

We're at the San Francisco Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project. Today is July 21, 2003, and we are interviewing Mr. Hans Gottheimer. The videographer is Dr. Anne Grenn Saldinger, and the interviewer is Hilde Gattmann.

Mr. Gottheimer, what was your birth name?

Hans Heinz Gottheiner, with an N.

And when were you born and where were you born?

I was born March 15, 1930 in Breslau, Germany. It is Poland now, with a different name.

And what was your father's name?

John. John Gottheiner.

And your mother's name?

Frieda.

And do you have-- did you have brothers and sisters?

One brother, Peter. And how did your family support itself?

My father was a CPA.

And do you know any stories about the Depression, how they got through the Depression before you were born?

No. Well, no, very little.

Uh-huh. Right. And would you like to describe your family, the whole family situation? What schools you went to?

OK, as I said, I was born on March 15, 1930, at 4446 Hedwig Street in Breslau. I was born at home, not in a hospital. As I said, my father was a CPA. My mother say she had worked before she was married, and then she was a housewife.

Uh-huh. What kind of work did she do before she was married?

I believe she was in retail sales at a department store. My brother Peter was born in 1919. So he was 11 years older than I was. He was born right after World War I. My father was in World War I. He fought for Germany and was an officer. And that helped him later on, when we'll get to that part of the story.

Yes, right.

We lived at that address til I was about six years old. It was like not a suburb of Breslau, but it was more out in a residential area with parks. And it was a nice area. The zoo was right there. And--

Did you have non-Jewish neighbors?

Where I was born, yes. Yes. And my father was very much involved in soccer. He was a good soccer player. And so was my brother. They represented the city and also the county. My father did.

Mm-hmm.

So when I was little, we spent a lot of time at Gruneiche the soccer place. In fact, I have a picture at home. Maybe I

should have bought it. I learned to walk on the soccer field. With my brother's hand, just walking because of the age difference.

Mm-hmm. And when you went to school, was it a Jewish school or was it a regular public school?

It was a Jewish school. In 1936-- I'm not sure when it was, but it was 1936-- my parents moved to more of a downtown area. I was told it was primarily for my school. Because my brother went to regular public school and what they call the gymnasium, which we call here a high school.

We lived on Freiburgerstrasse number 22, which was barely three blocks from the school, which was the basement and an annex of the synagogue. So it was very easy to walk down the street to school and walk back.

Right. And what grade did you achieve? How far could you go?

I don't know. I started in '36. And after November '38, there was no school. In fact, I talked to my sister-in-law yesterday who attended the same school. And she went there till she was 16. But I mean, after November 10, '38, that was it. There were no schools.

Can you describe your parents, your mother and father's education?

High school, gymnasium. And I believe my father had some more training in order to become a CPA, but I'm not sure where he did that. That was probably before I was around.

Mm-hmm. And did you play with some of the neighborhood children when you were outside, when you were a little boy?

Yes. Mm-hmm. We had friends. And most of them were connected through sports.

Uh-huh.

That's how my parents had friends and their children, and we got together. And I remember many steamer trips down the Oder River. So but not any specific friend at that time.

Mm-hmm. And was this a mixture of Jews and non-Jews?

Yes. Mm-hmm.

And how did your family relate to each other? Did you have some uncles and aunts where you lived?

Yes. When you asked me, we had more Jewish friends once we moved to the downtown area. Because that was more of a Jewish area and temple and everything there.

More of a Jewish neighborhood?

Neighborhood, yes. Mm-hmm.

In a different time?

Yes, after '36. You asked about relatives?

Mm-hmm.

My father, I believe, had 8. I think either 8 or 9 in the family. And his oldest brother, Isidore, well, they lived in Berlin. They were married. His wife passed away I don't know exactly when or from what, but she passed away. And they had a

daughter, Gerda. And she got married, and they had a baby but all of those perished in Auschwitz.

Mm-hmm.

And the next brother was Martin. That's in order by age. Martin was sent to Buchenwald, I believe, in '38. And somehow he was accused of stealing a blanket, and he was beheaded. They cut his head off.

Then there were three girls in the family. Those are Hertha and-- what were the other ones' name? Probably have it written down.

[? We'll look later. ?]

Yeah, there were three women. I believe that two of them died during the war. And, well, all three of them, but I think two of them were in a camp. Then, of course, before the women was my father. He was the third in age. He was born July 28, 1886. And he died. In fact, I just remembered that he died July 23, 1960. So it's all this month.

OK, after the three women aunts, there was another boy, Kurt. He survived the war. He married a non-Jewish woman. And Clara. And they had two children, Horst and Helga. In fact, Helga still alive, and I was supposed to call her yesterday but I forgot.

So we talk to each other. They live near Heidelberg in Germany, near Heilbronn there. And wait a minute. There's one more, one more brother. That's Walter. And he also married a non-Jewish woman. And they had one child, Lilo.

And she and I are very close. We are constantly in contact, and we've been over there visiting them twice. She married a Jewish man, a symphony conductor. And he's done very well, conducting symphonies and plays throughout Germany. And also in England, worked for the BBC in England.

But they stayed in Germany.

They stayed in Germany. They survived because of the non-Jewish women. And they told us that they didn't have an easy life during the war. Their husbands had to be like slave labor. But they were approached by the German authorities to divorce their husband, and they could get a much better, much happier life, much better apartment, and more food and everything. But both--

They even offered them rewards to do that.

Yes, divorce your husband and you'll have a better life. But they-- neither one of them did it. So they struggled through the war, but they did survive, yes.

Going back, the mother's family we didn't hear about yet, right?

Right. My mother didn't have any sisters or brothers. She was alone. But her poor mother, my grandmother, we lived in the same apartment building on Freiburger Street. She lived on the third floor, and we lived on the second floor. Because I know I had to carry groceries up there. Third floor with no elevator.

And she was sent to Theresienstadt, and she died and she died there. Of exactly what, how, we don't know, but she died in camp.

And your economic status in Germany?

In Germany? I would say probably middle class. We always had enough food. Nobody had a car in those days. You know, it was bicycles everybody went on. But we weren't wanting for anything.

And the Jewish customs in Breslau? I mean, you belonged to this congregation?

Yes.

This was reform?

Yes.

There weren't many there yet, were there? In the area?

Many?

Many reform congregations?

No, no. But that's what they called the reform synagogue or the New Synagogue.

Right.

When you have done some checking on the computer, on the internet, and it's always referred to as the New Synagogue, compared to the old one that's still there and was not destroyed.

What was the name of the synagogue?

Just the New Synagogue.

Oh.

That's the only name I ever knew, and that's what it's referred to. And I believe even that little model I bought that it says New Synagogue, I think.

Did that have an organ also?

An organ?

