The head and shoulders?

Right here.

OK, so I can wave my arms and--

Yeah.

OK.

I want to ask you, when you were listening to your radio about Hitler, how old were you?

I must have been around 9 or 10 listening. Everybody was listening. The radio was the big thing in those days. I mean, all the latest news was on the radio.

Did you talk with other kids about what you heard?

Not too much, I don't think so. But I was aware of all these things happening. Although I didn't understand them.

You said the day before, I think, that the Germans came in, their planes were flying overhead all day?

All day long, yes, yes, kind of a constant roar. It was a bit intimidating, I think. Or maybe that's what they were trying to do. And then after was some--

So afterwards, they had this plebiscite election. "Do you want Austria to be part of Germany?" If you do, you vote here. If you don't, then you go over there and vote. So 99% were in favor-- surprise, surprise.

Did your parents vote on it? I don't-- I don't think so, because they were Jewish. I don't think--

So could Jews vote in it?

I don't think so, but I'm not really sure.

So the day-- the day went on. The planes were flying overhead the day before. Did you pretty much know the Germans were coming tomorrow?

Well, those were tense situations. Schuschnigg was on the radio appealing to Austrian nationalism. "We all must stand firm" and sounding very patriotic. But in reality, everything is lost already. He was just trying to put on a brave front. And so it was kind of a hope against hope that somehow he'd be able to pull this off. But it was-- So everybody was hoping, but they really knew that it was hopeless.

What kinds of conversations did you have, in your family, that day?

Gee, I don't remember. I should have kept a diary.

Do you remember what you did? Did you go to school? Were you at home? Where were you when you heard the planes?

I was at home when I heard the planes. And the church bells, you could hear all over the city. That was very discouraging, hearing them, because you knew then you wouldn't get any protection from the clergy.

Do you remember anything different in your house that day, your mother doing anything or saying anything?

No, I just remember letter writing. She wrote a lot of letters. And she started immediately writing letters. You know. She made some comments that we have to get out. We can't stay here. So I thought it was very impressive that she saw the future so clearly. Because even in Austria, some people dawdled a bit. And it was a matter of life and death.

So if a visa hadn't come through at that time, we might not have been able to get out, because the war was coming so quickly. Yeah.

Can you describe the next day, the day the Germans came in?

See, I really don't remember those details.

When-- so did you-- do you remember seeing many soldiers?

Not really.

How did you know that it had happened?

How it had happened? On the radio. The radio said, yeah. And Schuschnigg capitulated and read a sad speech. And I think everybody cried, right then. We knew that was the end. That was the end. So it was the end of Austria and also the end of the Jewish life in Austria, so it was kind of a double loss.

Before that, well, they knew Hitler was on the march. But the previous prime minister had some kind of treaty with Mussolini. He was an Italian-style fascist. So there was a hope that Mussolini would not allow this to happen, because Austria was kind of under his wing at that time. But he didn't do anything.

What do you remember of the Nazis in Vienna before Germany came in? Were there many? Did you see them?

After, there were a lot of what they called illegal illegal Nazis, who joined the Nazi party, probably out of hope there'd be more jobs because of the terrible unemployment. As I mentioned earlier, those turned out to be the more decent ones, because they had some principals and some idealism. Even though it was misplaced idealism, it still was some idealism.

The worst ones were the opportunists who joined overnight. And imagine, the parents of those kids that wrote the swastikas were of that type.

So what changes did you see overnight?

Well, the kids that were my friends were no longer my friends. That was a big, big shock.

Can you talk more about that?

I don't-- unfortunately, I don't have a good memory. I just remember the events and how I felt about them.

What happened in the school? I thought you were talking about that kids that were in your class and how they treated you differently.

Yes. Right. See, and then all the Jewish kids were supposed to go to some other schools, some special schools. And I remember, once, there were other kids waiting outside, and they beat up the older students. And I remember my mother saying, well, you should always remember this, this thing what happened here.

And then she thought it was too dangerous for my brother and me to go to school. And she was probably right. So I spent a lot of time at home, not going out too much.

How soon after they came in did you stop going to school?

I think all this happened pretty quickly. I can't know how many weeks or it happened, but very quickly. And all these other things happened very quickly-- the ban against Boy Scouts. And all other organizations, all of a sudden, became illegal. It was a really, really a very monolithic dictatorship, only. Only the Nazi party, that was the only thing. Everything else was verboten.

Oh, I think I heard some Zionists met, kind of clandestinely, in secret, in Vienna. I knew about that. So there was some people preparing to go to Palestine, Israel. And there was some training going on.

But we had to be very careful. And then I remember hearing a lot of stories, what happened to this person, what happened to that person. So there were all these stories going around.

And it all seems bizarre to me, because it seems so chancy, though, just some neighbor, someone who didn't like them and turned them in. I mean, it could be any, so you never knew. Maybe you've offended somebody, unwittingly or somebody has a grudge against you. And that was often enough to get you killed. So you can feel the uncertainty of living, kind of living from day to day, because you didn't know what would happen.

Although, I remember there was a lot of camaraderie among the Jews. There were endless jokes about the Germans, about Hitler and Goring and things. So I think people were in very good spirits, at least, even though they knew what was happening.

And then, even in New York, people still told us wonderful stories and jokes. And then as people became more successful, that disappeared, which I thought was a shame. And also, that kind of bonding that took place among people. Like in New York, people would meet over a nickel cup of coffee, and they'd sit around and talk and socialize. And then gradually that stopped.

