OK. We're on.

This is an interview for The San Francisco Oral History program. It's June 11, 1992. We're at Congregation Beth Shalom. And I'm Ron Green. And the second interviewer is Eric Saul.

Today we're going to be interviewing Professor Werner Goldsmith. Thank you for being here. And let's begin by going back to your early history.

And I understand that you were born in Germany. Perhaps you can tell us something about those early years, where you were born, something about your family. And we'll go on from there.

I'll be happy to do that. I was born in the town of Dusseldorf, which is in the Rhineland, and on the Rhine itself. Currently it's the capital of the state.

In 1924, my father, Siegfried Goldschmidt, was a merchant. In particular, he dealt with grain that was imported. And he had the title of a jobber. He was in business with my grandfather, who had a firm originally by the name of Isidore and Adolph Goldschmidt. And they were originally in the town of Duisburg, which is about 20 kilometers north of Dusseldorf.

Subsequently, they separated. I think my granduncle died. And my grandfather reestablished the business in Dusseldorf. He was very successful, from what I understand. Because at that time, there was a tremendous depression in Germany. A lot of people were out of work.

But he had a mechanism whereby he had some sort of futures in grain as being of value. And there were coupons attached to this. This was a very unusual step that he took, a novel thing. And as a result, I would say that he was, and my parents were, a member of the middle to upper middle class. We were never rich, but we always had enough to eat.

My mother, Margarethe Grunewald Goldschmidt, was born in Cologne. My father was born in Dortmund. My paternal grandfather, Adolph, was born in a town called Lintfort in Westphalia.

The reason I'm alive is because my mother was a very, very good friend with a woman with whom we stayed friends with until she died five years ago, living in New Orleans. And we're still on excellent terms and very good friends with her children. She was married to my father's cousin, at which time my mother met my father and there was a rapid courtship, in any event. It resulted in me about a year afterwards.

And so this is basically the history of my family. They were in the business of trading. And my father was a soldier in World War I. He was on the Eastern Front. He was wounded.

And that had consequences as far as I was concerned. Because as a result of that action, I was allowed to go to a gymnasium. I was the only Jewish student in the gymnasium.

I will go back to an earlier time, but it does bear on my father's activities. My grandfather was also in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71. And he fought at Verdun, which was a fairly well-known battle.

I know relatively little about the history of that business. I do know that my grandfather visited, as part of the business, the new world, back in the early 1900s, perhaps 1904 or so. I recall distinctly his telling me that he visited Winnipeg and New York and Galveston.

And I know why he visited Winnipeg, because of the grain. I don't know why Galveston. Maybe he was looking into the possibility of a meat subsidiary to the business that he was executing. So he was over here at the time when it was very rare for a European, especially a middle class European, to visit the United States.

I do not recall when I was one or two years old. My earliest recollection is of moving to a place which was right

opposite the zoo in Dusseldorf. It is still a place that is numbered. But the building is gone.

I have been back to Dusseldorf on at least five occasions, six occasions. And in each case, I've looked for the remnants of the residences where I used to live. And there are three that I recall. One was opposite the zoo. That was the first one.

And my parents and my grandfather had a business, which was close to the main railroad station. But then when Hitler came into power and shut things down more and more, the business delved, developed to be carried out in the home. And eventually, I think it disappeared completely because of restrictions on what could be done.

So these three places I do recall having lived in. And this would be from the age of, let's say, 2 to the age of almost 14, when I migrated to the United States.

Now in my young days I recall being very interested in geography. In fact, at a very early age I made maps with watercolors. Whenever I went on a train, I recorded the times the train arrived and departed from the station. And I kept records of these.

Just in my memory, I do recall these events. I don't know why I did this. But this is one of the things I was able to do.

In my youth, and I mean before the time when I went to school at all, I was with a few of my Jewish friends of the same age whom I have completely lost track of at this point. I'm sure many of them did not survive the war.

I then went to a volksschule, as it is called, elementary school for the first four years, which was very close to the home where we lived on the so-called [? Breidenplatz, ?] opposite the zoo. Then we moved to another place, also not too far from there. And so I finished this. And then I went to the Realgymnasium, a gymnasium which dealt not in the classical area, but presumably in modern languages. That was the distinction.

Now as far as the rest of my family is concerned in those days, the only people living in Dusseldorf that were closely related to me was a brother of my mother, with whom I was actually very close. He sort of acted as a travel agent. And later on, particularly for Jewish groups, he arranged for vacation trips to various places. And I went with him on at least three occasions, once to Hungary, and at least two occasions to Switzerland. And these would be times like 1935 and 1936.

I had also an aunt who died before I was born. My father's sister named Erna. I had another aunt, another sister of my father, who lived in Dordrecht, Holland, married to a Dutchman by the name of Joseph Vandenberg. And I've kept in touch with what is left of that family also since that time.

Did you participate in Jewish life? Did your family participate in the synagogue? Or can you describe that aspect of--

Surely.

--those early years?

As most Jews in Germany, there was more of an assimilation than a separation. I was bar mitzvahed. And I, as a result, of course, attended the ceremonies that were needed for me to be able to read the Torah.

And as a matter of fact, one of the things that I got back from Dusseldorf as part of the effort of restitution is a little brochure in which the chief rabbi of Dusseldorf has been written up and given his biography. I'm not sure at this point whether he officiated or his colleague officiated my bar mitzvah. But he surely was in charge of the operation at the time. And I recall distinctly going up there and reading the Torah.

Do you remember a time when it became clear that there was something different or perhaps not acceptable about being Jewish?

Well, that became clear very quickly in 1933. '33, I was nine years old. I was still in the grammar school, just prior to

transferring to the gymnasium. And immediately--

How was that made known to you?

It was made known to me by total exclusion from the activities of the classes and all, the limitation of my friends solely to those of Jewish nature. You asked me about my participation in the Jewish life? We observed the major holidays. We went to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

I do not honestly recall whether we fasted or not. But we surely paid heed to that, and Pesach, Hanukkah, and Sukkos. But we also celebrated the Christian holidays as not a religious matter, but just as a festivity.

And this was the standard for most middle class Jews in Germany. At least where we lived, there was no ghetto of any kind. This sort of thing, I believe, was strictly limited to Eastern Europe. And there was free communication.

I can also tell you this. I've told it to my wife, so no reason to say this. My mother had a very, very close friend who was from Stuttgart who was not Jewish. Whenever he came to town, he visited her and they went out for dinner together, and I went along a few times. So that close relationship was not destroyed by the Nazis.

My uncle, who was not married, had a very, very close girlfriend who was not Jewish. And I am sure she suffered as a result. Her name was [? Reinhart, ?] as I remember it. I don't have any pictures or any documentation for her.

But as far as I was concerned, from the time I was nine until the time that I left, my parents were very, very far-sighted in getting me out of Europe. Because if I had stayed, I would not be alive. Like, the entire family was wiped out that didn't leave the continent.

So you became aware of what was going on personally at the age of 9 or around that time? And you left Germany a few years later?

When I was almost 14, a couple of weeks shy of 14.

Before we go on, can you tell us a little about what your home was like, what it looked like--

Surely.

--the kinds of things that went on in the home?

We had apartments. We never had a house. In fact, a house is a rarity, even today, in Europe. Mostly there were apartments in multi-story buildings.

I think we had a 5, a 4, and a 3 story building in which we had these apartments. That I recall, we had two bedrooms, one for my parents, one for my grandfather. And then I sometimes had a bedroom.

In one case, I know in the last place where I stayed, I was allowed to be in the attic. And that was very nice. Because I used to read until 4 o'clock in the morning with a flashlight and nobody disturbed me.

I did have-- I would not call it a governess, oh, an au pair, or something like that-- it was somebody who took care of me for a portion of the day to help my mother out. And I don't think I have any pictures of her. But I recall distinctly.

And I tried to look all of these people up. When I went back to Germany-- just to go back to that, and I'll come back to my home and what it was like in a moment-- I did try to look up all the people whose names I could memorize, or I had recalled. One of them was my teacher, whom I did see, who tried to shield me. This was my gymnasium teacher.

And you know, there, they see you through. They stay with you rather than leaving you at the end of the class. And he shielded me from the excesses of some of the other students.

I tried to find an employee of my grandfather's, whose name I recalled, who wouldn't see me. And I tried to find this lady who was sort of taking care of me. And I was also unsuccessful in that.

Now as far as our home was concerned, we had a grand piano. And I played piano. I was given lessons.

And the fact is that my piano teacher was still alive as of last February, because I called her and she lives in Providence. And her advertisements for her piano lessons are in one of the old Jewish community newspapers that I have an example of with me here. So I had piano lessons.

We had a comfortable home, good furniture, some antiques. My mother enjoyed collecting Dresden China. Each year she had a plate from Dresden for the Christmas plates. I think they still do that.

We had some very beautiful crystal. We had some nice silver. I don't believe we had anything of tremendous value in the way of art or jewelry. But they had standards, gold. And so I certainly never lacked for anything in the way of clothing. I had a bicycle, which I rode to school constantly and also [INAUDIBLE].

Now going back to my home, my mother did the cooking. My father happened to be allergic to anything involving fruits. So even when we had ice cream, it had to be vanilla or chocolate. And that was the only quirk as far as dietary processes are concerned. We were not kosher. And we had good meals.

Entertainment became more and more difficult with time under Hitler. I was allowed early on to go to movies. I remember seeing in 1936, '35, the movie San Francisco. And I saw it four times. It played longer than any other movie in Dusseldorf that I can recall.

