Bachofen originally, my grandfather changed it.

What was it originally?

Bachofen.

Also comes from Germany. My name was-- my name was Richheimer. I changed it, yeah, to Richards.

You ready?

Yes, anytime.

OK, this is May 3, 1990. We're the Holocaust Center of Northern California, interviewing Paul Richards. And my name is Peggy Coster, and also interviewing is Judith Backover.

Where were you born?

In Germany, a small community of about 2,000 inhabitants.

What was it called? Schenklengsfeld. It's very hard to pronounce.

And you said also that your name was not--

My name, my name was Richheimer before. And when I applied for citizenship, we changed it to Richards.

How come?

My wife felt it was easier to pronounce, easier to--

OK. How many brothers and sisters did you have?

I have one brother, and he lives in Portugal, in Lisbon.

And was he older or younger than you?

He's four years older than I am, just had his 80th birthday.

So you were born in 19--

'14. I'm 76 plus.

What are your earliest memories of--

Childhood?

--antisemitism, or what was it like in your town? Did you sense any antisemitism early?

Yes. There were always some anti-Semitic remarks, but it wasn't that we are mistreated or that we had to suffer very much. Actually, that came in 1933, when Hitler came to power.

That was when it got real bad?

Yeah. Yes, but still the Jewish merchants, they could make a living. There were some people they said, no, we don't

want to do any business with you. But I believe the majority of the non-Jewish people still supported the Jewish businessmen, whatever he was.

Did you ever have any anti-Semitic incidents in school?

No. I went to a Jewish school. [LAUGHS]

OK.

That answers my question.

So you really don't remember very much that affected you a lot when you were very young?

No, no. No.

When did you start noticing the changes?

As I said before, the moment Hitler came to power in 1933, when I read a book, Mein Kampf. He made it very clear that Germany should be Judenrein. Judenrein means free of Jews.

Yeah. But I thought that a long time before that, like the Brownshirts were causing their trouble in the '20s.

I actually, I come from a very small place. I didn't notice that too much, or we didn't pay too much attention probably, as a young fellow.

So it sounds like you first became aware of overt action, actually through a book, through reading.

Yes, but we knew about what Hitler and his people had in mind to become more powerful or take over. But we were always hoping it wouldn't come to it. That's why so many Jews stayed in Germany. That was the Jewish community 300 or 400 or 500 years old.

And where do you work from too?

Oh, definitely.

Even though it was a small town?

I can trace it back, my great-great-grandfather, who lived in that same place where I was living.

So it was kind of the attitude of this too shall pass, or--

Exactly, yes.

May not even be laws, but it wouldn't be so bad.

But naturally, was some people, they saw it coming. They left already in 1933. So was my father. He was working for a bank, and he lost his job, and he didn't even try to find another job. So he left, by the way, went to Paris, France, and then from there to Spain. And now he lives since 55 years in Portugal. He saw it coming like this.

Was it difficult for him to get a visa or whatever he needed to go move?

Well, it was. Yes. And I understood that was not the legal way. You could pay something on people who brought you over-- at night, over the border. And so many people did to Switzerland and to other countries. But later on, when Hitler came to power, it got somewhat difficult. They watched the borders with dogs, and it was almost impossible.

When he left, did he try to get the rest of the family to go with him?

No. He did not. My parents also, my dad also, was in the First World War. And he always felt, nobody can do anything to me. That was the attitude of many, many people in Germany unfortunately.

What's the first thing you remember happening to you personally as a result of Nazism and Hitler's rise to power?

What was the first thing? It's actually very hard to say.

Well, the first few things.

Well, naturally I saw that people lost their jobs who worked, for instance, a judge, a Jewish judge, they were released right away. They lost their jobs, people who worked for the government, you know. Doctors had certain restrictions what they could do and couldn't do. And we saw it, but we still were hoping it would get better one day.

Yeah. But do you remember anything personally that happened to you?

Well, when they arrested me, I mean, and sent me to the concentration camp, naturally. Is that what you ask me, or you want to know what happened earlier there?

Well, I'd like to know about that too. But also what happened first? Like, what gave you your first-- what did you first experience? Don't forget that's now more than 50 years ago, you know.

Oh, OK. Well, we can go on. What happened when you were arrested?

This I remember. Two policemen came and asked me to follow them. I said, what's the reason? They said, well the Jews, did such and such a thing, and--

I'm sorry, that such and such thing?

In what happened in Paris, one of the high officials of German government was murdered by a Jew.

And yeah, when Kristallnacht happened.

And we are-- the Jews in Germany, we supported it. We are responsible for it.

Yeah. So that's what he told you?

More or less, yes. And then the same night, they went to the synagogue, and I saw the synagogue going up in flames. And there were some people that stood around. They didn't say a word. Some other people had a feeling. They were sorry about it. And some other people they cheered and--

Yeah. So when they came to arrest who, was it before or after? It sounds like it might have been actually the night of Kristallnacht?

That was exactly the night, yeah. That was the day after.

So it was the day after.

I still saw when they burned the synagogue. That was on the 8th of November, and I think they arrested me on the 9th, or on the 9th of November, and they arrested me on the 10th. That was one day later I was arrested.

What did you do during Kristallnacht? Did you stay indoors?

I stayed indoors. Yeah.

And did you know how bad it was outside?

No, no, no. And later on, when we heard that the synagogues were burning and they arrested people, so later we heard in Berlin, and that the people in the big cities actually they were arrested probably a few hours earlier, than I did in that little place.

You said you were watching the synagogues burned. So was that the same night, or did they burn the synagogue--

The synagogue, I think that was on the 9th of November.

It the next day?

And I was arrested on the 10th of November.

OK. So you went.

How did you hear about it? Did somebody come and tell you?

That the synagogue was burning?

Yeah. Oh sure, we heard that on the radio.

Oh, OK.

Yeah. Not only that synagogue, the synagogues were happening all over Germany.

Yeah. What did you think when you first heard that, when you heard--

Well, then naturally I thought that's the end of it. We had no idea about what will happen to us. We knew that there was a tremendous change. There was no more hope for anything. That was also the reason why I later on went to Shanghai. I didn't want to stay in Germany and wait until I had a chance to go to America, or to South America, or to Australia. See, Shanghai you could go without having any-- you only needed a passport and the card, so you could go. To America, we could not. Which I had-- I had an affidavit. But they only let 30,000 people come during the year, you know. So some people had a very late they called out the number.

So I might have to wait another year or two. That, it would have been too late. Do I make myself clear?

Yes.

When you went out and you saw the synagogue burning, that was in your small town right, yes? And like was there any show of-- describe the crowd.

Now, first of all, I couldn't go very close. I didn't want to be recognized, unless I-- I tried to mention before. Some people they stood there, and didn't say a word. Some of them were applauding. And I'm sure there were also some who were against it. But nobody dared to say it's not a shame, it's not to bombard or whatever synagogue, where they put bombs in.

What did that do to you inside?

Well, as I said before, I knew that was the end of Jewish living. There was no chance anymore even to wait an extra day.

So the next day, the policemen came, and they--

Arrested me.

--arrested you.

And they brought me to a sell where there were 20 or 25 other Jews who were also arrested. Naturally, we asked what will happen to us. We couldn't get an answer. So the next morning, well two days later, they took us to a train station, went [INAUDIBLE] to Dachau-- not Dachau-- Sachsenhausen. So I knew exactly that Sachsenhausen was concentration camp.

