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--Constance, so you can give her a date, location, and personnel.

It's the 13th, isn't it, Jeff?

14th.

Oh, 14th. You're right.

I was scheduled for the 13th.

Oh, all right. The 14th. Wow.

14th of June.

What a mind.

Any time.

OK. My name is Constance Bernstein. I'm talking to Walter Frank. It is July 14, 1990.

It's June 14.

Sorry. It's June 14, 1990.

You're ahead of yourself.

And we are at the Holocaust Center in San Francisco.

Right.

OK?

Yes.

Well, now, Walter, the last time I saw you, we were just leaving Germany. I think you had just come back from the-- you had been taken away.

I was in a concentration camp.

Right. And for how long? How many months?

I was in the camp for five months.

That's right. And you just come back. And your family was getting ready to-- well, they went to China--

Leave.

--to get on the boat. So can you take us from there?

I'll take it from there. And I just want to put in one correction of something I had said the last time. I mentioned the Bundeskriminalamt in Wiesbaden, the German police office, national police office. And I said, that's the equivalent of what we have in this country called the CIA.

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I got my letters mixed up. It's the equivalent of the FBI. It's a law enforcement agency that covers the entire Federal Republic of Germany. And I suppose today they cover both Germanys. But with that correction, let's go back to-- this is April of 1939.

Right. And I just want to-- I remember very distinctly what you said about the policemen at the railroad platform--

Oh, yes.

--and how he treated you like a gentleman. I thought that was-- well, to come out of the experience and to still be able to tell the good guys from the bad guys, or--

Well, it was, in a way, a shock to come out of the very rigidly structured environment of Buchenwald-- and rigidly structured is probably a euphemism for what goes on there--

Right.

--and to stand on the platform or one of the back rooms of the railway station in Weimar and find a man in uniform with a swastika on the uniform say, oh, don't worry about those guys. You do what we tell you. And we have made arrangements with the Jewish community to bring coffee and cakes for you.

Right.

And don't take your hats off every time I say something. And just relax. You're among friends.

Among friends, he says.

I don't know whether he used the word "friends," but he just treated us as nice people, and was a nice person.

Yeah.

And we just weren't used to that sort of thing. Anyhow, we went home. I think I told you about that instant in the train where three or four of us, all looking like vagabonds in our clothing, unpressed clothing, and our hair shorn off, and we were accompanied-- or not accompanied. We were in company of a bunch of German soldiers who were also traveling on the train.

And they wanted to know where we were coming from. And we were a bit scared of-- nervous, maybe, about telling them we were coming from a concentration camp. And so we said, well, it's some sort of labor detail. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, the voluntary labor service, the Freiwilliger Arbeitsdinst. They understood that. And that was fine. And then they didn't bother us anymore.

And yeah, we went from Weimar straight through to Frankfurt, where most of us got off. All of us got off the train, even the ones that had to go on, because you had to change trains there. It was a major transfer station.

Was this a whole big group of you from your hometown?

The total-- no, from my hometown, I was the only one. I was the only one going to Wiesbaden.

Oh, you mean after you came back from the camp?

That's right.

Oh, right. But I think we can jump to-- we had talked about your mother seeing you, and how--

Right.

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--she reported to the police, and everything. So let's take the story up to where you and your family are leaving. How was the boat?

OK. I'd come home on a Tuesday, I believe, or Wednesday-- Wednesday. And first thing I had to do was buy a whole set of new clothing, because nothing fitted me. I put on weight, which was a bit unusual for a concentration camp. Later on, that didn't happen. It was mostly water, though, that I eventually lost from the constant soups they fed us.

And we all were packed. And on the following Monday, we got on a train in Wiesbaden, went to Bremerhaven in Germany, northern Germany, and then boarded a ship on Tuesday the 18th of April, 1939-- my father, my mother, my brother, and I.

We did have one more passage, one more ticket for my mother's sister. But she insisted that she would want to go to the United States. Her husband had died-- I told you that last time-- on the day after he came home from concentration camp.

Her son had already gone to the United States, was already here. And she didn't want to go to Shanghai. She wanted to go to America. Trouble is, she never made it. She was deported on May 23, 1942. And we don't really know what happened to her.

But there we were, the four of us. At the last minute, my father was pulled out of the line by the Gestapo and body searched for money that he might be wanting to smuggle. At the time, the law was that you could not take out more than 10 marks per person, which was the equivalent of about $2.50.

But he had no money on his body. He wasn't the kind of guy who would do anything that would be a violation of law, even if it was an unjust law. He just wouldn't do that. And so he came back.

And we boarded the ship. And the ship left Germany. It was a German boat, German crew, German captain, with one Gestapo on board. And there was a purser. And the boat left and went to Rotterdam as its first stop.

Was there are a lot of Jews who were leaving on that ship?

There were several hundred refugees on board the ship. There were other people-- Germans, there were Swedes, Swiss, Americans, some British. It was a mixed crew. We were traveling first class. That was the only passage we were able to get.

It's not that was our choice. We wouldn't have gone-- we would have gone steerage too if that had been available. But the only thing that was available was first class passage. And we were living for the next four weeks like first class passengers.

Oh, yes.

We had a lot of money that could be spent on board the ship. But anything that wasn't spent at the end of the trip was sent back to blocked accounts in Germany. So we were living high on the hog-- champagne and wine every day. My father smoked expensive cigarettes. I shot roll after roll of film. I had my camera with me.

Whatever there was in the way of luxuries that you could buy, we did, because we had the money. And it wasn't-- it was worthless because it would be sent back to Germany. We couldn't use it in Shanghai anyway.

And you couldn't smuggle it off?

Oh, no, you couldn't. All you did was sign for things. And it was charged against that account. And whatever wasn't used up went back to Germany. Eventually, some of the money was transferred to Shanghai, but at the rate of about $0.06 on the dollar, which doesn't mean anything.

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So we went to Rotterdam. We were able to get off the boat, all of us refugees. We went to the Jewish organization in Holland. This was before the war. This was still an independent country. And we got a lot of advice, and a lot of handshakes, and good luck, fellows.

And then we went back on board. We went to-- I believe it's Southampton, England next stop. British wouldn't let us off the boat. They didn't trust that. They were afraid we might stay in England.

Next stop, Genoa, down past the coast of Spain, Portugal, past Gibraltar, onto Genoa. Genoa, we were allowed off the boat. Interesting city, we walked around a little bit, went back in the boat.

Next up was Port Said and the entrance to the Suez Canal. There, again, we were confined to the boat. And we went through the Suez Canal to Aden, again, confined to the boat, to Bombay, again, under British control. They wouldn't let us off the boat.

And in Bombay, it was Singapore. Singapore was the first port we were allowed off. And from Singapore to Manila, again, we visited Manila, walked around there-- very hot, very sunny, very bright, our first real taste of the tropics-- to Hong Kong, where they, again, permitted us to visit Hong Kong and travel around.

And some of the organizations-- Jewish organizations in Hong Kong took us under toe and showed us around. And we went up to Victoria Peak, which is a typical visitor's place to go. Any time you go to Hong Kong, you go up to Victoria Peak-- and then to Shanghai.

Now, on the boat, it was interesting. The captain was a very decent guy. And what he could do to make our life easier, to make this last fling, as it were, nice for us, he did, in a quiet sort of way.

For example, the rule was that in a German movie house, the Jews had to sit separate from the Germans. Didn't say where, but they had to be separate. So what did he do? We had movies every other night in the main lounge.

And so the Jews were sitting separately from the others, right in the center. And the Germans, who had to be separate from the-- Aryans, they sat way over on the side, not so good seats, you know. You're better off sitting in the center.

Swimming-- the Germans and the Jews were not allowed to swim together. So all right, Germans swim from 6:00 in the morning till 11:00. And the Jews swim from 11:00 to 4:00 when it's nice and warm.

You're right.

You know, and of course, who was there to protest? There was a certain amount of cabin-hopping going on, which I, at my tender age, didn't quite understand at the time. But I heard about it. And I know now more about it.

And so the captain called one of the Jewish passengers and said, look, he says, if this has to come to my knowledge officially, I have to make an arrest and take the person back to Germany. And you know what that means. So you better tell him to cool it, you know, the purser Gestapo.

And so everybody cooled it. It's the kind of guy he was. I heard much later, oh, I'd say nine or 10 years ago from somebody I met who was an editor of US News and World Report that he also knew the captain, that he also traveled on that boat, and in another--

Time?

--on another voyage, in another context. That was an American. And he heard that the boat was interned when the war broke out-- not interned, but taken by the Japanese when the war broke out and then converted to a troop carrier, and then freight carrier, and that the boat was sunk by either American or British bombers. And the captain went down with the boat. And he also confirmed that he was a very nice, decent German, someone that Rabbi Schulweis would call a

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Righteous Gentile.

And the entire crew acted that way. They were international people. Sure, they were Germans, but they were used to international business, international trade. And to them, this business of race, and Aryans, and iron didn't mean anything. Didn't mean anything.

The only "bad," in quotation marks, guy on board was the purser. So we arrived in Shanghai on May the 19th, a nice trip, a month and a day. And having been first class passengers on board the ship, we got off the boat and were poor as church mice, all of us.

You had $10 or something?

10 marks, not dollars-- 10 marks.

But each of you, the four of you, all together had 10 marks?

Together, we had-- they had the equivalent of about $10. There were trucks waiting for us that were operated under the aegis of local committees, which we weren't familiar with. It was hot. It was muggy. We were loaded on the trucks. Our baggage was taken to a go-down. That's not an English word. It's an Indian word. And it means a warehouse.

And we were taken to a refugee camp. We were taken to a camp in the Embankment Building, which was a large apartment house on Soochow Creek. And the camp itself was in the basement. And my father looked around and immediately made an effort to get my mother out of that rather miserable facility.

And so he was able to rent a room for a few Chinese dollars. Didn't cost much, but that much money we had. And he put her into that room. So she at least was spared this business of living in the camp. And the three of us-- my brother, myself, my father-- we lived in that camp for a little while. And then he--

Was it full of other Jewish refugees?

Yeah. It was a camp for Jewish refugees. What was happening was that every week, hundreds of refugees poured into Shanghai-- altogether in a period of, I'd say, a year or so, maybe a little more, 18,000 refugees. And of course, they had to be housed someplace.

And so the local people, local Jewish organizations, organized a number of refugee camps on Chaoufoong Road, on Ward Road, and the Embankment Building, on Alcock Road, all over Shanghai, particularly in the area called Hongkew, which was in the eastern part of Shanghai.