Mm-hmm.

Yes. It was very large. I remember how large it was and there was a school. You talked about the school. The school was right in it, right in the basement facility, and a little bit to the left of it.

And what was so convenient, the street that it was on, it was called Anger, Angerschule. Anger was the name of the street. Anger and Freiburger, they just met. They just ran into each other. And the temple was right there, smack.

So the Jewish holidays were observed and celebrated?

Yes. Mm-hmm.

All of that. And do you remember your rabbi's name?

In Germany, no. In Shanghai, yes. In Germany, no.

You were pretty young.

Yeah.

And was your family always observant or?

As long as I can remember, they've been. Mm-hmm. They've not been Orthodox Jews, but they've observed the holidays. And we always had Passover and Hanukkah and so on. Yeah.

And how did your family interact with the Gentile neighbors?

Probably pretty well, especially-- well, especially-- I mean, before 1938, I think they did pretty well with them. Because they had been longtime friends.

Yeah.

And I imagine my dad probably had some friends from the war time, and many, many friends through soccer.

Yeah.

Some were Jewish and some were not. And--

So what happened in '33 did not interfere in the beginning? In terms of their social life.

Well, not socially, but probably economically. The Nuremburg laws of the early '30s I'm sure had an effect on my parents, on where they lived. And from what I remember, it was a very nice apartment. But it might not have been what they would have wanted if they could have lived someplace else or could have gotten.

Do you think that might have had an impact on why you moved?

That probably had an impact on it, too. Mm-hmm. No, there was a definite effect on the family of the laws.

Was anyone in your family involved in local politics or trade unions before?

Not to my knowledge, no. My brother went to-- he became a PE teacher at a very young age. He went to-- after he finished his school in Breslau, he went to Mannheim, another part of Germany, and got his credentials as a PE teacher. But by the time he got it, it was-- he didn't teach anywhere in Germany. So.

Do you have any idea how large the Jewish congregation-- I mean the Jewish population in Breslau was? Approximately?

No, but it was considerable. It was large. And I know then after the war it diminished some. But from what we hear now, it's coming. It's coming up again. It's increasing again.

Mm-hmm. When did you first notice anti-Semitism yourself?

Probably one of the first times I remember, we didn't live too far from-- they have canals going through Breslau from the Oder River. The kids went ice skating, and I wasn't allowed to go. But my parents had a maid who was not Jewish at that time.

I think everybody had a maid in those days. Anyway, who was not Jewish, who took me ice skating, and just told me that my name now was Christopher. So she went over there with me, and I was Chris. Come, Christopher. So that's when it first dawned on me.

And then of course in '38, after November, it all came to a head.

And then Kristallnacht. Did you lose any non-Jewish playmates that you know because of the Hitler time or--

Probably, probably, yeah. No, not specific ones. And I was trying to find out. As I said, I talked to my sister-in-law last

night. I believe that we had to-- after 1938, that we had to wear the star, the Jewish star, with Israel and Sarah. But I'm not positive on that. I think we did.

When did you first hear about Adolf Hitler? Probably just a name.

And what he stood for and all that.

Well, what he stood for by '38, when I was about eight or nine years old. The name I've heard earlier, because there was a time, I believe it was in '36 or '37 that he came to Breslau. And where we lived by that time was close to downtown, and streets were blocked off in parades and all that. That's when I remember hearing the name. But I was too young for political-- for much knowing.

So what was school like for you? Did you like it?

In Breslau?

Mm-hmm.

Yes, from what I remember, it was-- Mm-hmm. There were the primary grade, elementary, six, seven, eight. I mean, '36, '37, '38.

Got you. And when did you first see Brownshirts?

When they came and picked up my father in 1938, after Crystal Night. In fact, the same day. I think it was the 9th, but the temple burned in the morning. And then afternoon, late afternoon, they came and picked him up.

Did he come back after that?

Yes, he was--

How long did they keep him?

Well, they arrested him and took him to the police station, which ironically is on the same street where we lived, between our house, our apartment, and the temple. And it's still there. It was still there in 1996. Yeah, the main police station.

They took him there. And then a few days later, I think in a couple of days or so, they sent him to Buchenwald. And exactly how long he was there, it was a few months. Not longer than that.

He was released because of his service to Germany in World War I. He was an officer. And he had one of those Colonel Klink hats, with the spire sticking up there. You know who I mean, the Colonel Klink? Yeah, yeah.

[INAUDIBLE] in service

Yeah. And he was released. And my brother was not arrested. He was evidently too young. For a while, they accused him of having an affair with the non-Jewish maid, but they dropped that because there was no proof or anything of that.

Maybe we should back up just a bit and hear about what happened on Kristallnacht.

OK. Well, the first thing, I remember my parents hearing-- there were quite a few Jewish stores on the street, just retail stores. There was a barber shop and different things. Well, you could hear all the windows being smashed. The glass was being smashed in.

So we went. We went out in front of the house, went out and just looked straight ahead. And there was the temple all in

flames. And like I said, that'll stick with me forever, because it was maybe two, 2 and 1/2 blocks, no more than that away.

And I mean, we just couldn't believe it, nobody. Just like people in a panic, just wondering what's going on, what's happening. And then a little while later, when they arrested my father, well, I mean, my mother was devastated. I was probably crying, they told me. And--

Do you remember the soldiers coming to your home?

Yes. Yeah, they came to the front door and just asked, John Gottheiner live here? They didn't say John. It was Johann. Johann Gottheiner live here? Yeah, and they just took him away.

With no explanation?

No, no. No, they just-- because they knew who was Jewish and who wasn't, probably.

Now, as a young boy, you see your synagogue in flames, and that was your school as well. Do you remember how you understood that, what you felt?

I think it was hard-- I mean, it was difficult to understand, hard to understand. I was eight. I mean, the impression of it burning is there, but understanding it, why and what I think was probably pretty hard to do.

But then after a while, it all came together, and them saying, well, it's because you're Jewish. You're different from him and from her, and that's why it's happening.

What condition was your father in when he came back from Buchenwald?

I think he'd lost quite a bit of weight from [INAUDIBLE] with stories and how bad things were, the whole conditions there. And my wife and I went to Buchenwald in '96 to look at it. And it has the visitor center that they have there closed already. But you can go out. You can go out through the camp on your own.

And it was pretty frightening to see the place. There they have a crematorium at Buchenwald, right at the edge of the camp. And then they have a very narrow road, probably no larger than this room next to it. And across is-- right across from the crematorium they had a zoo to entertain the guards and the soldiers with different kinds of animals.

That kind of-- yeah, it really gets to you when you see that. And the carts full of rocks that the prisoners had to pull. And we were kind of glad that the visitor center was closed, because we could spend quite a bit of time there, just wandering around where the barracks were, and some buildings were still there. And so--

I think the crematorium might have been built later on, don't you? Because they didn't do that final--

After my dad was there, yes.

