

And I am April Lee [PERSONAL NAME] and assisting me here today is Charles Gardyn. So we will begin now, and let's ask Mr. Homburger to spell his name for the transcript.

It's H-O-M-B-U-R-G-E-R.

And your first name.

Wolfgang, as in Mozart. As in Mozart, all right. Well, as we talked before, we're going to try and recapture in this interview your early experiences as a child in Germany, and your experiences when life began to change when the Nazis came in, your experiences during the war, and then after the war and how those experiences affected you in your life-- your young life and your later life.

So let's begin by going back in memory to what your childhood was like in Karlsruhe.

Right.

And tell us when you were born.

I was born in December 1926, so I was only six years old when Hitler took over the chancellorship of Germany. And I really have very few memories of a pre-Nazi Germany.

At about two weeks before Hitler came to power, my mother died. And I think that probably left more of an impression on me than Hitler coming to power.

In terms of the atmosphere of the city and the general atmosphere of Germany, I think I was aware most of the time after-- soon after 1933 of the enmity of much of the population of the uniforms of the SA and of anti-Semitism of some of the-- but not nearly all-- some of the classmates I had in school. So because of the age group I'm in, this was something I almost grew up with, so to speak, as I became older-- age 7 through 12.

The SA part of the Hitler troopers kind of thing was particularly vivid, because we lived in a three-story duplex house. And the other half of the house was the home of a-- I still remember the last name, Bader-- Herr Bader-- who was some sort of an officer in the SA. And who had his particular platoon or whatever it was meet outside his house and do military drills right out there on the street outside his house, which was, of course, right next to our house. So this was probably by 1935 or so that he started this, and so we became very conscious of that.

Also, up at the end of our street, was and still is a big barracks-- army barracks. And that became also the center of a lot of political activity. And, in fact, once when-- I believe it was Goring-- came to Karlsruhe.

He spoke from the front steps of that particular barracks that we could actually see from our house. And there was, of course, a huge crowd of people there, and lots of swastikas, and lots of cheering and Sieg Heils and so on. So without having to go very far from my house I was sort of steeped in this kind of thing already.

As things progressed toward Kristallnacht, I think the tensions increased. I remember that on the commercial street that was about four blocks from where we lived, there was one of these big newspaper display cases that always displayed Der Stürmer, which was the very, very anti-Semitic newspaper put out by Julius Streicher.

And since we as kids used to walk past there to and from the stores or the dentist or whatever, I used to sometimes see these displays. And I still remember actually reading them and looking at them, and getting this impression that what the caricatures of the Jew were like from this.

I don't remember reading the text maybe, because the text was probably using very many long words in German. There's one language for kids and another language that you start picking up when you get to university perhaps that has the multi-syllable words. But I do remember looking at all of the illustrations and the cartoons and the headlines of that. So

throughout this early part, Nazism and anti-Semitism was really almost a conscious part of what I was going through.

So that you were so young, do you have-- can you take back the memories of before that a little bit, like what kind of a household were you growing up in? What was the spirit of it like? What role did Judaism play in the household?

Oh, I can talk about that to some extent, although again, my conscious memories really start when I was about four or five years old, which was almost when Hitler came. But no, I grew up in a family that was conservative Jewish.

In fact, in Karlsruhe, I don't believe there was a reform movement. There was an Orthodox temple, and that was probably the minority of the Jews. And the majority of the Jews were conservative Jews.

And the synagogue was on the other side of town. And we went there, not every week, but certainly for the high holidays and for some of the other sabbaths. It seems to my memory that traditionally, unlike in the United States now, the Saturday morning service was the key one, not the Friday evening service. And so I remember going during daylight essentially to most of these services.

My father and all the other men were wearing these old fashioned opera hats. Yarmulkes would have been looked down upon.

There was, in fact, a certain prejudice against the Orthodox Jews for doing such things as wearing yarmulkes and looking so obviously different from the German average people. The conservative movement, like so many-- the vast majority of German Jews-- was an assimilationist type of approach. So the opera hats were all right. That's how you kept your head covered in the synagogue, but not, say, a yarmulke.

At home we really didn't do any observance at that time. Now, my mother, as I mentioned, died when I was age 6, in January of 1933. My father hired a housekeeper to replace my mother to some extent. And she was also a Jewish woman, but not a particularly observant one.

And four years later, my father married again-- my stepmother. Now, she came from a family where her father was Jewish and her mother was Christian. Her mother had died long before I ever knew her. Her father was still alive, and, in fact, got to New York in about 1940 via Holland, and died in New York in 1945.

I did not know until I was reading one of the books that I brought with me about the history of the Jews of Karlsruhe that my mother actually formally converted back to Judaism from Christianity in 1934. This is very remarkable.

When other Jews would have probably tried the escape route in the opposite direction of getting baptized and denying their Jewishness, she, who had been brought up in a Christian atmosphere being half Christian, formally became a Jew. And this was before she met my father, so it wasn't that she was already thinking about marrying into a Jewish family.

She was-- perhaps we can come back to her. I know we will. But she was a very remarkable woman from the start.

You felt very close to her.

I would have if we hadn't been separated for so many years. But unfortunately, that came then a big gap.

She married my father in 1937. And to get back to the theme of what Judaism played in my life at that time, she decided-- I guess it must have been in the spring of '38, it had to be that year-- to have a Seder in our house, and to invite one of the rabbis to conduct the Seder, since my father didn't know how to do this.

And I still remember how nervous she became about what was kosher and what wasn't kosher, and how to prepare the meal, and all the other details. This was probably the only formal Jewish ceremony we ever had in our house during the 12 years that I lived there, certainly during the six or seven years that I can remember.

You did not go to Hebrew school.

Not until-- well, not in the sense of what that term means here in the States to learn Hebrew-- that I remember. I think there was probably a children's activity during part of the service-- which I don't remember now-- at the synagogue.

Now, after Kristallnacht-- of course, Kristallnacht resulted in us being thrown out of the schools we were in at the time. And we were sent then to the only option open, which was a Jewish school that was organized for that purpose within a matter of hours, I guess, or days. And in which there I learned a little bit of Hebrew, but, of course, they were also trying to keep our regular education going.

Could you tell me a little bit about your family life-- about your brothers, and your father, and what you remember about your mother before she died? And what did she die of?

That last question it's difficult to answer, because I'm not quite sure. I had always been told that she died of an infection of the inner ear that somehow had spread and that could have been cured if penicillin had been discovered by that time.

Most recently, one of my brothers says no, it was breast cancer. And I really don't know.

Would that have been something that they didn't talk about in those days?

Well, certainly not to a six-year-old.

Certainly not.

I wouldn't have understood the terms anyway, I don't think. And I never felt comfortable asking my father later on in life about that, partly because I thought I knew the answer.

Yes.

Now I'm not so sure anymore. My mother was born in the Harz Mountains in Central Germany and married my father in 1922. My father and my family, going back to 1721, has lived in Karlsruhe. I don't want to spend much time on family history, because that's not the purpose of this project. But I could talk on that for hours.

My older brother was born in January of '24, so he's almost three years older than I am. And my younger brother is only 18 months younger than I am. So in the family atmosphere, I was somewhat closer to my younger brother because of the smaller age difference than to my older brother.

After Kristallnacht, my older brother was actually sent to a Jewish school in Frankfurt and boarded there with a family for about a six-month period, whereas my younger brother and I went to the school in Karlsruhe I don't for sure why that was decided.

Further about family, my uncle-- my father's brother-- lived around the corner from us with his wife, who died in about 1937. And they had two cousins somewhat older than we were, born in 1914 and '18, respectively-- I think both men who immigrated to the United States in the mid '30s and became very important to the story in that they eventually were the ones who got the visas for my father, my stepmother, and my uncle, which allowed them to escape from the camp in Gurs.

My father also had a sister who lived in Berlin, whose husband had died. And she had a daughter and a son. And I want to come back to-- the daughter was one of my cousins obviously later-- because she was a fugitive during much of the war hidden in Vichy, France. So that sort of sketches the key family members.