And they had warehouses. They had factory buildings that were empty. And they just set up beds-- double-decker, triple-decker beds and very primitive. But it was a place to be, a place to be taken care of. And then they set up kitchens to pass out food so that people had something to eat.

They established hospitals, first aid stations. A lot of the refugees that came in were physicians. My father was. And so they had more physicians than patients in some areas.

Oh, really?

Lots of physicians. They had more lawyers than courts too, lots of lawyers there. And so people first went into these camps. Some of them, like my parents, were able to get out using their initiative, using what little resources they had.

My father was able to rent an apartment in the same building that the camp was in on the third floor, a-- what would you say-- two-room apartment, a bedroom and a living room. The living room became his office. And there was a kitchen and a bathroom. And it was a nice balcony. It was a comfortable place.

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And fortunately for us and for him, our furniture arrived. The Gestapo permitted it to go out. And it came through. And with the exception of some medications and some medical equipment that the Gestapo, we assume, removed from the stuff, almost everything arrived that we had sent out. So we had beds. We had room. We had furniture. We had desks, and chairs, and whatnot.

My father was able to set up an office. He had himself cards printed in English and Chinese. He had a very friendly Chinese gentleman translate his name from Dr. Willy Fackenheim to [? Fou ?] [? Verlain-- ?] [? Fou, ?] the last name, Verlain, Willy. And it meant something very nice in English.

That was a very tricky thing too. A lot of people had their names translated into Chinese for business purposes. But if you didn't get the right translator, you came out with someone that didn't sound too nice. But here, it's gentle and charming or something, whatever it meant.

And he set up shop. He went to the city council, the municipal council in Shanghai, which was in charge of the particular area we were living in. And they said, OK, you're a physician. Where did you graduate? And here are my documents-- WÃ¼rzburg, Berlin.

OK, you're in business. Sign here. And that was it. There were no tests, no examinations, no fees, even. And so he was able to start a very small practice. It never amounted to much, but he made a few bucks.

We registered with a committee, which was called the International Committee for the Organization of European Immigrants in China. Didn't use the word Jewish. European immigrants, because there were a number of people who weren't Jewish who were also coming out, who were half-Jewish. They were Protestants, or Catholics, or married to non-Jews. And so the committee avoided the term Jewish-- this particular committee.

We registered with them. And I was introduced to the honorary secretary, a Mr. Paul Komor. Komor was a Hungarian who had lived in Shanghai practically all his life. There was some connection with us in the sense that his mother had died and was buried in Wiesbaden, where we were from. And so of course, that already made us a little closer.

He had been deported from Shanghai after World War I as an enemy alien, because after World War I, Germans and Hungarians were on the same side. And the British had won the war. And so he was deported. But now, he was on the right side of the law. He was friendly with the British. And in fact, he was the Hungarian honorary consul for a while with import and export.

And he decided to help immigrants at the time. And he'd set up this committee, which was financed by a British Jew named Sir Victor Sassoon, committee to help people to find jobs, to sell their belongings through a thrift shop, to contact, to interact between refugees and the city council, or the foreign consulates if they needed it, or the courts.

He set up a conciliation board to mediate disputes rather than having them go to courts-- Chinese courts-- have it mediated by European-- German, Austrian lawyers. He set up a milk fund, and a coal fund, and a school fund to collect money for purchase milk, which was very expensive and rare in Shanghai, to purchase coal for the winter, to send kids to school. In fact, eventually, he organized a school, separate Jewish school.

And so I went there. And he arranged for me to get my first job in a Chinese laundry. It was my beginning of my accounting career. I was an accounts receivable clerk. And I started to learn English. I learned Chinese.

I learned a little Indian. I learned how to say good morning in Indian. That's the only thing I learned. I learned some Portuguese, some Spanish, and had a smattering of languages. You've got to understand that Shanghai was a rather polyglot place. I guess--

International community.

--it was an international community. It was a culture shock to get there, to be there, to arrive there, to go into a city in which the street signs were in English, and French, and in Chinese. In the French part of Shanghai-- they have what they

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call the French Concession-- it was-- everything was French. The uniforms of the police were French. And in the international settlement, it was all English.

And in parts of the international settlement, called Hongkew, which I mentioned earlier, that had been occupied by the Japanese since the Sino-Japanese war in 1937, and there, a lot of things were Japanese. The Chinese spoke 100 different dialects.

And there were Indians, Hindus, and Sikhs who spoke their language, practiced their religions, and had their customs. Chinese had their customs. British-- there were maybe 1,500-2000 Germans in Shanghai, maybe 6,000-8,000 Russians, I don't know how many Portuguese-- large Portuguese community.

It was completely different. This was something that we'd never even dreamt of, you know. You've got to remember that going to Shanghai for a German or a German Jew was like today-- it was less--

Immersed.

--conceivable, then, for you to today think that maybe one day, I'll go to the moon, because we've been to the moon. Sure, Marco Polo went to China-- meshuggeneh-- you know, crazy. Who goes to China? And there we were, in China.

And so I got my job in the laundry and learned Chinese. I talked to the coolies every day, the truck drivers. Called them coolies-- that delivered laundry and dry cleaning, and collected the money for it, or brought back the signed receipts for people who paid on an account once a month.

And I would check the money. And I would check the receipts. And god help this poor guy if that didn't match, if things didn't balance. I would start discussing with him his parentage-- all in good fun, you know. I'd question whether his father and brother were ever married, for example. It was all in Chinese.

Really? Is that the Chinese way?

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. This is customary. This is what you do with it. I mean, you probably do it in English in a rough environment. And this was a rough environment. These were very rough and tough people. These were lower economic circles, workers. They work by the sweat of their brow.

So this would be the worst thing you can say about him, that his parents weren't married?

Of course. Of course. And then he would call me something bad, you know. And we'd laugh. And then OK, go away. See you tomorrow. And tomorrow, he brought the right sum of money. And I praised him. And this is how you learn Chinese.

How old were you at the time?

I was 19.

That's a very sophisticated skill at 19.

Well, yeah, it's something different, you know. This is not the kind of hoi polloi, high society type of environment. And we had a lot of fun there. And you learn things. You learn questions that you shouldn't ask. For example, you never asked, even in fun, a Chinese what he thought the weather was going to be like.

Why?

You never did. And there's a very good reason for it. And I saw it again confirmed the other day in-- of all places, in a science fiction magazine, Isaac Asimov's science fiction magazine. Had the same story, which confirmed it.

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And what happens is that in Chinese mythology, the only one that knows what the weather's going to be like is a turtle. Right. And if you ask a Chinese, well, do you think it's going to rain tomorrow, you are suggesting he's a turtle. That's an insult. You don't call him a turtle.

I mean, you don't go around calling people pigs in this country, you know. And there, to call him a turtle is an insult. And you didn't do that even in fun. I mean, I might question whether his parents were married-- or his grandparents, for that matter. But you never ask him what the weather's like. One is fun. And one is joking around. One is kidding. One is pulling the leg. The other one is a slap in the face. And you learn it very quickly.

I remember somebody who came back to this business of cards. His name was Picard. And he had his name translated to [? Pigou. ?] And that was a very dirty word in Chinese. And he didn't know that.

[? Pigou. ?]

[? Pigou. ?] I didn't know what it meant. I forgot it. But [? Pigou, ?] that's close to Picard. That is in an Austrian, I believe. Anyhow, I worked for the Chinese laundry for six months. And during that period, I picked up my first tropical disease.

My father was working as a physician. My brother got a job with an import and exporter, a Russian gentleman in Frenchtown. And I picked up my first disease-- maybe dysentery. And it was very hard to diagnose.

The symptoms are very simple. You have diarrhea. And you have to take the specimen to the laboratory in a hurry, because the bacteria die very quickly, even when they cool off. And so by the time you get it to the laboratory, a lab, they didn't find anything.

They finally diagnosed it in December of that year. And I was immediately taken to Shanghai General Hospital, where I spent the next four weeks. I mean, here, you get a couple of shots, maybe you spend three days in the hospital and four days at home, and you're fixed up. It's antibiotics.

Those were before antibiotics. They had just their conventional medications, which were slow, and which were more palliative and symptomatic in nature, rather than actually treating the disease. And so I was in Shanghai General Hospital for four weeks.

Got out, rested up at home another three weeks. And then I got a letter from a Cathay Laundry, my employer, saying, well, too bad, but we had to fill the job. And thanks, but no thanks. So I went back to Mr. Komor and said, what do we do now?

And Komor said, well, let's see, you speak English pretty well. And can you write English? I said, oh, sure. He said, well, OK, why don't you work for me? And I got a job for him as a gofer for that committee. Now, you go here, you go there, you go for this, you go for that.

Third day in, he sent for me. And he had a letter to the editor, which was one way to communicate with the public-- letters to the editor in the North China Day News. And he had drafted some. And he said, why don't you write it out all the way and see what it looks like?

And the thing was an appeal for funds for the milk fund. Rather than calling in a journalist and have him write it up, you wrote it up yourself. You sent a letter to the editor. And the editor would pick it up. And sometimes, even writing in a trailer to go along with it.

This was a small town sort of thing, you know. Sure, there were millions of people. But it was an enclave surrounded completely by China. And it was pretty much like a family.

So I wrote that up. And I took it upstairs to him. And he looked at it. He says, well, why don't you go and work for me as my secretary? So I was quickly promoted to his second secretary. He had one secretary, a lady from Vienna, a [?

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Liese ?] Altura. And I became her assistant. So we were the secretaries working right in the anteroom to Mr. Komor's office.

So I made a quick career there. And from then on, I wrote most of the stuff that went into the North China Daily News-- appeals for funds and this kind of thing. And also, on a more general nature, he would write a letter to the editor complaining about the symphony concert or whatever it was. And I would write an answer to that under another assumed name.

I see.

We'd kind of work together, you know. For example, he might complain about recorded symphony concerts, records, because it isn't like a live concert. And I would write back, saying, yeah, but in records, nobody coughs, and nobody rustles the papers, and so forth.

So we had a good time doing this sort of thing. And along that way, I learned how to improve my writing. He would always critique it, and help me, and straighten out to be sort of an editor. And I learned a lot from him. We became very close friends. The friendship lasted until he died in Santa Cruz, California here.

Oh, really?

A short while after I came here to California, he left Shanghai with his wife. His two sons were already in the United States. And he retired in Santa Cruz. And my wife and I visited him many times. We came all there. And when she died, we stayed friends all the way through. He was a wonderful guy.

