Holocaust Oral History Project
San Francisco, California

Interview with:
JERRY ROSENSTEIN
August 9, 1990

Interviewers:
Evelyn Fielden
Dan Leeson
Cindy Clumack

Transcribed by: Teresa R. Gaudet, CSR

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BY EVELYN FIELDEN:

Q INTERVIEWING JERRY ROSENSTEIN FOR THE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA HOLOCAUST CENTER. TODAY WE ARE AT THE HOLOCAUST CENTER IN SAN FRANCISCO. ASSISTING ME WITH THE INTERVIEW ARE DAN LEESON AND CINDY CLUMACK.

GOOD AFTERNOON, JERRY.

A Good afternoon.

Q WE'LL TALK TO YOU, AND WOULD YOU START BY TELLING US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR CHILDHOOD, WHERE YOU WERE BORN, AND WHEN YOU WERE BORN?

A In 1927 in Bensheim, Germany, which is equidistant between Heidelberg and Darmstadt. I lived in Bensheim until my 7th year. I went to school in Bensheim first grade only, and then we moved to Darmstadt.

When I say we, let me tell you I'm the youngest of a family of three sons, my mother is a native of Bendheim -- Bensheim -- the same town but by the family name of Bendheim, and they have lived in this town since 1750 or somewhere around that area. My father was important in *(Hal-us-hausen)*, which is in Central

Germany, near Kassel, and then he married and moved to Bensheim and had a factory there, a furniture factory. I am the youngest of three, as I said earlier, and in early 1900 and -- no, late 1895 we moved from Bensheim to Darmstadt which was the next largest city, where we lived for six months only and then we emigrated to Holland, to Amsterdam, to Holland where I spent most of my school years.

Q TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR PARENTS. WERE YOU ORTHODOX JEWS?

A We were conservative to orthodox. There was only one Jewish community in a town like that and it was obviously run along orthodox lines. However, the majority of the community would be conservative or less. We were amongst the more orthodox ones because my mother's family was a very orthodox family. My father was not.

Q YOU WENT TO REGULAR SCHOOL OR JEWISH SCHOOL?

A In Bensheim I went to regular *vorscule* first grade. And in Darmstadt, that was already a Jewish school for the five or six months we lived there. Then once we emigrated to Amsterdam of course I was in the regular public school system there.

Q SO YOU WERE STILL IN YOUR HOME TOWN WHEN HITLER TOOK OVER?

A Yes, definitely, yes. We lived in the outskirts of town in a fairly isolated large house with isolated grounds and gardens, and so it was very scary, but my father

was traveling a lot and my mother was alone with the children and whatever help we may have had at the time.

Q YOU WERE VERY YOUNG, BUT CAN YOU RECALL ANY SORT OF BEGINNING SURGES OF ANTI-SEMITISM?

A Yes, I definitely -- first of all there was this fear which was all-pervasive, which was in the atmosphere. And I got, on the way home from school one afternoon when I was in first grade, beaten up by the father of a schoolmate who said I'd insulted his son. And was obviously a drunk and anti-Semitic provocation, and there was no one there to do anything about it. I was about 7 years old. So at an early age I had some physical notion about what was going on.

Q SO WHEN DID THE QUESTION OF EMIGRATION COME UP?

A My father had always had business in Holland and in France in all those years and traveled a great deal and decided to move to Amsterdam in 1935 already. So we emigrated from Darmstadt, early 1936 I think it was, to Amsterdam. It was not like refugees. We had our furniture, and everything was taken with us and we just went by car with regular papers, passports, and all that. And of course my father -- my parents thought that we would be safe in Holland.

Q TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR EARLY DAYS IN HOLLAND WHEN YOU WENT TO SCHOOL.

A Well, as I said, I was the youngest of three boys and we all had to go to study Dutch in one of those pressure cooker courses for six weeks, and then we

were just put into the Dutch public school system which was a hell of a lot -- pardon me -- more difficult than what we had come from in Germany. It was a very good school system. But I flourished in school. I liked it very much. I enjoyed going to school in Amsterdam in the public school system.

I then went to high school, to the regular high school, as long as Jews were permitted to go to high school.

In 1940, when I was 13, the Germans invaded Holland and then slowly the laws in Holland changed and by 1942 we were no longer permitted to go to public schools. I may be a little off, five or six months on my years or my dates, but essentially, this was it. And then I had to quit the regular high school and go to the Jewish high school in east Amsterdam. We lived in south Amsterdam.

Q BEFORE THAT, DID YOU NOTICE ANY ANTI-SEMITISM IN YOUR CLASSMATES, WERE YOU IN ANY WAY SINGLED OUT AS A JEW OR WERE YOU --

A In Amsterdam?

Q YES.

A No, that was nonexistent.

Q SO YOU HAD A LOT OF FRIENDS THERE?

A Yes.

Q BOTH JEWISH --

A Oh, yes. Well, we lived in a neighborhood which was most largely

populated by German Jews, but amongst our friends as children there were non-Jews and Jews, whoever was playing in the same block. I don't recall that that was ever an issue.

Q COMES 1940. WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU THEN?

A 1940 was two weeks before my bar mitzvah. Germans invaded Holland, and well, I'm not here to give history lessons, the war was over in 5 or 6 days, and the Dutch government had fled and the Germans had installed their own *gauleiter*, meaning their own government in Holland. So there was effectively no Dutch governmental assistance to anything the Germans did because there was no more real Dutch government other than possibly municipal.

Q SO YOU WENT TO JEWISH SCHOOL, YOU SAID?

A No, at that time I was in regular school, until 1942. Then I had to change to Jewish school.

Q SO WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU THEN?

A Well, the deportations started in 1942 from Amsterdam, in early 1942. And my brother Hans, the middle of the three, was called up for the first transport. And he was sent to Auschwitz. And we once got a postcard from him from Birkenau. I believe the postcard should be here somewhere in the archives here in the Holocaust Center, and it was just one of those predrafted texts: "Dear family, I am well. I'm in good health. I hope you are well." That sort of thing. And that was the last we heard. Subsequently we learned that he had been gassed in 1943 in Auschwitz.

Q HOW WAS HE TAKEN AWAY FROM YOUR HOME?

A He had received a written notification to report to the railroad station in east Amsterdam.

Q DID YOU KNOW WHAT THAT WAS ALL ABOUT?

A No, of course not, none of us knew. And had my parents known that -- would have preferred not to know probably. We did not know at that time what it was all about, other than it was labor.

Q WHY WAS YOUR BROTHER SINGLED OUT?

A He was of the age group then, he was then just 15 or 16, that they first called up for labor. They were all between 16 and 21, to the best of my recollection, the people that went on that first transport.

Q WHAT ABOUT YOUR FATHER?

A My father had -- because he was a soldier, an officer in World War I, a certain amount of deferment, which at the end didn't do much good, but it helped us survive because we were taken just a year later and that year made a big difference in survival rate.

Q HOW?

A How. There are hardly any survivors from Auschwitz-Birkenau from 1943 and I believe most of the survivors would be from 1944.

Q DID YOU TRY TO ESCAPE AT ALL DURING THAT TIME?

A No. We -- well, when the Germans invaded we drove to Zandvoort to

see if we could get a fishing boat, but this was about the last day of the war and there were no fishermen and there were no boats, and there was nothing to be done, and so we just went back to Amsterdam.

Q CAN YOU TELL US WHERE ZANDVOORT IS?

A Zandvoort is about 30 minutes, about 35 kilometers straight west, due west from Amsterdam on the North Sea. It's a resort town.

Q WHAT ABOUT YOUR FRIENDS, YOUR JEWISH FRIENDS?

A The school friends? My parents' friends? Family friends?

Q ANY FRIENDS. ANY JEWISH FRIENDS, YES.

A Very few of them in our circle went underground. I don't know exactly what my parents' financial situation was, but in order to go underground it required, I believe, a great deal of cash assets because simply, you could not expect strangers to support you. And how are you going to live? So I don't know, it seems to me -- we never discussed it afterwards -- that it was not an option that could be considered.

Q DID YOUR FATHER CONTINUE TO WORK AFTER THE GERMANS TOOK OVER?

A My father had his own business and he continued to do in a small way, business, whatever he could in order to make some money until we were deported, yes.

Q COULD YOU EXPLAIN TO US A LITTLE BIT HOW LIFE UNDER THE GERMANS, WHAT IT WAS LIKE AFTER THE GERMANS

ENTERED HOLLAND, YOUR DAILY LIFE?

A The daily life changed immediately and of course after 1941 much more drastically. We had to wear stars, we were no longer allowed to get streetcars, we had to go to different schools, we couldn't shop at normal shopping hours. We were, you know, it was the well-known story as to what happened during the occupation in Holland.

From 1942 on things got much more difficult because first of all there were the deportations had started, but there were also occasionally street *razias*, where they were closing off blocks and just arresting all the Jews within this particular block on the street.

And I was a kid of course at the time, but I remember being in one of those blocks and our iceman -- at the time we received the ice in blocks from a delivery man -- our iceman was just delivering ice on that block and he spotted the *razias* and he also spotted me and he just shoved me in the back of his ice truck and took me home through the German barriers. That was the only time I got caught in something like that.

So life got to be more and more difficult, of course. And everybody was being deported. Many, many friends every day disappeared and were deported and we were kind of waiting with our suitcases packed until they would deport us.

As I said before, luckily, because of my father having been in the First World War as an officer, they did grant us at first a certain amount of preferential

treatment. That manifested itself during deportation as follows: My parents were sent from Westerbork -- I'm jumping the gun a little bit, but I'll go back to something a little earlier -- my parents were sent after six weeks in Westerbork to Bergen-Belsen and I stayed alone in Westerbork. After a number of months being alone in Westerbork I was deported by passenger train to Theresienstadt. This was in late 1943, I think. And after I was in Theresienstadt for about six weeks, a transport arrived there from Bergen-Belsen and they had sent my parents to Theresienstadt. So all of this is still partly due to the fact that there was a little bit of preferential treatment there, which of course disappeared at the end.

I will briefly tell you the rest of the family history. My father and I were deported in 1944 to Auschwitz-Birkenau and my mother remained in Theresienstadt until the end of the war, where she survived. Both my father and I survived Auschwitz, and we'll go into that a little bit later, I'm sure.

Q YOU MENTIONED ONE BROTHER --

A I mentioned -- I had two brothers. The oldest brother who was five years older than I am was an ardent zionist, and he went to a camp in Holland where he was instructed in what was called *landwirtshaft*, in other words, horticulture, agriculture, animal husbandry, in order to prepare himself to go to a kibbutz in what was then Palestine, which he did in 1938. He left at that very young age, '37 or '38, and went to a kibbutz in Palestine. He lived on the kibbutz until during the war when he enlisted in the English army. He was a commander in the English army, and

he was killed in action in Albania in 1945.