And what we did then later on, instead of being able to go out as much, there were some card games that were played at home, particularly a game called Scotch, which is a three-handed card game, somewhat lower level than bridge. But my father, my mother, and my aunt, my grandfather played it. Occasionally, somebody else came in as a visitor and took a hand.

I tried my hand at it early on. But I am afraid I wasn't quite up to it at the time. That was the entertainment in the house. We had a radio. And of course, there were no televisions in those days. But the fact that we had a piano was a very nice thing for me.

Did your parents talk about what was going on around Germany? And did you have a sense of their participation in the impending atrocities? Did they talk about Hitler? Do you remember any of the political conversations? Or, perhaps, did they have political conversations?

They had political conversations. Politically speaking, my family was a Social Democrat type. So it's sort of a centrist type of operation. They were not radicals in any way, shape, or form. Surely, the presence of Hitler, and the presence of the rising anti-Semitism, and the physical acts that were taken against Jews were a matter of discussion. I was simply admonished to try to be, shall we say, as careful as I could be.

When I went down to the corner to take the streetcar, you could not help but see these huge glass-enclosed-- not advertisements, but notices with Der Sturmer, which was the anti-Semitic paper. And the Jews were accused of everything under the sun. And it was written in such large letters, you just simply couldn't avoid seeing it. Streicher, I think, was the person who put that out. He was the editor.

There was also clearly remarks that my fellow students made to me. I don't want to repeat them. But I mean, dirty Jew was the mildest of them.

I was only, I believe, beaten up once or twice. It wasn't a constant process. The one time I was careless and I pushed somebody into the pool. And I never saw the end of that, as far as I was concerned.

As I say, this one teacher really tried to protect me. I don't think that anything my parents could have done to help me, shall we say, counter the antagonism and the hatreds. And I think a fair amount of that hatred was cooked up. I don't think it was all real.

There was some sort of diabolic magnetism about Hitler's speeches. And you can't take away from the fact that he's probably one of the greatest orators of all times, malevolent though he was. He ranks with Churchill, perhaps Roosevelt.

Can you help me understand what you mean by "cooked up?"

What I mean by that is I don't think that my fellow students really basically felt that way. They were just sort of urged on to show and to participate in acts of antagonism towards me. Somehow I had the feeling within me that it wasn't all real, that it wasn't their basic nature. But nevertheless, it manifested itself towards me.

One of the results of this was that I worked harder and harder and harder to be a good student, to learn as much as I could, and to get good grades. It was one way that I could passively, perhaps, show that I was not one of these heinous criminals that they were told Jews were.

And this sort of metamorphosis was gradual. It wasn't from one day to the next. It occurred over a significant period of time, years perhaps. And at the beginning in 1933, other than the burning of the Reichstag, which I recall, and the consequence, assumption of a dictatorship by Hitler, it was taken without any, at that time, explicit vow against the Jews.

Although during the time before he became chancellor, he had talked that the Jews were the cause of all the ills in the world, that they controlled this, that, and the other thing, that they raped and pillaged and plundered, and so on, and so forth. That was what he said. Now not everybody believed him. Perhaps they saw today. I think much of what he said in his book, Mein Kampf, is what he actually put into execution during the time that he was chancellor.

Are you saying that many people didn't take him seriously, or many Jews didn't take him seriously in the beginning?

I think what happened was that the Jews said this cannot happen to us. It might happen to the people down in the next city for whatever reason. But it doesn't happen to us.

Now that's not true of everybody. But I think the vast majority of the people, the Jewish community that I knew, did not think that they would be, shall we say, eventually killed and put into concentration camps. That they might be deprived of their economic standing to some extent, they might be limited in what they could do business wise.

And this of course, is something I was very aware of. There was a continual reduction of that kind of activity for professional or monetary purposes any Jewish member of the community could engage in. There were these laws that limited what you could do.

Are you saying your own family, your own parents never really believed that they would be harmed?

No. I'm not saying that. You asked me about the community. No, in my case, I think my parents were very farsighted. They started to make arrangements to send me out of the country in 1936. And it just was a long negotiating process.

The man who brought me to the United States, a man by the name of Maurice P. Davidson, was a very high level politician in the city of New York. He was chairman of the Fusion party, which is the party that put LaGuardia into office. He was also a high level officer of the Democratic Party of the State of New York.

I met many, many high level politicians of the Democratic Party when I first came to the United States. I'm not sure whether I met Roosevelt or not. I think I did. But I cannot recall. In any event, it wouldn't have made any impression on me. I know that Henry Wallace, when Vice President, was a houseguest of the man who brought me over.

The man who brought me over first brought over a second cousin of mine who is the son of the woman that I told you

about that was married at the time that my mother met my father. And so he brought him over. Then he brought me over.

Then he placed affidavits for his parents. And they were able to get here, but not until after a very, very tortuous journey. They went through Peru and Cuba. And they got here in 1939 or '40, something like that. He also placed affidavits for my parents, but it was too late.

Now in terms of my parents, they recognized this by trying to get me out. And then they emigrated from Germany to Holland. You see, my aunt was living in Dordrecht with my uncle by marriage. And the family there was closely knit, and I knew them all.

And so they went to Holland. But they didn't live in Dordrecht. For some reason, they moved to Breda.

So they left in-- I think it was January or February of 1939. Anyway, before the war started. And then, of course, the first thing that happened was the invasion of Holland. And they went into hiding.

And I talked to at least one of the families that was involved in hiding them after the war. And I got contradictory stories. But whatever the situation was, they were eventually discovered and taken to Auschwitz from Holland. My grandfather, who stayed with his daughter, my aunt and daughter, I believe, was taken to Westerbork. And my parents were taken to Auschwitz, which the documents. I have attest to.

Now I wasn't aware of the fact until I went to the Yad Vashem that my grandfather had not died a natural death. He was 91 or 92 when he died. And it would have been natural to assume that he died a natural death.

But no, his place of death is listed as Westerbork, where he may have very well died a natural-- that's conceivably. Then again, he may not. But we'll never find that out. There's no way of documenting this.

So they did try to take this kind of an action. And perhaps I'm rambling a bit. But it is relevant to the answer to the question that you asked.

You're doing fine. You don't mention any brothers or sisters.

I have none. Had none. I'm the only child.

And the other immediate family member I've mentioned, the brother of my mother, she also had a sister who was a spinster. And was sort of a somewhat poor soul. She was alone and never had any friends. And I had relatively little contact with her, as a young boy is likely to be. I was possibly, perhaps, more cruel to her than I should have been.

My maternal grandmother was alive and died while I was still in Germany. I think I was eight when she died. Her name was Julie.

My paternal grandmother, whose name was Annie, died when I was four. And she died while she was in some sort of a home. I do not know whether it was something like Alzheimer's or whether it was because of physical incapacity. I was too young to know at the time.

And so I remember her death at age four, my maternal grandmother at age eight. My paternal grandfather I never knew-- sorry, maternal grandfather I never knew. He died before I was born. And my paternal grandfather, as I say, we lived with him, Adolph, until I left and they went to Holland.

They left for Holland before, or after, or simultaneously with you coming to this country?

No, after I left. I came in May 1938.

Can you tell us a little about what that process was like for a young boy, really, to leave his parents?

Yes.

And what that was like mechanically and emotionally?

I'd better start with the mechanical before I get to the emotional aspect. There had been this negotiation with this gentleman Maurice P. Davidson in New York. His relationship to us was that he, I think, was the second cousin of my grandfather's. And so there was some sort of family connection.

But it was also known that he was well-connected politically. And so there was this request to have me come to the United States. And because of all the kinds of rules and regulations, and also because of personal problems that he may have had at one time, there was a postponement. I was supposed to come earlier than I did.

But then his wife apparently became ill. And he said I couldn't come at that time. It would have to wait. And my parents were concerned whether or not that was a complete rejection of his original offer to take me in. But it wasn't.

But anyway, when we finally found out that that had been cleared up, then we had to get a visa. And that was not all that simple. Because we had to go from Dusseldorf to Stuttgart.

And we have to remember, even though that's a distance of only about 200 or 300 miles, in those days and at that time as far as the transport is concerned, it was a major journey. People didn't move more than a few miles out of their town as a rule, unless it was really a long journey.

So we went to Munich, where there was some distant relatives that I visited. And then my mother and I, my mother came with me, came to Stuttgart. And we had an American visa. It's a good thing that happened at that time.

Had it happened six months later, completely aside from Hitler, I would have been unable to get a visa. Because after coming to the United States, within two months, I developed what is called osteomyelitis, which is a bone marrow infection. And that I'll get to later. But it would have barred me, I think, from entry into this country, even though Mickey Mantle also had the same thing.

So I was able to get out. And in terms of being responsive to your question, the emotional part of it-- that was the mechanical part. My mother took me to Stuttgart.

But then when I was about ready to leave, my mother developed a very major ear infection. She had to have a mastoid operation. And so she couldn't see me to the boat, which left from Hamburg. And so my father took me to the boat.

I came over with a children's transport, a Jewish children's transport. There was a woman who was shepherding 20 or so people. And I don't know whether or not I have a photo of that or not. It may very well have gotten lost. But I did have a photo of that.

Came over on the USS America. And I think it was the SS America. And so my father brought me there. So those were the mechanics.

