

Mr. Hotzner, good morning.

Good morning. Nice to see you.

Thank you. I'd like to ask you to begin by telling us where and when you were born.

I was born on August the 11th 1923, which I am told was some sort of a medium or low holiday. I mention it in German. It's Verfassungstag. I never figured out what that was. And it wasn't really important. It was important because it was the day that I was born. See, nothing else was important for the 11th of August, 1923. In Hamburg-- if you ask me-- in Hamburg, a very large city Germany.

Tell us a little bit about your family and growing up in Hamburg.

Family consisted of four, father, mother, sister, and myself-- sister younger than I am by about two years. My father was a bookkeeper accountant for a very large Jewish wine import, export company, [? S&L ?] [? Duolocker. ?] And the company, I remember so well, was called Sociedad Vinicola, wines from Italy, from Spain from everywhere. And my dad was bookkeeping for this very large company, which was located on the other side of the Elbe River. It's one of those divided cities where you have the population living in one place and then the industrial ships and businesses, commercial businesses, I should say, being on the other side, which you would reach by means of a very interesting tunnel underneath the Elbe River, still in existence I understand. I haven't been back, but that's what I understand.

Great, big elevators, and the reason I have to emphasize that because some of our viewers, or maybe my children, will want to know that we had a tremendous fire in that area many years ago. One of the big steam ships caught fire while in the harbor. I think it was either the Europa or the Bremen, one of the big ships. So how do you get equipment through there? Fire engines could be put into these huge elevators, brought down, and go through the tunnel, back up on the other side with elevators and do their work.

We, of course, walked through there to pick up my dad once in a while. And it was a good, I would say, 3/4 of an hour to an hour before leaving his work and coming to our home.

I need to interject something there because it sort of fits into the sequence of things. About a year and a half or two years ago, I was given access to a videotape that was made in Hamburg by Deutschlandfunk, the radio people in Germany and Hamburg. And what they concentrated on was the life in Hamburg before 1933 and after 1933.

The reason I bring it in at this point was that I was able to see the places that we moved around in or where we lived prior to our leaving Germany in 1937. And I must say very honestly that what I see from the pictures then look to me like a ghetto. It didn't appear like a ghetto when we grew up there. So something changed.

I mean the emphasis-- I found that very interesting. Very concentrated Jewish people living within three, four blocks of the synagogue. I lived about 1 and 1/2 blocks from the synagogue. And I think our building was perhaps four stories high. And that would be really in this country equivalent to four flats in a building, going up four stories. It may have been eight flats. I'm not sure. No elevator, you walked it. We were on the first floor.

I don't recall anybody living in that building that might not have been Jewish. But it's possible. I know that my teacher-- I have fond memories of him too. I'm sure he's not alive any longer. Mr. Rothschild, he was teacher at the school. He was also choir director at the big synagogue.

Big synagogue I mentioned to you before we sat down was the Grosse Synagoge on Bornplatz. That's the largest synagogue that we had in Hamburg, probably some 2,000 members, filled to capacity at certain times of the year of course. And we had a choir. We had a choir of I would imagine 40 voices.

And this teacher lived in my home-- he lived in my apartment house, I should say, apartment house. And I don't think I'll ever forget, and it gives you an idea of the sincerity that there was in wanting to be a choir boy. We got a little bit of

pay, very small amount, but that was to make it interesting.

But we had had a choir rehearsal for a Shabbat service. And there were a few of us who decided to play pranks, which at that time, you know, all children have a tendency to do. My age-- 10 years, 11 years of age probably, before bar mitzvah.

So we had something like a peashooter with those little beads that you put on top of cakes to make them colorful. And one of these things hit the teacher. And he knew where it came from.

So he came by that evening at my parents' house. And he said, I want you to know that Walter is not going to sing with us this Friday night, this Shabbat service. I was dissolved in tears. That was probably one of the worst punishments that I've ever had.

But I've been singing since 10 years of age. And along comes the bar mitzvah three years later and then comes this great big void, and now 50 years later, I'm singing again for the second time in our synagogue here in San Francisco, which is kind of interesting. I digress there.

But went to school right about a block and a half from where we lived, where this teacher also taught drawings and things of that sort, quite interesting. The school, Talmud-Tora-Schule, of which I have brought a picture along and I think later on we'll probably be able to zoom in a little bit, is, as you can see, in this picture, which is the old picture, there is a school building. And next to it, you can see the big synagogue looming in the back with a big dome on top-- no longer in existence. Unfortunately, the National Socialists had to build a street through there, which was much more important than preserving a synagogue.

Here's an up to date picture. If somebody goes to Hamburg at the present time, that's what he would find. The building is still there. It's not the school. It is some kind of a library that they have founded and are making use of the building.

The school was perhaps one of the finest schools in Germany. And I need to say one word about it because we think of schools as being, in this country, private or parochial schools. Talmud-Tora-Schule was both. It was an accredited German school, up to the end. And yet it was, of course, leaning very heavily towards Jewish thinking and Jewish learning.

We had gymnastics. And we had all the other things that any public school would have. Maybe there was a little more emphasis on the Hebrew part. A very fine school-- some of the greatest scholars, which, of course, I can exempt myself very nicely, but some of the really brilliant people that came from that part of the world all went through that particular school.

We had a terrific influx of people after 1933. And the people that came to us were those who were not particularly interested in Judaism. They couldn't care less. They didn't maybe belong to a synagogue, or they may not have belonged to a synagogue.

But once Hitler had this decree that if you were born of a Jewish mother, then, of course, the picture changed. They automatically had to withdraw from the non-Jewish or from the public schools, non-Jewish public schools, and get themselves enrolled into the JÄ¼dische Madchen Schule, which is the girls school, or the boys school, which was Talmud-Tora.

And so like any other youngster, time flew by. 1933 came along, and children sort of in my household were spared a lot of things really. Parents didn't discuss finances. They didn't discuss problems. They didn't discuss political things. If we were ready for it, we would ask questions, and they would be happy to answer. But we didn't see an awful lot of that.

And so the next thing we knew it was time to learn for the 13-year-old's bar mitzvah. And that took a number of months, I think six months or something like that, to prepare. And when the day came, to my surprise, and I don't think I knew this before, we had two bar mitzvahs on the same day. That's unusual, maybe not in this country. But it was unusual over there.

But since a conservative or Orthodox bar mitzvah is usually placed on a particular Jewish date corresponding to the birthday, the Jewish calendar and the non-Jewish calendar, two of us were bar mitzvah on the same day. That sort of scared me a little bit. And it was difficult-- I imagine it was very difficult for the families.

This young man came from a very distinguished family by the name of Schloss. His father was also one of the top teachers in Talmud-Tora-Schule. So he was a well-known personality in the city of Hamburg, and his son was going to be bar mitzvah.

You have-- if you do things for bar mitzvah in the right order, that's the conservative or Orthodox order in this particular case, you would call seven people to the Torah. We sometimes in this country try to augment that a little bit and maybe call 10 people, that you read a portion over again and it really doesn't do any harm. And it's very, I think, very permissible.

But in those days seven people were called, not eight. And so I could just imagine behind the scenes the fight between these two families. Who's going to be called and who's not? Who's going to be left out?

Well, my grandfather was already long, long gone. I never had a chance to meet him. And on my mother's side, those were also gone before I was born. So there were really only my father, maybe an uncle-- I remember an uncle-- and myself. So we would have accounted for maybe three what we call Aliyahs, or being called up, and that would have given him four.

So anyway, we made it. It was no big problem. And I must say, looking back at it, I really had a much better chance than the other kid. He didn't have a voice, and I did. I had a very glorious voice in those days, a soprano, nowadays sort of a tenor, I think. But anyway, I think I wiped him out as far as singing is concerned.

But we both came through that. And after the ceremony, which was attended by great many people from both sides, both families, my home was located much closer than to the home that this young man lived. So everybody first came to the Hotznerns and then traipsed off to the Schloss's to give their greetings and congratulations for this occasion-- kind of enjoyable.

And I have a picture. I have one or two pictures. But let me see if I can get this out.

This is small. But I think we can probably get enough out of it. I'm not sure if you can. But maybe we can zoom in at a later point.

We'll do nice shots of these at the end of the tape. But--

I'm doing it backwards. Let me do this one first. This is what a bar mitzvah boy might have looked like with the pork pie hat, short pants, black suit, and leaning on this new bicycle, of course.

And on the second picture-- this is sticking-- on the second picture, a table setting of all the hundreds of gifts. There weren't 50 fountain pens. There were maybe two or three. But a wonderful cross-section of presents that I got at that time.

Bar mitzvah behind us, I could see that things were changing in our household. Letters were going out to relatives in South America. My mother's brother in Sao Paulo, no longer alive, was contacted. And Uncle Eric was asked, what do we do if we have to get out?