Yeah, the final decree came a little later.

But I just still can't believe that they have entertainment place right across, 20 yards away.

Do you know if your mother was able to communicate at all with your father while he was in Buchenwald?

No, no, no. There was no communication. Neither did she know where he was sent either. He was just gone, and that was it.

Do you know whether your parents were thinking about leaving Germany before that?

No. Before '38, no. They didn't. Because everything seemed to go pretty normal for them. My father was working. Not before '38, I don't think.

So do you remember what happened then, right after Kristallnacht? Your school was totally destroyed?

Yeah, there was nothing left. And right now they have duplexes there, where the temple was, where the school was. They just erected a memorial to the temple at that place. And hopefully we'll get to go back there and see that. We haven't seen that.

But after November '38, said my brother who was about 11 years older than I am, his girlfriend at the time was Jewish, from a good Jewish family. And her parents wanted to leave right away, or left right away, or had the finances to leave right away. I'm not sure.

And they left very early in 1939 for Shanghai. And my brother and his girlfriend didn't want to be a part. So anyway, in spring, in spring of '39, my brother followed her to Shanghai. So which really saved our lives by him going there.

Why my parents didn't leave in '39 I don't know, but I don't think they were ready yet to leave. And my brother had a picture. I think we sent it to him, and I brought it along today, that my parents had taken at the zoo in Berlin. There was my mother and my father. I was in the middle. And they both had lions. In fact, they were Hermann Goering's lion cubs on your lap.

You could go in. They put the lions on you, and then they take a picture of you. And he took that picture with him. He either took it with him or we mailed it to him. We sent it to him. I think we sent it to him.

And at that time, many Jews from Germany had already gone to Shanghai. And I don't think they wanted any more people there. So he worked very hard, made several trips to the Japanese authorities-- Shanghai was occupied by the Japanese at the time-- and convinced them that my parents were lion trainers, with that picture.

And he could be very convincing throughout his life. And he evidently convinced him that we were, and they issued him a visa for us. And that's always been the family story, and I have a copy of the original picture that I bought along here. That's what got us out of Germany.

And I don't want to jump ahead here, but we got out of Germany at the last possible time. I mean, the war was going on for over a year. Poland, France, Holland, Belgium was all under German control, occupied already.

There were no more ships to go. So we went on the Trans-Siberian Express.

Oh, my.

A long train trip.

Uh-huh.

Yeah.

That must have been an experience also.

Yeah, midsummer of 1940. And we were only able to do that because at that time Germany and Russia, Hitler and Stalin had a non-aggression pact that was still in effect. So we could do that. And yeah, it was the last minute. I think another couple of months and I wouldn't be here.

So your brother went to Shanghai to follow his girlfriend, and then that made your family want to--

That made our family-- yeah.

--stay I guess with him.

Yeah.

How did your mother support you and herself while your father was gone? What did the two of you do?

Well, we continued living in the same apartment. As I said, my grandmother lived upstairs. And I'm sure there was always enough money around for groceries. And I don't think other than groceries and rent that they had any other expenses. Because life was pretty simple then. But we seemed to get along.

And you all of a sudden stopped going to school?

Yes.

What was that like?

Well, probably a long vacation, that sort of-- yeah, school was just over then until we started school again in Shanghai.

So do you remember what you did or did you have other kids around at all?

During the time after 1938, probably just be home and out on the street, playing but nothing. And we had-- his brothers, they lived in Breslau also. There was family that you could see.

Both of my dad's brothers that I mentioned that married non-Jewish women, they were in Breslau with their families. And so there was a lot of family interaction. One lived out on a farm. The other lived in town.

And the brother that died at Auschwitz, they lived in Berlin. And that was about 100, 120 kilometers away. So I remember a lot of family get-togethers. In fact, I think I still have some pictures of cousins and me.

I have to come back to the soccer players. That was your father and your brother.

Yes.

Both. Did they just leave the soccer club or were they asked to leave?

They just left it.

I see.

I think my father-- I think both of them played till right around 1938, till that time on teams. So they played all during the '30s till--

That's interesting.

Yes.

Interesting. Do you know if family members were making any effort to get your father out? Do you remember any talk of that?

No. They didn't-- to my knowledge, they didn't make any effort. His military record, and it evidently happened to-- my sister-in-law's father was also released at that time. They did release some of them, if they were in the military. As you say, they didn't have the final solution at that time yet in '38.

So tell us about the trip on the Trans-Siberian railroad.

Trans-Siberian Express? That's something else, besides the temple burning, that kind of-- especially with a young kid you remember.

Right.

So had your father been back home for long before you left?

Yes. Mm-hmm.

Oh, he had been home for a while.

I don't think he was in Buchenwald more than probably four to six months, which is when I said no more, that's long enough. And well, we took-- we had to take a train from Breslau to Berlin. And--

But you stayed in Breslau until--

Yeah. Mm-hmm.

And was your father able to work?

He did some work, but I think mostly for Jewish clients at that time. Mm-hmm.

But at that point, they were looking to leave?

Yes. Mm-hmm. But let's say the war was on, and it was-- from what I was told, you couldn't take a ship out anywhere. My brother left early in '39. When he went, he left out of Genoa, Italy. That's where the ship-- he was on a German ship. His girlfriend and her parents were on an Italian ship.

So but once the war got going, when shipping stopped or they were torpedoed or whatever. Anyway, we went from Breslau to Berlin. And we had three suitcases. I mean, little ones, not big ones. And each one of us was allowed 10 marks. Put that at 30 marks.

And from Breslau, we got on a train. They took us through Latvia and Lithuania to Moscow. I don't think we transferred trains.

And when the train stopped in Riga, the capital of Lithuania-- of not Lithuania, the other one.

Latvia.

Yeah. Somehow, I don't know how, but I broke a train window. I don't know what, I had to walk or but I did it. So that cost my dad 10 marks right then and there. So we had 20 left in three suitcases.

Did you get in big trouble?

Well, he wasn't happy about it, yeah.

What about crossing the German border? Did you have any trouble?

No, no. My parents had the German passport, but it was marked stateless. They revoked the German citizenship. And with the name Israel and Sarah and stateless.

But they let you leave.

They let us leave, yeah.

And that was 1940?

Summer of 1940, late summer of 1940. Mm-hmm. And that train took us to Moscow. And we had about I think a two or three day layover in Moscow in a hotel. And I remember being very impressed by the very, very wide streets in Moscow. They're huge.

And first we stayed in there. The train, they put us up in a small hotel right near the Kremlin. You could see it out of-- across the street out the window. And that's where we boarded the Trans-Siberian Express to-- across Russia, Manchuria, Mongolia all the way to Dalian, Manchuria. And it took right around three weeks.