These wonderful cafeterias where people met, the kind that Singer writes about, a little cafeteria. And coffee was really cheap even for immigrants. A nickel a cup of coffee, and you could sit a long time. Guess those cafeterias are all gone. I hope somebody write down all those wonderful stories and jokes.

Did your maid stay with you up until you left?

Yeah. She stayed. She was very decent. Yes. She was a devout Catholic. And Nazism didn't fit into that. So there were some people who objected. It's hard to know how many, because they were invisible. So, but there were some.

Do you remember hearing about the Gestapo? Yes. Everybody knew about that. Yes.

Do you know when you heard it ?

I think we might have heard, actually, before Hitler marched in, already. Because it was happening in Germany. And those stories stories got out. And as I mentioned, the book that was being circulated, so they mentioned it.

And there's a wonderful story about Freud. So Freud was in trouble with the Gestapo. They arrested his daughter. And they finally released her because all the pressure from America.

And then finally, they asked him, before leaving, to write some kind of a disclaimer before leaving. And he wrote, I can highly recommend the Gestapo to everyone. Lucky, the Germans didn't catch that. So a lot was known.

Did you see the SA?

Yes, I saw them on the street, SA and the SS.

How did you feel when you saw them?

I think I stayed away from them. But it was pretty common knowledge about.

Did--

And people knew about the struggle between the SS and the SA, and Hitler wiping out a good part of the SA. All of that was known. So people were, I guess, pretty aware of what was happening.

And everybody read the newspapers a lot. And they were wondering what the other countries would do. Would England or France or America do anything? Of course, they didn't.

Did you know other people, besides the person that you mentioned, who committed suicide?

Just my uncle, this one uncle, and then one uncle in Italy, he might have committed suicide. One of those cases where you hear different stories from different people, and you don't really know what happened.

He was supposed to be involved with some woman over there or something. And there was a lot of stories about these things. But everybody had a different story.

In mentioned earlier in the conversation, people tried to cover up and hide unpleasant things. So nobody want to have a black sheep in the family, so all these things tended to be hidden. And I think that's a shame, because, at least for me, those are the most interesting people.

But I mention this uncle, who committed suicide, and he was an alcoholic. And the family said, well, it's all because he had bad companions. So we blamed it on somebody else. But the thing what really happened? He was the second son. And the first son got all the attention. So in a large family, I think he fell between the cracks. Nobody paid much attention to him.

So, some people think large families are wonderful. But in that family, not much attention was placed on any kids, so they had to raise themselves. They played by themselves. They formed little groups by themselves. That's my mother told me about that.

She had a favorite brother. And he was very imaginative. And he invented games for them. He was a very creative person. He was a very creative chemist. And in Austria, he was able to live on the royalties of his inventions. And when he came over here, he worked for various companies. And he was a brilliant inventor but a terrible businessman.

So at first, he thought, oh, this company is wonderful. This is going to be different. And then, of course, they just always took his inventions, and he quit, and he started over again. I don't think he was really ready for American life. Probably wasn't tough enough.

But he was a wonderful person. Really, I think he was the most creative person I've ever met. I remember, my wife and I stayed with him on a trip to Europe. And every morning, he made coffee in a different way. So even in small things, he had all this creativity, ingenuity.

So I think the Austrians lost a lot of talent when they expelled the Jews. And let's see, when I was back in New York a few years ago, they had a special memorial for all the talent that was lost. They had kind of a moving band on the floor with names of the people on them.

And there was also a book given out of all the artists and writers and other people. It had a wonderful title, too, something [YIDDISH] or something, "The Driving Out of Reason," something like that. So I'm glad there was some recognition among the Austrians about what they lost. So I think, at least among government circles, there is some awareness and some attempt to really give justice to the contributions of others.

I get the an Austrian magazine called RotWeissRot, RedWhiteRed. And they have articles about Austria. And they also have articles about immigrants, including some who came to America and made good. So pleased to see that. Although from what I hear, there's still an awful lot of antisemitism among the people.

What did you know about the concentration camps?

Let's see. Well, the one uncle, who was arrested, was sent to Dachau. So, we didn't know much detail, but, after he got out, he told us all these stories. But it was generally known what was going on but not in detail.

Did you know other people who were taken away?

Let's see. No, he was the only one I knew about. But we knew, in general, that there were massive arrests. And I'm not sure if we knew all the concentration camps. There were so many, I'm not sure we knew all of those. But we knew about Dachau, which was fairly close. It's near Munich, which is very close to Austria.

Why was he picked up and taken away?

Oh, yes, this was on Kristallnacht, when they were burning a synagogue. He muttered something under his breath, and somebody overheard him. And that was it. So, you say the wrong things or look at someone the wrong way or somebody dislikes you, it would be trouble.

What do you remember about Kristallnacht?

Well, I remember that we-- see, I remember, that was the incident when they came and searched the apartment. That was really frightening and such a close call, almost finding my father's service revolver, I think. I think if they found that, I wouldn't be here. For a Jew, having a weapon, that was really terrible.

Do you remember hearing a lot of noise?

I think I heard stories about what's happening from other people. They really did a lot of damage in the Jewish section that I mentioned earlier, Leopoldstadt, that I think we concentrated there. So they smashed a lot of windows and arrested people. They burned synagogues, so I think they really bore the brunt of it.

And then they went around. I don't know, they must have a list of all the Jews, because yeah, they went around all the Jewish homes. And again, it's a matter of luck if the people searching were a good mood, you were OK. If they were in a bad mood, then they might find something they disliked.