Yeah. Do you remember your first moments there?

Outside, first of all, we had as soon as we came in, we had to carry signs.

Sorry, signs?

Yeah.

What for?

Shall I say it first in German, or in English?

Either it says [GERMAN]. Did you understand what I said? We are the destroyer of the German culture. We are responsible for the death of vom Rath. That was the name of that vice consul.

Vom Rath, yeah.

Vom Rath.

Yeah. So you had to carry signs saying that?

You have to carry signs, and they let us march and some people who couldn't make it. They were beaten and for hours, and hours, and hours, and then finally they took us to the barracks. And we slept on the floor. And then we got something to eat. Don't ask me what. I don't know anymore. I think it was bread and water.

Yeah. Talk about Dachau for a while.

About Sachsenhausen?

Or Sachsenhausen, I'm sorry, yeah.

Probably about 40,000, 50,000 Jews and other political. So we have the Star of David. So either way the SS, they knew right away that's a Jew. The one who had a purple one was a homosexual. You have read about those things. Did you?

Yeah.

So-- for instance I told the story at [NON-ENGLISH] Israel. The very first night when we were in our barracks, one SS man came in and said, you, you, you. And he picked eight people, took them outside. And all of a sudden, we heard eight shots. So we took it for granted they killed those people. And after a few more minutes those eight people marched in again, to frighten us.

Yeah.

That's what I really will never forget. Naturally if you hear eight shots and you knew eight people got taken out, then we are probably the next one who will be killed. But as I said before, there was no mass killing.

Yeah.

People got punished, if they did something, if the inspector-- what is another plate-- aluminum pot, if there was a little spot on it, they beat us up, and so on and so forth.

What kind of punishments did they do, besides beating which they always did?

Beating in most cases. So you had to stay for 24 hours in the place and without food, without water.

Did you find the food difficult to be willing to eat.

Listen, if you're hungry, you eat anything. And at that time, I still kept kosher.

You were able to do that there?

Let me tell you what happened. They gave us very often a piece of, they called as in Germany blutwurst. This I can't even translate, blood sausage, you know. That is very inexpensive, probably the most inexpensive sausage on the market. So I exchanged it always with a non-Jewish or nonbeliever. I gave him my sausage. They in turn gave me a piece of bread. So I managed not to eat any pork. I'm not saying I eat kosher, but those things I never, never touched.

Did they put you on at work detail?

Yes, I know they had the most unproductive work could think of. They let us carry some stones from one place to another, and then we had to pick them up and put them back on the place we took them from. So there was no work, I mean productive work.

Yeah.

Yeah, we had some-- yeah, there was. There were some Jewish-- not very many-- tailors or shoemakers. They had big rooms where they could-- they could make new shoes for the SS and for the SI, yes some tailors, clothing for the-- For us, we wore those striped, very thin suits. It was bitter cold, very cold. That was in November. As you mentioned, in Germany, it gets called in wintertime. It's not California.

Yeah. Did you pick up any diseases?

No, I didn't. No. I lost probably 10, 15 pounds. But I was very young at that time.

Were there any guards that were decent, behaved decently?

Let's say there were some of them that were not as cruel as other ones. But I've never seen one coming to a Jew and had a conversation. That in opinion, was non-existing. That's why I feel read about that even some SS people were able to get people out, or make life a bit easier. But it did not happen to me.

Were there some guys that were worse than others?

Definitely, yes. And the worst one naturally was the Lagerfuhrer. He was in charge of the whole thing.

Do you remember his name?

Yeah, Baranowski. And he was hanged when the American troops, he made a remark, and they put this ring around his-

- mach schnell, mach schnell. That means make it fast. Make it fast.

I read that in the paper. I did not witness it. I was at that time in Shanghai. But I read it. Baranowski was his name.

Do you remember what--

Yeah. He made his speech. And he said, I guarantee you, everybody will leave the concentration camp again. But I cannot say if it will be alive or dead. That was his remark he made.

How long were you there?

From the 10th of November until my birthday, by coincidence, on the 28th of January. From '38 until the 28th of January 39. As I said, it was a coincidence. It was not a--

A birthday present.

No. And here again, before we left, we were called, and we had to sign a document that we would leave Germany within three months. I signed it. But I had no idea if I was able to leave. But that was also the reason I took the first opportunity to go to Shanghai, to China.

How did you get out?

That was--

Did your family try to get you out or?

My family couldn't. My parents were still in Germany. They were still in Germany. My dad was also in concentration camp, but not in the same one I was. He was in Buchenwald.

Did you know it at the time?

Well, that my father was in-- no.

You found that out much later.

I actually found out, not much later, when I was released from the concentration camp. My mother, actually I called her. And she said, Papa is still in a concentration camp. But he was released shortly after.

So they just released people.

At that time, I would say yes, unless they found out that something was against him. But the people who were from the Kristallnacht, from that, I think they were 100% released. That doesn't mean that-- they were rearrested later on, when the war broke out, at the end of '39.

Yeah. So when you got out, how were you able to leave?

Well, first of all, I had to get-- we went by boat, get a ticket.

How did you get the money for the ticket?

I still had a little money. We didn't spend every dollar I made. And it was very expensive. We took the least expensive. I figured we could get into Shanghai.

What was the trip like?

It was all right. It was OK. At least we knew we left Germany, and better life expected. As I told, we knew in China it was very hard to make a living.

Did your whole family go, like your mother--

No. My father and my mother, they were they were able to go to Portugal. My brother was in Portugal, you know. And she was able to get both my parents out after my father was released from the concentration camp.

So you went to Shanghai by yourself?

I went to Shanghai by myself, yes.

What were you thinking about on the trip there? What expectation did you have?

Well no, there were also on same boat, there were 300 or 400 Jewish people. And we didn't know what we had to expect. We knew it wasn't easy to make a living in Shanghai. First of all, the language barrier, and there are certain kinds of work you cannot do as a white man. That is done by Chinese people, unless you had money, you could open a store, or you could do some import-export. But for that, you needed money.

Now we had some people who had already money in America, you know, bankers and doctors and they had money, and they could do something. As a matter fact, some of them did extremely well.

So what did you do?

I worked for a grocery store first, did some babysitting.

Were these enterprises owned by white people or by Chinese?

Mostly yes, mostly white people. Yeah.

Was there any kind of a Jewish community in Shanghai?

Definitely. There was a very old Jewish community, Russian Jews who settled there many, many years before. Some of them in the fur business, you know, and diamond business. Oh yes, for instance, what's his name? He was-- like the Sassoon. The Sassoon family. You must have read about it, you know. He was in a big enterprise. And there was [NON-ENGLISH]. They come originally from Holland. Oh, yeah. There were very influential Jews in Shanghai. But they come much, much earlier.

Did this at least give you a sense of belonging, some community, like you had somebody to turn to?

We had our more or less, we lived in Shanghai, in a certain district was called Hongkew. We were more or less with German Jews, probably Polish Jews who came at the same time at our own synagogues, not built for us, services were held in a school or-- there were some rabbis. I remember we had three or four rabbis who came over. They left Germany, and gave services. There was well-known cantor, who later became the Cantor [NON-ENGLISH] Israel, Dr. Warsaw.

