

And then you can begin at your convenience.

And where we are--

And where we are.

The Holocaust Project Center.

Holocaust Center of Northern California.

Holocaust Center of Northern California, OK. All right.

Go ahead.

Shall I begin?

Yes, please.

My name is Constance Bernstein. And I'm talking to Mr. Walter Frank--

Right.

--at the Holocaust Center of Northern California. The date is May 15.

1990?

1990. Thank you.

OK.

All right?

Go ahead.

All right, Mr. Frank, I'd like to begin by just asking you something about your background, your childhood, where you were born, and tell me about your parents and the rest of your brothers and sisters.

All right. I was born in 1920-- May 1920, as a matter of fact, just about 70 years ago, in Wiesbaden, which is now in West Germany. It's near Frankfurt. My father was a physician, what was then called a [GERMAN]. Today, it'd be an internist, a family physician.

And two years after I was born-- I was the firstborn-- I had a little brother. That is how I was told, the stork brought me a brother. In those days, a stork brought children. And when I was told that, I asked my father what did the stork bring me? Always, always thinking of number one.

Anyhow, I grew up in Wiesbaden. I went to school there, to a Volksschule, a preschool, grammar school, I'd say, and then to the gymnasium because I wanted to follow my father's footsteps and become a physician.

I left the gymnasium after six years, and got a job, and also went to another type of school that trained you for trade and commerce, lectures in accounting, economics, sales, and so forth, sort of an equivalent to some of the business schools here.

And I worked in a factory in Wiesbaden, a Jewish factory that made medical equipment. I did that until November the

10th, 1938, when Kristallnacht occurred. And I, along with 30,000 other Jews, was arrested and sent to Buchenwald.

OK. Let's stop there and go back. You've covered a lot of territory there. How old were you there, then, at that time?

Well, that was 1938. And since I was born in 1920, it makes me--

18 years. OK.

--18 and 1/2 years old.

So tell me something more about your childhood. Did you go to-- and your family, and your friends, and your relatives-- did you have your relatives there?

Well, OK. Let's go to my relatives. I had, in Wiesbaden, my grandparents on my mother's side, that is, my mother's father and mother.

And were they from Wiesbaden?

No, they were from Mannheim. In fact, my mother is from Mannheim, was born there. My grandfather, her father, was a partner in a large department store in Mannheim, with branches in Mannheim, Ludwigshafen, Darmstadt, Michelstadt, and other cities in that neighborhood, called Rothschild-- Rothschild.

Department store?

What's that?

You said department store.

A department store, right, very large department store. And he had retired. When I got to know him, he was already retired and living in Wiesbaden in retirement with his wife. And we visited there very often. And I had always a big thing to go visit Grandpa and Grandma.

Did they have a big house? Were they wealthy?

They had the upper flat of a three-story building, which is still there. I was in Wiesbaden just about a year ago. And I saw it. It's still there. And they lived there very comfortably. I couldn't tell you today how many bedrooms they had. But I know they had a beautiful living room, dining room, kitchen. Could have been one or two bedrooms.

Then I had, in Wiesbaden, my mother's sister, who was married to a man who, together with someone else, owned a large-- oh, what would you call it-- store selling perambulators, bedding, linens, that sort of thing. Firm was called Hamburger and Weil.

This was Weil, Otto Weil. And they had a son, name of Max-- Max Weil. Max now lives in Middletown, New York. Otto Weil died the day after he came home from Buchenwald, during Kristallnacht. He came home, was very sill-- sick, very ill, went to the hospital, was taken care of by two German physicians, and died the next morning.

My aunt was deported on May 23, 1942. I discovered that last year when I went to Wiesbaden and found the Gestapo lists. They had listed her as one of the deportees on that day.

Those were the relatives in Wiesbaden that I recall. There were other relatives outside of Wiesbaden. There was my grandparents on my father's side who were living in Bebra. He was a native of Bebra, a small town in Central Germany.

It was a very small town. I'd say it's a village, but it was called a town because it had a very large railroad station. Most trains going north-south or east-west in Germany had to go somewhere through Bebra, particularly freight trains. And so

it was an important what they called [GERMAN]-- important railway center.

And that's where he was from. His parents were living there. They had a hotel, ran a hotel, Jewish hotel, strictly kosher. And we used to go there in the summer, stay there two weeks, three weeks-- the kids, my brother and I.

And my father's one sister lived in-- two sisters, matter of fact-- lived in Bebra. They had married there. Another sister lived in Eisenach. And they're all gone. They were killed during the Holocaust. We don't know exactly where-- Auschwitz, probably. My grandparents died before things got bad, died before or shortly during the Hitler period.

So your father's parents?

And my father, mother, my brother, and I were able to get out of Germany after Kristallnacht and get to Shanghai. But that's a later story. We're not quite there yet.

So you had grandparents in kind of the country, your father's parents.

They were in sort of a--

Small town.

--country setting, I'd say, a small town in which everybody knew everybody else, and which-- this not just the Jewish population, but Christian population too. My grandfather, Isidore, was very well-known in Bebra.

For many years, he was a member of the city council. He was a sort of an unofficial conciliator and arbitrator for disputes that you wouldn't take before the courts, because the courts would take too long. The farmers, if they had a problem, they would go to Isidore. And he would fix it all up.

Was this just for the Jews, though? Or was it--

No, no.

--for everyone?

The Jews weren't farmers in those days. They were tradesmen. He would be the sort of arbitrator between one farmer and another-- dispute about a piece of land, dispute about a cow, dispute about merchandise, whatever, you know. And he was well-known in that area for that sort of thing, and very well-respected, and good reputation.

I had a cousin who was born there, Ilse, who died in Oakland a couple of years ago. And she wrote up a bit of a history of what she remembered from those days. I remember seeing her, of course, meeting her in Bebra, where she was living, until she got married and left for the United States sometime in the '30s-- '39, something like '40, maybe. I'm not quite sure.

Anyhow, those were the family members. And then, of course, my father was well-known in the community-- not just Jewish community, but community at large. But he was very active in the Jewish community. I'm not sure whether he was on the board of the Judische Gemeinde in Wiesbaden. But he was very active.

And he was always a man who got an Aliyah when he went to synagogue. And he had a good, let's say, social position as a physician, as one of the busier physicians in town.

How did he get to medical school from-- his father ran a hotel, was it?

His father ran a hotel. And it's interesting that you ask that. I've just been reading a book called *Burger Auf Widerruf*, published by The Leo Baeck Institute, a collection of autobiographical material, diaries, et cetera of German Jews from 1780 to 1945.

It's a collection coming out of a larger work, four-volume work, that deals with that. And they indicated there that the people in the 1700, 1800 area, late part of the 19th century, the Jews were business people. They might be farmers, but very usually not.

And they would always try to get their children to go into the professions. And there was my father, going into professions. And he went to-- borrowed the money from his father. Went to Halle first. I think he studied in Berlin for a while, medical school, and went to WÃ¼rzburg and graduated from the University of WÃ¼rzburg with a degree as an MD.

And he told me, I remember, that he paid every penny that he borrowed back to his father once he was in practice. He was in practice in Wiesbaden for a while. Then the war broke out. And he was taken into the German Army. He was an officer. Wound up as a captain.

This is the First World War?

First World War, regimental surgeon, [GERMAN], staff officer. And he spent much of his time in France or in Russia. Those were the two fronts that he served at. A number of years ago, oh, this is probably 25 years or more now, I happened to talk to a physician at Kaiser Hospital in Oakland who was a dermatologist. And I was seeing him for some minor skin problem I had.

And I detected a German brogue when he was talking. And so I let on that I spoke German too and that my father-- and we talked German. And my father was a physician. Oh, what was his name? I said, Dr. Fackenheim, which was our German name. Frank is the Americanized version of it, because Fackenheim would be a little bit of a problem in this country.

And he said, oh, I met your father. I said, what do you mean? He says, I heard, during the war, when I was on the Russian front, as a physician with one of the German regiments, I heard that there was a very well-respected and well-educated physician, Jewish physician, who always traveled with a library. And I wanted to meet him. And I made it my business to get a couple of days' pass. And I went over. And I saw him. That was your father.

He said this?

We spent two days together. And then I went back to my regiment. And I never saw him again.

And so how old was this doctor?

That physician must have been, at that time, in his early 60s-- late 50s, early 60s, I'd say. He would have been old enough to have served in the German Army. And my father was born in 1882. He was probably in his 30s-- 32 when the war broke out.

And this man must have been 30-32, in the same age, same age group. So they would get together. It was a small world-- a lot of these small coincidences that I've run across, not just in that case, but in other situations too.

So he was well-respected. He had a good practice. And we grew up in a medical atmosphere. My mother helped him in his practice to the extent that she took care of the bookkeeping. She would also take care of the chemistry.

In those days, you didn't send out to the lab if you wanted to check somebody's urine. You did it right in the doctor's office. And she would do that. She would check it for albumin and check it for sugar. And sure, you did a lot of tests that you don't do anymore today in that particular form.

But she would do all that work. She would assist him when there was a big problem, say, setting somebody's leg. She would assist him with the bandaging and the stuff that finally immobilized the break or fracture. And every now and then, I would help out, too, as I was getting older, some of the bookkeeping.

My father was a very particular guy. In Germany, when you went on the bus, you got a ticket. It was punched. And that indicated the value of what you paid for it and so it was. He would collect those tickets whenever he went out visiting patients and didn't use his car.

And many times, he didn't use his car. And he would collect those. And he would put them on a string so that he would have the records for his income tax. And whenever there was an--

That is incredible.

--examination of his tax return, he had everything documented, but everything. If it wasn't documented, he wouldn't take a deduction. And that's probably why I got my tax-- my early tax training.

Is that what you do today, string things?

Well, I remember, when the income tax people came, the men from the Finanzamt-- that's what it was called in Germany-- he would haul out his strings with tickets on it. They'd take one look at it and say, that's OK. So he had no problem. He was a very, very, very careful guy.

He was-- a little story that kind of illustrates it. In Germany, when you went to the railroad station, you only got as far as a barrier. If you wanted to go past the barrier, actually to the platform where the train arrived, you had to pay, I don't know, a nominal of some \$0.05, or 10 pfennig, or something unless you were under five years old. Then it had no charge, you know.

Well, my father-- I was in Bebra doing something. My father was arriving by train for a visit or something. And my grandparents or uncles, whoever it was, took me to the railroad station to meet him. I was just past five years old. It was in June or July. I was born in May, five years and two months. And as they took me to the railroad station, they told the guy at the ticket office, oh, he's under five. Oh, OK, sure. No problem.

So in the evening, they were sitting to dinner. And somebody said, oh, boy, we put something over the railroad today. We took Walter to the railroad station. We told him he's under five years old. My father got up from the table, walked to the railroad station just two blocks away, and apologized, and paid \$0.05.