On my mother's side, there was an uncle in the Harz Mountain village where my mother had also grown up. He and his wife, they were childless. But they were both interned in Bergen-Belsen. He somehow survived. She did not.

And he was liberated at the end of the war. And since Bergen-Belsen was somewhere near Hanover, he settled in

Hanover.

He never was interested in emigrating after the war. He is a-- there is a type of German Jews, in which he belongs, that could never quite grasp the fact that they had become victims. He had got an Iron Cross in the First World War, having served the fatherland very faithfully and done brave things or whatever. And he could not believe that they would ever do anything negative to him because of that.

And even after he came out, he said, where else should I go? This is my only country. So he settled in Hanover after the war, married again a Protestant woman. They had a daughter, so I have a very young first cousin. She's about 40 years old now.

And he lived until age 96, which was just-- a year and a half ago he died. His second wife died within a few months, a few months before he did. If you wish, I can come back to him later on, too. So that sort of sketches all of the family members I think.

How about family friends? Did your family or you have any Gentile friends, say before Kristallnacht?

I did. I think the one worth mentioning most-- I mentioned that my step-grandfather was a widower. And he had a Christian housekeeper who had a son about the age of my older brother, maybe a year or two older. So he would have been four to five years older than I.

And after my mother came into my father's life, he became friendly with us, although, of course, a 17-year-old or 12-year-old don't have sort of an equal friendship. It was more like an older brother kind of thing.

And he used to take us on outings and things like that, even during the time when this became sort of looked down upon by the Nazis and many others. And he remained a very faithful friend until we emigrated.

He died just a year ago in Germany. We had kept in sporadic touch with him. And then one day my younger brother reported that a letter was returned as undeliverable. And so we wrote a letter to the mayor of the town he was living in, asking is there any information, and got the information back that he had died. And that reading between the lines, he may have committed suicide, but that's sort of a tangential issue. But that was certainly the prime example of a friendship with a non-Jewish person we had.

How about schoolmates before you were segregated off to this Jewish school?

I had a few friends. I don't remember them very well. But I had a few friends that were not Jewish, as well as one teacher that I remember going to the morning after Kristallnacht or the afternoon after Kristallnacht. Because I was so utterly confused and didn't know what was going on and why I wasn't going to be allowed to go back to that school.

And I went to his apartment, and he was very kind. Of course, he couldn't do anything about it. And I still remember going to ask what's going on and why is this happening. And he tried to comfort me as best he could. But he was also a very kind person.

So did your family try to help interpret what this meant, what being a Jew in Nazi Germany was all about? You were pretty young.

I don't think they really did a terribly good job at that. My father was in another group. He wasn't as blind as my uncle in northern Germany, but he also kept hoping this would eventually end. He wanted to ride it out, unlike, for instance, my two cousins who left in the mid '30s-- unlike many other Jews who left in the early and mid '30s.

It was my stepmother who finally decided something had to happen, but by that time it was getting very late. It was she who saw to it that that my two brothers and I would be taken on this Kindertransport program to England.

And, by the way, she also had a brother-- my step uncle in other words-- who had also come to New York by then. And

he plus my two cousins, or three of them, were responsible for getting everybody out.

And I think it was much more her motivation that saved both us and eventually my father and herself. I think if it had been left to my father, I'm afraid that history would have been much sadder.

Tell us your father's name.

Victor-- his name was Victor. My stepmother's name was Marianna.

And your mother?

Lotte.

Now, could you tell us about the events that led to your being part of the Kindertransport?

Well--

You said your stepmother--

If I could say it strictly for my own memories, all I can say is that one day we were told that we would be leaving for England in a few days' time, and what did we want to pack and so forth.

We meaning you and your brothers?

My brothers and I. Well, my older brother was still in Frankfurt, but I presume he learned about it at the same time.

I remember a day or two before leaving going around on my bicycle with a little box camera on the handlebar taking pictures of the town. And I still have them somewhere.

But that's the part I remember. But from talking with my mother later and so on, I find that we had a very distant relative who is an Englishman. Well, two of them-- two brothers. They were related through-- our whole family tree is really a bramble bush. Everybody intermarried everybody else.

And anyway, he was on that bramble bush somewhere, and the two of them were. The one that took care of us was a bachelor, who I think among other things that yearned for having a family, but loved a married woman who couldn't or wouldn't get a divorce from her then husband. And after the war when her husband was dead, my uncle, as I called him-- he was really a distant cousin-- eventually did marry her.

But in the meanwhile, it was very appealing to him to become responsible for the three of us. Also, he was very well-to-do, and so there was no financial problem.

So he became our guarantor in England. And my mother-- I guess both my parents had made this contact with him. He had actually-- no, the other brother I believe had actually spent a year in Karlsruhe in the '20s as an apprentice in the family bank. My father and my uncle I mentioned between them owned a bank that had been founded by my great-grandfather.

So the contact had been made in the '20s, it was renewed in '38 or early '39. This one uncle-- his name was Paul [? Dreifuss-- ?] guaranteed for us. And so on the 2nd of May, which is just four months before war broke out, we left Karlsruhe for Frankfurt. And then-- or maybe it was the 1st of May I guess. And then on the following morning--

1939?

Right. And on the following day, we were put on a train with lots of other children and went to Holland, where some group-- it may have been part of HIAS, which is a Jewish welfare organization-- H-I-A-S. But it may not have.

I remember they fed us a dinner in a huge, big sort of gymnasium-like place. And then we were put on the ferry at Hoek van Holland go over to England.

One interesting little sidelight is that there was an exhibition here at one of the museums-- I'm not sure which-- of the Jewish Community of Danzig. And one of the exhibits there was some reproductions of a local community newspaper they put out. And the issue of mid-May 1939 had an article that started on the page that was visible in the display about how their children left for Hoek van Holland on the very same day, so they must have been on the same boat.

I wrote to the Jewish Museum in New York. I asked could they possibly Xerox the back side of that. And then I never had an answer.

But there must have been, in other words, hundreds of children on that one particular ship. And I don't know how many other days there were in which Kindertransport was being handled.

Do you have a memory of what it was like to leave your family and your community?

Well, I was scared.

You were scared.

I think I was also relieved, because I knew we were escaping from something that was very bad.

But something hadn't affected you in a painful way as yet.

Well yes, I mean, at one point--

It had.

At several points, the anti-Semitism had become physical. Some kids of my age or older would beat me up on the way to school or from school. Or they'd at least yell nasty words at other times and so on. So it was very painful the last year especially before we left.

And you were surrounded by these street corner meetings all around you, too.

Yes, these kind of things going on as well. And, of course, on the radio you could hear these big rallies from all over the country with the Sieg Heils and Hitler's voice screaming away. I never could understand what he was saying because the words he used were always such political long words and so on.

You can remember the sound of his voice?

Well, and I've also, of course, heard it on the recordings since then. But I remember a sense of relief when we crossed the-- where the train crossed the boundary into Holland.

On the other hand, arriving in England, meeting somebody I'd never met before was going to be our guardian, and everything else that followed was very lonesome-- relieved a little bit by the fact that my two brothers were with me, otherwise I think it would have felt even more dreadful.

What was happening to your father and stepmother while you were going to England? Were they--

Well they-- yes. First of all, my family bank was confiscated. I don't know the exact date.

In that year or somewhat earlier?

I think it was later.

I'm asking a really--

I think it was after.

Let's just go back to that moment. Your father and uncle owned this bank. You're reasonably comfortable financially. And when that began to be taken away, did you feel any economic deprivations?

No, because I think-- first of all, I think the bank wasn't taken away until after we left. Secondly, I suspect that my father had enough savings and so on that he could have kept up things a little bit.

I should add, of course, that at some date like 1937 or early '38, there was a decree that non-Jews could not live in the homes of Jews anymore. And we had had a cook and a maid that lived in. And they sort of disappeared at that point. So there was a change in that aspect of lifestyle, which also reduced costs in a way, because my mother stopped doing the cooking and so on. So being rather spoiled by what I experienced before, I suppose I must have felt a little deprivation of that, although I hadn't really thought about that particular point anymore.