Mm-hmm.

And I learned to eat caviar on the train. Well, it was there. It seemed to be the standard, like you get probably cereal here as a kid. You get a bowl of caviar.

And another thing that really stands out, most of the trip, the blinds on the windows had to be down, down and they snapped in. And if you opened them and they caught you opening them, you were in big trouble. You probably never left Siberia.

They had a lot of military installations. And are you familiar with the term fifth column?

Mm-hmm.

Yeah, spies? Well, they expect-- they suspected many of the people on board to be spies for Germany and wanting to look out the window at the installations. Because Germany at that time was already planning to attack Russia.

So most of the time, it was just going in the dark, just chugging along and not knowing where you are. But even when they opened the shades, you still didn't know where you were. So.

How did a child deal with that?

Pardon me?

How did a child deal with that? You dealt with it OK, I think. I remember they have Lake Baikal in Russia, which is the largest lake in the world. It's huge. And it's an inland lake. That means it's not connected to the ocean. It took the train two days to go around it. It took two days and nights to go around this lake. So that stands out.

Could you sometimes look out at the scenery?

Yeah, sometimes they did. Yeah, sometimes they did. But whenever they it was what they felt is a strategic area, they just came down and don't you open them. Nobody did. Because it was soldiers, guns, and you don't want to do that.

Were you sitting in the train, or did you have sleeping cars?

We had sleepers, yes. We had those little-- like you have the Pullman's here, those little compartments? You open the door. And you know there were beds. They made beds, three beds. And so I don't know if they made them up or my mom made them up, but you've got beds to sleep in, yeah.

What about washing facilities? There were no showers in those days, were there?

No, no. Just like probably on a train here in those days, or even now. You had your bathroom, and your sink, and water.

But no showers or baths or anything. So I had to wash a lot.

So you arrived in Manchuria. Were there other refugees on that train that you could tell?

A few, very few. I think there were two or three other families that were on it. Yeah, we made a few stops. But we never got off the train. They stopped in several cities or towns in Siberia. I remember Harbin, Manchuria, and Mukden, Manchuria.

But the train just stood there for half an hour, and you looked out but you didn't get off it. And in Dalian, there were people there. Evidently, the path-- from there we had to take a ship, a Japanese freighter to Shanghai. That was a two-day trip. And I know I slept on the floor right by my mother's bed. They didn't-- well, my mother's bunk, really. Because it was a freighter, and yeah. And my father had just spoke very little English. I didn't speak any. He spoke a little bit.

And I remember him getting upset with some of the authorities there, who called them people. You people. And he didn't know what the word "people" meant. And he thought it was something derogatory, call you people.

So he got upset with them, and they were hollering at each other. For him, in German, and the other fellow in whatever language. So.

And once you get back to Shanghai, your brother was there, knew you were coming?

My bro-- yes. My brother was there. And, well, the whole different life started then. I got a little older, and made friends. And we lived in probably two places for a very short time, and then in one place for a longer period.

But it was one room, one room. My parent's bed was one of those Japanese straw, hard straw mattresses. I had a like bunk bed that you make up. Like I said, it was one room. There was no heat and no stove in there.

My mother had one of those little not like a barbecue. Like a hibachi.

Hibachi.

Those little stoves. And she was there with a fan, fanning the charcoals. I mean, that's what she did all her cooking on. There was a little corner of the room, and they put a curtain around it. And--

That was the kitchen.

That was the kitchen. Yeah, but there was no water in the kitchen. She had to go out, and like in a courtyard. That's where the water and the toilet was, that they picked up three times a week. Honeycombs came to pick them up. So--

The buckets.

Yeah. But as a kid, right, you got used to it. That's the way it was. We do it different from Germany, the things that we had a regular bathroom there. But then, that's the way it was. In fact, just last week, when we had dinner with friends here from Shanghai, they all said at that age we accepted it. And that's just the way life was. We didn't know any better or any different. So.

It was like an adventure.

Yeah, in a sense. Yeah.

It must have been hard on your mom. And your father.

Yeah. Yeah, my mother took in ironing. She did ironing for people. My father sold shirts and suits. There was some made to order. He had samples, and he went to businesses, some Japanese. And bought a shirt and he had to measure

them, and had a shirt made for them, and suits.

I worked in a bicycle shop, and worked primarily on rickshaws, changed tires on rickshaws. But not the pedicabs. The rickshaws that they pulled, that the coolies pulled.

And you learned on the job?

Yeah, yeah. That was after school. You know [INAUDIBLE]

So did you move right into the Hongkew area?

Yes, right into Hongkew.

By the time you arrived there, did Jews already have to stay within the ghetto?

Either they did already or very shortly thereafter. And you had to go to Mr. Goya, Japanese--

Yeah.

You probably heard that name from other people. To get a permit or to leave the area. And that's how my father finally got to go outside of the area to sell, try to sell something, to make a living.

As I said, my mother took in ironing. And I went to school. And it was so hot at night. Have you ever heard of flying roaches? They fly in. They were about, oh, a couple of inches long. And they just zoom in at night. The windows had to be open because it was so hot.

So yeah, it was very different, very interesting.

Yeah.

Do you remember how it was for your mom to adapt to that?

Very hard. Very hard. Well, let's say just the cooking and things, we had to walk a block to buy water. You got little tokens, little wooden chips like this, tokens. And we had to go to the corner to buy boiling water, buy hot water.

And then you had to be very careful drinking it. And eventually, after '45, after the war was over, we got relief. We got food packages, the same packages that the soldiers got from the United Nations. UNRRA, they send-- we got little cans of spam and whatever.

How did the local Chinese treat you?

Very well. Very nice.

How about the Japanese, then?

Japanese, they were-- like you crossed a bridge, they had a little guardhouse that had to bow down when you crossed them. People like my father who liked to smoke cigars, you couldn't have anything. I mean, that had to be out of your mouth, and you had to be at attention, bow down.

I mean, they were-- it was a lot rougher with them. I mean, but the Chinese were very friendly to the--

How about the Jewish community? Were they helpful?

Yes. We had a lot of Jewish friends. The school we went to was established by a very wealthy Jew from India,

Kadoorie. You've heard that name before, too, I think. And the teachers were mostly White Russian ladies. And that's where you learned English, where we learned English and so forth.

And a part of the school was like an auditorium in the back, was also used as a temple. In fact, that's where I had my bar mitzvah, in that school complex. It was quite large. Or it seemed large to me at that time.

Like the street we lived on in Germany, in Breslau, I always told my wife, it's a good size street. It's a wide street. And we came there, it was very narrow. Because as a kid, it just looks bigger. And it's narrow, because they didn't have cars or very few cars. So they didn't need the wide streets, cobblestone streets.

