

Interview with Lewis Weil
Holocaust Oral History Project
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Q: WHERE WERE YOU BORN?

A: I was born in the southern part of Germany, a small town called Landau.

Q: THAT'S SPELLED L-A-N-D-A-U?

A: L-A-N-D-A-U. Right. And it's not too far from Strassberg. It was German and French, and I went back and forth.

Q: WHEN WERE YOU BORN?

A: 1922, in September of 1922.

Q: AND WHO ARE YOUR PARENTS?

A: Well, my parents are both deceased, and my father, unfortunately, never made it to this country. He passed away in a concentration camp in France, and my mother was fortunate enough to come out in 1941. In fact, she was on the water between France and coming to this country when the war broke out on December 7th. And she came to San Francisco on New Year's Eve, 1941. That was quite a celebration at the time.

Ernie at the time was in New York, and he came out with her. He waited, and the two of them came together.

Q: WHAT WERE YOUR PARENTS' NAMES?

A: My mother's name was Auguste, and my father's name was Isidore.

Q: HOW DO YOU SPELL THEM?

A: I-S-I-D-O-R-E. And Auguste is A-U-G-U-S-T-E.

Q: OK.

A: Wonderful people, both of them.

Q: HOW MANY BROTHERS AND SISTERS DID YOU HAVE?

A: Well, I have two brothers: The younger one's name is Ernie, and the older one's name is Henry. And they both live in San Francisco and are married and have children.

Q: HOW MUCH OLDER OR YOUNGER THAN YOU ARE THEY?

A: Well, there's about a year and a half difference on both sides. Ernie is a year and a half younger, and Henry is a year and a half older. That means I'm right in the middle.

Q: WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER MOST ABOUT WHEN YOU WERE VERY SMALL, ABOUT WHERE YOU LIVED?

A: We lived in a small community, and what I remember most at that time was I had a lot of friends, and people were very friendly, because my parents had a lot of friends, both Jewish and not Jewish. So, that's most probably some of the early memories.

We also had a very active Jewish community, and so I have--from when I was very young--I have good memories.

Q: ARE THERE ANY PARTICULAR CHARACTERS THAT YOU REMEMBER IN PARTICULAR?

A: Well, it's interesting, when I was about 9 or 10 years old, and we lived on a little side street, and as I was looking up, a little child about two or three years old, fell out of the window, and I caught that child. And the interesting thing was, when Helen and I went back to Germany--and the first time I went back was in 1964--

Q: HELEN IS YOUR WIFE?

A: Helen is my wife, who is an American, was born in Sacramento. And, when we went back to where I was born, and I was walking down the street--a little, small alley more than a street--the woman happened to be looking out, and she recognized me. Now this was; I was 38, that was almost 30 years later. And she said, "Oh, Mr. Weill! You're the one who saved my little girl many years ago when she fell out of the window." So, that was kind of an interesting experience.

Q: HOW OLD WERE YOU WHEN THAT HAPPENED?

A: About 9 or 10, at that time, when that happened.

Q: WHAT DID YOUR FATHER DO?

A: My family was in the cattle business. My father and his father, which meant they would buy cattle all over the country and sell it to farmers and to the slaughterhouses. And that had been a family business for several generations. So, he would travel all over.

Q: DID YOU GO WITH HIM?

A: No. The only time I would go with him [was] when we would make trips as children in the outlying areas, and in those days, there weren't many cars, so it would be sometimes in a horse and buggy. Which was great. I have a lot of fond memories as far as my father was concerned. He was a great believer in the human race, and in people being good, and he never thought that what happened would happen. And when it did happen, that it would last as long as it did.

It was interesting: Before the elections in 1933, I had always wanted a radio where you could listen to foreign stations, which was not permitted, really; you were not supposed to listen to stations from France, for example. And my dad--one afternoon I said, "If Hitler gets elected, will you buy me a radio?" And he was so sure it wasn't going to happen, that he said yes. Unfortunately, we got the radio.

But he believed it wasn't going to last, that people wouldn't go along. That's most probably why he wasn't ready to leave. We--the children--left, and he ended up in Camp De Gurs with my mother.

Q: DID HE EVER GET TO THE POINT WHERE HE DID WANT TO LEAVE, BUT IT WAS TOO LATE?

A: Well, I imagine so. We tried then. We could have gone to South America, and I think at that time he wasn't ready to leave. And then, he really had a brother in the United States, who I think came to this country in the early '20s. And in 1929 or '30 we lost track of him. Then when we tried to get out, we tried to find out where he was.

I don't know whether Ernie told you this, but we had an aunt who lived in a small community close to where we lived. One day, she brought a postal card to my mother, and said, "Why don't you write to this woman here? She lives in San Francisco." She visited, I think, in the late '20s, because this lady's mother came from that same community where my grandfather was born. So my mother wrote a letter to Mrs. Adolph Kaufman, at that time, from Somer and Kaufman, and asked her whether she could find out whether my dad's brother--who she thought had been at

one time in San Francisco--might still be living in the area.

A correspondence started between the two ladies, and they tried, but they could not find anybody who knew about my uncle. Anyway, to make a long story short, in 1937, she wrote a letter and said "I will sponsor one of your sons. Why don't you send three pictures, a picture of each one of your sons, and then I'll make a decision." And it so happened that she picked my picture. But she also got the affidavits through somebody else for Ernie and Henry.

And, at the time, I had to leave high school, because there were only two of us Jewish boys in high school, and the other boy had a hunchback, and the kids would always pick on him, and I would fight his battles. And it got to the point it was just impossible, so I left school, and decided to work for a year in preparation to coming to this country.

I worked for a tannery, and while I was there. It's before your time, but when the Munich crisis was, in 1938, I told my uncle, whom I stayed with at the time, in a town which was near Heidelberg, I was going to go home. So that was on a Friday, and I went home on the train. The next morning, I went to temple with my father, and during the time when the rabbi gave his sermon, I turned to my father and said, "I'm leaving Germany. I'm leaving now."

And I went home. I told my mother. I got my passport stamped, and was trying to catch a train. The train had left already. We got a taxi, and I caught a train in Mannheim, and took the train to Amsterdam. And I spent two weeks in Amsterdam. And I was really very, very fortunate.

My uncle had a sister there, and they got us into a place where we spent--another fellow I happened to meet on the train went with me--and we stayed at place where a lot of people who had left the country illegally stayed until they had a chance to get out.

One night, the place was raided. They had a false ceiling, where they kept the people when a search was going on. And the search went on, and the friend that I was with had to go to jail, and the reason I didn't have to go to jail was because I had a passport and a ticket already to come to this country. He went to jail. And, thanks to my uncle's relative, we got him out of jail.

Q: SO THAT WAS THE DUTCH POLICE WHO RAIDED IT?

A: Yeah. No, it was the Dutch, and they worked in conjunction with another--I don't know what the other police was. They worked in conjunction with another police. It wasn't just the Dutch. And a lot of people were taken and sent back across the border. And I think a lot of them never made it. So, I was very fortunate then.

Q: NOW WHAT--DO YOU REMEMBER THE DATE?

A: Um, yes, it was in September of 1938, and in fact, I was on the second trans-Atlantic cruise--whatever you want to call it--right after new Amsterdam, and I got into New York on October 15th of 1938, and I spent two weeks in New York.

I had two uncles in New York who wanted me to stay in New York. But I always had a dream I wanted to come to San Francisco. Ever since I was a little boy.

Q: LET'S GO BACK A LITTLE BIT MORE TO WHERE YOU GREW UP. WHAT WAS LIFE LIKE IN LANDAU?

A: Well, you know, as I said, it's a small community. I think there may be 10, 15,000 people at the time, and being a small community, a lot of people knew each other. And prior to Hitler's time, some of the things that I remember, I would go around with my non-Jewish friends at Christmastime and sing Christmas carols. I would go over to their homes, and my parents would invite them over, and when we lit the candles, they would be in our home.

So, we had a very nice relationship going on. Some of the other things I remember that during Passover time, my parents would get small, 1-pound packages of matzos, and we would give them to our non-Jewish friends at Passover.

And, my mother, who was a very fine cook, every Friday she would make challah, and we'd take it to the baker because our oven wasn't big enough to be able to bake three big challahs, so we'd take it to the baker, and we'd pick it up and we would have challah Friday night and everybody'd get a little glass of wine for dinner.

But most probably one of the most terrible things that affected me, after Hitler came to power, that some of these young friends I had turned overnight, and they no longer were my friends. However, I also had the opposite happen to me. I went to high school at the time, and one friend, who was at one time very close, turned out to be--he joined the Hitler Youth, and he and I were just knocking heads constantly.

We had one professor, I'll never forget it, who was very high in the SS, and he would talk to this young fellow, by the name of Summer--I'll never forget his name. In fact, Ludwig--my name used to be Ludwig, L-U-D-W-I-G, and I changed it when I came over here because the Kaufmans felt I should Americanize my name. Anyway, this professor, who believed in the Nazi doings, however, defended me at all times when this guy would speak up against me. So--

Q: WAS THIS IN GYMNASIUM, OR--?