Now, as I say, I guess I could look it up in one of these books just when the confiscation went on. I think it may have been soon after Kristallnacht. Maybe I should come back to Kristallnacht before we move on to England.

Yes, why don't you tell us what Kristallnacht was like for you.

First of all, I remember not everything about it, but a fair amount. I remember seeing our synagogue in ruins, seeing Jewish stores with broken windows and graffiti scrawled all over them and so on.

My father disappeared-- it turned out to Dachau. What I didn't know, which I only learned when I on the 50th-- perhaps for the purpose of the total history, I should add on the 50th anniversary of Kristallnacht, the city of Karlsruhe published two books dealing with all the expenses of Jews in Karlsruhe.

And the second of those, which deals with the Nazi period, is one in which I read that when these Jewish men were rounded up on the morning after Kristallnacht, they were taken by taxi to the main square of Karlsruhe, were forced to pay for the taxi by the way, just as an added insult, and then were beaten up in the town square. My father never told me this. I never knew this until I read in the book.

My uncle was in this group. One of my older cousin, I guess, was still in Germany. My younger one had left. My older must have left soon afterwards. He had been a TB-- he had had tuberculosis, so they did not actually move him to Dachau. And I think he got out of Germany very quickly after that.

My uncle and my father were in Dachau for about six weeks, as I recall. I still remember my father coming back and my being very startled by the fact that they had made him shave off his mustache, and they had given him a very sort of army-style crew cut. And so that he looked in that sense very obviously different.

He also was a very shaken person after that. I think this was-- as for many other people who went through this, the final information that they'd better get out of Germany if they possibly can-- that there was no way of riding this out in Germany.

Did he tell you anything about his experiences then or at a later time?

No.

Never. You can infer from what you read what might have happened.

Yes. I think I have learned a lot both about that and about their later experience in Gurs. I've learned more from reading

about it than from talking to them. Both my father and my stepmother were rather reticent, and I was rather reticent to bring up the subject.

So after Kristallnacht, after being shaken and observing all these terrible things, and your father being away, and you're not understanding what was happening to him, what happened then to you and to the family? And how did you carry on?

Well, I think we carried on as best we could-- I think is the answer. At that point, of course, nobody was taking our-- it wasn't even our house. We had rented or least it for years and years.

But there was no dispossession of that. We went to this new school-- a Jewish school, which was, of course, quite different. We were much more careful about going out and where we would go, which neighborhoods we would go in and so on than we had ever been before. We were looking over our shoulders all the time to make sure nobody was going to jump us-- things like that. So that about six-month period from Kristallnacht until we left Germany was very much this kind of atmosphere.

It seemed quite restricted. Did you ever tried to go against the restrictions?

They weren't really--

Or what was it caution instead of restrictions?

It was caution. I mean, I was making my own restrictions to some extent. I was learning how to be cautious, how to get through the situation without provoking physical attack or anything like that, if I possibly could.

So this went on for about six months. And your stepmother was making moves toward helping you get out.

Right, yes.

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about that early period?

Well, maybe I should follow it up with what happened to my parents after we left.

OK.

They were in Germany for about another year. I know from my mother's little diary, which I found after she died in her effects, that just after war broke out, in fact, they did go back up to the town where my uncle from my father's first marriage lived, and visited there one more time, and saw him one more time.

In October-- late October of 1940-- all the Jews of the entire state of Baden and of the adjacent state of the Pfalz were interned. This was a more or less unilateral decision by the Gauleiter, although presumably he had been encouraged by Berlin to do it.

They were put on about a dozen trains made up mostly of freight cars, and were sent to Lyon, which was in the then brand new Vichy, France. If the reading I've done about it is correct, the Vichy French did not even know these trains were coming. So something of the order of 11,000 Jews from Baden and I forget how many thousands-- a smaller number from the Pfalz arrived in these trains.

The Vichy French were told put them in camps. The French had built some camps near the Spanish border in the foothills of the Pyrenees to house refugees from the Spanish Civil War. By 1939, those camps were 80% empty. Some of them were completely empty. So they just open them up and put these people in there.

Of course, since they had no notice, there was no food. There was no bedding. The buildings were in partial disrepair, and it was, in fact, a very miserable situation. And, of course, winter was just coming.

My parents, my uncle, some other relatives, and a group of six of them, I believe, were in a large group that wound up in this camp, Gurs-- G-U-R-S-- which is not far from the city of Pau-- P-A-U.

Not near Lyon, then.

No, no, no. That was just a way stop. Then it was up to the French to decide what to do, and they took them. Others went to other camps, all not far from the Spanish border. I believe there was a series of four of these camps if I'm correct.

I've read quite a bit. There have been several books published by people who were in Gurs. I've seen some drawings that have been made by artists who were incarcerated there. In fact, three of them I happened to see in Yad Vashem. And one, in fact-- another relative of mine was an artist, and one of her pictures wound up in a book that I've seen.

A work camp, then?

No. In fact, it might have been healthy if they'd had something to do. They were essentially idle. The men were separated from the women, which, of course, was painful in its own way. Eventually they organized themselves.

The camp commandants originally-- they were French people-- were reasonably humanitarian, but couldn't do all that much. They didn't have the resources to really get them much food and so on. It was not a prison in the sense that if somebody had an excuse to go somewhere, if they promised to come back that would be allowed to do that. Things got much worse later on.

Of the approximately 11,000 people that wound up in Gurs-- and a few of them, by the way, were French Jews. They were not all from this group. 1,000 were in the category of my parents, that they eventually got visas and were allowed to come to whatever country gave them the visa.

Another 1,000 died that first winter and spring and are buried there. And I've seen the cemetery, which includes one distant relative of mine and three people with the last name of Homburger, so were probably also relatives, but very distant if they are. And the last 9,000 were eventually shipped to Poland, and that was the last that was ever heard of them. I would imagine the proportions were the same in the other camps.

My parents were released in early March of 1941 on the basis that my cousins and my uncle had got visas for them, as well as for these other couple of relatives I was referring to. The same cousins and uncle, who probably had bribed even the good old US Department of Immigration, because that sort of thing was going on to get visas, were also bribing shipping companies to get tickets for them on anything that would sail across the Atlantic.

And it turned out that the tickets they could get were on a ship that was to leave from Lisbon, which meant traveling through Spain and Portugal to get to the ship. So then the next challenge was to get transit visas across those two countries.

And my parents spent a great deal of time in Marseilles, during which time my mother maintained this little diary, which is where I have some of the information I'm telling you. One of their group spoke fairly good French, which was extremely helpful, because the French were, and I would add perhaps from my tourism experience still to this day are, very hostile to people who don't speak any French at all. But they soften up when you try a little French.

Anyway, they did finally succeed in getting all of these papers-- transit visas and so on. They caught the ship all right, and they arrived in New York in late June of 1941.

So they came through Ellis Island.

They came through Ellis Island.

And meanwhile, you were in England. Did you know anything of what was happening?

Very little. When we arrived in England, this bachelor relative of ours, the guardian Paul [? Dreifuss ?] did what upper-class Englishmen do anyway-- sent us to a boarding school. And because of our ages, my older brother went to a different school-- what's called a public school in England. And we went to a prep school.

War broke out four months later. Until then, we had corresponded normally with my parents. After that, of course, there was no direct Postal Service between Germany and England, and we had to correspond through the Red Cross, which involved using a special form in which you were allowed to-- not sure if you had to count the words or not, but something like 100 words per individual letter you were writing, or maybe 200 words. And I think there was a maximum of one a month or something like that.

And we were able to do that until they were interned. I don't remember now whether we ever were-- I don't believe we ever knew where they were from October '40 until June of '41. There may have been a letter from them at some point, but I knew we couldn't write to them, because they could never give us an address where we could communicate with them.

So was the next thing you heard from them when they arrived in New York?