Mm-hmm.

So you started almost immediately going to school at Kadoorie School?

Yeah, shortly after we arrived. Might have been a few weeks, but very soon thereafter. Mm-hmm.

And learned English there?

Yes. There and here, and still learning.

Did you learn any Chinese?

Yes.

Enough to communicate?

A little bit, but then things that you learn as a kid you probably don't want to repeat anyway. So yes, but we could communicate. Like time and what do certain things cost. There was communication. And working on rickshaws.

Also, I liked them a lot, because it was something I had never seen before. And I was always telling my wife, who when people speak about China, is there anything you miss from China? I said, the rickshaws were fun.

You went, you sat in THEM or at that time I was interested in girls, girlfriends. I mean, it was just you sat in there, very narrow, and pulled the curtain, and the guy would just take you wherever you wanted to.

If you wanted to go for another half an hour, it was another quarter, and he went. But that part was fun. I thought it was fun. I don't know.

Tell us about your bar mitzvah.

OK. My teacher was the same teacher that we had in school for Jewish-- for religious. Name-- Mr. Wesel. And I had-- it was quite a lengthy time that I had to study for it, because my bar mitzvah was in March. And I was told that-- you might know that better than I do, that in March on a certain day, it's the longest reading that you have to do out of the Torah.

And I learned it. And I did it. So--

You got that day.

Pardon?

You got that day.

I got that day. I don't know. Is that early in March or late in March? You might know that. But it's in March. And I know

there was a small get together after, but not a big party or anything. Just family. So.

How was medical care?

Pardon me?

How was medical care?

There wasn't much. There were a few doctors, but there wasn't too much. I know-- Yeah, well, there was some. I shouldn't say that. My brother had his appendix taken out. And I came down with malaria.

Oh.

I'm glad you reminded me of that.

Uh-huh.

And I was not in the hospital, though. I was at home. And the doctor was also a Jewish refugee, who made house calls at that time. And my parents had to sell their wedding rings, their gold rings in order to buy quinine. I think it was quinine that they bought.

And to this very day, I can't give blood or anything because I had malaria. And that was in about right around '42.

It must have been pretty rough.

Yeah.

In the facilities there.

Yeah, in a small room. I mean, the room we lived in was no bigger than this room here. Probably smaller. Yeah, so it was hard with them. But they sold their wedding rings and things to get the money to do that. So that--

But then they were able to get the medicine?

Yeah, but it was quite expensive. So-- well many, many things were hard to get. We went out, and my parents went out. We went to the store and bought a half an ounce of margarine, a half an ounce of butter, and we ate brains. Which at that time I liked. And different intestinal animal parts that they bought.

And I was taught when you-- at that time, when you have a slice of bread, it's always large on one side than on the other, always to butter the smaller side, because it saves. So. No, I was taught that. That was in Shanghai. So.

Now I've learned something.

You remember being hungry at all?

No. I mean, there were no dessert. If there maybe once a year there was a cake, it was something that my mother could make on her little hibachi. And then to keep it warm. If you made rice dishes, to keep them warm till the evening, she puts them in bed under blankets and things to keep it warm.

No, I mean, there were no desserts or anything special. It was mostly either rice or potatoes and brains. Things like that.

Mm-hmm. So how long did you live there?

In Shanghai?

Uh-huh.

Till about the end of-- close to the end of '47.

Mm-hmm. And so you were not-- never able to bring any money or anything from Europe because it was pretty late.

No, no. My parents had to leave everything. I mean, we had-- it was a pretty large apartment that we had. And no, everything stayed there. They just had those three little suitcases. And something that fits in with that, when we were in Breslau in 1996, at a hotel there, some of the people spoke German and English.

In fact, there was a taxi driver, and they were telling us that the apartment that the Jewish people left there, they left them furnished. You just walk out like you go on a weekend trip to someplace here. And that they moved German soldiers, I think, right into them. Here's your furnished apartment. It's yours. So that-- yeah, they left everything there.

Mm-hmm. Do you remember as a young boy having to leave behind things that were important to you when you were young?

Probably toys and things. Yeah. Yeah, because it was just a few pieces of clothing. That was all in there. There was no jewelry that my mother took or anything. So yeah. Mm-hmm.

So once you got to Shanghai, did you have anything to play with or?

No. No. In fact, I don't really remember any toys in Shanghai.

Mm-hmm.

We made a lot of friends through school. There was like a United Nations building. Well, not United Nations. It was like a compound, a commune where a lot of the refugees lived. My brother lived there. And there were a lot of kids my own age, my age there. That's how I met [PERSONAL NAME] and other people.

And we played around. There was one movie theater that they had, and it played old, old American movies.

Could you afford to go there?

Not very often. Now, that was during the war. Not very often. And there was no music. There was a radio station, on the radio station. But only song I remember I ever heard was "Sioux City Sue." And I had no idea what it was all about. None of us knew what it was about. Yeah. So that was the first song, American song I ever heard over there. But--

Did you ever have to do anything illegal?

Illegal? My father did in Germany. He listened to an shortwave radio. He listened to the Joe Louis-Max Schmeling fight.

Oh.

I remember that. And he always said, shh, be quiet. It's the radio. Because that was--

Illegal.

Another thing they would have found out, we wouldn't have left Germany. But in Shanghai, no. Not to my knowledge.

Mm-hmm. What did you hear about the war? Did you hear anything about what was going on outside Shanghai?

Very little. Very little. During-- oh, about '43, '44, Shanghai was bombed by the Americans. We had b-29s come over there. The building, many Jews lived in, my brother lived in, was totally destroyed. He wasn't home. Him and his-- they were married at that time. He wasn't home, but the building was destroyed.

And we sat under the kitchen table, listening to the bombs fall. So you could hear the whining of the bombs.

No place to go? No shelters?

No, no. Just under the table. And they had like a civil defense thing, where everybody of age got a three hour shift, and we had to walk around with a little billy club and a flashlight out there. I don't know what the purpose of it was, but my father did it, and I walked with him many times. Everybody did it.

Mm-hmm. And did you hear anything about the concentration camps at all? Any rumors?

Not till after the war. That's the amazing part, that we didn't really know much about it. We knew they were still fighting in Russia and they were still fighting in France. We didn't find out about the D-day invasion till quite a bit later.

These radios were controlled by the Japanese. And they probably didn't want anyone to know. And then there were no English broadcasts. I mean, even if it was on the radio, we wouldn't have known it. After '45, after American soldiers came in there, then things came out a little bit more.

What was the social life like for your parents? Did people support each other?

In Shanghai?

Yeah.

Yeah, pretty nice.

OK.

You asked about the name of the rabbi, Kantorowski.