Oh, my goodness. What a man.

He wasn't about to do anything that was remotely bad against the law.

What a role model for you.

Oh, he was a role model, all right. Both my parents were role models-- upright, upstanding, no fussing around. You do what's right.

What about your mother then? How did she end up marrying your father?

Well, her sister was already married out of Weil. There was the Weil family.

Yes.

Remember that.

Right.

That's the man who was a partner in the store, that Hamburger and Weil.

And he's just died in Oakland, you said, the son.

No, no. Hamburger and Weil, he-- Otto Weil died after he came out of concentration.

That's right, so the son.

That's the other side of the family. Son lives in Middletown, New York. And so his sister was already married. And she was visiting in Wiesbaden or maybe living in Wiesbaden at the time. And there was some kind of a party. And she was introduced to this doctor Fackenheim. And he thought he was a great boy.

This is the sister-- your mother's sister?

No, no. That's my mother.

Your mother? Oh.

See, my mother's sister was married. And she introduced my future mother to my future father. And my mother saw there this guy that's something of a bore, you know, no big deal.

He later showed her.

But I think she changed her opinion, because sometime later, they were-- got engaged. And then in September 1919, they were married. And I still have their wedding pictures. They was married in Frankfurt in a huge wedding, a lot of people, and the usual photograph, with the happy couple in the middle, and the family, the mishpacha on the wife's side and mishpacha the husband's side.

And the thing that puzzled me when I saw this picture for the first time and studied it-- puzzling me was where the heck was I? I mean, wasn't I at the wedding, the family event? And I figured it out. I figured it out. I doped it out myself. I was standing behind grandpa.

Oh, so the photographer couldn't see you?

Well, I mean I couldn't see. And my grandfather was a very tall man. And so I figured out, I must have been standing behind my grandpa. And that's why you can't see me on the picture.

How old were you?

Oh, I must have been six, seven years old, something like it, before the age where you know more about these things. And for a number of years, that was my firm belief. And I would tell everybody that. That's this picture hanging in our living room-- no, that's the dining room. Say it, there, see, I'm behind Grandpa.

So I found out that was different later on. But for a long time, that was my idea. Still have it. And because those pictures are great treasures, and it's one of the few things-- some of the few things that survived all the trips from Germany to Shanghai, and Shanghai to San Francisco.

How did your mother get to Wiesbaden, though? I know that your--

Well, I think her parents were already retired. And her sister was living in Wiesbaden, as I told you, because of her husband, Weil, had a store in Wiesbaden. And this is how she got to Wiesbaden. My mother, as a daughter of well-to-do Jewish business people, was sent to London for 11 months for finishing school. This was the big thing, the young Jewish ladies of means would be sent to Switzerland, or France, or England.

How old?

Oh, she must have been 16, 17, maybe, something like that. And this was a very strict sort of school for her, a sort of an institution out of school where they're taught how to behave like young ladies, you know. And they had these rules-- no candy in the rooms and that kind of stuff. Of course, they smuggled candy into the rooms.

And my mother told me that one time there was a sudden inspection. And she had all this candy in her bed. And threw it under the bed, fast asleep, lying on the candy. It made a sort of a mess. But somehow, they survived that. These are the things that happened. I guess it happens today, too, in similar situations-- maybe at Mills College and not London.

Maybe. Had your mother planned to work at all. Or was it just not favored?

No. I don't think so. She was never trained for work in the sense that she went to any kind of a school that prepared her for any specific career other than, as a career, the housewife.

But she finished school?

She finished school, right. She went to school in Mannheim. And after finishing school, I don't know how far she went and whether she went to a gymnasium or some kind of a high school. But she went to that finishing school in London for 11 months.

I think she had to come back because war was threatening, as you know. And so she had to get back to Germany. She never did train for any kind of work. And I think the idea was that she would eventually marry somebody, professional man, and she did.

And how old was when she got married?

1919, she must have been 25-- 25. My father was 30s.

Oh, that's late, you see. Wasn't that-- it was late?

Yeah, yeah, my father was 37.

Wow, that is very late.

Yeah, they had another-- he was late. She was late. They were 12 years apart. He was 12 years ahead of her. And he was late because of his medical training. He was late because of the war, which cost him another four years-- of course not just him, but all the other people--

Sure, 1914.

--in the war on both sides of the frontier, both sides of the [GERMAN]. And so by the time he got back out and got settled back in Wiesbaden, it was 1919. He was 37 years old.

There was a big wedding?

Big wedding. And then they settled down in Wiesbaden, at Bernstrasse 7. The house, it was bombed during the war, doesn't exist anymore-- up in the third floor. It's a huge flat, with two bedrooms, a dining room, living room, kitchen, and then the office part-- office, a treatment room, a waiting room-- a very, very large place. And that's where I was born and where, later, my brother was born.

A year ago, I was in Wiesbaden with a group of old Wiesbaden residents who were invited back by the city-- they've been having for a number of years. Invite us back at their expense, all expenses paid.

Without?

Well, I'd written to them before. I knew they were-- [STATIC] to be honest-- [AUDIO OUT] they paid everything-- San Francisco Airport back to San Francisco Airport-- hotel, outings, \$500 cash walking around. I mean, so they really treated us very nicely.

I have to stop for a minute. I'm having a little problem with the microphone here. And I need to take about--

This one?

--five minutes to--

Go ahead.

Whole business is to convert computer disks now, because there's so many people who have changed.

Well, I know they convert computers. There's an outfit called Data Clone. And they won't do an Apple 3. They just don't have.

Well, I know she has some Apple computers at her facility.

OK. Excuse me. I think we're ready to go.

OK. OK. Go on.

We can start up any time. Thank you.

Oh, I just want to ask you, at the end, can we go back and get all the names of the family, like, move on from the family stuff to the period?

Yeah, but I just want to explore a little about the childhood more--

OK.

--growing up.

OK.

We were talking about?

You were talking about last year when you went to Wiesbaden.

Oh, yeah. I went to Wiesbaden. And I'm not going to tell you now the whole story about it. But there was one very old lady there among this group of about 28 Wiesbadeners who went back there. And when she heard my name, she says, I was in your house when you were born. I heard your mother scream.

And I said, what were you doing there? She says, well, I was working in the store that was on the ground floor. They had on the first floor-- ground floor, first floor, second floor, that's the way they ran it in those days. And I was working there. I was an apprentice, or a salesgirl, or whatever it was. And I heard your mother. And then I heard that you were born. That was in May of 1920.

And she was not Jewish. She later married a Jewish man in Wiesbaden in 1928, I believe. And they had a son. And she and her son were at this group in Wiesbaden last year. She and her son wound up in Theresienstadt late in 1945, early '45, and late-- the last day of the war, and managed to survive. And so they were there. And there was this woman who says she was there in the house when I was born. And it's, again, a small world again.

Very. Fantastic. Well, all right, well, let's go back to after your parents were born-- after your parents were married, and you were born, and your brother was born. He was two years younger than you.

2 and 1/2 years-- 2 and 1/4, yeah.

The social life at that time, was it mostly with other Jewish families, do you remember?

It was mostly with other Jewish families, right. We had a housekeeper who was Catholic. So we celebrated the Catholic holidays along with her. We celebrated Christmas. We didn't have a Christmas tree or Hanukkah bush, as I would call it. But we had presents for her. And she had presents for us. And we had a special meal. But we also celebrated Hanukkah. Of course, she celebrated that us.

And of course, as I grew up, I knew quite a bit about what she was supposed to do and doing. And so the first Friday in the month, I made quite sure that she fasted, because that was a Hard Jesus Friday or something. I made quite sure that she always read her Catholic newspaper-- kind of a shomer. Not just Shabbos, but a shomer goyim.

But the social life was pretty much with either the family or other Jewish families in town, the colleagues of my father's, or friends of his, or his lawyer, that sort of thing. But it was a very good family life.

Of course, Friday nights were always special. That's when we had an evening meal, which was major. Usually during the week, we would have our major meal at lunchtime, which was a German custom, much more healthy than eating at night.

And at night, you'd eat a sandwich and have a glass of milk, or a cup of tea, or a cup of coffee. But at lunch, you had everything from soup to nuts to dessert. But Friday nights, you had your main meal Friday nights. And you had it in the evening. And it was always something special.

And I remember, many of these Friday nights-- particularly one, when in the middle of the dinner, the doorbell rang. And my father answered. And there was a man who was bleeding profusely. And he was drunk. And so my father got him in into one of the rooms. And they put him down.

And he said, now, relax, relax. And just rest a little bit. But this guy wouldn't rest. And he was rummaging around the whole house, shouting obscenities. He was drunk. So I was a little scared.

My father finally took him into his room, and gave him a shot of some kind, and calmed him down, and then banished him up, and sent him on his way. And I was small enough to be very disturbed about that. And I still remember that. This is one of those traumatic things that you remember.

Kids, yeah.

Not disturbed about it anymore. But--

At the time.

--then this was a very, very scary thing, this guy hollering.

Excuse me just a minute. Were you very religious? Did you go to the synagogue with your family?

Yes. There were two major synagogues in Wiesbaden, two major communities, you might say. One was called a Liberal Conservative community, which was a large group. And then there was a smaller group, which was very Orthodox. And that group included, of course, a lot of the Jews who had come into Wiesbaden from Poland, the Polish Jews.

And those were the two major synagogues. The Liberal synagogue was on the Michelsberg, very large edifice. The smaller one was the Orthodox shul on Friedrichstrasse. And the rabbi there was a Dr. Ansprache.

Rabbis, of course, were PhDs in Germany. They went to school. They got their PhD. They became a rabbi. So rabbi was always Dr. Ansprache at the Conservative-- at the Orthodox shul. Dr. Lazarus, whom I remember very well, because he was one under whom I was bar mitzvahed. Dr. Lazarus was the rabbi for the Liberal shul.

Dr. Ansprache had a son name of Joseph, who emigrated to England-- that's another interesting story-- and then was deported from England to Australia, became a rabbi, became a rabbi and a Reform rabbi, and wound up his rabbinical days in San Francisco-- Joe Asher, Temple Emanuel. He's now retired. In fact, he's now quite ill. My old school friend, we went to school together.

It's Asher.

He's in San Francisco. And his son is a rabbi and is I think the sixth or seventh generation rabbi, because it's a family of rabbis going back I don't know how many years. And we were members in the Liberal Conservative-- today, you'd call it Conservative.

Not Reform?

No, no, a lot of Hebrew in the prayer books-- some German, of course, but a lot of Hebrew. The Reform has, here in this country, mostly English, some Hebrew. There was a good dose of Hebrew, a good dose of Hebrew prayers used in the service.