Oh yes. There was Jewish life, is in the community. There wasn't too much money.

How did you find your job?

School friends, you know. You applied, and you knew somebody, so I was not well paid, got something to eat probably, and a few Shanghai dollars. So it was very little. Life was very, very inexpensive. People who were fortunate to have some money in America that sent it to Shanghai, they could live on very, very little.

Where did you live?

In Shanghai?

Mm-hmm.

Well, we lived in a big building, with 250 or 300 people.

Like an apartment building, a hotel?

No, no, no. Like an old factory, you know when they--

A dormitory.

--put some beds in and so forth.

How many people lived there?

You mean Jews, or the whole population?

No, no. The Jews who lived in the building, like where you live.

Oh, I would say between 120 and 150. So we were all together about 18,000 German Jews in Shanghai [INAUDIBLE].

Was it hard to get food, enough food?

Well, there was a kitchen. There was board, and some Jewish organizations, you know, [INAUDIBLE] like a welfare. It wasn't-- you didn't get any steaks or any-- but we survived.

Was there any kind of thing to relieve all of the tension and stress, like any kind of social life?

Definitely, yes. They had like a cabaret, that was a former Jewish-- his name was Herbert Sanek. He was well-known in Berlin. There was a girl from Poland, Chaya Tsumina, as a fact, I saw her about three years ago. We had from the Shanghai, they get together. And she lives now in Las Vegas, and she performed. I saw after 45 years ago. Her name is Chaya Tsumina. She comes originally from Poland, very, very wonderful actor, or should I say comedienne.

Oh yes, there was a lot of lectures, I mean that's yes, we can say we had an abundance.

So were you in Shanghai during the whole war?

Yeah, definitely.

From 1939 until the end of '47. I was in Shanghai 8 and 1/2 years.

How did things change when the Japanese took over?

The Japanese, as you know, they didn't consider us as friends. When I say us, the Jews, you know. And we had to live in, as I mentioned before, in a certain district. And they watched that very carefully when they came there, the Japanese.

Did you know about the extermination that was going on over in Europe?

No, no. Absolutely not, no. There were all kinds of rumors, you know. But I didn't know about that mass killing, no.

When did you first hear?

Well after, probably '45, '46, after the end of the war.

How did the Japanese treat you? How did it change once they took over? Did the ghetto get worse?

Well, as I said, the Japanese can be very brutal.

Right.

Mean isn't the right word.

Vicious.

Vicious, yeah, that's the better word. They actually were in control of that part of Shanghai where we were in.

But they didn't do extermination.

No.

Well, when they were vicious, what kind of things did they do?

Well, let's say somebody went through another district of Shanghai, where they had friends, you know and he was caught, they would beat you up and do things. There was one man. He was in charge. His name was Goya. And he was more or less chief of police at the same time.

Did you have any contact with the Chinese population?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Chinese people, but as I said in that district where we were, was not the most wealthy one. But people were, I would say, the Chinese people were friendly, and in some cases, they might have even helped some people.

Did you know of any cases personally where they helped the Jews?

Well, if you consider, let's say a Jew has opened up a cafe. And some of them did, especially from Vienna. And I know that some Chinese people went in and had their coffee and cake. If you consider that this helped, they certainly did. But let's say somebody was manufacturing clothing also whatever, I'm sure there are hundreds of Chinese who could afford it, they bought their suits.

Was it hard for the store where you work to get more merchandise to sell?

What we-- you mean if there was a shortage on merchandise? No, there was no shortage. There was a shortage of money. That some of the Jewish families didn't have the money to buy. I mean you could buy anything.

When people didn't have the money, were they helped anyway?

Yes, they did. There was, as I mentioned before, I don't know exactly the name of the organization, if it was-- it was or ORT. They got a little ticket and during lunchtime they got soup and whatever was on the menu. As I said, it was not steak and lobster. But people did not starve.

Now, did you have to eat there or--

Well, if you didn't have any money and you were hungry, you went there. And if you were able to buy, then you didn't.

Were you usually able to buy something?

I was at one time, yeah.

Did you have any contact with your family?

No, no. No, after the war. No, absolutely not. No, we didn't.

Did you meet up with any people had known in Germany or known of in Germany?

Oh, yeah. I knew quite a few. We came from the same place, and some of them in a close vicinity. And naturally, you make friends. Imagine of 18,000 or 20,000 Jews are together in this, we made friends. And we had bars, and we had dances, almost everything, movies. I mean it was not a concentration camp.

What was liberation like?

Well, first we couldn't believe. Naturally, the first question was we still alive, is my aunts and my cousins, and I had a lot of family still in Germany. Then came the--

Who liberated you? Who in Shanghai?

Americans.

And--

One of the first Americans I saw was Rabbi Fein. Have you ever heard of him?

No.

He was the rabbi at Temple Emanuel. And he was I think they have a rank of captain, chaplain, isn't it?

I believe so. He was a chaplain.

Yeah, he was a captain.

I think he was a captain or a lieutenant.

Yeah, naturally he right away he said, it'll take a while. But you all will come to America or wherever you want to go. Then we had a choice after the war. We had three options. We either could go to America. At that time, it wasn't Israel. It was Palestine. Or you could go back to Germany.

Some people, for instance, I knew quite a few people, men they had their wives still in Germany, and non-Jewish. They went back to Germany. Some of them wanted to go to Palestine. But I think the majority opted for America.

How long did it take you to get here?

You mean?

Like for the red tape, so that you could immigrate?

That took quite a while. Now, I don't want to pinpoint probably, more than a year. You can imagine, the war was ended '45, right? And I left end for '47, second day of Rosh Hashanah. So it took more than a year. First, we had to go to like some examination. They didn't want to bring people to America who had lung disease over there. No.

Yeah.

And it was paid. That was paid by Jewish organizations, which they naturally expected us to pay back. I did. I don't know if everybody did.

You paid it back?

Oh, yes. It was charity, you know, and after in one year, I think it's that your obligation to pay it back?

It is.

Plus.

When did you first hear about the camps, the extermination. You knew about the camps, but--

Well, as I said before, after the war ended, you know, in '45.

Do you remember who first told you?

No. No. And what we actually didn't, we didn't have individual radios. That was a luxury. No, there was that they used it as a synagogue and as a community center, there was an old fashioned radio. And we went every day. I couldn't-- some of it, I did understand. Some of it, I didn't. But there always some people who were fluent, and they translated to us what happened. So we gathered around the radio.

Then did you look for your family to see?

Yeah.

And what happened?

As a fact, there was a book there, not much longer. There was a book, when people who survived had their names in. Unfortunately, I didn't find very many of my family.

Did you find anybody?

I found people I knew, yes, from the town where I came from, yeah, three or four. Some of them were hidden by non-Jewish people. Some of them were sent to labor camps, work for a big company, you must have read about it. And they survived, some of them.

When did you first find out that your parents and your brother were safe?

Well, that I found out actually very shortly after the war was over. I got a telegram, both parents and my brother was alive. I knew my brother was alive. He left in 1933. I don't know if you know. Yeah.

You said that your wife wanted you to change your name to Richards to make it easier. So you must have met her before you got here. No. Then I came here to San Francisco I was introduced.

Oh, you met her once you were here? So you changed your name once you got here?

Yeah. Well, no, you can't change your name again. You can change your name when you make your citizen.