Q WHEN DID YOU FIRST HEAR ABOUT CAMPS, YOUR VERY FIRST TIME WHEN THE WORD CONCENTRATION CAMP CAME UP?

A We heard about concentration camps as early as Kristallnacht, meaning November of 1938 when we lived in Holland and all the family, the brothers of my -- the brothers-in-law of my father's side of the family who were still living in Germany had been arrested and sent to Buchenwald and Dachau, so that's where we first learned of concentration camps. Of course, we never associated that with what would happen to us eventually.

Q HOW DID THE DUTCH PEOPLE TREAT YOU WHEN HITLER TOOK OVER?

A I have very good memories of how the Dutch people treated us, personally. The neighbors were cooperative, people were helpful, a lot of people took chances, people buried things for you or kept things for you or even sent you packages in the camps. I have very good memories. Obviously I was a young boy then and the memories I have would not be historically correct memories after the war. And much, much, many, many years after the war we find there were just as many collaborators amongst the Dutch as there were amongst the Germans. After all, the Dutch police were the ones who did arrest us and not the Germans.

Q WOULD YOU CARE TO DESCRIBE YOUR ARREST, TALK ABOUT YOUR ARREST?

A About the arrest? The arrests were pretty commonplace. All the arrests of families in Amsterdam at that time were in the middle of the night. They did not want people to see people being arrested so it was always after dark in the middle of the night. They came, they rang the doorbell, we were prepared to go, and they took us on a truck to a theater in Amsterdam, I think on North *(Plan-tawsh-er-lam)*. It was a stage theater which they used as a staging place for people arrested in Amsterdam and sent to Westerbork. We spent 48 hours there and then we were shipped to Westerbork, I believe, by train.

Q HOW FAR IS WESTERBORK FROM AMSTERDAM?

A Westerbork from Amsterdam is about probably today about two hours, but then it was probably more. Westerbork is in north central on the east border of Holland.

Q HOW DID YOU LIVE IN WESTERBORK? COULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR LIFE THERE?

A I had to do office work and I also had to occasionally go out on an agricultural detail for work. I lived in a male barracks with men only, of course, and the bunks were the normal two, one on top of the other. They were just two-tiered bunks. The food was not bad. It was acceptable. There was no mistreatment of prisoners, there was no -- in other words you did not have an inkling in Westerbork what was to come later. And I believe it was pretty deliberate at the time. But I understand at other times from others it was not as -- what seems to me as easy as

it was during the time I was there. Possibly I blocked out things, but I do not recall a single instance of mistreatment in Westerbork.

Q YOU WERE WITH YOUR FATHER AND YOUR BROTHER?

A No, my brother was dead. No, no, no. I was with my parents in Westerbork but my parents were shipped from Westerbork very quickly thereafter, just after a few weeks, to Bergen-Belsen, and I was alone in Westerbork.

Q BECAUSE YOU SAID YOU WERE IN AN ALL-MALE BARRACKS, AND I WONDERED WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR MOTHER?

A She was in a female barracks.

Q BUT YOUR FATHER WAS WITH YOU AT THE TIME?

A Yes, at first, but very briefly only. No, as a matter of fact we were never together in the same barracks because I think I was more with younger people than he was, he was probably grouped with people of his own age group. I don't recall that we were in the same barracks in Westerbork.

Q YOU WERE THERE WHEN YOUR PARENTS WERE DEPORTED?

A Yes, that was difficult because I was so young and, you know, first time, you know, I had real separation trauma. I was 15 I think, 14 or 15. Fifteen probably.

Q COULD YOU KEEP UP CONTACT AFTER THEY WERE DEPORTED?

A No. I don't even recall if I knew where they had been deported to.

No, I believe I knew this. I believe I knew that they had been deported to Bergen-Belsen. At the time there was also a Bergen-Belsen -- in '43 there was also a privileged camp or one camp that was not as bad as the other camp where there was no mistreatment and people hadn't started to get ill and die like they did a year later in Bergen-Belsen, and I believe that's where they were for the few months they were in Bergen-Belsen.

Q WHEN DID YOU FIND OUT THAT YOUR MOTHER -- YOU KNEW THEY WERE SENT TO THERESIENSTADT?

A The minute the train arrived somebody hailed me on the street and said, a transport just came in from Bergen-Belsen and both your parents are on the transport. And so I immediately saw them and they were very happy to see me. We were then, all three, in Theresienstadt for a while, but also in separate barracks.

Q WHEN WAS IT THAT YOU WERE TAKEN TO THERESIENSTADT?

A Early in 1944. And I don't recall exactly when. And I'm sure that the records of Westerbork will show it. I was in Theresienstadt the other day. I looked at the archives there and they had thrown away everything except the one book they had with the names of the survivors of Theresienstadt, but they had -- they pretended not to have any lists of transports. Now this was just before the new government took over in Czechoslovakia. Possibly they have unearthed something.

Q HOW LONG WERE YOU IN THERESIENSTADT?

A Probably five months or so. Five or six months.

Q COULD YOU TELL US OF YOUR DAILY LIFE IN THERESIENSTADT?

A Daily life in Theresienstadt was difficult. But I was very young, and again, there was no mistreatment of people. And again, in recollection, I've found that it was not so difficult for me as a young, healthy person.

There were cousins of ours, of my mother's, in Theresienstadt -- that was at that time before my parents had arrived there, when they were in Bergen-Belsen -- and the man suffered of cancer. I think was dying of cancer. There were no means to alleviate his pain. There were no drugs, there was no medications, and he was just dying a terrible, terrible, painful death. And I was there with his wife and his son while he was dying. And I remember that so well, how difficult it was for them and for everybody, you know, when you got sick. You could just not get sick in a place like that. But unfortunately he would have died of cancer in Amsterdam at home with or without the Nazis. It's one of those things that was irreversible at the time.

But it must have been extremely difficult for an adult in that situation. Incidentally, this cousin who died there, his wife and son, who was my age, were on the same transport to Auschwitz that we were on. The mother survived and the boy did not.

Q HOW DID YOU SPEND THE DAY IN THERESIENSTADT?

A Working. There were all kinds of work. Also sometimes, there were some classes that one could go to. Basically I worked much in potato fields, if I recall. We were sent outside the walls numbers of times in details to work in the fields and the other stuff was not hard work. It was menial work, whatever they told you to do, whatever detail they told you to do you did. And also, since I was adapted to office work I think I did quite a bit of office work too.

Q DID YOU HAVE READING MATERIAL?

A There was reading material there. How much I read I do not recall. But there was reading -- there was some reading material available. There was art material available as is evidenced by all the pictures that survived Theresienstadt. And there must have been musical scores available as evidenced by the fact that today a lot of stuff is being published that was written in Theresienstadt.

Q WHAT DID YOUR MOTHER DO?

A My mother worked in a place called Dachlima. Dachlima was where they made insulation materials for submarine. It was tedious, but very easy work of splitting mica or something of that nature. And it was the best place for a woman to work in because it was warm in the wintertime and it was heated and they were reasonably well fed, and they survived. They were the only group of people that survived there as a group, were the 300 women who were in Dachlima.

The other survivors, I don't know where they came from in Theresienstadt. They were not there all the time, all the time that we were there.

Q YOU DID NOT LIVE WITH YOUR PARENTS IN THERESIENSTADT?

A No. We saw each other all the time, but we were all housed in separate barracks.

Q WHAT DID YOU FATHER DO?

A I don't recall what my father did or if he did anything. I don't recall that he did very much there. He must have been assigned some kind of work as everybody was, but I just don't know anymore. Again, there was no mistreatment. For, you know, we were not mistreated. The mistreatment took place in a camp just outside the wall of Theresienstadt called Die Kleine Festung, which was a real concentration camp, largely political, where many of the Czech non-Jewish prisoners were killed. Underground, resistance, etc.

Q IT WAS, IN OTHER WORDS, A _____?

A Right. But anybody in Theresienstadt whom they wanted to go after, they took first to Die Kleine Festung. They didn't do anything in Theresienstadt itself.

Q THAT'S TRANSLATED AS "A SMALL FORTRESS," RIGHT?

A Right. Die Kleine Festung means "a small fortress." And it goes back to the days of Franz Josef and Maria Theresa, the early Hapsburgs.

Q HOW WAS THE FOOD SITUATION?

A The food at Theresienstadt was poor, but we survived on it. But, you

know, you wouldn't get -- it was just good enough for survival, let me put it this way.

Q IN YOUR CONTACT WITH THE GERMANS THERE DID YOU HAVE ANY CONTACT WITH THE GERMAN GUARDS?

A In Theresienstadt? Very little. Most of the contacts were through the *(oon-rad, ooden-off-ish-trawd)*, meaning the --

Q JEWISH COUNCIL.

A -- Jewish Council that was in charge there.

Q SO WHO WAS TRANSPORTED FROM THERESIENSTADT FIRST, YOU OR YOUR PARENTS?

A My father and I were transported from Theresienstadt at the same time in the same cattle car. Once we were deported from Theresienstadt we were together all the time. That took place sometime in spring or summer of 1945. I do not recall the date exactly, but the Auschwitz archives could possibly establish the exact date by looking at our numbers from Auschwitz. The deportations, we were probably in the middle of the big deportation from Theresienstadt, because many of the earlier ones had not survived at all.

The cattle cars were the normal cars, about 125 people in there and one bucket. I recall that many of the people did not survive. They were dead at the time of unloading in Birkenau because many of the people were elderly and were frail when the trip started. They never opened the doors. There was no relief. The trip took probably four days, I do not recall. It was dark. And we rarely could make

out where the stations were, where we were. When we arrived in Birkenau it was the middle of the night. It was the usual scene. We were -- the doors were opened, there were the capos, and the *sondercommandos. They told us to get out of the car. Yelled at us, leave all your luggage there, get out of the car, line up five abreast and start marching slowly towards the front. Which at that time we did not know what was going on. We could smell the strange smells, but we did not realize at that very moment what these were. As we started going forward, my father, who was next to me, said, "If they ask you how old you are, make yourself a year older, I'll make myself younger. If they ask you what your profession, you have, you were *metaalzerlegen*, metal workers." My father had very good instincts about everything. At that stage he did not know what was at that table. We finally got to a table and there was -- what we know today was *Mengele was sitting there and doing the initial selection. My father and I were sent to the left, his right, with a large group of people and marched off. And the people that marched us off, among them were some Dutch speaking capos. At the time my father and I were only speaking Dutch. In Auschwitz we did not speak German, because we thought for political reasons it would be better to be grouped with the Dutch and we were with a group of Dutch people all the time. And those capos told us then very quickly and very briefly what was happening. What happened -- what was happening to the people who were sent to the other side, the old, the women, the children. And told us about the gas chambers and chimneys and extermination and everything else, and we were fairly

clear on everything in about three or four minutes what was going on.