And we went there, of course, Friday night, Saturday mornings. I wouldn't say that we went every Friday or every Saturday, but very often, particularly did to the youth services, which Jugend Gottesdienst, which took place at least once a month. And we went to religious instruction, which of course, in Germany, you couldn't avoid, because that was part of your regular school curriculum.

You went to a Jewish school?

No. No, in Germany, in those days, and still today, there is no separation of church and state. Therefore, in a Jewish-- in a curriculum of any school, there is a section that's called religious training. If you're Catholic, you go to the Catholic section. If you're a Protestant-- two major faiths in Germany-- you go to the Protestant section. And if you're Jewish, you go to the Jewish section.

And the trouble was that with the few Jewish students in Wiesbaden-- there were maybe 3,000 Jews altogether in a population of then 160,000-- all the Jewish kids were collected from all the schools. And they had their classes in the afternoon, which was something of a bother for us, because while the other kids played football, we went to study Hebrew.

And it was terrible to study Hebrew. My god, what a language, the grammar alone. And Bible, and that was terribly boring to read the Bible, all this old stuff about people that we didn't really believe existed.

And I changed my mind about it in the meantime. I'm very active right now in the Torah study group in Berkeley. But in those days, that was a bit of a problem to go to the school.

But I went there. And I got my usual good grades, no problems. And I still remember some of the teachers-- Dr. Lilienthal, and Dr. Kapell, and others, most of whom perished in the Holocaust. Dr. Lazarus, the rabbi, was able to take a disability retirement. He had diabetes, was a patient of my father-- diabetes, was retired.

And a rabbi, of course, was an employee of the state. And because he was retired on a disability, he was not arrested during Kristallnacht. You see? A state employee on retirement, you didn't arrest him. That he was Jewish was another matter.

And he was able to go to Israel, then Palestine. And they lived there for many years. I think he lived to see the State of

Israel established and died in '49 or '50. But he was a rabbi in 1934 when I was bar mitzvahed.

Bar mitzvahed.

And I was supposed to be bar mitzvahed in 1933, in June, shortly after you're 13. But that was right after the Machtergreifung, the seizure of power by the Nazis. And things were very unsettled. Everybody was nervous. What are we going to do? Are we going to bar mitzvah or not bar mitzvah?

And a bar mitzvah, normally, it was a big affair. And normally, my bar mitzvah would have been an affair of 500 people, 1,000 people, I don't know what, family from all over, from Mannheim, from Darmstadt, from Bebra, from Kasseln, from Eisenach.

And so what are you going to do? We're not going to have a big bar mitzvah. Maybe we're not going to bar mitzvah at all. Finally, they decided-- my parents decided to have a bar mitzvah in January 1934, which is about seven to eight months later.

And that bar mitzvah was very small. There were maybe 30 people-- 29 Jews, one goy, one non-Jew. And that man was representing the Gestapo. He was in the temple. Well, they wanted to make sure that the rabbi didn't say anything that was offensive.

Was he invited?

Of course not. Well, the Gestapo was at almost every service. You went to service. And there was at least one Gestapo man in the audience to pay attention to what was being said. And by god, if you said the wrong thing, off you went-- Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald, Dachau.

Yes. Now, tell me about the thinking at that time. This is '33. And can you tell me a little about what your parents were talking about at that time, and what had happened specifically, and what their response to it was.

Right. The general-- I can't say what my parents specifically said, because I was too young to worry about that.

No, just the general feeling.

And I was not included in these discussions. But the general idea of German Jews then was that well, after all, we've lived in this country for hundreds of years. My family was traced back by some cousins of ours to the 12th and 13th century, actually traced back paper by paper.

This guy, Hitler, he's from Austria. He's not even a German. And nothing, I mean, he's talking a big-- he's got to do that. He's got to say all these things in order to attract attention. But he isn't going to do all the bad things that he's saying he's going to do, because he needs the foreign support.

And then of course, the German proverb, soup is not even as hot as it cooked. And so nothing's going to happen. And the next election, we're going to vote him out of office again. And it's not going to be too bad. And don't worry about it.

And who could imagine that in a country of Goethe, of Schiller, of Wagner, even-- great musician, who knew he was an antisemite-- of Brahms, that they would kill people by the numbers? Who would imagine that? I mean, incredible.

And then gradually, things started happening. At one time, the members of the neighbor's lodge were arrested. All of them were kept in jail, in a police jail for half a day, or a day, a couple of days, and released again. And that kind of--

When was that, do you remember?

About '36, '37.

And what was the reason they were arrested? Was there a reason?

Because they were members of the B'nai B'rith Lodge. They were Jewish. You know, there's no reason. There's just no argument. You were Jewish. If you crossed against the light, you were arrested and wound up in a concentration camp.

So back in '33, after--

But it was all-- let me just finish up, spin out that thought.

Sure.

It was all sort of haphazard. And it usually happened to somebody else. And when it happened, there was always the idea, well, maybe he really did commit a crime. Maybe he did commit a fraudulent bankruptcy. Maybe he shouldn't have gotten that German girl in trouble, a non-Jewish girl, you know. Maybe he really did sell merchandise that was not what was represented to be. Maybe he should be in jail. Maybe he deserved what was.

Those were some of the things that people thought. And it really didn't hit home until November 1938. All of a sudden, the Holocaust started. This was the start of the Holocaust, when 30,000 Jews were arrested, when businesses were smashed, synagogues were burned. You can read about it. You've got all the books here. You know what happened.

That's when people started making massive attempts to get out. We were registered for immigration, with the German-- with the American consulate in Stuttgart, which was responsible for our part of Germany, in 1936 or '37. That's when my parents really made an attempt to get out, before Kristallnacht.

I think some uncle of ours who was an American came to visit. And he, apparently, discussed it with my parents. And they decided, well, maybe we'd better get out of here. Well, the quota for German nationals, not the German Jews, but anybody born in Germany, the quota for people born in Germany to emigrate into the United States was something like 12,000 a year, maybe 13,000, something in that neighborhood.

Our number, waiting number at the consulate in Stuttgart was 37,000-something. It didn't take much of a mathematician to figure out how long we'd have to wait. We couldn't wait.

So when Kristallnacht arrived, my father was arrested. I was arrested. He was in the concentration camp. I was in the camp. He was fortunate to be released after two weeks. But I was there for five months. They made an attempt to get out. And they picked the only place in the whole world where you could still go without having to ask for a visa-- Shanghai.

OK. I'll get to that.

Want to get back.

Yeah, I'm interested in--

OK.

--how it started, you see, because already in '33, your parents are saying, well, maybe you shouldn't have a bar mitzvah. And I'm wondering, what was their thinking at that time-- not to show Jewishness or what?

The thinking still was that well, maybe it's going to blow over. But still, they didn't want to have the bar mitzvah because it would be too obvious that they were Jewish or what was the feeling?

It was very-- you see, the Nazis took power in Germany in January 33. And those first few months were very turbulent. There was the Reichstag's fire. There was the crackdown on the Communist Party. There was the crackdown on Social Democrats. There were some arrests of Jews who were targeted because of a journalist had written against Hitler. There

were lawyers and had prosecuted Nazis, some kind.

But these were all isolated things. But there was a lot of turbulence, and a lot of Nazis marching through the streets, Fackelzug. I don't know whether you know what a Fackelzug is, that's a torchlight parade. And that's pretty frightening, you know.

And so they said, well, let's wait a little bit. Let's see. It'll simmer down. It'll settle down. It's not going to be that bad. Maybe as time goes on, things aren't-- the soup isn't going to be eaten as hot as it cooked, the old story, you know. We'll vote him out of office. We'll have another election.

So you had a small bar mitzvah. And how else, during this time between '33 and '38, were you personally affected by what was going on? What was going on?

Well, personally affected-- I don't recall the details anymore, but more and more, they cut down the extent to which my father could practice until he couldn't practice at all.

How did they cut that down?

Well, they had to pass laws, one law after another. I have at home a record that's brought back from-- a written record-- that I brought back from Wiesbaden that lists all the laws and government regulations that were passed during that time that cut down the amount of activities that physicians, and lawyers, and engineers, and architects, but particularly physicians and lawyers could do--

Jewish physicians?

--Jewish physicians could do until they finally were told, you can't practice anymore at all. A Jewish physician couldn't treat a German patient, a non-Jewish patient. A Jewish patient could not be treated by a Jewish physician unless there was a great emergency and there was only one physician in town that was qualified to do that-- qualified by law, not qualified by training.

And this was all gradual. This was just a little bit at a time. You see, if all this business of the Crystal Night event, if all that had happened in '33, the Jews would have been out of there, all of them. But it was sort of gradual. And you kind of get used to it.

Well, all right, OK, we can live with that. All right, we can live with it. It's in a lot of ways was similar to what happened in a family generally. Someone gets sick, well, it's terrible, but we can live with that. Probably get better, you know.

Well, it doesn't get better, well, you can live with it. It gets a little worse, well, you get used to it. It gets a little worse. The party that is sick becomes unable to walk, well, all right, then we put him in a wheelchair or something. But you live with it. You always adjust. You always adapt.

But how could your father make a living after he wasn't able to?

Well, he was making the living of sorts until living got smaller, and smaller, and smaller, and smaller. And it wasn't until '36 to '37 that he finally decided, well, maybe he'd better get out of here. He had a chance to get out of Germany in 1923 when he had an American patient who said to him, Doctor, Germany is bankrupt. It just lost the war. They've got all those reparations to pay. Germany's bankrupt. Get out of it.

I'll fix you up. I'll pay for your trip to America. I'll set you up in business as a physician. I guarantee your income for a year, introduce you to all my friends. He says, after one year, you'll make so much money, you don't need me anymore.

My father's thinking, why should I, a German, ex-German officer, member of a German family that happened to be Jewish, who'd been in Germany for years, with a new family, two kids, brand new kids-- one was two years old, one

was brand new-- just set up in this fairly-- in a beautiful town-- and Wiesbaden is a beautiful town-- gorgeous surroundings, gorgeous climate. Why should I leave, go to America?

Who went to America in those days? Somebody in the family who committed fraudulent bankruptcy, who got a girl in trouble, who committed something, everybody chipped in, the [NON-ENGLISH], the district attorney, they looked away, would get them out of the country. Don't worry about it. You know, they sent him to America.

And those were the people, of course, later on that sent us the affidavits that supported us, you know. Now, well, I'm not saying that everybody who left Germany went to America it was that kind of, but that's what happened. America was a country where sure, it was you picked up gold in the street. But it was, essentially, a place where there were a lot of crimes--

Uncivilized.

--like gangsters, and it was sort of Wild West, California, my god, I mean, you have to wear guns all the time, you have to fight with Indians. This was the picture we had of the United States.

