New Yorker's view of California. Los Angeles is somewhere on the outskirts of San Francisco or vice versa, I suppose, then. So I thought Berkeley would be nearby. I couldn't possibly believe it was 400 miles.

So I went to California. And I went to Berkeley. From the school, I won the Parents and Teachers Association Award. And that was, I think, \$150. So I could buy my ticket to California and have some money left for the first few days. And I didn't realize that California was great, but it's much harder to find a job in California than New York.

At that time?

Oh, yes. And very much harder. And it took me a long time in Berkeley to learn enough to find a job. And the jobs were very hard to get in Berkeley. So I came here. And I didn't realize that California had an out-of-state tuition fee. And I just didn't have the money.

So through the Hillel Foundation in Berkeley, the director of the Hillel Foundation directed me to a women's group in Berkeley who had a student loan fund-- a Jewish women's group had this loan fund. And so instead of paying \$35, I had to come up with \$175, which might as well have been \$10,000 at the time, because I didn't have it.

So my finances were very rocky in my first semester at Berkeley-- very, very rocky. And it was very, very difficult to find jobs, because there were so many students there all applying for jobs. Plus, I was not a citizen. And there were tremendous numbers of jobs in California, both private and public, that required citizenship.

Did you plan to become a citizen?

Oh, yes. Yes, as soon as possible. I made sure all my immigration documents were in proper order. And I reported to the immigration department in San Francisco on Sansome Street. But it was a very difficult semester because of having very little money.

And I used to smoke in those days, I'm sorry to say. And I used to say sometimes, oh, it's going to be a cup of coffee or a pack of cigarettes. Well, a pack of cigarettes will last through the whole day. So I tended to buy a pack of cigarettes for something like less than a quarter in those days. I was really in very short rations.

And I was willing to do anything. One of the things that my aunt and my uncle taught me was that I did come to this country with European views about work, that all work was honorable here. And they really believed it. And they lived it.

So I had no reluctance about doing physical labor or anything of the sort. In fact, one time, I thought of becoming a plumber instead of going to college. And sometimes, I wonder. But I knew that I was willing to work.

But finding a job was very, very difficult. And part of finding a job is how to present oneself in getting a job. And I didn't know that one's supposed to do certain things in getting jobs in those days.

How did you manage financially while you were out of work?

Well, I would get jobs cleaning people's homes, and sweeping, and doing this. But there weren't very many jobs like that, because there were so many others also doing it-- and dishwashing and things like that. I got a dishwashing job at the International House, finally, in Berkeley. And I lasted, I think, a week and a half because I broke a cup. And that was it. So I was fired.

But since that, had lots of dishwashing jobs. I got all kinds of jobs while I was a student at Berkeley. And as a result of that, of having no money, the Draft Bill was passed, the Selective Service Act of 1948. And under that, one could go in the army for one year, stay in the reserves, and serve one's military obligation that way. And this was the Cold War era. And there were no GI benefits, though, from this at all.

But I thought that if I went in the army and I saved my salary for a year, it would ease my transition in college. And it did. So I enlisted in the army. And I volunteered to do translation, which I had done before. Then they told me that I was officially an enemy alien. And because I was an enemy alien, I couldn't possibly get my clearance. And if I can't get my clearance, then there's no point in training me or doing anything of the sort.

And I finally asked them, how many native-speaking-- native Americans, I mean-- who can get a clearance spoke colloquial Hungarian or Romanian? And they said, well, that doesn't matter now. What we have to do is this. So I gave up the ghost on that.

And I wound up in-- I was sent to first Fort Ord and then to Fort Hood. Now, it's called Fort Hood, Texas. It was Camp Hood, Texas. It was an Armored Division. And I eventually wound up in the medics there.

And I had a very nice lieutenant by the name of George Kravis, who brought me good books. And so I read some good books while I was in the army. And I learned something about medicine. That came in handy later on in microbiology. So I got out of the army after this one year of service. And I joined the reserves. I came. I hitchhiked back to California to save money.

Had you been seeing your aunt and your family regularly?

Oh, I used to visit them in Los Angeles. Actually, I enlisted in Los Angeles after the semester was over. Yes, we certainly kept in touch. And usually, I went down either once at the beginning or at the end of the semester and visited them in Los Angeles, yeah.

Did you have any romances in this period?

Oh, sure, the usual. What else did you do in Berkeley if you didn't have money? And instead of going out, you went to all the public dances. So I danced. I eventually taught dancing. I learned enough dancing. And that's after I got out of the army. And that's one of the ways I made money is to be a dance teacher.

I made a lot of friends. Berkeley was full of people from all over the world. And I went to Hillel a lot. So when I came out of the army, as a matter of fact, I got a job cleaning up Hillel.

There was a fellow there by the name of Jerry Plattner. And I think he took pity on my plight. He was an ex-GI. And he got the GI Bill. And so for him, the job was great because it was an addition to the, I think, \$75 a month, which was a tremendous amount of money in those days.

But I lived there for a while. And then I moved out in an apartment. And I was an undergraduate in Berkeley. I was official in the College of Agriculture, which means that in the lower division, you do mostly science and very little else, and then in the upper division, your specialty.

But there was no law against attending classes in other people's classes in Berkeley. And the classes are so big, they can't tell who was in there, anyhow. So I heard a lot of interesting historians, and political scientists, and sometimes philosophers.