Probably. I'm trying to remember. I don't know whether we got a letter from Marseilles or not. This I don't remember now.

So who was closer to you as a parent while you were in England? Was it this uncle or your older brother?

No.

Who was your guide in life then?

Well, my uncle was very kind and wanted to be our parent, but when war broke out, he disappeared into the army. He had been a major in the First World War, and he immediately volunteered and disappeared. And I use that phrase, because he was an intelligence officer. So we couldn't really know much about where he was. Every now and again, he'd suddenly show up and call us up and take us out to lunch or dinner and ask how we were doing and so on.

So he was school [BOTH TALKING]

Yeah. He made arrangements for other people. But his own brother, who was married and had two sons-- Albert [? Dreifuss-- ?] was taking care of some of the main responsibilities, like making sure the bills to the schools were paid and all this, but was not really very interested in us in a sort of a personal way.

I remember we used to stay at his apartment in London once in a while. I remember being incessantly beaten at chess by his son, until I took a great dislike to chess. And I don't know that I've played it since.

But then there were also arrangements made for us to spend our vacation time with a family in Devonshire whose sister was the housekeeper of this woman that my uncle loved and couldn't marry until after the war-- one of these sort of involuted kinds of things. And certainly for my younger brother, they very much became parent figures.

For me, I guess I didn't really have any one. I mean, there were a number of teachers that I found I could occasionally confide in, but in general, I think I was almost an orphan for most of my English experience.

My older brother was interned by the British in 1940, as were all Germans who were 16 years old or older at the time of Dunkirk-- June 1940. Essentially, the British said internment first, check them out later. And the fact that some of them were Jewish refugees meant nothing. They didn't want to take risks or waste time.

My older brother was sent to the Isle of Man. And after, I don't know, maybe two or three months there, he was shipped

off to Canada and spent another year in a camp in Canada as an internee.

As an enemy alien?

As an enemy alien internee. And eventually at the end of that period, was released and given the option of staying in Canada or going back to England. And since by that time he had developed a healthy hatred of the British for very obvious reasons, he stayed in Canada and lives there to this day.

He's the one in Ontario.

He's the one in Toronto.

Toronto.

Now, that also means that he couldn't act as any sort of advisor or helper to me.

How about you and your younger brother? Did you have a close relationship with him?

Yeah, with a good element of sibling rivalry in there, of course. He wouldn't take orders from me, and I wanted to give him orders-- this kind of thing that goes on with brothers. But I think we had a reasonably good relationship. We also, of course, made friends with-- in a prep school where you're spending 24 hours with the other students, you fairly quickly make friendships with other students.

Tell us your brothers' names.

Well, the older brother in Toronto is Walter, and the younger brother is Peter.

Now, you were in-- this was an all-Jewish school, the boarding school?

No, no, just the opposite.

Just the opposite.

It was a standard--

--a few Jews.

Yeah, in fact, I probably was the only Jew in the prep school.

The only Jew in the entire--

Except for my brother. These schools were, and still are, very much Church of England oriented. This prep school had a little chapel. The public school, to which I eventually moved on, had a big chapel-- a beautiful one. I've visited it several times since then. And there were daily short prayers in this chapel, and weekly, or Sunday, more formal services.

My Uncle Paul [? Dreifuss ?] essentially said, look. When in Rome, do as the Romans do. Just go along with it. Which we did.

I always like to tell the story that one of the first-- oh, I should mention that in this Jewish school in Karlsruhe, we had started learning English fast. It was obvious we all might were going to need it. But I still arrived in England with not very much English. And so one of my first tasks at this school was to learn English.

And the reason, by the way, why my uncle had picked that particular school-- he had no other reason to choose either the town of the school-- was that there was a teacher in the school who was a German Swiss who was actually hired by

the school to teach French. But, of course, he spoke fluent German, and he would be able to teach us English.

And I like to tell the story that one of the first English words I learned at that school was "whichart". And people say, what's "whichart?" Our Father, whichart in heaven. Because that's the way they always pronounced it. But this also shows that I was exposed to this.

I became very, very fond of the music there. I eventually became part of the chapel choir and have since remained-- well, not now, but for many years afterwards was in choruses in this country and so on. But I never took to the religion, and I've never shown much interest in any religion since that time.

My younger brother, for whatever reasons-- and they may include the age at which he was, both when my mother died, which I think hit him more than me in a way, but also the age at which all of this was happening. And his need to have to identify with the family that we were staying within Devon, he became a Christian-- not Church of England, as it turned out, but congregational. So different reactions for different people for different reasons.

Did being a Jew hold any importance for you at that time, and also in terms of [INAUDIBLE], what understanding did you have what was happening in Germany and Hitler and the Nazis?

No, we heard very little. And I think-- well, as you know, most other countries denied, as much as they could, what was happening to the Jews in Germany, partly because they were feeling guilty about not letting more of them come into their respective countries. I think that was probably the case in this country as well.

Certainly in England-- well, everything the Germans did, of course, was evil, because we were fighting them. So it was not-- but I don't know that they really knew much about what happened after the war started. If they did, it didn't trickle down to us.

Now, as far as we were concerned, I remember being more worried about being German than being Jewish. Which I wasn't worried about anti-Semitism in England. I was worried about anti-Germanism, where people say, oh, you're just another Kraut. But it didn't really happen.

You did not experience that kind.

No.

You were in a sheltered boarding school.

Later on in the public school, there was one anti-Semitic boy. I remember quite vividly.

That would be around what year?

I was aged 14 by then, so this puts it into 1941, '42-- somewhere in there. And he used to hurl insults at me. But he was an isolated case.

As a Jew or a German?

As a Jew. It was strictly anti-Semitic, not so much as a German. In that school, there were one or two other Jewish boys in a group of like 300 or 400, so it was still almost zero-- very few.

I should also say, in relation to perhaps other people you've interviewed that were involved in the Kindertransport, that other than the actual trip to England, we really weren't involved. We never afterwards had contact with any of the other Kindertransport people.

And when they last year had a 50th anniversary reunion, and somehow-- I forget how I heard about it and got some material about it-- I discovered that I was an outsider of that particular group of people that we're putting on the reunion.

That what they were talking about in the material and so forth was all strange to me, because I had become very English in a way. But because I was sent to these English boarding schools, I was living in an English village during the vacation times, and I never spoke German until I got to New York.

So I also remember that when I was coming to this country, on the ship there were some other people of about my age who may have been Kindertransport people, who had maintained very strong German accents-- much more strongly than I. And it turned out the reason, in part, was that they had stayed in communities where German kept on being spoken. I had somehow been pushed into a completely different kind of situation.

So yours was a more unique experience, or a different one than many of the others who chose to be a part of the reunion and still felt [BOTH TALKING]

Yeah. Nobody chose. It's where you happened to land.

I meant chose to be part of the reunion.

Oh, chose to be part of the reunion. Well yes, I suppose. Yeah.

Some of them may have landed in clusters and made group ties.

Right.

Whereas you were away from all of that with your brothers.

Yes.

And so why don't we start. Let me see if Charles has any questions thus far. If you don't, you can hold it for later on.

I'll wait.

All right, fine. OK. So then you went to the public school after the boarding school, right?

Yeah, two years in this-- oh, the school was evacuated after Dunkirk, because the place we were at is Eastbourne, which is on the South Coast of England, right opposite France. And so after Dunkirk, that was pretty dangerous. And the whole school just packed up and moved to a country house in Somerset, where, by the way, there was no chapel. And I suppose we must have had some prayer services, but I think that was then de-emphasized.

And after another year there, I then reached the age where I would go to the public school, which was outside Oxford. Which was also an Eastbourne school, because my uncle had decided, for obvious reasons that my older brother ought to at least be in the same town we were in when we first arrived. That school was evacuated, too, near Oxford. And so I caught up with him there. And I was there for 3 and 1/2 years, and graduated-- well, took the higher certificate is the correct phase-- higher school certificate in 1944.

And you were a good student, weren't you?

Yeah, I think so.