Well, what about when you were in school?

Perception, not reality.

Of course.

Not reality, perception.

It's very understandable, very understandable.

Yeah.

But when you were in school during this time, you were in a public or a--

I was in a grammar school first, in which there was no problem at all about being Jewish. This was from 1926 to '30. When I was six years old, I went to grammar school, first grade. And I was there for four grades. Then I had to pass a very stiff examination in order to qualify to go to the gymnasium.

You didn't go to the gymnasium by the fact that you were alive or paid for it. You had to qualify to get in there. Here, it's different. You go to high school because you live and breathe. So I went to the gymnasium, which started at age 10 and was an eight-year school.

And there, I was from 1930 to '33. Of course, there are no problems, because that was before Hitler. Now, when Hitler started, things got a little sticky. In the morning, they started the school with the teacher coming in, everybody jumping up, Heil Hitler. And that's how you started the school day.

And of course, you didn't want to be left out. So everybody raised his hand, including myself. And there were probably four kids, four Jewish children in that school, four Jewish students. There was Joe Asher, my friend, my brother, and one of my brother's friends, who now lives in Frankfurt, retired from some job over there. And we were the only Jewish kids in that school. And there were maybe 800 students in that school. Still exists. I was there last year, an honored guest this time.

And so things got a little sticky. Then we had the son of what they call the Kreislieter, the district leader of the Nazi Party. He was sitting right next to me. And we were good friends, played football together, no problems at all.

And then another time, a real big Nazi in this particular grade, a fellow named Meixner with an X-- M-E-I-X-N-E-R-- I still remember that, sitting next to me. And we were doing a test, a math test. And he was pretty stupid guy. I mean,

friendly, but stupid. And somewhere during the test, I was working away there. The teacher, Dr. Glichter, said Meixner, don't copy Jewish work, you know, something like that.

So Meixner, of course, he doesn't look at my paper. He looked at his paper. After that was over, the teacher called me over, he said, you know, I didn't want to offend you. I wanted to show up this Nazi. Big deal, he's a big Nazi and he has to copy Jewish thinking, you know. I didn't want to offend you. He apologized to me. He was not a Jewish teacher. It was a German teacher.

So I had relatively little problems in school. We had one teacher who was teaching biology, chemistry, and physics, I believe, Dr. Breuckner. He was an old Nazi. But that was, you understood, someone who had joined the Nazi Party back in the early '20s.

And as a result, he wore not just a swastika, but a swastika in gold. It was a big deal for those guys. And he was a bit of a problem because he was teaching the Mendelian laws, and dominant recessive genes, and all that good stuff.

And of course, he discussed the Jews, who all the recessive genes were in the Jews. And Jews were bad. And he demonstrated the biological facts. And then I was sitting in the first row, writing it all down in shorthand, which I had already studied. And he was very upset about that.

But I am supposed to take notes, you know. But there I was, writing down all this stuff. And so he was always giving me a bad grade. That's the only time I ever got a 3 minus. If 1 was the very best, 5 was the worst grade, 3 minus was pretty bad from my point of view. I was always at least a 2 plus type of student.

But he was the only one I was really having, in a remote sort of way, troubles with. My fellow students, even the big Nazis, we were always friends. And what happened later on, I don't know. I don't even know what happened to those kids.

But I don't remember any specific problems. And I left high school because either that or they would tell me to get out, because they were trying to get rid of Jewish students.

So when did you leave?

I was 16 when I left high school and went to-- got a job as an apprentice, commercial apprentice, and then went to a commercial training school, which is sort of equivalent to one of our business schools here.

So you were forced to leave school when you were 16?

Let's put it this way, I left voluntarily. But if I hadn't left, I might have been forced a little later to get out. It was time to go.

How did you feel about that?

Didn't feel too good about it, but I didn't have a choice.

And your parents, that was about the time when they started seriously thinking about leaving?

That was the time they started thinking, maybe we're not going to be here too long. Maybe we better get out. Maybe we better switch. Maybe he's not going to become a physician, because we knew already then that I would not be able to go to college, to university, because I wouldn't be accepted.

In Germany, then, they had something called numerus clausus. They did a lot of things in Latin, which was fine by me, because I was studying Latin and Greek. So numerus clausus means that they cut, it's a quota system. Here, we call it a quota system.

And they would say, all right, the numbers are closed for Jews. So many Jews can go to college. And that number went-- was smaller and smaller as the years went by until no one got to college. And so I left that school. But I switched to another school, which was equally tough and equally hard, except in another direction.

And they let you in. There was no quota there?

No. They had to let me in, since I was a commercial apprentice. And in those days-- and this may still be true today in Germany-- if you were an apprentice, you were protected by the Chamber of Commerce, which was a state organization.

And you had a contract which was co-signed by the Chamber of Commerce, which your employer could not break unless you committed a terrible crime-- stealing money or some such thing, you know, or setting fire to the factory.

And your employer had not just the job, but the duty, the obligation to train you. Corresponding, you got very little pay. I think you had 15 marks a month the first year, 25 marks a month the second year, where a regular employee would get 75 to 100 marks at once.

So you were in that program for two years?

And I was in that training. I was in there for a three-year period. But before the three years was out, the Kristallnacht occurred. And that was the end of that.

What about your younger brother? What happened to him?

Younger brother went also to the same high school.

This gymnasium.

Went through the same thing, was two years behind. And he left school also and didn't do-- he went along another year or so. But he left school also. And he didn't do anything until we emigrated.

So tell me about that night now. How did that happen, Kristallnacht?

Well, how it happened, of course, I can just repeat the story of Herschel Grynszpan.

From your point of view.

From my point of view?

Yeah. Where were you that night? And what was your personal experience.

Well, that night, I was in bed asleep. I was working in that factory. And I got up the next morning. And not knowing what was going on, I got dressed. I got up. I think I had a bicycle and bicycled out to the factory and met there in very old, at least to me, in those days, he seemed to be very old, Jewish fellow who worked in the factory, who said that the synagogues in Mainz-- and in Wiesbaden, Mainz is just across the river-- were burning.

And there was a lot of riots. And some businesses were smashed and whatnot. And things were in bad shape. And I decided, well, I have a job to do here. I better finish it up in case something happens. And then I got a phone call from my mother, who said my father was arrested. And they asked about me and where I was.

They had come to the house and taken your father away?

They'd come to the house to arrest my father, Gestapo. So then I decided, well, to finish what I was doing. And I was getting some kind of a shipment ready. And I felt that I didn't like to leave things half done. I wanted to tie up loose

ends, get all the documents ready. Not that it mattered. Kind of silly thinking back in it, but this is the way I--

Of course, you had no idea.

--still, to this day, I would do the same thing. I don't want to leave work behind that's undone. I want to do it done. So I did that. And I went home about, I guess, 1 o'clock then. Oh, another thing happened. I would usually go to a little restaurant in the neighborhood to have a lunch sandwich, a cup of coffee. They called me. They suggested I better not come that day. They knew I was Jewish.

So how were you feeling about all this?

Well, I was feeling a little bit apprehensive. And I went home. And I said, well, what went on? My mother said, well, they came. And they just said, the government orders, they arrested my father. About 2 o'clock, the doorbell rings. And there was a Gestapo.

And they said, I was under arrest. And I said, well, why? What's going on? Well, government orders. I don't know anything about it. He says, I just have orders to arrest you. He says, you better pack a few things. You might be away for a day or two.

So I packed a little suitcase, a little satchel with a few changes of underwear and a shirt. And I took my heavy winter coat along and followed this fellow. And we walked. I mean, I wasn't handcuffed, or beaten, or anything else. We just walked like two friends through the streets to the main police headquarters.

And there, he took me upstairs-- first floor or second floor. I don't know where it was. Opens the door, and then gave me a shove. And I went through the door. And I was in a police jail. And I was turned over to the police officers. This was the general police.

So one of those guys says, well, what's your name? I said, Fackenheim. Oh, he says, yeah, we got your father here. He's another patient of my father's. My father had a lot of police and firemen amongst his patients. And so he knew many of them. He says, he's in number 23. But it's well, we'll put you in with your father.

So they took me down to a small cell. And there was my father. And put me in the same cell. It was very nice of those guys. So we were there overnight. This was on the 10th, I believe.

On the 11th, in the morning, we were called out and we were questioned by Gestapo officer, who had a big list. And he asked me, are you healthy? I said yes. Are you really healthy? I said-- I didn't know if I say no. I got problem in the lungs and my feet. I said, yeah, I'm really.

He shrugged his shoulders, put a check mark after my name. Maybe if I said, I'm not healthy, maybe he would have said OK. That afternoon, they took us, called all us out, put us aboard the buses. These are the buses that are normally used to take people around Wiesbaden to show them a good time.

Put us on those buses an SS officer with a big gun in the front. And they drove us to Frankfurt, about an hour or so away. Today, it's 20 minutes for the Autobahn. And there, we arrived sometime in the late afternoon-- this was in November, it was already getting dark-- at the main railroad station. And there was a mob of thousands of people, who were screaming. They were, kill the Jews. And let's tear them apart.

People in the streets were screaming that?

On the street, yeah. And the SS made a path for us to get us into the railroad station.

How many of you were there?

Oh, the bus full of people may have been 30 or 40 people. But there were many buses. I don't know how many

altogether. I don't remember that anymore. I just remember the one I was on.

From Wiesbaden.

From Wiesbaden. And their object, of course, was not to protect us from the mob. But they had orders to deliver us to the trains. And of course, they didn't want to lose anybody. And that's why they protected us.

See, this is, again, the German mind at work. Order was signed. You see, they got 33 prisoners. And the 33 prisoners got to be delivered. If somebody gets killed, or beaten, or bloodied, or whatever it is, they can't deliver 30. So they had to make a way for us. But we had to pass through that yelling crowd. And it was pretty frightening.

And we were taken out to a platform without paying the \$0.05. And there, we were lined up. And there was a train waiting. And on the train, it said Weimar. And that's when we knew.

Weimar was the city where Buchenwald was located. Weimar was the city of Goethe. Weimar's a nice city, a beautiful city in the center of Germany. But a little bit outside of Weimar, there is a forest called Buchenwald. And in that forest, they had built the concentration camp. So we knew that's where we were going.

You knew about the concentration camp?

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Concentration camps were not a secret in Germany. In fact, I remember, in 1935 or '36, reading in the papers a story about that, in a German paper, mind you, that those are camps in which people are trained for work, and educated about the German government, and the aims of the National Socialist movement. And it made it nice, nice, nice, nice sort of thing. But we still knew what was going on because we had met some people who had been there and come back.

Jews?