So I guess the answer was study Portuguese. And that's what we did. And it was mind boggling. [SPEAKING PORTUGUESE], a few other things I know. That's all I remember of Portuguese. And that's plenty. That wasn't really our choice. But, you know, choices were for those very fortunate ones, to which we belonged.

Sometime later my father decided that there was a family living in San Francisco. They were real cousins, five brothers

and one sister. They need to be contacted. And whether my dad did the writing or my mother did the writing, I don't remember. But correspondence went back and forth.

And I remember so well that they wrote back in English what the prices were, what you would expect to pay for a flat, or what you would expect to pay for food, and so forth. And I would hate to look at them today, because you just absolutely faint. But anyway, it was a guide of what would have to be done.

And they would suggest that we would again also learn English. My father and mother had learned English when they went to school. But that's not a conversational English. That's just knowing some words and not being able to put them together. So we did study some English.

Then came the day when the papers that we asked for came to the American consul in Hamburg. And thereafter, we were asked to come and appear there. And I would imagine that everybody going through something like that, when their life depended on that, would be one of the very scary things to be confronted by somebody that you didn't know who could either say yes and could say no.

Well, it was saying no to us that really shattered our hopes. And the reason he said no was that the affidavits from five cousins and one lady cousin, gal cousin, had been turned down for insufficient funds to keep a family of four afloat in America. We couldn't quite grasp that because they were-- I don't want to say wealthy, but they were certainly well-to-do people, prominent people in San Francisco, furniture factory owner. These people were making lots of money.

But they were not willing to declare it for fear of taxes or God knows what. None of these six members of the family are alive. So I have no reason to hide it. But I bring it out for one very important point. Here's a life threatening situation and somebody fiddles around with finances, falsifies, and the results could be just absolutely devastating. One more family added to the 6 million could have very easily happened.

Thank God it didn't happen. And the reason it didn't happen is another, I think, interesting story. My mother remembered a boy friend, school chum, a man that I've never met in my life and probably will never meet either because of age difference, gentleman by the name of Siegfried Kamarski. And Mom had found out that he had left for Holland many years before, about the early-- about the time the Nazis came in.

He had become a very prominent banker in Amsterdam. So one night, I heard all of this back and forth talking with my parents. And it was rather unusual because it was lengthy. We weren't pulled into it, except that we were told finally that Mother is going to Holland for one night, and she would be back.

It's a wonderful statement. I mean, nobody knew that she was going to be back. Or maybe she wasn't going to be back.

But anyway, we said our regular goodbyes. And she took a train. She saw Mr. Kamarski the following day, told them what the story was-- four people needing to go out and having been turned down. He made the funds available for monies that he had in foreign countries, or whatever it took. And with that, we were assured of a passage out of hell. And, of course, we were spared the real hell, which came a year or two after us.

How does one thank somebody that you don't know and you can't contact? I mean it's just one of those things. It's she knew who it was. She remembered it, and he was cordial enough or, shall we say, humane enough to make these funds available.

So she came back the following night. And then we eventually got in front of the same consul general, who then said, yes, we could go. That must have been November of 1937 when we said goodbye at the big train station to friends and relatives. There was a grandmother living in Lubeck. Lubeck is today maybe 45 minutes out of Bonn drive. And in those days, it was a whole day's trip by a steam engine train going and coming by-- a long, very, very drawn out affair.

We had said our goodbyes to her. She was a very old lady. She later died of natural causes. And she was taken care of by my dad's sister, a spinster, who in the final end went to Riga and was never heard of again.

We left Germany by way of Holland with that usual ferryboat ride to England, where the water goes in one direction and the boat goes in another direction, and your stomach goes in a third direction. And it's just awful. But it didn't make any difference. We wanted to get there, and we did get there. And in London, there were three or four days before we went on to Liverpool to take our ship to the United States.

I want to point out that my parents were not wealthy people. And one could not take out any money, with a very small exception, I think something like an equivalent of maybe \$10 per person. My father had-- being the bookkeeper and being the finance expert-- had figured out a way of paying for literally every single thing all the way into San Francisco.

Trips from Holland to England, to Holland, of course, by train, and then from England to New York, staying in New York five days, through the Panama Canal, to San Francisco, all paid for in German money because we knew it was just going to be left behind. There wasn't that much anyway, I don't think. But we got out, and everything was pretty well paid for.

And so we had our chance to get to New York for a few days and then through the Panama Canal and to San Francisco, where we had on pier-- I remember it very well-- sometime in mid-December of 1937, this barrage of relatives that we had never met before, this contingent standing on Pier 35 when the SS Pennsylvania, a very beautiful, large passenger ship owned by the Panama Pacific Line, no longer in existence, came in and docked and unloaded the cargo of these four greenhorns from Hamburg.

They were all lined up there. And they were all given the job-- the lady aunt, Gerta, was very, very much in charge. Uncle Julius, you take this person. And so-and-so, you take that person. And that's where we stayed for the first few days in San Francisco and got a look of what the city was all about.

I left out one little thing. In saying goodbye to all of our friends and so forth before leaving Hamburg, my dad took me one day to the office of the chief rabbi, Rabbi Joseph Carlebach, who unfortunately is no more along the living as he perished along with his congregants, with so many of his congregants, I believe in Riga. Rabbi Carlebach was an unusual person.

He was one of many sons. I believe there were five rabbis in the family. He was also the son of a Rabbi Carlebach who came from my father's hometown in Lubeck. So there was a little bit of a relationship there, a knowledge more than just being a congregant, but being somebody from hometown, if you will.

And when we went to him and told him we were leaving, he sat down-- and I can still see his beautiful smile-- and he wrote on his stationery a letter merely addressed to whom it may concern. This is to introduce the Hotzner family, four people, who I have known for a great many years, and who I wish a great deal of luck. I'm translating obviously in a very broad way. But the extent was please extend them the courtesy and the joy and the enthusiasm that we've given them here and that they deserve in the new country.

And then once we got to San Francisco-- that's why I wanted to interject that-- once we got to San Francisco, one of the first tasks were to find a place of worship where we would be comfortable. And that occurred after some several weeks of searching at Beth Shalom. Rabbi Saul White was still alive at the time. And he looked at this document that we had-- that my dad held in his hand, an introduction. He didn't speak any German. So we translated for him what was in the letter.

And he was just completely dumbfounded because he had never gotten a letter of introduction from one colleague 9,000 miles away for a family that was migrating or immigrating to the New World. That seemed to him a rather unusual step among all the other papers that we were carrying. But it was probably one of the most interesting and probably most valuable papers that we ever carried with us.

So we came to San Francisco. And we try to learn the language. I went to school at Presidio Junior High School, which is not far from where we are sitting today. And in consultation with some of my wonderful teachers there, we decided that what I really needed to do is to get into a German class to reverse the procedure where I could speak German, but I would learn the English. And the other kids spoke English and would learn the German. It worked out wonderful. It

worked out very, very well.

And from there, I went to, right up the street, George Washington High School and stayed there for all of the time, graduation. And right after that came the US Army. And I was inducted down here in Monterey at the Presidio and then went into the army from there to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and overseas to the Philippines and finally to Japan and finally home.

There are some pictures of the Philippines. I tell everybody that this picture here-- I don't know if that'll show, but we'll get it later on where it will show. Standing in front of the University of Santo Tomas in Manila-- now that's right around the corner from the famous San Miguel Brewing Company. And I still think today that I think the only reason we rescued the Philippines is because we wanted the beer. But General MacArthur, I'm sure, thought otherwise.

I spend a total of three years in the armed services, one small portion, only three months, in Japan. And this will show you the very comfortable position of crossing your legs underneath a very low table and after about half an hour you can't get up anymore, circulation cut off. There's one young lady there who was the daughter of my guest-- of my host. I was the guest-- of my host, Mr. Wantonabi. And she was wearing a traditional kimono, which they don't always have. There not much-- not many of those left over since the war.

So I was three months in Japan, learned very little Japanese. It's a very tough language, almost like Hebrew. Hebrew was a little bit easier for me than Japanese I found out.

But after that, I came back to the United States and continued my work as a window display or window decorator for so many different-- I must have had 14 jobs in five years, something like that. I'm exaggerating, but-- constantly something different. But window display was one of my things. And I think that I'm probably getting ahead of some of the questions that you had. I'll stop for a second and see if there is anything that you have in mind that we shouldn't leave out because we lose sequence that way.

You mentioned a little while back that your parents and you noticed shortly after your bar mitzvah that things were changing and changing for the much worse.

Mm, hmm.

I was wondering if you could tell me, as a 13-year-old boy, how that affected you, how it manifested itself to you.