And we also had a lot of copies of the Fackel. This was kind of a radical newspaper put out by Karl Kraus. And if the people searching had been a bad mood or had known about it, that might have gotten us into trouble.

So a lot of little chances, a lot of things you don't think about, too. I mean, something may seem very harmless to us, may seem dangerous to the Nazis or forbidden.

Do you remember what it was like in your neighborhood the next day?

Let's see. I remember they burnt my synagogue. I remember that and hearing all these stories. That was really the beginning of the more, massive persecution of the Jews. That was really the incident that set it off or that they used as an excuse.

Did you talk about it in your family?

Oh, yes, we talked about it. But I don't remember the details though. Remember, it's a little over 50 years now. I remember when they celebrated the 50th anniversary.

Do you remember being afraid to go outside after that?

I don't remember No, I don't remember that. No. As a kid, I was pretty foolhardy. I think I didn't worry about these

things. I think all kids think they're immortal, nothing can happen to you. And we do foolish things. Certainly, I wouldn't do go to a Nazi rally now. That certainly was a foolish thing to do.

You talked about your mom starting to write letters.

Right.

But how did your other Jewish friends' families react?

I think they all tried to get out. I'm not sure they were quite as energetic as my mother. She started immediately, to write letters immediately. They might have procrastinated more. So, a hard thing to face up to, plus it was so hard to do, too. You had to go through all that terrible paperwork. You have to get this paper from this bureau and that paper from some other bureau. They made it very difficult to get out.

Do you remember how neighbors and former friends and business associates reacted responded to the new German laws?

I don't really, know. I think I was too young to pay too much attention to that. I just knew how my family reacted.

You talked about one incident where you saw German soldiers in the street.

Yeah, they were dragging some Jews off somewhere.

Did you see that on more than one occasion?

I just remember that one occasion. And it was a real, real shock to see that. I'm not sure they were soldiers. I don't remember what kind of uniforms they had on.

How did you feel?

Well, it was terrible, of course, yes. And of course, you heard all these stories that they made Jews scrub the street with toothbrushes and things like that. So they really harass people-- torture them, actually. And look, potentially, they just grabbed whoever they wanted. So everybody knew about that.

Then once they arrested people, and they made them stand in the cold for long hours, and I think things of that kind. Some people got very sick afterwards.

How did your friends and neighbors respond to your mother's plans to emigrate?

I don't really know. I don't know. I can imagine, but I don't really know. Everybody was talking about that. They were talking about what to do, where to go, how best to do it. So there were a lot of different escape possibilities.

Did you know non-Jews as well as Jews who were planning to leave?

No, I didn't.

Do you remember talking about it with an other family than your immediate family?

No. I just remember when my immediate family talked about it. In the long afterwards, here, were all the different sagas of how we got out, people got out, and what countries they went through. And each family had an interesting story to tell, some happy-- happier than others.

The ones who went to Italy did pretty well. The ones that went through France or had to go through France did not as well, because the French were more antisemitic and less helpful.

Did your family ever think of going to Palestine?

They didn't, no. Yeah. I don't know why, but they-- I thought afterwards, suddenly, what would have happened if we'd gone on to emigrate to Palestine and been part of that movement. Because I was certainly very strongly in favor of that. But that time, I didn't think about it. My family didn't even think about it.

My impression was that there weren't very many Zionists, there, at that time. We just heard about a few. And we heard about these groups meeting and stories about my cousin. He was considered sort of a misfit. He was a tailor's apprentice. And the story was he played cards with the tailor instead of studying his training. So, but he turned out to be the smart one.

How did your mother go about selling your possessions?

Let's see. I think she gave most of it away to people. Like the very loyal servant, she gave a lot of things-- whatever she wanted.

Did she thinks she would ever get them back?

No. It was a gift. Oh, no, she was too sensible to think that. And so we could take some things, but the furniture, of course, was too heavy, so we gave all that away and took some clothes along. But of course, most of it turned out to be useless, because people wore different style. So we really had to start over when we came over here.

Did your mother ever think that she would return to Vienna?

Never. Never. I think-- I know that she said, when she saw Jewish students being beaten up, I think she said, if you ever get homesick for Vienna, think about this.

I think it would be hard for her to go back to Vienna, maybe harder even than for me, because she knew more about what's happening. And she knew more about her friends being killed and family being killed.

So you were saying that your brother stood in line to get papers?

Various kind of papers-- you had to get clearance from different bureaus.

Did your--

And each one had a separate line, so it took days and days and weeks to do that.

Did your mother stand in line, also?

She didn't, no, mainly my brother. And there was some professional line-standers, too, people who did it for money. So that was a real ordeal. I heard a lot about that, you know, waiting and waiting and waiting in line. They made it as difficult as they could.

Did she think that you could get out or doubt that you couldn't get out?

Oh, she was-- I think she's always hopeful. At least, she always put on a good front. Yeah, I think she was optimistic. And I remember, when we were over here, following the war in Europe and when Hitler was making all these advances, and she was always sure that he would be defeated. So she had generally an optimistic temperament.

Were there other people who were standing in line who wouldn't get their papers at that time?

I don't know about that. I think it's probably a good thing that my mother thought we could get out, otherwise she

wouldn't have worked so hard. If she had thought it was hopeless, then she wouldn't have written all the letters and done all those things. So she's a very strong person.

And she told me, one of the friends of my father's, at the bank, talked to her and said, my dear, Mrs. Brunn, what are you going to do in America with two kids and no money? So he tried to talk her out of going, because he saw the difficulties and losing the pension, of course.