The committee that I worked at had an interesting policy as far as salary is concerned. Everybody got the same pay, didn't matter what you did. The lawyer on the conciliation board, the gofer, the fellow who sorted the mail, there was only one difference-- Mr. Komor. He got nothing.

Oh, my goodness.

No pay. He devoted practically his whole day to running that committee. He would run to his office in the morning for a few hours-- this is his own office-- to do some importing-exporting. He would be there in the afternoon for maybe half an hour. And he spent practically all his time, seven days a week, on that committee.

And what were the thanks he got when the Japanese took over the city when the Pacific War broke out? He was arrested by the Japanese. And they claimed he was a spy, and he stole the money, and all kinds of stuff. And they finally couldn't prove anything so they let him go. But he was a-- if there is such a thing in Judaism as a saint--

That was him.

--he was it. Yeah. He was really respected by all the people that worked for him. We had lawyers for the conciliation board. We had accountants. I became an accountant again. I was running the books for the thrift shop.

There was a store we had rented on Nanking Road, where people would bring their merchandise they had, silver, and some of the things they were able to get out of Germany-- maybe a camera, or maybe a set of books, chinaware, anything at all that had value. And rather than throwing it on the open market, where they might not get anything, bring it to the gift shop, either sell it outright, or put it in on consignment.

And the gift shop would take, what is it, 30-35% of the sales price, which was enough to pay for the rent, and for the staff, for advertising. And any money that was left over would go back to the committee for its operations for milk, coal, school, whatever it was. And so this is one way to help people get as much as possible out of their belongings when they were trying to sell it.

So I worked for the committee for a number of years. I got to meet a lot of the other refugees who were registering at

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the committee. Practically everybody had to register at the committee. If you didn't register, you weren't in Shanghai.

And so if you wanted to be in Shanghai-- there were other committees operating there. There was one committee that dealt primarily with food and housing. And they were probably our largest sister organization. They dealt with the camps. They dealt with the kitchens. They dealt with hospitals for refugees.

And our committee was more an administrative type thing-- the courts, the consulates, the city council, and a few charitable type operations, like milk fund, coal fund, school fund.

And then eventually, we built a school with the help of a man name of Kadoorie-- Sir Horace Kadoorie. He financed a lot of that.

And that school ran classes. I don't know now how high they went. But they started with the first grade. I think they went through sixth or eighth grade. I'm not sure. The committee also had-- my committee, the one I worked in, also built a creche and a kindergarten and operated that.

What about your brother, and your father, and your mother? How were they surviving?

Well, my father continued to work as a physician and make whatever little he made there. He built up a small practice from people in that apartment house. The apartment house had, I think, eight floors and something like 20 apartments on each floor. It was a fairly big operation. And we picked up friends there.

And people would come in, mostly people in that immediate neighborhood, some refugees. He was not in the center. And the apartment was not in the center of where the refugees were living. It was at the edge of it, the edge of Hongkew.

Most refugees, most of the 18,000 people, were in Hongkew. Some were in Frenchtown, some were in the international settlement. But the bulk of them were in Hongkew. And we were at the edge of that. And so they didn't come to us. And there were so many physicians. After all, the competition was very, very stiff.

My mother kept house. She was a housewife. She was doing the cooking, and cleaning, and looking after us, and making sure we were in clean clothes, and so forth. She was doing the shopping.

Give you an instant out of her life-- she was shopping. And of course, when you did go shopping for food, or for anything, for that matter, you had to bargain. There were no fixed prices, you see. You ask, how much is this? X dollars. And you offered 1/4 of that. And then you after a while, you get the price. And so she went shopping one morning for food. This was in February.

And she's arguing about the price of vegetables, or rice, or whatever it is-- $0.09 a pound. And she offered $0.05 a pound. And well, no, $0.09 a pound. And out of there, it started to snow in winter. And the man immediately dropped the price to $0.08 a pound without her asking for it, you know.

She said, what's going on? He says, oh, fresh snow in new year-- very good luck. Everything in the market went down about 10%. Everything, automatic, so the customers had to get used to that idea.

I would buy, and I remember that very vividly-- I went to buy a pair of shoes on Nanking Road, which the main business street. Still is today. It's sort of like the-- I'm trying to think-- Market Street of Shanghai.

And you walk into a store there-- in those days, at least-- show windows, there's no glass. You walk into the store. The stuff is all over the place. There's no salesman in the way. Can I help you, sir? You look around. You walk around. You pick this. You pick that. You look at it. It looks like my size. You try it on. And once you decide on what you want, then you go to somebody and buy it.

And so I found a pair of shoes that I liked. And it fitted me. And they had a Chinese price tag hanging on it. And so I

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went to the nearest clerk, called him there. Maybe it was the owner. And I said, how much is this pair of shoe? I spoke pidgin English. How muchie this pair of shoe? This is not really good English, you know. You wouldn't ask that in San Francisco.

But you ask them in English?

You ask them in pidgin English. How muchie? Sort of Indian English, Chinese, combine. How much is this pair of shoe? Oh, this is very, very, very good shoe-- really, really good shoe. This pair of shoe is at $22-- $22.

I said, oh, that's too much. Too much, man. Turned around, and put them down, and walk away. Comes and says, oh, no, no, no, no, no. $21 and 1/2, $21 and 1/2. That's down $0.50. Well, I said, no, no, too much and walked out the store. He comes running after me, dragged me back in the store. And back and forth, back and forth. We get it down to $16.

Then I pointed to the price tag, which I had read before. And I said [CHINESE]. I spoke-- switched to Chinese. This says $11. [CHINESE]. You know Chinese? Oh, sure, sure. I know Chinese. [CHINESE]-- $10. Paid $8 for these shoes.

Now, if I had paid $22 for these shoes, he would have felt bad. He would have felt like stealing. I mean, he expected me not to pay $22, even if he asked. It's how you start. And the whole fun in this business is the back and forth. You know, I asked $22. And he offers $10. And I was thinking and so forth. And you meet somewhere in the middle.

Well, why did you start off in pidgin English?

Because I wanted to see what happened, you see. I didn't want to say, I'm going to pay you $11 or $10. I made like I was stupid. I'm foreigner, after all. What do I know from Chinese? I was wearing a European suit. Mind you, this was before I was able to buy a suit there-- European cut.

He could tell that I was not a local person. I would be stopped on the street by rickshaw coolies offering me a ride. What would they say? Want you go Berlin? Want you go Berlin? I mean, they knew also. I mean, they weren't dumb. They may be rickshaw coolies. But they knew that I had a European suit on. Want you go Berlin? Want you go Vienna? Vienna? Really, really cheap. You say, how much? $3, $3, you know.

To Berlin?

Well, I mean, probably, if he had known where it was, he would have charged more-- $5 maybe. And so this is what you did. You bargained for everything, except streetcars. That was fixed price, you know. Postage stamps, they was a fixed price.

Drinks in the Hongkew-- what is it-- Shanghai Club, I think it was called-- Shanghai Club. And it was the largest bar in the world. That was the big boast of it. And I never was there. I never seen the place. I couldn't afford it. That was fixed. But everything else, you bargained for.

So did you enjoy being in China?

Yeah. You get into the emotional aspects of it, the first day I walked around Shanghai, I said to myself, I'm not going to stay here. This place is filthy. I mean, the streets were filthy. The air smelled bad. I don't want to go into a lot of detail of what the air smelled like. But it didn't smell good.

I walked down the street-- this was the first or second day-- and there's a police patrol coming up the street with their guns out, not just in their hands, but like so. Said, my god, what's going on? Is there a robbery? Is there a shooting?

No, they were just walking like this because if somebody fired at them they didn't have time to draw their guns. That's the kind of city it was. Talking about the Wild West, this was the Wild Far East.

And since we had not only paid for our tickets to Shanghai, but under the law in Germany, under the rules in Germany,

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we had to pay for our tickets back to Germany just in case we weren't accepted by the port of destination, which happens sometimes-- you remember the St. Louis, the boat, left Germany and then no country wanted to accept it? They went to Cuba. Cuba didn't, said no. Went to the United States, well, they sent them back.

So in case Shanghai wouldn't accept us for any reason at all, the Germans wanted to be sure that our passage back to Germany was paid for. Of course, once you go back to Germany, that's it, back to concentration camps. So we had money.

And so I said to my parents, you know, I have this visa to go to England, which you don't have. And maybe I ought to go back to England. After all, we have our patch. We checked with the [INAUDIBLE], which was a shipping company, a German company.

And they said, no, you can't do that. You can't use that money to go to England, because then, what happens if they don't accept you in England? Then you've used up all your dough. So I never did leave Shanghai to go back to England. I stayed there till I finally left for the United States.

But my first impression was this is no place-- terrible. It was hot. It was muggy. You were constantly perspiring, particularly since we were wearing these heavy European suits. And the work I was doing, I didn't particularly care for that. This was not what I was-- really what I had planned for my life.

You had planned to go to the university and study?

Become a physician. This was a culture shock, future shock, you might call it-- culture. And this was a culture shock that affected a lot of people. I got over it rather quickly. So did my brother. So did my family.

But there were other people that came there that were a lot older than I was that had been very successful merchants or very successful business people in Europe and that came there. And they just couldn't pull themselves out of the blue funk that they were in.

I remember, when I was working for the committee, for Komor, we would have one client, if you want to call it that. He was a man that had just never gotten out of the depression that hit him when he got to Shanghai. He was living in a camp, living in one of those double-decker beds.

And that was where he lived. That was it. He never had the energy or the initiative to get up and go to get out of that place. And I would bring him once, twice, every so often, let's say, every three months, bring him some money so he could buy a toothbrush, or toothpaste, or maybe a package of cigarettes, or whatever, just a few extras, a few things that he could not afford. And he was just-- he was so demoralized. And he just couldn't get out of that.

And there were a number of people like that. There were a number of suicides, people that just couldn't make it. On the other hand, there were people who made it, who set up a little business, a bakery. A lot of people learned in Germany how to make ties. For some reason, that was supposed to be the big deal, tie-making.

Ties, you mean like what you wear?

Ties, yeah, ties. And so they set up a shop to make ties. Other people made shirts, became tailors. One guy set up an operation to make soap. And he was very successful with it. Made a lot of soap, sold a lot of it, and make good money. Some people started-- one guy started a newspaper.

People organized little theater groups. People organized cafes, restaurants, bars, nightclubs-- not the kind of nightclubs you have here, but in a dim sort of way. But they, in some way, had the initiative to try to get into the commercial, industrial, economic life of the city.

One guy became an embezzler-- one way to make a living. Sure. And was caught, went to jail. But by and large, there were quite a few people that were able to make a living of sorts.