A: The Oberrealschule. Gymnasium, that's more where the Latin language and the professionals. I went to the Oberrealschule, where science was more important. At the time, we had a lot of French, and later on English.

But, that really made a great impression on me, because I was in my 13, 14, and 15 years old.

Q: WHEN YOU SAID YOU KNOCKED HEADS WITH THIS YOUNG KID, WHAT DID YOU DO? WASN'T IT KIND OF DANGEROUS TO OPPOSE THE NAZI YOUTH?

A: Yeah, it was, but I would never--that didn't bother me. Whatever I believed in, that was it, and I wouldn't take it from any of them. And I think, in a way, I got their respect by speaking up.

One time, what happened later on, since we could not participate in of our activities anymore, we had an organization where we would go either play ping-pong, and I was involved in teaching gymnastics to the younger kids on Wednesdays, and I remember--this happened to be in the summer of 1938--Ernie was with me, and we had just finished.

And as we were leaving, there must have been about six or seven kids from the Hitler Youth attacking us. And Ernie and I had a bicycle. We took off the bicycle pumps and fought it out with them. And I spent a couple of very sleepless nights then, because if that would have gotten to the police, and I would have gotten a police record, I would have never been able to leave the country.

Q: WHEN WAS THIS?

A: That was just about three or four months before I left, but it never got reported to the police. And I also, in school, when they called me dirty names, I spoke up. I wouldn't go for it.

Q: WHAT WOULD YOU SAY? WITHOUT GETTING IN TROUBLE? OR DID YOU GET IN TROUBLE?

A: Well, I got in trouble, but when it got to the point where I knew there was nothing I could do, that's when I left high school, in 1937. Because I just, being the kind of person I was, and not being willing to just sit there and take it, I thought it would be better for me to leave.

And as I said, I got a job for about nine months or so. I worked in a tannery as an electrician's volunteer, trying to learn something, knowing if

I came to this country, I might have to earn a living. In fact, it was interesting: Right after I left, they were looking for me because they needed conscription labor. And that was just about a month or two after I left.

And Ernie--

Q: WHAT KIND OF CONSCRIPTION LABOR?

A: Well, where you were told--You were taken and sent someplace, and you were told what you had to do. Whether it was digging roads, or laying cable, or whatever was the case.

Q: WAS THIS SOMETHING THEY WOULD DO JUST TO JEWS, OR WAS THIS TO--

A: Well, I think it was everybody, but also quite a bit to Jews, too. So, I was fortunate that I had just gotten out a month or so before. But, on the other hand, I--you know, you develop also a certain amount of guilt feelings, which you can have, which are easy to develop, and which took me a long time to get over.

Q: AND THE GUILT FEELINGS WERE ABOUT?

A: About being one of the fortunate ones to have gotten out before Kristallnacht and everything else. So--

Q: WHAT DID YOU HAVE TO DO TO GET OVER THESE GUILT FEELINGS?

A: I talked to a lot of people, and it took me many years. And I tried to resolve it, and I think what finally did it--When I went back to Germany in 1964, it was not a very pleasant experience. But then in 1975, we took our children with us, and Ernie's daughter got married in Haifa, she married a Sabra over there, and we went to the wedding. There were 18 of us from over here, in fact, who went over there. It was a wonderful experience.

And from there, we went to Germany, and I wanted our children to know where I was born. We went to the house, and we had a very interesting experience there. As we drove up, the people who owned the house then were just ready to leave and I think go to church, and I asked them whether we could see the house, because that's where I was brought up. And they said, "No, we're just on our way to church."

And they got in the car, and they start talking to each other. The husband and the wife and everything, and one of their kids or two of their children, and the next thing we know, they said, "Yes, we'll show you the house."

So they showed us the house, and as we were ready to leave and we thanked them, the husband asked me whether I wanted to buy the house back. So the reason they showed me the house, was to want to sell the house back to me. The house that I grew up in, that was taken away from us, and then whoever took it away sold it to them! And I said, "No, thank you."

But, anyway, from there we went to France, and we went to the camp where my father passed away, and we went to the graveside. And I think by then, that really helped me to kind of resolve that guilt feeling.

While we were there we had a really very pleasant experience. We had to get the key to get into the burial grounds, and while we were waiting and we got the key, we met another couple there with their son, and they were not Jewish, and he used to belong to the French Underground, and helped the Jews. And he still, every year at least once, would go there, and if any graves needed to be fixed up in some way, or if weeds were there, they would pull weeds.

So we invited them to have a little bite to eat, and we talked about this. And it kind of makes you feel good, you know, that there are a lot of good people, too.

So, anyway, it took years for me to resolve that particular problem, that I was able to get out and not be involved in a lot of unfortunate things that happened. I wasn't in a concentration camp. But it took years to get over that. So it was fortunate that the rest of the family was able to come to San Francisco.

Q: THE REST OF THE FAMILY MEANING YOUR BROTHERS?

A: Right. And then in turn they got married, and they all live here, with the exception of Ernie's daughter, who lives in Israel.

Q: HOW ABOUT YOUR EXTENDED FAMILY? HOW MANY OF THEM GOT OUT?

A: Well, some of them got out who went to Brazil, but some aunts and uncles perished in the Holocaust, and we never heard from them again. We tried over the years. One cousin, who was the son of my mother's youngest sister, is the only one who survived from that part of the family. When he was very young, somehow he got into Switzerland, and later on he went to school in Switzerland. In fact, he was one of the few who got citizenship in Switzerland. But his family we never heard anything of. I had another aunt and uncle who perished, we never found out what happened to them. So we lost our share of family in what happened over there.

Q: WHEN YOU WERE VERY YOUNG, DO YOU REMEMBER ANY ANTI-SEMITISM IN LANDAU?

A: That's a good question. I really don't, personally. When I was little, no. I don't. The interesting thing is, when my father was--I think he was once or twice in Dachau, after I had left, when they rounded up all the Jews and sent them off, and he ended up in Dachau--several of the people he was very close to--non-Jewish people--would bring food to my mother and to the family.

So the only thing I'm saying is, I do not remember any anti-Semitism when I was small. I really don't. So that's why it was that much more of an unbelievable thing to me that something like this could happen. But I anticipated it before it happened. I told my family and my father, that we're going to have problems.

Q: WHAT WAS THE FIRST ANTI-SEMITIC INCIDENT YOU REMEMBER EXPERIENCING PERSONALLY?

A: I think it was in high school. Being called names, and kids moving away from where I was sitting, and not talking to me anymore. That probably was one of the first incidents that I remember.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER ANY OF THEIR PARENTS TELLING THEIR CHILDREN THAT THAT WASN'T RIGHT?

A: That's a good question. That is a good question, and I don't know whether I can-- There were some parents who, and some of the older kids, who did not behave that way, but I think most probably some of the parents then were afraid to really tell their kids "you don't do that," because the kids might have turned around and talked about it to their friends how the parents felt. You know, everybody was afraid that everybody would tell on everybody else. And I think that was what made them successful: Fear.

Q: SO EVEN IN THE EARLY DAYS, IN THE EARLY '30S, THOUGH, WHEN PEOPLE WEREN'T YET THAT AFRAID OF THE HITLER YOUTH, YOU DON'T REMEMBER ANYTHING THEN?

A: What do you mean, don't remember anything? In what respect?

Q: LIKE PARENTS COMING TO YOUR DEFENSE AND TELLING THEIR CHILDREN, "NO, THAT'S NOT O.K."? THIS IS BEFORE, BECAUSE I KNOW THAT AT ONE POINT HITLER GOT VERY--

A: Yeah, well, I don't remember, personally, any anti-Semitism before '33, as far as I was concerned. I was--what, about nine years old? And I played with all the kids, and yet you could kind of feel it in the air, it was there. I don't know. Like when you say here, "I've got a gut feeling," but you can't explain it. And I had that same kind of feeling, but I couldn't explain it, but I know it was there, and I felt it was going to get worse. But on the other hand, personally, I do not remember, prior to 1933, being called names.

Q: YOU MENTIONED THAT THIS INSTRUCTOR IN SCHOOL WAS AN SS MAN. WAS THE SS PRESENCE IN LANDAU PRETTY VISIBLE?

A: Yes, I think it was as visible as it was in a lot of other places. Yes, it was. And the marching and everything, goose steps and everything. You had it there, too.

Q: WAS IT COMPULSORY TO JOIN, OR DID PEOPLE JOIN BECAUSE THEY WANTED TO?

A: Well, I think it turned into being compulsory, because if you didn't do it, you were a marked person.

Q: WHAT WOULD THEY DO TO A MARKED PERSON?

A: God, I guess they got to be outcasts in a sense, too. I think young people do the same thing here: They do what the others do. Right? You follow the crowd. And I had-- But I remember also, in the early '30s, I had another professor who was really--he had a group of kids that he used to take hiking and on overnights, and I remember I was involved in that. That was after Hitler, and the kids we went with, there was never anything said about Hitler Youth or anything like that. But he was not part of it.

Q: WHAT HAPPENED--DO YOU HAPPEN TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM AFTER THE WAR?