We were marched to a showers, told to undress, leave all our clothes together, that we could keep our shoes separately. We then entered the shower and were disinfected and then immediately thereafter were shaven of all -- searched -- shaven of all bodily hair and tatooed on the left arm. My father was B12772 and I was B12773. The "B" numbers were the last series of arrivals in Auschwitz so that was, now in retrospect, a very good thing to have a high number.

Actually, I'm going to digress a little bit here at this stage. I have never read very much of Elie Wiesel, but the other day, in anticipation of this interview, I decided I would read his book Night. And I don't know if you have read it or not. And basically my story parallels Elie Wiesels' story virtually to all the details. He was born in '28 and I was born in '27. He and his father were in Auschwitz exactly at the same time, arrived at the same time as we did. They came from Hungary; we came from Holland. He went to *(Boona)*, which was in Marnewice day before we were deported from Gleiwitz. Their group came to Gleiwitz one day before we were to leave Gleiwitz. We were in what was known as Gleiwitz number 3, Gleiwitz *Drei*. And the Germans, being very orderly, had evacuated first Gleiwitz *Eins*, Gleiwitz *Zwei*, and the last day was Gleiwitz *Drei*. Because we were in the last day of evacuation, the Russians got there in time to save us, the small group, and the day before Elie Wiesel and his group, I think they also went through a camp called Blechhammer, were deported from Blechhammer to Buchenwald/Dachau or

wherever those transports went back into Germany. And because we were one day later that was the one day that saved us.

I don't think any of us would have survived another three months.

Q YOU NEVER MET ELIE WIESEL, DID YOU?

A I don't recall. I don't recall anybody I met.

Q OKAY.

A No, but it was, you know, it was just very strange when I read the book Night, the geographic thing, the chronological thing was so much the same. Well, of course, the great exception now is that he's become a very successful author, and I have not.

Q TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR DAILY LIVE.

A In Auschwitz? So much has been said and so much has been written about it, it seems to me almost redundant to tell the same trite tale all over again. We all know -- the worst thing about being in Auschwitz as far as personal safety was concerned, the very worst thing was of course a selection. And the first selection we didn't know what was going on, that was the one on arrival. But if you go through a selection and you know what is going on, that probably is the most difficult experience, because you know you have to survive and you have to appear fit, and you're not very fit, but still, the will to live is enormously strong. And I think all of us who survived had a very strong will to live.

There were suicides. There were murders. There were -- the first time

in my life I had seen other inmates kill someone. That was an arrival after we got there from Holland, one of the men on the transport had been a traitor and worked with the SS and with the Nazis in Holland and he was recognized by people who had been in the resistance in Holland whom he had denounced and who were, as a result, in Auschwitz, and they just cold-bloodedly killed him. And it was a terrible thing to see when you're 15 years old.

You could, well, you couldn't accept anything else, people hanging from the gallows or being punished. The story was the same for everyone. And I don't particularly like to dwell on the daily atrocities and the daily indignities that people went through, had to go through.

The famous -- infamous institution of Musselman should be described at this stage. *Musselman* translates literally as a man of Islamic faith. But what was known in the camps as a Musselman was somebody who was fated for death, who had somehow or other slumped together, given up hope, and was just waiting for the end. It is when there was no more will to survive, you couldn't survive. And these people had lost the will.

The food was very minimal. Some kind of a hot liquid once a day from a *(careens)* and something called coffee, I believe, in the morning and dry bread. It was extremely minimal.

We were allowed to keep our shoes, and after we got back into the barracks, my father told me that he had in the lining of his shoes a ten-dollar bill.

Which probably was very foolish, but it was there and he kept that ten-dollar bill. After we were in Birkenau for six weeks, we were finally deported to a labor camp called Gleiwitz, Gleiwitz number 3. It's within a few hours of Auschwitz, the same complex of industrial towns. In Gleiwitz 3 life was infinitely better than in Birkenau because there was no -- there was a crematoria there, there was no gas chamber, and people who were not -- people who were selected for death were sent back to Auschwitz. They were not killed there.

And the camp was a labor camp. My father worked in a factory that manufactured railroad cars. And I was in a factory that manufactured some kind of weapons. I had to do welding all day long. And it was fine. Both places were reasonably warm, but certainly not ice cold in the inside in the wintertime, and it was a very severe winter of 1944 to 1945. And as my father -- the second or third day we were in Gleiwitz -- as he was being marched out to his labor detail, one of the guards said to him, "Aren't you Max Rosenstein? Weren't you my officer in World War I?" And he was an old *Wehrmacht* man who had been re-enlisted for guard duty in the camp. He was not a Nazi. He had not volunteered for this. He was a decent man. And the moment he could my father gave him the ten dollars and he threw -- at night he threw newspapers and sometimes bread over the fence to my dad. And so wonderful things can happen to you in a situation like this. But how this man could have recognized my father so many years later, totally emaciated, with the exception that if I look at his picture here during World War I [camera focuses on picture] he

perhaps looked a little bit like that after all. It was a real unbelievable happening that the man even had the courage to let him know who he was.

I don't believe that that *Wehrmacht* guard survived. When we went on the march from Gleiwitz on back to Germany, I believe the SS even shot their own people that couldn't make it, that stayed behind. Everybody at the end of the column was constantly being shot then. But again, I'm jumping the gun a little bit.

Q DO YOU RECALL HOW MUCH YOU WEIGHED AT THE TIME? YOUR PHYSICAL CONDITION?

A Yeah, I weighed about a hundred pounds, European pounds, which would be 110 our American pounds, at the time. I weigh now 135 pounds, so I didn't have much weight to lose. I was skinny all along, but my father had lost considerable weight. My father had been a diabetic and had a kidney disease all his life and was never in very good health. In Auschwitz the total starvation diet caused his health to improve to the degree he was totally free of any symptoms. He was, the only times in his life that he was really healthy is just then, but he also was very thin, but reasonably robust. Unfortunately, normal eating habits didn't agree with him after the war.

But it's amazing how certain people that have illnesses related to probably foot intake could possibly not suffer as much as a normal person would on a starvation diet.

But the fact that my father was with me all these months in Auschwitz

and Gleiwitz helped me to survive and probably helped him to survive too. He was very cool. He never, never got excited and he had all the smarts.

Q HOW OLD WAS HE?

A He was born in 1893, so he was in his late 40s.

Q HE WAS RELATIVELY YOUNG?

A Yeah. To me that seemed like an old person at that stage, but yes, from where I am today, that was extremely young. Yeah, well, in 1944 he was 51 years old, actually. But that was about the upper age limit where people would survive. Very few people that age survived.

Q HOW ABOUT THE SANITARY FACILITIES?

A They were terrible in Birkenau, the sanitary -- there were latrines on the outside of the barracks, and sometimes we had to go and empty them and do latrine work. Very unpleasant. There was one or two cold water fountains in the barracks. There was no way of bathing, shaving, or anything. In Gleiwitz they were better. There were cold water fountains outside the barracks and we were allowed to go wash ourselves at 5 o'clock in the morning every morning with the cold water. First we had to wrap excelsior around the pipes and light the excelsior in order to thaw out the pipes. Remember, it was very cold. And then we got a trickle of water and we could use that for whatever sanitary purposes it was needed. I don't think any of us had a toothbrush.

Q YOU STAYED HEALTHY IN A WAY?

A I had no real health problems, except two. I Gleiwitz in October or November of 1944 I was assigned to work other than my regular work in that weapons factory and I had to unload railroad cars. And they put a heavy weight on my shoulders unloading railroad cars and my back cracked at that time and was -- I've had back problems ever since. They are very much under control nowadays, but they were not for many years.

And the other thing I suffered from, particularly towards the end, was holes in my hands and feet from lack of vitamins. Open sores on the knuckles and joints. Many people had those and I had very severely, big holes. Yet it eight or nine days after liberation they had disappeared.

Q WHAT ABOUT FROSTBITE? YOU DIDN'T HAVE GLOVES.

A We had no gloves. We just huddled together. We were very, very fortunate that we didn't get frostbite on that trip. Possibly because we had to keep moving. We were never allowed to stand still at all. And I imagine we would have had frostbite under other circumstances.

The evacuations started about January 20, 1945, from Gleiwitz. Again, I'm not certain of the date. It's within two or three days of that date. And as I stated earlier, we were the last to be evacuated and we ended up in a camp called Blechhammer.

Have you heard of Blechhammer?

Q NO, I HAVE NOT.

A It's a fairly large camp, not far from Gleiwitz. As a matter of fact, I met somebody the other day who was in Blechhammer.

Q HOW BIG A CAMP WAS IT?

A It was larger than the camp in Gleiwitz. How big in circumference, I don't know, but it was a fairly large camp. So as I said, we got late at night into Blechhammer and we were told to go to a barracks and we were all inside a barracks and we tried to make ourselves as comfortable as we could. There was no food, but I think there was water there and we were totally exhausted from the march and we just passed out. And the next morning at dawn we heard shots. And I believe -- as a matter of fact I had already been outside the barracks and they started shooting and I scampered back in. What was happening was the guards were shooting at anybody that moved, from the towers. Any prisoner they could see, they were shooting from the towers. That lasted for only 15 or 20 minutes and there was total silence. And the next time somebody dared go outside and look at the towers, all the guards were gone. The towers were unstaffed and the Germans had fled.

Within a few hours of that happening the gates were opened and at first somebody from the Red Cross came into the camp, but just to the gate. They didn't dare go in the camp because they thought it would just be too dangerous for them, not realizing that the freezing conditions wouldn't leave -- no bacteria could survive, it was so cold. And probably this is why there was no typhus in this camp, because of the cold weather.

And then they disappeared and then the Russians came by, the Russian troops. And they started coming by and through, but they didn't pay too much attention to the camp. We, that is my father and I and a group of 12 Dutchmen -- from Holland, let me put it this way -- were together and we promptly decided we were not going to stay in this camp one minute longer than we absolutely had to. We did not want to wait for somebody to come and give us instructions so we just packed our blankets and moved east in the direction of the Russians, away from the front, away from the war zone. And let's get out of here. We can find someplace to stay that's less dangerous than this.

After a couple of hours we found an abandoned English prisoner of war camp which had just been abandoned. It must have been evacuated very, very brief moments earlier. Later on we found out that they were also in Russian custody rather than in German custody. But that camp was clean. It was run by international standards of prisoner-of-war camps. There were stacks of blankets. We found a chest of tea. We found lost of plates and cutlery. And we found somewhere where we could live. Of course there was no water, but there was so much snow on the ground so we just burned the furniture and we broke down the furniture and melted the snow. And again, luckily, one of the people in our group of twelve was a butcher, and unluckily for some calf or cow, some livestock -- no, a pig came by squealing and of course we had nothing to eat, we hadn't had anything to eat in days. So we slaughtered a pig and it was our first meal. Many of us being kosher, we still had our

first meal of pig. And I remember not eating much of it, not because of religious reasons, but it just didn't appeal to me. I had some liver, I believe. Everybody got terribly sick. Everybody in the group except me, I think, got deathly ill because nobody had a body that could absorb rich food like that.