The emotional aspect of it, It was made clear to me that it was an absolute necessity from their viewpoint. They felt very strongly that this was going to end up in a complete and total destruction of Jews within Germany. And so they themselves, of course, left too. They couldn't have known that Holland would have been invaded. So they really wanted to just leave.

It was sort of, in a way, unthinkable on one hand. And yet, not as unusual as it might be today. Because there had been lots of migrations from Europe to the United States of various kinds of people, the Irish, the Italians, the Germans. There were waves of immigrants. And they always came at a time when there was economic unrest, or poverty, or whatever.

Since the Mayflower, I don't know whether any group has come strictly for political or religious reasons. Because I don't think, once we got over the Elizabethan era, that Europe was that unhealthy for any kind of belief, or political, or religious. But there were waves because of the famines, the economic poverty of various countries.

So the removal to the United States was not all that unheard of. But the removal for this reason was. And so I guess I can only say I did what I was told to do.

And yes, I will be brutally frank and say that when I left my father in Hamburg, I was reasonably sure I would never see him again. And that was a hell of a burden to have to bear. But at 13, especially in a relatively protected home environment at any rate, you don't have the free will that you would if you had been on your own for a few years. So then it became clearer and clearer and clearer to me as I came, as I spent time in this country, that I would indeed not see my parents again.

Were you able to stay in contact with them when they got to Holland?

Yes. I had some letters which got lost. And they were lost before this fire. I have some of the envelopes here, but not the letters.

And this contact was through sometimes a Red Cross, through the US mail. But as you can probably see, even those letters were opened by censors. And so what was expressed had to be very, very carefully couched.

The information that I got, I got only over the American radio, and that was not necessarily accurate. Although there was a time in my life when I believed that what was said over the radio was the absolute and total truth. I've since learned to be a bit more skeptical about that.

But anyway, the separation from my parents was very hard. It was helped perhaps in two ways. Number one, I'd always been a relatively self-sufficient individual, at least psychologically. I had my own interests, in which I was encouraged, but not helped or assisted by my parents.

I always had been a very intensive student. And when I came over to this country, I was bounced around extensively, which had something to do with the rest of my life. And I'll talk about that later.

But as far as the transformation from Germany to the United States is concerned, it happened relatively smoothly. I still remember the journey over. I remember talking to one of the crew members. And I learned about 60 or 80 words of English. I have reasonable linguistic ability, so it wasn't too difficult for me to pick up the language.

And I also spoke French fluently at the time. And I spoke Dutch fairly fluently at the time. So communications wise, this was fine.

What did I do to compensate for the absence of my parents? Probably nothing. I couldn't. There was no compensation.

I was taken in by this man. And he and his wife did their very, very best to make me feel comfortable and at home. I also had my second cousin there. His presence served as a counterpoint, because we were continually fighting. But it wasn't fighting in a bad way. It's just we disagreed as to whether the window should be open or not in the room in which we both slept.

I have kept no contact with any of the people I came over with. I don't even know their names. One of the friends that I made in Germany, and in fact, he left the day before I did for England, when I left for the United States, I saw in the East Coast. And I knew his mother, who was actually living in the same town where I went to high school, Mount Vernon, New York, now so that I'm sure she's dead now. I can't even recall her name.

I do recall the name of this boy. And he had married fairly early. He'd become an assistant manager of a Woolworth or something like that. And my last impression of him was that all he was interested in was jazz and baseball. And I felt those were fine, but there has to be something more to life than that.

So we had significantly diverged in our, shall we say, life's paths. And I have not kept up with him. I do not know what happened to him. I do not know where he is.

I do know, but through a circuitous route, someone who was in Germany with me at the same time. He's in England. And I also have a second cousin who is in England. Whom I looked up, incidentally, just on the Sunday before the fire. I was over in Liverpool, in Manchester, talking to these people.

And the person in Manchester was a very famous engineer. Put the people in Germany who are doing a similar thing to what you are doing, the history of the Jews there, in touch with me. And I spent to a day and a half with a lady who is compiling the history.

It may be something that you yourself might want to make note of later on. They're doing it intensively. And she is a trained historian and particularly specialized on the role of the Jews in Germany, not just during Hitler, but over a longer period of time. So she's undertaken as a project to do this.

Share some more of your early days in the United States as a young man who could learn English rapidly, but there must have been a time where you were still struggling with the new culture. What was that like for you?

Well, I was left pretty much to my own devices. There's still things, things that I'm thinking of in Germany, that I will go back to this at a later time.

Sure. You can go back and forth.

But when I first came to the United States, as I say, I was with my second cousin. Then I was put in a camp. This is in 1938. I came in May of '38.

And in June, I went to a camp for a very well-known high school, private high school in New York where I was supposed to go, Horace Mann High School. And they had the camp in New Hampshire. And I went there.

And within a month, I came down with this osteomyelitis. And I had to be taken to Hanover, New Hampshire, where they have the hospital, closest hospital. And I spent three months there.

Partly because 1938 was a very unpleasant year for the East Coast. They had the Great Hurricane of 1938, which moved ships in, 10 ton tankers about two miles inland. They also had the Connecticut River floods.

And Hanover was isolated from the rest of the world, except for one telephone line in from New York, completely isolated for a month. All the roads were cut. And so I had to stay there, even if I had been able to get out.

As a result of this, going to this camp, I think I knew more four-letter words that I tried to utilize in the hospital and was promptly and correctly slapped down. But I learned that from my compatriots there.

I went there as a waiter, meaning that the fee for the camp was substantially reduced. And I waited on the tables about one day a week. But otherwise, it was a camp. I did canoeing, so on.

So we are talking only about something like a month that I was in New York City. And I used to take the subway down, for a nickel, to Times Square and just walk around and look at all these sights and sounds, and the $0.05 movies, and what was then considered to be very risque. And I looked at the collection of businessmen and derelicts. And they were all down there as you walked up and down 42nd Street.

The man, as I say, who brought me to this country was a lawyer. He had an office on 42nd Street and Madison Avenue. And I spent quite a bit of time in his office doing some minor chores. But generally, trying to find a way to usefully kill time.

I had met someone from my hometown. I was interested in stamps. I still am, in some respects. And beside the business he had, he was a stamp dealer. And I remember going to his house and talking to him.

And also remember very distinctly, this is the very early days in New York, that he had another German refugee who kept telling him-- in very loud tones so I couldn't help but overhear it-- why did he want to bother with someone like me who couldn't do him any good, who couldn't even buy a reasonable amount of stamps? Why did he waste his time with me, et cetera. It made me feel very good. But this is the sort of experience you learn to live with.

And so after the summer, then, when I came back, and when I came back, it was more or less December, I started going to a public school in New York. Instead of the Horace Mann school, I went to a PS 66, I think it is. But only for a semester which was, of course, in a way, good, in a way, a terrible waste.

Because I'd had four years of French. I spoke fluent German. I had had mathematics substantially beyond anything they taught there. But I caught up on shop, though I've never been good at that. And I caught up on some American history and this sort of thing.

And then when I left New York in January of 1939, and I was placed by this family with another family in Mount Vernon, New York. And their name was Reichert. And they were in their 40s and never had any children. And there are some very strange reminiscences that relate to something that has happened just about a year ago.

Anyway, they were in the business of repairing binoculars. And I started going-- not to junior high or anything else-- I skipped a year and a half, effectively, of school. I went to high school in Mount Vernon, New York where I spent 2 and 1/2 years and graduated.

And I took an academic program. And, again, I did a lot, a lot of studying. But I developed certain hobbies and certain friends at that time with whom I'm still in very close contact more than 50 years later.

And the people I lived with and, again, this is something that's only possible to gauge from this point on, should never have taken someone like myself in. And a woman whom I just recently saw at the 50 year reunion, who was my classmate, had actually been consulted by them. How do you handle somebody coming over from Germany who's 14 years old? How do you deal with them? How do you treat them?

But whatever they did, they did it wrong. And this woman, whom I'm now-- her husband is a professor-- not husband. Her brother is a professor at Berkeley. And I knew the name. And I said, there can't be possibly any connection. But it turned out it was her brother.

And so I called him and found out, when I met this woman at the 50-year reunion, about this relationship. And now we're going to have periodic meetings. And I'm going to call her up.

Anyway, she was consulted by these people as how to handle me. And they handled me completely incorrectly. I mean, it was just-- any psychologist could have told them that the way to treat me was not to do it the way they did.

As an example, they tried to hammer into me consistently and constantly that the one thing I wanted to do, which was to go to college, I should never even entertain. Why? Well, because I would have to work very, very hard and make money and bring my parents over. And that's important.

So I shouldn't even think of going to college. When I, in my own mind, was reasonably sure, and they should have been even surer, that I would never see my parents again. I mean, they were adults. Here I was, a teenager.

So this is just one of the things. Then they put me to work in their shop at $0.05 an hour, helping to ship, pack and ship the binoculars. And I saved the money. And they asked me what I wanted to do with it. I said, I'd like to buy a radio.

And they ridiculed that. Again, that's something I should say where my parents are [INAUDIBLE]. So their concepts were totally wrong.

And the man had gone to Cambridge, England university for, I think, one year. And then he had to leave. So he thought he was the cat's meow as far as physics and mathematics is concerned.

And he later described, talked about this with some acquaintances of his. And I made the remark, yes, I thought he knew something about arithmetic. But that's about the extent of his knowledge.

And yet, because he was so sure of himself and what he had, how his life was being lived quite properly, that I should live the way he felt. I learned a great deal from that in terms of treating my own children totally different.