A: No, I often wondered what happened to him after the war. I have no idea. He was a professor, and he certainly didn't agree with what was happening there, but I do not know what happened to him after the war. I don't.

Q: DID VERY MANY FAMILY FRIENDS START TURNING ON YOUR FAMILY WHEN HITLER CAME TO POWER?

A: I think there were some of them, but the-- I believe in the earlier part of the '30s, when I was really young, my dad still did do business with the people he was dealing with before, but as time went on that got to be less and less.

Also, you know, you couldn't keep any more help, because non-Jews couldn't work for Jews, and so each one of the three of us was assigned certain chores, like Ernie would help in the kitchen, and Henry helped my dad with books and so forth, and at that time I think we still had some cattle. And we also had stables where we kept cattle, and I was helping in that aspect of things.

So, your circle got to be smaller and smaller. Because people were afraid. And they wouldn't speak out.

Q: DID ANYBODY EVER GO OUT OF THEIR WAY TO MAKE A REAL SHOW TO YOUR FAMILY OR TO YOU?

A: Oh, yes, they did to my family. Absolutely.

Q: WHAT DID THEY DO?

A: Well, like bringing food, when there was no food available. Or one I think telling my father, some of them told him, "Get out of here." And he had friends who stayed friends. Absolutely.

Q: DID THEY DO THIS KIND OF SURREPTITIOUSLY, OR WERE THEY ABLE TO BE OPEN ABOUT IT?

A: Well, I-- A lot of this happened after I left, so I don't think they could be open about it. Because then it would have meant trouble for them also. But I remember my mother, after she came over, telling us and telling me, that thanks to some of those friends, they had at times food which they wouldn't have had otherwise.

Q: WERE ANY OF THESE PEOPLE WHO HELPED YOUR FAMILY-- DID THEY JOIN THE S.S.?

A: I don't know. I can't answer that question. I don't know.

Q: WHAT HAPPENED WITH YOUR PARENT'S BUSINESS EVENTUALLY?

A: Well, there was nothing left, eventually. You know, it went by the wayside.

Q: WHEN DID THAT HAPPEN?

A: Well, I guess that happened in-- That started happening in '36, '37. Got to be less and less. Then in '38 it was all gone. With Kristallnacht and everything, there wasn't anything left. You were lucky to get out with your life--which was a lot more important, anyway.

Q: BEFORE I FORGET, DO YOU REMEMBER THE NAME OF THE S.S. MAN IN SCHOOL WHO DEFENDED YOU?

A: Yes, I'm trying to remember it. You know, I thought about his name, and it came to me and I forgot again. I don't know-- It starts with an "L", but I can't for the life of me remember. I can see the man in front of me, but I can't remember his name. And I really should.

Q: IF IT COMES TO YOUR MIND LATER, JUST INSERT IT THERE.

A: I will. I will, because I was thinking of him the other night. Because I give him a lot of credit for it. He did what he believed in, but he was still human, and he didn't believe in some of things that they were doing. I'll think of his name.

Q: THE OTHER NAME I'D LIKE, IF YOU CAN REMEMBER IT, IS THE MAN WHO DIDN'T JOIN THE PARTY, WHO TOOK YOU ON THAT CAMPING TRIP.

A: Munich. His name was Dr. Munich. It just came to me: M-U-N-I-C-H.

Q: HE'S THE PROFESSOR--

A: He's the professor who did not join, and he had the group of young people. It was like a club that he had, and I remember going with him and a group to the Black Forest and staying overnight. And he did not join nor believe in what was going on.

Q: WHAT WAS HIS FIRST NAME? DO YOU REMEMBER?

A: Now you're asking a question-- It may come to me.

Q: THAT'S O.K. IF IT DOES, JUST--

A: Yes, it-- But he was a very fine gentleman. A very fine gentleman.

Q: WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR PARENTS ON KRISTALLNACHT? WHAT WAS THEIR EXPERIENCE?

A: Well, I remember from--this is hearing from Ernie--that they--if I remember correctly--that Ernie and my mother were hiding for a while in the attic. And then when they had an opportunity, they hiked from where we lived to a place where my father used to do business, and spent some time there with the people, who also were not sympathetic to the Nazi cause.

And then they ended up--I don't know--on the train--they ended up, the two of them in Mannheim, where my mother's youngest brother lived. And I think that's where they ended up. And I believe Henry came there. I think he was at the time in Frankfurt, and he came there, too. And my father then, I believe--or before then--was taken to a concentration camp, to Dachau.

But then he got out. And I'm not sure whether they took him back one more time, and then they both ended up in Camp De Gurs in France--my mother and my father and her younger brother and his wife. And they were in the same camp, and my father passed away there. I think he got pneumonia--whatever it was, I don't know.

My mother got into Marseille, and my aunt and uncle (my uncle passed away a few years ago, and she lives in Oakland now)--they escaped through Spain. They got out of the camp and they escaped through Spain. In fact, she wrote the history of her escape, and that may be something that you may be interested in reading.

She was very helpful and close to my mother, and helped her in many ways in getting over her loss and while she was there, and was very close to my mother when she was alive here. She lives in Oakland now.

Q: WHAT WAS THE NAME OF THE BOOK?

A: It isn't a book. She wrote a history, you know, of what happened. Which is very interesting. She was hoping that maybe she could somebody who was interested to make it into a book.

Anyway, her husband was always the kind of guy I looked up to, because he was always interested in sports, and I used to be very much interested in sports.

Q: DID YOUR FATHER TELL YOU VERY MUCH ABOUT WHAT THE CAMP WAS LIKE? WAS THIS ONE OF THE BIG NAZI CAMPS, OR WHAT?

A: It was a French camp, really. And we really didn't discuss it that much. I want to talk some more with my aunt about this. I don't know why; maybe at that time I wasn't ready to hear about it. It's quite possible. So we did not discuss it that much. But later on we talked about it a little bit, and she always told me how much she had to thank my aunt for really getting her out of there and coming over here.

Q: WHAT DID SHE TELL YOU?

A: Well, when she was sick, my aunt would help her when she needed mental support. She would be there to help her. She was just a very strong person, and knowing of her being there was really a great support to her.

Q: WHAT YEAR WERE THEY IN THIS CAMP?

A: Well, she got out of the camp in 1941, and she stayed in Marseille then until we were able to get her a passport to come over here. And she left, as I mentioned, before the beginning of December of 1941, she left. On one of the last ships that got out of France to come over here.

Ernie had gotten out-- I don't know, most probably when Ernie was in the ship that went to Havana, and couldn't land there. Then they went back to France.

Q: THE **SAINT LOUIS**?

A: The **Saint Louis**. Yes, he was on the **Saint Louis**. And he ended up in France. He was very fortunate in the sense that, he was in the border organization, and a woman took a liking to him, and he ended up going to cooking school-- What is the name of it? Everybody talks about it, and now I can't think of the name of it. Anyway, he went there for a year. Then he came over here.

CAMERAMAN: The Cordon Bleu?

A: Cordon Bleu! Isn't that funny? I couldn't think of it for a minute. Right. He went there, and that was sponsored through a French baroness or somebody who took a liking to him. Then he came over here and ended up with my mother in San Francisco.

Q: WHAT DID HE TELL YOU ABOUT THE **SAINT LOUIS**?

A: Well, it was interesting, in a sense. They finally got to Cuba, to Havana, and my older brother, Henry, was in Havana at the time. And

they could have gotten him off, but it would have meant that it could have presented problems to a lot of the other people there. So it was decided not to do it.

Q: WHAT KIND OF PROBLEMS COULD IT HAVE PRESENTED?

A: Well, it would have been done in a way which most probably the authorities would not have approved of. So rather than cause problems--

Q: FOR THE SHIP?

A: For the ship, it was decided not to do anything. And then Ernie ended up going back on the **Saint Louis**. And finally, he was one of the ones that was let off in France. As you know, a lot of countries wouldn't take the people in. So he ended up in France, and was at the Order camp. Naturally we feel very close to the Order organization. In fact, I think Ernie went to a meeting in Los Angeles where the people from all over came to have a 50th reunion.

Q: YOU SAID THAT YOUR AUNT ESCAPED THROUGH SPAIN, THOUGH. SO SHE AND YOUR MOTHER ESCAPED BY DIFFERENT ROUTES?

A: Yes, they escaped by going over the mountain range there. My mother-- we were fortunate enough to get a passport for her and get passage for her. So, yes, they escaped. My mother could have never gone over the mountain range there. So they did, and it was quite an experience.

Q: WHAT CAMP--

A: And--

Q: I'M SORRY, GO AHEAD.

A: You were going to say something about the camp.

Q: NO, YOU FINISH.

A: No. I'm finished.

Q: O.K. THE CAMP THAT YOUR MOTHER WAS IN? WHAT WAS IT AGAIN?

A: It was camp De Gurs

Q: HOW DO YOU SPELL THAT?

A: CAPITAL D-E, THEN CAPITAL G-U-R-S.

Q: NOW, YOU SAID THAT THAT WAS ACTUALLY A FRENCH CAMP. WAS THAT A VICHY CAMP?

A: Yes, it was a French camp.