You know, I've asked myself that question many times. And it's either that I'm blanked out or I really don't recall. There were stores in our street. But I don't recall anybody saying you can't go into this store or you better not go into that store. I don't remember that type of conversation.

But it would really add up if my seeing this film that I mentioned in the early part of this interview, if that made my area look like a ghetto, then that's most likely that we were not that affected in that area. I'm not sure. I really don't know. I think we probably shopped and we probably had our main activity in that area, which was called the Grindel area.

And I'm sure that there were manifestations of the Nazis coming in. I'm sure there were rallies. We saw-- I remember certainly seeing Brownshirts en masse going or coming from some of these rallies. But I don't think they took place right where we were living.

And I think going to a Jewish school, those people were also a little bit protective of their kids that were going to school so that we weren't really shoved into a dangerous area just because they had taken over the country. 12 and 13-year-olds, probably, are not avid newspaper readers. I don't think we had comics. So that leaves that out. But I don't think they were reading world news as such.

And I have a real strange feeling that in our household, for better or for worse, we were overprotected. That's the only answer I can give you for that question. I don't remember that much of it.

We were not kicked out of school. That came much later. And when I see this videotape, I see where the classes drop down or where maybe 600, 700 students at the school dropped down to 500 and 400 and so forth. That's much later.

Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass, as it's been translated, was after we left-- was all after we left. And so for some good reason, you know, you could ask yourself why did we survive this and so many others didn't? I wish I knew the answer. I wish I knew the answer because so many of the wonderful persons that we knew, obviously didn't make it.

What did your parents tell you about leaving Germany and coming to the United States? What were you aware of?

We were probably told-- I say probably because it's not that clear, in my mind anyway-- we were probably told that a change of government had occurred, that they were unfriendly towards Jews. And that therefore, they were going to try and see if we could get out of Germany to another country.

And again, half a year makes a difference, like this unbelievable difference. We didn't have the problems that so many of our refugees that came out later encountered, where one place was open and another place was already closed to them. But let me lead into something else there.

Once we were in San Francisco and things obviously got worse in Germany, Austria, other countries, we had the desire to bring out, if we could, a cousin of mine. This cousin, Werner, Werner Hotzner, lived in Nuremberg, southern Germany, with a widowed father. We went to the same relatives that we thought were bringing us out and proposed that they get together the necessary paper to bring out a man who, at that point, might have been 25 or 26 years of age, something like that, maybe 10 years older than I was, something like that, bachelor.

And here, again, we see, what we now would say, callous attitude by one of those cousins sending those papers regular mail instead of air mail and thus denying this 26-year-old an immigration and perhaps a life in a world that is free. Unfortunately, the father knew that these papers were coming and committed suicide. So he lost his father, and he lost his life.

I don't want to say just because of a stamp. I mean the stamps in those days weren't that expensive. They're a little more expensive today. But airmail-- going regular mail, you know you were taking chances.

So my point really is that if you are committed to do something that you want to do for fellow human beings, don't leave any stone unturned. Do it. The reward is not necessarily noticeable right then and there. But in the long run it is.

And these people missed the boat in my estimation all the way through. It wasn't that-- they weren't mean. They weren't mean people. They didn't think.

So that was the last part of my family. And, of course, I am the last of the Hotznerns. There is nobody else to follow through with that name.

So I have no idea what happened to Werner, no idea. I hope that one day we can find out. We have some correspondence going to see if one can locate, after this many years of what happened. I'd sort of like to know either way.

But anyway, that's one of the things that still goes through my mind. How bad was it before we left? I'm sure we saw the signs. My sister was two years younger than I am. I'm not sure whether she really was old enough to grasp any of this.

But life was going on pretty much as it had before. The difference of a half a year later or 3/4 of a year later would have made a tremendous difference. And my attitude is-- and I'm jumping, but my attitude today would be I'm not particularly interested in going back.

I mean there's going to come a time if I live long enough that somebody's going to say they would like to have you take a trip back to Hamburg. And that might be very nice. But I really am not looking for anything by going back there.

And the people that were dear to me are gone. And sure, it's another beautiful city. But there enough beautiful cities in the United States that I haven't seen that would have priority, I think.

It was in this film that I got from Hamburg, there was a wonderful, wonderful lady that was interviewed, who lives in Berkeley, an acquaintance of ours. She was interviewed. She had been through four concentration camps, lost her whole family. And when the interviewer, a German interviewer, probably 35, 40 years of age, who had absolutely no idea what had happened 50 years earlier, no idea, when she interviewed her, she wanted a final impression. And I guess the final impression that this lady said was, well, I hope that the German people have learned something, but I doubt it. And that's where she left it.

I'm not sure. I've been to two trips-- two trips to Israel. One trip was more important than the other because my daughter Judy, younger one, was in Israel at the time. And that gave me the opportunity to take her by the hand and say, we're going to go to Yad Vashem.

And we sit through this long film that every person that is going into the armed forces in Israel must see. And that is the German ascension to power basically. We went through the whole thing. It was, of course, it's an awe inspiring type of event.

I took her through all the various places. And we finally landed in the room that has all the names. And there we encountered a very nice gentleman, who spoke very little English, spoke a little German. So we managed that way. And I asked him if he would look up my wife's family.

And he did. And he came back after a couple of-- just a couple of minutes. And he opens the book. And here are 12 names, my wife's family names. And you sort of stand there. And you-- it's not a matter of crying. It's a matter of feeling or not feeling at all, feeling this deep, deep feeling that comes over you that there are people-- I have never known those people. But you know that there are 12 names there that were not there before. And it's a very eerie feeling.

And when we walked out of Yad Vashem, there was a busload of youngsters from Germany that had been there about the same time we were. And they were coming out with tears streaming down their faces. And I said to Judy, I says, look at this, those were our former enemies, and this is 50 years later. They have feelings.

I don't know about their parents and their grandparents. I'm not sure. I'm not a judge. I don't want to be the judge. What right do I have to be the judge?

But that was really a high point of that particular trip. Been there since. And I don't know, maybe they have learned something. Or maybe this friend in Berkeley is right when she says, I'm not sure. But it's a good point.

Here we sit years and years later and we talk about it and we think about it. And there are people who say, oh, you ought to really forget about it. I've had enough of this and enough of that. You can't do that. There's just no way you can do that. These are thoughts that will never be erased nor should they be, nor should they be.

I just really-- I just really have to think, why me? And I guess every person who has come through this feels the same way. In Jerusalem is a-- and I'm not sure whether I'm right. There's so many museums. But there's one place where children of the Holocaust made their own drawings, their own impressions.

And to walk through that is so absolutely outstanding. It is-- it's like reading their minds because there are no captions underneath-- thank goodness, you know-- that tell you what you should think. You think what you want to think. Very interesting. Very, very interesting.

I find that I find that throughout the whole country of Israel, wherever you go, city, outside of the city, out in the country, wherever monuments have been erected, they have been erected with so much feeling and so much understanding. Near the Yad Vashem is this monument to the Warsaw Ghetto of a woman with her hands raised to heaven and her children are at her feet.

You don't have to say anything. You just stand there and you weep. And it doesn't make any difference whether she came from Poland or whether she came from Hungary or Austria or Germany or anyplace else. She's the mother for all of us, and the children are all children.

It's really-- they have captured, I think they have captured what this era was all about better than any other country in the world. We have monuments to this and monuments to that. And they have them so beautifully and so simply done. That's not always how much money can you spend to do something. Here, we're talking about this era and all we have around us is an interviewer, somebody that's being interviewed, a wonderful cameraman, and a good piece of equipment that does all this recording.

That's really it. Getting too serious. But is it a serious subject.

What am I leaving out? I wanted to tell you a little bit about once I got out of school and into business, I had an opportunity to get into my own business, which was stereo high fidelity. And being very much involved with music, music is, you know-- well, I coined a phrase some years ago-- if music is a part of your everyday life. Well, it's a part of my everyday life. It always has been.

And as part of that, I had a chance to operate a small store in San Francisco, not greatly successful. We're very competitive type of business. But we enjoyed doing the type of things that we did.

I had a radio program every Saturday morning-- Saturday afternoon, where we talked with people who were prominent in music-- Isaac Stern, Bruno Walter, just two. I mean there's a whole string of people that we saw. And with them, there was always this feeling of what we could do to interest people, maybe in the field of music or maybe in the field of writing or whatever it might be, and you could never quite separate yourself from what had happened in Europe.

And these people didn't separate themselves. Isaac Stern is, for all purposes, an American, married an Israeli gal. And when he came into the room that we had our microphones set up when we interviewed him at the opera house, he fully expected I had a whole list of questions, you know. I said, you're not King Hussein. I don't have to have a list of questions and so forth. He said, well, what are we going to talk about, he asked me.