So she was aware of what was facing her, but she went anyhow. I think she didn't really think there was any choice-- either get out or be killed.

Did she ever consider splitting up the family?

This was suggested to her by, I think, one of the Jewish agencies. And she absolutely refused. Good for her. She was very strong. I mean, the family was her main thing in life, keeping the family together, seeing that we got an education.

So, I remember growing up, it was always assumed that my brother and I would go to college, to university. In fact, I didn't know that I had any choice. It was just sort of understood. The only problem was how to do without any money. But she was certain we'd go to college.

Did she have plans for how she would support you once she got to America?

Not really, no. So, I think that was very hard. The first few years were very difficult. Those jobs were pretty miserable. And I think she got some kind of allergy from some of the dust and things.

So I think, when she lived in New York, she was never completely well. And I remember she thought of going into the diamond cutting business, which was a well-paying profession. But it turned out she was allergic to the diamond dust, so.

Did she tried to bring any other relatives with you?

No. None of them. They were all pretty independent. And they all kind of went their separate ways. Some went to England, some went to Italy. I had an aunt who had gone to America earlier. And it was fairly typical, at that time, to send one or two of the kids to America, because there were so few jobs in Austria.

So it was lucky for us. We had an uncle who had lived here a long time. He, I think, emigrated in the '20s. And my aunt, the next-- my mother was the youngest. And the next youngest also came to America before Hitler.

And so we heard stories about America. But really, they were just-- we really didn't know what it was like and all this. Heard kind of extreme stories about America, you know?

What did you hear?

The Goldene Medina, on one hand you know, and then it was such a terrible country, with no culture and so forth. And so these wide-ranging viewpoints-- all wrong. And really, it feels they generally underestimated America in Europe. But you didn't realize that until much later.

So I think she had a very good eye and understanding, of what's going on and seeing things, and kind of a large view of things. Even though most of our time was spent in just making a living in this terrible job, she still had a kind of a bigger outlook.

How did you feel when you knew you were leaving?

I don't remember that. But I do remember when I crossed the Swiss border. That was so wonderful. It was really such a great feeling of relief.

So you took the train?

Took a train? Yes, through Switzerland and then through France. I think we spent a day in Paris, then we switched trains and went to Cherbourg. And then we took a British boat, from there, to New York.

I remember the boat ride. It was strange. It was White Star Line-- a very, very nice boat. And they served us grapefruit for breakfast. I had no idea how to eat that. So that was a real-- didn't see that in Vienna. So a lot of details that were strange.

Details that were strange?

I thought that was strange, yes.

What other details were strange to you?

Let's see, strange? Try to-- Of course, how people dressed, it was so different.

What were they wearing on the ship?

I don't remember now about that. I think I used to wear knickerbockers. And nobody wore knickerbockers.

What class did you travel?

I think just tourist class, I think. I think so. We had enough money to buy tickets, but we just couldn't take any money with us. So, we were just as glad to spend the money rather than giving it to the Germans.

How long was the trip?

It was about a week, and pretty stormy-- hit some winter storms. This was December. I remember being seasick on the ship. It was too bad, because they were showing all these new movies coming over to America. So that was-- And every night, there was a movie. They were showing some Hitchcock films. I remember The Lady Vanishes. But I never found out how it ended, because I get seasick.

So that was a very pleasant ride. And I remember, it was very elegant ship.

What else did you do besides watch movies?

Movies? Walk around the deck and look at the ocean. And then seeing the Statue of Liberty, that was also a thrill coming into New York Harbor. And then we had to go through immigration. But it wasn't too bad, because we had all the papers. And my uncle was there waiting for us, so he could smooth things over.

Who were the passengers? Was it mostly Jews or was it mixed?

See, I don't remember.

Did you make friends with other kids?

I don't know. No.

Did the staff treat you well?

Yes. Very well.

Did you know if they were German?

No, it was a British ship. so they were-- British ship, White Star Line there. They were very professional. They were. And the passengers? I don't think they cared what kind of passengers we were.

How long were you on Ellis Island ?

Oh, not at all. We just walked through it, because we had all the papers, legal papers. That went very quickly.

So then did you go with your uncle?

No, we stayed in some special housing. One of the Jewish agencies had some special houses for immigrants. So we stayed there, I don't know, a couple of nights, two or three. Then my mother found an apartment pretty soon.

How did she have the money to rent the apartment?

I think she got some money from my uncle in the beginning. Although-- so he supported, but in the beginning, but not afterwards. She was independent when she started working.

How did she decide where to live or how did she find an apartment?

Let's see? Well, the Manhattan West Side was where everybody went. So I don't know how they figured that out. But everybody-- it seemed to be the neighborhood for the new immigrants.

So where did you live on the West Side?

On the West Side? Eventually, 101st Street and Manhattan Avenue-- a very interesting neighborhood. It was very mixed. There were Italians and Irish and Spanish and not too many Blacks. Blacks were a little bit over in Harlem.

And people talk a lot about the good old days, but they had street gangs in those days in New York. And they were along ethnic lines. That was each nationality had their own different street gang. But it wasn't as violent as now. People didn't have guns.

But it was a rough city. I remember, I got held up once at knifepoint. I think it was in Central Park, so these things were happening. I don't think I paid much attention to that. I thought that was a part of city life.

And then I had a laundry route in the neighborhood. I forgot what it was. I forgot, was it nickel or package or $0.25 a package, something. Anyhow, I saved up a little money. And going to Harlem was dangerous at that time, too, already. I think I got-- I got roughed up there once, too. So I think New York has always been a tough city, particularly for the poor.