Well, anyway, we managed to survive there for maybe 12 days and build up our strength somewhat. After about 12 days a Russian patrol came by and said we were too close to the war front, it was back and forth, and we had to move east to Katowice by foot, and they told us which way to go. So we packed up and moved on the road to Katowice. About half a day's walking on the road the Russians -- again another group of Russians -- came by and said the war's coming here, you all have to dig ditches. So all of a sudden here we were again digging ditches, this time for the Russians. We didn't enjoy it any more than digging them for anybody else, I'm sure. And the Russians didn't really know exactly what to make of us at that time. We were shell-shocked and wore strange outfits.

Oh, incidentally, while we were at this English prisoner-of-war camp we found all kinds of English prisoner uniforms there so we all shed our striped uniforms and put on warm, woolen English uniforms. At least we were a bit more comfortable and possibly even cleaner.

There was a lot of pillage and enormous amounts of rape amongst the Russian soldiers. They raped their way through that part of Germany. It was horrendous what they did. Terrible. Mostly religious orders. And the troops were

very, very undisciplined, but that's understandable after what they had been through. It wasn't understandable to us then, but today you look at it differently than you looked at it then.

But we did manage to get to Katowice after a few days. In Katowice there was some kind of a Red Cross unit and they assigned us to peoples' homes. They had to give us shelter which was -- my father and I were quartered with some lusty widow and her niece. I imagine the Red Cross paid them to give us food. I don't recall how long we were in this town of Katowice, and also there was little communication. We could speak to the woman in German. She didn't want to speak German, we didn't want to speak German, nobody wanted to communicate at all.

The first time that we found ourselves then in a group of people also mostly from Holland who had survived all of the various camps in and around Auschwitz and Birkenau among them I found one or two schoolmates from Amsterdam and also the former girlfriend of my oldest brother, the one who had emigrated to Israel. Her name was Ruth *(Asher)*. I remember her so well because she had undergone terrible experiences in Auschwitz and she went totally psychotic after the liberation. She had survived the camp, but she didn't survive survival. We had to guard her 24 hours a day. There was nobody else to do it. We had to all assume sitting on her so she wouldn't commit suicide. She was very suicidal and she was extremely psychotic. Out of control. That lasted until we got to Marseilles. I don't know what became of her. I hope she got well. I hope she survived. I lost

complete track. But that was not a rare case of people breaking down afterwards. And this is the one case that I remember so vividly.

Go back to Katowice. We were in a group of maybe 200 people or so, assorted gypsies, Romanians, circus performers, many of whom had survived the experimental block of Auschwitz. We were then put on a train and my father and I shared a compartment with many of these circus performers, dwarfs, little people from Romania, and they had all been used in the experimental block. We had a very difficult time communicating with them. There were just no languages. They had no language other than Romanian that we could make ourselves understood, but we knew they had suffered enormously. And they all got off the train in the middle of the night when we got near the Romanian border and disappeared.

And our first stop on that trip was *(Jenowitz)* which was in the *(Book-owe-veen-a)*. *(Jenowitz)* was an enclave of small beautiful mountain towns in the Carpathian Mountains, I believe. Wide, gorgeous, untouched by the war. It was unbelievable. Not a bomb had fallen there. There were no deportations of the Jewish community. They must have had some kind of local government or Romanian government or some kind of a government entity that protected them, but there were no deportations from *(Jenowitz)*. There was a small prosperous Jewish community largely in place there and they welcomed us with open arms even though it was then already Russia, it was under Russian occupation and it's part of now annexed to Russia. And we spent about three or four weeks there trying to recover

and from *(Jenowitz)* we were sent to Odessa by train, again, the Russians told us to go to Odessa. And they housed us in Odessa in a sanitarium outside of town. And then we found ourselves with those same English war prisoners whose barracks we had liberated a few months earlier in Blechhammer. So we were waiting there for about five or six weeks. The Russians asked me to help because I spoke some English at the time, and they had some English speaking as a translator between them and Dutch, and the Dutch, and that worked very well. It was nice to be able to do something. To do a little office work and have something to do.

There was no water. We had to wash in the Black Sea. But as a reward they took us to the opera one night in Odessa -- to the ballet, but under strictly -- what is it called? KGG guards.

Q THE RUSSIANS TOOK YOU?

A The Russians took us.

Well, anyway, after six weeks a ship arrived in Odessa sent by the English Red Cross and that ship took all of us to Marseilles and when the ship made port or passed Istanbul, the first time that the English consul could come aboard, the first time that a Westerner could have contact with us, and we were allowed to send telegrams. My father was able, having had a very good memory, remembered all the addresses of everybody, was able to notify all the relatives in the United States and Egypt and in England that we had survived, that we were alive. Because until then, nobody knew this.

We hoped my mother would know it because one of our group that was liberated in Blechhammer decided to go back and wait for Theresienstadt to be liberated by the Russians, and to go back there because his wife was hopefully still there. And he was told to find my mother and tell her that we were in Russia, that we had survived, and that we were presumably somewhere in Russia at the time. And my mother did get that message and she did know that so that was a great relief.

As I said, the last transport from Theresienstadt came to Auschwitz in October of '44, I believe it was October '44, and we knew my mother was not on it, so we also had high hopes she would still be in Theresienstadt, which turned out to be the case.

Q HOW WAS YOUR MOTHER'S HEALTH?

A Excellent. She was very young and very healthy and she was never sick for a day, thank God. After the war my father got very ill. I got very ill in Paris. But my mother did not get sick, no. She was in good shape.

Q WHEN YOU ARRIVED -- WHEN YOU FIRST TALKED TO THE ENGLISH CONSUL IN ISTANBUL I SUPPOSE --

A You say Constantinople.

Q CONSTANTINOPLE. RIGHT. WHAT WERE YOUR IDEAS? WHAT WERE YOUR PLANS? WHERE DID YOU WANT TO GO? WHAT WENT THROUGH YOUR MIND?

A Well, first of all, it was my father who was the adult. I was only 16

years old. We were going back to Holland, if necessary. But things changed. First of all what was on our mind of course was to give a sign of life and at that time we didn't know my oldest brother had been killed just a few months earlier. So we didn't know that and of course we wanted him to know that the family, at least dad and I, were alive. That was what was on our mind.

You know, you had been regimented for so long you don't get out of this taking orders kind of a mood. But my father got out of this taking orders mood very much, very quickly. We arrived at Marseilles by ship. Met a friend on the railroad station from school in Amsterdam who had been underground in Southern France. He told us that things in Holland were terrible. There was no food in Amsterdam, etc., etc. We were immediately put on a train going north to Amsterdam, a regular passenger train, by the Red Cross or whoever was managing this thing. And in the middle of the night my father shakes me awake and I said, "What's the matter?" He said, "We are getting off." I said, "Where are we?" He said, "We are in Strasburg." And I said, "Why?" He said, "There's a train standing there, an American Army train going to Paris. We are going to Paris." And I said, "Why?" He said, "We have some money in Paris and I have only blocked accounts in Amsterdam and at least we have enough to survive. I have receivables there from before the war. I have business friends there and it's easier for us to manage in Paris," where things were much better than in Amsterdam. So the decision was taken in three minutes and we ended up in Paris.

(Centre du Coeur), the French, had themselves pretty well organized as far as survivors were concerned, at that stage. The guilt started setting in, I imagine. They did very well by us. They put us in a *(Santra da coeur)* outside of Paris. It was recuperation. It was love them, feed them, rest them, etc. I got very ill with pneumonia, and my father got very ill with his old diseases and had to be in the hospital for a couple of weeks. That was in July of 1945. When he got better and I got better I borrowed the American Army uniform of a friend of ours who was stationed in Paris, a young man from -- a few years older than myself -- from our home town who was in the signal corps, and I just went to the *(gar-den-ure)* and got myself on an army train and then to Brussels, without papers, other than what I have here.

Q YOU CAN SHOW THAT LATER ON.

A Yeah. I'll show that later on. Actually, I may not even have had that.

Q IT'S ACTUALLY LIKE A PASSPORT?

A What I probably had was this card, *carte identite d'etranger.* And from Brussels I took a tramway to Antwerp and then I hitch-hiked on army trucks until I got to Amsterdam where I found my mother, who had been repatriated in the meantime to Amsterdam. I took my mother back to Paris with us and a year and a half later we emigrated to the United States.

Q HOW MUCH DID THE JEWISH AGENCIES TAKE CARE OF YOU DURING ALL THAT TRAVELING? HAD YOU HAD CONTACT AT

ALL WITH THE --

A None. Maybe we didn't want it. Maybe we didn't require it. It was something that was not in my parents' vocabulary.

So what was lacking, what was sadly lacking, and that may have been a symptom of the times, was psychiatric help. It was either sink or swim. And most of us thought we were swimming, but we were really sinking. The way we mismanaged it in my family was by tacit approval that never once would we mention what happened to us. We got to be back together as a family in some, possibly August of 1945. With Auschwitz and Theresienstadt and what happened to us in the camps was never, never discussed. It was not a very healthy way of dealing with things. So you know, in retrospect I think today there would have been much better support services available for people like ourselves. There weren't any. What services were available possible in D.P. Camps, and I cannot judge, we weren't in one, were probably food and clothing and immigration, but I don't imagine anybody was there to help with the soul, at that time.

I would think that was, if you ask for criticisms or for discussion of what happened, I think this was one of the major things that I would say today where the community failed.

Q YOU AND YOUR FATHER NEVER TALKED ABOUT IT?

A Not once. Me and my mother. My mother and I never talked about it once. Never.

Q NEVER?

A Never. Just was not a subject to be discussed. And my mother least of all wanted to ever talk about it. She would say something in conversation with other people, "Well, you know what happened to us," and thereby dismiss the subject. Further details were not given or volunteered with anybody really, but certainly not within the family. It was virtually a taboo in our family. But I have heard it's not unusual.

Q WE'LL TAKE A BREAK?

A Yeah, some people might have some questions here.

[Short break taken.]

BY EVELYN FIELDEN:

Q JERRY, YOU MENTIONED BEFORE THAT AMONG YOUR FAMILY THESE HAPPENINGS WERE NEVER DISCUSSED AND THAT YOU COULD HAVE USED SOME PSYCHIATRIC HELP AT THE TIME TO GET YOU OVER THESE DIFFICULTIES.

A Well, to get me to deal with these difficulties. And I believe they were more difficult for me than for my parents because if something happens to you that's extremely traumatic at age 35 you can deal with it much better than if you're 15.

Q WHEN DID YOU FIRST DECIDE TO EMIGRATE TO THE

UNITED STATES?

A That decision was made when we arrived in Paris in 1945. Once the family got in touch with us everybody in this country insisted that there was no more question, the time had come that we move to the United States and leave Europe behind us and my parents were quite willing to go.

Q DID YOU HAVE A LOT OF FAMILY HERE?