And I said, I thought we might talk about your youth in San Francisco where you was born. He beamed. I mean he smiled-- it was just unbelievable-- and then just rattled on, San Francisco. I don't think he remembered anything of his origin. I think he was two or three years old when he came to this country from Poland or Russia. It doesn't make any difference. But when you talk to him about going back to Israel, making music, for anybody, and some of those Jewish melodies that he has able to reproduce on his violin for record recordings, tapes and so forth, it's a great gift.

I was very fortunate. And I tell you a small anecdote. My grandparents came from Berlin. And the father had died-- that would have been my grandfather-- had died very early in life. I'm not sure what, some sickness that went around at that time. So that left a widowed lady and three children. My mother was the middle, my uncle Hans, Cheskel Zwi Kloetzel-- that was his name even before the Nazis-- and my uncle Eric, who went to South America.

The mother somehow got to Hamburg a few years later. The children were put in an orphanage in Hamburg. That's one place my mother never forgot. And as she became older and older, and we thought of maybe using the Jewish home for the aged, which is so beautiful here, located in San Francisco, there was no way to get her there. That was an institution, and she does not want to go into an institution. She did not want to have any part of it because that was her early life.

So we did not force that. And, of course, she is no longer alive. But we got it-- it was made very plain that would not be the answer.

My uncle Cheskel Zwi Kloetzel became a journalist, a very prominent one, wrote a number of books, went to Israel very early. My cousin, his daughter, is still alive there. But there is an article that he wrote, which I think is of interest.

When these youngsters were raised at the orphanage in Hamburg, they were dressed in similar garb. So when they went to school two by two by two by two, you could see them walking down. And somebody might have said, there go the

orphans, [SPEAKING GERMAN]. And he never forgot that.

And later on in life, he made it a point that orphanages should do away with this absolute dire way of tagging people. So that they would have the stamina. It was bad enough to be an orphan. But why make it worse? And he lived long enough to see that was done away.

The orphanages were well run. They were the best of students. If they didn't come home with a first class grade, then they would fair punishment would be that they might not see their mother on a Saturday.

Today, that sounds like archaic. And it was archaic. And he's outlived that to his great joy that these things were changed that made it so bad.

So my mother and the two brothers were raised basically in an orphanage. And the uncle achieved great fame. And as I say, he went to Israel. He worked for the Jerusalem Post as an assistant editor and spent all of his life there, traveled all over the world. And when he came to San Francisco, he said, I can hardly wait to get back to Jerusalem. I can understand that.

And in Berlin, going back to where originally where he was born, in Europe it was customary that balconies went out the back of the flats so that you would find that my grandmother and Bruno Walter's parents or mother were almost in touching distance in Berlin on these back balconies. And as I get the story-- and I'm sure that it isn't 100%, but it's 99%- - Bruno Walter's name was Schlesinger, Schlesinger. And as in so many cases, names were changed because they felt that, as a Jew, how would he become a conductor. Bruno Walter was his real name and he dropped the last part of the name.

But anyway, his mother, Mrs. Schlesinger, and my grandmother were within, as I say, touching distance of balconies. And as I understand it, the first job that Bruno Walter had in his after school years was as a bank clerk my grandmother was able to procure for him. It didn't last very long because he was a musician. And he went to the Stern Conservatory in Berlin, where he then made his name in life as one of the truly great musicians.

And while I was in my business, which was the high fidelity business that I mentioned to you, I was asked by the Institute of High Fidelity, organization out of New York, to present Bruno Walter at his 80th birthday with a gift. And I went to Beverly Hills with some strange feelings in my heart that I was going to be seeing a very great man. But then somebody said to me, but they all put their pants on the same way so don't let that get you.

Well, I come in, and here is this elderly, older gentleman coming out with his beautiful bow tie and everything else. And we're sitting down. And he says to me, are you a musician? I said, no. You don't play any instrument? I said, no. What are you? He says, I'm a listener. And I no sooner said that when he broke out in this wonderful smile and said, thank God, there are still some of those around-- coming from an 80-year-old.

So there is the sideline of my grandparents. Their home was filled with music. And on my mother's side, somebody had one of the most astounding libraries, bookstores in Hamburg. And I understand it's still in existence. That is a family name of [? Glogau. ?] And I think the [? Glogau ?] Bookstore is still in existence. Obviously, there's nobody left family-wise.

But they were very cultured people. And they were music lovers. And their homes were filled with a great amount of intellectual conversation with people that primarily were associated with music. And maybe that's where I got that strain of being interested in music.

I just wrote a little article for my congregation because I'm singing in their choir. And I entitled the paragraph, "O, Say Can You Sing?" And get a lot of comments on it. I haven't sung in 50 years. But I'm singing for the holidays this year. And all these glorious melodies and there we come back to my early youth as singing in a choir, these are the same melodies that we sang 50 years ago, 60 years ago. And they're world renowned, mostly from German liturgy that was composed by one or two people, very prominent people.

But that's been pretty much my life. And now, of course, living in Marin County, I have just retired recently. And I spend my time primarily enjoying my grandchildren, who one of these days will look at these scenes that we're doing here today and will get a feeling of maybe what a serious era their grandparents lived through-- thank God, not as serious as so many others. And I can't-- I never can get that out of my mind that really we were sort of protected, if that's the right word. I think it is.

Can I ask you to go back and discuss a little bit about your passage to the United States? And especially when you learned that the efforts of your cousins in San Francisco were more or less for naught, when the truth of that revealed itself.

Well, I think that came much later. I have a feeling that-- I'm sure that we landed in San Francisco without any doubt that they had accomplished all these feats. Let me do it let me do it this way. If we were turned down the first time by the consul and we came the second time and we passed, there wasn't a lot of discussions in our house that said, now, you see, the only reason we were able to do that is because Mom went to Holland and got this man to be gracious and give us the funds necessary. I don't think it was discussed.

I think that came out much later. I think it probably came up when I went into the service. And they hung out that little flag with the star that somebody in the family-- actually, that little flag was meant for the father and mother who had a son in the service. I was the son of a cousin. But, boy, those flags were hanging out on these relatives' windows in their homes for all the time that I was overseas.

I don't think-- that might have been the time that my mother might have said at that time, you know, they're very proud that you're in the armed forces, serving your new country. But they never realized that their efforts were really in vain. So we talked about it at that point. I don't think it came out very early.

As far as our trip to coming really out of the country, it was-- well, it's a voyage, for youngsters, it's always an exciting time. I was unable to learn how to swim in public school over there, in Germany. I learned how to swim aboard the ship going through the Panama Canal. And I don't know. That was exciting.

Or it might be compared to anybody's going on a voyage. We were out of there-- you know, I see these pictures now of people coming out of Kuwait and Iraq, Saudi Arabia. And I have difficulty. I know that what they've gone through is far from normal. They're also being hounded to find these people that are maybe of an American origin. The father has to be left behind. The mother is allowed to go.

And while we're talking about it, this is going to change within a matter of hours or days or weeks, hopefully. That was really not different. What was different was that maybe we didn't really know what we were getting into, a foreign country, a foreign language. Here we can digress for a minute and we can be almost humorous.

To learn a new language, one of the first things that you have is a dictionary. And even the dictionary doesn't really help you. I think my mother sent my dad out to Woolworth-- was at that time was almost every corner was a Woolworth. They don't have that anymore-- to buy some safety pins. Well, if you don't know the word safety pins, what do you do? You look up in the German English dictionary. And you come out with something like security pins, where it's safety translated.

It doesn't work. And this went on day after day after day. It was a good idea. And my father and my mother spoke very good English after they were here a very short time. Once they became citizen, they spoke excellent English. There was very little German spoken. There was no need for it, except that we wanted the kids-- that's us and our children-- to keep that second language as much as we can. The great grandchildren are getting a little bit, but very little. It filters down, but not sufficiently.

So there were funny words. There were these words that just couldn't be translated. But that leads me into something else again.

The days of arrival in the United States, 1937 was not a particularly great time. Jobs were not plentiful. The first job that

my father had-- and never complained about, because it was a mitzvah. It was something that you would want to do-- was sitting at Sinai Memorial Chapel. Orthodox people, Reformed people, and Conservative people, in many cases, do not want to leave the deceased person prior to burial alone. Somebody sits there and reads some, hopefully some, meaningful passages and gets paid a very small amount.

Dad did that gladly. That was a job. And that was also a mitzvah.

And I must tell you something else, as long as we are sort of baring or confessing-- we don't use confessing in our part of the religion, but let's call it that. The German Jew-- and I hate to generalize. I can just hear my wife say, don't generalize because there are always exceptions. And sure, there are exceptions. But the German Jews had a tendency to put down the Eastern Jew.