And so my life with them was a constant battle. And, again, it was in a way unfortunate, not being able to actually take it a little easier. But I wasn't that ill-prepared.

Because I'd been living that sort of life for the six months, or the year, or the two years prior to that in Germany under very similar circumstances. I was constantly on the defensive. I constantly had to defend what I wanted to do as being a proper thing, not be ridiculed, not be talked out of it, or whatever.

It sounds like you had a lot of inner direction. Somehow you were strong-willed and had a mind of your own even then.

I am sorry. I must agree with you.

[LAUGHTER]

Yes, I am very strong-willed. And in part, there is no question in my mind, that my experiences in Germany. And this that I'm now reciting to you contributed to this.

The fact is that they forced me. They forced me, literally, to take shorthand and typing. Now typing I've never regretted. But shorthand was the biggest waste of time I ever had. I mean, what shorthand I took in college were formulas for which the Gregg system isn't particularly appropriate.

So they did leave me to take an academic course other than that, for which I was grateful. So I at least had the necessary prerequisites to get into college. I formed strong friendships then. I formed strong interests then. I've acquired interest since.

But the transition was somewhat abrupt, to go from this benign, although somewhat neglected environment in New York City with the man that brought me over to this highly regimented and prejudicial and opinionated environment that I found myself with these people, with whom I stayed until the end of the summer. And I was placed there, by the way, through the Jewish agencies. But I'm sure the man in New York paid a certain sum for my upkeep and my-- well, of course--

I was going to ask you how that worked, and if money was involved, and why these people did these kindnesses. Was it purely out of kindness, or--

Do you mean the man in New York?

And in the second family.

The second family, I didn't think I was particularly treated kindly. I was paid $0.05 an hour for some fairly hard labor. I was packing and shipping and taking to the post office the binoculars that they had repaired. It was a job. And I had it during the summer only, I might say, not during the regular year.

And I don't even remember whether I had an allowance of some sort or not. I must have, to be able to buy milk in school. But I can't say that my treatment there was kind.

Wrong word. However, you did survive. And you did go on. And could you peg this to the outbreak of the war? Was this just before the war?

Yes. Now let me say this, I was with these people I described. And they told my guardian, that was a better word, the man who brought me over, they didn't want to have me around anymore.

So he placed me for three months, on a very temporary basis, with a very, very high, hoi polloi family, a Jewish family, who took me in strictly as a temporary measure. I was allowed to eat at their table. But that was about the only contact I had with them.

And after that, he found another family that took me. And, again, I am sure it was partly for reimbursement of some sort. But there I stayed until the end of my high school career, which was June of 1941. And that was six months before the war broke out as far as the US is concerned.

War broke out in Europe in August 1939. And so at that time, I was already living with the Reicherts, yes. And oh, they had some other strange habits. I don't know if you want to go into them.

They insisted-- this is not particularly Polish, but I just wasn't used to it. They insisted that I go bathing nude in the presence of similarly nude females. And for someone brought up the way I was, it was just not, shall we say, de rigueur. And so we had fights about that.

And so then I left them. And I went with this other family. And I have very little recollection. Except that this woman that I talked about who was consulted about how I should be treated knew the children of this family quite well. And she talked about how their parents were not exactly their favorite types. In fact, she called him a stuck up ass.

So the woman was OK. It was her husband who was this way. And the children, they rubbed it into me they were going to Yale. And they were going to-- I forget, Wellesley or something like that. And here I was, probably not have any chance to go anywhere.

But then, when I went with his last family-- and he was a vice principal of Evander Childs High School in the Bronx, which was the second largest high school in the New York City school system. And I was treated well there.

The woman was crazy. She insisted that I didn't have a speech defect. And she was going to correct me. She fancied herself a speech therapist. And you see how well my accent has been corrected.

But he was fine. And he encouraged me in going to school, applying to colleges, doing everything. Pursuing my hobbies, which were initially chess, and then I switched over with my high school friends to bridge. And I became almost an internationalist at competition. And I had to choose between bridge and teaching mechanical engineering.

Well, I've given the game up more or less. I haven't played in about 10 years. But anyway, we did that. And we did it every afternoon after school.

And all of the four people that I was with, I'm still in contact with all of them. And I've seen them periodically.

So I had this, well, very benevolent individual who took care of me. And he saw to it that he didn't hinder me the way the first family did. Didn't put any impediments in my way.

And, again, I excelled in school, did well. I wasn't the valedictorian, but I wasn't ashamed of my Regents [INAUDIBLE]. And so that brought us, then, to the fall of 1941, which was three months before the outbreak of the war.

I'd arranged to have a summer job that year. I was a bellboy in a country club, a Jewish country club in Elmsford, New York, which is in Westchester County. And at the time, very well-to-do New Yorkers came out there to play golf.

And I'd applied to a whole bunch of colleges for admission. And to make a long story short, for example, MIT-- well, I had to apply for a scholarship wherever I, again, went. Because I had no money. And MIT turned me down, for which I now am very grateful.

And Texas gave me a scholarship loan through a B'nai B'rith loan fund. And so I went to Texas with about $50 in my pocket, and a train ticket, and good intentions, and an admission to the university. And I got down there, and I started working my way through. I held two jobs always besides going to school.

And so it was the first semester that Pearl Harbor occurred. You asked where I was at and how I was treated at the outbreak of the war. I instantaneously became an enemy alien. I had to give up things like my camera and my radio.

If I wanted to leave town more than 10 miles an hour, I had to get permission from the US attorney of the area. And all of this didn't matter so much because I was really rooted. And this is the University of Texas in Austin.

I was rooted there because I had no money to do anything else. So I may have gone to a football game in Dallas or something like that. But beyond that, I certainly wasn't traveling in any way.

So it had very little practical effect. How did it appear to you that all of a sudden you were an enemy alien? And I take it this was more or less automatic?

It was automatic.

It happened to all the other Germans at that time?

All the Germans? I suppose it happened to all the Italians and all the Japanese. The Japanese were treated far more harshly, especially in California, than I.

Well, how did it appear to me? Frankly, it didn't have any effect on me. A minor inconvenience, I regretted not having a camera. I enjoyed taking pictures.

Did this last for long, or a few months?

It lasted until I became a citizen. I became a citizen before the war ended. So once I became a citizen, all of that was removed and automatically restored all the rights and so on. So basically, the advent of the war had a minimal effect on me. The advent of the war in Europe had a much greater effect on me because of my parents and my family's position.

That's what I was going to ask you about, to track that for us. As the war progressed, or as you began to, I assume, worry more and more about your parents, can you tell us how you found out? Or did you find out about your parents--

All communication was cut off almost completely somewhere in 1940. Even after the war broke out, there was still a way of getting things out of Holland. I can look at those letters that are dated, not letters, but envelopes that are dated. And I can see what about the last communication was that I had with them. At some stage of the game, certainly in 1941 when I went to Texas, I no longer was in contact with them.

I see.

And sure, I worried about it. But then again, what could you do? You were not in a position to get intelligence out of there. I didn't even know where they were, frankly. They presumably were in hiding.

I think I had once or twice a letter from Portugal of Dutch people who had met my parents in hiding and told me that they were OK but that was as far as that went. And then I got contradictory information as to who had done what and who had not done what. So there was no way I could ascertain the truth.

It was a terrible, terrible thing. But, again, on the other hand, what could you do? If I had let this completely devastate

me, I would not have been able to survive. Because in order to survive, I had to do well in school, so I could hold my jobs and also stay in school.

As far as the American army was concerned, I was given a draft deferment, being in mechanical engineering. But somewhere along the line, they caught up with me, no matter whether you were an engineer or not. And so I reported for my physical examination.

I was rejected because of this. And it wasn't the fact that this was disabling. But if this had acted up again while I was in the military, they would have to pay my pension the rest of my life. And somehow or other, the economics of that didn't appeal to them, no matter what the external circumstances with the war were. I never figured that one out.

But that's the way it was. So I was taken to San Antonio sometime in 1944 and given a physical and told I was 4-F. That allowed me to finish.

Although the other thing the war did, I took out a war loan in order to speed up my education. I bought some money which I paid back to the government with interest, low cost interest. And what happened was that, instead of a 4 and 1/2 year program, I finished it in 2 and 3/4.

So what that meant, of course, is that I had to take, instead of the usual 15 or 16 units, I took 21. And for some of these units, of course, I could get credit. I mean, for my non-technical electives, I could take two years of German and get credit for that. I took some classes, though, that were useless. I took a semester of Spanish, which I decided I didn't want to continue with.

We didn't have that much choice in the way of courses to take. There were a few technical electives. But the rest was pretty well prescribed.

And the interesting thing was that the climate of the university was such that I really didn't make many friends. We were too busy trying to get our work done to have much time for socializing. I do recall that one of the things I did do, every other Saturday night, we used to play poker. And we played poker all night.

We played it with silver dollars as our chips. And so even though I was making perhaps $66 a month as my salary, and I remember that was one of the salaries I made, I may have had $120 at home just as chips to be used in these biweekly poker games, or semi-weekly poker games.

So that was one of the things. Other than that, I would say that I've got no more than an average of three hours sleep, three to four hours' sleep. I was working the rest of the time. I had a job at the university either as correcting papers or as an assistant in some form or another.

Eventually, after I graduated, I actually taught classes. But then I also lived in a co-op for a year and a half. And this required a certain number of hours, either cooking, making beds, cleaning, whatever. And so there was perhaps a total of, oh, 46 hours of work a week, 46, 48 hours of work a week that I performed.