Now, as people came into Shanghai-- and this was all before the war broke out, the European war-- people started leaving again. They were able to finalize their papers to go to either Australia, or to-- in some cases to Palestine, but many of them to the United States. And they left. There was a constant turnover.

And then the war broke out in Europe, which did not stop the trips to Australia or the United States, particularly, or to Palestine, for that matter. And so that continued until the Pacific War started and froze everything in Shanghai, at which point, there were probably 17,000-18,000 people, European refugees in Shanghai from Austria, from Germany, a group from Poland.

And you never-- your family never wanted to go on to United States or to anywhere?

Oh, yes, of course. Of course. All of us were there only for a "few weeks," quote-unquote. And of course, we went to the American consulate immediately and brought them all our papers. And we wrote to our contacts in the United States, because our objective was to go to the United States. And Shanghai was only an intermediate point.

We did not realize then that we'd be there eight years, my brother and I, or that my parents would die there. But if you know the future, then you can plan for it. But you don't know. If I knew what's going to happen tomorrow, I'd probably make a lot of money in the stock market. But I don't.

And if I'd known that I was going to be the eight years, I would have studied Chinese in a much more formal way than I did. And I would have come here, eventually, after eight years with a very good knowledge of Chinese and Japanese. And I might have gone into the foreign office of some such work, or into export-import, and whatnot.

And we never figured we'd stay there that long. But we made every effort to get out. But it was difficult. You see, we were still under the German quota, which was over-subscribed. Poles were on a Polish quota, which was just a little nothing.

It didn't matter what nationality you were. The question was where were you born? And that determined the quota in those days under the immigration law in effect then. And so we, like everybody else, continued our efforts to leave Shanghai.

And those people that were lucky enough to were successful-- to be successful left. This was the turnover that I mentioned. Well, we weren't. Our quota number was too long. We were in Shanghai from 1939 till '41, the war broke out. We might have been able to get out in late '41 or early '42, but no more.

So what happened when the war broke out?

We knew that things were getting sticky. We were reading the same newspapers or the same stories in the papers that you were reading in the United States. And Paul Komor told me, you know, it doesn't look very good. But what were you-- we were stuck there.

December 7, 1941, which was December 8 here, during the night, this was from a Sunday to a Monday in Shanghai. And I remember, I was out that Sunday with a friend of mine who had taken me to some sort of a Jewish dance or whatever. And I was there. I didn't have a girlfriend. I was just there sitting around, listening to music.

I came home about 11:00, 11:30. Went to bed. We were living in the Embankment Building, in that apartment where my father had his office. And I was awake at about 2:00 in the morning from gunfire-- machine guns, cannons.

And since I was, at that time, a member of the Shanghai Volunteer Corps, which is another story I haven't even gotten into, which was a sort of a paramilitary organization of Shanghai, as it was called out during times of civic disturbance, or prevent civic disturbance.

We were in British and American uniforms, armed with rifles, revolvers, and whatnot. And I immediately called the

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Shanghai Volunteer Corps headquarters to see what's going on, whether there's a problem. Couldn't get an answer. And then I call called North China Daily News, which was the major newspaper in Shanghai-- no answer.

And I looked out the window. And I saw the flames, and fire, and smoke. But I couldn't make out what it was. Well, the thing died down again. And I figured, well, what the heck. Went back to bed.

Next morning, get up. And I turned on the radio. The station I always listen to his XMHA, an American station, where Carrol D. Alcott was the broadcaster, sponsored by Maxwell House Coffee, "good to the last drop."

And there was an announcer, not Carrol D. Alcott who had left Shanghai a couple of weeks earlier, because things were getting sticky. And the Japanese had a price on his head. He said-- and they read a proclamation by the Japanese commander, commanded a naval landing party.

Whereas war has broken out between the United States and Japan, da, da, da, and so forth. So that's how we knew war was on. And I looked out the window. And all over the area, I saw barbed wire, and soldiers.

What was that from?

Japanese.

The Japanese had invaded Shanghai that day?

Well, the Japanese were already in Shanghai. They had, in 1937, taken over that part of Shanghai called Hongkew, during the Chinese-Japanese War. So they were already there. All they had to do was move forward, physically, just cross the bridges-- move into the international settlement, move into the French concession.

And they moved in with their troops?

And they moved in. They moved in.

So Shanghai was occupied--

Shanghai was occupied.

--when you woke up in the morning?

Shanghai was occupied. We were under Japanese control. And they were friends of the Germans. And that means the Germans were in control also-- at least we thought.

We knew there was Gestapo in Shanghai, because there were some indications. There were some funny murders going on. Some people disappeared. These were not Jews, but Germans. And we all were a little bit nervous about that. Or maybe to say a little bit is a euphemism--

Yeah, I see.

--we were quite nervous. Anyway, I heard later on that on that day, the Germans decided that aha, we are now already in charge also. And they put out their flags. They put on their uniforms and the swastika and hit the streets.

And the Japanese stopped them, and tore off the flags from their cars, and tore the armbands off their uniforms, and passed the word that the only flag in Shanghai is a Rising Sun. The only uniform in Shanghai is that of the Japanese Army and Navy. And you guys better get off the street.

And that was the end of that for the German showing the flag was concerned. Apparently, there was some instance of Japanese desecrating German flags-- and not by burning them, either. Those were stories that we heard. And as far as I

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know, they were true. I've heard from pretty reliable sources.

Anyhow, I went to work, having to cross a bridge over to Soochow Creek. And there were Japanese sentries. But they didn't yet stop people. And we were all pretty shook up. We were in shock. We went to work. We were sitting around talking. There wasn't much going on. There wasn't much traffic.

And after a few days, things kind of simmered down to a semi-normal routine. There was a movie that was popular here two or three years ago about that time. I forget what it was. It was based on a so-called autobiography of somebody who lived in Shanghai at the time. I forget the name of the movie.

Not The Last Emperor?

Hmm?

The Last Emperor?

No, it was not The Last Emperor. It was another-- at the same time The Last Emperor was showing, that was showing. I forget the name of it. But it showed Japanese troops storming the city and a lot of shooting going on.

Oh, I remember that.

You probably remember that. And the guy looks out of the-- probably the Cathay Hotel. And he sees the streets, and the riots, and people being beaten, and all.

While his house was occupied.

Yeah, none of it happened-- none of that, none of that. It was very quiet. They just took over the city and clamped down. That's all. Everybody was still walking around.

Every now and then, for the first few weeks, they would suddenly, when there was a might be called a political assassination, when some Chinese would walk by a Japanese sentry, and would suddenly pull out a gun, and fire at the sentry, and disappear, melt into the ground, they would lock up a part of the city to try to find the guy. But that was all that happened.

Then they issued orders to the quote, "enemy aliens--" British, the Americans, anybody at war with Japan-- to give up all their cameras, and their binoculars, and their radios, and that sort of thing. Then they issued a general order that nobody--

Did you have to do that?

I was not an enemy. I was not British. I wasn't American. I was "German," well, quote-unquote. Well, I wasn't even German anymore. The German government had, prior to that, sometime in 1940, I think, issued a decree, a law that said, any Jew who had left Germany was now stateless, lost his nationality. So technically, politically, we were stateless refugees, not German. But the Japanese figured we were Germans. That was how we were. We were.

And they classified the British and Americans as enemy aliens. And they issued red armbands to them. They had to wear red armbands too. So on the street, you could see that this guy is a bad guy, enemy alien.

But they had issued a general order that everybody had to give up his shortwave radio. Nobody was allowed listen to shortwave radio. And so we would listen to shortwave radio on the QT. We would know somebody who had a shortwave radio in a closet someplace.

We'd listen to KGEI in San Francisco-- William Winter broadcasting the news from San Francisco. And so we would learn very quickly how to interpret Japanese and American reports. The Japanese would report that they had sunk 20

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American ships and shot down 40 American airplanes, you know.

And then we would listen to the William Winter news, and it was exactly the opposite. So we didn't have to even listen to William Winter anymore. We simply took the Japanese news and transposed the nationalities. We knew what was going on.

The news agency of the Japanese was Domei-- D-O-M-E-I-- Domei News Agency. And they were the ones that issued all the news. The only other foreign news that we could listen to in Shanghai was the German newscasts, which were, of course, friendly to the Japanese, and the Russian newscasts, Soviet Russian newscasts-- XRVN, the voice of the Soviet Union. All the stations in Shanghai had an X in front-- XRVN, XCDN, which is a British station.

But they broadcast in Russian, didn't they?

No, the Russian station broadcast in Russian, in Chinese, in German, in all kinds of languages-- in English. And not German, in English. They wouldn't speak German, but in English.

And of course, they were censored, I suppose, to some extent. But at least you could get a good, clear picture of what was going on in the Russian front, that is, how the Germans were moving forward, and then were being stopped, and were turned back. That was available from the Russian station.

You know, so many memories flood in on you as you discuss all this, you know, and what to say first and what to report on first, because it all happened. And a lot of it happened simultaneously. And so the British, then, were interned.

One day, they were told to show up at certain collection points. And they were sent into internment camps. And gradually, in 1942, they shipped them home. They exchanged them for Japanese interned in the United States.

The Japanese classified all the foreigners in three categories. The enemies, that is, people at war, nationalities that were at war with Japan were enemy aliens, enemies. The people that were friendly to them-- Italians, Germans-- they were friendly enemies.

And the people that were neutral, like the Swiss, like the Spaniards, like the Portuguese, they were neutral enemies. But they were all enemies, you see. And so we were neutral enemies, I suppose.

Something interesting happened. I mentioned earlier that I was a member of the Shanghai Volunteer Corps. And in January 1942, that is months or so after the war broke out, the Japanese ordered a census taken of everybody in Shanghai. They wanted to know who was there because they wanted to know how to organize food distribution and whatnot and for possible other reasons. And to do the census, they used the regular police.

Now, regular police being off the street, they wanted somebody on the street besides their own troops, which were not that many, to keep law and order. So they called out the Shanghai Volunteer Corps.

Here was a city occupied by the Japanese during the war, the Pacific War, where the street was patrolled by people in British and American uniforms. Again, it's something maybe out of a Kafka novel. I think I mentioned Kafka last time.

Right.

There we were, in British uniforms, in American uniforms-- I was in a British uniform-- with revolvers, with rifles, with bayonets patrolling the streets. Well, unfortunately, first or second day of this thing, which lasted about two weeks, one of the people in what I believe was a Jewish company, was a separate company in the Shanghai Volunteer Group, which consists only of Jews, a Jewish company-- there was also a Japanese company.