He was dressed funny. He had maybe the payots, the locks. He maybe wore the black kittel or the kaftan or whatever it might be. Sort of put down.

But that was so unfair because it was the Eastern Jew that took us by the hand and looked for a job when we came here. We didn't have these organizations that you have today. We didn't have guarantees or setting somebody up and so forth. That was all-- you did it yourself. And if you had a helping hand, you were very lucky.

I know that it was one of those Eastern Jews, a very, very nice gentleman, San Francisco, that called up one day and said, Mr. Hotzner-- my dad-- Mr. Hotzner, can you be ready tomorrow morning at 8:30? Sure. We're going job hunting.

And whether he did it by intimidation or by just knowing somebody, he was successful in getting him a job. And so many times, you find that-- when you look in the paper, there was a wave of immigration coming in at some point from European Jewry that did not get out the regular way and came across the back, which would have been going in through China or Philippines or places like that, that then finally came here. These were tough times. They were really tough times.

Mom went out and scrubbed floors, cooked for somebody else. Never complained. I never heard a complaint. And that was just understood that she was going to do whatever was necessary.

I had a newspaper route right from the beginning. I mean this-- if I left Germany at about 13 and 1/2 or almost 14, I had a newspaper route almost immediately. I didn't have to speak any language, I mean to carry newspapers and throw them out. Need to know a little bit of language to collect money at the end of the month for that. But I had one of the largest newspaper routes in San Francisco. And I was able to contribute to my parents' household in those early days.

I knew they were struggling. And if I could buy my own pants or my own jacket or something like that, so much the better. I enjoyed that. I really enjoyed doing that.

So we had a-- it was a struggle. And every generation-- you know, we're looking at papers just now, Ellis Island and what they went through. And I understand the same thing was on this coast. I don't know, Angel Island I think was an immigration naturalization spot that was probably as much disliked as Ellis Island was at the time. I shouldn't say dislike, because when they got here they were glad to get here. It was, just that the bureaucracy was difficult to swallow.

Every wave of immigrants that have come to these shores have gone through real problems. And I think maybe that's what made this country so great. We speak different languages. We may even pray to different gods. And we do. But I think it is important to go through something like that because hopefully what comes out of it is worthwhile for your friend, for your neighbor, for your family, and for the community.

What have I left out? Plenty, I'm sure.

Talk about your childhood here. You mentioned in newspaper route and schools--

Here? In here, yeah.

In San Francisco.

It was really very nice. We came in '37. And in '39, we had a World's Fair in San Francisco over at the-- what's it called?

Treasure Island.

Treasure Island, correct. Well, that's not the real title. But anyway that's good. That's good enough.

And we must have lived over there. I mean three or four trips a week on that ferry boat to see what wonderful, wonderful things were shown there. That was a great part. It was a great part.

Also, I was very fortunate that-- I mentioned the newspaper route. That newspaper that I served at the time was a Scripps Howard newspaper called The San Francisco News. No longer around unfortunately, very good paper. And they did so much for the newspaper carriers. It's just unbelievable.

If you brought in some new subscriptions, you get so many points. And at the end of the month or at the end of the year, it would be a gold watch, which I have at home, or it would be a trip to Hollywood. I mean actually, the studios and everything else were open to us because newspapers have connections.

A beautiful camp in the La Honda Mountains down in the Peninsula with horses and swimming and everything else, complete at the disposal of the newspaper carriers. It's a thing of the past. Today, kids don't know what a horse looks like, don't know what a locomotive looks like. All very, very strange.

But our childhood was-- really our childhood was a very good childhood. And I need to point out that I would think that most of the people that you talk to over the years with this project will-- if you touch the word finances, somewhere along the line, they will say, yes, the German government and now maybe the Austrian government have made available some small funds as, what we call, restitution. I am one of the very few of my generation that has never gotten a dime or Pfennig from anybody in Germany.

It's not their fault. It's probably my attorney's fault. In those early days, they paid out for just leaving a school in Germany and picking up another school in your new community. Didn't even get that.

But I don't care. You know? That isn't going to change my life to a great extent. Where I left in Germany, I could not pick up here because of the language problem. So I might have gotten back two grades-- backwards. It might have taken a couple of grades longer. But there wasn't really a great disruption there, except for the language.

And as I say, the school system here in San Francisco, the junior high school and high school was just unbelievably good.

Really?

Really. We learned something. We appreciated what the teachers were giving us. And maybe that worked both ways.

I wasn't allowed to graduate from George Washington High School at the opera house. At the time, we needed the opera house because we had such big classes. So they graduated from the stage of the opera house. I wasn't allowed to go because that was during curfew, Second World War. And we might have been Jews, but we were Germans. And Germans were, of course, not allowed to go-- that's the Germans, Japanese, and so forth-- were not allowed to go out after a certain amount of time.

My teachers tried their darndest to get an exemption for me. It wasn't possible.

It's OK. I understood. I was an air raid warden at the time. So I really understood that that was more important than graduating from the school-- stage at the opera house. But schooling was-- you know, children today, I'm just amazed.

My grandchildren are 7 and 9 years old in Sacramento. They couldn't wait for school to start after the vacation.

Now that's the kind of an attitude because the school system in their little town, which is Rocklin, right out of Sacramento, is so superb. You can see it. The kids are just dying to go back to school. I'm not so sure that we were that anxious. I don't think we were. I don't think we were.

But I didn't go to anything beyond high school for the simple reason I knew that somebody had to work and help out and make a living. And that part was OK. I sort of miss it because vocabulary-wise, for example-- I mean I can, as you can see, I can make myself understood pretty well. But you ask for some little fancier words or a little more intellectual words and that's missing. And it's not going to be there. It's OK.

But that's pretty much what we encountered when we came here. We made a great many mistakes with the help of our relatives. I hate to say it, but that's really the truth. When you have a family coming into a strange community, you don't tell them to go out and buy furniture when they don't have any money. You tell them to find something that's furniture equipped. And at some point when you have made a little bit of a living, buy the kind of furniture that you want.

We didn't do that. We were told, he says, you got to go down to so-and-so on Mission Street and buy furniture. That furniture never got kicked out. It should have been kicked out two years later. It never got kicked out until 10 years later. It's still standing. The leg hasn't fallen off. So why kick it out? Why buy new furniture? That's typical.

It would have been so much smarter to say, well, for the first few months go into some place that's completely furnished. You'll be comfortable. And then do something.

But that's difficult. I'm playing devil's advocate. Maybe they couldn't put themselves in our position exactly and figure that's the way to do it.

But we did have a nice flat. We lived out on 23rd Avenue and Cabrillo, Richmond district, nice area. Walked to school, naturally. Walked to school. Everybody walked. No automobiles. There were automobiles, but we didn't have that kind of money. It was all right.

And on Sundays, we went to Marin County for a hike, which meant the bus with a whole load of kids singing. And a very, very small amount of money being spent for that. And that was understood. And once in a while to a movie.

We were not that sophisticated. Today, with the advent of all these modern conveniences that we have, things are vastly different. I took my grandchildren on their first airplane ride to Los Angeles to go down to Disneyland. That didn't faze them at all. Taking off, landing, that was every day. Of course, they see it on television.

The only instructions were be sure and get two bags of peanuts, not one. That's not enough. So the stewardess had to oblige. But that's basically it.

Our childhood from Germany on, I even think-- I want to include Germany-- it was very good. It was meaningful. And sure, it was disrupted. But at the time, the disruption is not a comparison to somebody that may have left in 1939 or 1940 or later. That's different. So there's just no way that we can compare that, nor do I ever want to.

So you see that the word survivor bothers me. Yes, I am a survivor. But I'm not a survivor that's compared to somebody that's gone through four concentration camps. That's a survivor. And I always will have my greatest admiration and respect for those who were able to make it through those kinds of ordeals.

When the war started, what were you aware of? And what did you think about what was going on in your home country?

When the war started-- we were talking about 1941, Pearl Harbor? I was in San Francisco. I was-- '41, OK. '37 to '40, so I might have been 19, 17, 18, somewhere in there. Well, I think I was old enough to realize, of course, what was going on. And I immediately enlisted as an auxiliary air raid warden, which at the time was very important.

And what was going on in Europe? I don't know. I was probably very much aware. But that was based on the periodicals that we were reading here in San Francisco. And I'm not sure whether we were getting the real signals. I think those of us who came from Europe could probably see that the signals that we were getting were not quite as accurate as we thought they were.

But by the same token, there's a tendency on the part of a citizen to say, there's got to be a few smart people around, and they're not necessarily in San Francisco. They may be in Washington or someplace else. And they must know what's going on. Well, that's a bad phrase because we find out more and more they may not know more than you do.