Oh, OK.

That is, so I changed it from Richheimer to Richards. Hilda was my wife, was working for [INAUDIBLE] of California, one of the biggest in the United States. And when she told her friends I got engaged. What's his name? Paul Richheimer.

Richheimer, Richheimer nobody could say it. Why don't you change it? So she changed it. She changed it for me to Richards.

Oh, I hope she will not listen to that tape.

How long after you got here did you meet her?

I tell you, very shortly after. There must have been four or five people said, oh, we know the right girl for you. And they must have told her, I know the right man for you. So we met. Yeah we met at end of '38, And we got married on the 18th of April. No why the 18th of April?

Why?

Between Passover and Shavuot, are you familiar with the Jewish?

No.

No. There is only one day you are allowed to marry.

Just between those--

Between those two holidays. Now there is if I say the Jewish word, [NON-ENGLISH], that was on the 18th of April that year. So we got married.

Like Arbor-- it's like Arbor Day.

Right, yeah.

Does everybody get married at the same time?

You mean? No, no.

So what did you think? What were some of the problems you encountered when you came to America? I didn't speak any English, or very little. But I found myself a job after a very short period of time. I worked for Plumb's Candy. And then I worked for another candy factory. And then I got myself, and I wanted to get out of that kind of business. It was hard work. I worked for Woolworth's for the last nine years.

So do you want to say anything more about your life in America once you got here?

If I say something what?

Do you want to say anything more, talk about your life once you got here?

I love it here. Every day, and I'm thankful that I'm here.

What do you think about-- do you think there are lessons that people need to learn today from the Holocaust?

Yeah, that it should never happen again. We have now that same-- not the same problem, a problem with Jews who want to leave Russia. I don't know if you read about it. I think 300,000 Jews applied for a visa to go to Israel.

More than 10,000 left last month alone.

Yeah, I know. And tremendous amounts of money have to be raised to get those people out, because they are penniless. They are not allowed to-- that was unfortunately in Germany a lot of Jews could have been saved, if America would

have taken them in. It's a fact. I don't know if you read about it. There was one boat went to Havana, to Cuba. Did you ever read that book?

The St. Louis.

The St. Louis.

And those people, nobody wanted to take in the Jews, went back and everybody lost his or or her life. You must have read that.

Yes. I believe 10 survived, including a man who's the deputy mayor of Miami Beach.

That could be. But I know that ship, there was so that--

Well, how would you go about articulating ways, or have you thought of ways that people-- it shouldn't happen again, but don't there need to be specific ways to make it not happen again?

Well, first of all, it should be taught in school. Don't you think so? Young people should be aware of what can happen if you follow one leader. But I personally don't think it could happen in America.

What do you think it would stop it?

I tell you what. I think in Germany, there was one master race, what they call, Germans, 1% Jews, and a few Frenchmen, and a few Italian. But it was 98% Germans. In America, you have a conglomeration of Italians, and Germans, and Russians, and South Vietnamese. For that reason alone, I don't think it could happen. I don't know if I make myself clear what I'm saying.

Mm-hmm. Well, we do have one basic difference. I mean that's visible, which is between White and Black or White and Asian. And you don't think that could ever happen along those lines?

I don't think it could. I'm an optimist. I don't think it can happen, it could happen.

What about antisemitism here?

Here, well, you know as much about it as I do. There is antisemitism. There will always be some antisemitism, even in Germany. Now only 30,000 Jews that against 600,000 before that onslaught, when I still read the paper. There is some antisemitism. First of all, there are people in Germany who say, oh, that isn't true that 6 million Jews were murdered, and a few lost their lives.

And here, unfortunately in America, that is a very small percentage, you know who also feel and say that it never happened, and those are all-- there's a special word for that lie, only it's not true.

But you don't ever feel here when you hear about, say, destruction or vandalism to a synagogue.

Well, I don't like to read about it, but as I just mentioned, I'm not I couldn't imagine that something like that could happen, or will happen in America. There are a lot of people who disagree with me. You might even disagree with me. That's my opinion.

In Germany, there was first, they lost the First World War, the reparation. Then there was a tremendous-- that I remember-- tremendous unemployment rate, people standing in line to get a plate of soup, and runaway inflation. You don't know what that is. They couldn't print the money fast enough. So what they did they, took 10 marks, and put another stamp on 100 marks, or a 1,000 marks.

So I don't think that will or can happen here.

What do you think about-- do you remember Colonel Oliver North--

Yeah.

Was-- there was a lot of people who they didn't think that he should have been tried or punished or anything, because he was just obeying orders.

Well.

Did that disturb you?

I didn't bother not answering that question.

I'm sorry?

I wasn't happy about it, let me put it mildly.

Yeah.

Have ever heard of Alice Miller? She's a Swiss psychiatrist. And she's written a book called For Your Own Good. It's about abusive child raising practices. They're pretty much worldwide, actually, but she concentrates a lot on Germany and Austria. And she describes a lot of Eichmann and Himmler stuff. And she really goes into length about Hitler in the book. And she talks a lot about how the extreme abuse that they lived with as children that she sees not only them, but also in a lot of the really sadistic people involved, that she thought child abuse had an awful lot to do with the development of the Holocaust.

Have you ever thought of that?

No, I never read about it. And I read a lot. The Holocaust, first of all, a fanatic Hitler, and people followed him, and you see the pictures. How was it possible that professors, economists, they could follow him blindly? It's almost unbelievable.

Have you ever come to any conclusions to how they could have done that, following blindly like that?

Well, first of all, the German people, they like to march. Since they lost the First World War, they said, we have to-- the next one we have to win. And that had something to do with it, and all the reasons I just gave you. It was very easy. Tell you what. When people have an empty stomach, they do almost anything they're asked to do. I don't have the go through the whole Hitler period, what he promised the people, find jobs, find housing.

Millions of people who wouldn't even question that he would do anything that could harm the country.

Yeah.

I personally, I will never understand that such influential people followed him, that they were taken in by Hitler, and by his--

What do you think of portrayals in the media of the Holocaust? Do you think that-- I mean because nothing can really portray it. And so everything is short of the truth.

You mean what they show on-- well as a fact, a show there was the other day I saw a movie, I think. They have documents. They found pictures.

I mean like when they do like the series they did called Holocaust?

Yeah. I saw it.

And it raises a lot of people's awareness. But I also hear other comments that not everybody really thinks that it's a good enough portrayal, because it can't portray it like it really was.

You don't have any thoughts on that?

No, not really, not. I feel it was very close. My wife, for instance, she couldn't see it any longer, you know?

Did you ever talk to your wife about your experiences?

Oh, yes I did. As a fact, as I mentioned before, we were invited by [NON-ENGLISH] Israel on the 9th of November, the year before to make a speech. So since I'm not a great speaker, I wrote it down. And in the letter, then the rabbi asked us, Rabbi Weiner. There's a group of young people 15, 16-year-old people that would like to interview you. And they did basically the same thing what you are doing now. And I was very pleased about-- not that I'm telling you I was in a concentration camp.

But that young people, that young people show an interest and want to know what was going on.

What question are you asked most when?

When I said, how come you got out of the concentration camp? I would ask the same question. Then normally nobody could get out. As a fact, there is a case here. I don't know if you follow that in the newspaper, that two German Jews here, Drimmer and another one. They just had a man coming from Poland. Did you see that? It was they showed it on television who--

Yes, we interviewed them. Max Drimmer and Herman Shine.