There was a Chinese company. There was the American company. Signals company was the communications outfit that I was in. We ran telephone lines and whatnot, signals with lamps, with flags, and rig-rags, and whatnot.

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And somebody in the Jewish company dropped his rifle. Well, normally, that is no big deal. But that rifle went off. He dropped it. So the Japanese got nervous. And they said, OK, you have to turn in all your ammunition. So there we were, armed to the teeth, no ammunition.

But we were patrolling the street. And this was very cold. This was during the winter. Every now and then, we did find someone that was suspicious. Like and one night, I found a parcel in one of the lanes off the street.

And when you found a parcel, you always worried about a bomb being in it. So I called my sergeant. I was a lance corporal, a British Army type of a rank, low rank. Called my sergeant. And I said, here, let's take a look at that parcel.

And I put a bayonet, and fixed the bayonet on my rifle, and slowly sawed open the strings around the parcel. And fortunately, it wasn't a bomb. It was just a dead baby-- sort of a shocking thing if you will sit here in the United States and talk about it.

But in those days, it was ho-hum. In a city in which every morning, they picked up 20, 30, 40 bodies of people who froze to death on the street, picking up another body wasn't a big deal. So we called the police station. They sent a truck out and picked it up.

And during the night, of course, sometime around midnight, we would go up to the Japanese sentry huts. And there they were in the Japanese uniforms, and we in our British uniforms and American uniforms.

And we'd flag down an itinerant noodle seller. They were walking through the streets with their bamboos, and their little stoves, and the noodle boiling, bubbling away there. And we'd buy a bunch of noodles. And we'd share it with the Japanese sentries.

And to the extent that they spoke English, or Portuguese, or Russian-- and some of them do, some of them did-- we would chat with them. They'd show us pictures of their families. And this is my son. And this is my wife. And this is my parents. And we'd show whatever pictures we had. And then we'd shake hands. And we'd go back to our job. And they went back to their job.

And again, in the middle of the war, there were the symbols, if you will, uniforms of enemy soldiers sitting down, very frankly-like. It shows how silly war is, isn't it? It's only when you get 100,000 people on both sides that you have a war. If you had two people or three people, it's no war.

So that's one of the memories that comes back of those days. Well, that lasted a couple of weeks. And then they ordered us to turn in all our equipment, and all our guns, and our uniforms. And that's the last time I've ever worn a British Army uniform or walked around with a 45 on my side, and a 303 Lee-Enfield-- that was what we had in those days-- on my back, and went back to the committee.

The committee was allowed to work. Then the Japanese naval landing party came, Captain Inuzuka, who was in charge of Jewish affairs. He came in with four or six people, four or six soldiers one day, and arrested all of us.

Mr. Komor was arrested and taken to the fourth or fifth floor of the building where they had a hotel. And he was put into a hotel room and kept there for, forget, four or six weeks. Sort of diplomatic arrest. They didn't even lock the door. They just told him, don't leave.

And we were told, the staff was told to show up for work or we would be [CREAKS]. And so we showed up for work. Why not? We were working anyway. And they put in a group of auditors to audit our books and to see that we had really stolen all this money that they claimed we had stolen.

And of course, we hadn't stolen anything. They wasn't anything even to steal in the first place. There wasn't that much money there. And the audit committee reported back to whoever it was. And we kept working, but without Japanese supervision.

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And in the meantime, I was introduced to one of the Japanese officers, a Captain Inoue, I believe it was. Something like that. And he tried to recruit me to work for the Japanese naval secret police. I can help my fellow refugees if I work.

I kind of made excuses, you know. I'm not very good at that sort of thing and so forth. So he finally said, OK. OK. He wasn't going to hire me. And you couldn't really turn him down flat, because he might have just taken you out and shot you.

But he was nice enough to me. He was related, from what I heard later on, to the emperor himself and quite a wheel in the area. So I got out of that sticky wicket--

Wow.

--which was pretty nerve-wracking. And yeah, I continued working for the committee until finally, one day, I decided there wasn't anything more I could do. And I got a job with Mrs. Altura my first boss at the committee. You know, she was the secretary to Paul Komor. She was my boss in a way.

And she had opened a little haberdashery in French concession. And I went out to start to work for her. She was a manager. I was the assistant manager-- all chiefs, no Indians. The whole store was probably half the size of this room here. And we were selling shirts, either off the shelf or made to order, pants, handkerchiefs, ties, socks, whatever men needed in the way of clothing. And I worked for her for a while.

And in the meantime, my father had become ill with a problem that nobody could really diagnose too well. He first had what seemed like a heat stroke. This was 1942 in the summer. He'd been out visiting a patient of his. And he'd come back.

And he went to sleep. And kind of when he woke up, he wasn't responsive. He responded to a question five, 10, 15 minutes later, kind of delayed reaction. And I called in one of his colleagues. And he said, oh, it was a heat stroke. He'll get over it. And he did get over it.

But a few months later, he began having problems with his vision. It was like a curtain was being drawn over his eyes, every day a little more. And he called in a Chinese nerve specialist, a brain specialist.

We called in a German Nazi, or Aryan, eye specialist, the big eye specialist in the Far East, who came over right away, and no questions asked, no fee, nothing, examined him, and prescribed something. But they couldn't figure it out. And gradually, that got worse. And he died seven months later.

I found out a number of years ago by discussing it with a surgeon here that now, they know what happened. A blockage in the carotid artery, which stopped blood from going to the brain, part of it, and blocking nerves, which today could have been fixed in a very simple bit of surgery. In those days, they didn't know about these things.

So that left my mother, and my brother, and I. In the meantime, in 1943-- oh, in 1942, the German government sent Colonel Otto Meisinger to Shanghai. Colonel Meisinger was-- that was a Gestapo rank. He had been the Gestapo chief in Warsaw and earned himself the sobriquet of the Butcher of Warsaw. He killed hundreds of thousands of Jews in Warsaw.

He was transferred to the German embassy in Tokyo as the internal police chief. And in the summer of '42, he and two other Germans, a fellow the name of von Puttkamer, and another chap, his name was Neumann-- Neumann-- he was sent to Shanghai to discuss with the Japanese naval landing party, and particularly the section in charge of Jewish affairs, what to do about the Jews in Shanghai.

And he suggested to the Japanese that don't trust those Jews. They're very dangerous people. And I'll tell you what you ought to do. He says, coming the High Holidays in another six to eight weeks, Rosh Hashanah, you surround the synagogues.

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And when they come out after services, you just pick them up, load them on a freighter that you have in the harbor, or two freighters, some old, rusty ships, take away their clothes, and tow this thing out to sea, and let them drift there for a while. And then go out and sink the whole mess, just torpedo the ships.

And if you don't like that, take them up to the salt mines, up the Yangtze River, and we can tell you how much to feed them every day so they are good for two or three months' worth of good work for the Japanese government taking salt.

And if you don't like that, we have another idea. We can establish a concentration camp in the little island down the Huangpu River. And what you do there is you put them all into the camp and let them volunteer there for medical experiments, like the human nervous systems resistance to pain. Well, and Mr. Neumann here is from Bergen-Belsen. He's a former commandant there. He can tell you how to do all that. He's an expert in that field.

The meeting broke up without any decisions having been made. And one of the participants at the meeting, a gentleman name of [? Shigemitsu ?] Shibata, he was the Japanese vice consul. And I'd met him on a number of occasions. He went to a little park, and sat on a bench, and thought about the meeting.

And he said to himself, have we proud Japanese sunk this low to listen to this stuff, to even consider it? I mean, this is what we are fighting the war for, to take civilians and treat them this way?

He had a few Jewish friends. He met the first one-- he went to see the first one of them. And he said, we got out of a meeting right away, something terrible is happening. I've got to tell you about it. You've got to do something about it.

And the fellow said, I'm sorry. It's erev Shabbos. It's the evening of Shabbat. And we can't have a meeting now. We've got to wait till after Shabbat. Can't have meetings on Shabbat. He says, but it's terrible. Says, I'm sorry, I can't do it.

So he went to another fellow who was not quite so shomer Shabbos, that's the expression, careful of Shabbat. And he called a meeting. And Mr. Shibata reported that whole plan to the Jewish leadership. And they got busy.

And working for six to eight weeks under danger to their own lives, they were able to get that story to Tokyo, to the foreign minister, who turned around, sent a wire back to Shanghai, saying, keep an eye on the Jews, make sure they don't get into trouble. But don't touch them.

Mr. Shibata saved our lives. He saved, conservatively, 26,000 lives that day. The story didn't come to light until in the middle '70s, when a rabbi named Marvin Tokayer was stationed in Tokyo, and spoke, and wrote, and read Japanese [INAUDIBLE].

And he found the story in Japanese archives. 1976, I believe, the Jewish community in Tokyo honored Mr. Shibata for his actions at a Passover dinner. He died a year later. That's why I'm here. That's why I can tell you this story, because Mr. Shibata had a conscience.

And I understand that the Germans sent such top commanders to Shanghai to deal with the Jewish problem. Was there-- I mean, this was a major concern?

They were planning to wipe out all the Jews in the whole world, not just in Germany, but in the whole world. If they'd won the war, they would have done it.

And so here was a group of Jews who were under Japanese, meaning German, control. Why not wipe them out too? You know, I mean, they were wiping out community after community in Europe. Here was another community they were able to attack.

And Meisinger, who was hung after the war, wasn't doing much anyway in Tokyo. He was police chief at the embassy. And there wasn't that much to do. And so they sent him to Shanghai to try to do that. Nice people.

And so what they did instead of the carrying out the plans that Meisinger has advocated, in February of 1943, [AUDIO

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STATIC] that all stateless refugees in Shanghai must move into what they call a designated area, which is English for ghetto, and cannot leave that area unless they have a pass.

And as a designated area, they designated a 1520 block-- I can't tell you the exact size-- in Hongkew, where most of the Jews were living anyway. Now, that doesn't mean that all the other people living in that area had to get out-- Japanese, Chinese, Portuguese, whatever, Russians-- it just said, you go and find yourself some place to live.

And so they squeezed 18,000 Jews into Hongkew, in many cases, families of three, and four, and five, and six people living in one room, six to eight families in one building with maybe two bathrooms, this sort of thing.

And our family was able to, fortunately, get an apartment ourselves. We were very lucky that way. We had a two, almost three-room apartment-- two bedrooms, one living room, kitchen, and a bathroom-- in a lane which was primarily occupied by Japanese.