I started out delivering newspapers for the local paper. Then they decided, a week after Pearl Harbor, that they were going to cut the commissions of the newspaper boys. So the newspaper boys got together and decided to go on strike.

So we picked up the papers and dumped them in front of the girls' dormitory and into the river there instead of delivering to the customers. Well, of course, the paper picked my name as being the ringleader of the strike. And here I was, a week after the war was declared, as an enemy alien. And I was a little frightened that I might just be interned or whatnot.

But that got straightened out. And I got a job in the library cataloging books. The books that come in fresh, I had to take cards and go to the Library of Congress catalog that was upstairs and see if they were there.

But only about 25% of them were. The rest were specialty books from South America. And I had to make the

preliminary entry on that. I had no training in library science.

Well, I made the entry. And then it was reviewed by a librarian. But still, I did all of that. And I did that for about a year and a half.

And then I became a reader. I read collected papers. And I did this in maybe three or four courses simultaneously so as to have enough money to continue living. And that continued until I graduated.

I'm curious about how you chose your mechanical engineering.

Well, again, there is a certain amount of perversity in this. I thought I liked mathematics very much. And I sort of rationalized that mathematics was not a very salable product per se. At least in those days, it's become better now.

So I thought there would be enough of the mathematical aspects to engineering if I went into it. And it was a field in which there was at least a reasonable chance of landing a decent paying job.

So you were being practical?

I was being practical as well as, to some extent, wishing to pursue my areas of interest, which was mathematics. And I've gone into an area which is called applied mechanics. That's in the graduate area, which is part of mechanical engineering. And if I had to do it all over again today, I'm not sure I'd deviate very much, even knowing all that I have experienced.

But what was very interesting about this is the fact that when I went into the University of Texas, they gave placement examinations of some kind, skill tests and whatnot. They were national, places like Michigan, Harvard. I don't know whether Berkeley was among them. But anyway, there were eight or 10 universities using exactly the same tests-- there were about eight or nine subjects-- to try to determine your aptitude.

And I topped the country that year in linguistic ability. In fact, I had 108% of the previous year high. And so I was besieged by advisors who strongly urged me to leave engineering and go into something where this would be useful, such as political science. And I just shook my head. It wasn't as strong pressure as what I had in high school, but it still was pressure.

I didn't do that badly in mathematics. But I was in the 98th percentile. But it wasn't as good as the other one.

But in mechanical engineering, the two aptitude tests I took were my low points. They were 68 and 71 percentile, or something like that, no, 59 and 64, whatever, spatial visualization and mechanical ingenuity.

And one of the other things I wanted to mention, when I expressed my interest in engineering, was this first American couple that I lived with, the childless couple. They discouraged me from that on the basis that they say you can't even hammer a nail in straight. How can you be an engineer?

And I suggest to them now that engineers that can hammer nails in straight were very far away from where technology is today. But it was a somewhat similar argument based upon my performance in these aptitude tests that got these people to try to get me to change my mind. I didn't.

And so I went through the mechanical engineering program. And that ended in June of '44. I had six months to go before I became a citizen.

So I decided I would stay. I couldn't very easily get a job in industry, anyway. The war wasn't over. And I was an enemy alien.

So I just wanted to stay on as a graduate student. And I did and started my master's degree. And I got that in September of '45.

Well, in January of '45, I became a citizen. So all of these restrictions were lifted. And I was able to continue from there on out.

I do remember that the time of my college days was a time of extremely hard work. I remember my high school days, aside from who I lived with, at least initially, much more pleasantly than my college days. I also recall the horrendous shock at the death of FDR that occurred while I was there.

So the activities at college just were far less impressionable, then. It was routine. It was hard work. I didn't have time to think. Didn't have time for much recreation.

You seem to be motivated to get through quickly. Am I correct?

Yes, but in fact, this was forced. The government wanted us to get through there as quickly as possible so we could go into industry and help produce war material. Engineering was one, engineering and medicine, perhaps one or two other areas were exempted from the draft on the grounds that were needed.

And this was indeed the case. It was something that the agencies, the military agencies since, have taken very good care to avoid. They were not prepared for the need for scientific personnel back in 1939. And when they needed it all of a sudden, they weren't there.

It's interesting that you were an enemy alien. And yet you were being prepared to help the war effort.

I think they had convinced themselves that I wasn't really a threat. And obviously, with my background, I should have been given an exemption from the start. But that may not have been possible.

Speaking of that, it's very interesting that the man Mr. Davidson, who brought me to the United States, was at least an acquaintance of the man who represented Hitler in Washington as a lobbyist, the German lobbyist, and who eventually went to jail. His sons all disowned him. I forget his name.

But I also remember that his wife came to me when I was ill with this and brought me six volumes of a very, very famous German story writer, who's also been translated into English, by the name of Karl May. And if you've heard of him, he wrote about Indians without ever having seen one. And about, I guess, what would passed for cowboys. He calls them West men, whatever that may mean.

So she bought me those. And I had them until the fire. And they died here.

So the children of this man Davidson also knew the children of this lobbyist. And as I say, the lobbyist's children disowned him. And so it's just one of the sidelights of my relationship with Germany that just crossed my mind. There's so many memories, and inklings, and so on. It takes a little while to bring them out of a corner. I wonder if you could--

10 seconds here. Professor Goldsmith, let's have a change of pace now and have Eric Saul ask you a few questions.

Did you experience any anti-Semitism in the United States, in Texas?

No, not in Texas. I did experience some anti-Semitism subsequent to that, occasional remarks that were made while I was a young engineer for Westinghouse in Pittsburgh. And I would go to a bar, and sometimes alone, sometimes with a lady companion.

And I'd hear some rather nasty remarks about Jews. The goddamn Jews are ruining the economy. And they have too much power. They oughtn't be living in our neighborhood, things of that general nature.

It's very unpleasant to know also what to do about that sort of thing when you hear it. You can't pretend that you didn't hear it. Yet on the other hand, you can't go ahead and punch that person in the nose, either. So maybe you turn around

and give them a nasty look. But that's not very effective.

I take it that none of these remarks were directed at you?

No, not specifically at me. In fact, speaking of that sort of thing, one of the things that gets me upset, because I heard it when I was in college, I dated a non-Jewish girl. I went to see her parents. They said, but you don't look Jewish.

I said, would you mind defining for me what it is to look Jewish? And they're, well, you know, how it is portrayed in the pictures. You mean with a hooked nose, and a yarmulke, and a shawl, or whatever? What do you mean? And they were generally unable to answer this.

Unfortunately, I've encountered that same remark with my own small daughter. And I have to step on her rather hard, perhaps too hard. That's the sort of thing that may be interpreted as anti-Semitism. But perhaps it's just an unfortunate way of expressing it as it occurred 50 years ago. Today, with people being a bit more politically correct, perhaps that doesn't come up so much.

Were you aware of the escalation of the murder in the death camps in the 1940s when you were going to school through news articles, or the media, or anything?

No, not an escalation. I mean, I was aware of the fact that there were camps. That also was not hard knowledge. But it was word of mouth and stated in the papers, "It is rumored that," and this sort of thing.

I never talked during those days to anyone who had been in a camp and somehow or other got out. However later, when I talked to a distant relative who was living with these friends in New Orleans, he had been in a camp. And because of major efforts to get him a visa, and which were successful in getting him out, he was allowed to leave.

I believe there was a time when Hitler would have preferred to have Jews leave Germany rather than to kill them. At least, that's the history now. And so when there was the opportunity and a clear case of being able to get out, this was permitted, even when they were in the camp.

I had a very unfortunate experience along those lines myself. It happened two weeks before my bar mitzvah. My uncle, my mother's brother, was living with us at the time. We had planned on one day to go take a bicycle trip through the area, just as a recreational measure, he and I.

Three days before this, at 3 o'clock in the morning, the Gestapo came to our house and arrested him. Turned out it was a case of mistaken identity. And they didn't want him. They wanted somebody else.

But when he then went on this trip with me three days later, he had a heart attack in the middle of a field and died. And here I was, just barely under 13, having to deal with a dead uncle in the middle of nowhere and a regime that I knew was not particularly sympathetic to Jews. So that was something I have never forgotten, either.

So I don't know if this is, again, responsive. But it has something to do with my awareness of the rise of anti-Semitism in Germany and of the rise of deaths in camps. But there was no hard knowledge that I had, or hard figures that I became familiar with until after the war.

But while we're on the subject of camps, do you now have an opinion about whether or how many Germans actually knew about the camps during the war?

Well, I vacillated. During the war, I'm not so sure. I vacillated. Initially, I thought that they weren't perhaps the majority. A substantial number perhaps, but not a majority.

Then after the war I became convinced that everybody knew about it, or almost everybody. And then I've carried this conviction with me until I talked to this woman who I personally believe has no axe to grind. In fact, she's as harsh on the Hitler regime and the times and the people as anyone I have ever seen.

But she advised me that from her researches there were not as many people as perhaps some others had believed who were completely familiar with the existence of the camps and what was going on there. Initially, I believe the propaganda line was that the camps in a sense were set up in part for the protection of these people, that they didn't want the populace to be let at them, that this was a matter of protection. That was at least one propaganda item that I had heard about.

And then, of course, that didn't last very long. It became evident that they were taken there. I am not sure that the initial intention was to kill them all. I think this was a later decision that was made, perhaps at the time of the Kristallnacht, or close to that period, the final solution. And I think camps existed before this final solution meeting occurred.