Exactly.

They were in Sachsenhausen 3 and 1/2 years. And then they were sent to Auschwitz.

Exactly.

They escaped from Auschwitz.

Yeah, and now they found the men after 40 years who actually saved their lives.

Right.

Yeah. There were some heroic people. Yeah. We had a lot of non-Jewish people who risked their lives. And you know what happened when they were caught. They were killed on the spot. I mean not everybody. Not everybody was a Nazi. Although naturally lot of people, they had to do it. They had to join the party, otherwise they would have lost their jobs.

Yeah. Did you have very many people show support for you that you remember?

You mean, in Germany?

Yeah.

Well, sure there were people. Don't forget, I was employed, and people our customers, 99% non-Jewish. They wouldn't have come to do their shopping at the place where I was working.

They wouldn't have.

No, if they would have been Nazis, against Jews, they wouldn't have come. They would have bought the merchandise in some other store.

Yeah.

We had people who went to doctors and lawyers, Jewish lawyers and doctors. Sure. In fact, I don't know it fits in. My wife just got an invitation from the city of Frankfurt where she was born to come for two weeks on the 6th of June, bring her husband, in that case I'm her husband, and stay at a hotel. And it was also a sign of they want to show what it comes through. They invite every year 150 people, who are 70, I should say.

So we're going next month to Frankfurt for two weeks. It's completely paid for by the city of Frankfurt. Probably it doesn't fit in our interview here.

Oh, yes it does.

So you can leave it out, if you want to.

No. I didn't know that they did that.

Oh yeah, not only Frankfurt all the big cities too, like Berlin, Munich, Hamburg, the big cities.

I've talked to several people who've had similar offers. In fact, the parents of a friend of mine were offered a sizeable sum of cash reparation, and their attitude is, as they said to me, we wouldn't even fly over Germany.

Listen, you can argue. I know there are people, they don't want anything to do with the Germans. Probably they lost their closest family or whatever the reason was. That doesn't surprise me. And I wouldn't even give anybody an argument, if somebody would say to me, I wouldn't go if they would pay me first class and would let me stay six weeks in a hotel. I can understand that. It was the same thing when they paid to Israel, they made tremendous-- gave tremendous amounts of money and merchandise. Some of the Israelis, as I said, don't want it. Send it back.

And they were in desperate need of whatever they sent. Some, I don't even know if I should call them fanatics. But they are people, they feel what happened in Germany, we first Germany doesn't exist anymore.

How come you don't find it so difficult to go back?

Why? Because I feel that it's a different generation now. As a fact, and Hilda got yesterday, it came, that invitation from Frankfurt, there was a sheet of paper from young teachers. And it said, if she would mind, if those people would interview her. Because they are teachers and they want to tell the children what actually happened, a group of six or eight young teachers. So how can you take a stand against it?

I think the Nazis in Germany now, I think those are the ones who actually were in the war. The younger people, I believe, 90%, 95%, they know what's going on they. They talked about it, and they don't have to try to tell me what happened.

Do you have more questions?

I have some questions. You've told us some of the extraordinary things that happened in your life. I'd like to back way up to the beginning, just to get some background. And could you tell us what it was like, your hometown that you were born and raised, and what your life was like as a child, and what your family was like.

It was a very small place. It was-- I think the whole population was between 1,000 and 1,200.

And what was the name of the town again?

Schenklengsfeld. Shall I?

Spell it out please. S-C-H-E-N-K-L-E-N-G-S-F-E-L-D. It's very hard. My wife who is married for 42 years with me, she still can't spell it or pronounce it.

And what was life like in that town?

That was a little town of 1,200 people about 20%, 25% were Jewish. We had our own Jewish school. It was actually an uneventful life, if you ask me.

And what did your family do?

My father was the owner of a very small store, textile store.

And was your family religious?

My mother was extremely religious. But my dad was conservative.

What's that mean?

Conservative, we have in our religion, we have liberal, conservative, and Orthodox. So conservative is a middle of the road.

So you kept kosher.

Oh, yeah.

You went to synagogue on Shabbat.

Yeah. Yeah. But the real Orthodox they don't not only go and Saturday, they go three times a day, or two times a day, and two times on Saturday. And they wouldn't go out without wearing a hat or woman--

Scarf.

Yeah. I think your talk about Orthodox or conservative and liberal Jews. You can answer that in one question. It would just take days and days.

Now, I believe the young man wants to ask.

Oh, well I just wanted to hear more about your childhood, and anything you might have to say about growing up in that town. What were the relationships like between the Jewish population and the non-Jewish population?

I would say it was good. It was not perfect, but it was good. I mean they patronized the Jewish stores. And it was actually the only thing I could say.

What are your earliest recollections of any kind of anti-Semitic behavior in the environment?

That could happen that somebody made a remark, oh, you are Jew, and it happened.

To you as a schoolchild?

Oh, yes.

Were you chased?

No, I wasn't beaten, no, no. I don't think so. I wouldn't remember that, no.

Did you have non-Jewish friends as a child?

When you say friends, I mean we had young people played with us. Yeah, we played football, what is actually in Germany, that's soccer. And we had Jewish and non-Jewish children together on one team. Yes, I did have.

Did you have brothers and sisters?

One brother.

Older, younger?

He's four years older than I am.

And what was his experience during this period?

Well, he left. I mentioned that before. He left already in 1933 for the simple reason he was working for a bank, and he lost his job. And then he felt it was a good time to leave Germany. And he was definitely right.

What did your parents think about the growing climate of antisemitism? Were they realistic about what was happening?

If I would show you a book here, that is--

Yeah, you can sit in the chair there, and just show us pages.

No, it is actually. You can. [NON-ENGLISH] They sent in 1933, my dad a diploma and some coins. Here's another document. He was in concentration camp. When my mother took him the papers, they had to release him.

This is his specific document?

That is the specific document.

Is his name on here?

Oh, definitely. Kaufman Adolf Richheimer.

Can you sit in the chair and hold that book in your lap?

Yeah.

We can get a shot of it.

Yeah.

What's the name of that book?

That book is-- it's is in German.

Can you hold the cover up so we can see it? OK. And can you read that title for us?

In English or in German?

German, both.

First it is [GERMAN].

OK.

And in English I would translate it, the story of the Jewish community in Schenklengsfeld.

OK.

And--

Where was that book published, in Israel?

No, that was published in our little city where I came from.

After the war?

Oh, very recently, about two years ago.

Very interesting. Why don't you open up to that page of your father's document, and let me just get a quick shot of that. That

Was the synagogue.

I'm just going to hold this here.

Do you want me to hold that? No. That's all right. OK. There you go. Back to you.

I have another one. I want to show you something.

Could you tell us what a typical day was like in Sachsenhausen when you were there?

It was not that good. We had to get up at 6 o'clock. Then they give us for breakfast now either one or two slices of bread, and what they called coffee. I think it was more or less water. And then we had to march, and some people had to wash the windows. So I had to-- they created all kinds of jobs. And by lunchtime here again we had a piece of bread. Twice a day we had-- what is it called when they count the people?

Roll call?