Q: SO THE VICHY RAN IT?

A: Yes, I believe that it correct. Yes, they ran it. And they had the women separate from the men there. But I really don't know, when you ask the question of how hard it was there. There were a lot of times they didn't have much to eat. That I know. But, like I said before, my mother was finally able to get out of there.

When we were there, there were a lot of people who lost their lives. When we were there in '75 and looked at all the gravestones.

Q: WAS THIS A CAMP FOR JEWISH PEOPLE WHO HAD COME FROM OTHER COUNTRIES, WHO WEREN'T FRENCH CITIZENS?

A: I believe a lot of them were there who were not French citizens. But I am not sure whether they also had French citizens there who did not go along with the Vichy government. I can't answer that question, because I don't know.

Q: WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST IMPRESSION OF AMERICA?

A: Interesting that you should ask that. Let me go back. When I was six or seven years old, I saw pictures of San Francisco, and ever since then, that was my dream city that I wanted to come to. When I came to New York, and I got off the ship, it was in Hoboken. And my first experience was getting a hot dog and a root beer for a nickel. And when I saw "root beer," I thought it was beer. And I had that root beer, and that's the last time I had root beer.

Then when we came into Manhattan, and I had just turned 16, and I look around, and I see those tall skyscrapers. And there's little Lewis looking up there. And I said, "this is not for me." I was going to go to San Francisco anyway

But also, an experience I had which I will never forget: I remember in one of the restaurants, I saw a sign that said "Jews not allowed." And that,

to me, I could not believe, when I saw that sign. But coming from a small town, and seeing that unbelievable city, being 16 years old. You know, you look around, and it's like a new world. And it was a wonderful experience and something that I had looked forward to for many years, but not under the circumstances that it happened.

So, I stayed with my aunt and uncle for two weeks, and then I went on a train from New York to San Francisco. I arrived here on November 3, 1938, on a Thursday morning at 8 o'clock.

Q: WAS IT EVERYTHING YOU EXPECTED?

A: Yes. The sight. There was a train called The Challenger. And it left on a Sunday morning, and I sat up in a compartment, and you changed trains in Chicago, and we got off in Oakland. And the Kaufmans, Mrs. Kaufman came over to Oakland, and came over on the ferry.

And I will never in my life forget that sight of being on a ferryboat and seeing San Francisco and the outline of San Francisco. That was a dream sight, something I had dreamed about. The kind of impression you get and you never forget.

And the Kaufmans, they were like parents to me. They were just wonderful people.

And I went back to school. Another thing that happened that's interesting: The first week I spent at Homewood Terrace-- I don't know whether you're familiar with Homewood Terrace? It was a home for children whose parents had separated or where the parents couldn't hold onto their children, and it was a home where they had cottages and they had housemothers, and the children stayed there from a young age until they were ready to go to work.

Anyway, I stayed there for a week, until I went into a foster home, when I went back to high school. And Dr. Langer, who was the director of the home, I stayed at his home, and there was a woman by the name of Mrs. Kasten who was his housekeeper, and she wanted to make a real nice breakfast for me, and it was a great breakfast.

And I saw the glass-- I don't know whether you know, in Europe there are what's called "blood oranges." They come from Spain, and they're very red, the oranges. So I saw that glass, and I thought, "Oh, boy! I'm getting orange juice with oranges that came from Spain." Right? Then I started to take a sip, and I had to drink it. I was tomato juice. And never in my life did I have tomato juice. So that was the first and the last time that I had tomato juice. I love tomatoes, but I won't drink tomato juice.

But anyway, I have been very, very fortunate to live in this country. And hopefully, we can give a little bit back of what was done for us. So, all of us are involved in some way to-- I don't know, I don't think you can

repay anything. I think you can acknowledge what has been done for you, and by doing something hopefully help somebody else.

Q: KIND OF PASS IT ON?

A: That's most probably a good word. Pass it on to others who-- There's a great need. Whether Jews who are coming out of Russia now or people in this country, there's a great need.

Q: HOW MUCH ANTI-SEMITISM HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED HERE? IN THE UNITED STATES?

A: I have experienced some anti-Semitism. And in most cases I have spoken up when it has happened. There was one case where for some reason I rationalized, and that was wrong.

Q: WHAT HAPPENED?

A: It was somebody who singled out the Jews and made a remark, "only the Jews could do something like that." And for some reason, I didn't speak up then and there, and that was wrong.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT WAS IS THEY SAID ONLY JEWS COULD DO?

A: It had something to do with dealing with money. That I remember. And then-- It's interesting: Then, later on--I think it might have been a week or two weeks later--I told that person, I said, "You know, I am Jewish." And then he tried to defend himself. You know, "It isn't meant for you." And then I talked to him about it, but I'm still sorry that I didn't do it when it happened.

So there have been a few times where it has happened. I think it also happened a couple of times to my wife. And she's the kind of person...

[VIDEOTAPE QUALITY PROBLEMS; INAUDIBLE]

...for example, some of the people that got involved in the S&Ls, the Boesky's and so forth. When Boesky got put into jail, who is Jewish, and Miliken and so forth, some of the people said, "well, they are Jews." And "only Jews would do something like that."

Q: WHEN YOU SAY, IT'S THE ONLY REASON--

A: The reason why. I mean, that's the kind of thing. And I think you've got to speak up. Yes, they were Jews, but it could have happened with anybody. And I don't think one should just let it go. And I think my wife had an incident a few years ago, and she spoke up right away.

Q: WHAT HAPPENED?

A: I'm trying to remember. She said to the woman, "I resent that. I am Jewish, and I think what you just said is offensive to me and to the Jewish people." I'm trying to remember. It had something to do with behavior of Jews. You know, "Jews behave in a certain way that other people do not behave." And Helen resented it, and correctly so.

And in fact, when I came home the night when I told her that I didn't speak up, she was very upset with me, and she was right. She was right.

Q: DO YOU PARTICIPATE, LIKE WHEN PRESIDENT REAGAN-- WHEN THEY OBJECTED TO HIS VISIT TO THE BITTURG CEMETERY, DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN STUFF LIKE THAT?

A: Yes, we went to a lot of the-- Helen and I both would go to rallies. Like we went to the one that-- Last two years. Yes, we did, or write letters.

Q: WHAT ABOUT?

A: Well, like when this Perestroika and everything happened, we went to rallies that were at the Soviet Consulate. We went there. Or Helen would write letters, and we're very supportive and help wherever we can to what we can to as far as trying to help get Russian Jews out of Russia.

Helen, through the Temple, for several years wrote postcards and letters to a family in Russia, and that family finally got out. And we are involved with an organization for Jewish emigres, and participate in Jewish welfare relations, Exodus Program. So we try to help wherever we can.

Q: DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN THOSE DEMONSTRATIONS THAT THEY HAD WHEN THE AUSCHWITZ CARMELITE MONASTERY STUFF WAS GOING ON LAST FALL? LAST SUMMER, I GUESS.

A: Yes, we went to some meetings. Yes, that's where the nuns were going to-- Where they didn't want to

Q: TO MOVE THEM

A: --move them. Yes, I think-- I'm trying to remember. We did

something when that happened. I don't know whether Helen wrote a letter or what she did, but we did something at the time.

Q: DO YOU TRY TO EXPLAIN YOUR VIEWPOINTS TO PEOPLE WHO AREN'T JEWISH? BECAUSE I REMEMBER THAT AUSCHWITZ THING, AND A LOT OF PEOPLE--CATHOLICS IN PARTICULAR--A LOT OF THEM I DON'T THINK WERE ANTI-SEMITIC; THEY JUST DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY THE JEWISH PEOPLE WERE OBJECTING. AND HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH THAT? I PERCEIVE IT AS A NAIVETE ALMOST.

A: Yes. Well, when you say that, do you mean that you can't fault them for agreeing with it because they don't know any better?

Q: I GUESS SORT OF. IT SORT OF JUST-- I JUST KNOW A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE JEWISH VIEWPOINT, WITHOUT BEING ANTI-SEMITIC.

A: Yes, I understand. I think what one really has to do is an educational job, but let's take the flip side of that: What happened in Jerusalem, where we took over that building in Jerusalem, which most probably has similar sensitivities.

Q: I'M SORRY, WHICH BUILDING?

A: It belonged to one of the Moslem factions there. And, I don't know, maybe five or ten or fifteen Jewish families moved in. They bought the house and moved in, and it caused a problem. So, where we didn't have the sensitivities, the same as what you were talking about.

Q: THAT BRINGS UP ANOTHER-- ONE OF THE MORE INTERESTING THINGS I'VE BEEN READING LATELY ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST. ALICE MILLER PROBABLY DOES SOME OF THE BETTER JOBS. I'VE ONLY READ HER; SO MAYBE OTHERS DO JUST AS GOOD A JOB. SHE'S WRITTEN A BOOK CALLED-- I CAN'T REMEMBER ALL OF A SUDDEN--

CAMERAMAN: "FOR YOUR OWN GOOD"

Q: YES. "FOR YOUR OWN GOOD." AND IN IT--SHE'S A SWISS PSYCHIATRIST--SHE TALKS ABOUT CHILD ABUSE AS BEING POSSIBLY A MAJOR MOTIVATOR FOR THE HOLOCAUST, AND SHE SPEAKS A LOT ABOUT GERMAN AND AUSTRIAN CHILDRISING HABITS. AND SHE GOES INTO HITLER'S LIFE IN DETAIL AND INTO A COUPLE OF OTHER PEOPLE'S IN LESS DETAIL. SO WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT TYING

THAT TO THE HOLOCAUST? DO YOU THINK THAT'S IMPORTANT TO DEAL WITH THAT?