And whenever I finished my work in the lab, wherever a lecture hall was open nearby, I'd go visit. So heard the famous Kelsen, who was a judge of the Supreme Court of Austria. He lectured on international relations. And I sat in the class by Rappaport, who talked about Russian diplomatic history. And I heard a student of Veblen's, who was still a professor there in Berkeley. I mean, some lectures I didn't attend regularly.

But Berkeley, in some respects, was very inhuman, because the students are just lost. And I had huge classes. And we had a class in Western civilization that spent five minutes on the entire Renaissance. I had more in high school on the Renaissance than I had in my Western civilization course.

But in the sciences, Berkeley shone. Now, some of the instructors were very, very good, including Dr. Barker, and Dr.

Doudoroff, and Dr. Stanier. And they were the leading lights of the world. I didn't know it then. I knew that they were famous. But I didn't realize that these were the leading lights in the field.

And they had a view of the world-- they were professors in the sense that they not only taught principals, but they taught a view of the world. So on the individual student, I don't think Berkeley is a place to cultivate undergraduates. But for some students who are very aggressive, Berkeley is suitable.

Thus my undergraduate experience was happy in parts and absolutely dismal in others. There were people there who didn't treat students in such a way as to enhance their learning.

So in what way was it dismal?

Well, first of all, there were classes where rank intimidation was practiced. One of the most famous chemists, Hildebrand, would say, look to the left of you. Look to the right of you. On the third day of the class, only one of you is going to be here at the end of the semester. Now, that's not invigorating to a class that is scared silly about the standards, anyhow.

The very large classes have a sense-- they tend to repress the good. And they don't bring out the best in students. Now, for people who are well-trained, who are familiar with their field, large classes can be handled. But for beginning students, they're awful. They're just awful. And after I started teaching, I realized just how bad those were.

So I learned to learn on my own. And in the beginning, I learned a lot, and I got lousy grades. I did learn a lot, though. I would get interested in something and follow it through. And I finally learned that the American universities were not like the European universities.

When I was about six, seven, eight, my mother rented rooms to university students. And they would have very late-night discussions on various subjects. It could be chemistry. It could be architecture. It could be politics. Or it could be poetry. But they had followed, obviously, one stream through some process.

Now, I didn't know this specifically. I didn't know this when I was seven years old. But my expectation when I went to university was that this was a place where one could follow one's interest within a course. And of course, you can't do that and expect to get quote, "good grades" to go on. One does this at the expense of a grade.

So by the time I got to be a junior, I buckled down, because I knew I was going to have to get grades if I wanted to get into school. And I did learn how to get grades better. But I was actually a much better student when I followed my interests than when I towed the line.

The plant pathology department at Berkeley didn't even have a field course at the time, it was so theoretical. It was strictly lab and lecture. I mean, it's unbelievable. But so I kept asking them about this, what they had one. And this was a very small department for Berkeley. There were only 12 students. And the faculty was so distant that my advisor didn't recognize me year to year. And he only had 12 students to worry about.

And I thought, this was not the best. So when I finished-- I graduated in '54. I started in '48. I was out for a year. When I came back from the army, I worked for him. Then I was out for a while making money. I sold shoes. And I did various things and then went back to school.

I did have a good background in microbiology. And I got very much interested in microbiology. But I also knew that if you call yourself a microbiologist, there are no jobs in the United States. They're very difficult to get jobs as a microbiologist. But if you call yourself a plant pathologist, you did. And you only need three courses to call yourself a plant pathologist. So I took those courses.

And I had some great, great teachers in plant pathology also. And the aspect of plant pathology that I was particularly interested in wasn't in the forefront, then, at Berkeley. Later on, it became very much so.

So I started graduate school in the botany department, because I was interested in fungi, and there was a professor there by the name of Emerson, Ralph Emerson, the grand nephew of Ralph Waldo Emerson, who was a great teacher and a great researcher.

And I got a job working for him as a lab technician. And during the time that I was in Berkeley, eventually, I should tell you that I earned my living as a grocery clerk. And eventually, I joined the union. I became a grocery clerk. And that was a very steady source of income. I was making horrendous amounts of money. And I actually saved money during the semester by the end of the semester.

But when I gave up my career in grocery clerking to become the assistant to Dr. Emerson, and I learned a lot about fungi from him. But I learned very little in graduate school in botany. And I liked Emerson, as I said, but I didn't like the rest. And they didn't like me either.

So at the end of my first year, I went off, because there was a position in Davis in the food science department. And Dr. Emil Marek, who later became chancellor, was at that time head of the food science department. And a project opened up that was related to fungi. And there was some translation involved in there from German. And I could do that very readily.

And Dr. Emil Marek was a-- first, he was a very prominent scientist in yeast. He and Dr. Pfaff wrote one of the major works on yeast. He later became an administrator when he was a chairman of the Department.

But he was renowned for his sensitivity to people from all over the world. I mean, he could travel anywhere. You could drop him off at an airport blindfolded. He could pick up the phone and call somebody that he knew, he had as a student, or helped someplace in the world. And we had students from Greece. And we had students from India and so on.

And in the food science department, there's a department that's applied science. But the reason that the department became so famous is because they stressed the fundamental aspects. And they had very few applied courses, as a matter of fact. So the people came out prepared to address different kinds of problems with that.

There are certain schools which are called jam and jelly schools. People learn how to make jam. People learn how to make jelly. But they couldn't solve a problem to save their lives. Well, this was not one of those schools.

And he took an interest in whether students earned enough money. And he was known as the deadliest man with a cocktail glass, because he raised more money at cocktail parties for students than anybody. And he did.