And maybe they didn't. I have a feeling that they knew a lot more than they were willing to pass on to the American public because, I'm not very proud of what this country did or what this country didn't do, I should say, that they should have done during that war. Unbelievably bad. I mean you can say that Eleanor Roosevelt tried and Franklin didn't listen. You can say that. We know that many, many years later. And we would have never believed it at the time because everything Franklin Roosevelt said was the gospel truth, wasn't it?

So things change. I'm very, very upset about what was not done, yet as much as I feel very badly about the Japanese internment, which is a very sad chapter in American history. But if you ask if we really-- we could only know what was going on in Europe from our sources here. There was nobody in Europe to communicate with that would tell us. That would always be censored or wouldn't come through. And there was really nobody that we would communicate with.

So we were dependent just like thousands and thousands of others on what we were being told. And so I think that's a chapter that is not very good for the United States and for Jewry in the United States. I don't know where all these people were at the time. I mean somebody must have known what was going on.

But it goes further. I think that really the religious leaders cannot exempt themselves from not having known. Somebody knew. It wasn't important enough. It wasn't important enough to put an airmail stamp on somebody that you wanted to bring out of Europe. There it is again. I think that's a tie in. That ties together.

So I don't know how to answer that. We probably thought it was worse than what we were reading. But we probably also thought somebody must really know. Whether they didn't or whether they didn't want to, that's for history to decide. I think that's it.

Tell us about joining the army and going off to fight.

When I was inducted, I was told to go to Monterey. That would be the post where we would be inducted actually, with the haircut and all. And that was OK. That's fine. I got down there.

And it never occurred to me-- maybe I was just sticking my head in the sand. It just never occurred to me that I'm not a citizen. So they really can't do much with me. But that didn't last very long because they were pretty smart too, you see.

So one day they came up and said, tomorrow morning, you're going to Salinas. I said what for? Figured maybe picking some vegetables or something. No, no, Salinas is the county seat of Monterey County. Or was at that time. I don't know where it is now. You're going to see a judge who's going to swear you in.

So I didn't have to learn anything. I didn't have to read up on all this, which all the people worry about. They really worry about before becoming a citizen. I just stood there amongst a hundred and some odd people who raised their right hands. Do you object to fight for your new country? I said, no.

The next day I was on a boat going out to the Philippines. So that worked very well. That worked very well. Yeah.

I was in the artillery with the 25th Division. And we went overseas. And three days out of San Francisco, on a boat that took 38 days to get to the Philippines by zigzagging-- we never knew who was in submarines other part of-- over the ocean-- on the ocean that would be able to destroy or something like that.

But 2 days out, or 2 and 1/2-- I think it was three days out-- they announced on the ship that we were going to have Passover services, complete with everything. We had the candles. We had the matzah.

There's an understanding between the armed forces and the Jewish organizations all over that material and everything else is available, because I carried a suitcase during most of the Philippine skirmishes with the prayer shawls, the tallit, with kippah, yarmulke, whichever you prefer, and the prayer books and everything and wine and candles. And we held services. I was not in the chaplaincy or anything like that. But we held services.

And in the Philippine campaign, somewhere on Luzon if I remember correctly, I got a notice one day that said, you're going to have a Jewish chaplain come to visit. Now, you have to put that into perspective. Jewish chaplains are available. But they're usually available for very large concentration of Jewish people, which we didn't have.

So anyway, Friday afternoon, I set up for services. And lo and behold, in comes a gentleman, uniform, officers uniform, 6 foot 2, 6 foot 3, I mean a big, tall, sandy haired, very good looking-- not very Jewish looking-- and he had the Magen David on his uniform. So I knew he wasn't a Christian chaplain. He introduced himself. And he says my name is Chaplain Kahn. It turned out to be that he is Rabbi Kahn from at that time, I believe, Houston, Texas, a very prominent today rabbi. And he introduced himself. And we had a wonderful service.

And that leads me to one other high point in my army career. We got to a Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah in the Philippines. And the largest stadium in Manila-- I don't know what it is today because I haven't been back there, but at the time was the Rizal Stadium, downtown Manila, big sports stadium, all the way around with a podium in the middle. And that was where our services were going to be held.

We had something like 17 chaplains from all over the Pacific. We had any rabbis that were in the area. And we had a service that was so magnificent that it became the front page of the army newspaper, the armed forces newspaper, Stars and Stripes, carried it on the front page.

The reason for it was this. The chaplains were standing with their white kippah and kittel, their robes, and the tallit on this stage, on this bimah, if you will. The Japanese had been there before and had shot up the roof with machine gun bullets. So the sun was streaming down on these clergy.

It was a picture that you would never forget in your life. It was that dramatic. There were maybe 8,000 Jewish men and women. They were holding services all at the same time. Fantastic. That's the kind of thing would never forget. But the setting was so unusual with the light streaming down in all the different directions from the sky, so to speak, due the courtesy of the machine gun bullets from the Japanese. That was really outstanding.

So my Jewish portion, my Jewish life, went on even doing services, doing active service, I should say. Spent very little time in Japan, interesting country, and then came back home three years later. We're good?

I'm sorry to see people having to go through these conflicts, of course. But I don't feel bad for some youngster who comes out of school putting in his one or two years during peacetime. It's the best thing that could happen to him. The mothers get a man back instead of some namby-pamby that comes out of school and doesn't know what he wants to do. Then let them find out what he wants to do. It's good, not bad.

They don't have to go into Saudi Arabia with 140 degrees temperature. I mean I don't wish that on them either. But by the same token, there sometimes are necessities where if we had all the women in the world directing things, maybe we wouldn't have wars. If we could have that.

My father always used to say, they're going to start another war. Let the generals from opposing sides get out there in the field and shoot each other. And in case of rain, we take them inside a building. They wouldn't have to worry about it.

I don't know if we're ever going to get away from that. And I'm very, very-- I'm very cognizant of the fact that everything that's going on right now in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Syria. They're drawing them all into

this thing now. And I just have a great fear that Israel somehow is going to get dragged into this.

And that I think would be just awful. That's the last thing they need. A couple of years, a few more years of absolute peace and you would see that country really go even further than they already have. But I'm not sure if they're going to get the chance to do that.

We're living in a very strange world, you know. Another 30 days, something can look up completely different, look to us differently. Hopefully better. I don't know.

I always think of Elie Wiesel, who is a person that's been through quite a lot, lost family and everybody else, which everybody else does too. But he's able to express himself about it. And he can be terribly, terribly pessimistic. I've heard him several times, terribly pessimistic.

And that mood is contagious. He hits an audience with that pessimism. And they are in the same mood as he is. And along can come one spark.

He was in Marin County I think one time many years ago. And just as he came out on stage, somebody handed him a note that a friend that he had met in Russia has just been released to go out of the country. And with that, he might have just as well thrown his speech away because his whole mood changed.

And I guess that's what happens to us. And I'm at a point now where I really don't-- I don't even want to see the radio. And I don't want to see the newspaper because it's not very-- it's not very good news.

But there will be days. There will be days. And I'll forget about all of that I'll forget about all of that during next week when the High Holy days start. Then I can forget about-- when I get into temple, I can forget about everything that's going around me because that is more of a priority. Maybe that's not realistic. But it's more of a priority. I'm standing amongst a bunch of people who feel exactly the same way I do. And we all feel that hopefully the next year will be one of Shalom and good health, and everything else will take care of itself hopefully. That's a good note to end on, unless you have some other good questions that we didn't cover.

A little bit about meeting your wife and starting a business here.

My sister and my wife, who were good friends, are good friends, while I was overseas. And when I got back my sister made sure that Gertie would be at the house when I came back from overseas. And one thing led to another, you know. There was a time at that time when every Saturday-- every Sunday was set aside for somebody's wedding, always.

So one fine day-- and don't ask me when it was. I know the date, but I don't know the year or anything else-- 43 years ago, we did the same thing as all of our friends did and got married at the temple on 14th Avenue and Clement Street. And we've gone through some considerable hardships, primarily physical, with a few heart attacks and a few bouts of cancer and a few other things.

But so far, we've been able to raise two daughters. And they, in turn, have married. My older daughter lost her husband last year to leukemia, which was really a terrific bout. But the little kids and my daughter did not hide anything from the children with this terrible disease. So they lived through it. And they were ready for it when their daddy passed.

And sure they miss him. And obviously, children at 7 to 9 years of age have a totally different aspect of this than grownups. But they're doing fine. They're very cognizant of their daddy being in heaven.

And if I may lead that into something that happened just a few months ago, my son-in-law would have been 42 this August. That's just a few weeks before. And the little seven-year-old one day decided that she really wants to do a birthday card to her daddy. Doesn't want to talk to her mother about it because she knows that that's hurting, that subject is sore, of course.