So there was a shift in purpose, so to speak, for those camps.

Yes. It was never a pleasant thing. But then, on the other hand, we interned people at Manzanar with not very good reasons, either. But I am not aware of a particular crescendo of the number of people who were killed. In fact, the ovens themselves was something I didn't learn about until very, very late in the game, perhaps even after the war, the method, how they were killed.

Let's jump back, then, to your college years and the years just after that. And perhaps you can begin to tell us about your first jobs and how you began to form your first relationships, your first family relationships, and so on.

I mentioned the fact that I graduated with a master's degree in 1945. And I went to work for Westinghouse Electric Corporation in Pittsburgh. My area of study in college, sort of specialization, was refrigeration and air conditioning. I have one story I would like to relate while I was a graduate student.

Please.

Because it made its way into the books. And this was now, mind you, the summer of 1945. The war still was going on.

And I was doing an experiment for my thesis dealing with the refrigerative properties of refrigerative sugar-salt solutions. This became an issue in quick freezing of fruits and vegetables, which was a big business down in Texas. And I was examining various solutions. I froze them, and then I thawed them gradually, and I watched the temperature rise. And this was something for which I've been given this refrigerator, a walk-in refrigerator, a big one, which was kept at -40 degrees, the same thing in centigrade and Fahrenheit, it so happens.

And I was supposed to be the only one besides the head of the laboratory that had a key to this place. Well, I was in my laboratory working. And I hear the door to this refrigerator go click, click, click, click, click.

And I rush out because they had food in there that had kept for 10 or 15 years. And they were experimenting on its ability to survive freezing for that length of time.

So I slammed the door. There was a lock that put a pin through and put a lock on. I turned out the light and walked out of the laboratory. Well, it turns out that what I had done is I had locked the chairman of the department in there, who had no business whatever being there without letting me know.

And the lucky thing was this was a Saturday afternoon in the summertime in Texas. The head of the laboratory walked in five minutes later and heard this thing. And he unlocked the door and let the guy out, a very shaken chairman, out.

And I never heard one word of reproval on it. Because as I say, he had no business being there. But that made its way into the history of the University of Texas College of Engineering. And it is now in book form. So it is just an aside, an anecdote that I like to recall.

When I left Texas, I had interviewed several companies. And I decided I would like to work for Westinghouse. So we were brought to Pittsburgh.

And in fact, we didn't live in Pittsburgh. Because the work was in East Pittsburgh. And you couldn't live in East Pittsburgh. It was just not fit for human habitation. So we lived in a place called Wilkinsburg.

And almost all of the students in this course, and it was a student course, we were exposed to the various products the company made. They had speakers. They told you how they manufactured them, how they sell them, what the problems are or might be in the assembly line, what the problems might be in the operation, and so on. It's very educational if you could sit through all the dull lectures.

They also had a couple of people from the University of Pittsburgh teaching you how to write reports. Because they don't believe engineers can write. So this was going on.

But we got to Pittsburgh. And it turns out that was a general strike against Westinghouse. So the entire operation was shut down, with the exception of management, who was running the elevators and sweeping the floors and keeping the place open. But we obviously couldn't go into the manufacturing areas.

So they kept this course, going and going and going for much more than the month that they originally had intended until finally they settled this thing. And so I decided I wanted to go to the research laboratories. Because I've always been interested in research.

And they took me in there. But then, for reasons that are still not known to me, they decided that after the probationary period-- and it wasn't really a probationary period, it was a rotational period-- they didn't want to keep me there permanently. So I took another job somewhere in Philadelphia with their steam turbine division.

Well, again, it was also probably a good thing I didn't stay there, either. Because when I went to Philadelphia, I was exposed to what turned out to be the really one of my loves of 30 years. And that is tournament bridge, which Philadelphia was the capital for. People like [? Goren, ?] whose name may even be familiar to you, no--

Sorry.

--is from that area. And so I played really high level bridge at a very young age. I worked in a place on the Delaware River and lived in a small village outside of Philadelphia. But it was 20 minutes by train to the downtown.

It was right next to Swarthmore and all the cultural attractions of Philadelphia were available, the symphony. At the time, I thought they and Boston had the best symphony in the country, and Koussevitzky. And so Koussevitzky, I think it was-- one was in Boston, one was in Philadelphia.

Anyway, so I stayed there a year. And I worked in this outfit, the steam turbine division. And I saw the people who had been there 30 years looked at me like they were working themselves from a rat into the grave. And I didn't want to do that.

And also, I really wanted a PhD. So I wrote-- and this was now 1946-- to some 30 colleges or universities. And said what I want to do is I want to teach. But I also wanted to be able to get a doctor's degree at the same time. Can I do this and will you hire me?

Well, they were in desperate shape in most places. Because here they had the GIs coming back, tripling their enrollment overnight. And they had no qualified people to teach them.

But Berkeley in those days, as did most universities, didn't have the requirement of a doctor's degree in order to become a member of the faculty. That just started coming into vogue in the late '40s, early '50s. And from there on in, it has been rigidly enforced.

So I received a number of rejection slips, including those from Caltech, Stanford, and MIT again. And I received a lot of requests and offers, including Michigan-- no, not Michigan-- Minnesota, Illinois Tech, Brooklyn Polytech, Johns

Hopkins, and Cal.

And I said, at age 22 and 1/2, why don't you go to California? You hear so much about it. It's a great place to be. Everybody wants to go there.

If you don't like it, if the work isn't interesting, you can quit. You're not really that old. You can take another job.

Well, I came out. The jobs that I was supposed to do, the courses I was supposed to teach, I didn't end up teaching. I taught other courses. And I was able to get my doctor's degree in two years. And I've stayed ever since.

Two years?

Yes.

That sounds like--

But I had passed the master's degree. But you must not forget that there are two things. First of all, I worked my tail off. I mean, at that time--

That's what I was going to get at. You must have continued to work very hard.

Yes. And when I first came out here, the teaching load was incredible. Right now, a member of the faculty teaches three courses a year. That is a two semester system. We teach two course, one year-- one semester, one course a second semester. And you have graduate students who do research and so on.

Well, teaching two courses is six contact hours. I had 18 contact hours when I first came out here. That gives you a measure of the degree of work that I had to perform.

Yes, I worked very hard then, too. I guess my time-- well, while I was working for Westinghouse, I was working through the day. But at night, I both taught and took courses at the University of Pittsburgh. I taught math. I took a course in math.

At the University of Pennsylvania, I took a course in thermodynamics. And I taught math. So I did more than one thing.

Now this time the government wasn't pushing you. So this must have come from somewhere inside.

That's right. That's correct. Don't ask me where. But that's me.

Well, I was waiting for you to tell us.

Well, from early on, because of my inability to do many things that my peers were able to do for which I could therefore not get any recognition, I felt that the recognition lay in the accomplishments in the academic area. And so I did that.

Do you think it had anything to do with your early history in Germany and the Holocaust and the being--

I'm sure of it.

--the need to achieve, and somehow to demonstrate your abilities?

I'm sure.

Let's talk a little bit more. Can you speculate about that for us?

Well, I had basically no responsibilities at this time. I did have a constraint at the University of California. And that may

have been, perhaps, even more than 50%, the other being my earlier experience. I could not be at Berkeley for more than two years and be both a member of the faculty and receive a degree.

The first two years you're an instructor. And you're not a voting member of the faculty. Once you become a voting member of the faculty, you can never again receive a degree from the university. And so I had that time pressure put on me, which also obviously had a great deal to do with my achieving this degree in that length of time.

And well, what happened, of course, is truly ironic. I worked in a certain area for my PhD. The moment I got my PhD, I left that area. I've never returned to it. I'm in a diametrically opposite field within the context of mechanical engineering.

It had something to do with the fact that I was arbitrarily assigned to teach in a certain group. And that certain group was more related to what I have done since than the early work, which was in heat transfer of thermodynamics and fluid mechanics. So it's been 40 years since I've done that sort of thing, 40 years, 45 years.

Do you find many of the men of your generation and perhaps the women of your generation with a special need for achievement, based on their early history?

Now you're asking me to look back at people who have emigrated from Germany, Jews who emigrated from Germany now of my age. The ones that I know-- and of course, that's not necessarily relevant. Because the ones that I know would be the ones that have achieved things through the natural course of events being, shall we say, authors of papers, or presenting things at meetings.

And so my confrere in England, who is at the University of Manchester, is certainly one who has achieved an awful lot, international reputation in his field.

The current associate dean, although retired, is still the Associate Dean at Berkeley, got his PhD under my direction, he has achieved enormously. He's from Austria, also Jewish, but not German, but Austrian I don't know if there's a distinction or not. He has certainly achieved a lot.

All the people that I've met that have been in universities and who are of my vintage are people of extraordinary distinction. But then, again, I don't know whether that is totally relevant. Because if they had not had extraordinary distinction, maybe I wouldn't know them. And they may still--

This is not a scientific survey. I was just wondering if you'd ever speculated on the possibility that those early experiences had a profound effect on the need to achieve, this need to prove one's self.

I think it did. I think it must have. But I also think there was definitely the usual drive of the parents to have, in the Jewish families, to have their children succeed in the educational area. And as I say, it was a strong surprise to me to come over here with this one family that I mentioned, to see that they wanted to limit rather than push you in terms of what you wanted to do.

That wasn't a typical Jewish family as far as you were concerned.