So he asked me whether I wanted to become a-- whether I wanted a title or whether I wanted money. And I said, I needed money right now. I was contemplating getting married. And so I told him I wanted it. So he made me a senior lab tech. And I got more money that way than being a research assistant. That was a great honor, but not much money.

Did you get married?

Yes, I did get married. And my wife moved up to Davis. And we lived there.

What's your wife's name?

My wife's name was then Vicky Crook. And she had been married before. And she had a daughter. And her daughter's name was Diane. She was two years old. And we lived in Davis. And Diane grew up. And eventually, Peter was born, who's four years younger than Diane.

And Diane is now grown. She's a veterinarian and lives in Berkeley. And Peter is-- well, he's going to be 34 now. And he got his degree in economics. And he's learning computer programming.

And we lived in Davis for those two years. And then I got a job in Berkeley. And the job was for a consulting organization. And this is an organization that consults to food processors, because the individual food processors do

very limited kinds of work. And at least in those days, it was very limited. And they looked at all kinds of problems.

So I went in their bacteriology department. And I worked there for two years. And there came a time when I wanted to buy a house. And when I applied for a loan, the guy looked at me, he says, how come you're making so little?

Well, I didn't know. I had a master's degree. I said, I didn't know how little. I thought everybody made this little. And he said, no, no, you know. So I went and I got a raise. But even with the raise that I got, I barely qualified for a \$12,000 house loan.

So the state had exams open. And turned out that I took a state chemist's exam. And I was qualified for that. I had the courses. And I gave myself a raise by passing the exam. And there was an opening on the civil service. So I went to work for state public health.

So had you become a citizen by this time?

Oh, yeah. I became a citizen while I was still a student, at just five years there. I would have-- no, it took six. Actually, I would have become a citizen sooner, except they lost my documents someplace in Philadelphia. And then they said, well, there's a sure way to finding the documents. So they fingerprinted me. And apparently, that's the magic way to find documents-- well, in those days. I'm sure now, it's much more up to date.

But then I didn't have any problems with getting jobs. And actually, I thought that my army service would accelerate it. But it didn't. I served, also, four years in the reserves and got out of the-- I was discharged honorably as a sergeant in the reserves.

How was your health? I mean, did you ever feel like you had any supply from your years during the war and camps?

No, not really. I have scars from being kicked and beaten. And I have a spot on my lung, which was discovered, which was probably TB-- well, it is TB, not probably. No, I had a lot of problems in my teeth were the main things.

The other problems are the problems that all survivors had-- loss of friends, loss of loved ones, and a total disruption in your life, a sense of why am I here? Why me? But that's common to all survivors. And now that I'm done, what am I to do next? I'm not sure that I've always answered those questions fully.

But when I was in food science, for example, I would not work on certain kinds of foods, or what I considered trivial. In plant pathology, I was very firm that I was only interested in working on food-producing plants and not ornamental plants. Now, that's really being silly, is the truth.

But my ethical position was that those are the significant things. And these were not. I've since learned that ornamental plants are really quite significant. And there's a lot to be learned from them. But in my primal dependence on food, I was focused on. And then, well, my choice of occupation had to do with the fact that I wanted to have a trade which I could practice anywhere in the world, whether I spoke the language or not.

It never even occurred to me to go into a field where I was depended on a situation of a particular legal situation to make a living. Didn't occur to me to become a lawyer, or a CPA, or something of this sort, because those are all dependent on knowing the local kind of rules. And I didn't.

You said, also, you wouldn't work on certain foods that you considered trivial.

No, I would never work on potato chips. I wouldn't have worked on junk food. When I got my PhD, I knew something about the feeding of astronauts, because one of the major professors that I had worked on was a consultant to NASA on this subject.

And I knew that the feeding program in NASA was fifth-rate in importance. In fact, importance, they're interested in other things. And this was mainly a public relations effort. It wasn't a serious effort of understanding fundamental

processes. It was there because they sort of had to do it, make it look good.

And I didn't. I had offers to join that and very fancy salaries. But I didn't want to do that. I didn't want to work on, as I said, trivial foods or work on iced tea. Well, it may be a major source of income for a lot of people. But I don't want to become an old person and then think back that I spent my life making better iced tea.

You wanted some very meaningful.

I wanted something much more meaningful. And I generally chose situations where that-- when I went to work for the National Canner's Association, we were working on a major process of irradiating.

Part of the reason I went there is because they were using radiation to control botulism. Unfortunately, the process didn't work out, because the bacteria are so resistant that the food turns bad once irradiated.

But what I was concerned with was something that was significant, that had a consequence, that had an effect, rather than finding new packaging for packages for Twinkies or something of that sort. I wouldn't have done that.

And I worked at state public health. And I worked in the sanitation radiation department during the fallout season. And I worked there for quite a while. And I learned a great deal. And I met some very nice people and some lifelong friends there.

But eventually, the work got very, very dull. And it was certainly a lot less than what I trained for. And so I decided to go back to graduate school. And by that time, I had bought a house in Berkeley. And my wife, then, also wanted to go back to graduate school in either anthropology or Chinese. She wasn't sure then. She wanted to do some Chinese translation.

And so we sold the house, packed up, and moved to Davis. I applied to graduate school in Davis. I applied to Berkeley too. And I got in both places. But when I visited them, I thought that I would get to work with people more directly in Davis than in Berkeley.

And so I went to graduate school in Davis in the biochemistry department. It was called the Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics then. It was headed by a man by the name of Paul Stumpf, who has since retired. He turned out to be an excellent chairman. And it was a small department. It was very, very open.