Roll call, yes. And if God forbid, if one was missing, then we had to stand until they found him. In some cases somebody collapsed. It also happened one or two times that they cut out of the concentration camp. And they tried to catch him again.

What did it sound like? What did the camp sound like? What kind of noises did you hear?

You didn't hear very much noise, somebody was beaten, you know.

So, it was quiet.

It was quiet. Well, the SS, they started to insult us, whatever it was. When I'm saying it was quiet, we didn't say very much. We kept as quiet as we possibly could.

Because?

First of all, you never knew. In some cases, they had some of the SR put in the same outfit that we were in. So to find out what was going on between the prisoners.

Spies.

Spies, exactly. We were warned, so we were very careful in that respect.

Was there any cooperation among inmates on any kind of resistance level?

No, no. No, there was no. No, nor that I knew of.

How many weeks were you in Sachsenhausen?

I was in from the 9th of November until the 28th of January.

So about--

Seven weeks.

Seven weeks.

Yeah.

And when you were released, was there a reason given for your release?

Yes. I had to sign papers that I would leave Germany within three months. I signed it, but I really had no idea how to get out. But I felt I signed it, and maybe I would go.

Were you released at the same time as a large number of other people?

At that time, yes, they released more or less all those people who were arrested on the 8th or 9th of November. That was what they called Aktion. Action, you know, 579.

And how many people was that approximately who were taken and then released?

You mean all together? There were some of them that were there are already two or three years before, non-Jews and Jews.

OK. Give me both numbers.

I really don't know I would say, between 1,500 and 2,000.

Were in there total?

Yeah.

And how many people were taken in there on November 8 and 9th?

Maybe 1,000. Here again, those numbers--

Rough numbers.

Yeah. My memory isn't that good. Probably I never knew exactly how many.

And when you were released, were most of these 1,000 people released?

Yes, yes.

At the same day?

No, not about the same day. They could only release a certain amount every, when we cut our-- that actually the release took about four or five hours. First, we had to go and sign papers. And then we had to get our clothes back and all kinds of formalities. So that wasn't that easy.

Did you see inmates of Sachsenhausen killed while you were in Sachsenhausen?

I did not see anybody who was beaten to death. But I saw people who didn't have the right or didn't have any medication and died, heart attacks, and yes.

Were there kapos working in that camp?

Oh, that means--

Jewish supervisors.

Jewish they made, yes, yes. Not in that block where I was living, yes. Definitely.

But not in your block?

No, no. You know what a kapo was? Actually, it was by the Nazis. But usually they were not 100%.

Yeah.

Now you were interned in Sachsenhausen during the year-end holidays, religious holidays.

Yes.

Was there any celebration or acknowledgement?

No, the only thing I remember on Christmas, they did not take us out. We stayed in our barracks for the whole day.

What did it smell like?

You mean the barracks?

The whole place.

I tell you one thing. It was immaculate, clean. It's not like you what you read or saw in Buchenwald, or in Auschwitz. People didn't have any chance to take a shower. No, that was on the contrary. We had to go every second day, take a shower, community shower, 100, 150 people at the same time. And we had a part of this, aluminum part, where we cut our-- or we had to clean it over and over again.

Do you recall any situations where any inmates took any risks to help any other people.

No.

I don't know if I should call it risk. I know there were people depressed, when we had a couple of former-- or there are still rabbis, naturally. They tried to talk to them and say, we will get out of here. Yes, that I saw. But I did not see that one risk his life to save another one.

Did you see any of the opposite? Did you see people turning each other in for special favors.

No, no, no, no. No.

Were the women abused sexually, or any other--

We had no women.

There were no women in that camp at all.

No.

There wasn't a women's half of the camp?

No, no, no.

No.

At least I haven't seen any. No. Now what I'm telling you, that could have been-- I'm sure that changed later you know. Somebody might say that isn't correct. I'm sure after the war broke out, they might have brought women in, because they didn't have enough space.

Yeah.

Could you tell us about arranging for your trip to Shanghai? Could you tell us about the logistics that you went through to arrange the trip, and then what the passage was like on the road at the time?

Well, yeah, first of all, we had to buy or I had to buy a ticket. We then went to Italy. And the name of the boat was the SS Victoria. I think it took about 4 or 5, 4 and 1/2 weeks.

So the boat sailed from where?

The boat goes from Italy, it goes through the Suez.

It sailed from Italy though the Suez Canal?

Yeah, through the Suez Canal. And then we stopped in Bombay, in Singapore. But we couldn't-- I mean we stopped, but we did not have a chance to see all the things for the simple reason we were only allowed to take out 10 marks, 10 German marks. That was the equivalent of $4. And naturally, we were holding onto it, because we knew when we came to Shanghai, there wasn't any money waiting for us.

Did the boat stop anywhere else besides Bombay?

Yeah, in Singapore. There was another. That's about it.

And how many weeks did the boat trip take?

I think 4 or 4 and 1/2 weeks.

And can you tell me what a typical day was like on the boat, and what the boat trip was like?

As far as I remember, mostly Jewish people, Jewish people on that boat. But there was one very famous American. His name was Dr. Schacht. And he was asked to come to Bombay from the government. And he knew what happened to the Jews. And I must say he behaved very, very friendly. You know, once in a while we had a chance to talk to him. Hello, Dr. Schacht. Hjalmar Schacht was his name.

And he was the finance minister, under Hitler. Then they called him to Bombay to--

Wasn't he tried?

You are 100% right. But they couldn't do anything to him.

So--

He was starting tried in the Nuremberg trials. Dr. Hjalmar Schacht. Very well. You must have read quite a bit about it. But he came free as far as I know.

And what contact did you have with him?

I didn't have close contact. He was always eating with the captain of the boat, because he was a great personality. But at times in the afternoon, hello. What is your name? And I didn't have to tell him why I'm here. Because when we came to the concentration camp, or we left the concentration camp, they cut our hair off. And all the people who were on that boat, we knew right away, he must have been at a concentration camp.

Did you or anybody else have any discussions with him?

No, no.

About the exodus of Jewish people?

No, no. No, no. He didn't go that far. Hello, and said a nice and friendly word. I have never seen him talking to people at any length of time.

So you're saying a certain percentage of this boat was Jewish refugees, and another percentage was regular passengers--

Oh, definitely.

--on a commercial line?

Definitely.

And what percentages were Jewish refugees if you guess?

Listen, I don't want to give you-- say more than 50%, maybe 75% or 80%. I mean I didn't take statistics, you know?

Sure. I understand.

That's now, when was it? In '39. And now it's '90.

And how old were you again?

That's 51 years if my German arithmetic is right. Now, do you remember all the things about 51 years ago?

No, I remember very few of them. How old were you at the time?

I was 25. And how many passengers, roughly, would you guess were on this boat?

Oh, that was a big boat, about 1,100, 1,200, Italian boat. It was very good.

And was any Jewish person in Germany in early 1939 able to buy a ticket to get on this boat?

Yes.

Or was it difficult or tricky to buy a ticket?

No, no. No, no. That wasn't. If you had the money at that time, actually the government, they wanted us to get out. Keep whatever you had. In my case, I didn't have very much. But we had some wealthy Jews who left their property, and left whatever, only to get out. And some of them did not for that reason. They felt we want to wait until things calm down, and we can sell our house, and take the money, which was in my opinion very stupid, if I might use--

Even at the time you thought it was stupid?