But the neighbor across the street, Bonnie, is consulted. And she says to her, I want to make a birthday card to my

daddy. But how do I get it to him? Do I just throw it up in the air?

And Bonnie says, no, you don't have to do that. He knows everything that you're doing anyway. Oh, Hillary says, but I don't want her to see it until it's finished. Thinking-- and that would have been a story for Art Linkletter, who was so good with young children. Their expressions are just so marvelous, you know.

So that's a great joy now is to have little ones that hopefully will carry on in what we all hope is a better world and-- this goes on all the time. We used to say that my parents world was the great world. Those were the good old days. Now those are not our good old days. But hopefully, it will be the children's good old days when that time comes, from generation to generation.

I don't know if I asked what you were interested in hearing.

Is there anything you'd like people in general to take from your experiences, to learn or to consider?

Yeah, we touched on it. We touched on it already. And that, I think, cannot be emphasized enough.

Once in a while, there is an opportunity in the life of an individual to do something really truly important, put it into perspective, truly important. When that opportunity comes, one does not dare turn his or her back and pretend it isn't there or pretend it doesn't concern us. Whether that's the US government, whether that is any other government, or whether it's an individual or man or woman, it make any difference.

These challenges must be met. And we find that opportunities that are missed can never be recaptured. Now, all the books that we read tell us the same thing. Our Jewish literature tells us the same thing. So there must be something to it.

These challenges don't happen every day, thank goodness, because we would probably all go to pieces because some of these things can be really severe. Whether it's a physical condition or a mental condition or a condition of war or condition of some other that I can't think of at the moment, they must be looked straight in the eye. And you decide that you have an opportunity to do something. And when that opportunity comes, you've got to be there.

And for so many of us there wasn't anybody. For so many of the 6 million that have perished, there wasn't anybody. That's why we still stand in the synagogue today and we say Kaddish, not for a father who died with natural causes or a mother or child, but for 6 million for whom there is nobody to say that memorial prayer. And I think that's really what this is all about. You can't shirk it.

And if you do shirk it, all you're going to wind up with is more guilt feelings. And the psychiatrist tells us, we don't really need those. They make their living on trying to get rid of those things, right?

So we've had it we've had a great opportunity. Every generation says, there have been bad days and they've been good days. But I'm looking back at my mother, who was 91 years of age when she died a few years ago, about five years ago. And from her childhood to her old age, the changes were so unbelievably many, unusual, difficult, easy, inspiring, that you just can't scramble.

She's been on airplanes. She's been on ships. She's been on trains. She has found a new media-- I think the only thing that she didn't find was the fax machine, which came after her. But that's about the only thing I can think of. Television, everything has come in her lifetime.

In our lifetime, it has meant migration from the old country to the new country. And in this particular family, it was obviously a godsend because that's how we have come through this era literally unscathed, but fully aware and with deep feeling for those who had great troubles doing whatever journey they took to become free.

What am I leaving out?

Well, I'd like to ask Tanya if she can think of anything [INAUDIBLE].

OK, I've got a couple of questions. Why don't you go ahead, Tanya.

Good.

Well, this is going back a little bit. I just wanted to know if back in Germany around the time when you were leaving, if you noticed in your community other people who were leaving? Was there any talk about other families who were trying to leave or who managed to leave? Did your family discuss that at all?

I'm not sure whether we really had discussions on the subject. I think, yes. I think there were people leaving. I would almost have to say they were sort of rather quietly.

The scene at the large train station with a lot of our friends there, I was not aware of that happening to somebody else because I was maybe not in that circle of friends of the other people. Otherwise, maybe we would have been there. Sure. But the big portion, I mean the large amount of people that left or were deported came later. And that's a vastly different story.

And then I also wanted to know that when you arrived in this country, was there any talk about Germany that you had just left? Did your family talk to friends, to people? Was there any talk about what was happening? Were people curious about what was happening in Germany at all on this end when you got here?

I think to some extent I might have been a curiosity when I first came into Presidio Junior High School, not being able to speak the language and stumbling and this type of thing. Probably that was true. I also know that in that first class, I didn't land at the lowest level in junior high school. I came in probably second level. And there are probably three or four levels. So I don't remember that exactly.

But there were youngsters there-- and I must say mostly from Jewish families. We have a tendency to sort of stick to each other for some reason, for good or for bad. And maybe that's this fear of not knowing what any outsider might think of us, you know. And that's still in us. And that's still from Europe. And that's probably going to stay for the rest of our life.

But the kids that I met there realized that I had come from Europe, realized I'm having trouble with language. They were fabulous. They were just fabulous.

I was welcomed with them. They would be-- my school buddies, girls and boys, and we would do things together. And really, they were very supportive.

But I don't think that they really asked-- they might have asked, where you came from, was that a big city? Yes, it was a big city. And did you have subways? Well, they had the subways or something like that. But none of this question of now, this Nazi thing, the way it developed, really got into the headlines probably a half or 3/4 of a year after we got here.

And when it did--

Yeah--

Was there discussion in the synagogues or in your community that-- what I'm really wanting to know is what were your feelings or your family's feelings about being in America and hearing about what was happening in Germany? How that affected you coming here.

I have a feeling that most of us today would like to think that during those years it is impossible that the United States and American Jewry per se acted the way they did. We would like it not to be that way. We would like to say, it couldn't have possibly been that bad.

I'm here to tell you that I don't think it was good. And I think it was that bad. And I think they were ignorant or wanted to stick their heads in the sand. It was unpopular. Of course, things like that are unpopular.

And then it got to a point where we really knew that we couldn't do very much about it from this distance. There must have been organizations that were doing something. But they were certainly terribly handicapped or maybe lack of funds or whatever it might have been.

I mean, you're reading the same stuff that I'm reading. Think of the ship that came to Cuba and wouldn't unload. What was it called? The Exodus? That wasn't the Exodus.

St. Louis.

The St. Louis, right, thank you, which one of my dear friends was on that ship. They wouldn't let him unload. And they go back. And that's an interesting story. I'm sure it's been told that the boat went back, and they told them to send the boat back to Germany.

And the captain knew that if he would take that ship back to Germany, those people would eventually wind up in concentration camps. So he scuttled the ship in the English Channel and sent out an SOS. Now, I don't know whatever happened to the captain. But I would certainly say, there's a guy that really belongs on that beautiful walk to the Yad Vashem for the Righteous Gentiles. If anybody belonged there, an honor would have gone to that man. And maybe it did by now.

But these are the things that we read about. Why wasn't there somebody able to be successful and deal with Cuba? I know we have trouble dealing with Cuba too. But they sure had troubles in those days to get a few hundred people in. That's not explainable. It's just not explainable. I don't know.

But maybe I was spared those questions because I wouldn't have known the answer. And I don't even know them today. Sir, you're on.

OK. Forgive me if I go over some areas that you've already talked about.

Yeah.

Can you tell us what your earliest memory is of an antisemitic experience or encounter you had? Your first memory of that.

I really have trouble answering it. There may have been at some point when we were shopping in one of the stores that somebody said a derogatory slur, remark. I couldn't tell you. Most of these things, of course, are always connected with big rallies, which they had. And it's usually connected with marches of some sort. And we just stayed away from this, for good reason.

So we left early enough not to find the type of thing that you ask about that was undoubtedly a daily occurrence just a short time after. Get out of the store. We don't want to deal with you. Or we don't have anything to sell you. Or we don't take your money. Or any of those things that we can now accept as having happened, that was afterwards.

You talked about how parents tended not to share problems with the children and keep the problems away from the children, did your parents talk to you about this issue of the rallies and how we're going to stay away from the rallies? Were you--

I think to answer you honestly, I mean I think that was probably already produced in the school that we attended, that they said now we want you to go home. Stay together. Don't go by yourself. And don't go to any antisemitic type of-- what do you call them? It's not just activities, but something that was planned. We would stay out of that.

The discussion, in least in our house, was never that we were sat down and say, now, we want you to understand this

and this. This is what's happening. And this and this is what you have to do. That was never necessary.

But on the other hand, I don't want to pass that off and saying that it was a neglected part from my parents. I know that during our growing up, we were never informed of maybe having a difficult month financially or having a good month financially. That was a subject, it was just not necessary to tell the kids. So they thought.

And we carried on pretty much the same thing, although not quite the same thing. I think that if there were a problem in our family today, as there was when my son-in-law was so sick, the whole family was brought in at that point. They were all aware. We were all aware. And I think that's pretty much the way we would answer that today if there was a problem that we wouldn't just try to solve it between my wife and myself. The kids need to be a part of that. They need to know.

Was school different? Was there more discussion of this in school with students and teachers? Was there a civics or political discussions in school that included any of this material?

No. See, nothing that I can remember includes changing books to include National Socialists or anything of that sort. They had been there since '33. And we left four years thereafter. But during those four years undoubtedly a lot of things changed.