Some things I think were better. The subway was only a nickel, I remember, and you could ride all over the city for a nickel. And nobody was afraid of going on the subway. It was safe. It was hot and crowded but safe.

And then gradually, as people became more prosperous, they moved away from Manhattan, from Midtown Manhattan to Washington Heights, and then eventually to Long Island and other places. So it was a gradual moving outward.

So the community lost its cohesiveness, people spread apart. It was difficult to visit. And so generally, people lost touch with each other.

As I mentioned earlier, there was wonderful cohesiveness at the beginning. People met at the cafeteria and chatted and told jokes and shared stories. I mean, gradually, as people became more prosperous, that disappeared.

I think if I'd been a little older, I think I would have written down some of those stories and some of the jokes. I

remember, as a kid, I thought they were really great, particularly the jokes.

So people didn't have much money, but they had good spirits. And so it was kind of a lot of exuberance there. And when we got more prosperous, that disappeared. And I think we got more caught up with the everyday problems and our own personal lives. So I thought it was a big loss.

And see, we read. There was a German-Jewish newspaper, which everybody read, called the Aufbau. And I think, at one time, it was a pretty good paper. It's still being put out, but there are hardly any readers left, so papers decline. So that was kind of a common bond, too. Everybody read that paper. And I think I think one of my cousins still takes the paper. Yes, maybe. I'm not sure she reads much, but maybe out of sentimental value she still takes it.

Did you talk, in your family, about what had happened?

We talked more about the ongoing war, what's going on. We followed the battle zones. And we did that very, very closely. Hitler's advances, we kept track of that. And there was a lot of discussion about that.

People didn't talk much about the past. They were worried about whether Hitler would win. I remember different people had different views. I had one aunt who thought Hitler would win. And she would argue with my mother. And my mother would argue with her.

But my mother was always certain that Hitler would be defeated. And then she would quote some German proverb or something like that. And let's see.

We spoke German at home. And then when she got more profession, she wanted to speak English. But I wanted to speak German so as not to forget the language. But she learned. She learned English. And she read in English, a lot-- mostly in English-- and with a bit of an accent, but very, very proficient.

And then I think she read, probably, more English book than German books, and a lot-- and a lot of French books, too. So she had a really lively intellectual life, even though she worked at these crummy factory jobs.

She was also a big music fan. She loved classical music. And I think she was a great Mahler fan. I mean Mahler was still very new and strange.

What did you know about what was happening to Jews in Europe?

Let's see. We knew about the concentration camps. But we didn't know about the death camps. But we knew my grandmother was in Theresienstadt. And I remember getting a letter from her. I wrote her, and she wrote back. But of course, she couldn't say anything. They were all censored. So we knew that they were over there. And that was pretty grim.

But death camp, we didn't know about that. I remember afterwards, there was a Pole, who escaped from Auschwitz, who went over here. And he tried to tell people about it. And I think he talked to Rabbi Weiss and to Frankfurter, but they either didn't believe him or they didn't want to do anything. But we didn't know about it personally until much later.

How did your mother find her job?

I don't really know. But one thing better than now, there were jobs available. They weren't great jobs, but there were jobs available-- unskilled jobs available. I mean, I think that has probably changed a lot.

Why did--

And the other thing was there was no welfare in those days, then, either. You had to make it on your own. I think the person who sent the affidavit had to make a statement that he or she is responsible for us. But my mother was too proud and that. So she made it on her own.

When did you start going to school in New York?

Almost immediately. And it was a big mishmosh because, first, they put me in a lower grade, because I didn't know English. And then they jumped me up to another grade, so I sort of was moved around a lot.

But school seemed very easy compared to the gymnasium. Only, the social life was difficult, but the academic life was easy.

Were there other kids, that you went to school with, who had come from Europe?

I didn't know any, no.

How were you treated by the other kids?

Well, in the elementary school, as I mentioned, I got into a lot of fights because I looked different, I think. But later on, when I went to Bronx Science, it was no problem. And of course, in college, there was no problem.

Of course, by then, I spoke pretty good English. I was able to dress like a native. It's surprising how big a difference those little things make, particularly for, I think, young kids who are very conscious of wanting to look like everybody else. If someone looks different, then something's wrong. And of course, I didn't know about that.

How long did it take you to learn English?

Well, actually, I learned to read very fast. But I remember-- let's see, I read-- I think through reading Mark Twain, reading Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, that was my English teacher.

But pronunciation was very difficult for me. Took me a long time, because there are no real rules. So you have to learn each word by itself. So that took me a long time.

And especially, there's some sounds which are very hard, very different, like the T-H sound. And the Rs are very different. Instead of rolling them in the back, you pronounce them in the front of the mouth. So I had to work on that long time. And it took-- I think, in school, I took special speech classes to practice that. I worked with a teacher on that. So I was very conscious of that.

But reading came very-- it was easy. And reading the newspapers was very easy. So I was a big reader. And I used the public library a lot, because, of course, we didn't have any money to buy books. So I checked out a lot of books from the library.

So I read Mark Twain. And then I also read a lot of adventure stories. I think, gradually, my taste changed, I think, to science fiction, and then to detective stories, and eventually to literature.

So I always feel my students, I don't care what they read as long as they read something. Because once you read something, then you can always change to read something different. But if you don't read, then it's very hard to students to read.

So I'm a big fan of the public library. That was a large part of my education So we're glad that Sally, my wife, Sally, put in so much effort. That was one her major efforts. And she worked a lot on building the new main library, too. She was much involved with that. And a new book that came out about the library, there's a side column, sidebar with her picture in it. So I was very pleased with that.