Jews. So we were taken onto the train or put on board the train, regular passenger cars, third class passenger cars. Third class is hard seats. Second class is soft seats. Hard seats, which is what we traveled on usually anyway. I mean, this is of no particular hardship.

And then we were told that anybody who opens a window will get shot. Anybody who sticks his head out the window, shot. Anybody tries to escape, shot. Every third word was shot. We were given the rules. And then the train started to move and arrived in Weimar a number of hours later. And we were told to get out of the car, schnell, schnell, schnell.

And there was a gang of SS officers, SS men with steel rods and whips. And they yelled at us, schnell, schnell, schnell. Run here, run there against the wall. Don't move. Don't move. Don't move. Anybody who moved got beaten. And then we were put on trucks. And again, we were given the rules-- anybody that's shot, shot. Anything that you do that violates rules, [GERMAN].

And in those trucks, they took us up to the camp, which is about 10-15 minutes outside of town, a little bit before the main gate, which has that famous inscription, Arbeit Macht Frei-- work liberates. I think you have a photograph out there of one of the camps that has that gate. All the camps, all the concentration camps have that.

Then in front of that camp, the truck stopped. We were told to get off the trucks and run, again, through a gang of SS, who were beating up on us, into the camp. And then we ran into a scene out of, I guess, Dante's Inferno. There were thousands of people milling around, being told to go here, to there, to lie down on the ground, to get up. Nobody knew what was going on. And you were registered. This was about 2:00 in the morning, middle of the night, searchlights all over the place, machine guns, machine guns, barbed wire. And there we were. And we probably spent-- I spent the whole night there, being registered, being recorded, and recorded again, told to go here, told to go there-- not friendly-like, yelled at, screamed at. I was almost immediately separated from my father.

Yes, I was wondering where, up to what point were you with your father.

I was with my father up to that point. I lost him. I mean, there was-- I found out later that in this camp, there were 10,000 non-Jews and 2,000 Jewish prisoners who had been there before this November 10 thing occurred, before Kristallnacht, who were there for reasons not connected with Kristallnacht-- Germans who were communists, Germans who were-- non-Jewish Germans-- Germans who had committed crimes of some kind, served their time in jail, and then were arrested by the Gestapo when they were released after serving their regular time, people who had refused to do public works.

For example, an insurance agent who was called up by the Gestapo, by the National Socialist Workers' Party, to work on the Putsch project. And he would say, well, gee, I can't do that. I'm this insurance agent. They'd say, oh, is that right? And then go, there was in the concentration camp.

Social Democrats, Catholics, some Gypsies, Jews who had committed political crimes, Jews who'd committed what was called Rasenschande-- sexual intercourse with a non-Jewish woman-- homosexuals-- it was against the law in Germany, still is. A homosexual was just arrested, period. That was it. Didn't need any political excuses. They were there.

So were approximately 10,000 non-Jewish German prisoners and 2,000 Jews who had been there before Kristallnacht. And now, we were brought in. And within the first week or so, approximately 10,000, just under 10,000 Jews were brought into Buchenwald, imprisoned there, from, I'd say, ages 14 to around 80. In Berlin, they picked up a whole school with all the students and everything, put them in the camps.

And the confusion was indescribable. There was a regular camp with regular buildings, permanent buildings made out of wood. Some were made out of brick. And then they had separated a portion of the camps with barbed wire.

And in that separate portion, they had put up five barracks, 1A through 5A. That was the numbers. And those are the barracks that we had to live in. And the barracks had shelves. And we were living on those shelves.

And I can spend probably a couple of days telling you what went on in that camp, but it wasn't very pretty. But almost immediately after the people got in, they started releasing people.

Who were the first to be released? People who had immigration papers and were ready to go. They had people who had the American visa and the American shipping tickets in their pockets who could go two days later, three days later. They were sent out.

And some people were sent out-- maybe, we're not sure yet, or released-- because they were German officers or German soldiers during the First World War. That may have been the reason why my father was released after two weeks.

And so these continued. My cousin was there. My uncle was there-- Max Weil and Adolf Weil, my cousin Max. Adolf Weil was released in early December, was sick already, went home, died the next morning. Max Weil went home, was able to emigrate in January '39.

I also met a cousin of my father's whom I'd never met before and never met again, Julius Fackenheim, who had a son, name of Emil. There's somebody you know, is Emil Fackenheim. Emil Fackenheim is one of the most famous rabbis and sages in Jewish religion, used to teach a Toronto rabbi. Now he's in University of Jerusalem, very famous, written book after book after book, a philosopher.

Well, Julius Fackenheim is his father. He was a lawyer from Halle. And I met him in the camp very briefly, by chance. You meet people by chance, because there's no way to make an appointment. There's no way to say, we'll meet at 12 o'clock under the clock.

There's no clock, first of all. There isn't, and you don't have a watch. You mill around you. Work up to here in mud. Sometimes, you get something to eat. Sometimes, you don't. Have a meal with this guy. He says, isn't your name, you know. Yeah. I'm Julius Fackenheim.

OK. He was released sometime in the middle of December. About a week later, my name was called on the PA system, report to Department 1. And if you had an order to report to Department 1, that meant you go to the administrative section, which is OK.

They ask you to report the Department 2, that was trouble. That was the Gestapo. It's almost like the military in all the world. S2, G2 is intelligence, S1 is administration, S3 is personnel, S4 is supply and service. Same way in the German Army and the German SS. This was Department 1.

I reported to Department 1. An SS officer took me into a room, had me sit down on a chair, very comfortable. He says, do I know a Julius Fackenheim? I said, yeah. They said, do I know where he is? I said, well, he was here. But as I recall, he was released about a week ago.

Oh, is that right? I said, where did he go? I said, well, I assume he went back to his hometown of Halle. I said, well, why? What do you want to know? He says, well, we found a savings account passbook that belongs to him. And we got to return it to him by registered mail. And we want to be sure it gets to him.

Now, this is the same fellow who would have had no hesitation to beat Julius Fackenheim to death or to shoot him over something, for an infraction of the rules. But now, Fackenheim was out of the camp. He was back among the civilian population. And they found his property. And his property had to be returned to him in good order. Ordnung was signed. That's a German mind at work.

Strange, very strange.

It's crazy, you know. So he thanked me. And he told me to go back to the other camp. And I went back to the camp. That was it. That was December. Well, things went along. People were released. People were released.

Finally, there were about, oh, I'd say 200 or so left out of the 10,000-- 200. And at that point, they decided to liquidate that separate camp. It was barracks 1A through 5A. I might say that up to then, I had lived in that suit that I'd wore when I was arrested.

I had not once, not once taken that suit off me, or washed, or showered, not once. I was living in the underwear, in the shirt, in the suit that I wore when I was arrested for three months.

So they moved us into the regular camp. For the first time, we were given showers. And those were real showers. This was not fake. And we were not concerned. We wouldn't have been concerned. Wouldn't have known anyway when they told us to go into a shower. They'd given us showers.

And they cut off all our hair, all our body hair that we had. We had lice. It was miserable. And we were given uniforms, regular concentration camp uniforms-- stripes and the star, yellow and red, in our case, which meant Jewish political prisoner, and numbers.

And for a while, we were left alone. When all the rest of the camp were assembled in the morning and then march out, outside the camp, and work there, at various jobs, we were left alone. We'd walk up and down, taking our time, tell stories, play games. I remember one time, an SS officer came down. He played with us.

But then somebody had an idea of all those Jews, they should be doing some work. And so they started to take us out and put us to work.

So you had not been working before, even when you were in the other barracks?

No, no, never. Didn't work.

So for three months, you hadn't been working?

No. We would line up in the morning for roll call. We'd line up in the evening for roll call. We'd line up for other occasions. For example, one evening, we were just having our, quote, "dinner," unquote, which was a salt herring and a piece of bread, no tea, when we were told to line up for a roll call. And we lined up.

And there was a big gallows in the middle of was the parade ground. And they hung a fellow in full view of everybody. He and another buddy of his had escaped the camp in July, I believe, that year. And his buddy was discovered after a big search about a day later and killed right then and there. And this fellow escaped to Czechoslovakia.

And after the Anschluss in September '38, he was discovered in Czechoslovakia, brought back, was tried for murder, and he was hung in front of it. And we were standing there eating our bread. You get very cold. All you worry about is didn't happen to me.

So we were working. We were working, digging stones out of the ground, digging with our bare hands, digging tree stumps out of the ground, sometimes with tools, sometimes without, carrying bricks from one place to another. They were building barracks there, military barracks. And we were kind of helping along with some of the raw material.

So this is after they decided that they should put you to work?

That's right. And then in late November-- late February 1939, the camp was put in a quarantine. I found out later that two days before, the camp was put in a quarantine and was completely locked up. No one was allowed in or out of the camp-- SS, police, nobody. The camp was sealed off.

Two days before that, the Gestapo had sent a release order to the camp to get me out, because my parents were able to not just get a ticket to go to Shanghai, but for me, because the Gestapo wanted to see a visa-- they want to see a visa, again, the German mind, got to be a piece of paper.

My parents got me a visa to go to England, went to the Gestapo of February the 13th or something like that, 1939. And the Gestapo said, oh, great. Your son will be released. That's my order. But a few days later-- a few days earlier, the camp was put in a quarantine.

And we were told that typhoid fever had broken out. And we were inoculated once a week for three weeks, shots, subcutaneously in the chest, and worked, and worked. And in April, April the 12th, 1939, the quarantine was lifted.

And out of the last 212 November Jews-- that's what we were called, the November Jews-- I was among 144 to be released and sent home. As far as typhoid fever is concerned, it wasn't typhoid fever. In the '50s, and I read that in Time Magazine, documents were discovered.

They were conducting germ warfare experiments on the prisoners. And one of the experiments had jumped the controls and was threatening to wipe out the camp. That's why the camp was put in the quarantine.

We knew there were two blocks, two buildings in the camp, which were surrounded by barbed wire. And we knew that people would only be taken into that but not come out. Rumors were going around. But we didn't know what was going on. Later on, I found out, the middle '50s.

They were conducting germ?

Germ warfare experiments on prisoners. And so on April the 12th, I remember very well, when our block fÃ¼hrer, an SS officer name of Martin Gerhard Sommer, made a speech. He says, now, you're going to go home.

And you can remember, nothing happened here in the camp. You weren't injured. You weren't sick. And don't tell anybody about what you saw in the camp, or what happened in the camp, because if you do, no matter where in the world you are, we're going to get you. We're going to kill you. That was his farewell speech to us.

Again, in 1957 or '58, and I have that at home, Time Magazine published a story under the heading of "The Monster,"

story of an SS officer in concentration camp. He was such a brutal guy, such a cruel guy that even his own colleagues couldn't stand it anymore.