But I don't think in our school, which happened to be an all Jewish school, that was incorporated. I understand later on that was altered tremendously, to the point where they wouldn't even allow him to go to that kind of a school. Well, obviously then you have vast changes. But they were not, to my knowledge, in effect at the time I went.

What was the name of the boat that you sailed on?

We went on two ships. The one that we took from from Liverpool to New York was a Cunard ship called the Samaria. Awful. It got sunk. Best thing that ever happened. It's not nice to say that.

From New York, the ship was called the SS Pennsylvania. And that was a pretty good sized ship. And it was a very interesting voyage because going through the Panama Canal-- I know lots of people do that nowadays, you know. But in those days, that was very exciting to see these locomotives drag that ship through these locks and so forth.

How long were you in New York between ships?

5 days.

5 days.

We got to see the automat, which I understand they've dismantled, where you put in a coin and out comes a sandwich, good, bad, or indifferent. I don't remember. It looked good. And we got to see a few of the big tall buildings, which just completely overwhelmed us, and met a few friends. And five days go very fast.

I did not really remember much about New York until a few years ago when I came back from Israel and one of my friends lives in New York and said, we'll pick you up and you stay with us over the weekend, and we'll show you around. I learned more in those two days than I did the five I'm sure.

Can you tell us what a typical day was like for you on both of those ships as a teenager?

Yeah, I can. The ship that went from Liverpool to New York shook us up, literally shook us up, in the middle of the night because it had an iceberg right in front of it. And the captain saw it and put the engine into reverse. That's from full forward to full reverse. That's like an 0.8 earthquake running through the whole ship. Everybody flew out of the ship. That was unusual.

Besides that, I remember only that there was one call after another for this, what I disliked so much, was some broth, not

chicken broth, some beef broth with a couple of crackers. And that must have been served five, six times during the day. And somehow that was altered on the ship going through Panama because that was more of a luxury type of boat.

And I don't think much has changed in ship travel. Nowadays, you eat yourself to death. But you see some beautiful sights. And I think that makes it worthwhile. I don't dare go aboard a shipboard travel, because I would get even heavier than I am.

That was a good trip. It was an interesting trip. I think we touched Acapulco, which Acapulco in those days-- we're talk about 1937-- there were guys diving off of a cliff or something. That may still be in existence. But there were no luxury hotels that I can think of.

And then we touched the-- what's the name of the harbor in Los Angeles? Ship harbor-- you don't go into Los Angeles. It's--

San Pedro--

Long Beach, San Pedro. That's right, San Pedro. And I remember that was on a rainy day. And we had relatives coming down to visit us. And they couldn't even get down because it was almost like a flood stage within a few hours.

But the sight of that ship that we were on coming in through the Golden Gate, that's quite a sight. That was quite a sight. And then finding all these people standing at the pier and welcoming us, that was also.

See, that's one of the reasons you don't forget these type of things. That's why we felt anything that had to do with they're not able to give us the papers that were necessary to get out, the affidavits, really took a second-- they really took a step backwards. We didn't even put that into focus. That was not nearly as important as their being there at the pier and welcoming us. So anything that I've said that came out afterwards, really did come out quite a bit afterwards. That wasn't on our minds.

And forgive me if I'm going over ground you've already covered. But the trek to Liverpool--

Yeah--

How much time was involved in that?

Well, I think the way that worked, if I remember correctly, when you get off the boat-- that's the ferry from-- we went from Hook of Holland to Harwich across the channel. From Harwich, the British train went into London. And that's quite the thing. I mean I think British railway-- you know, American Railway leaves a lot to be desired. But British railway in those days were good already.

In London, I think we had three days or four days in a hotel that was completely paid for with kosher food, downtown London. I don't I don't remember the name of the hotel, no idea. And we must have walked around because we didn't take any conveyance. I didn't take a double decker buses or-- I saw them, but I we didn't take any.

So we got to see very little of London. We got to see very little of England. And then one day, the time came to go Liverpool. And that meant taking a train from London to Liverpool. If you ask me, was that two hours, three hours? I have no idea. I don't even know what the distance is.

All I know is that the hotel in Liverpool was very poor. There were more fleas than you can shake a stick at in the bedding. And we only stayed one night. That was plenty.

From there, one goes to-- see, the ships-- the ship that we took in Liverpool doesn't lay at a pier. It's out in the water. It's-- what do you call it? It's in mid-stream. So the way to get there is by means of a small boat that takes you to a big pontoon or platform that's floating alongside the ship. That's what it's actually for.

And there's a lot of bobbing going on. And you try to reach their little-- I think it's called a Jacob's ladder, if I'm not mistaken-- that goes up. And for gals, as well as for male-- my father and I had as much trouble as my sister and my mother had to get this connection between the float and the ladder. So that was quite an interesting experience.

The ship itself I don't remember. The Cunard company is very well known. But this particular ship was a half freighter and half passenger. There weren't that many passengers.

Were they refugees from the continent mostly? Or were you a small minority in the passage?

A very small minority. I think there were a few more people on this boat that went around the canal. That was a longer trip. That must have been something like 13, 14 days. And the trip across was only about five days.

And I doubt if we met anybody on that ship that we really got to know as, then called, refugees. But on the other boat going around the canal, I think there were a number of people that might have come from various places, where we wouldn't know them from Germany anyway, but who then settled-- where are you going? Well, we're going to Napa. And we're going to San Francisco and so forth. But no close connection.

Just so I can get the timetable clear, how many days are we talking about in the movement from Germany to Holland to Harwich to London to Liverpool?

From Hamburg to Holland is about a day. In the evening, you go aboard that ferry boat, which travels all night with suitcases flying from the left bulkhead to the right bulkhead. I mean it's unbelievable. That's a rough part of the ocean. Everybody knows that, including the crew getting seasick.

That puts you into Harwich early morning. Then by train, couldn't have been more than a couple of hours into London. And then we had to rest there for two, three days. I'm almost sure three days, something like that.

Then the trip to Liverpool could not have been more than just a few hours. And again, then getting aboard the ship, and about five days later-- they went at that time over a fairly high route, Newfoundland and then down the Eastern coast past-- we may have even gone into Boston. I don't know. We might have stopped into Boston for just a short time and then into New York. So it could have been five days.

Then another four or five days in New York, rest. And then through the Panama Canal, I would think that might be 12 to 14 days. So we were away what? Not quite a month.

And again forgive me if I'm going over information you've already covered. In the trip from Hamburg into Holland--

Yeah.

Were there any problems in emigrating out of Germany at that time?

No. I tell you what I think I can remember is when the train gets to the Dutch border and the Germans were still in charge, the passports and everything else my parents handled. So we were just-- we didn't have anything to do. But I think there was a sort of a tension that I remember, which dissipated rather quickly once we got over the Dutch border.

And nobody expected anything to go wrong because the passports were correct. Again, you see, we're dealing with something that is a little bit earlier than where everything was being challenged afterwards. So when we got there, these people looked at the passports. They were stamped properly and everything else. And there wasn't really much of a factor except that the grownups who knew what this was all about were probably a lot more scared than we were.

John, you wanted to get some good shots--

Yeah, let's take some shots, some pictures--

Pictures--

Of the photographs.

Sure, OK.

Get some good closeup shots.

John can get--

Electronic track to get laid down.

OK, can you tell us about this picture?

Yeah, this is a picture of baby Walter and his pretty mother. And I don't really remember much about this, forgive me. 10 years later, I would have known a little bit more about it.

You're how old there roughly?

Oh, I can't even judge that. It's less than a year.

1, 2, or 3?

Oh, I think less than a year.

OK, very good.

Pretty hefty, even in those days. Yeah.

Let the tape roll here. OK.

My mother's hairdo with a bun in the back, I guess that's really not that out of date. I mean there's still-- well, you ladies know better than I do. That's still sometimes seen a bun in the back, but maybe not at that high.

It's in vogue these days, isn't it?

Yeah. Well, if you live long enough, everything comes back, right?

What was your mother's name.

Her real name was Margarethe. Grete, G-R-E-T-E, is what we call her. And she was a bright lady. When she passed away, it was for good reasons, heart primarily. But even the day before, she knew what was going on in the world. And if I wanted to know what was happening anyplace, she was very bright and very interested in everything.

5 seconds and you can--

Yeah.

OK, can you tell us who these people are, please?

Yeah. On the left is my father Herman Hotzner. On the right is my mother, Margarethe, or Grete, Hotzner. They're both deceased now. Dad died quite a bit earlier. He died at about 62 years of age. Mom all the way up to 91 years of age. Dad had a full head of hair. And his son, me, [LAUGHS] has very little I don't know. I just don't know anybody in the family that has lost their hair.

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