Essentially, the professor's policy was if the door was open, you could go in. And if it was closed, it meant you had to wait till the door opened. And they were very helpful. They were very rigorous.

And I was very worried, because I hadn't been in school five years. And there was literally a revolution in biochemistry in those five years. And I knew nothing about it. What I knew about was how to get strontium out of sea animals and whatever kind you name, and how to count bacteria in waters, and such. But I wasn't up on this.

And the other thing that helped is that I got a public health service grant, a training grant, which subsidized us in school. Those were the post-Sputnik era, when there was a great effort in science in the United States. And it paid off. Everything that today is called biotechnology, all the foundations came from then.

So I was in Davis. And in order to get my degree in biochemistry, I had to take a lot more chemistry than I had had before that. So it took me six years. Plus, I worked on a problem unsuccessfully for almost a year. But then I switched problems. And my PhD problem worked out very, very nicely.

And then when I was in graduate school, my wife and I were divorced. And I got custody of my son, Peter. So he was with me. And so I knew a lot about what single parenthood is like while he was going to school and while we were in Davis.

And we lived in student housing. I claim I integrated student housing for single parents, because they were going to

throw me out of married students housing. And I told them that there is nothing in the act that says that only single parents can live there. And they looked at--

Was this unusual for a father to get custody at that time?

Yeah, it was. In Davis, it was, but not Alameda County then. But anyhow, I got into this student housing. First, I stayed at a friend of mine's. He has a garage. And as luck would have it, his wife came from Germany. But she's much younger. She was born sometimes in the early days of the war. And she was very kind to Peter and I. And we lived in their garage for a while till this the student housing opened up.

And then I lived in the student housing, which was very nice and provided some people to play with. And Peter got to be a very good tennis player by asking anybody who wanted to play tennis to play tennis with him. And he went to school there in Davis. And one day, he started bugging me about bringing home a teacher for dinner. So I finally said yes. And that teacher is my wife today.

Really?

Yes.

How neat.

That's it. So he brought Sandy home. Her name is Sandra Robbins, was then. And she was a student in education. She was finishing her teaching credential. And she was born in San Francisco and raised in Santa Rosa. And I finished my PhD there and did a little bit of work in one lab.

And then I got a job. And I had to take the best-paying job at the time, because after my divorce-- you know, divorce is usually a financial disaster, and it was-- my total assets were a very old Plymouth station wagon.

And so I took a job with RJ Reynolds Tobacco Company. I went to Winston-Salem, North Carolina with my son and I, mostly on a credit card that came in the mail. And then a year later, my wife, Sandy-- Sandy and I were married in Carolinda. And then she came to North Carolina.

And I was there till 1970. And from 1970, we moved back. There was an opening at Sonoma State. And I've been there ever since. We live in Santa Rosa. And then Eleanor was born in June 14, 1980, which was our 11th anniversary exactly. Yes.

Same day?

Yes. And she's now 11.

Do you talk with your children about your war experiences, about your time?

Yes, well, they're-- I have two children, but they're separated in time. So I went through two experiences. I didn't want to tell Peter very much. He knew dribbles, and dribbles, and bits, and pieces, because particularly when I was a single parent, I didn't want Peter to simply grow up learning to hate Germans.

I did tell him some things, and gradually, little bits, because children ask questions and such. And gradually, he did know. And he did learn about it, but as I said, not all at once. And he probably heard about it when this was eight or nine. And he liked history. He used to read Second World War history. And then so he put two and two together. Gradually, he learned more and more in his teens.

And Eleanor heard about it in the sense a little earlier, because we were sitting at the table. My former wife's in-laws visited us. They lived in New York. So we seldom had one of these kind of family dinners.

But we had a family dinner. And Eleanor looked up. And she said, well, where's your side? And I told them, well, they died during the war. I used the term died at that time. So then gradually, she now knows that they were killed during the war.

And she knows something about it. Gradually, she'll get more and more. There were some programs on TV which were suitable-- I preview them, essentially. And there were some stories of kids in France who were protected.

And even though I try to protect her as much-- she has gone through the period of nightmares, where she felt threatened, and persecuted, and such. And I wish I could have saved her that.

Did you have nightmares also?

Oh, yes, yes, sure. I think it's less so as time went on, but pretty periodically. And humans are adaptable. And people do heal. When I came to this country, I made a very conscious effort to disassociate myself from my past.

So I met other people who lived in the what if world. If there hadn't been a war, I would have been this and this. And really spent an awful lot of time on it. And I think particularly because of my aunt's tremendous sense of balance, whatever she said, she said it just at the right time, because I'm aware for my own children that timing is very, very important in children's perception and children's learning. She just said it at the right time.

So I didn't mourn my past. I missed it. And I realized very late. When Bruno Bettelheim was at Davis-- in fact, I arranged for his coming to Davis, I'm the one who found him, and he was very hard to find, to speak at the Holocaust Lecture Series.

And it did ring a bell that for a lot of people who were in the camps, they never got a chance to mourn their parents. And they never buried them. And that did resonate in me.

So that was your situation, mostly?

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I remember, when I was liberated and I was both elated and sad, first numb-- first numb, just numb. And then I hadn't even accepted that my parents were dead. I turned around and I expected to tell-- I expected to tell my father because I was with him. And I had that sense that oh, he must be close. And then I couldn't.