A: Well, I think its-- I read a little bit about that, and I guess when you go into that, it's almost like partially giving him a justification for what he did. But most probably it had a bearing on how he conducted his life. But I don't think it is any justification of what happened. Because he wasn't the only person involved. There were hundreds and thousands and millions involved.

I think we know that our upbringing and what happens in our early childhood has a bearing on how we act and react, but I don't think one could or should use that as an excuse or justification.

Q: WHAT IF IT WERE USED AS AN EXPLANATION, WITH THE ATTITUDE THAT CHILD ABUSE NEEDS TO BE FOUGHT IN ORDER TO FIGHT A RECURRENCE OF SOMETHING, NOT NECESSARILY JUST LIKE THE LAST HOLOCAUST, BUT SIMILAR IN NATURE?

A: I agree with that. Because anytime you can use something that has happened that was unfortunate and can use it as an example or as teaching for this or something similar not to happen, by all means it should be done. Absolutely. Absolutely. Whatever that may be.

Q: WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE LESSONS OF THE HOLOCAUST THAT MOST NEED TO BE REMEMBERED?

A: I think that is a good question. I think what has to be remembered is that when something happens, that it has to be recognized, and the rest of the world has to do their part in helping to make it not happen again. And not find reasons or excuses for sitting back.

Q: AND BEING UNINVOLVED?

A: And being uninvolved. And I think that is even more important today than it was then, because the world is getting smaller.

Q: SO THE LESSON YOU'RE ARTICULATING IS THAT IT'S VERY IMPORTANT FOR EVERYBODY TO BECOME INVOLVED IN SOCIAL FORCES?

A: Yes. I think we have to involve ourselves. I think that's the only way that you can bring about change without revolution. I think that is very important. And I think that's one lesson that we should have learned. I

think that's true with the Third World countries; that's true what's happening in Eastern Europe, and I think that's most probably--hopefully--the one lesson that all of us learn. That's true with the unfortunate people right here in our country. Whether they be Jewish or not Jewish. It's very important.

Q: HOW WOULD YOU GO ABOUT-- I DON'T WANT TO SAY "GETTING," BECAUSE YOU CAN'T GET PEOPLE TO DO ANYTHING, BUT I GUESS MOTIVATING PEOPLE TO DO THAT?

A: Well, I think there's several ways to do it. First of all, I think you can't motivate somebody unless you sent an example. That's number one. Number two is, I think, that something has to start in the home, with your family, with your children, at a very young age. Whether they take a bowl of soup to somebody who is shut in or whether they take in the newspaper to somebody who can't get up in the morning to get, or whether somebody drives somebody to Temple, or gets their groceries.

I think that's something that can't happen overnight, but it's something that all of us can do in one way or another. I don't think that's something that has to do with how rich or how poor you are. It has to do with what you want to do with the 24 hours of the day. And what part of that do you want to devote to making this world a better world.

Q: SO, IT'S SORT OF A COMBINATION OF A VALUE SYSTEM THAT YOU TEACH YOUR CHILDREN.

A: Exactly.

Q: AND YOU ALSO TEACH THEM TO SEE LIFE FROM OTHER PEOPLE'S PERSPECTIVE.

A: Absolutely. That's right. And I think that's very important. Yes. And not bringing them up in a very isolated environment. I think that's important. But you cannot tell somebody when they're 20 or 25 years old, "I want you to do this." What happened to the other 24 years? It doesn't work.

It's funny, I was at a meeting last night, where I'm involved through the Temple in a family assistance program, through the Temple. And one of the things that we were talking about was how to get more volunteers involved. Because we have a program where we work with the needy, and the primary thing we're trying to do is provide funds for people who cannot afford the first and last months' rent deposit. So we interview families, and we make that money available.

We go their home, and then try to work something out over a period of time, where they can pay it back, maybe three or five dollars a month--whatever.

But we've got a problem with trying to get more volunteers. And we talked about it, and we're going to spend one evening trying to find a way of getting more people involved. In other words, you can't do these things in one night, but you can start, you know. It's like a little tree: Once it's grown, you can't bend it any longer. It breaks in the wind.

Q: THE FLEXIBILITY IS GONE.

A: The flexibility is gone. That's right.

Q: HAVE YOU TALKED ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES VERY MUCH TO YOUR FAMILY? YOUR EXPERIENCES IN GERMANY WITH THE HOLOCAUST?

A: In what-- What do you mean, to talk to my family? In what respect?

Q: YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES. LIKE WITH YOUR FAMILY AND WITH YOURSELF. HAVE YOU TALKED TO YOUR CHILDREN?

A: Yes, it's very interesting. Our oldest son, David, is doing a videotape right now. We've had about three sessions, with us three brothers, telling the whole story from when we were little and growing up and everything else, and then he's going to give it to every one of the family members. Because that's one way of making sure that it is not forgotten. He's doing that right now.

Q: WHAT ABOUT TELLING OTHER PEOPLE, WHO ARE NOT PART OF YOUR FAMILY AND NOT NECESSARILY JEWISH.

A: I have talked to some people, but maybe not as many as I should. I think we have talked about it when the opportunity arose. But I don't want it to be that I'm spreading a gospel.

Q: HOW DO YOU MEAN?

A: Well, telling people about it rather than going out and-- I don't know what the word is-- trying to spread the gospel.

Q: AND THE GOSPEL IS WHAT?

A: The gospel being that-- Well, you asked me about talking about my

life and what happened. I feel I want to do it in a-- I don't know what the proper word is. In an appropriate way.

Q: WHAT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE?

A: Good question!

Q: Well, just sitting here is an appropriate way of doing it. And like when I was talking to John here, how can I be helpful, not having gone through some of the things that others have gone through. And he said, "well, maybe if there are a few things that we can take out of here that can be helpful in making other people aware of what has happened and how to prevent it." Well, that is a way of being helpful.

If I have talked to young people--

Q: YOU'VE DONE THAT, TOO?

A: I have done it in a small way. But that's something I think, most probably, as time goes on, I have thought about maybe doing more of that, and just possibly have rap sessions with maybe youth groups or something. I have given that some thought. And just sit around and talk and let them ask questions.

Q: WELL, THE REASON I ASK IS BECAUSE I WAS SPEAKING OF KIND OF "BRIDGE BUILDING" AS A METHOD OF...

[VIDEOTAPE PROBLEMS; INAUDIBLE]

Q: IT JUST SEEMS MORE LIKELY THAT PEOPLE WOULD BE MORE LIKELY TO REFUSE TO PARTICIPATE IN ANY KIND OF PREJUDICE IF THEY...

[VIDEOTAPE PROBLEMS]

A: ...What I'm trying to say is what kind of approach to take in doing this, what we are talking about. I most probably feel a lot more comfortable just to sit with young people and talk to them about it because, in a sense, they're still in their formative years. And they're the ones who're going to run the world tomorrow. And that's most a probably...

[VIDEOTAPE PROBLEMS]

A: ...I most probably will do.

Q: WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO TELL THEM?

A: I think most probably what I will do is sit down, get together, and just maybe make a short introduction about who I am, that I came to this country in 1938, and what has happened, and leave it open to them. "Why don't you ask me questions? Why did you come? What did you see in this country? What made you leave over there?" And so forth.

I am not one who believes in giving a canned speech. Because people interact differently under different circumstances. When I have to talk to people, I maybe have a 3 x 5 card, and I make five notes on there, and that's it. That's just it, I talk as I go along. Because I think, to me, that's a much better way of doing it. So I can't tell you I'm going to talk about...

[VIDEOTAPE PROBLEMS]

...I think, to me, that's a lot more fruitful than doing this with people who are much older.

Q: I'VE THOUGHT A LOT ABOUT LESSONS THAT THE HOLOCAUST CAN TEACH US IF WE'RE WILLING TO LISTEN. AND ONE OF THE THINGS I'VE THOUGHT ABOUT IS BUSINESS POLITICS: SCAPEGOATING PEOPLE IN BUSINESS. SCAPEGOATING PEOPLE ANYWHERE. YOU KNOW, DAILY LIFE SORTS OF THINGS. WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT--

LIKE, IN GERMANY, PEOPLE WERE INDIFFERENT. AND THEY PARTICIPATED IN THE NATIONWIDE SCAPEGOATING OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE THAT WAS MORE BRUTAL THAN ANYTHING RECORDED. AND MORE EXTENSIVE. BUT, I MEAN, THEY DIDN'T JUST LEARN HOW TO DO THAT WHEN THAT CAME UP. IT'S YOUR DAILY LIFE, IT'S YOUR LIFE AS YOU LIVE IT. THEN ALL OF A SUDDEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES PRESENT THEMSELVES, AND YOU MIGHT PARTICIPATE. DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I'M SAYING.