Although, one thing I should mention that seems kind of strange. When I was going with Sally, I was a bit worried about marriage. Because she came from such an American family. She could have been a Daughter of the American Revolution if she had wanted to. But she-- So I said, you should join them and subvert them.

So I wonder. I was kind of a little bit worried how it would be received in the family. But it turned out, it didn't make any difference. Because my mother and her mother got along really well. Even though they grew up in different continents, they had the same values. They both had kind of Victorian views. So that was really nice. That was a happy experience.

So there never was any problem. And we got along really well with my mother-in-law. Despite all those mother-in-law jokes, I think she was a wonderful person. And she was a big reader, too.

So some of these are cultural things. Maybe, there may be superficial difference. But I think probably values are the real important things, what things are important. So Sally and I, we never had many things. But she didn't have to work, so she could do what you wanted to do. So I think-- So I was glad that we could live on one income, you know, and do well.

How long could you stay in that first apartment?

In New York?

Yeah.

Not-- I don't remember, not too long. Maybe-- And what happened, every fall, there was a moving season in New York. And you wouldn't believe that, there was a surplus of-- a surplus of housing. And in order to get tenants, the landlords offered a first month rent-free and a new paint job. It was wonderful. So we moved around a lot. And then she finally found this apartment that she liked.

And where was that?

20 West 101st Street. See, I remember. And I went back and visited a few times. And it first it turned into a slum, was a dangerous, dangerous slum, and then it became fancy apartments. So, we wouldn't be able to live there now.

How long did your mother stay there? Let's see. It was quite a few years she was there. And then, see, my brother and I, after the army, both went out to California. And then she followed us out. She wanted to be where we were.

And it turned out to be very good thing for her, because the climate was so much better. And she was, as I mentioned earlier, she always was sick in New York. She could never get really well.

Those were the days with no air conditioning, so people went to all night movies to get cool or slept out in the park. And I think she was really happy living in San Francisco. We had a big circle of friends.

And she did volunteer work for the Sierra Club. You know, very independent, she lived by herself until she died. She didn't want to be a burden to anybody. I have a lot of fond memories of her. And she got along well with Sally, too, so that worked out surprisingly well.

After Bronx Science, did you join the army?

I went to St John's College, Annapolis, which is kind of a great book school. And the main reason I went there is because my brother had gone there. And he'd told me about it. And also, I got a full scholarship. so I could manage to go, with a scholarship, with a certain amount of work. And then I was drafted from there.

So I stayed in the army. It was duration plus six. So just before the end of the war, in April 1945, I was drafted. Just a couple of days before Roosevelt died, I remember that.

And then I wanted to go overseas, but they army didn't send me, wouldn't send me. Probably, if I'd said, above all, don't send me overseas, they would have sent me.

And then, after the army, I went out and I went to Berkeley. I heard a lot about the physics department. And although, I'm not sure, I think their reputation is undeserved. They were good at building things and doing research, but they didn't pay much attention to undergraduates. So I was very disappointed in that, especially having been in a small school, which was small class and very personal.

But by the time I realized what it was really like, it was too late. I was established at Berkeley for the jobs and things, and I knew the system. And I liked the students a lot. They're really great students. And I lived in a student co-operative, which I really enjoyed.

And one thing, I was struggling. Very different, the idea of cooperation with other students is really very strong in Europe but not strong over. Here, the emphasis is on individual achievement. And also there was more working together.

So like the co-op people, people lived together-- very egalitarian arrangement. And also, they had no discrimination against Jews or Blacks. At that time, a lot of fraternities still discriminated. So that has really changed.

And I also remember, back East, the school-- in New England, there was a lot of discrimination. They had a special code, like church is nearby. And everybody knew what that meant. But that, I think that all changed, I think, in the '50s. So I think some things have gotten better.

So, I haven't felt much antisemitism in America. There was one job, which I lost, because I think I was Jewish. But that was about the only thing I can remember. You know, even my regular work in the job-- so I've worked for the radiation lab-- it didn't make any difference in the work. And the industry didn't care. They're teaching this, certainly. They don't care.

How did your brother pick St John's?

I don't really know. I don't know how he heard about it. So I'll have to ask him. And as I mentioned, at St John's, I really got to know him better. And I was so surprised that we had things in common. I always thought I was being completely different. Plus, of course, we were a little older, you know?

When you were drafted, where did you go

I was in the infantry, Fort Blanding, Florida, and then various other places. That was a time when we were drafting everybody. We were drafting people with punctured eardrums and poor eyesight, heart troubles. If you could walk past the doctor, they took you. So I guess I was probably one of the healthiest ones who was drafted. I was in really good shape then.

What was it-- what was it like being in the army?

I really hated it. I thought it was kind like a prison, I thought. So. And there was some antisemitism in the army, I think. Yeah, I noticed it there.

So I think there are pockets of antisemitism in this country. And I think, I know some people talk a lot about it, and they're worried about this. But I think it's not a big worry here.

If you could have gone overseas, would you have felt differently being in the army?

The front line?

If you could have gone? You asked to go overseas.

Yes, yes.

If you had gone overseas, would you have felt different about being in the army?

I think so. I would have felt useful. Yeah. And I did want to fight the Germans, so. Kind of the last of the good wars, so I felt very different about that war than the Vietnam War. I wouldn't have gone in the army. The Vietnam War, I would have been a conscientious objector or gone to Canada, something like that.