But on the other hand, I healed in the sense that I told you. I don't have a sense of wanting to go back. Apparently, I think, I was young enough to be able to sever in that cord. I think it would be much difficult later on.

Do you think, at some level, maybe you did know your parents' loss?

Yes, I did, but much later. Not when they died.

Not then.

No. No. I think I was well late in my 20s when I understood what it really meant. And I know that parental loss is very, very difficult. And I see it now happening to my friends, and colleagues, and such. And they're just devastated.

But at the time that it happened to me, there was just no time and no place. And there was no-- when I came to this country, I detested all ceremonies. I detested the ceremonies, because in my early childhood, these official ceremonies for the king, or for the party, or for some-- all of these great, big marching ceremonies were all what I considered total frauds.

And they were always imposed for some crazy purpose that had nothing to do with me. And we had few family ceremonies. I remember those. And in school we had these official ceremonies, which I detested, where you were inspected and looked at your uniform. And so I tended to dislike ceremonies. And now, as I grew older, I'm beginning to understand the function of ceremonies, that they punctuate life.

We've got 10 seconds. I'll let you know. Can start.

You just talked about having learned the importance of some rites or rituals. And from what you were saying, I assume you mean, say, the importance of a funeral--

Yes.

--in this case, where we--

Yes.

--were talking about mourning.

I think it is.

And how in the Holocaust, people died in the camps. You didn't know when, where.

You didn't know where or when our--

Or even in--

Don't worry. Well, in the beginning, and it certainly was true. And I did go through a time where I hoped that it was all a terrible mistake. But I knew it wasn't, really. That German clergyman told me. And then I asked. And I asked and I asked. And I never had any reason. And the same thing with my mother. I knew.

But in terms of fantasies, I certainly had fantasies that all this was wrong. And then it wasn't. So I missed my parents enormously. But that never left.

Today, when my daughter does something, and she has a certain gestures that resemble my son. So I know that they're just inherited patterns, because they really weren't raised together. And there, she has other gestures which remind me of my mother.

Sometimes, the way she holds a pencil or the angle of the head-- I have an early picture of my mother when she was four years old-- and the head is slightly to the side, it's exactly the same angle, that Eleanor.

And I'm sorry that my mother would enjoy Eleanor very, very much. And Eleanor has the same sense of humor. And she would enjoy the same kind of word games. And she'd just be delighted to be able to show her something like sewing, where you can do fancy stitches or simple stitches.

And you know, she showed me a certain amount. But I think that Eleanor would just thrive in that. And when she has a triumph, I sort of miss the fact that I can tell her. And it was the same thing with my son when he achieved. Those are times that-- those are the events that punctuate life and where it's startlingly real, the absence of parents.

And looking there at the table at a holiday and realizing that there are no other chairs here. I think the other aspect's that I think the children perceive that there is something missing. And it's true that Holocaust survivors tend to be overprotective of their children. That's true.

Do you feel this to be true?

Oh, yeah. Yeah. God, yes. I certainly do.

In what ways do you notice this?

Oh, I tend to be very careful about everything, from seat belts to looking out for splinters. Or in buying toys, for example, I've never bought a toy that cuts children's hands. And I've seen lots of people buy. Or safety in school or safety in most things around the house were probably more than just conscientious. We are overprotective.

Your wife as well?

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

How about in external relationships or activities?

Well, I don't know. It depends upon the intensity of the activity. I don't think it really matters an awful lot in sort of pro forma relationships and casual relationships. I think that there is a-- among our close friends, there's a tendency to shy away from some certain areas, because they're afraid that they're stepping on a landmine, that they're afraid that they're on very treacherous psychological grounds.

In the beginning, people-- when I first came here, I noticed people were really not quite sure, because they expected some to explode emotionally or to collapse. Or well, actually, I've never seen that. But I've seen people who burst into tears. I have seen people who withdraw, some who literally would work, and achieve, and then suddenly collapse.

I was never quite sure whether the experience of the Holocaust is singularly responsible. But if it's this kind of event, and people have been, people are likely to associate the two.

That said, I don't know for certain. I think it's difficult for children and for adults both that of people who suffered a great deal, if you get into a confrontation or an argument, there's a tendency to say, oh, they suffered so much more. How can I? And so it makes some situations that are difficult in themselves more complicated.

So you mean, your friends wouldn't bring up certain topics?

I think they wouldn't. They'd have to know me very, very, very, very well to bring up certain topics. I mean, there was a time when if they had something German, they would have hidden it before I went in their house, unless they asked me, well, how do you feel about such things are?

I think there was an anticipation of not causing pain, or upsetting people, of being cruel inadvertently. And then from the early days, there were always question marks in people's eyes. But I know from my-- as I mentioned, in my experience with the soldiers, is I know what the effect is. And that's why people don't talk about it. People can't take that, being told exactly what happened.

So it's the answers.

I think the answers are feared.

As much as they fear hurting the other person?

Yes. Yes. And that is reciprocal. That's it.

Have you been able to talk freely of your experiences with your wives?

No. No. Well, they know some. But by the time I met and I was with my wives, I was not in pain due to the Holocaust anymore. That's true. I wouldn't have attempted it with teenagers here. They couldn't have handled it at all.

But by that time, both my wives would be extremely sensitive to physical cruelty or such. And I wasn't at the point where I needed relief. And all telling the details would have given them endless nightmares. I think my wife does have nightmares sometimes now.

And you know, I just wish I could spare them that. I think wives' roles are particularly difficult. And I know that if my wife would have it in her power, she would erase that. And the nurturing aspect of humans is to undo pain.