He would do things like taking the prisoner, rubbing his back raw with steel brushes, and then pouring acid over it, then put the body under his bed. That's the kind of guy he was.

So he was finally sent to the Russian front, got injured there, became paraplegic, went underground, and then surfaced after the war to claim a pension and get married. He was arrested by the German police, was tried of-- charged with 1,000 murders, was convicted of 38 murders, and was sent to life imprisonment-- Gerhard Martin Sommer, that guy.

And I heard last year from Buchenwald, which is now a museum, that he died about two years ago. But I know where he died, whether he died in prison or not. That was the guy I had-- there's still his picture in Time Magazine. He looked just as bad sitting in a wheelchair in civilian clothes as he looked in uniform, just a bad guy, pathological.

Anyhow, I was released April the 12th, came home April the 13th. Took all day to process us and to get us on the trains. Tell you an interesting story there, something that, again, shows the difference between the bad Germans and the good Germans.

We were taken from Buchenwald to Weimar railroad station on buses. We were taken through the rear entrance of the railroad station, because we looked disreputable. Our clothes had been deloused-- not pressed, but deloused. We had our hair cut off. We looked terrible. Some of us were starved. Some of us were not, just looked bad. So they didn't want us to show this to the general public.

And we had instructions. You do not use a D train, which in Germany is a very fancy sort of train, almost like an express train. You do not go into dining rooms. You do not go into dining cars. You only go to regular, what they call a Personzug, which is a third class type of a train.

OK. And when you come home, you report to the Gestapo immediately before going home, before going to your house. You go to the Gestapo headquarters and report. OK, OK. So they dumped us in the back of the railroad station, in the back entrance.

And we stood around there. And we didn't know what to do. And when a railroad police officer shows up, uniform, gun on the side, and immediately, in a Pavlovian reaction, we took our hats off and snapped to attention, because that's what we learned in the camp. When an SS officer comes, you take your hat off, stand at attention.

Fellow took one look at us, he says, gentlemen, he says, you're not up there anymore. Relax. Put your hats on. He says, I've just called the Jewish community. They're going to be here in 15 minutes, half an hour, with coffee and cake. In the meantime, anything that we can do for you, just let me know.

Says, also, he says, you were told that you could not use the express train, you could not do this, you couldn't do this. From now on, the railroad police is in full charge and has the responsibility of getting home. If I tell you you go on a D train or you're going to a dining room, that's where you go.

And we thought the earth would open up and swallow the sky. It didn't. That was a decent chap. And sure enough, a few minutes later, the guys came in with rolling trains of coffee, and cake, and I don't know what to eat. And I went home in a D train.

It was three of us in that compartment. And there were a bunch of soldiers, German soldiers, sitting in the same compartment. And they wanted to know where we were coming from, because we looked kind of-- you know, didn't look like a regular civilian.

And we were kind of noncommittal about that because we didn't want to say we come from Buchenwald, you know. And he says, oh, you probably come from the-- what do they call it-- labor service.

There was a sort of a National Socialist labor service type of thing, where German Jews, German youth-- not Jews, but youth were sent out to do public works, get a little training, and go back to their families, you know. Oh, you're probably from the labor service. Yeah, yeah, yeah, labor service.

And we arrived in Frankfurt. From Frankfurt, I changed trains, went to Wiesbaden. Got off the train in Wiesbaden and said to myself, well, I've got to report to the Gestapo first thing. But how do I do that? I mean, this is Wiesbaden. And Wiesbaden at about 11:00 at night, you roll up the sidewalks. Are they going to be there? Are they going to be awake? Let me ask a policeman.

Next thing, I didn't know where to find a policeman. So I walked from the railroad station to the main police headquarters and rang the bell. Nobody answered the door. So I said, well, I'll go home and see what happens. I went home on foot, dragging my little suitcase.

And my mother and my father were there. They already moved out of our apartment. They were ready to go, packed, everything ready to go. Was supposed to leave on the 18th. This was the 13th.

My mother said, yes, the Gestapo had told us to report to them immediately. They're worried about you already, why, where did you go? Worried about you, mind you. So she threw a coat over her nightgown, and called a taxi, and she and I drove down to Paulinenstrasse, which is where the Gestapo was located then.

And while she waited in the taxi, I went up to the door. And I rang the bell, and rang the bell, and I rang. And finally, a guy opens up. [MUMBLING] I said, well, I'm name so-and-so. And I'm supposed to report in. I've come back from Buchenwald. And I have orders to report to you immediately.

And he said, I see that. I had my papers from Buchenwald. Oh, you're the guy we've been waiting for. I said, yes. He says, well, you could have waited till tomorrow morning. You're two months late anyway. I said, well, I had orders to report immediately. I didn't want any trouble. He says, well, yeah, I guess you're right. Come back tomorrow. He says, I'm tired.

How do you explain this?

I don't know. I don't know. People are people. They're not machines. They're not always as bad or as good.

But how do you explain this attitude, about the concern that you were two months late--

I don't know, the guy was asleep.

--that they keep you in a concentration camp for five months. I mean, this can drive you crazy.

Kafka.

Yes, it's Kafkan, yeah.

Kafka, that's what it is.

And the policemen at the railroad station. How do you explain him? He knows what's going on just up the road in the camp.

Of course he does.

And then he's so nice to you guys. I mean, how do you make sense of this?

The more and more you get stories out of Germany, out of Austria, out of Poland of nice Germans, of nice Austrian, nice-- there were not many, but there were enough. There were enough. There were plenty of them. They just didn't

speak up.

But you call him nice, I mean.

This guy was nice. As far as I'm concerned, there was a fellow who could have made our life miserable in the railroad station because he had the authority. He was a police officer. Somebody didn't take his hat off fast enough, he could have picked up the phone and had him rearrested.

But he didn't say anything.

And he called us gentlemen.

But he tolerated what was going on right down the--

Exactly.

--the way.

He was scared.

And you still would call him nice. He was nice to you.

What can I do?

I don't know. The question is, there, how do you--

It happens here too, you know.

What?

It happens here too.

Yes.

Except it's people that don't say anything if a Black is beaten up in Bensonhurst. People would say, well, it's Bensonhurst. It's not the west side of the park. It's Bensonhurst. What do you expect? It's Brooklyn, it's the Bronx. What do they expect? Me in Westchester County, why should I worry about it? Same thing, same attitude. I've gotten very philosophical about it.

You've what?

I've gotten very philosophical about that, you know.

I'm interested in that process.

You can get mad, but get mad-- don't get mad, get even. That's probably the better attitude.

Well, tell me about that, about how you developed that approach.

Well, over the years, you know, I mean, I guess in those days-- to give you an example, when the war was over, somebody asked me, do you want to go back to Germany? Would you ever consider going back to Germany?

This was in 1945, '46, after I found out what went on. That's when we learned in Shanghai. We learned what was going on in Germany, the 6 million Jews killed, my relatives killed. I said, the only way I ever go back to Germany is with a

machine gun. And I believed that. But I've gone back to Germany twice.

Without it.

Without a machine gun. And I met Germans who were very nice. And I met Germans who were maybe not so nice. We can take hours. I went to the opera last year because I had opera tickets-- free, no charge. We saw the Bolshoi from Moscow, putting on Mussorgsky play, a Mussorgsky opera. Gorgeous.

That was the only time I was uncomfortable in Germany. Why? All those German opera-goers our age and older in smoking jackets, and tuxedos, and whatnot-- very formal, was that the guy who took my aunt to the railroad station? Was he one of the guys? Was he in the Gestapo?

The people who are now 45-50 years old, what the heck? You could, you know. I was mothered, fathered while I was there by two Germans, two teachers. One teacher is in the gymnasium and teaches French-- teaches Latin, and Greek, and ethics in the gymnasium where I used to be. The other one teaches French there, both of them Germans.

She told me-- she's, my guess is, early 40s. He may be a little older. That time, they were living together. In the meantime, they got married. [GERMAN], both of them, meaning PhD, higher-level teachers. She told me that she found out, to her horror, that her father was in the SS. And she is horrified by it. And she's absolutely devastated.

She was born in Peru or Chile, I think. Her father was a German abroad, but he was in the SS where he was in that foreign country. So he was probably not physically involved in the killing of Jews because he was always out of the country. But he was in the SS. And the idea, it horrified her.

This is the type of Germans you meet today. You meet others. You meet the people who are members of the party called the Republikaners, the Republicans, which in Germany is a right-wing, neo-Nazi group, antisemites.

Of course, today, they don't play much in antisemitism today. They are anti-Turks, and anti-Arabs, and anti-foreign workers. They've always got to be anti-something, always got to look down upon somebody. It's always got to be a level, like in the concentration camp, there were levels, gradations, or classes. Lowest class, of course, was the Jew.

But then there were the Gypsies. And then were the homosexuals. They were all different levels. And the highest level in the camp was the criminal, the guy had committed some crime-- thief, murder, whatever it was-- and then was put in the concentration camp. They were the guys who were the trustees because they were considered to be, politically, at least, correct, if nothing else.

And they were the kapos. They were the guys who were running the Jewish section until sometime in December 1938. One evening, the camp commandant made a speech over the PA system, said, they had discovered that a coffee and alcohol smuggling ring had been operating in the camp that smuggled coffee and alcohol into the camp. And those things were strictly prohibited.

And it was SS men who were doing it. SS men were doing it. And he said, they had been arrested. And they were now prisoners in the camp. And they didn't live very long either. And as a result, he trusted the Jews more than the Germans. This was an SS officer.

And from that point on, every Jewish block had its own Jewish supervisors instead of German supervisors, because they didn't trust the Germans anymore. Again, Kafka. You know? How do you understand, how do you explain it? You don't explain it. All you can do is report it. This is what happened.

Let me ask you about what happened to you during that time. You left in November a young worker-- not a worker per se, but a young man who was working. Right?

Who's trying to make a career. That's right.

Trying to develop a career. And five months later-- you're just taken out of that world. And you're put into, transferred into a nightmare, world end.

Right.

And you come out of that five months later. What happened to you during that five months?

Physically?

Physically and psychologically. I don't know that much happened to me psychologically. When you're that young-- I was 18, 18 and 1/2-- you're very resilient, usually. I'm not saying this as a generalization. I'm not saying everybody is resilient. Some people break down. I didn't.

And I was glad to get out. I was happy to get out. Within days, I was on the high seas leaving Germany, going to China, to a new life, whatever that meant, hoping to get to Shanghai for just a few days so then I would go to America. It turned out to be eight years, not just a few days, but looking forward.

And while I was scared at times while I was in the camp, I mean, this is the place where you never knew in the morning whether you'd see the evening sun go down. And you knew that. But you get even used to that. You lived with that. And it's never bothered me.