But the Second World War, I didn't really mind very much being drafted. I think, originally, I wanted to enlist in the navy, but they wouldn't take me, because I'm colorblind. I don't know why it makes any difference, but apparently felt that was important. Of course, the army didn't care.

How did your father deal with coming to America?

Let's see. I think he probably did really well. He was a wonderful student, as I mentioned. They were always comparing me to him. I could never quite live up to that.

And then he had a harder time in the army. He was at Anzio, in the invasion at Anzio, in Italy. And he got very sick. He got some kind of dysentery that was very hard to get rid of. But I think he got out of his hospital bed to be part of the invasion of France, then.

And then, when he got back, he was in the special GI Bill, disability GI Bill. And that was enough to enable him to go to Stanford, which probably nobody-- probably couldn't afford now. He applied to both Berkeley and Stanford, and Stanford took him first, so he went to Stanford. And as I mentioned, he did really well in school. He was in the student paper. And he never had to study until he went to law school. And then he said he worked very hard.

And then later, he lost. He lost the memory. It was too bad. Because I think a lot of doing well in school depends upon memory. Except places where you have to-- it wouldn't help in mathematics or in law. So he did pretty well.

Then after law school, let's see? Well, before this, I think he wanted to be a journalist. And he tried it out. And it wasn't like the movies. And then I think he worked as a statistician, and then he went back.

He went back to law school. And he worked private practice for a while. And he did a lot of work for the consumers, setting up the consumer program for Brown, for Jerry Brown. And then he was appointed a judge in-- for Berkeley/Albany. And he worked there maybe about 20 years or so, and then he retired.

When you first came to America-- did you have much Jewish identity when you first came here? Did you become--

I felt more like a-- people treat me more like an Austrian than a Jew. I didn't really have much Jewish identity. And we didn't belong to any synagogue in New York.

And my mother was really mad at this one Jewish Agency, because they wanted to separate us. I forgot which one it is now. So we didn't have much contact with the Jewish community-- pretty much.

Though, I think we had kind of the feeling that the Russian Jews, they resented us. And In particular my uncle's second wife, I think, felt that way. Why didn't we work as hard as she did, that sort of stuff. I think so, there was a-- I think it was a clash between these generations of immigrants.

When did you meet your wife-to-be?

It was in 1963.

And did you court for a long time?

Not very long, because, see, I was willing to just go along. And I remember my mother saying, what are your plans? So

I don't know. And Sally doesn't care. And then she said, oh, women think differently about this.

And then it turned out, we got together on, I think, March 31st/ and then she started to cry and wanted to know what my intentions were. So then we decided to get married on the first Sunday after school was out. Because it really didn't make much difference to me, but it made a big difference to her.

The thing is it probably made a big difference to her family, too, and my family. I think both the mothers were pretty conventional. So they were very happy.

My mother was very happy, because she had given up on me ever getting married. So she was thrilled. And Sally was pretty old, too. I think she was 34, which is getting on. So that worked out really well.

So after Berkeley, then what did you do?

Then I worked in industry, in electronics, for about eight years. And then I got out. I was unhappy there, partly because we were doing so much defense work. And I was an early peacenik, already, in the '50s. So I felt this terrible conflict doing one thing in the daytime and doing something else at nighttime and being pulled apart. So I had to resolve it in some way.

And also, I didn't get along. I didn't get ahead in the company. Because I wasn't willing to be a company man. To get ahead, you had to do things which I really didn't want to do. So eventually then, I quit. Also, the work I was doing there wasn't really what I wanted to do. I wanted to do research. And I was in the design branch.

Well, anyhow, I quit. And then I decided to take a trip around the world. I didn't know what I was going to do. And I thought somehow I'd get this great inspiration when I was traveling. And of course, I didn't and had to make up my mind when I came back.

But one thing it did for me, it made engineering seem pretty irrelevant after seeing the what goes on in the world, seeing the poverty and the problems. So doing this fancy, high-tech stuff really had no relevance to the lives of most people.

So I decided not to go back in engineering. And then I had a-- Funny, when I was growing up, I never thought about teaching, because I didn't know any teachers. So I never had any role model. I didn't know what a teacher was like or what a teacher did.

And all my uncles were all engineers and chemists, so those were my role models. So I thought I'd go into engineering or physics. But I met a lot of teachers along the way. And I think they had a big influence on me.

I was really impressed by the dedication of some of these teachers. So then I decided to go into teaching, but I really didn't know what that was like. I'd done a little bit of tutoring, but I'd never actually done any teaching.

So I remember my first day in the classroom. I looked at the students. And the students looked back at me. And nobody knew what to expect. That was, looking back, a really funny moment. But it worked out really well. I got to really enjoy it.

The students said I paced a lot before I was married. Paced up and down, up and down. But then I got over that. And I really feel useful as a teacher. I didn't feel useful as an engineer.

I think I mentioned, I've been teaching now for 35 years. It is very satisfying. Also, we have a lot of immigrants, new immigrants in Hayward. And being an immigrant myself, I can understand what they're thinking and feeling. So the immigration experience has been helpful for me in that respect.

So I think it's one thing to understand something intellectually and quite another thing to actually have lived it. So I think that has worked out really well. And I have a good relationship with the students and with the other faculty. I hope to keep on doing it. I am now the teacher who has been there the longest. Only one other person in classroom staff has

been there as long as I have been.

Where do you teach?

Chabot College. Anyway, I hope they don't see me as an old fogey.

When were your kids born?