A My father had two sisters, one of whom is still alive, in the United States, married with families, of course; and a brother who lived in Egypt during the war and who subsequently emigrated to the United States in the late '40s or early '50s from Egypt. My mother had a brother, a younger brother in Houston, who had disappeared before World War II already, and who didn't want to have anything to do with the family in the United States. So technically yes, she did have a brother here. He died since, I'm sure. He was in the Merchant Marines. My mother's other brothers lived in Israel and Palestine and in England. We were the only ones in our immediate family to be caught in Europe.

Q WHO GAVE YOU THE AFFIDAVIT TO COME OVER HERE?

A Oh, relatives. We had tons of affidavits. There was no problem. On the Bendheim side of the family, people who had been here many generations and who were in the affidavit business.

Q SO WHEN DID YOU ACTUALLY LAND IN AMERICA?

A In September of 1946.

Q HERE?

A In New York and first we went to visit the relatives in Buffalo and Chicago and then back to New York. I had to get a job immediately and started going to school at night, college, and my mother took a job as a waitress and making belts, and my father started his own business in New York. He was then in surgical instruments and he started a small business in 1949 in New York.

Q HOW DID YOU FAIR IN SCHOOL? YOU DIDN'T HAVE A HIGH SCHOOL --

A I didn't have a -- I'm mostly autodidactic and I went to a lot of schools, mostly of hard knocks. I have a lot of schooling, but I have no education. Or possibly I have some education, but it is not according to the Ph.D. schedules of the major universities.

Q SO YOU SAID YOU WENT TO SCHOOL IN NEW YORK?

A I went to school in New York. I went to school here a great deal. I went to college, university. I took courses in whatever I wanted to take. I never went to school in order to get a degree, I've had no need for it. I've had a fairly good life here in San Francisco. I came to San Francisco in October of 1949 for a weekend and liked the city and went job hunting on Monday morning at 9:30 and at 9:35 I had my first job in San Francisco. That lasted for about four or five years and then I switched to another company and eventually became the chief --

Q WHAT JOB?

A -- officer. It's import/export. It's international trade. It's rather a complex field I'm in and I tried to be retired for the last ten years with not the greatest of successes. I'm still working somewhat.

Q HAVE YOU EVER BEEN BACK TO EUROPE?

A Oh, very often. Yes, I go to Europe very frequently. I went back to Holland, which is a great love of mine, but which is very painful. It is much more painful for me to go to Holland than to go to Germany. Lately I've been in Germany quite frequently and the hometown where I was born, Bensheim, has asked me to give them also an oral history. And as a matter of fact I just went there in May and did, in German, an oral history of the family, which they wanted for their archives. But I found out they're already publishing it all over in the little county papers over there. They have to have something to write about, and if it makes them feel better, that's okay too.

Q HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOU WENT BACK THERE?

A Germany doesn't -- I separate the Germans over 60 from those under 60, or those over 65 from those under 65. And surely somebody my age or younger couldn't possibly be accused of any misdeeds and you cannot accuse people, you really cannot discriminate against people because of what their parents or their grandparents did. You have to get over that. You're going to have to have it behind you or else you don't survive yourself. You have to survive yourself. That's not the way I could manage it, so I feel okay as long as I'm with people I can trust and that

I can talk to and that know my history. That's kind of what I insist on. If they can live with it, that's okay, but that's the way I handle it. And for me this works. It may not work for others.

Q HAVE YOU BEEN TO ITALY?

A I just got back. Yeah, I've been there many times. I've been to Israel. I spend usually about four to six weeks in spring and summer in Europe. And so that would include Germany and Holland and other places.

Q DO YOU BELIEVE IN GOD?

A Do I believe in God? Yes, now I do, with limitations. Certainly the experience was not one to engender belief.

Q IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WANT TO TELL US ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS, YOUR HISTORY?

A Well, the key work here is history. What happened to us is something that lives with you all your life, regardless of how well you survive. You really only survive well if you learn how to live with it because it cannot be undone, it's something that is so overpower and so colorful and so traumatic that there is no way to ever undo this.

But as I said earlier, survival is to accept this and, you know, to live with it and not to forget it, but to kind of forgive yourself and everybody else, because you just cannot go around and survive any other way. That's the wa I look at it.

Q A POLITICAL QUESTION. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE REUNIFICATION OF GERMANY.

A That was a very good question. I happened to be in Berlin in June and was asked that question too. And first of all just because of who I am or what I went through, that doesn't make it possible for me to have extraordinarily valuable judgments. My knee-jerk reaction at first was one of being scared. However, intellectually I'm totally in favor of reunification provided that all the mistakes that were made in the past, and I'm going back to the early part of the century, would be taken into account and that we learn from our lessons. If it's a reunification imposed upon Germany with any kind of terms which are basically not acceptable to them as 1990 Germans, then I do believe the process would be flawed, and we to the extent possible I think politically must be avoided that there be a flawed process in that process.

But my answer is yes, basically I'm in favor of reunification.

MS. FIELDEN: DAN, YOU HAD A FEW QUESTIONS TO ASK.

BY DAN LEESON:

Q COULD YOU TELL ME YOUR MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME?

A Sophie, S-o-p-h-i-e, Bendheim, B-e-n-d-h-e-i-m.

Q YOU SENT ME A PICTURE, A PHOTO, FROM THE CEMETERY IN *(BENSHEIM)*. ARE THOSE YOUR MOTHER'S PARENTS OR YOUR

FATHER'S PARENTS?

A My mother's family.

Q WOULD YOU TELL ME BOTH OF THEIR NAMES, PLEASE?

A Zacharia, Z-a-c-h-a-r-i-s, and Johanna, J-o-h-a-n-n-a Bendheim.

Q DO YOU KNOW YOUR FATHER'S PARENTS' NAMES?

A Yes, *(Barook)* Rosenstein and his wife was Betty *(Mueller)*, also born in *(Hal-us-hausen)*, Germany. And I just went by there to see the little town.

Q WHAT WAS THE CONDITION OF THE CEMETERY IN BENSHEIM?

A It's walled in. You have to go and -- actually the cemetery for the region is not in Bensheim but in a neighboring town called *(Ben-en-bauch)*. You go to the city hall and get the key from the mayor, or you climb the fence, which is more likely. It's what I have been doing all these years. The cemetery is not well-maintained and it should not be well-maintained. It's overgrown, it's romantic, it's full of moss, but the graves are not vandalized. They're standing up and sometimes they pay for it and sometimes the families pay for it when gravestones fall down. Most of the people buried there, you know, they go back to the middle of the 18th century for this region. But there were very large families there and they were all the same families and many of them have descendants in the United States, so every once in a while somebody from here goes and looks at the graves of the old folks. It's very nice to have that because the Germans, for political reasons will not plow

under a Jewish cemetery, but they do their own, after 35 years.

Q CAN YOU COMMENT ON WHY THE ROSENSTEINS AND THE BENDHEIMS WENT TO BENSHEIM WHENEVER THEY WENT?

A The Bendheims were in Bensheim as merchants since about 1750. There are stories in the archives there that go back to 1750, 1760, certainly to the Napoleonic wars. So they've always lived there as a Jewish merchant family in a small town and had vineyards and business there. And were, you know, long-term, respectable *(kow-a-nee-man)* citizens of the town. They were very German and very orthodox Jews at the same time.

The Rosensteins. My grandfather was a teacher in Hebrew school in two or three small towns in Central Germany. My grandmother died very young. She was of a local Jewish small family in that particular town. I think she died of leukemia after she gave birth to her fourth child. So she was very young when she died. I have never known her. I only remember my father's father very vaguely. He died in 1938 in Frankfurt of cancer, old age.

Q YOU MENTIONED COUSINS IN THERESIENSTADT. CAN YOU NAME THEM?

A Yes, the name is a cousin of my mother's, he was a second cousin, was *(Ludwick Luventaul)*, and his wife's name was *(Rosel)*. And she survived the war.

Q YOU SPOKE THAT THERE WERE MANY SELECTIONS. THE

FIRST ONE YOU DIDN'T KNOW THAT YOU WERE GOING THROUGH IT. ON THE LATER SELECTIONS, FOR THOSE WHO WERE SELECTED, WHAT HAPPENED? CAN YOU DESCRIBE WHAT THEY SAID, WHAT THEY DID?

A That's a very good question because to those of us who survived they became nonpersons at that very instant. They were in a separate group immediately and they were segregated right away. And the way I recall, that particular selection they were immediately put on a truck and sent to the crematorium, to the gas chambers.

If you have read the literature on the survivors it comes out very frequently, you know, that you would use self-protective measures for your own survival. This was probably one of those self-protective mechanisms that we employed to survive by simply not identifying any further with those selected for death.

That's the best answer I have at this stage. Possibly something else may be more valid.

Q WHEN DID YOU BEGIN TO SPEAK OF THIS IF YOU AND YOUR PARENTS DID NOT SPEAK OF IT?

A I went on my own to a psychiatrist for therapy for about two years in the '50s, about 1957. That allowed me just to deal with it myself because until then I wouldn't even deal with it myself.

In parentheses, I had my tatoo removed in 1951 surgically, because I

would simply not ever go around with a short-sleeved shirt or let people know I'd been in the camps. I could not stand the idea of having to have a conversation about that subject.

But to answer you more specifically, in the late '70s one of the founders of this institution, *(Leni Yahil)*, who was a very good friend of mind, -- sort of -- she and her husband raised my consciousness and said, "You've got to join, you've got to talk, you've got to be active, there are too few people who can do what you can do. So I slowly but surely came out of the closet as far as speaking up in public is concerned. And in so doing, of course, I'm dealing with it much better myself than I had done heretofore. Of course, that's a benefit I didn't realize at the time there was going to be connected therewith.

Q WOULD YOU COMMENT FURTHER ON THE DUTCH TRAITOR WHO WAS MURDERED?

A I only recollect walking into the adjacent barracks. It was about 3 or 4 in the afternoon, the day after we arrived in Birkenau and there was a circle of backs in the barracks, men standing there, and as I approached the circle I could see there was somebody bouncing in the middle and they were just systematically killing this person. And I asked why and that's when they explained to me that he had been a traitor and had betrayed them and that they were in Auschwitz because of him. Now he was there himself. He was apparently a Jew who had collaborated with the Nazis in Holland. I don't know his name.

Q RUTH ASHER. WHAT WOULD CAUSE HER TO SURVIVE, AS HEALTHY AS SHE COULD AND THEN COLLAPSE, AFTER EVERYTHING WAS OVER?

A It's not an infrequent phenomena. Lots of people collapsed after everything. It's called post traumatic stress and this was just one of the extreme cases of post traumatic stress. Today from the knowledge we have and from the little knowledge I have, I find it not at all uncommon.

Q THE FRENCH. YOU IMPLIED THAT THEY FELT GUILTY AND THAT THE BEHAVIOR WAS A FUNCTION OF THEIR FEELING GUILTY. COULD YOU COMMENT ON THAT?