There were two buildings. One was a four-unit flats to size, or apartments to size. One was a four-unit building that had Jewish refugees in it. And there was another one which was a two-story building with three units, I believe, with refugees in it. All the other people in that lane were Japanese. That's where we were able to move to.

How were you able to get that?

I still don't know how it worked. As far as I recall, there was a gentleman living, a family living in the same apartment house we were in, name of Frankel. And they were very friendly with my parents. My father was already dying and died in March of '43.

And they were able to get an apartment for themselves and an apartment for us. And another family, name of Brown, that also, they were associated with Frankel business, so the three of us were able to get these apartments.

The fourth family was a family name of [? Bescher, ?] who were Austrians. And the man, Mr. [? Bescher ?] was running a large paper factory in Shanghai. And his son went into the business. And he now lives in Australia. In fact, he was here last week, visiting. They come here once every year.

And you see them?

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. We're still friends. And so we were able to get into the district and have relatively comfortable living quarters. And compared to many of our friends who just lived in miserable conditions-- I wouldn't say they were living in holes, but squeezed together, no privacy, that sort of thing, it really bad, and sanitary facilities.

We had regular flush toilets. This was something that was unheard of in many parts of the city. Of course, you couldn't drink the water. Didn't matter. I told you that earlier. You couldn't drink the water in Shanghai unless you boiled it first. Drinking the water out of the tap was like committing suicide.

And so we lived in that apartment. And I was able to get a pass to leave the designated area. They had set up checkpoints. And they checked you as you came in and out. They had Jewish sentries there, internal sort of police force.

And I had my pass, always valid for three months, for the entire city. And I went to work because I was working in French concession, which was about eight, nine miles away. So every morning, I took my bicycle and hotfooted it out to my job. Came back every night.

My brother got a job with the internal-- call it camp police. These were the kind of an internal security force for the refugee camps. You had to have somebody to help people who collapsed, or to prevent fights, or to prevent theft. Unfortunately, some of those things happened, even within the Jewish refugee camps.

And so he was a member of the camp police for a while. That was a job where you got very little pay and you got food. And that was primarily what he got. And so we, hand-to-mouth, kind of continue to exist in that environment.

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Lots of things happened during the war. The Japanese organized a civil defense force, civil air defense force, in which my brother and I were members.

We had armbands. And since we were, quote, "officers," we had two red stripes on the armbands. Some people had one red stripe. Some people had no red stripes at all. There's always ranks. It was always Indians and chiefs. We were chiefs.

And we had to all make sure that we had blackout preparations and that we had first-aid squads, and rescue squads, and firefighting squads. And the firefighting squads were equipped with the latest firefighting equipment, buckets. That's all we had, buckets-- steel, you know, metal buckets.

And it's-- you learned how to throw water in a fire. You have to learn how to use a bucket. You can't just pour it like this. You can't get that close to the fire. The theory was that you just threw the water as far as you can and the water goes out, fire goes out.

At least five-minute training, yeah.

And as time went on, the US Air Force would fly through the Shanghai defense area. And there'd be air raid warnings. And they'd be on their way to Kunming or to other cities that were occupied by the Japanese to bomb them.

And we would be called out. Air sirens would howl. And we'd rush out in the street in our, quote, "uniforms," unquote, with our armbands, which was our uniform, and towel around the neck. In case of a smoke, you'd cover your face. And we had a big nightstick in case we had to break a window. And we had ropes in case we had a rope something. That was our equipment.

And we'd been out there in the day and night and kind of do our job. This is in between our regular daytime jobs. And that went on for a number of years. Then once in a while, there'd be an airplane go by and drop a bomb outside of Shanghai.

But the city itself, till July the 17th, 1945-- we didn't know it then, but it was about a month before the war was over-- when there was an air raid, I was working in my job at Frenchtown, at my haberdashery. We heard the sirens.

Police station was next door to our store. And they had a siren on top, was a heck of a racket. And well, we did what we always did when there was an air raid warning. We had put the shutters, wooden shutters, in front of the store window. And we would haul out our lunch. It was quarter after 12:00 noon, and hauled out our lunch, and had lunch.

Of course, nobody was in the street anyway. There wouldn't be any business. I just stuck my head out the door to see what's going on. And I saw planes going in and out of clouds. And I wondered whether I'd ever meet any of the guys that are flying those planes. And the chances, what was it, in those days, 180 million to one, 190 million to one.

And then we heard this rolling thunder, like vrr. And the phone rings. And my brother's on the phone. He says, boy, they clobbered the district.

I said, anything happened to us? No, just a lamp came down in our house. But we have houses burning. We have a lot of people injured. We have a lot of casualties. You better get home and help out with trying to control things.

So it was just bombed, Japanese bombs?

Yeah, American bombs. These were American air raids. After all, they were the Chinese on the street who saw the planes too, and said, [CHINESE], American airplanes, great, great, hurray.

And then they got bombed?

They got bombed, still a raid. After all, they went outside, you know. And the Chinese didn't like the Japanese either. So

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the Chinese were very happy about the American airplanes coming over and--

And bombing?

--and bombing the city, even so they lost people. And we were happy. After everything was done, after the dust had settled, and the fires were out, we had lost 31 people. Dr. [? Kardig, ?] the head of the Jewish community organization was dead. His assistant, 31 others, a lot of people injured, some of them very badly, a lot of homes gone, a lot of property destroyed.

I took my bicycle. And I bicycled back to the district, to the ghetto. And then I got off the bicycle and carried it, because there was glass all over, furniture, houses burning, a hand, a head, just a mess. Only area that I ever been, the only area that I would want to be in. And we cleaned up. It took us two days, put out the fires, dig out people, bury people, kind of straighten out stuff.

In the early '60s, I guess I was at a board meeting of the East Bay chapter of the California Society of CPAs I was a treasurer, secretary treasurer. And there was the vice president. And there was the president and a bunch of members of the board of directors.

We were having a meeting. We were having breakfast at the time and kind of talking about all kinds of things. And I told them about my Shanghai story. And this one fellow, a vice president, good friend of mine, another CPA, he said, oh, I know Shanghai.

I said, what are you talking about you know Shanghai? Were you there after the war? He says, no, I wasn't really there. He says, I flew over it. I bombed it. I said, was that on July the 17th, you bombed by radar because of the cloud cover, it was about noontime?

He says yeah. I says, you bastard, damn near killed me. He was a lead pilot. And a few-- maybe a year later, so his firm merged with our. And he's been my partner and good friend ever since.

Oh wow. And so you met one of those pilots.

Then after he had-- this is a small world department. After he had joined our firm, he looked at our client list to kind of acquaint himself with who were our people, pointed to a name on a list of tax clients, and he said, is this fellow my age? I said, yeah, he's a little older than you. Is he in finance? I said, yes, he works at Pacific National Bank in Montgomery Street. He said, uh-huh, navigator.

Then a few months later, we went down to San Diego for an annual meeting of the California Society. By then he was the president, I was the vice president. And he took his wife along. My wife stayed home with the kids. And he said, you're going to have dinner tomorrow night with [? Tully ?] and me. And I said, OK, fine.

And we drove outside of San Diego, up a mountain, stopped in front of a house. He rang the doorbell. A young man opened the door-- well, middle-aged.

And Jack [? Drummond, ?] my pilot friend, said, David Cohen, meet Walter Frank. Walter Frank, meet David Cohen. You guys have something in common. Well, with David Cohen, no, maybe because we are both Jewish. Jack said, David is the bombardier, and Walter is a target. So I met the bombardier.

Wow.

And then about a year later, I met the armorer out of that flight. And there were 100 planes involved in that flight. They were coming out of Iwo Jima, a little island.

Yeah.

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And they were on their way to bomb Japanese shipping in the Yellow Sea, which is a stretch of water between China and Japan. And on the way, or shortly after takeoff, they were notified that the ships had been sunk by American submarines.

And they were told to attack Shanghai as the alternate target. So they went over Shanghai. They made out the city on radar, and try to find whatever was worthwhile bombing, and dropped their bombs, and went back to Iwo Jima. That's how that happened-- small world.

So did it help the people of Shanghai?

Well, it helped their morale. It helped their morale.

But the Japanese, they weren't bombed out or anything?

No, I mean, they hit-- the bombs hit a uniform factory. They hit a Japanese radio station. They hit some Japanese trucks. They may have hit some part of the airfield, but I don't for sure where that's really-- that's become.

And I went on the airfield a couple of months later. I didn't see any bomb damage. This was after the war when I started working at the airfield. And there wasn't any major damage. It wasn't a big thing.

But it was much bigger for the Japanese in terms of their morale was another story. When the Allies invaded Italy, that was 1943 or '44, there was an Italian ship, the Conte Verde, the Green Count, tied up in Shanghai. It was in Shanghai when the war broke out.

And of course, it couldn't leave anyway. So was tied up there. And when the Allies invaded Italy, and Italy became suddenly an enemy, or at least an unreliable ally of Japan, the Japanese wanted to take over the Conte Verde.

But before they could do that, the crew on the Conte Verde, the Italians opened the sea cocks. The ship filled with water and sank. It just keeled over and lay there. Well, you can't go in and just say, well, let's write it up and take it out of the water. It's a big ship, very big ship, a passenger liner.

So they found a Swedish engineer. The Japanese found a Swedish engineer who worked months, and months, and months with all kinds of systems, and cables, and whatnot, was able to right the ship, get the water out, plug the holes, and then tow it down the river, where they were going to clean it up, and install new machinery, or whatever, and make it seaworthy again.

That night, one American bomber came over and dropped a bomb right in the middle of the ship. That's the end of that. Now, that was bad for their morale, you see. This air raid, it wasn't, I don't think, that bad because it didn't really do that much damage. But it was good for our morale.

And so there we were. And shortly after that raid, I developed jaundice, which to this day prohibits me from-- prevents me from donating blood. It's a lifetime thing. I was sick for a week or two.

And then one night in August 11, first, we got the news that America has dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. And what's napalm? What's an atomic bomb? And so there were the people in our group who were the smart ones, of which I figured I was one of them.

I said, that's very simple. The atomic bomb is so powerful that the blast breaks everything up not just in the little pieces, but in the atoms. That's an atomic bomb. That's not exactly a scientific explanation, but it made do. And ooh, we want to know.

Listen to me. I'll tell you what's an atomic bomb. Everything breaks into little atoms. And that's the smallest-- we knew that the smallest unit in the physical universe. Or they did know.

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And then we heard that on the Russian radio station. The Russian radio station broadcast this combined announcement by Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin that they had dropped an atomic bomb. The next thing we know, an atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki.