It wasn't even a typical American family. They were so high-- well, I don't want to slander the dead.

[LAUGHTER]

The thing that I found, on the other hand, I've mentioned this already, my closest friend in Germany went into this area of being an assistant manager in a Woolworth's store, which I hardly think is an ambitious sort of outlook on life. So in his case, it certainly wasn't pushing education.

Let's go back now once again to those early years. And perhaps you can tell us something about your social life and how you began to more or less integrate yourself into the larger social culture, and perhaps something about your marriage, and your children.

Surely.

And as we do this, if it's relevant, of course, we always want to come back to the Jewish connection, if you had one.

Well, let me say this. I already mentioned the fact that my uncle arranged trips while I was still in Europe. These were all for Jewish groups. I don't think they were necessarily arranged through the synagogue.

But they were definitely limited to Jewish by constraints of the environment. And so within that context, the only people I was exposed to were Jewish. And whatever influence they might have had on me would reflect this Jewish background.

Now it should be important to point out that the number of really Orthodox Jews in Germany were very, very few. I mean, the vast, vast majority were Reform Jews. And quite a few of those didn't pay any attention to the religious aspects at all.

At least my family observed the standard holidays. I cannot, in all honesty, say that I went to the synagogue every Saturday. I didn't. But on the high Jewish holidays, surely I did.

And as far as the influence on me is concerned, I think I always feel, and I felt then, I feel now, that sociologically, I don't consider myself to be a Jew-- culturally, yes. And when it is particularly important is when it's unpopular to be a Jew. Then I am a Jew, very much so.

And my daughter, just anecdotally speaking, for the first time in quite a while, last year I went with her to Kol Nidre. Now this is my older daughter who is 100% Jewish. My younger daughter is 0% Jewish by the laws.

So I had gone to the Kol Nidre, of course, also when I was on sabbatical in Israel. And that was a very moving experience. But the rest of the service, I don't know, it just didn't do much for me.

You see, I've always prided myself, rather than being governed by a religious set of tenets, that I have my own code of ethics. And I cannot only live with it, I'm happy to live with the code of ethics I have. Which means, to be totally honest, to help when you can, to defend yourself when you must, to try to enrich your life as much as possible to take care of your family, and to be honest in your dealings.

So I don't have to have an organized religion to teach me that. And I think the Jewish religion is very good in this respect. They sort of expect you to have that kind of a philosophy. And they don't constantly hammer it into you like the Catholic religion does, nor do they put obstacles in your way, the way other things are done.

So I can't say that, specifically speaking, my being Jewish has had anything to do with my outlook on life. My being Jewish has had clearly a strong effect on how I lived as a child, by the constraints of the environment. And that, in turn, had an effect on my operations.

But I don't think I can trace it to being Jewish. If what had happened to the Jews in Germany has happened to people who, let's say, spoke Hindu, or whatever, and if I had been one of these, I think it would have been the same thing. It wasn't being Jewish that produced this kind of a result in me. And of course, that may have to do with my genes.

So as you walk through your adult life, you didn't do so as a Jew, so to speak, as a conscious, every day awareness.

Emphatically not. Let me tell you about my history briefly sociologically, and so on. I was an assistant professor at Berkeley and was about to become an associate professor. And I got married to my first wife, who was from Mount Vernon, New York also.

Her father happened to have a PhD in chemistry. And he was, in addition to that, an allergist, an MD, an allergist. He became an allergist, he told me once, out of self-defense. Because his entire family was allergic to all kinds of things.

Well, this girl came out here. And we went, spent a week together doing everything I could think of, the sort of things I enjoyed doing, camping out of doors, going to the symphony, going to a play, being in a social environment with my colleagues, going dancing, whatever I could think of, and to see how she would react.

And then I, of course, met her parents. And I knew about her parents. And I guess I had an impression in me that it was critically important that I should be able to get along with her parents so that we would have a successful and happy marriage.

But it turned out I'd never been wronger in my life. I did get along beautifully with the parents. But this girl, for whatever reason, wasn't happy. She was the one who asked for the divorce. I was very upset, because I couldn't understand why she would want to divorce me. And she said, well, one of the things, that I shouldn't have married a scientist. I should just married somebody in the social sciences or something like that.

Even though she had inadequate grades-- by my connections with the people at the university, I got into the graduate program in anthropology. And she got a degree there, a master's degree. And I talked to somebody that she apparently worked for who hadn't been very happy with her. But that's neither here nor there. That's also rumor, perhaps.

Anyway, we were married almost six years. And she asked for a divorce. And we had no children. She became pregnant once and had a miscarriage.

There were other wrong-- not wrong. There were other, how shall we say, things that strike me, in retrospect.

My second cousin in England-- who was the only person other than my children who bear my name, Goldschmidt, he also changed it from Goldschmidt, which was my original name, to Goldsmith-- he's a surgeon, a renal surgeon. And he recalls when he first met my first wife, she carried around a little suitcase with her which was filled with pills for and against everything that you could imagine. He was just shaking his head. He said, this is not the kind of way I would like to live as a doctor.

And this is very personal. But nevertheless, she insisted, for example, that I take a shower before I even contemplated something like sex. Well, I thought sex was supposed to be more or less a spontaneous thing. And this was not exactly a scheduled item in the agenda. So we had our differences.

She wanted you to be more emotional?

I don't know if that was it. I don't know--

She talked about-- that's what I'm reading into it when she talked about the social sciences.

No. What she said was this. When we parted, she wrote me a letter saying, I cannot expect you to change in the mold that I would like you to be in because I can't change. Therefore, we have to part.

And it was a very unfortunate thing, I suppose. But it was definitely something that affected me very strongly. Because I had perhaps not worked at the marriage all that hard.

And part of the reason why was I was trying to become a full professor. I mean, you don't do this by spending every spare moment of your time from your family life.

But whatever it was, my interests and her interests really clashed. And I feel that I was deceived on my initial meeting with her that she claimed she enjoyed the kind of things that I went through with her. At least other people felt the same way.

So we were divorced in 1959. It was not a particularly bad divorce. I just felt badly because of the fact, not because of her. And I married too fast. I married again in 1961. I married somebody that even my older daughter, with whom I am

very close, said I don't see how you and mommy ever got married.

Also a nice Jewish girl from New York-- she went to-- what is it, Hunter College, the companion to Columbia? She was an artist. And what she was doing, she's working on cartoons down in Los Angeles for the Bullwinkle show, which you may or may not have seen once--

Sure.

--and this sort of thing. And she thought that artiste kind of representation was her life. She came here in an Austin-Healey, a beautiful car, but it never worked.

And so what happened, and I should have perhaps looked into this, this time I didn't check into the background of her family. And her family, she told me herself, were not something that she wanted to associate with.

And yet everybody I know, the best I can say for her is that she's psychoneurotic. She was in analysis before I married her because of her relations with her parents.

Then after I got married to her, she went back into analysis. And when we had our second child, our daughter, she had whatever it is that produces a crisis. And she had to be now with a psychiatrist an hour every day. And it was really-- and she gradually backed off from that.

But I would never know, when I came home from work, whether she'd throw her arms around me or give me a tirade beyond belief. It was unpredictable. It was no way to live a life.

And I moved out several times for brief periods. And then finally, we had just a bang out, like, knock down, drag out fight. I moved out. And I wasn't coming back.

And then we had an extremely bitter, an extremely bitter divorce which lasted a total of 13 years. That's a long time for a divorce, at which point I finally was able to get rid of all obligations.

She alienated my two children from me. My son, who is now over 30, was very, very seriously affected by this. Because he was old enough, 3 and 1/2 to 4. And he has developed in a way that is most unfortunate from my point of view,

I don't want my son to be anything special, particular. I don't want him to become a PhD, a professor or whatever. I want him to earn an honest living. What I wanted to do is to stay within the law. And that's all I asked.

He has right now a daughter of which he is custodian, guardian. The mother has run off somewhere. And a girl with whom he lived, really, really took wonderful care of my granddaughter. Then he split up with her over absolutely nonsensical reasons. And that didn't bother me so much.

But he was over at last Christmas at the house with my older daughter, who was is his direct sister and her boyfriend. And he acted in a way that was simply almost sociopathic. That's all I can say. And I told him he had-- I couldn't-- he could not stay in the house.

And what he expects at this point is that he can use my granddaughter as a mechanism for coming back. And now it's me and the rest of us all at fault. It was a ridiculous argument over People's Park. And I saw halfway through where we were heading. I said, Steve, let's change the subject. Let's get off of this.

And he wouldn't. And then he started at the end with obscenities that were unbelievable. But he wants to hold my granddaughter hostage in terms of our relations with him. And that's not going to work anymore. Something tore.

Now with my older daughter, who's 2 and 1/2 years younger, she was a year and a half at the time of the divorce. She was not affected psychologically by this. She and I are very, very close. She lives in Brooklyn. And as I say, she's about to get her PhD.

And she rediscovered me at age 14 because she left her mother. In fact, the mother left that apartment. And she stayed, kept the apartment, got a full-time job as a waitress.

And she never graduated from high school because she got bored. She went to college, junior college, got all A's.

And then accompanied us to Greece on a sabbatical when she was 17 and stayed over there a year with us. She didn't stay with us. She stayed in Greece and she traveled all around.

And so she's truly, if I say so myself, a Renaissance person. And she also cannot condone her brother's behavior. I mean, it's just incredible. Now her mother, she told me on several occasions, she doesn't understand how we ever could have gotten married. She's grateful, because she wouldn't be alive.