Sure.

So tell me about your thinking. You were released from Sachsenhausen, and you signed a document saying you must leave in three months. What went through your mind? Did you evaluate different possibilities?

Naturally. As soon as I came out, I went to [GERMAN] means a traveling agency. I said, what can you offer me?

And what did they have to offer?

And they said, listen, if you have an affidavit, with such and such number, you would be able to go-- to get a boat in two or three months. But since I didn't have it, and then there were other possibilities to go to England, work as a domestic worker, you know? But here you needed 1,000 pounds. And 1,000 pounds was about 12,000 German marks, which I didn't have.

However, the only possibility is you buy yourself a ticket to Shanghai. So that's what I did. But we knew already from people who were in Shanghai, first of all, the climate is very tough. You know, it's super humid. And besides. there are very few possibilities for somebody to make a living. But I felt, well, what do I risk?

Yeah.

Where was your brother at?

He was already in Portugal.

In Portugal.

Yeah.

Did you discuss with your parents your options?

No, because when I came out of the concentration camp, I didn't live with my parents. They lived in a different part of Germany.

Did you have any communication with them?

Oh, yes. With the phone. So my parents, as I said before, they went to Portugal, right after the shelter.

Why didn't you go to Portugal?

That's a very good question. The Portuguese government that was under-- I forget the name. He did only get permission to bring his parents in. Theo, Theodor was his name. There were certain rules for immigration office. Since he could prove that his dad was in concentration camp, and reached already a certain age and my mother same thing. So he got a permit to get my parents in.

But he was not able to do something for me. Yeah Portugal, was under Salazar. Salazar was a very mild dictator. You read about Salazar? And as long as-- he made a living over there. But he never became a Portuguese citizen. See, in some countries, contrary to our United States, you cannot become a citizen unless you do something, you are a scientist, or do something special for the country, which would have been great.

So he still kept his German passport to this day.

Really?

And did your brother and your parents stay in Portugal throughout the war?

Oh, definitely. Definitely.

Then what happened to them? You may have answered this question, but I was working with the camera.

What happened to my parents?

Yeah, what happened to your parents and your brother after the war? My parents died shortly-- wait a minute. My parents must have died both in '42 or '43.

Both of your parents?

Both.

In Portugal?

Yeah.

Of what causes, if I may ask, natural causes?

Natural cause. My father was a heart attack before. And my brother, he's there since more than 50 years now.

Your brother still lives in Portugal?

Oh, definitely. Yeah. And what's his business, or what is--

He has a small business, office supply. He visits schools, and offices, and so on.

And so your parents then never saw the end of the war. Is that correct? They died while the war was still going on?

Right, yeah. Definitely.

Do you have communication with your brother now?

Yes. As a fact, we are going see him in end of next month. We went there eight times.

How would you compare his life in Portugal compared to your life in California?

It's a completely different life. Portugal, there isn't as much pressure. For instance, business people, like himself, between 12:00 and 2:00, they closed up the office, meet some friends. They sit on the little cafe, and there isn't-- I'm not saying they're not working. But it's easygoing. There isn't that--

I think we should do that here.

Well, this I don't know.

Me too.

Yeah, so did I.

It's a good thing to emulate.

Yes. But Portugal became a very poor country, since they lost most of their colonies. And when you say, compared to America, you can't compare. There is no middle class. There are a few people who accumulated great wealth. But the majority of the people make very, very little. As a fact, I have a niece, grand-niece. She's a high school teacher. She visited us two years ago. When I figured out how much or how little she made, I couldn't believe it.

Naturally, you can't compare it over there. They have escudos. But still, she was not able from her salary to rent a room and be independent. She still had to live with her parents.

Is your brother pleased with his life?

He is very happy.

He likes it.

He likes it. As a fact, he was also two or three times here. And I said, how would it be--

No, no. I stay in Portugal. The Portuguese people, as a whole, are very friendly, very decent, very honest people.

Does your brother-- does he live as a Jew in Portugal? Is he married to a Jew?

He is not married to a Jew. Naturally, his first wife came from Germany, and it ended in a divorce. And then he married a Portuguese girl, who is not Jewish. But he goes on the-- we call that a three-day Jews. Did you ever hear that expression?

They go on Yom Kippur, you heard that as-- then the two days of Rosh Hashanah. We call them here the three-day Jews. That's as far as his Jewishness goes.

Is he identified as a Jewish person in Portugal?

Yeah, but I tell you. I ask him the same question. The people in Portugal, there is very little difference. They actually-- I don't know if people know. They might know on his accent that he wasn't born in Portugal. But they are not-- there isn't any religious controversy. I don't know what to say.

Does he experience any antisemitism?

Absolutely not. No. No.

Let me ask you the circumstances under which you were arrested and taken to Sachsenhausen. This was during the Kristallnacht period.

Right, shortly afterward.

Were you just walking down the street and were you--

No, no I was at home. I knew then, and I was home, and two policemen came in and arrested me.

Which town was this in now again? Well, I didn't mention it before. Soest, S-O-E-S-T, Westphalia. A little town of about 35,000 inhabitants.

And tell us what happened when you were arrested, where you were, and what you were doing.

First, they took me to an office, and give my fingerprints. I'm not 100% sure. And then we were together with 35, what did I mention before Jews, you know, who came from other parts of that little town. We had absolutely no idea what could happen to us.

So the next morning, two or three of those storm-troopers, how we called them, they come in. [GERMAN], that means get ready. And then they took us to the railroad station, and it was a four or five hour ride to Berlin. And in Berlin, they picked us up at the railroad station, again with big dogs, and drove us to that concentration camp.

Now Kristallnacht went on for a couple of days.

No, no. Because that was actually one day there.

What time of day were you arrested?

That was the 9th of November. I was arrested on the 10th of November.

In what time of day?

I don't know, early afternoon.

And what were you doing in this town? Were you working? Did you have a job? Before, oh definitely.

What sort of job?

I was a-- was a salesman in a department store.

And how many years had you lived in the town and worked at this job? It was '24. In '24 I was 16. Eight years.

And were you married at the time?

No, no, no. No.

And you may have covered this before. Again, I tune in and out a little bit. When you were in Shanghai, what was the step between getting from Shanghai to the United States? Did you go to get a number to emigrate, and get in line and wait for--

Oh, you mean-- no, that was comparatively very easy. Because, first of all, they sent a man who took all our-- well first, we had the chance. There was an organization called UNRRA, that's United Nations Rehabilitation Reorganization Administration. That was in English. So when we called. You come from Germany. What would you like? I think I mentioned that.

So we had three choices-- we go back to Germany, or to America, or to Palestine. Israel at that time was still Palestine.

So most of the people, here again, I don't know the percentage, but I would say offhand between 80% and 90% did go to America. There were some men I knew that their wives were still in Germany. So naturally, they wanted to go back to their family in Germany, and went back to Germany. And some of them had relatives in Palestine. They went to Palestine.

And the ones who went back to Germany that might interest you, were, I would say mostly very elderly people, some judges, some rabbis. And they were right away installed in their old jobs. They could, let's say, somebody was before a judge. As soon as they came back to Germany, they were reinstated. That was part of the agreement that was made.

So this United Nations effort, was that coordinated by the Jewish community?

Yes, that was. That was definitely.

And so at some point, you were how many months were you in Shanghai again?