Ah, thank you.

You might have heard that name before, too. So. Yeah. Yeah, he was also a good friend of my parents in Shanghai, and then also in San Francisco after--

That's where I heard it. He came to San Francisco.

Yes.

Yeah, the name is familiar. He was with the Temple--

Beth Sholom, I think. On Funston and 13th Avenue there.

I have heard of him, yes.

Yeah.

So you were able to leave in '47. Now, did you have-- you needed a quota number to come to San Francisco-- to come to the United States?

We needed a sponsor for an affidavit. And we didn't have any relatives here. Some very distant relatives that my parents

didn't even know where they lived or anything. But they had good friends from Breslau that had left in the early '30s for-- they were New York.

Mm-hmm.

And after I think there was some quite a bit of correspondence between the two, anyway, they sponsored us after a while. And then we came.

You had to wait till your number came up?

Yeah, yeah. And a little bit later on, in '49, 1949 when the communists took over in China, the rest of the Jewish people there went back to Germany.

Oh.

In fact, my sister-in-law, the one I'm talking about, her parents went back to Germany, and then had to wait in a camp in Germany for their quota number to come up to come here. But we were able to come directly.

You were very lucky you managed it faster.

Yeah. Mm-hmm.

So did you finish your schooling in Shanghai?

Yes. Mm-hmm.

Did you finish what was equivalent to high school.

To high school, yeah.

Now, the high school, was that also at the Kadoorie School?

Yes. All one school. They had-- before the war and after the war, they had an American school in the American section of the International Settlement of Shanghai. In fact, my brother taught there for a short period of time. But that was the only school for us.

And then what did you do after you finished school?

Came to San Francisco.

OK, so that was about the right--

Yeah. But in Shanghai, we had a lot of friends. I mean, a lot of people the same age group. They formed a Boy Scout troop over there. Somebody else you might have talked to or not.

Mm-hmm.

And it was adventurous for kids.

So you were in the Boy Scout troop, which was made up of refugees in Shanghai?

Yes.

What kinds of things did you do?

Well, especially after 1945, when it was over, we had camp-outs across the Huangpu River. That's where the big airport is now. We visited a lot of British and American ships that were in the harbor. We went over and they liked Boy Scouts. And someone made arrangements and we went there.

We had bicycle trips to different parts. We all had a bicycle, only one of those old ones, one-speed. So it was interesting. And in fact, the friends that I've talked about I have right here in this area now, they were both Boy Scouts. We were all together. And our Boy Scout leader lived in Santa Clara County at that time. So.

Did your parents ever think of considering going to Israel?

No, they had a choice in Germany of either going to Shanghai or Haiti. And they chose Shanghai. I'm glad. Yeah. Yeah, why? Those were the two countries or areas that would accept Jewish stateless refugees from Germany.

I hadn't heard about Haiti.

Yeah. And from Shanghai, there was a lot of people that went-- well, not a lot but many people that went to Australia.

Mm-hmm.

So.

So you came to San Francisco. And what happened here?

What happened in San Francisco?

Who was waiting for you, if anyone?

Nobody. Nobody was waiting.

Did the Jewish organization give you some assistance?

Well, after we arrived, that's another little-- they had made-- the Jewish organization had made reservations for us at the Powell hotel on Market Street, right where the cable car turnaround is. And we came over on the General Gordon. Used to be a troop transport, but American President Lines.

And I believe it was pier 41 we landed. And then we still only had those little suitcases.

Sure.

Didn't have much from there. My father got a taxi to go to the Powell hotel. We saw all of San Francisco, you name it. From Golden Gate Park to the thing. So most of his money that he had then went to the taxi driver. We had no idea how close-- I mean, it was just down Market Street.

He took advantage?

Yeah, we had a tour, sightseeing tour.

So the taxi driver was trying to get a nice fare.

Oh, sure. And he did. We stayed at the Powell hotel, oh, probably two-- a couple of weeks. Two, three weeks. And then we moved out to 11th Avenue. There was a Jewish family that owned one of the typical San Francisco Avenue homes. And my parents rented a room upstairs. And the room had a nice size walk-in closet. That was my room, the walk-in closet.

We stayed there. They moved quite a bit, and we moved to Baker Street. It was the first place I had my own room. And eventually to 11th Avenue. So we moved to three different places here.

And I started working soon after we came there. I worked for Sunbeam, Sunbeam Corporation. The one that makes Mixmaster and Toastmasters. I worked for-- they had a branch with the Aaronson Company. I worked for them.

I've been in retail and that type of business all along. That started and I kind of stayed with it. And my father did bookkeeping. He went out, and he got a number of accounts, jewelry stores and clothing stores, and learned the tax code and did that for them.

My brother didn't come to San Francisco until 1949. He contracted tuberculosis in China, and he couldn't get a visa to come in until it had all cleared up. So they came in '49.

And how was it to adjust to life in America then?

Pretty easy, pretty nice.

By that time you knew a lot of English?

Yeah, kind of, kind of. When I worked at the Sunbeam place, words came up, and San Jose came up and I spelled it with an H. You know, I mean, you didn't know, especially the Spanish names. But it was easy to adjust.

In San Francisco, I spent an awful lot of time at the Jewish Community Center. Again, with many of the same people that I knew in Shanghai, and then with a lot new friends that you made there. I mean, it was a daily hangout, really. There were dances. There was ping-pong. There was a swimming pool, were pool tables.

Now it's been torn down and they're building a new one. But yeah, it's been work and the Community Center, that's where you spend your time. So.

And then did Mother have to work also?

In San Francisco? No, she didn't. And she spoke very little English. But she went shopping, and she always found places where somebody spoke German. It was very easy for, whether it was the emporium or the corner grocery, always somebody who understood her.

And then did you meet your wife at the center, too?

Yes, I married twice. Yes. I met her at the Community Center. At that time, I was very close friends with [PERSONAL NAME] So we still are, but at that time, we were inseparable. So yes. Yes, I did meet her at the Community Center. And I was married in January of '51.

Did you have children?

Yes, two of the children that I put on the form, the two oldest one, Karen and Barry. Karen lives in the Los Angeles area now. She's an attorney there. And Barry lives in San Jose. And he works for a subsidiary of Intel. He has a good job with them.

Karen has no children. Barry has all of them. Barry has 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 of them.

Do you see them a lot?

Yes. Yes, they live in San Jose. So they don't live too far from us. And I was married till 1962, well, really, 1961. And in '62, Marlene and I were married. And we have two children, Diane and John.

They live nearby?

Pardon me?

Do they live nearby?

Diane lives about a mile from right here. She lives in Belmont. And she's getting married in October. We just found out. And John lives at home.