A Well, it was a little flip of me to have said that. I'd rather withdraw this.

We all know today that the French did not cover themselves with great honors as a people during the occupation. In 1945 however there were only the resistance members living in France. Nobody else existed.

Q REGARDING THE RAPING, OF THE RUSSIAN SOLDIERS. YOU INFERRED THAT THEY WERE SEXUALLY MISTREATING RELIGIOUS WOMEN?

A Orders. All the orders.

Q DID YOU HEAR OF THIS, OR WERE YOU PERSONALLY OBSERVING THIS?

A Yes. We were on that trip between Blechhammer and Katowice. One night we found shelter in a monastery. They asked if we had a doctor in the group and we said one of the men was a doctor in the group, but before he could find out -- it was not his specialty at all, I believe. He may have been a dentist or a podiatrist or something. He was asked to examine the nuns because 16 of them had been gang raped the night before. So yes, we have very -- this was not a rumor, this was very personal knowledge.

Q WHEN YOU WERE IN BIRKENAU, TELL ME HOW MANY DAYS A WEEK DID YOU WORK AND HOW MANY HOURS A DAY WERE YOU PERMITTED TO SIT?

A I would imagine -- this is a very difficult question to answer. The hours per day of sleep was something like 9 until 5, so I imagine it was 6 or 7 hours. The work hours I imagine it would have been from 6 until 7 or 8, 12 to 14 hours I imagine would be what we worked usually. In Birkenau it could have been very difficult because you know it entailed sometimes heavy labor. In Gleiwitz it was, let me see, we were usually marched out at sunrise or -- no, well before sunrise, like 6 or 7 o'clock in the morning we started working I think until 4 in the afternoon and there were no breaks. Four or five in the afternoon, somewhere around there and there were no breaks. Again this was, the work we did basically, unless it was unloading railroad cars or heavy detail, you know, which could be very hazardous, was very good at the time for us because it was warm. It was covered. It was inside. What

was not so pleasant was after work if somebody's bed wasn't made right or if somebody was missing or, you know, having to stand at break and sometimes on one leg or all the absurd things they make you do for hours on end before you were allowed to eat or go to bed. Those were the difficult things.

Q YOU MENTIONED THAT YOU AND YOUR FATHER WERE HOUSED WITH "A LUSTY WIDOW AND HER NIECE." DO YOU REMEMBER THEIR NAMES?

A No, I don't.

Q WAS SHE KIND TO YOU OR WERE YOU SIMPLY ASSIGNED THERE, AND WHY THE WORD "LUSTY"?

A I think she was especially kind to my father. And yes, they were very kind to us.

Q WHAT IS YOUR ATTITUDE CONCERNING THE CURRENT PRESENCE OR ABSENCE THEREOF OF ANTI-SEMITIC FEELING IN GERMANY?

A That's a very difficult question. The people that I know in Germany and who would be friends of mine would obviously not be anti-Semitic and their attitude would be, towards people who are, very much the same as mine. I simply don't know any in Germany who are anti-Semitic and if I were to meet any, it would be a very unpleasant experience for both of us.

It's not a question that comes up -- it possibly better phrased, "What

is your feeling about anti-Semitism generically?"

Well, that's a self-answering question. How could we feel about anti-Semitism, any of us, except it's wrong.

DAN LEESON: Thank you.

BY EVELYN FIELDEN:

Q I HAVE A FEW MORE QUESTIONS. DID YOU MAKE ANY FRIEND IN THE CAMPS THAT YOU WENT THROUGH AS A YOUNG MAN? DID YOU HAVE ANYBODY YOU KEPT UP CONTACT WITH?

A No. Unfortunately -- first of all, we lost immediately contact by virtue of my father moving to Paris and not going back to Amsterdam so that would eliminate the contact with those people we had been together with during those difficult years. And I have never been one to keep up contact.

I wanted to have -- this is part of this traumatic separation thing. I wanted to have -- I had no interest in keeping up contact with anybody. I was probably just too traumatized.

At one time I ran into somebody here in San Francisco in the early '50s at United Airlines. Somebody tapped me on the shoulder behind me, and wore an American uniform, was in the Korean War and the guy said, I'm so and so. Lothar Scott was his name. We were in high school in Amsterdam and we were in Auschwitz together. But that's not really maintaining contact.

Q HOW DID YOU REACT AT THAT TIME WHEN HE TOLD YOU THAT?

A Oh, I don't know. It's just one of those things that happened in life.

BY CINDY CLUMACK:

Q COULD YOU SPELL HIS NAME, JUST SO --

A Yeah, that name I remember. LOTHAR. And his last name is English, Scottish, S-c-o-t-t. I think at the time it may have been *(Schotte)*. But I think they had changed it in Holland already. I only remember him as Scott, Lothar Scott.

BY EVELYN FIELDEN:

Q WHAT WERE YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH THE CAPOS IN THE CAMPS?

A They were various. The first capo we had in Birkenau was a very difficult situation. He was a German criminal from the criminal prison system and it is only because of my father that I survived, who had all the smarts how to deal with him.

The capos in Gleiwitz were political prisoners. We were very lucky there. And because they were political prisoners their behavior was proper most of the time. We didn't have any real problems with capos in Gleiwitz. Auschwitz and

Birkenau, that, of course, was always much more difficult. But again, other camps had Ukrainian capos and Polish capos, and they were a pretty bad sort.

There was one capo I remember who was a terrible guy. And I forgot that was not in Gleiwitz, that was in Birkenau. And when dad and I were at a movie in Paris after the war and on the newsreel we saw this guy and my father immediately tried to go to the Red Cross or some authorities to renounce him, but who wanted to listen? Who wanted to hear this?

Q DO YOU REMEMBER HIS NAME?

A No. I remember no names.

Q WHEN THE RUSSIANS CAME TO LIBERATE YOU, DID YOU ENCOUNTER ANY JEWISH RUSSIANS AMONG THEM?

A Yes, there was one officer who spoke no Yiddish but who said he was Jewish. One, that I recall, but there must have been many more.

Q DID YOU HAVE ANY CONTACT WITH THEM? DID THEY TREAT YOU IN ANY WAY SPECIAL?

A Oh, he was, yeah, he was a better, so to speak -- I hate to use the word "better class" -- but he was.

Q ALSO, YOU NEVER MENTIONED THE, WHAT THEY CALL IN THE MORNING *APPEL*, WHEN YOU GET UP, THE COUNTING OF THE HEADS. IN THE EVENING BEFORE YOU GO --

A I did mention one of the evening *appels* where we had to sit in the snow

and stand on one foot or dance, or whatever. I did mention that briefly.

Q IN THE MORNING. HOW LONG DID THAT LAST?

A Usually about 10 minutes, 12 minutes. They were not terribly long. Of course there were exceptional circumstances where they would make you stand in the snow sometimes for a half hour or an hour, but I believe the morning *appels* were just briefly before we were marched off to work, so you know, the longer we stood *appel* the less labor they would be getting out of us.

Q WHAT HAPPENED IF IT DIDN'T TALLY OUT, THE HEAD COUNT?

A You stood and stood until it tallied out. In the Gleiwitz, luckily, no one escaped or they would have probably done some random shooting or something. So I have not been involved in one that eventually didn't tally out. Eventually they would always tally out.

In Gleiwitz one day there was a group of 11 French political prisoners that arrived one evening. They were resistance. They discovered a drum of alcohol and they didn't realize it was methyl alcohol. And they all 12 drank methyl alcohol and they were all 12 buried the next morning. Pretty sad. I mean, these were all healthy young guys, strong guys. They would have survived.

Q HOW MANY ATTEMPTS HAVE YOU WITNESSED OR NONE AT ALL, I DON'T KNOW, OF ESCAPING?

A I have not escaped -- I have not witnessed any escape attempts. I

witnessed lots of suicides, but I did not witness any escape attempts. But there were there. One reads of it today that there were escape attempts, but I never witnessed any.

You have to picture yourself surrounded by a hostile population, immeasurably thin, shaven, tatooed, and all you have on is blue and white striped *haftlings*, prison clothing. Escape is almost impossible unless you can change your appearance and you speak the language. If you don't speak Polish like a Pole, how are you going to escape?

Q WHEN YOU WERE BOARDING WITH THE POLISH, DID YOU HAVE ANY FEELING THAT THERE WAS ANTI-SEMITISM AMONG THOSE PEOPLE?

A I think at that time we really didn't care. That was the least of our worry how they felt.

Q AT LEAST THEY DIDN'T SHOW IT TO YOU, THERE WAS NO --

A No, not that I recall.

BY CINDY CLUMACK:

Q OKAY. JUST A FEW SMALL QUESTIONS. WHEN INITIALLY -- THE INITIAL ARREST, WHEN THEY CAME TO YOUR DOOR AND YOU SAID THAT YOU WERE SENT TO A THEATER IN AMSTERDAM FOR 48

HOURS AND YOU KNEW THAT SOMETHING LIKE THIS WAS GOING TO HAPPEN, DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT THOSE 48 HOURS WERE LIKE? WHAT THE FEELING WAS AROUND?

A Well, I remember strangely enough, this is something I remember very, very well because I was standing in the theater, in the lobby of the theater, and all of a sudden somebody gets violently ill next to me and it was a grand mal, the man had epilepsy. And I don't know who told me to, but two or three of us immediately jumped on him and held his head so he wouldn't injure himself and did all the right things. And there was a rather heavy experience for a kid, you know, under those circumstances. Yet on the other hand it probably gave me the feeling at the time that I was doing something useful, or helping somebody. It's just one of those things that happens under those, you know, under strange circumstances.

Q SO APPROXIMATELY HOW MANY PEOPLE WERE THERE IN THAT THEATER?

A Between 1200 and 1800, I would think. It was overcrowded and to see it, which I think its capacity at the time was about 1200 to 1800, judging from my later in life theater experience. At the time, I don't count. They made a memorial out of that theater in Amsterdam, and they did a very nice job.

Q OKAY. WHEN YOU AND YOUR FATHER WERE BEING LINED UP AT AUSCHWITZ WHERE WAS YOUR MOTHER AT THIS TIME?

A She was in Theresienstadt, where she survived.

Q OKAY. AND THAT'S WHERE SHE ENDED UP STAYING.

A Right.

Q OKAY. ONE OTHER QUESTION. WHEN YOU WERE WORKING TO PASS THE TIME DID YOU SING ANY SONGS OR ANY THAT YOU REMEMBER?

A I don't remember the songs. Yes, we did sing.

Q WHAT LANGUAGE WERE YOU SINGING IN?

A In Westerbork it would have been in Dutch, and in Theresienstadt, I don't know, probably grand opera.

Q THAT'S IT FOR ME.

BY EVELYN FIELDEN:

Q I HEARD THAT IN WESTERBORK, FROM SOME PEOPLE THAT WERE THERE, THAT THEY HAD RELIGIOUS SERVICES THERE.