But her mother, who was the most outrageous behavioral type of person, she was really a Los Angeles beatnik back in the early '60s, if I can call it that, driving this white Austin-Healey with hair flowing back, paint all over her face, and then talking about the most outrageous causes, all of a sudden has become an ultra-conservative Republican as a result of working for Lockheed for a number of years and taking on the coloration of the engineers that are there. And so she's very obviously definitively affected by her surroundings. So after telling me she couldn't live in Berkeley and moving back to Los Angeles, which she said is her town, she's now moved to Alabama, right on the border of Mississippi, a place I cannot understand how anyone can exist.

So that was my second marriage, two children, lasted from 1961 to '64.

And then I was a bachelor, or whatever you want to call it, for a long period of time. I had gotten bitten twice and I wasn't about to go into a relationship very quickly. I met a Yugoslavian girl who was absolutely beautiful, gorgeous, very intelligent, very highly educated, taught at the University of London.

But she was crazy. And she reminded me in many ways of my second wife. And even though both my present wife and I have become extremely good friends with her sister, and before they separated, her husband, I just thought to myself, I can't marry this girl. I'll be going through the same stuff that I went through with my second wife.

So then Penny, who worked at the University of California-- I'll be happy to show you a picture, tall, blonde-- worked in a department where I had lots-- not my own department, but one of my colleagues with whom I have 40 joint papers-- was one of her bosses. And I had to go over there a lot.

And so one day, she asked me if I would take her out to coffee. And that was that. Then we will have been married 20 years next year. And we have a very solid, good marriage.

Wonderful.

Her parents weren't exactly approving of me. I hate to say this, somewhat in jest. But one thing her father, I didn't think, enjoyed having somebody who was a little bit more intelligent than he. I'm saying that with tongue in cheek. They objected to the age difference, which is a generation, they objected to the fact.

He is the son of a Presbyterian minister. And they brought up their children as churchgoing people. Here I was, a Jew, 23 years older, I'm marrying his daughter, and et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. In fact, until we did get married, I was forbidden in the house.

So we have a daughter from that issue, from that marriage. The girl is very, very hardworking. I think she's very beautiful. I'm prejudiced, and also tall and statuesque. I'll show you pictures.

And she's 15 and 1/2 and going into the sophomore grade in the private school. Because living in Oakland, we cannot countenance the Oakland school system as an adequate method of preparation for anyone.

So she's going to [INAUDIBLE]. And it brought it out in her. She worked very hard this last year. So she didn't enjoy it as much.

But she's made very good friends. She's got a good, nice group of girlfriends. Not yet dating, but that'll come in time, I'm sure.

Can I ask you a question about your children? As a whole, I'm wondering if they in any way see themselves as children of a Holocaust survivor.

My son certainly does. And in fact, that was part of this ruckus that we had at Christmastime. Because we were talking about People's Park. And then he's talking about police shooting people. And then he said they're just the same as the people who killed your parents.

So I mean, that-- which, of course, is kind of nonsense. Because nobody got killed with those rubber bullets. But he felt very strongly at times about this sort of thing.

But it's inconsistent. I don't think there is a rational path that he looks at in seeing what happened there to me, to him. And well, I mean, he's 30 years old. I would think that if he has any rational ideas on this he would have expressed them at this point. He doesn't go to synagogue. He doesn't ask about the religion, at least not me.

But are you saying that his attitudes about People's Park are driven, at least in part, by what he thinks is a remembrance of the Holocaust--

I think it's the other way.

--and you should be more sensitive because you lived through it?

Well, I think that's possible, a possible interpretation. But I think it's the other way around. He was looking as a way of hurting me. When we disagree with him about People's Park, his position was it should be declared a shrine. The university should get out of there, et cetera.

And we were all saying, well, the reason the university went back there is because it's become a haven for drug dealers. It's dangerous to walk through there. And it's got to be cleaned out.

And this then prompted him, when we disagreed with him, to become totally irrational, start using gutter language. And then with this as an added phraseology, just to try to hurt me. That's the way I interpret it.

I see. I see. I don't think that he intended it as any connection to the Holocaust experience other than trying to tell me my parents were killed. And someone like police did it.

And trying to exploit a weakness, perhaps, or a sensitive area. What about the other kids, are they not-- well, let me ask, have they ever asked you about the Holocaust or your early experiences? Does it seem to matter?

Yes, they both have, but not on a consistent basis. I must admit I feel somewhat remiss in not talking at least a little bit more with my younger daughter, who I think would be very receptive to Jewish culture and Jewish history.

My older daughter has taken upon herself to do so on her own. She's now taking Hebrew. She speaks it now. And she's been over to Israel with us and with me several times. She has no intention of living there.

But she's very aware of her Jewish heritage. And one of the things that she was going out with a boy who-- boy-- a young man, tall man, who is also an electrical engineer, but he wasn't Jewish. He was German.

They have a good relationship. He was German only second or third generation. But she broke up with him, I think, over emotional issues. And she's now going with a Jewish boy, Mexican, who is getting his PhD on Sunday. And so

we're going down to Stanford to do that.

And she's become a different person. She's become much more relaxed. She's always been extremely intense. She takes very much after me. Physically, she looks like her mother. But she takes after me.

And my son, in terms of character, takes after my ex-wife. And so they're both-- Steve, I think, given the opportunity, would probably want to learn something about the Holocaust up to a certain point. He doesn't have a very long attention span.

Andrea, on the other hand, would study it from beginning to end. And as I say, perhaps because she is learning Hebrew, or has learned Hebrew, she may very well take up Jewish history. She's been to Israel several times.

If there was a message then that you'd like to give them about the Holocaust, could you tell us what that might be?

Yeah, don't ever let it happen again. I think that's the motive of the state of Israel, that they're not going to permit that to happen again. And I have no prescription on how you avoid it. In fact I think, although there were pogroms dating back hundreds of years in Poland and Eastern Europe, I thought that the country of Beethoven and Goethe would have thought of itself sufficiently well-bred not to fall for this kind of propaganda.

But if it happens again, how do you anticipate it until it's too late? It is very, very difficult to foresee this. To be quite frank, I am very worried about this coming election.

And I'm worried about Mr. Perot. Because I see this as a potential, I'm not saying it's going to happen, but at least as a potential for a change from our present form of democratic government to something less democratic.

Without singling out Perot, are you saying that the process that seems to be unfolding is a bit scary, that somehow an unknown, relatively unknown person with some clever messages seems to be creating this mass movement?

Well, what worries me more-- the mass movement, I don't know. What worries me more is Mr. Perot. I'm sorry. I have to pick him. Not him as an individual, but him as a class, or character.

Fair enough.

A person who apparently is not used to any kind of opposition, who is not used to somebody saying you can't do it this way, and we'll stop you from doing this way. He'll just run roughshod over them. That's what I read into what he has done up to now and getting to where he is.

If I may go back a few years, I mean, it's probably not all that dissimilar to the Kingfish, whom you may remember, Huey Long, who was well on his way to becoming a demagogue until he was assassinated. And certainly I don't believe in assassination. I'm worried about it. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe I'm overly concerned.

But to me, the absence of a mechanism of governance, which I don't see in Mr. Perot, how is he going to attract the loyal votes of the Congress, you know, which he needs? And what happens if the Congress stymies him?

I'm looking back at FDR. When that happened, he tried to pack the Supreme Court. He didn't succeed, but it would have been a terrible blow to the basic constitutional principals of the United States.

So you hope you're wrong. But this sort of thing brings up some chills or some uncomfortable feelings?

I can see some similarities. And I'm certain Mr. Perot has not expressed any prejudices that he would proceed against Jews or, for that matter, any other minority, except homosexuals apparently. And he's backpedaling on that one.

But it's something. To me, the country that would be least likely to have an experience like Hitler would be Great Britain. I think their constitutional democracy is stronger than ours. In part, I think, because the military in this country

have had such a very strong position.

And I can only refer you to something like Seven Days in May. I don't know if that is a book or movie that you're familiar with. But it certainly laid out the scenario for takeover of the government by a combination of some despots and the military. And this is an unusual situation politically. But I'm not sure that I can draw enough parallels between this and Germany to say that it is really deeply disturbing.

The experiences that I had in Germany was that it was not something that happened from one day to the next. It was an insidious, gradual experience for me, at any rate. That all of a sudden, without realizing it, I was at the edge of a cliff. And this would be something, I think, that people would be extremely difficult-- find it extremely difficult to guard against.

If you have a confrontation, OK, you know where you stand right here and now. But as a slow erosion of your rights, of your social life, of your economic capabilities, you always say, well, this isn't all that important. I can live with it. And when does a cup become full?

And when you look at the Holocaust, which after all, I don't see this. Some people are still denying that it existed. To me, I mean, how can anybody even say this? We had a contender for the presidency, Duke, down in Louisiana, who claimed it didn't exist.

So there will be people who will deny it. And there will be people, when they are thinking of a scenario that might produce something like that, are going to be very careful to keep it under wraps until perhaps it is too late. And you ask what can you do? How do you guard against it?

I don't know. I'm not that smart. One thing one can do, of course, if one recognizes that this is about to occur, you can emigrate. But then, of course, you may completely destroy economic security that you've built up. So it's an individual thing. The motivation for doing something depends entirely upon the temperature of the fire behind you.

Said like a true engineer.

Well.

One of the things you said a few moments ago was about how it built up in Germany so slowly. And--