And then this was all these hot, humid, summer nights. The windows are wide open. Everybody's out in the street or sitting on a stoop. And even if you're in the house, you perspire and you sweat.

And I hear upstairs, Mr. Brown opened the window, stick his head out the window, and yelling, sholem, sholem. Peace. And everybody's out on the street. What's going on? He heard it from so-and-so, who heard it from so-and-so, who heard it reliably from the Swiss consulate.

You know how these rumors go, that the peace negotiations are going on between Japan and the United States. The European war was already over. Germany had already collapsed in May. And there, sholem, sholem, and a great deal of excitement.

And the Japanese chief of the people living in that lane came over to me, since I was his contact at the time. After all, I was wearing two red stripes. I was an officer. He was an officer. And he said to please make sure that people kind of keep it down and didn't want any trouble.

And I said, sure, we don't want any trouble either. And day goes by, another day goes by. August the 15th, word comes through the community-- this was in the morning-- that the emperor is going to make an announcement at 12 o'clock over the radio.

And at 12 o'clock, you saw Japanese standing on the streets and in their homes at attention, listening to the radio. And we couldn't understand what was going on, high-pitched voice, Japanese speech. The emperor made a speech throwing in the towel. That was the end of the war.

That was at 12 o'clock noon on the 15th of August, three hours that saved my life, because for 3 o'clock that day, the American Air Force had scheduled another air raid on Shanghai. And their target, then, was the Shanghai municipal jail, in which there were some prisoners, but the basement was full of ammunition.

And I would have been stationed next door to the jail. You know, air raid warning, I go on duty. I would have been right across the street from the jail. And even if I had been home, we were only a block away from the jail. And if that air raid had come off and if that air raid had succeeded, that entire area would have gone up. That would have killed thousands of our people. But the raid was called off. That's it.

And did you find out about the raid through your friends?

When the war was over, shortly thereafter, the Air Force came in, and the American Navy came in, and US Air Force came in, and set up shop there. And they hired local talent. And I was hired. My brother was hired.

So I was working for the Air Force. And that's how I found out. They just declassified those orders from secret to confidential or from confidential to restricted. And so we were able to see these things-- not officially, but unofficially. I saw the orders.

Small world, again, you know, what three hours can do, what a man like Shibata can do. It's so hard to tell all the stories, the narrow escapes that you have, that people had. This area would have killed thousands of us, thousands. Would have destroyed--

What was the point of that?

Well, it was a military target. It was an ammunition dump. The entire basement of the Shanghai municipal jail, which was a large institution-- very large, it covered several blocks-- it was full of ammunition. Well, in war, that's what you want to destroy, ammunition. But they canceled it. War was over.

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Well, now, we had an interregnum, a period of time when nobody was in charge. The Americans had not come in. The Chinese nationalist forces had not come in. The Japanese had lost the war.

And they were worried, the Japanese, particularly, that we would have a situation in Shanghai like the one in Hong Kong between the time that the British forces pulled out of Hong Kong and the Japanese forces pulled in, when the Chinese suddenly started rioting, and smashing things, and stealing things, and killing people, and whatnot. They wanted to avoid that. So they set up machine gun posts in all major intersections.

Who's the they?

Japanese. They had lost the war. The war was over. But they were still there. As a matter of fact, when the emperor made his speech, the commander, the Japanese commander of the area refused to lay down his arms and quibbled with his commanders in Tokyo.

And these are stories that I heard. And I can't swear to them, but I've heard it so many times, I feel sure that they're true. They flew him to Nagasaki and Hiroshima. And they said, look, if you want to keep fighting in China, this is what your place is going to look like. That's when he gave in. Took a day or two.

So Shanghai was a little late in giving up, not that we noticed it in any major way. But the Japanese put in a curfew. After 10 o'clock at night, you don't go out in the street. Everybody off the street. And during the day, machine guns all over the place controlling traffic.

Can I make a break here?

Yeah.

Sure.

Getting back to ward?

We need about five seconds to let the tape start rolling.

OK. OK, you tell me.

Do you want some [INAUDIBLE]?

No.

How did you live? You were talking about that.

How what?

How did you live?

OK. We're all set.

How did we lived? Yeah, this goes back to the war years. We lived hand-to-mouth. And sometimes, the hand was empty. Some people were fed by the committees. Some people, like ourselves, sometimes went to the committee for food.

And sometimes, we were able-- since I had a job and my brother had a job, we were able to do our own shopping. But what you did there was to buy things just enough for one meal and sometimes enough for a half a meal.

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For one thing, you didn't have refrigerators. You didn't have ice boxes. And if you had an ice box, you couldn't afford to buy the ice. During the war, there was a minimum of natural gas available. So you had charcoal burners, little charcoal hibachi-type stoves.

We would go out for the shop for an evening meal and buy a half an ounce of liver sausage and a half an ounce of margarine or butter. And butter was very expensive, margarine cheaper. And you'd buy maybe an ounce of coffee if you could afford it and a slice or two of bread. And that was your meal.

And my mother would go out, as long as she was still around. And she would bargain with this one, and that one, and the other one for vegetables or rice. A lot of those things were rationed during the war. And you couldn't even buy them if you wanted to. Or you'd hand them a ration ticket for them.

And so you kind of scraped along. And you lived day by day, hoping that the war would be over soon. Well, she never realized-- which was a good thing-- that the war would last as long as it did.

Now, a few weeks after the war was over, Mother got sick. And she developed what looked like a tropical disease, what looked like relapsing fever, the kind of fever where every other day, you suddenly get these heavy attacks of fevers, shake you, almost like malaria, and last an hour, an hour and a half, and then they abate again.

And so of course, since we were still an ex-medical family, Father having died, we still had medical care from all kinds of physicians for no charge at all. And immediately, our house family physician came. And he checked her over. And he did lab tests.

And nothing, negative in malaria, and negative on relapsing fever. He couldn't figure it out. Couldn't figure it out, and finally, took her to the hospital for a head-to-toe checkup and discovered she had cancer, ovarian cancer. That was Monday.

She was scheduled for surgery Tuesday morning, died during the night. That's how quick it was, two weeks. That's how really fast it was. And so we buried her in September 1945, just after the war was over. She was just-- the war was just over. She was just able to say, oh, boy, maybe now, we can all go to America, enjoy peace again. Nothing.

Well, shortly after that, my brother and I got jobs at the air transport command, today, a military air transport service, I believe it's called. And that was at Kiangwan Airfield. They were hiring.

And other American military units were hiring local civilians to replace GIs and officers who were going home on points, because that was the big thing. The war was over. Everybody wanted to go home. They didn't want to stay in Shanghai.

So we were hired. My brother was hired for the operations department. And I was hired for statistics, what they call stat control-- statistical control office. And I started working there. And after a very short while, I became chief clerk in that department.

And my brother became the chief operations man. Operations is the outfit that sends airplanes out, that determines how much fuel they take, where they go, what the weather is like, this kind of thing-- controls crew requirements. Stat control is more reporting sort of an office. We made sure all the reports go out, morning report with a major document in military life, aircraft reports, aircraft out of service report. There's a million reports that have to be sent.

And once every week, once every month, month every year. And so that was my department. When we came to the United States-- and I'm jumping ahead a little bit there-- in 1947, my brother joined the air force almost immediately on arrival. And he was sent to Texas for basic training.

By then, the unit of the Air Force that had been in Shanghai was at Fairfield-Suisun Airbase, now Travis Air Force Base here in California. And so my brother tried to get assigned there because he knew those people. So he went to the personnel office and made an application. And they called him back in and said, well, we will assign you wherever we

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have to. And sorry, we can't fulfill the request of a simple GI.

Then he got his morning orders to report to Travis Air Force Base, which was still Fairfield-Suisun in those days. This was before General Travis was killed there in the airplane crash. He checks into the airbase, goes to the adjutant office, opens the door, and there's Major McNally, the adjutant in Shanghai, and the adjutant now in California.

He takes one look at my brother, says, Eric, where the heck have you been? Let's see, he says, you were in operations. Why don't you go out, do operations, and talk to a captain out there?

He goes out to operations, reports in, says, Captain Dunbar, his old boss from Shanghai, as Eric Frank, who is a-- what was he called-- and they didn't call him this in private. Somehow, the rule was that you were promoted to private first class immediately on termination of basic training. In his case, somebody goofed someplace. And he wasn't promoted. He was a private, the lowest animal in the air force.

So Captain Dunbar said, Eric Frank, Eric, let me introduce you to Master Sergeant So-and-so. This is Tech Sergeant So-and-so. This is Master Sergeant So-and-so. These are the guys that run the operations office now. He says, I'm going to change the plans a little bit. He says, gentlemen, Private Frank is in charge here from now on.

Wow.

Because he knew more about operations than those guys did. And he was more motivated too. So Eric was made the chief of operations there, Private Frank, was promoted almost immediately to corporal, which was skipped one rank, and then was made sergeant.

And then shortly after that, in 1949, I think it was, the Berlin airlift came up. And he was ordered for temporary duty 90 days to Germany, the longest 90 days he spent anywhere.

Came back after eight months. He was back in Frankfurt. He was back in our hometown of Wiesbaden. He wrote back a letter, saying, I'm walking around Wiesbaden. And it's like walking around with ghosts. He was in Berlin. And he was in Hanover. He came back here.

And then he was discharged from the Air Force, just to give you that part of the story, went back to school to study more formally the kind of job that he had done for the Air Force, and then got a job with Pan American Airways in New York as a dispatcher, airline dispatcher, where he worked, where he made a career in the Airline Dispatchers Association.

He became the president of the International Airline Dispatchers Association, flying all over the world to check on his troops, then became ill and died in 1971, rather unfortunately. He was 48 years old at the time, young man.

Well, back to Shanghai. War was over. I had gotten a job with the Air Force. I made my career there. I was awarded a couple of civilian decorations. Most people got them that were able to breathe and hold a pin. Met a number of interesting people.

One of the kids at the airfield was a fellow, name of Mike Blumenthal, just a kid folding parachutes or whatever he was doing. He made a nice career too. Last job I heard where he was in public life, he was a treasurer of the United States.

Oh, really?

His name is on a lot of the money that you carry in your pocket. That's little Michael Blumenthal.

How do you know it's the same one?

Well, I've met him. I talked to him, had correspondence with him. He was out here for our Shanghai reunion as a featured speaker just after he left the Carter administration. He now runs Unisys, one of those really giant corporations

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in this country, little Mike Blumenthal.