How do you feel about your brother being detained [INAUDIBLE]?

Well, I'm somewhat at a loss, of course. I think I felt more sensitive about being German then than at any other time while I was in England, although I realized at that time that it wouldn't affect me.

Later on, by the way, when I reached 16, they weren't doing that anymore. But they did restrict me from going to some-- from going to Devonshire, in fact. Anything near the South Coast was out of bounds for me after that. So I faced some

of these bureaucratic restrictions when I reached the age of 16.

But yeah, I was upset. I'm trying to remember now how much contact we had with him. There wasn't very much. But I think that we did exchange a few letters, maybe one every other month or so. And I did keep sort of track of where he was at any time.

Then, of course, after my parents were in New York, they established contact with him in Canada. And after that, we started knowing again exactly who was where and how they were doing.

And then you-- [INAUDIBLE].

Did your uncle explain? Did your uncle-- how did he feel?

He was gone.

He was already [INAUDIBLE].

Yeah, he was I believe in North Africa or someplace doing his intelligence work. So again, we were a little bit at sea about what was going on. We knew he was going, because perhaps he had time to tell us, or if not, one of the teachers from the public school came over to explain it to us.

How would you sum up your British experience? What effect did it have?

Well, in general, I felt very positive, partly because I got a very good education. I got a lot of kindness from people that was valuable-- the people that we stayed with in the summers, for example-- some of the teachers, my uncle when he was there, even the other-- I shouldn't really call him uncle, but for simplicity-- his brother to some extent, not as much. And I made a lot of friends.

Now, the last 18 months or so after I finished schooling, I took a job as a teacher in a prep school. So I stayed in the same atmosphere somewhat longer. This was a different prep school.

I got it through the fact that this woman, my uncle's girlfriend-- a woman friend-- knew the headmaster of this school. And he was desperate in those days for teachers, because there was a labor shortage where they were already away at the war.

And so I taught at this other boarding school for about 18 more months afterwards. And again, I made a lot of friends, and I felt very good about that experience. I enjoyed the teaching. I didn't really know-- I kept three pages ahead of the students part of the time, but I got some good feedback, to use a modern term, from the experience.

And I, in fact, had a lot of regrets about leaving England to come to the States-- my younger brother even more so. As I say, he integrated much more into the Christian part of England as well. And he really didn't want to come to the States. But again, with the kind of visas we had in England-- did not allow us to just become British citizens. And so we had really no choice anyway.

[BOTH TALKING]

I wasn't quite as-- I was not reluctant to go as much as regretful.

So what were the series of events that led to your then coming to the States?

Well, that the war was over, that my education through the equivalent of high school was over, which my uncle would have said, look, let's not interrupt it. But that was over, so that wasn't a factor anymore. And, most important, there was finally shipping space available. Because the war in Europe and in May of '45 in Japan in August of '45, and it wasn't until March of '46 that suddenly some shipping space became available.

Which was, by the way, on a lend-lease ship being returned by the British Navy to the US Navy, where the fare was \$0.40 a day-- 2 shillings a day. And the longer it took, the more expensive the trip became. And since it took 17 days since the ship broke down halfway across the Atlantic and sat there for several days, it was 17 days at \$0.40-- was my total fare.

That was you or your younger brother?

No, no. That was just me. My younger brother was still in school, and my uncle did say he should stay until he finishes school. And he came about a year later. He came on the Queen Elizabeth.

Because what year was it that you came?

I came in-- well, left in England in late March and arrived in mid-April of '46. Which, in fact, it was the day of the first anniversary of FDR's death. I remember FDR's death while I was in England, and this was really a major mourning event. I mean, I think the British-- and we all over there took it as emotionally as you people must have done in this country.

So he was a link for you to America in a way.

In a way, yes. Of course, my parents--

Had written [INAUDIBLE].

Of course they were the main link.

I mean an additional link. Yes.

Yeah, right.

Tell us something about the ship experience and then what it was like-- the reunion with your parents.

Well, the ship experience wasn't particularly interesting. There were 40 of us who-- it was one of these things where the Navy suddenly said, hey, we're going to have a ship leave like day after tomorrow. Who's got their bags packed? And so 40 people came in a ship that could have handled 400.

And we arrived in Norfolk, Virginia, which is the naval base to which they were returning the ship, not in Ellis Island. I don't really remember terribly much processing of papers and so on. We seemed to sort of sail through fairly quickly there.

I do remember one of my very first impressions-- I should add that in England, of course, we met some GIs. And some of them we got to know a little bit when we were-- when I was teaching in the school during the summer, it had been a hotel before the war. And if some GIs would come by, we would give them room and breakfast probably for free, as I recall.

And so we got to know some of these GIs, and they were always making fun of the British and their class system. They said, oh, in America everybody is the same. We don't have lords and all this sort of thing.

But one of my first impressions in Norfolk, Virginia was waiting for the ferry to leave the coast to Cape Charles, and seeing water fountains, whites, water fountains, Negroes-- bathrooms for whites, bathrooms for Negroes, and getting my first sort of shock treatment of is this really what those GIs were telling us about?

My parents-- I need to fill in here-- got to New York, as I say, in the summer of '41. My mother was very artistic. She'd gone to the Bauhaus. I don't know whether you know what--

Yes.

OK, then I don't need to--

I think architecture?

Right. She was a student there. And among the skills she had learned was weaving. So in New York, she became a weaver right away and started making money at it, enough to help support them.

My father started out by selling items door to door-- kitchen items and things like that. After a while, a good friend of his from Karlsruhe had become the director of self help, which was then called Self Help for Emigres from Central Europe. It's now changed its name somewhat.

But a Paul Tillich was, in fact, president of the board. You may have heard of Self Help, too. And Fred Weisman was the director, and he finally got my father a job as their accountant.

So by the time I got there, my father had a good job-- didn't pay very much, but very good. My mother was weaving, and they lived in a small apartment on the east side of Manhattan-- too small to accommodate me.

So also, I guess their finances were such that they couldn't really support me. I was more or less told-- I was 19 by then, of course-- that it was up to me to find a job, by the way, and start earning some money, and then worry about schooling.

Was this lower Manhattan or upper?

They were on West 49th. That's Midtown Manhattan, near where the United Nations was later built.

So I was to find someplace to live. And since this cousin of mine, who'd had tuberculosis, was living in a rooming house on the west side of Manhattan on 91st Street-- and across the street in an apartment building were some other people from Karlsruhe I remember from before the war. I wound up taking the room in the same rooming house.

And this was quite a culture shock-- a big culture shock for me. I'd lived in this rather isolated public school, boarding school kind of atmosphere, even when I took that job later on. And all of a sudden, I was in what was a pretty crummy room with a toilet down the hall and virtually no money and so on.

Then I got a job as an office boy in a firm that actually was sending food packages to Europe-- relief food packages. And this was all in April, May. And by September, I had enrolled in night school for engineering and maintained that job for another year, until I was able to switch.

And also, my father by that time was able to start saying I can pay you-- I think it was \$100 a month, which in those days was a lot of money.

That's a lot of money.

In '47-- then I switched to going to college during the day, and I had a part-time night job.

This is when you went to Cooper Union?

Cooper Union, right. Yeah.

So you went to college and became an engineer then.

Right.

And what happened then?

Well, in the summer of '49, my mother had had it with New York summers. She just hated them, as I guess everybody does. And decided-- I should say that I had mentioned before there were some other people in her group at Gurs. And of those, one woman, actually, whose husband died in Gurs, and her then teenage daughter came also on the same ship to New York, but came here to California where her older children had already settled and lived in Berkeley.

So my mother shipped one room by truck across the country in the spring of '49. And when she got a note from this woman that it had arrived, she caught the next train out here and spent the summer here weaving.

And, in fact, I have it here if you want to see it after this is all over. She sold some of her stuff to Gump's and to the little store that was in the Frank Lloyd Wright building on Maiden Lane-- Morris it was called-- very successful in that respect.