And I think it's an enormously frustrating task, because the wives are truly innocent. Or husbands, in other cases, are truly innocent. And they are facing a problem that they can only witness, where they can comfort, but they can't undo.

And I think that earlier counseling, earlier guidance probably would have helped in these areas. I don't know if it changes ultimate income, but it-- not incomes, but ultimate outcomes. But I think it may have helped.

I think it would have reduced the inadvertent pain that we cause our loved ones and that enormous weight that's on the shoulder of our loved one-- children, parents, both. I know children who complained that they just carried too big a burden, that they felt they always had to be good, because somebody was bad. And it's not logical.

No.

But it is emotionally understandable.

Have you experienced this with your children at all?

Oh, sure.

They've said that?

Yeah. Yeah.

Do you think they feel open to asking you questions? Or is this delicate ground? I think they still feel it's delicate ground. Well, it is still delicate ground for them. It's really not so much more delicate ground for me. I've been with it a long time. And I've had a chance to recover and a chance to heal.

But sparing them was in your mind too?

Yeah. Yeah. Sparing each other is a kind of condition, although some people argue entirely against it. I think they're frightfully naive about the consequences of their actions. They speak from vast inexperience.

How about your son, now that he's a grown person?

Yeah, well, my son is a grown person. But he's also a very sensitive person. And I think he still feels very protective in this area. I don't think he'd like to bring up something that he thinks might cause me pain.

He's a courageous person. He'll tell me things that he knows I wouldn't like to hear. He certainly doesn't shun bringing up an issue just because I might not like to hear it. But it goes to a point and not beyond.

How do you think your family will react to this tape?

Well--

Is this a worry of yours?

Well, no. No, because mostly-- I'm not going to show it to Eleanor all at once. I'm going to show it gradually. And I'm going to do it sometimes when we have time so she can ask questions that will come to her mind as going through it.

And again, I'm going to do the same thing with Sandy, my wife. My cousin has seen the tape. Our lives were so hectic, actually, that she had time to sit down, because her kids are all grown out of the house. But we haven't. So Sandy's only seen bits and parts. But she can only take so much because she is very fragile. And she doesn't go to the movies that

show violence, essentially. She just doesn't.

So she is particularly sensitive about physical violence. And I don't think that she needs to every bit. I think what's best for us-- that she needs to know that I'm not disabled.

You said before that you felt healing takes place.

Yeah.

Do you think one can sort of totally heal from such a thing?

Oh I don't think one remains unscarred, but I do think that one can heal. And the healed person is not identical with the other, by any means. And one does view the world differently. And we know things exist that our imaginations would not conjure up.

But I do think that people can heal in the sense that they can function, that they can enjoy life, that their lives aren't permanently limited and clouded. That doesn't mean that. They will have pain. They will have suffering. But it doesn't disable them from enjoying life.

I think that there is a tendency to look at the negative side of things and look at the dark prospect in the future before looking at the light prospect. I think that's-- I've seen that in survivors.

But one can learn to remember that there is another side to the issue. And in recollecting the very bad events and the things that people did to each other, one also has to remember the positive things, because it's the positive things that allowed us to go on and to live. The negative ones, if we would have believed that from the beginning, we wouldn't have lifted a finger.

And if there's anything quote unquote "good" that came out of the Holocaust, it was the state of Israel. It's the one good that I can think of. And the other is that if we carefully examine it, we'll find that there is good seeded in man.

We just can't let the dark destroy the illumination of the good. And we have to face-- for years, we didn't dare say that there's such things as evil. We said, evil is some miasma that hovered in midair and sort of descended on people on unlucky days. Or it was this kind.

I think it's a lot worse than that. I think there are people who are evil. I think that there are people who plot evil, with full knowledge of its consequences, not deceived, and not misguided, but they plot it. And we have to learn how to deal with them. And if we plot their demise the same way as they plotted ours, they will have won.

How, then, is one to begin?

One is that there has to be a meeting of both mind and emotion instead of constantly splitting the two, that ethical judgments have to be ethical judgments even after emotion has been considered. And you can't dismiss them. The Nazi movement was a great emotional movement. And it carried with it-- it carried people right over the edge in every way.

I think there has to be an integration of thoughtful value with emotions consistent with people about what is right. There is a right and wrong. There are many situations in which it's difficult to discern.

But there is right and wrong. And there are many ambiguities. And there are many, many difficult situations in which one deals with these questions. But nevertheless, when there is a point where people shouldn't be able to be nudged over the edge of ethical wrongs, when people say stop.

Do you think that, given some of the comments you've made about the structure of the hierarchy in Europe, whether there was anything that you could see in the German culture or this style of teaching or raising of children that would lend itself more easily, you think?

The utter respect for authority is, the unquestioning, the reflex to bow to authority without questioning, how that authority is constituted, whether it's acting in a lawful manner or not, is very, very dangerous because all you have to do is put on a uniform and order people, and they'll follow it.

And I think that on the other side of that coin is that because people act this way, they feel they now have a permanent excuse slip from their consciences, because they followed the order. We have to repeal that. We have to teach our children to ask why, even when we urge them. They can't ask why when we yell when they're middle of traffic. I understand that. But there are many other situations where we have to ask children to ask why. And where is this leading to? Where is this leading to? Or what next? And understanding the consequences.

So you see it as much a general problem as one maybe specific to Germany or other places.