Let's see, Nancy was born in '69 and David in '71. Sally had a lot of difficulty. She had a-- She, at first, couldn't get pregnant. And she had a lot of miscarriages, so it was a real struggle. And between Nancy and David, we lost one child. It died in the 7 month. So I think it was very hard for Sally, almost like losing a child. But we kept on trying. Eventually got a son.

Did you talk about raising the kids Jewish or not?

Yes, we did. And Sally converted, actually, before we even married, because she felt it would be simpler. So she was very, very sensible, I think. And religion didn't matter very much to her, I think.

She was Jewish more in the sense of the Jewish prophets. She was out trying to fix the world, [HEBREW]. And actually, as a student, she had read. She had read Buber in part one of her classes. So she was familiar with Judaism at least on an intellectual level.

So I think that was very foresighted on her part. Because I don't think I could have asked her to convert. it's such a personal matter, I don't think it would have been right for me to ask her. So it was very pleasant that she did on her own will.

And I think it does make raising the kids easier, although, no guarantees. Nancy, became very Jewish, and David is a Buddhist. And we brought them up pretty much the same but very different kids. And as I mentioned earlier, Nancy really believes in keeping up the family tradition. So she has this strong, strong feeling, family feeling.

How did you decide on their names?

Well, let's see? Nancy? There were a lot of Nancys in Sally's family. She had a sister named Nancy, so she liked that name. And I think I liked David from the biblical character. I like David.

So we named her Nancy, after her sister, Elizabeth after my mother. And the second name, David George? There were a lot of Georges in Sally's family. And also, my brother is George. The kids don't use their middle names.

What did you tell your kids growing up about your experiences in Europe?

Well, can I just stop a minute. I need to go to the bathroom.

Yes.

So I didn't make any systematic attempt to tell them about it. But just every now and then, it came up. And also, my mother told stories. David felt I talked too much about it. But I don't think I talked very much about it. I didn't want to burden the kids.

So they know a little bit about the family from Vienna and coming over here. So they know in outline. But I didn't tell any of my experiences with the Nazis, anyway. I didn't want it to be a burden for them. I told them enough so they know about it. And so the know a bit of where they came from.

And neither one of them was particularly interested.

Are they interested now?

Not too much, no. Nancy is interested in the family-- more in the family.

I was wondering when you found out about the death camps and everything that was happening in Europe?

I guess we didn't find out until it hit the newspapers. It must have been in the middle '40s, at the end of the war. We found out about the family in Czechoslovakia.

It turned out even worse than we thought it was. Is this it?

Couple more.

OK. I wanted to ask, what are your kids doing now?

Let's see. Nancy, as you know, is still going to state. And she's working, taking care of-- what do they call it-- emotionally handicapped adults. And she loves that work. And she's finishing a degree in women's studies. So I think she has found something that she really likes to do. So she seems very happy.

And David is in New York working on a computer programming. And he's not as happy as Nancy.

I wanted to ask you, when you found out Nancy was a lesbian, how was that for you?

Oh, well, didn't bother me much. What really bothered me was that she didn't tell me for such a long time. She said, she didn't know how I would take it. So I felt really disappointed that she didn't trust me on that. And she told Sally, but she didn't tell me. So I felt that was disappointing.

But the fact that she's a lesbian is beyond control, I think. So, I believe strongly that you are born with that, and all the evidence seems to indicate that it's a genetic thing.

And I have a little bit of regret about grandchildren. I think I would liked to have grandchildren. But other than that, I mean I support her and that.

How does the Holocaust affect you now in a way?

Let's see. Well, I think it still colors my feelings towards people. I'm still a bit afraid of people and I try to avoid confrontational settings. So I find that those situations are still difficult. So I'm consciously aware of that. So in that sense, I can deal with it. It's not some unconscious thing that's driving me. But I'm aware of it. But it's still there. So I think it left some scars.

Do you think it can happen again?

The Holocaust? What's up with that? Well, certainly not in that form. I mean there could be other catastrophes. I think there could be famines and wars and epidemics. But at least maybe not against the Jews, maybe to other people.

Like we've seen some of that in Vietnam and other places, so I think, to that extent, it could happen again. But I'm not worried as a Jew. I feel secure in that. I'm worried about the state of the world, but not about being Jewish.

And even though there's some news about some antisemitism, you read about the militiamen and other people, but I don't see it as a big threat in America. Pat Buchanan, people who advocate it seem pretty much on the fringe. They have little respectability.

And it was actually worse when I first came to America. There was more antisemitism. There was Father Coughlin around and other people like that. so much more conscious of it then.

So I'm really not conscious of it, only when we read the temple bulletin and hear some lurid debate about what's happening. But it's not-- certainly not visible and not on the horizon.

The other thing, affect it had, I guess it's really made me want to be more Jewish, I think. And I wanted to be more political, although it didn't have that effect on anybody else in my family, this result.

So I don't know why that happened. But I think that I definitely felt very strongly about that. Whether you were active or you were not active, you were persecuted. Whether you wanted to be a good German or not want to be a good German, it didn't make any difference. I feel, if they're going to persecute me, at least they should persecute for something real.

So I think those are the two things I think of. There may be some other, subtle things I'm not aware of, but.

Is there anything else that you'd like to add that hasn't come up?

Let's see. Let me think a moment. Let me think about it. No, I think pretty much that's it. Thank you.

OK, these are my grandfather's candlesticks. I think he used them for Shabbat. And it's really the only memorabilia that I have from my grandfather's family. So I look at these as kind of a symbol of continuity, my grandfather, my grandparents, my parents. Eventually, they'll go to Nancy.