When she got back to New York, she said, Wolf, when you graduate you ought to go to Berkeley for graduate school. I happened to, at a meeting of engineering students later on, meet a student from Berkeley, who told me about the emerging transportation program at the University of California.

So I came out in the summer of 1950 as a graduate student. And I think my mother has kicked herself ever afterwards, because I didn't come back to New York after.

She was sorry she told you about this Garden of Eden there.

She was very regretful of it.

So you stayed on and got a graduate degree.

I got a master's degree, and then I worked for the army for two years. Because I still wasn't a citizen, and, of course, the Korean War had started. And I--

So we're around 1954 now then.

Well, I got my master's degree in '51. The Korean War started in June of '50.

I was getting to the end of the war instead of the beginning. Sorry. Yes.

And I got my master's in June of '51. And I was within a few months of becoming a citizen. And I didn't really want to be drafted as a non-citizen. I wasn't quite sure what my status would be and what they would do with me. And I was scared anyway. Who wants to be drafted when a war is going on?

So I took a job with the army, which exempted me from the draft. And I was an engineer for the Corps of Engineers here in Northern California.

And then this draft status still hung over me, and I decided I could get a direct commission with a master's degree. And I got it. In fact, I got the commission. I was in the reserves, then I decided to have it activated. And I actually went on active duty two weeks before the armistice in the Korean War, which technically makes me a Korean War veteran, although I never got further than Missouri before the war ended.

So I did spend 21 months out of the 24 months I was supposed to spend in the army. But then Eisenhower cut the budget, and we all got three months' early release.

I was in Korea briefly and in Japan for about nine months of that. So I look at my army career as having been a rather useful two years. I not only learned a lot about myself and about discipline and about how I interact with other people,

but I also got a pretty nice view of Japan before it got ruined by its industrial explosion.

So then after the war, was that when you started teaching at [INAUDIBLE]?

Well, yes. I was released in '55.

And then you were a citizen.

Oh, I became a citizen in late '51 while I was working for the Army as a civilian.

You became a citizen.

Yes, right on schedule. 5 and 1/4 or 5 and 1/2 years after my arrival in the States, I got my citizenship. So that was all taken care of before I went on active duty.

And that was pretty important to you, wasn't it?

Oh, yes. Yeah, especially since technically, at least in the US' eyes, I definitely was still stateless. I didn't have any kind of a status at all, and everybody wants to have some sort of a status.

A sense of security.

Yes.

So then what happened in your career? Did you get married?

Well career-- I came back to where I got my master's degree and talked to a couple of the professors about where should I go job hunting. And the one said, well, if you can't find anything right away, we'll put you on for six months. We've got some research work going on here, and that'll give you a chance to find a real job.

And I did go back east, of course, to see my parents in New York. And I did some job interviews back then. And I took up this offer of six months. At the end of the six months, this particular professor had left, and there was nobody to remember that I was supposedly there for six months. And so I stayed for 35 years.

In terms of getting married, I got married in '58 to a Jewish woman born in Seattle, grew up in Southern California, who was a graduate student at Berkeley.

And what was she studying?

She got her master's degree in social work.

What is her name?

Her name is Arlene.

And her maiden name?

Levinson. We adopted two children-- Paul, who is now 29, and Joanna who is 26.

Did your wife-- what kind of Jewish background did your wife bring into the family?

It wasn't all that much different from mine. Of her four grandparents, three were from Poland, Lithuania, Russia, and the Baltic countries was changing that part. The fourth one was from Germany.

Her grandparents on her mother's side were quite Orthodox, in fact to the extent that the father never worked, because he was always studying Torah and preparing boys for bar mitzvah. And the mother had to do all the work.

And one way of earning money was she ran a boarding house for university students in Seattle, which is how Arlene's mother met Arlene's father. He came from a family-- he was actually born in a small town in Texas and grew up in New York. And it was on his side that there's one German grandparent. They were not-- well, based on what I remember by both her father and the two uncles, they were not particularly observant.

Arlene's parents moved somewhat away from this. It's kind of interesting, if this plays a role in what you're doing, about who stays at least married to Jewish people and who starts marrying partners from other mostly Christian religions.

In her family, several of her cousins have married Christians. Arlene and her sister are almost unique, I think, at that generation of having married Jews. And I think it was in part a reaction of some of the people against this strange setup, where the poor overworked grandmother was really suffering, partly because of this Orthodox Judaism that was going on.

My wife, as I say, grew up in LA. She went to Sunday school at the Wilshire Boulevard Temple-- the famous Rabbi Magnin-- which was more of a social experience, she says, now than a religious experience. About five years ago, she went for two years and took a graduate program at the Graduate Theological Union here in religious studies, primarily because she was very interested in it from a personal point of view.

And I think she could talk at length now about the lousy kind of Judaism she was exposed to in the Wilshire Boulevard Temple kind of situation. So partly, it was more ethnic than religious. You had to have your latkes and play with the dreidels at the right moment, but the religious significance was sort of downplayed, partly sort of a knee jerk reaction, like if he's Jewish, vote for him-- this kind of thing.

I have never resumed any Jewish observance in an active way. I will accompany Arlene once in a while if she feels like going to a service, but I don't feel part of this kind of thing anymore. I have long since lost a lot of that.

In New York-- I should backtrack. The people from Karlsruhe who lived across the street from me had joined a offshoot of the Unitarian church, called the Community Church of New York, which was then headed by a famous preacher called John Haynes Holmes and by Donald Harrington, one of whose claims to fame around here is that he is the father of Loni Hancock, mayor of Berkeley. I knew Loni when she was a little girl.

Anyway, I became active there, but in a social way. But, of course, again I was singing in choir, and I was somewhat exposed to some of the religious ideas, which was very, very liberal, very multcentered-- readings from Hindu scriptures and you name it from all over the place. And I think that that's kind of where I have left my religious education and my religious orientation.

How did you raise your children, though? What degree were they exposed to any religious education?

Well, one can have a lot of regrets about that, I suppose. We did join the Unitarian Church of Berkeley, primarily because of the children. Which is, of course, what a lot of adults sometimes do. They feel guilty about their children. They feel gee, we ought to send them to a religious school, but what sort of an example would be set if we don't participate ourselves? So we joined the Unitarian Church of Berkeley.

We were, by the way, married in the study of the Unitarian minister of Berkeley-- Raymond Cope at the time-- much to the nervousness of all others concerned, both her parents and my parents. But they found out that it wasn't a pagan ritual. It was all right.

It turned out to be a disaster, because the religious education program of children was just too unstructured for anything. It was in the era of the mid '60s, when essentially discipline was a word you never used in liberal educational circles.

They learned very little. They started resenting it, and after about three years we just gave up on the whole thing. And

that was about the end of it. Neither of our children are particularly religiously active.

How did you share your experiences from back in Germany with your children? Have you talked with them about it? Have they shown any curiosity about it?

To some extent. The major occasion was a family reunion we had two years ago in Colorado, at which about 35 people were present. And in our generation-- my generation-- there were both my brothers and all three of their wives. Because my brother has an ex-wife and a current wife-- both of my cousins and their wives. So of us Germans, there were five of us.

And then all the children of these-- well, my two-- yeah, all the children involved-- my older cousin had one child, my other cousin had two, that's three-- my two, my older brother's two, my younger brother's four-- all of the children were there. Those that were already married-- it was two of them at the time-- their wives were, et cetera.

And after one of the lunches with the video camera going, we went through a lot of this. In fact, I learned something about my cousins and my one cousin's wife, who survived somehow in Berlin for years during the war and a number of things like that.

It was facilitated by my older brother's wife, who, even though this is not in her particular background and her training, turned out to be able to start the conversation going and keep it flowing in a very good way. And we have a copy of the tape.

In fact, this is something that at some point your project might want to make a copy of. I hadn't thought of bringing it over here.

That's a good idea.

It gets off into tangents quite a bit. But my older cousin, who's since died unfortunately, was a great student of philosophy on the side and had a lot of insight into a number of things that are very valuable on the tape.