Mm-hmm. And it's something nice to look forward to. And you mentioned a bit about the work, that when you came you started and kept in that line. What kind of work have you done?

Mostly retail, retail sales. We had a clock shop in San Jose in two different locations. And we had that for about, oh, 15, 18 years. Something like that. And we sold that at the end of '79. And then I've continued working in retail.

Now, coming back to work, go back in China, besides working, besides working on rickshaw and bicycle shop, I also worked in a sausage factory, where they had--

Big change.

Yeah, whatever kind of job you could get. Where they stuff the sausages. And young kids, all we had to do was carry out big buckets of blood. Those were interesting jobs. And also the place where they sold material, linen, and things for suits, just like in the stockroom. So when you mentioned work, it came back.

If you worked in the sausage factory, could you ever bring home some sausage? Was that a benefit?

I don't think I ever did. It didn't look good enough. So.

How do you think-- or did your wartime experiences affect you in any way after?

Well, the whole-- it affected me for one thing-- with education. I mean, it was over in Germany in 1938. And then it was Kadoorie School in Shanghai. And then when we came to San Francisco, everybody had to work, too. Got your paycheck, and father had to pay bills with it. So that was a major impact.

Mm-hmm.

And I think probably the same with my parents, that my father would have had different jobs and different positions than what he did, what he had to do here, like being a bookkeeper for people. So yeah, it had a great impact on that.

And of course, losing so many family members. In 1996, when we went to visit Breslau, we also went to Auschwitz. And that's indescribable. You can't even-- wouldn't even know where to begin there.

To Buchenwald and Auschwitz?

Yes. But there's nothing much I can say about that that hasn't been said or that you haven't heard, but we made sure. We stayed in a hotel in Krakow. Our daughter, Diane, was with us. And--

How old was Diane at that time?

In '96? 30. She came. She was with us, and we had taken a tour on a bus in Breslau. And they narrated it all in German. So they don't speak. I do, but they don't. My wife doesn't, and then so I've got to keep translating for them.

And she wanted to be sure that the tour, the bus to Auschwitz from Breslau wasn't narrated in German too. So the lady

there told her Germans don't come here. We don't-- there are no tours in German. Either German people don't come Here that kind of sticks with you, too, some of those things. So.

When you visited, you saw places where you grew up and lived?

In Breslau? Yes, it was very-- you can probably ask Marlene-- very emotional for me. And I thought I'd like to go-- I'd like to go back. I grew up. I mean, it was nothing political then with me. I was--

[INAUDIBLE]

From zero to eight there. And here we went around. I was going to show her the house where we lived. We went down Freiburgerstrasse, the street. And to one side of the street is perfectly intact. Every building is there just the way it was.

On the other side where we lived, gone. It's destroyed and they have some Eastern European apartment building there. And the street was very narrow. So it's like from probably no more than 50 yards from one side to the other. That was bombed out. The other side wasn't.

And we went to the sports field, to the sports club that is there. And we talked to the people there, who seemed very nice. Did you bring some pictures? I said, no. I didn't know. That if you come back, bring some pictures of your dad in his soccer outfit and they might put it on the wall or whatever, but we haven't been back there.

But we have pictures of that at home, and it's just like it looked before. I mean, they didn't fight there or whatever. And we went where they called me Christopher to go ice skating.

Mm-hmm.

So there were places I remember. And of course, most of all the temple, where the temple was. Here we lived, there was the temple. So it was emotional.

I'm sure.

And we've talked about other places to travel. And I keep saying I really want to go back there. I really want to go back there one more time.

What kind of feelings came up when you were there?

Of everything that happened. I mean, it was home. It was where you were born, where we were partially raised. And then it all came crumbling down. It's hard to describe, but it was emotional. I showed that there was a school, and there was this and that.

We haven't been back to China. Now, many, many of our friends from there have gone back. We haven't been back there. So.

Have you seen any of the movies that were made?

Some of them, yes.

Some of the Shanghai ones?

Not the last one. We went to Berkeley to see it, and they said, we don't play today, or we don't play it at this time. So OK, we went back home.

Now, what about your children? Have you shared any of these stories with your children?

Yes. Mm-hmm. But we've considered this tape that you're doing now, that we might get copies of it and give it to the children and grandchildren. Because they-- I would say Diane and John, well, probably all four of them know-- they watch it, and they watch a lot of History Channel movies. And they've seen the carnage at the camps many times on TV. And they're watching that. They're really interested in that.

But my personal story, as I told it today, I think it'd be neat if they have a tape. So.

I'm sure they'll be happy to get it.

Yeah. I didn't leave out too much.

Yeah. Are there any problems that occurred during the war that you think linger today? In general, psychological, any kind of--

Probably the burning temple most of all, because that's very vivid in my memory, because we were so close to it. Maybe my dad being picked up by the Germans. And the visits to the camps in Germany.

So those images stick with you.

Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Which of your values, personal interests might stem from that area?

Do you mean values?

Your values, what you feel or think about generally what is going on in your community, in the world, in your family, things like this.

Well, things that relate to that period probably.

That you feel are because of the period.

Well, of course, hoping that something like that never happens again. And when you read in the papers, see on TV about the mass graves and murders in different countries, that we all read about now, it makes you think that this can't happen again.

We watched a program on CNN yesterday about North Korea. And he said it just sounds too much like what happened in the '30s. And you can't turn a blind eye to it and say, well, it doesn't really happen.

Like, I think much of the Holocaust might have been prevented if countries would have known about it. Or the ones that knew about it didn't do anything about it. So and if from what you hear now is that many of the world leaders knew about it, or knew part of it. But didn't do anything about it. So.

Do you think it could happen again?

I hope not. Pray not. But the way the world is, you just never know. So.

Do you think your experiences through the war years have changed how you lived your life afterwards?

Yes, I think so.

In what way?

Well, you-- I don't know-- probably learn to be more thrifty, more-- I don't like to throw anything away. I get shirts for

Christmas, and they'll just be in the closet till the other one is worn out.

I mean, just little things that I can trace go back to there. What I told you earlier. I mean, it was true about buttering your bread. I still do to this very day. I don't know why, but it's been instilled in me. 60 years ago or more, but still open and do the side, not this side.

How did you feel about the reunification of Germany?

Well, I thought it was good. But if I talk to my cousins over there, they didn't. Yeah. They didn't like the East Germans. And they said they're all going to come to West Germany to earn more money, to have better living conditions.

And I thought it was good, but when we traveled there, you can certainly see when you go from one to the other. Then you have all those huge, ugly Eastern apartment buildings. And nothing. No stores or anything. So.

Breslau having changed hands, were you able to get reparations?

No. I think back in the early '60s we got \$200. So--

Not even interrupted education?