A Yes. They had them in Theresienstadt, too.

Q DID YOU EVER ATTEND?

A No. In those years I wasn't the least bit religious.

Q YOUR FATHER DIDN'T ATTEND?

A My father didn't attend them either. My mother possibly would have, if she could have done so safely. But my father, I don't think he would have.

BY _____:

Q AFTER GOING THROUGH ALL THAT YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH IN YOUR LIFE, AFTER BEING LIBERATED FROM THE CAMPS, WHEN DID YOU FIRST FEEL SAFE, TRULY SAFE, LIKE NOBODY WAS GOING TO COME FOR YOU AGAIN?

A Very quickly. I think I felt, when you feel safe that's something from within yourself very frequently, rather than not necessarily imposed from the outside. Did I stop looking over my shoulder, that type of reasonable paranoia? Very quickly. I would think in Paris. Certainly not in Russia. I mean, there you had to look over your shoulder. It was not paranoia, it was just being smart. But I think when I got to Paris.

Q WHAT WERE YOUR FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF THE UNITED STATES? WHAT WAS THE FIRST THING YOU SAW WHEN YOU CAME TO THIS COUNTRY OR THE FIRST THING YOU FELT?

A Washington Heights, New York. That describes it.

Q THAT'S IT. THANK YOU.

BY EVELYN FIELDEN:

Q DID YOU EVER THINK ABOUT THE UNITED STATES, WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE, BEFORE YOU CAME HERE?

A Sure. We all did, you know. I'm sure we all had different impressions

or different feelings about it. I don't recall there was terribly disappointing, but I don't recall that I was jumping for joy in Washington Heights either.

You know, when we arrived here, all these friends, these close, close friends that used to stay with us in Holland, when, you know, on the way out from Germany to the United States -- they were all been smarter than we were. And all the relatives and all the cousins. We were just overwhelmed when we arrived here with family things. They all were there to love us and hug us and tell us all about how they suffered during the war in Washington Heights.

BY DAN LEESON:

Q CONSIDERING THE FACT THAT YOU HAVE SEVERAL YEARS OF DIFFICULT MEMORIES, WAS THERE EVER ANY ONE MOMENT WHICH STOOD OUT IN YOUR HEAD AS A POSITIVE RECOLLECTION, WHERE YOU MET A PERSON WITH AN INNER LIGHT WHO WAS ABLE TO TRANSFORM EVEN FOR A MOMENT THIS DIFFICULT MISERY THAT YOU WERE IN?

A There must have been. There must have been such moments. There must have been such people. What you have to understand, what made survival possible was the fact that you were not there by yourself. You were not picked alone. Jerry Rosenstein as being the sole prisoner in Birkenau or Auschwitz or Gleiwitz. You were there with an identifiable group of people that surrounded you.

It may not have been a support group, but just the fact that you were amongst your peers and that you really could maintain your dignity and your balance and know at all times who you were and who they were, made it possible to -- made it helpful to survive, I would think. Remember that survival was as a group, it was not all that individual.

Is that a clear answer?

Q YES. WAS THERE A MOMENT OF KINDNESS SHOWN TO YOU BY ANYONE?

A There must have been. And there were moments of kindness shown by me to others too, you know. It's not a predatory --

Q DO YOU REMEMBER WHO?

A At this moment I don't, but I'm sure they were there. We did not lead a predatory existence and survival also depended very much on you making yourself kind of invisible. There had to be a certain amount of invisibility about you to ensure survival.

BY EVELYN FIELDEN:

Q DID YOUR FATHER HAVE HIS TATOO REMOVED?

A No, he never did. It didn't bother him one bit.

Q YOU SAID HE LIVED TWO YEARS AFTER YOU CAME OVER HERE?

A No, he lived until '59, January '59. He started his business and he had a surgical instrument business. It was a small, healthy business and he did fairly well at it. He died young at 65, but he did leave enough for my mother to be comfortable for the rest of her life.

Q HOW DID HE DIE?

A Things really related to his earlier illnesses. Officially he died of stroke and uremic poisoning, but all of that was as a result of the kidney disease and the diabetes which had come back again after the war.

BY DAN LEESON:

Q AND YOUR MOTHER?

A My mother died of old age at 87 1/2. And she lived in New York until she was 85 and then the last two years of her life she lived in Oakland at the home for Jewish parents.

Q DID SHE REMOVE HER TATOO?

A They were not tatooed in Theresienstadt.

Q AH.

BY CINDY CLUMACK:

Q WHAT ABOUT WHEN YOU WERE IN NEW YORK --

A But if they had, she would have.

Q YOU WERE IN NEW YORK FOR ONLY A FEW YEARS BEFORE YOU VENTURED OUT TO SAN FRANCISCO?

A Yes.

Q HOW WAS THAT ONCE YOUR FAMILY WAS FINALLY REUNITED AND THE WAR WAS OVER AND YOU HAD SO MANY RELATIVES ON THE EAST COAST -- I COULD SEE WHY YOU'D WANT TO COME OUT HERE -- HOWEVER, HOW WAS THAT FOR YOUR PARENTS KNOWING THAT --

A Very good question. My father came from a background where it was customary for the young man to leave home and make his career somewhere else except at home. So that was a very normal behavior pattern as far as my father was concerned. My mother was very traumatized by the fact that I would leave home and leave her and it was very difficult. But the decision making process has never been difficult for me and I decided to do this in 1949 to leave and there was no arguing about it. I say I leave, I leave. So it was very good. So I've essentially not really lived very many years of my life with my parents.

BY EVELYN FIELDEN:

Q HOW MANY RELATIVES HAVE YOU GOT?

A Very good question. I've got lots of first cousins on both sides of the family. I've got lots of second cousins. And then there's some third and fourth

cousins I'm very friendly with too, so I have a fair amount of relatives, very few of them in San Francisco, however. Most of them scattered all over the country. Not too many here. I have discovered a very distant first cousin from Bensheim here in San Francisco the other day, about two years ago, and we are good friends.

Q DO YOU HAVE ANY RELATIVES IN EUROPE?

A In England, not in Central Europe. In Israel, and in England, but nobody in Europe. Either they didn't survive or they had left earlier.

BY CINDY CLUMACK:

Q JUST FOR THE SAKE OF THE VIDEO, WHEN WE SPOKE BEFORE, WHEN YOU CAME HERE YOU HADN'T MARRIED SO YOU JUST HAD THE RELATIVES THAT YOU HAD BEFORE?

A And a lot of them by affinity, Germans call *(vol-ka-von-shaft)*, that's like being related by affinity.

Q OKAY.

BY DAN LEESON:

Q HOW HAVE YOU FELT THAT YOU SURVIVED? DO YOU FEEL THAT YOU SURVIVED THROUGH A PATTERN OF LUCK OR THROUGH YOUR WILL?

A Most luck; also will. We had a great deal of luck. I related many lucky

events in this terrible story. The delays, the fact that we were in Theresienstadt first. The fact that we were not amongst the first transports from Theresienstadt and above all, the fact that we were the last transport out of Gleiwitz, out of Auschwitz. All of that is luck. I don't think we would have survived.

Q HAVE YOU EVER FELT GUILT THAT YOU SURVIVED?

A Oh, you're pushing my buttons, you're pushing my buttons. No, and I find the question really terrible. Why should I feel guilt?

Q ONLY BECAUSE SOME HAVE EXPRESSED THAT FEELING.

A I know some have expressed this feeling, but far more people have managed to get their Ph.D. and master thesis written on that theory on that thesis than is justified by anything.

BY CINDY CLUMACK:

Q DID YOU STILL, WHEN YOU RELATE THE STORY HAVE -- IT'S STILL VERY TRAUMATIC AND IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU'VE LEARNED TO DEAL WITH IT VERY WELL THROUGH THERAPY AND THROUGH POSITIVE THINKING IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR FATHER. DO YOU STILL EVERY SO OFTEN FEEL THE NEED TO SEEK THERAPY OR SEE A PSYCHIATRIST ON THIS STILL?

A No, not on this stuff. No, I think I'm dealing with it fairly well. I'm not sure. I try to tell myself that anyway.

BY EVELYN FIELDEN:

Q WOULD YOU LIKE TO MEET ELIE WIESEL?

A I met him.

Q OH, YOU MET HIM?

A I met him, but I didn't speak much to him. I met him at a dinner that the *(Swigs)* had two years ago, I think, at the Fairmont Hotel for a small group. It was related to the University of San Francisco.

Q ANYTHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO COMMUNICATE TO US?

A Well, I think you've asked all the questions you wanted to hear.

Q WE'VE PUMPED YOU, HAVEN'T WE?

A Yes.

BY _____:

Q I HAVE A COUPLE OF QUESTIONS, IF I MAY?

A By all means.

Q I'M ASSUMING YOU HAD THE OCCASION TO DEAL WITH DUTCH NAZIS, GERMAN NAZIS, AND POLISH NAZIS, AND I WAS WONDERING IF YOU HAD ANY OBSERVATIONS ABOUT ANY DIFFERENCES AMONG THE THREE GROUPS. IS IT POSSIBLE TO MAKE A GENERIC OBSERVATION LIKE THAT?

A No. It really is not. I mean, it's just too generic a question. Possibly

others might answer this positively. I can't. I cannot see the comparison or the correlation.

Q OKAY. DO I UNDERSTAND CORRECTLY JUST IN THE BIG PICTURE OF YOUR STORY THAT ONCE YOU WENT TO WESTERBORK THEN IT WAS A SAGA OF CAMP AFTER CAMP AFTER CAMP WITH NO OTHER INTERLUDE? DID IT GO FROM WESTERBORK TO THERESIENSTADT TO AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU TO GLEIWITZ?

A Exactly.

Q WITH NO INTERLUDES IN BETWEEN?

A No. No resort towns in the middle.

Q OKAY, YOU WEREN'T --

A Released and --

Q RELEASED FOR ANY PERIODS?

A No, nobody ever was to the best of my knowledge.

Q DID YOU HAVE ANY DEALINGS WITH THE UNDERGROUND OR WITH THE RESISTANCE AT ANY TIME?

A No, I was too young, and my parents didn't either.

Q DID YOU -- WERE YOU AWARE OF ANY ACTS OF RESISTANCE IN ANY OF THE CAMPS?

A I was not, but I'm aware of it now and so how much of that knowledge is retroactive or after the fact -- there was resistance in Auschwitz-Birkenau I

understand now, even at the time I was there. I did not know about it. And there was no resistance in the other camps.

Q THERE WAS A MOVIE THAT WAS RELEASED ABOUT SIX MONTHS AGO ABOUT A JEWISH BOXER IN AUSCHWITZ, THIS MOVIE CALLED "TRIUMPH OF THE SPIRIT." DID YOU HAPPEN TO SEE THAT MOVIE?

A No, because if it's a commercial movie about Auschwitz it trivializes the subject. Just to have it in livid color makes me livid myself because it was a very black and white experience.