Toward the end, the children were encouraged to ask a few questions. But they were mostly listeners. I mean, they could have interrupted at any point, but they chose not to. So certainly my two got a great deal out of that particular experience of listening, not just to me, but to everybody else that was there.

And for you, was that a good experience?

Oh yes. As I say, I learned quite a bit about what was going on with some of the other people involved that I hadn't known about before.

As you look back on your own experiences, do you feel it left any physical or mental sequelae or consequences for you?

No physical ones, I don't think.

Psychological in any way?

Oh, I'm sure.

In what way?

I'm sure there are quite a few, and I'm not sure I can catalog them very easily. I know last year Arlene and I went back to Karlsruhe as part of a trip to other parts of Europe. My first mother's grave is there, and this is one of several reasons why I wanted to go there.

And Arlene told me after about 48 hours after we crossed into Germany, she said, you know Wolf, are you aware of

how much tenser you've become in the last two days? And I hadn't really been aware of it.

But I was evidently seizing up. Now, that's obviously a psychological reaction. And it was only in my hometown, it turned out. Once we moved on to other parts of Germany, I seemed to relax again. So it obviously has to do with the associations of the anti-Semitism I experienced there.

When we went to other parts of Germany, I was just a tourist again. Although, I think I was still sort of studying the people and seeing if they were old enough. What were you doing back in the '30s and the '40s-- to myself.

There was on this particular trip one strange experience. We had gone off into the Black Forest on a sort of a streetcar line, and we're coming back. And a woman got on at a stop and sat across from us.

And the train left this particular station, she suddenly became chatty. She pointed out something and said, that's where she used to live years ago and so on. So I made a bit of conversation with her. And so then she said something to my wife, and I said, well, my wife doesn't speak German. We're from America, and that's why and so on.

And at some point she said, why did you leave Germany? I said, well, it turns out to save my life. You know, I'm Jewish and all that. And she said, oh, those were awful times. Of course, we didn't know what was going on.

What was your reaction?

And I just snapped back and said, in German, I cannot believe that. And I wouldn't talk to her anymore after that. And I can't believe it, based on this book here, which describes how the entire population watched this Kristallnacht business or took part in it-- how it was, of course, magnified in the press and so on. There couldn't have been a single German who was an adult by then, or a teenager or something, who would not have known what was going on. But there are still a lot of people who deny it.

This woman was probably 10 years older than I, so she would have been 20-something by Kristallnacht. She must have known.

Did you go by your home?

Oh, yes. Now, this was not the first time back in Karlsruhe. We had gone there with my children. We were living in England for eight months in 1971 when our children were 10 and 7. And we went actually twice.

The first time it turned out that we caught some sort of a virus, and we just went right through and headed for the nearest doctor in another town or something. But that was the first time we were there. We were back with the children seven years later.

The second time, I took them both to the cemetery to see my mother's grave. Each time we stopped, we didn't go into the house, but at the house where I lived and showed them the school I went to and a few things like that. So they all have-- they both-- and my wife has seen all of this.

Did you speak to the people [INAUDIBLE]?

Not in the house where I lived. It turned out that on the first trip when our son was 10, he developed a rash. It turned out later that it was a reaction to a particular suntan lotion he shouldn't have put on or something. But we didn't know.

And in the next street over we saw one of these glass plates that said this was a Kinderarztin-- a pediatrician, which was wonderful. So I went in, and I asked-- also has the hours, whether there was time to see them.

Oh yes, and the woman turned out to have been a friend of this other family I mentioned that was in Gurs with my family. And so the moment she heard the name Homburger, she immediately said, oh, which branch? Of course, she was about my age, so she didn't really remember me. But she remembered this other family very well and so on, and

became extremely friendly. And Christian, but obviously had remained friends with this other family throughout the Nazi period. And then had seen them, in fact, after the war.

So I did talk-- that's the only people in Karlsruhe I talked to. Except in '56 when I was still a bachelor, I went back the first time after the war. And then I really was tense. I remember that, too.

I had nightmares. You asked about psychology. I remember still that I had a recurring nightmare in England and probably in the early parts of the US of being finding myself back in Karlsruhe and giving myself away by something like not speaking good German, and therefore being identified as some sort of an enemy and getting into a great deal of trouble.

And when I went back, I said to myself, will I pass for German or not? Can I pass? How good is my German? Will I speak it? Why I worried so much about it and didn't pretend to be an American tourist, I don't know.

But at that time, I visited some other people-- Christian friends of this other family who were still alive then. They were in the older generation. But those, plus this pediatrician, are the only people that I've actually talked to, other than people in restaurants and hotels and so on.

Did you have any fears of a resurgence of anti-Semitism in Karlsruhe that first time we went back in '56?

I guess I probably was subconsciously worried about it. Yes, sort of looking over my shoulder all the time, and sort of sizing people up, and sort of wondering just a little bit what's going on in their mind.

Like wondering what they did during the war and how they're reacting to you.

Yes.

Could you live in Germany again?

I don't want to. I might mention, two years ago Karlsruhe invited all survivors of the Kristallnacht to come back, all expenses paid, to a commemoration of this. In fact, because they expected a lot of them, they had two groups, one in October and one actually on the Kristallnacht week.

I immediately said, I'm not going. I thought it through some more, and I still said, I'm not going. I felt that this was their way of washing their hands and saying, OK, we'll do this, and then we're clean again. That it might be propaganda, because there were going to be addresses. And there were, in fact, addresses by the lord mayor and the chief this and the chief that and so on. And they said, this is all going to be published in the German newspapers to show how magnanimous we've become now and how all is forgiven and all that. And I didn't want to be part of that.

After other people came back and told me what went on, I kind of regretted it. I think perhaps I should have gone. Because a few other things went on. This all did go on, but, for example, they encouraged people to sign up for going to some of the schools and talking to some of the classes about their experiences.

They got good feedback from these classes. There are a number of these kinds of additional things that went on that, had I known, I might have said, well, they're really trying. I should have given them more credit. But I missed out on it. I heard about it later from some of the others that did go.

So that was a way of transmitting information to the younger generation.

Over there, yes. A little footnote to that-- as I mentioned, my father owned a bank. And the building was taken over by some other bank after it was confiscated. And it's still a bank today, but it's a completely different bank.

Back in 1971 I was there. I wanted to change some travelers checks, and I said for sentimental reasons I'll do it in the bank. That was that.

I went back last year and did the same thing. This time, when this young lady looked at the travelers check and saw my name, she reacted. Homburger, she said. Are you related to the Homburgers that owned this bank?

Now, the only reason she might have possibly known was that event the year before-- that that event, in fact, made everybody so conscious of what had gone on. There was a big exhibition in the museum, by the way, of the Jewish community in Karlsruhe. These two books were published for that occasion.

And this young woman happened to be among those that wanted to learn, and did learn, and discovered that the building she was now working in had once been the Homburger Bank. That wouldn't have happened before 1988. So I really think that was probably a very worthwhile event, and I regret having missed it.

But you asked about psychological leftovers. And my reaction to the initial invitation was one of those leftovers.

There's still pain there.

Oh, yes.

Do you know what happened to your neighbor, the one that they say [INAUDIBLE]?

No, not the slightest idea nor the slightest interest.

Is there a Jewish community in Karlsruhe?

A very small one. When we were there this last year, we went to the Jewish cemetery. And my mother, since she died rather unexpectedly, was buried in the same grave as my grandparents. And so her stone is a flat stone as compared to the beautiful stone of my grandparents.

And over the years, it had become very, very eroded by the weather. And so we arranged with a stone cutter-- there's always a stonemason across the street from a cemetery-- to have it completely re-polished and so on and so forth.

And then it dawned on me that the people who run the cemetery ought to know about it. And there was a little office there where it was locked, and it said Jewish Community, and it gave another address. But I wrote them an explanatory note and just slipped it under the door with a 10 mark note, and asked them to please let me know when it's finished to confirm that the work was done properly. The letter, by the way, I got turned out not to be from the Jewish Community but from the City Office of Cemeteries-- a very official letter with a very official looking stamp.