Yeah, anywhere else, where the unquestioned acceptance of authority is. I don't think that the Germans are the only ones who did this. There are a lot of-- I'm sure that in other parts of Europe, this happened also. Under the guise of respect for-- it starts with respect for the parents, and then the respect for this, or for that.

The unquestioning acceptance, it's a very convenient state to work itself into. And once that state's achieved, it's very hard to dislodge people. I think the present problems of Europe are going to be the same thing. No one's going to tell them what's right. They have to decide what's right-- at least economically speaking.

What are your feelings about Germany today or toward the Germans? Have you visited Germany or been back?

No, I went back to Germany. We went to Europe in 1972, my wife and I. And we got a cheap flight, flew to Frankfurt. And I felt uneasy. As luck would have it, we stayed in a hotel. And we moved out of Frankfurt. We took the train the same day. But when we flew back, we had to stay for a day in Frankfurt. So we stayed in the hotel there overnight.

And I remember, there was a very arrogant clerk there. And I didn't talk to him in German, because I knew if I talked to him in German, he would not treat me as well as if I spoke to him in English. I counted them on their snobbishness.

So when he was nasty, I'd say, you know, next time, we're going to let the Russians keep you. And you know, he was startled. I said, have you forgotten? And then he was a fairly young guy. And he says, well, I really didn't know. I said, think about it.

Actually, when Germany was unified, I was apprehensive. But that was my knee-jerk reaction, to be apprehensive. When I thought about it, I thought that the separation of Germany is artificial for people. And this artificial separation gives the mischief-makers the major cause around which they could rally.

In Hungary, after the First World War, they had a battle cry of the ardent nationalists who were also the ardent Nazis. And it's [NON-ENGLISH] It means no, no, never, meaning they were always opposed to the decision of the Versailles Treaty.

Well, I don't want the German super-patriots to have a cause around which they can rally a lot of people by saying that Germany is divided by an evil world. I think it would only strengthen them.

So you think that the potential is there for such a thing to happen again if they had the cause?

I think that if they had the cause, the potential is there to happen in a lot of places. After all, Germany wasn't the only one. It was there in Hungary. It was there in Romania. It was there in a lot of places. They were less effective in Romania, less effective in Italy, more effective in Germany, more effective in Hungary, more effective in Poland, and Russia, and so on. But the capacity is there.

What I do think of the young Germans that I met, their either not identified politically at all, or those who are aware tended to be much more democratic in a genuine way than I've ever seen before. But of course, I've seen mostly

Westerners and not Easterners.

From what I see from them is that the official stance is very correct. What bothers me is that they hate the Turks, their Turkish workers, just as foreigners or foreign workers, and treat them just as miserably. They, essentially, are almost--well, they may be at the first step of what they did to the Jews.

That's what alarms me, that all the political rights, all the human rights, and all this progress since the Second World War-- but they're doing it. And the moment that they do it to others, it's only seconds away that they'll do it to us too.

As if a niche were there that's being filled.

Yes. Well, re-education would really mean that sort of thing can't happen. Now, it's true, it hasn't happened. I was alarmed by the fact that they moved the capital back to Berlin, because the Germans are very symbolically-oriented.

And Berlin is associated with the German Empire. And it's also true that Berlin had a lot of modern thought, and had a great culture, and all that. But in the formality, it's when Germany became the capital of-- I mean, when Berlin came they became the capital of Germany that this was the center of the empire. I would have much preferred that they face the world from Bonn, rather than Berlin.

I'll be very interested in how Eastern Germany changes in time. Because in Eastern Germany, the changes that went on in Western Germany, political organization, and in attitude, and so on, I don't think that took place. And when there is no more repression in the East, then we'll find out generally what they're like.

But as I said, these divided lands only serve despots and people who want to exploit the situation, whether it's North and South Korea, or Vietnam, or wherever. And you know, I'm certainly not in favor of bloodbaths.

But the events that happened in the Balkans just depress me to no end, that it's as if the clock had been turned back to the First World War. And the same thing in Romania, the Hungarian-Romanian rivalries there. I mean, these people believe the worst propagandists in the world, their own. They really believe that one is better, intrinsically better than the other. And I'm just revolted by that thought.

Did you have any sense of whether there was antisemitism in Germany in an open way when you went?

And as I said, I was only there a few days. No. No, I didn't observe any. And from all my friends who've gone there and people are going back and forth, there was no official. I've talked to people who have observed it in people's homes and such. So it does exist. But it's not officially overt. The official line is quite the opposite.

And I know of people were invited back to cities that they came from and were treated very nicely. But I noticed that they're not from East Germany, either. And I noticed that Hungarians, in spite of their rah-rah-rah about being Western did not mention an iota about it.

Now, there are only 250,000 Jews in Germany who were left. There were 450,000 in Hungary. And they're the most westernized of that group, not to mention the problems in Poland. I don't know what the scapegoat mechanism can do. I don't have a substitute, rather, for this scapegoat mechanism.

You mentioned another time, not today, the process of what you might call the visiting the sins of the fathers onto the children. And I was wondering if you would expand a little more on that. I can't remember exactly what we were talking about. But it was something along the lines of how one inadvertently treats one's children--

Yeah.

--the way one was treated or something like that. Maybe it's lost now. But I thought it was interesting.

Yeah. Well, I can't make the connection right now there.

Did you raise your children in a Jewish way, religiously or culturally?

Well, certainly culturally, yes. Not very religiously. But my son went in his early years to Kindershul. And that was in Berkeley. And then my daughter actually got more.