I've never felt-- and so many people do-- guilty that I survived and others didn't. I've never felt hesitant about talking about it. I've talked to the students at University California about it. I've done this sort of thing before, not in this formal setting, and not in a televised setting.

But I've talked about it. And I've written about it. And I've never hesitated to tell people if they ask me. Well, other people kind of-- they can't verbalize it. They can't bring it out. So it may be-- and I'm my own psychiatrist and probably have a fool for a client-- it may be that I had built a capsule around me.

And I'm not looking too deep into me. And that may be why I was able to survive, why I was able to make it, and to think about it, and not to shy away from the thought. Well, specifically why as a wife there was that I had a girlfriend. And she had gone to Argentina just a few days earlier.

In fact, the day that she left-- she was Polish, Polish parents. The day that they left for France and then for the ship to Argentina, that day, the Gestapo came to arrest them and take him back to Poland. This was the attempt by the German government to arrest all the Polish Jews in Germany.

They did. anybody who was Polish, and was shipped to the Polish frontier and pushed across the frontier. And a lot of these people didn't quite survive that, because it was bad weather. And the Poles wouldn't take them. The Germans wouldn't have them. They were sitting there in this no man's land.

And we were very much in love. And we had-- you know, this was a-- today, I don't know whether it would have lasted, but in those days, we were going to get married, that's it, and live forever, and happily, and all that, and grow old together.

And I just had this one idea. I got to see that girl again. I've never seen her again. But then I'm in correspondence with her. She's married. She's a grandmother. I'm a grandfather.

But you kept correspondence?

Well, for a while, I wrote her, of course, love letters and all that. She wrote back. And then I got my Dear John letter in Shanghai. She'd met somebody else. And I suppose it was OK, a very nice chap from Berlin. And they got married. And then I stopped correspondence. Not much point there.

And we had a brief exchange of letters after the war, when I was in the United States, through my cousin, Max, in Middletown, who was in touch with her. And that stopped. And then a couple of years ago, I had a call from a chap name of Newman in Reno, who-- a long distance call, who said that he had a letter from an old friend of his in Argentina.

He used to live in Argentina for many years. And she wanted to take up some contacts with our friends and whatnot from Wiesbaden. And so he wanted to know, could he give her my address? I said, what's her name? He said, well, Esther Doris Goerdner Schneider. Do I know her?

I said, yeah, I think I do. And I gave her my address. And we established our correspondence. And we've been in touch off and on ever since. But that's one of the things that kept me going, the idea I had to get out to see that girl again. Not that girl, but my girl.

You see, and these things have to hook onto somebody that gives you hope, because if you give up hope in a situation like that, that's it. You might as well walk up to the electrified fence. You're probably not going to get there, because they shoot you before you hit it. But that's what a lot of people did. A lot of people committed suicide.

By running for the fence?

Well, all kinds of ways-- cut your wrist, go to the fence, or try to go to the fence, and you go through the control zone, and the guys from up there yell at you, halt, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, one more body. So quite a few people passed on that way. Now, where were we?

Physically, how did you change? How were you-- what happened to you physically?

I don't know that I changed physically.

You must have lost weight.

No, I was just going to come to that. I went into the camp and I weighed 118 pounds. This is German pounds. You add about 10%, that gives you the American weight. Because the German pound is 500 grams. And American pound is 453. So I went in the camp, weighed 118 pounds, came out, I weighed 130.

Now, how do you explain that?

Very simple. The food we got was mostly water. And I was just waterlogged. You know, it was mostly liquids, you know, soup, soup, soup, soup there, a huge pot of water. And they throw in some-- whatever it is, pork, or meal meat, or some second or third-grade stuff that had been not passed by the health department. And they sent it to the camp. And they cook a meal out of it. And if you're hungry, you eat it. And so all that you had there was mostly liquid. And that builds up.

So did you lose it right away?

I lost it fairly quickly. That's one of the funny things, you know. I weighed more when I came out than when I went in, because in those days, while we were not well-fed, they did not really starve us, either. And we were not in starvation rations, as happened much later. We just didn't get either good food or plenty of it. But it was-- well, you could exist on it.

And the chefs, if you call them that, in the camp, were ex-Viennese chefs from good restaurants. And they knew how to cook. About the only bad meal I remember was the first hot meal I got two days after I got to the camp, that all of us got.

And it whale stew-- whale stew, very fatty stuff. And we were starved. And we just scarfed it down. And I managed to get another helping. And they call it nachschlag, and another helping. Oh, was great, you know. Next day, the whole

camp came down with diarrhea.

The whole camp?

The whole camp, all of us. And there were no latrines. And this is the clothes we lived in for three months. And very interesting, I got a book the other day, *BÃ¼rger auf Widerruf*, from LÃ¼beck Institute. These are biographical, autobiographical stories, or stories told by children of people, Jews-- German Jews from 1780 to 1945.

There's one piece in it by a fellow named Hans Berger from Wiesbaden who was in Buchenwald. He describes his experiences in Buchenwald. Hans Berger, by the way, happened to be my boss at that factory where I worked. I knew him very well. He disappeared in France. He and his whole family disappeared in France after the war.

He was in the camp for three months. And he reports this mass of people milling around and so forth. And he came across a man lying on the ground, semi-conscious, and six other Wiesbaden people standing around him. And that was Dr. Fackenheim.

And it was my father. And I didn't know that story. And he had in his pocket, Berger had in his pocket a little bottle of mouthwash. And he was able to get my father lips wet and let them smell in the mint. And he got him revived.

And they were able to get him up again. And they were holding up, because this was roll call time. They were standing there four hours. And all around him, people were collapsing, and yelling, doctor, doctor, doctor. And my father, as weak as he was, would go around, drag himself around with that bottle of mouthwash, which he got from Berger, to try to help people, until the SS came and told him to knock it off, or they would beat him up.

But I didn't know this story, because I was separated from him. I just happened to get that thing. And how did I happen to get it? The historian at Buchenwald sent me the story. He typed it up. He copied it out of the book, gave me the name of the book, and I wrote to the LÃ¼beck Institute.

And for \$20, whatever you say, sent me the book, which is published in Germany by the LÃ¼beck Institute-- small, small world how you find out these things. Berger went to Belgium and France later on, lived there during the war, and disappeared somewhere during the war, don't know where.

His brother, Fritz, I saw 20-25 years ago down in Southern California. He ran a dog obedience training school. I don't know whether he's still alive. I just saw him once when I was down there on some professional activity.

So somehow you went through this experience.

I went through the experience. And I wouldn't say I wasn't touched by it. But I also picked up a philosophy so that you can't get too excited about anything, because I'm living on borrowed time. By rights, I should have died, cashed in my chips, whatever you want to call it, age 19 or 18 and 1/2. What's more, this was not the only time the Germans tried to kill me. We haven't started talking about Shanghai yet.

Oh. I didn't realize that you were hunted in Shanghai.

I wasn't hunted. Let me tell you the story. In the summer of 1942, at that time, Shanghai was already completely under Japanese control. Shanghai, up to the outbreak of the war in the Pacific, was a town in which a part was occupied by the Japanese naval landing party.

Another part was the international settlement, which was run by the international consulates. One part was called the French concession, which was run by the government of France, was under French control. And about 18,000 to 20,000 Central European Jews had managed to get to Shanghai and were living there, were existing there.

Not all of us were living, many of us were just existing hand-to-mouth, day by day. Some people had a business. Some people had nothing. We had newspapers. We had theater groups. We had synagogues, plenty of them. We had homes.

We had hospitals.

I was working in one of the committees that helped refugees get established to help them interface with authorities. We had loan funds, interest-free loan funds, similar to the Hebrew Free Loan Society here in San Francisco. They help people establish a business.

War broke out, all of that collapsed. All of a sudden, the Japanese took over the whole town. Nothing much happened to the Jews for a while. And in the summer of '42, and we didn't know that until after the war, in the summer of '42, Otto Meisinger was sent from Tokyo to Shanghai.

Otto Meisinger had the rank of colonel in the SS. Before he was assigned to the job of chief of police at the Tokyo German embassy, he was the Gestapo chief in Warsaw responsible for the deaths of about 100,000 Jews. And he had earned himself the nickname the Butcher of Warsaw.

He was sent to Shanghai with a couple of people, one fellow, name of Neumann, and one fellow-- I forget his name. But I'm sure you have a book in your library that has the story. And he was meeting with that section of the Japanese naval police or navy that was in charge of Jewish affairs, because there were about 26,000 Jews, 6,000 Russian Jews, 18,000-20,000 European Jews, about 800 Iraqis.

And there was a Jewish affairs section. And he met with this section. And he said, look, he says, those Jews, you can't trust them. They'll give you nothing but trouble. Look what happened to Germany.

He said, I'll tell you what you do. Since you got a couple of ships in the harbor, why don't you, coming Rosh Hashanah in the fall, surround the synagogues, arrest them when they come out, take them to the ships, take away their clothes, tow the ships out to sea, cut the ruddy cables, and let them drift there. And a couple of weeks later, send out a gun boat or two and sink the whole mess-- simple, clean, no worries.

If you don't like that, take them up to the salt mines up the Yangtze River. Mr. Neumann from Bergen-Belsen can tell you how to feed them so that they're good for maybe two or three months of good, hard work for the Japanese Empire. And that'll take care of them, also, a natural way.

If you don't like that idea, I got another one. We'll establish a concentration camp for you in a little island down the Huangpu River. And you take them over there. And you let them volunteer for medical experiment, like the nervous system resistance to pain, stuff like that. Mr. Neumann from Bergen-Belsen, he's an expert on that. He can tell you how to do these things.

The meeting broke up without any decisions. And one of the men at the meeting was a Japanese vice consul, named Mitsugi Shibata. And he went to a little park that was nearby the meeting place. I'd been there many times.

And he sat on a bench. And he said to himself, have we, the proud Japanese people, sunk this low to listen to this sort of stuff, let alone to entertain the idea? Is this what we're fighting the war for? We? Terrible.

And then he sought out some Jewish friends that he had. This was Friday afternoon. And he said, look, we got to have a meeting right away. Something terrible is going to happen to you. We got to have a meeting. We got to discuss it.

And the man he talked to said, well, that's all good and well, but it's Shabbos. And we can't have a meeting now. He says, but it terrible stuff. Says, I'm sorry, it's Shabbos. We got to wait. No, you can't wait. He said, I'm sorry.

So he found another fellow who was not quite a shomer Shabbos. And they had a meeting. And he gave the word to the Jewish leadership in Shanghai, to some of them, anyway. And they got busy. It took six or eight weeks, at great danger to all the participants, till they finally got word of that plan to the foreign minister in Tokyo. I believe his name was Togo or Tojo.

And that man sent a wire to Shanghai. He said, keep an eye on the Jews, keep them under control, but don't touch them.