I met in Shanghai and I had lunch and dinner many times in the restaurant that was run by-- where there were two brothers, waiters, Lewin-- Henri and Werner Lewin, good waiters. They used to run the Fairmont Hotel.

Oh, really?

After that, they ran the Hilton. Werner's Cellar was one of the restaurants in the place. And Henry's Room at the top was the top-flight restaurant at the Hilton Hotel here in San Francisco-- Henry and Werner Lewin.

The story goes that when they came to San Francisco after having left Shanghai, they allegedly asked a cabbie, what's the best hotel in town? And he said the Fairmont. Said, well, take us to the Fairmont.

And that's how they got the job there. That was the story. How true it is, I don't know.

Does that mean that a lot of people in Shanghai came to San Francisco?

A lot of-- this was the port of entry for most of them. I wouldn't say all of them. Seattle was another one, Los Angeles was another one. But San Francisco was, really, the main port. When my brother and I left-- and he left two weeks before I did because he got his visa earlier, you know, all the paperwork, and the follow-up, and the red tape. He got his visa.

And I said, go, get passage and leave Shanghai, even if I can't get out of here. As it turned out, I got my visa a few days later. And I got passage on two weeks later. He came here. I came here.

And we have on our package-- had on our luggage our destination-- Middletown, New York. That's where my cousin lived, who was arranged-- who had arranged for all our affidavits of support, all the papers to get to the United States.

And so we were coming to San Francisco to grab a train, go to New York, and go up to Middletown, a little town up in the Catskill Mountains. Then when I arrived here, after my brother had been here for a couple of weeks, I was met by a cousin of mine who lived in Pittsburgh, had been living there for many years. And I met my brother again.

And he said, you know, I met Harry Sapir from the Jewish Federation in Oakland, was called Jewish Welfare Federation in those days. And Harry said, why do you want to go to New York? He says, it's a terrible place to live. It's hot there. And it's humid and too many people. And it's hard to get jobs there.

San Francisco is a lot nicer, the Bay Area. Why don't you stay here? If you go to New York and you don't like it, you've got to come back. And it costs you train fare both ways. He says, if you stay here, what the heck? So we kicked it around. And I said, it makes a lot of sense. We stayed.

And I got a job very quickly at HC Capital Company, which is today part of the Emporium. They changed the name from Capital Emporium-- Emporium Capital to Emporium now, in Oakland, on 20th Street. At this point, the building is earthquake damaged. They got to redo it.

But I worked there for about a year. But a few days after I got my job-- and this was maybe two or three weeks after we arrived in San Francisco-- the Key System, which was a forerunner of the AC Transit bus system in the East Bay, went on strike. My brother got so disgusted with all that, he joined the air forces. This is why he got into the air force.

Because of the strike?

Yeah. He didn't want to run around. And we didn't know which side was up, and where is north and south, and we had very little money. And he said, oh, I'm not going to look for jobs anymore. I'm going to join the air force.

After all, it's a decent job. You get paid. You get a uniform. And you get your food and your housing. And you got to be

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a citizen a lot faster. Normally, it would take five years. In this case, it took three years to become a citizen. It made a lot of sense.

And I might have done the same thing. But I already had a job. And then I went back to school. I talked to a bunch of accountants here. And they recommended I take certain courses. I had already a lot of accounting background from Shanghai, but nothing formal.

So I went to a University of California Extension. And I took a correspondence course from LaSalle Extension University in Chicago. I don't know whether they're still in existence, but very good school. And so working during the day as a stock boy at the Capitals, I studied at night, took a course that is scheduled to last 2 and 1/2 years.

And I finished it in 11 months because I could do it in my own speed. Instead of sending in an assignment once a week, I sent it in one day. And then I went to the personnel department at Capitals and asked for a promotion.

I wanted to get out of dragging gift boxes, and wrapping paper, and sales books around the store, and out of my dirty clothes. And I wanted to get into something more decent. And they said, all right, we'll give you a test. I came up with a very high test score, the third-highest the store had ever had.

And they promoted me to the rug department. I said, as what, as an assistant manager? No, as a stock boy. I said why? They said, well, you have a very heavy German accent. Well, I knew that I didn't have-- if I had an accent-- I probably do-- it wasn't as heavy, and as bad, and as German as one of the building manager-- or the building engineer, who was a German.

And so I said, well, thanks but no thanks and quit. And I was able to quit because I'd gotten married. My wife had a job. And of course, she was bringing in some money. She worked for the Veterans Administration. And so I went out and looked for a job and got a job in public accounting.

Tell me about meeting this woman, about your wife. Who is that?

Well, it's an interesting story. She had a sister out here. And they had met some other Shanghaiers.

First of all, was there a kind of Shanghai community that formed there?

There was a Shanghai community, yes. There was. This is a natural thing. We kind of clumped together. In fact, when I came through the Golden Gate, I remember that very vividly, and I saw my first sights of the hills of San Francisco, Telegraph Hill, I guess it was, I wondered which of the streets were the streets where all the Shanghaiers were living.

You know, I still had this ghetto sort of picture in my mind, where in Shanghai, we were all living in the same neighborhood. You know, you couldn't walk down the street without meeting 10 or 15 different people that you knew. And if you didn't know them, you knew them from somewhere.

So I figured, well, maybe it's-- I wonder where they are all living. Well, it turned out they weren't all living in the same neighborhood. But there were quite a few of them living in Shanghai in the Fillmore District, which was heavily Jewish in those days.

And then in the East Bay, they were living more scattered, because there was not quite a concentration with them living in one neighborhood. They weren't living in one neighborhood here, too, but there were more of them in together. And so we kind of stuck together. We'd meet each other.

So where did you live? Where did you move?

I got a room-- let me think. First, we got a room on 14th Street, about four blocks west of Broadway in Oakland, which was a fairly good neighborhood. It was almost a block over from the Jewish Community Center, which was then on 14th Street in Oakland, Downtown, close to City Hall.

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And then I moved over to East 14th Street, about three blocks east of the lake, Lake Merritt. I had a room up there. House was owned by a Jewish family, the Laubs. Their son is now big real lawyer. Then, he was just a little kid. And I had a little room up there.

And the Singers, the Singers were living-- these were the friends of ours that we visited every now and then-- they were living in 11th Street, 12th Street, someplace the other side of town. And they had two boys that we knew about our age-- Bernie Singer and Paul Singer.

And they told us, there are some girls that are visiting for dinner. Why don't you come for dinner, you know? And those were the Katz girls-- Ida and Eva Katz. Well, it turned out, I got friendly with Ida and we married. My brother was friendly with Eva and they married.

No.

That's right. Now, had you had a very active dating life up to that point? Did you have a girlfriend before?

Not really. Not really. I was pretty shy. And I had no money. I was going-- I didn't have a car. And you needed a car to get around. And you needed money to take your girl to at least a drive-in, if not to the regular movie house.

And with the kind of money I was making, I-- gee whiskers And I figured, for a while, at least, I got to study. I got to concentrate my time on that business. I got to pick up my career. I was 27. I was doing the things that normally a kid of 18 and 19 does-- prepare for a career in a profession.

I was debating, when I'd come here, what am I going to be? I knew medicine was out, because that took too long. Law and all, you have to study full-time. The only thing I knew that I could study on a part-time basis was accounting. And since I'd been doing accounting and gotten some encouragement from people here, I studied accounting.

I always kicked around the idea of studying law afterwards. But then by then, I was married, and had kids, and decided I'd stay with accounting. Never went into law.

So tell me about this so dinner.

So then we went to dinner at Singers'-- Mr. and Mrs. Singer, and Paul, and Bernie. And we met those two girls. And I didn't have her married in 1948 by another Shanghaier, Rabbi Gunther Gates, who was a rabbi in Alameda. He used to be in Shanghai.

He was a teacher there at the school that my boss, Paul Komor had organized, the Kadoorie school-- [? Gunther ?] [? Gassenheimer, ?] very nice fellow, very nice guy. And when he heard that I was getting married, he said, she was going to marry a Singer boy.

And he says, oh, well, you're going to marry Bernie? No. Are you going to marry Walter Frank? Oh, a much better choice. Well, I don't know. She might have been happy with Bernie. I'm not so sure she would, looking back on it.

She married you.

She married me. As a matter of fact, we had planned a double wedding. And the girls had worked like heck and prepare for the 20th of August, 1948, when we'd have it. We'd rented the-- or made arrangements with the Claremont Hotel in Berkeley, which was a very prestigious, but very inexpensive facility.

And they were shopping for wedding gowns. And all of a sudden, this Berlin airlift comes up. And my brother gets orders to go to Germany almost overnight. And so he and his fiancee went to City Hall in Oakland, got married by a judge. And Ida and I were the witness.

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And he packed up, and went back to the airbase, and flew off to Germany. And so we canceled the double wedding. And we were married in the temple in Alameda. We had a very small wedding meal, maybe 15 people or so. Again, the budget was low. And Ida's parents came out. And that's how we started married life.

She was from California?

No, she was a New Yorker, born in New York. And so was her sister. And her parents were from Russia by way of Argentina.

And they had been in New York. And they were not happy with New York. They didn't like the men there, wiseguys-- at least that's what she said. Maybe there were some nice people, she just didn't meet them. And they didn't like the life like that.

So they came out to see what the other half looks like, what people in the Wild West do, you know. And Ida had worked for the navy for quite a while during the war and after the war and then worked for the Veterans Administration. She was an old government employee.

Her sister was studying at University of California, was younger. And so she since she had a job at the VA on 13th Street in Oakland, at the old hotel Oakland, a huge building, which has suffered a lot of earthquake damage last October, I was able to quit my job at Capitals and look around for someone else. At least, I had time for a few weeks without all that money coming in-- not that I was making that much.

Anyhow, Capitals, I had-- I think it was-- I'd made $48 a week. So I got my public accounting job. And I was making $35 a week.

That's what happens in the professions, you know. The theory was that I would be getting $40 a week from the government under the GI Bill of Rights. That was the theory that they used in that particular office where I got my job.

So they would pay $35 a week out of their pocket. The government would pay $40 a week. I'd make $75 a week, which is pretty reasonable kind of a salary. There's one problem with it. I wasn't an ex-GI. I wasn't under the GI Bill of Rights.

But in order to compete to get into public accounting, I had to take the $35 a week. So between my wife's salary and my few bucks, we were able to make a living. A year later, I took the examination for-- CPA examination, which is a three day sort of ordeal.

I was lucky enough to pass it, all parts, on first try. And then in early 1950, I was getting to the point where I was making $75 a week. I was supposed to make $75 a week, not from the government, from my boss and city council.

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