How many months? I was 8 and 1/2 years, 102 months, 8 and 1/2 years.

8 and 1/2 years.

Does that come 102 months? 8 times 12 is 96 and 6, 102.

Yeah, about that.

Yeah.

In Shanghai--

I'm fast in the ticker, huh?

Yeah, faster than me.

In Shanghai, from what year to what year again, was that?

Well, wait a minute. That was from end of '39 until middle of '47.

I see.

Did I say that before?

So at some time there at the end, the organizational group came and said, where do you want to emigrate to. And did you select the States?

Naturally, yeah, and you contacted your relative, some of them had friends. I had very good friend. His two sisters were living in Australia, in Sydney. So he took the first boat. They sent him the money. And he went to Sydney, Australia.

When you decided you wanted to come to the United States, how long did it take for you to actually-- oh, until like oh, I would say-- wait a minute. That could have also almost take a year, I would say.

Took a year.

Yeah. And you came to San Francisco?

I came to San Francisco, yes.

And what did you do in San Francisco?

In San Francisco, I worked for many years, since I couldn't get anything, for a candy company, a wholesale place here, a candy company. And then later on, I worked 10 years for Woolworth's.

How many children did you have?

We don't have children.

You don't have any?

No. No children.

How did you find adjusting to life in the United States?

How?

How was it to adjust to life in the United States? How long did it take you to learn English?

After you left Nazi Germany and left Shanghai, it wasn't hard at all. So that is an answer I can give you. And I'm sure you understand that. It wasn't hard. No, on the contrary.

Do you talk to many people about your Holocaust experience?

Oh, when they ask me. I'm not-- as I said, my Holocaust experience is in no comparison to the people who later on had to go to Auschwitz and to Treblinka, and do all those things. It was not pleasant, but it is it was also not a miracle that I survived, you know. Because I've never been, as far as I know, in danger that somebody wanted to kill me, give me a good kick. That happened more than once. But that's as far as it--

Have you been to Israel?

Oh, yes. Yeah. Yeah.

How do you react when people say it happened a long time ago. Forget it.

Well, I can only say, you shouldn't forget it. We have in our church, we say you should forgive, but not forget it. That is the slogan our rabbis, our teachers say. Right? You should forgive, but we should not forget it.

So when people tell you to forgive, that's not a problem for you.

Listen, what can I say? There is a well known rabbi, Asha. He was the rabbi of Temple Emanuel. That's the biggest reformed temple, probably on the West Coast. You know where it is? And he was asked for the last four or five years to come to Berlin and give a seminar at the university for young priests, Catholic or Protestant, I don't know.

And you know I had the chance. He comes originally from Germany. And I talked to him. And he said he was very satisfied with the young people, how they reacted. And he feels we should do everything we could do to help them in that respect. He said the young people, they want to know everything. They're interested. In some cases, they even went so far and said, yes, I know. My dad was also in the SS and the SR.

Who said that?

He told us that's what some of those young people said to him.

Yeah, but teaching and getting the message across to young people isn't the same as forgiving the people who perpetrated it.

How can you pick out. Listen, when I go back to that little town I come from, you think I'm able to say, you were Nazi, you were not. If you talk to a hundred people, they say, we didn't know what was going on. Sure, we know that once in a while, the Jew was arrested. But nobody would say, yeah, I know they took him to Dachau or to Auschwitz, or Birkenau, and killed him. Hardly anybody who admits that. And how do I know?

Does the town have any kind of monument or memorial?

Yes. Oh, yes. I would show you that in one minute, in less than a minute, unless you want-- Yes, that is-- I hope I can find it now. By the way, that's a monument where all the people who were killed from our little town, the names and the date.

If you could just hold that out to your left there, I'll get a little shot of that on camera.

This one? Oh.

Well, that's not going to work. Let's see.

Is this a memorial of just Jewish people? Those is yeah, out of those 50 families, how many individuals were killed.

It looks like almost one per family.

Yeah.

Pretty nearly that.

Yeah.

What's it like going back to your hometown?

Well, I'm not going back to my hometown. I told the two ladies here, my wife is invited to come at the beginning of June to Frankfurt where she comes from. And the mayor of Frankfurt invited, I believe between 140 and 150 women, men, to be invited, the guests of Frankfurt.

When did your wife leave Frankfurt?

My wife left earlier than I left, in '36.

And she left because she was Jewish too.

Oh, definitely, yeah.

And her family-- so they had to get out.

Her father was also in a concentration camp. And they were able to go to England first, for a couple of years after he left, and came out of the concentration camp. So in other words, from '39 till '41, and then they came to the United States.

So actually, your wife was a survivor too then?

Yeah, but she was not in a camp.

My wife left a year earlier than I did.

My wife's father was a survivor.

Yeah.

I'm a little confused. Have you ever gone back to your hometown?

Yes, I did.

What was that like?

Oh, people were very nice.

Did the people remember you?

Oh, definitely. Each and every one, and were very nice. But I also was told by the mayor, that guy-- he was very young fellow. They were Nazis, stay away from them.

Did you have any discussions with the townsfolk about the politics?

No, no. The only thing we talked about, they talked about our parents. They did business with our parents.

No. We did not have. And no.

So there were no intense political discussions?

No, definitely not, no.

What were your feelings in going back to the town?

I had mixed feelings about it.

Can you tell us what those were?

Sometimes, and I still feel the same way, should we go back at all? Should we even try to be friendly with those people? And on the other hand, it's a different generation. And so--

So you still feel mixed, it sounds like?

Yes, I am.

Are there any other thoughts that you want to-- or ideas or information you want us to be sure to record on the tape here? Any messages you have for people interested in the period?

Probably, when I go home, then certain thoughts come to my mind. But right now, I really don't know.

You're always welcome to come back, and do another interview with us, if you think of other things.

I'm sure you will cut a few things out, when I didn't answer too clear. On some others you might.

We'll make a copy of the whole tape, and send it to you, so I'll have a record of the whole thing.

Yeah.

And I mean the whole thing will be in the archives.

Yeah, well, that's right. So that is the house that I was born. See, I mentioned before Richheimer. [GERMAN] That is the house, and here it says Richheimer. And that's the synagogue.

Oh, so you were right close to the synagogue?

Yeah. As a fact, that was one piece of property at one time, when a great, great uncle gave that part of that land to the synagogue. Let me hold up so I can get a good shot of that.

Well it says here, you can read my name Richheimer too. That is now where the synagogue was standing. They put in that from the community, you know. It says-- 22 people were killed.

Do you need to turn it off?

No. Are there more things you want to talk about.

No. That's OK, unless he has something to say.

Well, I hope I gave you some information you were interested in. It might not all be what you have expected.

Yes. Thank you very much for the interview.

See, here is something you should know there too. They found some documents what should be done against the Jews. Whenever the name came up of that, Mayor or the SS guy, they blanked it out, for the simple reason their children shouldn't have to suffer from it. They might say, your dad did some, made such and such on such. I first didn't understand that. When they had those-- you know what that is-- a swastika?

And always that was-- it said '99 not '33, see, when it started. But it says-- and what it says, don't buy at the Jewish people. So I was wondering if they want that book downstairs at the library. I would not give up, but I could write them, and they send me a copy.

Yes, I'm sure they would like a copy of the book.

Yeah.