One Japanese vice consul saved the life of 26,000 people. If he hadn't been there, I wouldn't be here today.

The story is told in two books. One is Japanese, Nazis, and Jews by Dr. David Kranzler. The other book's called The Fugu Plan by Rabbi Marvin Tokayer and a woman, name was Swartz-- S-W-A-R-T-Z. She is apparently the journalist who helped him write it.

Tokayer was a rabbi in Tokyo. And he reads, writes, speaks Japanese fluently. And he found those documents in the foreign ministry archives after the war. I know it took-- where Kranzler got his story.

If you don't have those books, they should be in your library. I would imagine they are. The Kranzler book, I don't know whether it's still in print. Tokayer book was issued in second edition. He was in San Francisco two or three years ago, spoke at Temple Emanuel. I heard him there. And I talked to him. And I saw him again in New York at a meeting of Shanghai Jews.

So you've read an awful lot about that time--

Oh, yeah.

--the Germans and the Japanese?

That's right. See, one of the things that's been happening as the Holocaust period is recorded is very little has been written about the Shanghai experience.

Yes, OK, well, tell me, after you got back from Buchenwald, your family left five days later, right, to go to Shanghai. Or it was you were leaving on the 18th or something.

Yeah, that's right. That's right.

And I mean, your mother must have been just in ex--

Well, we were all uprooted, just like anybody else.

But to see you all right, I mean, that's a humongous thing.

Well, yeah, I mean, I remember ringing the doorbell. This was about 1:30, 2:00 in the morning after having been on a train all day, and all afternoon, all evening. Ring the doorbell. And my mother yelled, out Walter, is that you? And my father fell out of bed, you know, he got so excited.

And then they came to the door. And of course, the usual reception. And my mother, I says-- the first thing I said is look, I have instructions to report to the Gestapo right away.

This was, again, my nature of doing things, which I am told to do, and do right now, and not later. And she said, yes, that's right. They told us they were worried about you-- her words. And they told us to get you over there right away. I'll call a taxi. And so we went over there, the story I told you.

Yes. That's strange-- well, it's not strange, of course. Did you learn to be so obedient to authority in the camp too?

Not so much being the authority as if I have a job to do, I'll do it. It's not a question of-- it's more inner-directed. It's not because someone told me to, but I know this has to be done. I might as well get it done.

What about in--

And now, of course, in Germany, if you're told to do something, you better do it. This is even true today. I mean, even in a nice sort of way, when we were over there, my cousin and I were over there together in Wiesbaden last year. And he's

a kind of-- he's a bachelor. He's never married. And he's always in correspondence with people.

And so he's been in correspondence with the chief of the German, call it-- it's [GERMAN]. It's the German CIA, Bundeskriminalamt, which is headquartered in Wiesbaden. Sometime early in '89 or late in '88, a German police officer or two were killed when one of those radio bombs blew up, the kind of thing that was used to blow up that airline, the Pan American Airline. They found one of those radios.

And somebody messed around with it. And police officers got killed. So my cousin wrote a letter of condolence to the head of the German CIA there. And so he was invited through that fellow. And he was in Wiesbaden.

He had invitations to come visit him. And the guy received him and said, Mr. Weil, nice to see you. Let's take a look at your dossier, we know all about you, and pulled out his file. And he knew all about him. That's German police. They know all about him. They had him down in their little list, friendly, of course, and over in ha-ha-ha, but efficient.

What happened to your brother during this time? Was he taken to the camp?

No. No, my brother was 16 at the time. And he wasn't taken to the camp. This was all very individual. It varied from city to city what happened. In the city of Aachen, which is on the Rhine. It's north of Cologne, as I recall-- not so good in geography anymore as I used to be.

In the city of Aachen, every Jew there was arrested by the Gestapo was put through a rigorous physical examination by a physician. And one man was told that he had diabetes. And he said he didn't know about it. They says, oh, yes, we checked your urine. You have diabetes. Better go home and see a doctor about it and do something about it before they send people off to concentration camp. Of course, he wasn't sent off, because he was sick.

It varied. In other cities, they would walk in with guns and shoot people. A little town further up on the Rhine, they walked in, a husband and wife in bed, and Gestapo came in, lined them up, and shot them. Didn't even arrest them, didn't say what they're doing, just shot him out of hand. It varied.

So your brother was never in camp?

Was not arrested, was not arrested. He was somewhat traumatized. He hid under the bed all day long until he finally relaxed a little bit.

All day long when?

When I was arrested.

Oh, yeah.

Yeah. And that's what I was told later on by my mother. And I wasn't there. And we all went to Shanghai together.

Tell me about that trip. How long did it take to get to Shanghai?

Trip took a month. We left Germany on the 18th of April, Bremerhaven, and arrived in Shanghai on the 19th of May. So it's a month and a day. We went from Bremerhaven to Rotterdam, where we got off the boat. We went to Birmingham, England-- sorry, Southampton, England, where we were not allowed off the boat. British were worried. We went to Genoa, Italy, where we were allowed to walk around.

Then we went to Port Said, through the Suez Canal, to Aden, to Bombay, Singapore, Manila. In Singapore, we were allowed off the boat. In the Philippines, we were allowed off. Hong Kong, we were allowed off. And Shanghai, we were kicked off. That's it. And there we were with \$2.50 in our pockets.

\$2.50?

10 marks, that's all we were allowed to take out.

So what happened to you?

The money that we had on board the ship, which we could spend on champagne, cigars, photo equipment, anything else was locked up on the ship, sent back to Germany. On board the ship, we were rich.

Why would they allow you to take your money to China?

Oh, the Germans, this-- you we're not allowed to take out anything except 10 marks in cash. And if they felt like it, they would send whatever you had left after that to whatever your foreign address was.

And so we were fortunate in getting some of our money out afterwards. It was about six, eight months later, we got a transmittal through one of the British banks of what was left of our very, very small fortune. We didn't have much of a fortune to begin with.

But then there was a big fine was levied on all the German Jews because of the murder in Paris by Herschel Grynszpan, which caused the Kristallnacht events. And then whatever we took out of Germany in the way of clothes, we had to be 100% duty on that. And my father took out his equipment. And we had to pay 100% on that.

And so your money shrank in a lot of what you might call, quote, "legal," unquote, ways. And then what was left, including the money that was sent back from the unused money spending money on board the ship was sent back into blocked accounts.

And those blocked accounts were transferred to us, finally, at the rate of \$0.06 to the dollar-- six pfennig to the mark. So my parents got, I don't know, 100 or 200 pounds, English pounds. And that was it.

So what happened to you when you got off the boat in Shanghai with \$2.50?

Well, we got off the board. We were received. We were received by the committees that were established there. We were put on trucks, taken to camps, refugee camps, and boarded there overnight. And then immediately, my father got busy and found a room that he rented for my mother. He didn't want her to be in a camp, a camp-type atmosphere. This was not a concentration camp, but it was strictly a refugee camp, pretty bad.

And so we put her into a room in the neighborhood of the camp. And then we were in that camp for a couple of weeks. And my father was able to rent an apartment in the same building that the camp was in, the Embankment Building at the Soochow Creek. Building's still there. I was there a few years ago. And got the apartment. And we were able to get some furniture out of Germany, also very fortunate, and set up housekeeping there. And he set up--

Did that furniture come on the ship, you mean, with you?

It came on a separate ship.

And where did your father get the money to rent the apartment?

I don't know. It didn't cost much. Was-- the whole project was owned by a Jew, British subject, a Baron, that Sir Victor Sassoon, who died in California many years later. Sir Sassoon, a very wealthy man, owned a lot of industry, owned breweries. He owned cotton company, on and on.

Later on, I worked for him. And so we were able to get the apartment. And I don't know what the financial affairs were. And so he set up-- my father set up a small practice. See, all I had to do there is go to the city council, say I'm a physician, here are my qualifications from Germany, here's my MD certificate from WÃ¼rzburg.

And he said, OK, you're in business, no tests, no nothing. Doesn't mean that he was making a lot of money, because there was a lot of competition. And almost every other refugee from Germany was either a physician or a lawyer-- maybe not quite so much, but this is what happened.

And then I got a job in a laundry, which is where I started my accounting career, Chinese laundry. True. True. Cathay Laundry, I was accounts receivable clerk. Learned to run an adding machine, 10-key adding machine. Learned Chinese.

Really?

Oh, yeah. I had a deal with the truck drivers, the coolies, they called them, who delivered laundry and dry cleaning, and collected the money, or brought back the signed bills so that we would record them in accounts receivable. And I would check their money. And I'd count it, and make sure it tied up, and everything dovetailed.

And if it didn't, I would have to discuss it with them in Chinese, of course, and use the proper adjectives and conversational gambits. For example, if the guy didn't bring back the right change, you would discuss with him the question whether his parents were ever married. It was a circumlocution for calling him a bad name, you know. And he would then call me something. And this was all in good fun. You know, but this is how I learned Chinese.

So you didn't take lessons? You just--

No, you learned it. And the other language that I didn't know, which I needed very badly there was English. I had learned French. I had learned Latin. I had learned Greek. And when my girlfriend was ready to go to Argentina, I learned Spanish with her.

But English, I never learned. So I come to a country in which English is the main language outside of Chinese, of course, outside of French in the French concession of Shanghai. And so I had to learn English.

How did you learn English?

I borrowed detective stories. I listened to the radio and detective stories. Of course, you want to know how it came out, and you got to read. And that's how you learn it. And I happened to be fairly fast. Listened to the radio whenever I could. And I got the language in to speak it.

And of course, at my job, I had to speak English. There was-- nobody understood German there. The people that I worked with were either Portuguese, or Russian, or English, or Chinese. So if I didn't speak any of those languages, just German wouldn't help me a great deal. So I learned some Russian. I learned some Portuguese. I learned some English. I learned some Chinese. And then I've learned a lot of English.

And about six months after that job, I became very ill. I had amoebic dysentery, one of the problems that you pick up there. I was in the hospital for six weeks, lost my job. Went back to the fellow who had got me the job in the first place, a local business, name of Paul Komor, who ran the committee that helped people get settled.

And he said, why don't you go to work for me? That's what I did. And I worked for him first as a sort of a gofer. And very quickly did somebody discover that I spoke better English than anybody else in the shop, because all the people working there way in from either Berlin, or Vienna, or Germany someplace, Austria.

And so I was promoted upstairs to Komor's private offices as personal secretary-- number two personal secretary. He had another personal secretary. And I was writing for the newspapers. And I was helping people go to the police and go to the consulate. I acted as interpreter.

And I worked there as an accountant. We had a thrift shop helping refugees sell their goods for a reasonable price so they wouldn't be taken advantage of. And I was keeping the books for that.