Q WHAT I WANTED TO ASK YOU WAS, TO WHAT EXTENT DID THIS HOLLYWOOD RENDERING, WHAT DID IT ACCURATELY PORTRAY AND WHAT DID IT INACCURATELY PORTRAY, BUT IF YOU HAVEN'T --

A Not having seen the movie, I can't judge, but I've seen "Sophie's Choice."

Q I'VE READ THE BOOK, BUT I HAVEN'T SEEN THE MOVIE.

A It was not really bad.

BY EVELYN FIELDEN:

Q THANK YOU VERY MUCH, JERRY, I --

BY ----------:

Q OH, EVELYN, I STILL HAVE A COUPLE MORE QUESTIONS, IF I MAY.

WHAT ABOUT IN YOUR STORY ABOUT THERESIENSTADT YOU SAID YOU HAD SOME DEALINGS WITH THE *(UDE-EN-ROD)*?

A Yes, we all did. I mean, this was your immediate authority to go to for anything.

Q CAN YOU TELL US A COUPLE OF ANECDOTES ABOUT DEALINGS YOU HAD WITH THE *(UDE-EN-ROD)*

A Sorry, I don't have any to relate. I don't know. I don't remember.

Q ONE QUESTION WAS SORT OF ALLUDED, THIS QUESTION I WANT TO ASK, WAS SORT OF ALLUDED TO A LITTLE BIT EARLIER. SOME OF THE PEOPLE THAT WE'VE TALKED TO WE'VE ASKED THEM IF THERE WAS ANY KIND OF MUSIC OR ART OR RELAXATION OR CELEBRATION ACTIVITY THAT EVER TOOK PLACE AMONG INTERNEES IN THE CAMPS AND I WAS WONDERING IF YOU COULD TELL US ABOUT ANY EXPERIENCES LIKE THAT.

A Yes, very much so. I was very much involved and this is going to be fairly long if there's enough --

Q FINE, FINE.

A Is that okay?

Q YES.

A When I was a kid -- we have to go back to Amsterdam now for a second. When I was a kid in high school my parents had very good friends by the name of *(Jacobi)*, an elderly couple. He had lung cancer. She was a fantastic bridge player from Berlin and they had a big boxer dog, and they had no children. And they asked me every afternoon after school to come and walk their dog. And the dog weighed a hell of a lot more than I did. And walking that rambunctious dog they got to spoil me rotten, as much as they could.

In their house -- he was a theatrical agent before the war in Berlin -- and in their house was sort of the coterie, the salon, for all the people from *(oofa)*, from the German movie and from the Berlin theater business and they all congregated in their house every afternoon for coffee, tea, smoking, and what have you. Amongst them was Kurt Gerron, *(Clivenhaugen)*, and a few others: directors -- famous people whose names I now no longer remember. But I became all of these people's pet too.

It so happened when I came to Theresienstadt by myself, before my parents were there, this entire group had been sent to Theresienstadt a couple of transports earlier and were there and they sort of looked after me and took me in hand and saw to it, you know, that somebody there, adult, they knew me. And they were doing, under the roof in one of the barracks, an operetta, an opera, every night, with or without the knowledge of the authorities I'm not quite clear. They always said it was without the knowledge of the authorities, but it couldn't have gone on

really without their knowledge, it was too much. And that's where I learned the Three Penny Opera verbatim at the very young age and I did a very creditable job.

And these were famous, famous people. Kurt Gerron can be still seen -- you still see him on the television late-night movies with Marlena Dietrich. And so there was a lot of musical activity.

Somebody *(sconched)* a piano, you know. I heard chamber music there. I know of the *(Drei-koshen) Opera. I also know today, I've kind of assisted in funding the program for the publication of music that was written in Theresienstadt by some very famous composers. There's a professor *(Bluch)* at the University of Seattle, I believe he's English, a musicologist who has taken it upon himself to find all the old manuscripts and have them published and performed and is doing very well and it's very good. Some of it is very good music. There was a woman composer, a Czech woman composer of great renown. And there was *(Ullmann)*, who wrote, amongst other things, the Emperor of Atlantis in Theresienstadt and that opera was performed here at *(Spring Opera)* many a year ago in San Francisco. So yes, there was definitely, particular in Theresienstadt, underground and semi-underground, a great deal of cultural activity. In Auschwitz, not that I ever encountered.

Q BUT IN THERESIENSTADT IT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN TOO UNDERGROUND IF THEY HAD A PIANO?

A Exactly. I'm sure it was with the understanding of the authorities.

What they were doing was *(Bresht-while)*, which was nothing of course that the Nazis would ever tolerate, you see. It was possibly what they were doing rather than that they were doing it.

BY EVELYN FIELDEN:

Q DID THEY HAVE AN ORCHESTRA THERE QUITE OPENLY IN THERESIENSTADT?

A I believe there was. I don't recall all the details.

Q A WOMEN'S ORCHESTRA?

A A women's orchestra. There probably was. What I do recall was assisting at these soirees under the roof all the time.

BY _____:

Q A COUPLE OF MORE LAST QUESTIONS. YOU MENTIONED RIDING WITH THE SURVIVORS OF THE EXPERIMENTAL BLOCK AT AUSCHWITZ AND YOU DID SAY THERE WAS SOME COMMUNICATION LANGUAGE BARRIERS BETWEEN YOU AND THEM, BUT DID ANYBODY AT THAT TIME TELL YOU ANYTHING ABOUT THE EXPERIMENTAL BLOCKS AT AUSCHWITZ, AND ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE?

A Oh, one knew, we knew anyway what was going on in the experimental blocks at Auschwitz. It's all extremely well documented. They did research on little

people. They did research on twins. And they did research on many things, but -- women's menstrual cycles.

Q DID YOU KNOW THIS AT THE TIME?

A I knew that already when I was in Birkenau, probably the second or third day, about the experimental block, yes. We were not far from there.

Q CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT ANY SPECIFIC PEOPLE, OR FIRSTHAND EXPERIENCES YOU HAD IN RELATIONSHIP TO THAT, INMATES THAT YOU DEALT WITH WHO WERE VICTIMS OF THAT SITUATION?

A I never asked anybody what exactly was done to them. It's part of the things you simply that one doesn't, one didn't do. I know that the women in the A Block very often got cement injections to stop their menstruation, attempts of that nature were done. I think that experiments with vision, on vision with twins, and also genetic stuff.

I don't know all the gruesome detail, and frankly, I've never wanted to read up on everything that was done. But the general nature of the thing we were very familiar with, very familiar with.

Q LET'S SEE. A COUPLE MORE. HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED ANTI-SEMITISM IN THE UNITED STATES?

A Occasionally of the social variety, something you can deal with, but nothing --

Q COULD YOU TELL US AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT?

A Well, it's the country-club variety of anti-Semitism. It's not the stuff one can help one's self with, you can tell people off when they're out of hand. I haven't had any experience with real anti-Semitism in this country in any sense. I'm just not exposed to it, frankly.

Q DID YOU JUST SAY THAT WHEN PEOPLE GET OUT OF HAND ON THIS ISSUE YOU TALK TO THEM ABOUT IT?

A Mm-hmm.

Q COULD YOU TELL US ABOUT THAT?

A Well, I just ask them if that wasn't being particularly racist or biased or -- whatever it is and then I tell them it's out of place. And then I drop them and the subject both.

Q WHAT KIND OF RESPONSES DO YOU GET FROM PEOPLE WHEN YOU SAY THAT?

A I don't -- usually an apology or embarrassment, but I don't elicit responses. I mean, they're out of my life.

Q AND ONE LAST THING. YOU WERE REFERRING TO THE CAPO IN BIRKENAU AND YOU SAID IF IT WEREN'T FOR YOUR FATHER'S SMARTS YOU WOULD NOT HAVE SURVIVED YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THIS ONE PARTICULAR CAPO IN BIRKENAU.

COULD YOU ELABORATE ON WHAT YOU MEAN --

A No, I would rather not.

Q PARDON?

A I would rather not. It's just too delicate at the moment. It need not be on here.

Q THOSE ARE ALL MY QUESTIONS.

A Good. We are done.

MS. FIELDEN: IF NOBODY HAS ANY QUESTIONS, I WANT TO THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

MR. ROSENSTEIN: You're welcome. I think you wanted to take pictures of your pictures.

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BY _____:

(Photograph of boy with horse.)

Q CAN YOU TELL US WHO THIS IS?

A This is a picture of my oldest brother in 1936, 1937, 1938 when he was on an agricultural training project prior to emigrating to Palestine. And it was taken in northwestern Holland.

[Cut-out photograph of man.]

Q OKAY. WHO ARE WE LOOKING AT HERE?

A This is a picture of my father taken in 1950 when he was 57 years old. Possibly it was even taken in 1945 or 1946 when he was about 53. It could have been taken right after the war.

Q HE WAS BORN IN WHAT YEAR AGAIN?

A 1893.

[Photograph of man in uniform.]

Q 1893. OKAY. WHO ARE WE LOOKING AT HERE?

A That's a picture of my father during World War I, taken around 1915, 1916, or 1917. He eventually was a lieutenant in the German army, in the Kaiser's army.

Q MIGHT AS WELL LET THE TAPE ROLL SO WE CAN GET SPEED.

[Photograph of gravestones.]

CAN YOU TELL US WHAT THIS IS, PLEASE?

A It's a picture of the tombstones of my grandparents, my mother's

parents near Bensheim, in Germany, being in *( )* at the Jewish cemetery there.

Q WHAT YEAR DID YOU TAKE THIS PHOTOGRAPH? YOU TOOK THIS PHOTOGRAPH?

A I have various photographs, I don't remember if I took this photograph, but it's probably fairly recent because I believe it was sent by them because my mother had the graves repaired and the stone re-erected or something like that. It looked like one of those photographs. But I have photographs last year or two years ago.

Q SO THIS IS A RELATIVELY RECENT PHOTOGRAPH?

A Oh, yes.

Q AND WHAT YEAR DID EACH GRANDPARENT DIE?

A I would not remember. Probably early part of the century.

Q CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THESE TWO DOCUMENTS, PLEASE?

A Yeah. One is a *carte d'identite*, which was the first kind of personal identification that was issued to us by the French government. And the other one is really a passport, *a patrie*, that means a *titre de voyage*. It's a travel document for people without nationality. And I had no nationality after 1945 because my father generously went to the Germane consulate, or whatever it was, and renounced his and my German citizenship. That enabled us to get this paper and we didn't want

to -- after the war -- travel with German travel documents.

Q DID YOU EVER MAKE AN APPLICATION FOR REPARATIONS OF ANY KIND?

A Yes.

Q DID WE TALK ABOUT THAT?

A No.

Q COULD YOU TELL US ABOUT THAT SAGA?

A Well, it's not a big saga. Economic reparations were something that only my parents were entitled to. I only was entitled to reparations because of interrupted education.

[TAPE ENDS]