A: Yes. You know, I think. Yes, I think I understand what you are saying, but I think when you talk about being the scapegoats, which we have been for 5,000 years, there are other minorities. It's always somebody who can't fight back who gets to be the scapegoat. Because if they could fight back, they would no longer be the scapegoat.

And I think, unfortunately, that might happen again in Eastern Europe, if things don't turn out the way all these people are dreaming. And it may happen eventually, and hopefully it will, but in the meantime we might be scapegoats again. And I think, then, we must take a stand, not just--

Q: WE BEING WHO?

A: We being the Jewish people and non-Jewish people in the rest of the world. You know, it's interesting: When Cranston asked Gorbachev, when they came on the plane from Minneapolis to San Francisco, "What are you going to do about the Jewish immigration and anti-Semitism?" And I think Gorbachev said that he has not done very much, but he's going to publicly speak about anti-Semitism, which is good.

So, I think we cannot afford to let things happen without speaking up and setting the record straight wherever it needs to be set straight. I think we have an obligation there. And sometimes, that may not be to our benefit--

Q: MEANING?

A: Meaning that when things happen that we don't agree with, then I think we must be honest enough, and look at the flip side of the coin, whatever that may be. There may be times where there is a cause--

Q: DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING IN MIND, LIKE AN EXAMPLE?

A: No. No, I do not. The only thing-- What I'm trying to be is honest and open.

Q: YES, I KNOW.

A: Right?

Q: YES.

A: Because there are cases where it involves somebody who is Jewish, but they are a person, and they are Jewish. They are not Jewish and a person. So if they are wrong, they are wrong. But they are not wrong because--

Q: THEY'RE JEWISH.

A: They're Jewish. I think one has--

Q: BECAUSE EVERYBODY'S WRONG SOMETIMES.

A: Exactly. So, in other words, if they are wrong, and they happen to be Jewish, one shouldn't defend them because they're Jewish. If they are

wrong, they are wrong.

Q: SO PART OF THE EDUCATIONAL THING WOULD BE TO LEARN TO SEE PEOPLE AS INDIVIDUALS, NOT AS NATIONALITIES?

A: Absolutely. That's right. And I think it's very important. And I think that's hopefully where the young people today, with the traveling that they are doing, all over the world, I think it's the best thing that could have happened. Because they find out that people don't have horns, that they like and dislike the same things that you and I like and dislike.

Russia is a perfect example, too. You know, that had to happen as people were getting televisions over there, and they see how the other part of the world lives, they feel that they want some of that, and they're entitled to it.

Q: YOU KNOW, WHEN I FIRST ASKED THAT-- WHAT YOU'RE SAYING IS REALLY TRUE TOO, AND VERY IMPORTANT ALSO. BUT ONE THING I AM STILL KIND OF INTERESTED IN ADDRESSING IS THE IDEA THAT: IT'S LIKE, IF TODAY I WON'T STAND UP FOR SOMEBODY WHO IS BEING SCAPEGOATED IN MY OFFICE, TOMORROW I'M NOT GOING TO STAND UP FOR A JEWISH PERSON OR A BLACK PERSON WHO IS BEING SCAPEGOATED AND MAYBE KILLED. DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I MEAN?

A: That's right. That's why I made a remark that I was sorry that at one time I didn't speak up when it happened, and I didn't tell the person until two weeks later. Yeah, I think that is very true. But how do you address yourself--and we get a little bit into politics, and I don't know whether you want to do that or not--of when you have people who are leaders in our society who are supposed to set examples that we and a younger generation should live by, do some of the things that they do and set the wrong examples. What do you do?

Q: TO BE HONEST, I'M STRUGGLING WITH THAT MYSELF RIGHT NOW.

A: And I think that's a problem we have in society today.

Q: I GUESS I PERSONALLY SEE IT AS AN ETHICAL AND MORAL AND SPIRITUAL CRISIS IN SOCIETY. AND SO I GUESS ONE OF THE THINGS I SEE IS A LESSON, PERSONALLY, OF THE HOLOCAUST IS THE NECESSITY FOR SPIRITUAL, ETHICAL, AND MORAL TRAINING OF YOUNG CHILDREN. AND IF THEY MANAGE TO BECOME ADULTS WITHOUT RECEIVING IT, THEN AS ADULTS, TOO. ALTHOUGH IT'S

MUCH HARDER--

A: You know that's why--I think we said in the beginning--you've got to start in the home. Because that's the formative and the molding years. Of the children. What is it, the first seven years most probably are the most important years in a child's life? And so I think it's very important.

Q: WHEN YOU THINK NOW, IN TERMS OF LESSONS OF THE HOLOCAUST AND THINGS TO DO, WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THAT AS A PRINCIPLE OF IMPORTANCE?

A: Well, whatever that means, I think to live the kind of life that--and be treated and treat others like you would want them to treat you. And I don't want to use, "be a good person," because "be a good person" doesn't mean anything because it's all relative. You know, what does "good" mean? Live an ethical and moral life. And to define that, don't ask me. Because I don't think one can define it. You either live it and do it, but I cannot define it if you ask me to.

Q: AND, YOU KNOW, I'M JUST SAYING THAT BECAUSE I'VE BEEN THINKING OF WHAT, EXACTLY, ARE THE LESSONS OF THE HOLOCAUST AND HOW CAN YOU GO ABOUT ACCOMPLISHING THEM. AND THAT'S A VERY DIFFICULT ONE, BECAUSE ALL OF THE MAJOR RELIGIONS ARE TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO DO THAT ANYWAY. BUT I JUST PUT IT OUT THERE AS A THING THAT THE HOLOCAUST WAS POSSIBLY THE RESULT PARTIALLY OF THIS SHALLOW SPIRITUALITY, SHALLOW ETHICS, SHALLOW WAY YOU LIVE YOUR DAILY LIFE.

A: Well, I'm not sure whether I quite agree with that, because there was a lot of economics and politics involved in it, to the same extent, most probably, when we talk about shallow lives. Because I think if, for example, Franklin D. Roosevelt would have taken a different approach than the way he did, and supported some of the people who wanted to prevent what happened over there, I don't think that has to do with living a shallow life. I think that was a matter of economics and politics.

And, believe me, before I came to this country, and in the first couple of years, I thought Franklin D. Roosevelt was the greatest hero that ever lived. And the longer I live, and the more I find out what the man really did, the less respect I have for him.

Q: REALLY?

A: Yes. So, it was a complete turn-around for me. Complete. Even so, he did a lot of good things, but there were also as far as what he did--as far

as our people are concerned--he certainly wasn't helpful.

Q: YOU MEAN HE--

A: He turned his back.

Q: HE DIDN'T ALLOW IMMIGRATION?

A: He didn't allow immigration, he didn't take a stand, he didn't let any people come in here. So he certainly wasn't very helpful. I think as a country and as a community, what you said is absolutely right. But then again, if you have leaders who don't reflect that, you're going to have problems. Then again, we're guilty for, because we don't go out and vote.

Q: AND WHEN WE DO, WE BELIEVE PEOPLE WHO LIE.

A: Well, they don't think they lie, so.

Q: YOU DON'T THINK THEY THINK THEY LIE?

A: Well, I think with some people, lies get to be the truth so they can continue telling the lies.

Q: THAT'S TRUE. YOU LIE ENOUGH AND YOU BEGIN TO BELIEVE IT'S TRUE. AND IF YOU SAY IT, YOU BEGIN TO BELIEVE IT'S TRUE.

A: If you say it long enough and often enough.

Q: SO I GUESS ONE OF THE BIG LESSONS OF THE HOLOCAUST, THEN, IS ALSO OUR POLITICAL SYSTEM NEEDS REVAMPING. WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THAT?

A: Yes, I think that is true. And I think most probably that has to happen world-wide. I think, because there is no such thing anymore as space or oceans separating countries. So I think that has to happen on a world-wide basis. I really do. Which doesn't mean that certain countries have to set examples, but other countries have to join in in bringing all that about. I think that's very important.

Q: THERE'S ANOTHER MAJOR THING THAT I'M KIND OF INTERESTED IN. DO YOU USUALLY WATCH WHEN THEY HAVE A MEDIA PORTRAYAL OF THE HOLOCAUST?

A: Well, for years I did not. I watched, I think-- Because it affected me in

such a way that I couldn't watch it. I think it had to do with my guilt feelings. I know it did. I remember years ago, I went with a doctor friend of mine to a movie. And it dealt partially with the Holocaust, and it affected me very badly for quite a few weeks. But that is no longer the case. At least I don't think so.

Q: SO YOU WATCH THEM NOW?

A: Well, I watch some of it. Yes. I watch some of it.

Q: WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE PORTRAYALS?

A: Well, unfortunately the media is the media is the media. And the media--and I don't think one should generalize, yet--the media usually portrays what the country wants to see. Which is not always showing it as it is. Or taking parts out of it. I think the best example is the earthquake. Right? What did the media show? The Marina.