But there is a Jewish community. I'm guessing it's maybe 15 or 20 families, compared to the over 3,000 total Jews that lived there in the 1930s. So there may be 300, or probably less than that.

Looking at the present now, how do you feel politically about reunification? And what feelings or ideas do you have about the fate of the Jews, whether there could be another Holocaust? Are you optimistic, pessimistic?

Well, let me say in my lifetime, which isn't all that many decades more, I don't expect there'll be another one. But anything is possible in the long run, because people do forget.

Anti-Semitism is such an ingrained emotion in certain other ethnic groups. It seems to be ineradicable. I am not optimistic, if I'm looking at it in terms of centuries. I think I am optimistic if I look at it in terms of the next few decades.

What we see all the time now, including the events of this very week-- the reaction to the assassination of Meir Kahane just is stirring up a lot of these emotions. Now, this happens to be more anti-Arab, but then there will be another reaction that will become anti-Semitic perhaps.

So no, I'm not filled with optimism in the long run. I think we have to work very hard at it. In fact, one of the things I'm

doing now-- perhaps I guess we will be finishing pretty soon, but let me perhaps finish on a positive note. My wife Arlene and I are active in a support group for the village of Neve Shalom Wahat al Salam. I don't know whether you've heard of that. It is the only place in Israel where Jews and Arabs are living together, administering their village together, doing projects together.

And the main project is a School for Peace, which is a conflict resolution school for focusing primarily on high school students and high school teachers, bringing together Arabs and Jews, forcing them together almost, having them talk out their prejudices, having them talk out their fears of each other, having them, by the end of a three-day session-- and they usually go through a series of about three of those in a year's time-- by the end of each session having them learn something about this enemy isn't a target in the rifle range, but a human being who has good reasons for fearing me, just like I have good reasons for fearing him or her. They don't necessarily all become friends, but they do at least start learning something about each other.

And unfortunately, this village, of course, is despised by the Israeli government, who don't give them much support. And therefore they rely on support from many other places. The British and the French and some other countries have very large donors that keep them going. And the US somewhat less so, but still has a fairly active program. And Arlene and I have started a support group here in the Bay Area for that.

Now, this to me is one way of responding to my fears that I just expressed a moment ago, that anti-Semitism is endemic, anti-Arabism is endemic among Jews. And that somehow, while this is an awful small start, somehow we have to nurture more of this kind of an attempt.

I think that's wonderful.

Well, I think Neve Shalom is wonderful, yes.

So you've translated your experiences into something very useful and important. And your contribution to this interview here will be a help, too, in overcoming prejudice.

Well--

The understanding, and the understanding it gives people who listen to it.

John, you may have some questions. And Charles, you have other questions.

I don't. Charles, how about yourself?

No, no.

We thank you very much for this. And if, when you get home-- if you think of anything else you wanted to talk about or didn't get to--

The one thing we didn't get to--

Oh, right.

There are photos, right?

Well, with this one-- my cousin in France. I was just briefly going to--

[INAUDIBLE]

Pardon?

[INAUDIBLE]?

Yes. Yeah. I mentioned I have a 40-year-old cousin. I also have an 80-year-old cousin. This was the daughter of my aunt, who as a young girl in about 1930-- a rather rebellious late teenager or something like that-- moved to France. And she married a French Jewish man.

And at the beginning of the war, I don't fully understand exactly what happened. But he wound up in the free French forces in England, and she was stuck in Paris with a little baby. And after the Germans occupied Paris, of course this became rather perilous.

And she was tipped off one day that the concierge in her apartment building was going to betray her-- tell the Nazis there's a Jew living in this apartment. So the partisans, about whom she knew by then, arranged for her and the little baby to be spirited into Vichy, France.

But they had to do it separately. They felt it was too dangerous to take them together. And so she didn't even know whether she'd ever see this baby again or not, and it turned out she did.

They spent the next three years in hiding in a part of France, which was subject of a movie. I can't remember now-- beautiful French movie that was shown not commercially, but was shown on campus about three, four years ago about a part of France where they're mostly Huguenots Protestants who protected a great number of Jewish people from the Nazis.

And she was in this situation. She survived this three or four years of being a fugitive there.

Her daughter, unfortunately, suffered somewhat from, who knows, malnourishment or whatever. And to this day has a very severe case of diabetics and unable to really carry a full-time job. And so for her, the Holocaust, or that particular experience, is one that's left a very major mark.

Yes.

My cousin herself came out of it as a hard bitten person, that she probably was going in. From what I can tell, she must have been that way before.

Her brother, by the way, was a communist. And when I was in the army, I remembered not to remember him. And he was in East Germany after the war. He was a big official in the East German government, until one day he was found out for whatever reason. And he became very disillusioned in the last few years of his life before he died.

But she was, to my mind of my immediate family-- my parents, of course, my uncle in Gurs, and she for four years underground in Vichy, France-- those were the Holocaust survivors.

Your father was released at 6 weeks?

The first time, in Dachau-- yes. I think they all were. This was sort of a-- I don't really know exactly what the Nazis were doing. First of all, they wanted to make a big point. All conventional behavior is forgotten. They'd been using this incident in Paris as the excuse, but all the literature says that any match could have struck this particular explosion.

They arrested as many male Jews as they could lay their hands on, and then they said to themselves, why did we do this? What are we going to do now? And I think after about six weeks, they started releasing most of them again. Some of them, of course, were never released or were transferred to regular jails or something like that.

One of the Xeroxes that I have left with you happens to be-- it was published in one of these books, the postcard that my uncle sent from Dachau to his wife. The only thing he could do on there was show his address. Everything else was printed by the authorities, including a sentence which says, any attempt to request the release of this particular person will be useless. So that was a separate kind of an episode.

I might add I've been to Gurs. I've been to Bergen-Belsen, but I have not yet had the opportunity. And I think it's really more that that and anything else to get to Dachau. One of these trips I will finally do that.

Rediscovering and understanding the past.

Yes.

Well, thank you so much for your contribution.

You're very welcome.

It was very helpful.

I'm glad I could do it.

Are there any last things you want to add?

I really think that there are many more things I could add. You'd have to load another cartridge into the camera. But I think we've covered the important things.

OK. Well, after the interview, let's talk about that and maybe the possibility of your returning to do a continuation at some point if you feel there's a lot of material that you still haven't covered yet.

I'm not sure whether there's another two hours' worth.

You have some photographs?

I have-- yes. The Xeroxes that you have there may not be good enough to photograph, and you may want to go to the actual book and take them right out of there.

If you just tell us what we're looking at.

OK. These are photographs of the Camp de Gurs in the Pyrenees of Southern France. This here is a memorial that's been placed in the middle of the cemetery. These are pictures of graves in the cemetery, and this is a picture of the entrance to the cemetery area.

The rest of the camp has been completely obliterated and has gone back to being just farmland. It was a very, very large camp with something like 200 barracks in it originally. But all that's left now is a cemetery.

It's maintained by the French government with payments from German government. And there's a caretaker that lives in the house near there.

And you took these photographs yourself?

I did. I took these photographs about five years ago when we had a lot of trouble finding the place. It took a fair amount of research in the map room of the University of California library to even locate where the little village of Gurs is. But we eventually found it.

What was-- there we go. This is the wedding picture of my parents in 1922-- my father Viktor and my mother Lotte.

And where was that taken-- that photo?

That was-- they were married in Karlsruhe.

OK. Anything else on that page we should-- is that you in the bathing beauty contest?

Yeah, I am in this bathing beauty contest with my two brothers.

OK.

I would be the one on this side.

Here on the left.

And Peter is in the middle, and Walter is on the right.

OK.

And down below, if this is not too small-- this lower picture here shows my maternal uncle and his first wife, who did get killed and died in Bergen-Belsen-- this woman there with, I believe, my younger brother Peter between.

What was her name?

Her name was Hedda. My uncle's name was Hans, and she was Hedda.

And her last name?

Fruhberg.