No. No, my brother didn't, and I didn't. But Breslau was very much destroyed. It was made a fortress during World War II. When the war was over already, they had already surrendered in Berlin, and they were still fighting in Breslau for another week.

So in fact, we bought a book there that we knew that they had a lot of destruction in town. But it seems like many of the buildings that I remembered as a kid were still there. And the rebuilding wasn't easy, especially then in the '90s. They didn't have to funds so many ruined buildings were still there, or you could see still buildings with bullet holes in them. And it hadn't been taken care of, yeah. Poland didn't have the funds to do it.

Are there any other details that maybe we haven't touched on, or stories or little anecdotes that you wanted to include?

I'll probably think of them later.

Yeah.

No, I told you pretty much what happened in Breslau. Oh, one thing that would be of interest, but it goes back to my grandfather. My father's father came to the United States in the 1860s, and supposedly, I was told, worked for the Pony Express and was in Indian fights. Now, that is true. I'm not making it up.

And, well, he was shot with arrows. I mean, he had-- he survived it, though. He was in Indian fights in the Texas area. He became a citizen of the United States in Austin, Texas. Nobody's sure of the the exact year, but it was sometime in the '60s.

And I've been trying to-- my brother at one time had been trying to find out, but you can't get anything from the archives unless you know what port he came to on the ship, or the name of the ship and when.

I mean, it could have been Galveston. It could have been New York. I don't know. But he became a citizen, then went back to Germany, to Pauline, my grandmother. They had all the children.

And at that time, I was told, and I believe it, that part of my family didn't like the United States, didn't like America too much. We're here in Germany, and they were over there with the Indians and this and that.

Anyway, so my Aunt Rosa burned his citizenship papers. And especially later years, she's never forgiven for that. Because it would have saved many lives. If your father is an American citizen, either you automatically can become one

or you certainly get a quota and can come much easier. That would have spared probably many people from the concentration camps, and it would have gotten us here much sooner. So that--

Do you have any idea why he came to the United States?

Adventure. That's what I was told. That's what my grandmother used to say. He was a young man, and you could just get on a ship and swab the decks. And I mean, you didn't need a visa. You didn't need anything then. You just go.

And he was here and then decided, well, go back to Pauline. And he did.

And was his intention to bring the family back to America?

He probably thought about it, but I don't know. But he did stay long enough and cherished his citizenship papers. And somehow Rosa got a hold of them and put them in the fireplace. We don't need American citizenship. We're here in Germany. So.

And she's been crazy, verrÃ¼ckte Tante Rosa since then. So from then on.

So she felt Germany is your country and that's where you should be.

Yeah. And when she burned them, it must have been in the '30s.

Oh.

But she lived in Berlin. She never married. And that was her feeling.

That was her world.

Pardon?

That was her world.

That was her world, yeah. So I know where she lived. We visited her, but--

What's done is done.

What's done is done. That's right. But to this very day, I'd love to find out more about him. But it's just-- I looked through all the Ellis Island things that you can get.

I think the Mormons are known to do research, family research.

Yeah, I've tried that, but didn't take enough time in Salt Lake City.

Yeah.

I have to-- no, I'd really like to know when he came. And all I know is that he became a citizen in Austin. So.

Well, there should be some records. [INAUDIBLE].

Yeah? So maybe I have to go to Austin and look.

Do you feel American?

Yes, I've been here for a long time. And I've spent eight years, eight or nine years in the National Guard. So I've gone to

camps. I've been-- I wasn't drafted, but I've been registered for Selective Service at that time.

My wife and I, we do a lot of traveling. We do the RV kind of thing. So we've seen much of the country. And what we haven't seen we hope to see yet. So yeah, pretty much. We vote. We fly the flag.

Is there something you would like to pass along to the next generation from the lessons that you've learned in your life until now?

Be vigilant and never let it happen again. It's just indescribable what happened. And just keep your eyes and ears open to what goes on in the world. And yeah, I lost a lot of relatives. And can't happen again. Can't let it happen again. So.

On that note, I think we'll finish and then we'll put the photos on at the end, but we want to thank you.

Yeah, OK. If you want to take a picture of the temple, because it might--

What you're looking at here is an exact replica of the reform synagogue in Breslau. That is the synagogue that I described that I saw burning from about two blocks away. I was able to obtain that from a company in New York. And it was built, I believe, in 1867, and totally destroyed November 10, 1938.

That is the temple my parents, my brother and I belonged to, and also where our school was in the basement of that synagogue, and to a small annex to the left of it.

The picture you're looking at here is our family's famous lion picture. It was taken in the Berlin Zoo with my parents and me in the middle. I was nine years old then. And the lion cubs that we are holding belonged to Hermann Goering.

That's the picture that my brother took to China with him and convinced the Japanese authorities that my parents were lion tamers. And my brother was a very convincing person. He convinced the Japanese that that is so, and they issued him a visa for my parents and me to escape Germany and come to China.

Without that picture and without the visa for us to come to Shanghai, I am quite sure that the three of us in that picture would not have survived the war and would have come to a tragic end in some camp. So that picture means an awful lot to us, to our family. Because I feel very strongly that it saved our lives.

The picture you're looking at now on the top row on the left is my father. Next to him is my uncle's son-in-law. The uncle is the one top row on the right, Isidore. Below him on the right is my mother. Next to her is Isidore's daughter, Gerda.

They had a little baby that I believe was born in 1939. Yes, in 1939. And Isidore, Gerda, and her husband above and the baby were all deported to Auschwitz, and all died in Auschwitz.

This is a picture of my grandmother, Pauline. She and my grandpa Moritz, my father's parents, had eight children. It is her husband who came to the United States and spent a few years here and became a citizen, the story that I told earlier. And she died in Germany in 1940. She is buried in Breslau. And I remember going to her funeral.

This is a picture of my Uncle Martin, who was Pauline's second child. On November 10, he was sent to Buchenwald, accused of stealing a blanket and was beheaded there.

His full name?

Martin Gottheiner. This picture was taken on May 17, 1942 in Shanghai, my parents and me at my brother's wedding.

That's a picture of me working at the American Air base in Shanghai after the war. I believe it was 1946. They hired a lot of us refugee kids, and we sat on top of the cowlings of b-29s and c-47s and changed spark plugs. And then we were hoping the planes would still fly.

And that's also where I got my first experience in flying in a plane. Some of the crew members took us up and gave us a ride in a plane.

That's a picture of my parents taken in San Francisco at Hanukkah in 1959. And it's their 40th anniversary picture. Probably the best picture I have of my parents.

This picture was taken December 23, the year 2002, in Half Moon Bay, California. It's our 40th anniversary. And my lovely wife Marlene looks very happy there.

And on that happy note, on behalf of the Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project, we want to thank you very much for recording your story.

Thank you very much for having me.