Q: THEY SHOWED EVERYTHING IN RUINS.

A: They showed everything in ruins, and they did not show the part of the city that was not in ruins. Right? So, I think that's the point I'm trying to make: That the media does not always show the way it is. That's why you should read three or four different newspapers. And then you've got to judge and value the different columnists and what they write, and draw your own conclusions.

I was talking to a friend of mine, I think about a week ago, who when he was in Dachau not too long ago, some of the people, yes, that's Dachau, but they don't talk about what happened there. And then I was talking to somebody else who had just come back from West Berlin, and they were telling us that in all parts of West Berlin there are areas where they show all the different concentration camps on a plaque, to remind people of what has happened.

So, I don't want to condemn the media, because there, once again, one should not generalize.

Q: DO YOU THINK THAT IT'S GOOD TO HAVE MEDIA PORTRAYALS OUT THERE? WHEN I TALK TO MY CATHOLIC FRIENDS--OR NON-JEWISH FRIENDS--THEY GENERALLY FEEL THAT THE PORTRAYALS THEY SEE ARE-- THEY THINK THAT IT'S A VERY EFFECTIVE PORTRAYAL.

[TAPE PROBLEMS]

A: That's true, and it's understandable. Because you and I cannot put ourselves in somebody else's body who went through what these people went through. As sympathetic as you and I are toward what they went through.

Q: NO, WHAT I MEAN IS, WHAT I HEAR SOMETIMES IS THAT THEY SHOULDN'T HAVE THE PORTRAYALS IF THEY'RE NOT GOING TO BE REALISTIC. BUT IF THEY DON'T HAVE THE PORTRAYALS, HOW ARE THEY GOING TO PORTRAY ANYTHING. YOU CAN'T PORTRAY WHAT IT REALLY WAS LIKE. YOU CAN'T DUPLICATE THAT.

A: I think you are right. I don't think you can duplicate it, and I don't think you can get people to get that same feeling. I think that why sometimes you have to overdramatize things, to make a point. And I think that's what the media at times has to do. You know, to make a point. But I think it's important that-- I think the media is very important.

You have to look at it with an open mind, and some of it you have to draw your own conclusion. And I can understand why somebody says it's overdramatized, because they can't visualize that anything like that could have happened.

Q: WHEN WE WERE FIRST TALKING, I THINK BEFORE WE TURNED THE TAPE ON, YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT THE EFFORT SOME PEOPLE ARE MAKING TO SAY IT NEVER HAPPENED. HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED MUCH OF THOSE KINDS OF--

A: I personally have not, but this friend--especially Helen is very friendly with her--with people on the street in the community have come up to her and said, "This has never happened." And I think there's a group of people you read about in the papers, where they say the thing has never happened. I guess there must be--I'm sure there's a reason why they think that way. They're blocking a lot of things out.

And I think that's why we have to make sure that as time goes on that generations remember that it did happen, and hopefully help to keep it alive. Not for its being kept alive sake, but to make people aware of it and when it starts again--if and when it starts--to take a stand right then and there. To keep people sensitized a little bit. I think that's important. That's very important. That's why I'm glad that our son is making a videotape of it, and can tell his child or children when they are old enough, of what happened. Maybe it's like the Talmud was years ago.

Q: WHAT DO YOU ANSWER PEOPLE WHEN THEY TELL YOU TO

FORGET THE HOLOCAUST? THAT IT HAPPENED FIFTY YEARS AGO?

A: I think you cannot forget the Holocaust. The same thing if a tragedy happens in your own life, if you lost a dear one, if you lost a child fifty years ago, do you block it out? You don't. And I don't think you should forget it. I really don't. For many reasons that you and I just got through discussing.

Q: DO PEOPLE VERY OFTEN TELL YOU THAT?

A: No. It may have happened once or twice. But I don't think they say "forget it." They put it a different way: "Why do you keep on talking about it?" Right? It has the same meaning and the same effect, but I think it makes it more palatable. I think the museum, the Diaspora museum, I think they have done a great job in trying to get all the people who have spread all over the world, where you can put your name and whole history in a computer. I think that kind of thing is also helpful to kind of keep track of what happens to the Jewish people. You were going to say something?

Q: YES. I WAS GOING TO ASK YOU IF ANYBODY EVER TOLD YOU TO FORGIVE.

A: Yes, and you know, I have thought about this many times. And the first time that happened was probably in 1957, at the time before I went into business with my brother Ernie, with another food company. And they sent seven owners of bakeries to Germany who came to this country, and they were in Chicago, and there was an association, and the managing director of that association called me, and asked me, since I am and was in that field, whether I would entertain them in San Francisco.

I was momentarily in a dilemma. Right? And then I said yes. And I went through, for four days when they came, mental torture. And some of that had to do of whether to forgive, which ones to forgive, whether to forgive the younger ones there who I was sure were involved in what happened. And there were some who I felt were not involved.

And the interesting thing was, when I told them that I was Jewish, every one of them said, "We didn't participate." Every one of them. So, I was hospitable to them, and in 1964, when I went back to Germany, I visited with two of them, and one of them who lived in Hanover, who turned out to be wonderful people, by being there and everything, I found out that they did not participate.

And then in Dusseldorf there was another one who had a big operation there, and at the time he wanted us to have their son come over to San Francisco and work for us. And I said, "Fine." I didn't hear any-

thing, and a year later I found out that the man and his whole family had committed suicide. He was way up in the Nazi party.

So the dilemma was there, can you generalize and condemn everybody? Do you forgive everybody? What do you do? I don't think that-- Let me put it this way: The young people who are growing up know, I cannot condemn them for what their parent or grandparent did. To me, that would be wrong. But I don't want to forgive the people that were involved. Absolutely not. But at the same time, you cannot put everybody in that category, as I found out. So I don't know whether that answers your question or not.

Q: YES, IT DOES.

A: I had a very interesting thing happen. And you talk about sensitivities. Three or four years ago, I was invited, like a lot of us, to go back and be the guest of the city that you lived in. And I decided not to do it. And I don't know whether it was right or not.

But at the same time, I got a letter from one of the young people that I went to grammar school with, and they were going to have a reunion. And they invited me, they said, "As long as you're going to be over here, join us for the reunion." And on the program, one of the things that they were going to do, they were going to go to the graves of the soldiers--the German soldiers--that had fallen during the war, and put down a wreath.

In other words, the ones that fought against us, and for me to participate--

Q: SOUNDS A LITTLE HOSTILE.

A: So, it's something I couldn't understand. There were no sensitivities there. He most probably did not know what he was doing, but there were no sensitivities there. Right? When you were talking about some of the friends really being naive about things, but at the time I couldn't understand how the man could do this, knowing why I left and everything else, and then help to lay a wreath and everything else. But anyway.

Q: IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THIS QUESTION IS PROBABLY A CENTRAL QUESTION IN THE RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRISTIANS. BECAUSE CHRISTIANS ARE PROBABLY ALWAYS TELLING YOU TO FORGIVE.

A: I don't think that's true. Do you really believe that generally Christians say that?

Q: I THINK THAT THERE'S A DIVISION THERE. I THINK THAT CHRISTIANS WHO ARE REALLY INTO THEIR FAITH PROBABLY ARE THE

ONES WHO ARE GOING TO SAY THAT MORE THAN THE OTHER ONES. BECAUSE THAT'S A CENTRAL TENET OF CHRISTIANITY.

A: I think that is true, but isn't that somewhat changing, too. That if-- Well, I hope you are wrong, because I think religion in some aspects-- religions--have to change somewhat in order to make this a better world. Because as you and I know, more people got killed over religious wars than over anything else. And I think that religions, per se, have to do some new interpreting of some of the things that they believe in, and kind of update it. And spread the Gospel differently.

See, there is when I talk about the gospel, you have to listen because when you to church or you go to synagogue, you are a captive audience. And that's the kind of thing I did not want to do. That's what I meant by spreading the gospel. And I think that has to change somewhat. You don't believe that will happen?

Q: NO, BUT I DO THINK THAT WHEN CHRISTIANS REALLY TRY TO UNDERSTAND WHAT FORGIVENESS IS ABOUT, THEY WOULD ALSO UNDERSTAND ITS ABOUT ACCOUNTABILITY AS WELL AS FORGIVENESS. WHICH VERY OFTEN IS LEFT OUT, FROM WHAT I OBSERVED.

A: Well, I think that is true. Yes. In other words, to do one without the other has no meaning. I think you are right. I think that is true. I think that is true.

Q: BUT I MEAN IN TERMS OF REJECTING FORGIVENESS IS ONE OF THE MOST BASIC-- CHRISTIANITY WILL NEVER DO THAT, BECAUSE THAT WAS ONE OF CHRIST'S PRIMARY MESSAGES. BUT I RESOLVE IT THE WAY YOU JUST SAID IT, THAT ONE IS MEANINGLESS WITHOUT THE OTHER.

A: That's right. But I am optimistic as far as religion is concerned, in the long run. I really am. Because if religion can't come together in some way, what do we have? And I think it will happen. It may not happen in ten years, it may not happen in fifty, it may not happen in a hundred years. But I think there will be changes in religion.