The little time that I had with my son when I was in graduate school, when we spent time together, I would talk to him about our history and about our institutions. Not in great detail, but I know that he was very clearly aware that he was Jewish. Because when I first met my wife, my present wife, Sandra, she told me, he said, you know, he had a very clear identity.

And I did it deliberately, because I didn't want him-- kids in elementary school, for example, visit each other's churches like bazaars or something. And I didn't want that. I didn't want him to be inadvertently influenced in any other way. I thought he should know what he stood for, what the principals were, what are the things that we believed in. Excuse me.

With my daughter, when she was, let's see, about 3 and 1/2, we joined a congregation called Sonoma County Synagogue Center, who were Reconstructionists. And they had a wonderful-- and they have a very good Sunday school. And she's been going there.

And I think an awful lot of people who were running the Sunday school all remembered that they hated Sunday school. So they tried to make it as attractive, as enjoyable, and as meaningful as possible for the kids. So they incorporate their Judaism including a sense of obligation to others and for those who are less fortunate very clearly.

And I think it's been successful. And she says she has no problems with it. She had to do a project. She did it on Israel. And it was really quite a project. And in school, she has no hesitation. And when I went to school, I wouldn't have done a project for Israel, because I had enough fights as is.

You felt like the other students would--

They would have only ridiculed. And I would have had more fights on my hands than I already had. Well, there was no State of Israel then, either. But I wouldn't have done it on Palestine. But she has no problem with them. Now, the school assembly, for example, she played Hatikvah on her flute. And she's played some other songs. And it wasn't self-conscious. It was perfectly natural.

So she's getting a cultural and a bit of religious education.

Oh, yeah. I know you also are very involved with the Alliance for the Study of the Holocaust.

Yes.

And what do you do in that capacity there?

Well, I'm involved with-- originally, I started with the Holocaust Lecture Series. And then the Alliance supports that. And that's how I joined the Alliance for the Study of the Holocaust. And there's Holocaust Studies Center at Sonoma State.

And John Steiner invited me about five, six years ago to join. The Lecture Series has been going on for seven or eight years at Sonoma State. And I wasn't there, I think, in the first two years. And then in the third year, I joined.

And luckily, it depends on the vagaries of my schedule whether I can join the lecture series or not. But I was interested in this when I found out how little people knew. And first, we heard that the German students didn't know. And then we discovered American students don't know, either. And I just discovered the French students don't know. French students, 20-year-olds didn't know who Hitler was.

So I participated, mainly because I thought it was important for them to know the history, know what happened. And then the denial of the Holocaust and this rewriting of history that's been going on provoked me even further. So I became more active in that.

And I also participated in teacher training sessions for teachers in Sonoma County. And I've gone to about maybe 14 or 15 various classrooms at junior high schools and high schools. At first, I thought, it didn't make any difference. But it makes a big difference when they see a live person talking about their experiences versus an abstract experience.

So the personal level.

Yeah. I think that it adds credibility to it. And I tried to present it from a 14 to 16-year-old's point of view.

Kind of high school students--

Yes.

--you're talking to.

Well, is there any last comment or message you would like to say?

No. I'd like to say that I hope that we never have another one. Our main reason for participating in all these programs are that we never again have a Holocaust.

Agreed.

OK.

Do you have any question you'd like?

The one that I had was that question about Victor Honig from my program.

Oh, I'm so sorry. Oh, yes, I'm so sorry. I forgot. When I arrived in the United States, in New York, and my adopted parents-- I stayed with their agent. I think I mentioned his name was Eddie Smith. Lived in Scarsdale, New York.

Anyway, I came to California. My adopted father's name was Ben Rochelle. His brother, Bill, was a newspaperman. I think he was an editor of the Palm Springs paper. He apparently called a friend. And I was interviewed in the Los Angeles Times.

The purpose of all this was to get in touch with my aunt, so hoping that somebody would read the article and put me in touch with my aunt, which I hadn't done that time. And lo and behold, I got this phone call.

And it turns out, Victor Honig is very distantly related to me. He came to this country in the mid '20s, he and his wife Victor and Irene Honig. He was a master barber. He won an international barbering contest. And then he moved to California. And he had a barber shop at the Paramount Studios. So he knew a lot of people.

To make a long story short, he came to the house. You know, the article carried my address. And he came to the house. And I opened the door. And he talked to me in Hungarian. I nearly fell over backward, because he looked at me. He said, you look just like Ilos. Ilos was my mother's name. And so he put me in touch with my aunt. So he was my connection to the rest of my family.

Oh.

And it turns out, he knew my father quite well. In fact, he had brought me some baby presents when he visited Europe. And he now lives. And his wife, Irene, passed away. And he now lives in Palm Springs. He's 89 now. Still lives in his

own trailer.

Really remarkable. Did you keep up your connection at all?

Oh, yes. Yeah, well we're not closely, but we talk occasionally on the telephone. He's beginning to wane now. His memory isn't as good as it used to be. But he at one time was on the cover of Life Magazine, cutting the hair of Charlie Chaplin when they made The Great Dictator. And he knew all the movie greats and so on. His house is decorated with these.

But he was a wonderful gentleman who was very, very kind to me when I came. Shortly after I came to Los Angeles, when I was still staying with my adoptive parents, I stayed with them for a period of about a week. And he showed me around there and was very, very kind. Yeah. He was a great gentleman. He has the only barber shop with classical music in it that I've ever been in. Yeah.

Is there anything else you would like to say--

No.

--in closing?

Well, thank you very, very much.

You're welcome.