I think it's a matter, most probably, of interpretations, and they have changed. Interpretations. Even in Christianity, there are some changes as far as Christ is concerned. Isn't that true? I mean, in the Catholic religion there are certain things that--

Q: I GUESS I'D BETTER TELL YOU, I AM CATHOLIC.

A: Well, to me it doesn't make any difference what you are. It honestly doesn't. When I talk like this, I really forget what another person is. And I think you should forget. I really do. It never even entered my mind what religion you are. Honestly, it didn't. You ask me questions, and I talk, and I don't consider. You know, once I feel that you are Catholic, subconsciously, I censor what I say. Anybody does.

Q: YES, YOU'RE RIGHT.

A: All people do. So, it did not even enter my mind. It did not, let's put it this way. I just answered, and you're here, you're interviewing me, you're talking to me, you're asking questions and I answer them. I'm talking to you as Peggy, and that's the end of it.

Q: WELL, AS PEGGY. MY PERCEPTION OF THE ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTION IS THAT THE THINGS THAT CHANGE ARE THE THINGS THAT ARE NOT GOSPEL, THEY'RE CHURCH RULES, THEY'RE THINGS THAT ARE A LOT OF TIMES SILLY, THAT THE CHURCH JUST PUT IN BECAUSE-- LIKE THAT FISH ON FRIDAY BUSINESS, YOU KNOW. I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S TRUE OR NOT, BUT I ONCE HEARD THAT IT WAS REALLY TO HELP THE ITALIAN FISHERMEN. YOU KNOW?

THAT NONSENSE CHANGES. THE STUFF THAT DOESN'T CHANGE IS THE STUFF THAT'S ACTUALLY IN THE GOSPEL. BUT VERY OFTEN, THE PERCEPTION OF WHAT IT MEANS CHANGES.

A: But isn't perception the important thing? Isn't that what we live by? It's not what it is, but what we perceive it to be.

Q: RIGHT, IT IS.

A: That is really the important thing. That's why I'm saying, hopefully, things of what's essential will change. And that goes for all religions.

Q: I THINK ANOTHER THING THAT AFFECTS THAT, FROM MY EXPERIENCE, I'M SPEAKING RIGHT NOW IS...

[TAPE #1 ENDS; TAPE #2 BEGINS]

A: ...you didn't find, you didn't get the comfort then, right? When you needed it?

Q: OF RELIGION?

A: Right.

Q: ARE YOU INTERVIEWING ME, TOO?

[Both laughing]

Q: YES, I DID WHEN I WAS VERY YOUNG. I HAD A REALLY WEIRD EXPERIENCE. WELL, NOT TOO WEIRD, ACTUALLY; IT WAS A VERY WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE. THAT INITIATED. IT WAS LIKE I JUST STARTED TALKING TO GOD SPONTANEOUSLY. I DID THAT FOR THREE OR FOUR YEARS UNTIL--

A: Is that right?

Q: YES. AND MY FAMILY NEVER KNEW I WAS DOING THIS. THEY WERE VERY RIGID CATHOLICS, AND ONE OF THE EFFECTS OF CHILD ABUSE ON SOME CHILDREN IS THAT THEY JUST KIND OF MOVE TO ANOTHER WORLD, MENTALLY. WHICH WAS WHAT I DID. SO I NEVER REALLY HEARD A LOT OF STUFF PEOPLE SAID. AND I JUST HAD THIS THING GOING WHERE I USED TO TALK TO GOD ALL THE TIME, AND I NEVER HEARD VOICES, BUT IN MY EXPERIENCE, GOD HAD A WAY OF REACHING ME AND TOUCHING ME. AND PROVIDED A LOT OF COMFORT, WITHOUT ANY HUMAN BEINGS DOING IT.

AND THEN THERE WAS A NUN-- SHE WAS WONDERFUL, AND SHE REALLY HAD A LOT OF LOVE, WHICH OF COURSE TRANSLATES INTO GOD'S LOVE, BECAUSE IT'S A NUN.

BUT A LOT OF IT WAS JUST, NO HUMAN BEING HAD A THING TO DO WITH IT. BUT IT DID END. IT'S WAS FUNNY, BECAUSE I HAD ASKED-- I USED TO TALK TO GOD LIKE HE WAS STANDING BESIDE ME ALL THE TIME, AND I JUST ASKED WHY I SHOULD PRAY TO MARY INSTEAD OF GOD? WHAT'S THE POINT? WHY NOT GO DIRECTLY TO GOD?

SO I WENT TO THE NUN--I WAS ON MY WAY TO CATECHISM WHEN THIS HAPPENED--AND THE NUN SAID, THAT WAS THE DAY-- CAN YOU BELIEVE IT? SHE SAID, THE REASON YOU SHOULD PRAY TO MARY IS BECAUSE HE WILL DO THINGS FOR HIS MOTHER THAT HE WON'T DO FOR US. AND IT WAS LIKE INSTANTANEOUSLY MY WHOLE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD CHANGED. BECAUSE I UNDERSTOOD THAT.

YOU KNOW, YOU NEVER WENT TO MY FATHER, YOU WENT TO MY MOTHER.

A: You went to mother. Yes. Yes.

Q: I FORGOT, WHAT WAS YOUR QUESTION? OH, THE COMFORT.

A: The comfort, yes.

Q: THERE WAS A LOT OF COMFORT IN THOSE FEW YEARS. IT DIDN'T REALLY BEGIN UNTIL ABOUT TEN YEARS AGO, BUT IT STARTED COMING BACK. BUT I HAD TO MAKE A LOT OF EFFORT THIS LAST TIME.

A: Yes, that's interesting. Well, maybe that also ties in that part of the religion, that we were talking about, will have to change because people will and do have different needs as far as-- The needs of religion have changed. As far as people are concerned. How to use the need of religion, I think, is changing, too.

Anyway, I hope that that will happen, as far as religion is concerned, because I think in the world it plays a very important part. And it's not always a shining light. But it should be. It should be.

So, I've got about five minutes left, and then I've unfortunately got to run.

Q: WELL, LET ME ASK YOU THEN, HOW DID YOU MEET YOUR WIFE?

A: That's a very good question. My wife was going to Cal at the time, and, as I said, the Kaufman family brought me over here, were very close to me. And Mrs. Kaufman had passed away, and Mr. Kaufman--Uncle Adolf, I called him, was very close to this Mrs. Rose Cohn, who was related in some way to Helen's family. When Helen had a date, she would stay overnight with them on Saturday night.

Anyway, he felt that I should meet Helen. So, it was arranged that on a Sunday, when she had a date Saturday night, I would go and meet her at Mrs. Rose Cohn's place. And I think it was for lunch. And we met for lunch, and I tried to make a date with Helen, and we didn't make a date till about two months later.

But the interesting thing is, that's how I met Helen. So I took her back to Berkeley, and I have a very good friend, who happens to be Walter Overmeyer, right? And Walter had just gotten married a year before we did, and I went over to Walter with Helen, because Walter had to go back to Berkeley and take a train, I think to-- Someplace. Wherever it was.

We get into Walter's place, and there, Walter's wife, Helen knew her from Cal. So that was very interesting. But anyway, so we dated, and we got married in October of 1951. So we're married 39 years, and have three children and one granddaughter. We've been very lucky. Very lucky.

And it is interesting, Helen comes from a Jewish family where really, the religion was not that strong. And she is has been and is a much

greater influence as far as customs and religion is concerned than I am. And let me just end it with this: Our oldest son, when he went to Sunday school, in order to get Bar Mitzvah you had to go for three years prior, and we sent him there and he went away. He never got Bar Mitzvah. Right?

He went to college at UCLA, and while he was at college, he met his future wife, who also went to UCLA. And I have a cousin living in Los Angeles, and they are very much involved in the Temple, and he used to go see them quite frequently. So, when he was there, if it happened to be during holiday time, he'd go to Temple with them. Adriene, who is his wife, herself is very religious. So he ended up going to Temple a lot of times twice in a weekend, for holidays. Now, they're keeping a kosher household. And there's a kid who wouldn't even go to Sunday school.

There you are. And we get together on Friday night, and it's wonderful. They have their little girl, and we light candles, and I think, that's a wonderful tradition. And that little girl sees that at the age of a year and a half, she's going to do this. You don't have to tell her, "I want you to light candles" when she is 13, 14 or 15. She won't know any different. That's a happy occasion. She's there, we sing, we say the prayers. She going to grow up that way.

And that's the point I was going to make: Do it in your home, whatever you do, and start it with your family. That's the best thing you can do. And perpetuate a moral and ethical life.

Thanks for talking with me.

Q: WELL, THANK YOU. IS THERE IS ANYTHING MORE YOU WANT TO SAY THAT I DIDN'T ASK?

A: I think we covered everything pretty well. I just feel that, you know, there are so many people who can probably contribute so much, and have come through so much more, and I was very fortunate. So I don't think I can add anything else.

Q: O.K. BUT I THINK WHAT YOU ADDED WAS VERY POWERFUL. O.K.