

Interview with WERNER WEINSTEIN
Holocaust Oral History Project
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Q I wanted to ask you to pick up your story with the talk of the march.

A Well, the Russians came closer and closer. The Germans decided to evacuate the camp. That means to take the people further into Germany. At that time, I was just released from the hospital because I had a knee injury. I was with my brother and he prepared a few things. We then got a loaf of bread and were taken out to the march. That means the people who were able to walk. I don't know what happened to the people who were not. Apparently, the Germans there would have shot them after we left.

On this march, it was winter, snow, and very cold. We went one day and we came to one camp in the evening, which I don't remember the name, but that's where we slept overnight. We got a little bit of soup and the next morning we walked again. Usually, there was a wagon pulled by Jews. When someone couldn't walk anymore, they put them on this wagon and when the wagon was full the one who came first or he could walk again--or if he couldn't, they would leave him behind and shot him.

We walked for a whole day and we came to one camp which was called (Blackhamer) and we arrived there at night and

they put us in barracks. We stayed there only one night. The next morning they called us up to go on, Somehow we were kind of late and we came to this camp and they checked the people. Since my brother and I were already really skinny, they sent us back and they said no (muzel) men. We can't use you, so we stayed in the camp. We were kind of scared because what they did in the past, we thought that they would shoot people.

Then we went back into the barracks and one time a German came in with the pretense to send food in and to make an (appeal). So everybody had to go out and we were standing in the (045) and there was one German, no 3, and he had a gun in his hand and we noticed that his hands were shaking. They counted whoever was there and apparently they realized there were too many people left behind. After he left those Germans who man the watchtowers, and they just shot into the camp, in the barracks, at everybody. So quite a few people got killed this way. I guess everybody was out. They set a few barracks ablaze.

After that, it was quiet. We went out and were looking around to find some food. The first thing we opened was a magazine, a storage for sauerkraut. So everybody went into the sauerkraut and then we found a storage of flour. Everybody got flour. So what we did--my brother and I--the barracks were still burning, it was fire--so we took the flour and mixed it with water or snow--I don't remember if

we had water at that time--and we baked (matza). So this (matza) last us. Then later we found other food and so we kept the (matza). The (matza) last us for many--we took it into Russia with us afterwards, because it wasn't very tasty. So when we had something good to eat, then we got.

After that, the Russians came closer and the camp was in a forest. They apparently--the Germans shot from one side, the Russians shot from the other side, so we always see a lot of shooting and so on. At night we decide we go into a cellar and we found a cellar there and there was--that was a potato cellar where they actually kept potatoes. I don't think--there was not more protection than that, but there were a lot of people in it already and they already celebrated the liberation.

In the middle of the night, we seen the door open and lights came in and the Germans came in and says everybody out. We went out. Everybody went out and went in one row and there were quite a lot of Germans. Apparently, those were the soldiers who came there. They took everybody out and we marched in one row to the gate and by doing this, we passed one of the houses of the blocks and there was an open window. So my brother and I--without even talking--we passed the window already. Then back very slowly, we jumped into the window. Actually, it was a magazine where they kept stuff and we went in one of the shelves and were laying very quiet all night. We thought the Germans may come in any minute, but

nobody came. In the morning, the Germans were gone and a lot of people were gone, except a few people from another side of the camp, which they did not get--which they were not aware of. Then the next day or so, a few days later, we heard that the first Russians came. Then we went out and went looking for food.

When we left Theresienstadt, my father told us whenever you go anyplace, make sure you take some blankets with you. That is most important. He was in the first world war and he knows how important the blankets were. We actually found blankets, and we took--everybody, my brother--two or three blankets and we met other people. Since we spoke only Dutch and German we thought we keep to some people who spoke Russian or Polish, or Czechish because we wanted really to go--well, I don't know where we wanted to go, but we wanted to go back to Holland.

First of all, we wanted to go as far away from the Germans as we could because we were afraid they may come back. So we found some people and we went together and we found also a good friend of us who seen us in the camp after liberation and we somehow lost him afterwards. His name was Leo (Bloomson). He was the leader in Holland, in the camp (Vestabork). We had a youth group and he was the leader of that. So we met him there after liberation but then we went with other people together. First, we walked and walked and we met some Russians. We always showed them the number

we have on the arm [Showing a picture of the number for the camera man--B11818] So we showed the Russians the number and they all were very helpful. They gave us bread and whatever they had. The Russian bread was then very rough. It's kind of very moist. It would be very healthy now, but in our condition it was not very eatable. Also, at that time what the Russians -- (speck) and bread. That's what the soldiers ate. The soup they ate was full of fat. So that wasn't too good for us.

So we found a house and we all moved in, because many of the Germans who lived there in (Glivetz) they run away. So we moved in that house and we stayed for awhile. Suddenly, we seen a lot of troop movement. We didn't know if the Russians move back or forward, so we packed up--all of us-- and we went to them. We said what's going on and the man said oh no, they never come back. Anyway, we went further in and they told us to go to Czernowitz. Czernowitz is a Polish city. In Czernowitz they collect all the free prisoners. So we went to Czernowitz--this was mainly all walking. In Czernowitz we came in and they put us up in a house with some other people and then they put us up in a school with Jews and non-Jews--mainly war prisoners, some English, French, Dutch. There we stayed a few days or so, maybe two or three weeks. From there they took us to-- no, no, no, the first city they took us to was Czenstochau. That was in Polland, and from there they took us to

Czernowitz. Czernowitz was in Bukovina. The trip there was very long, because we were in the train and every time the train stopped to make a place for the Russian army-- so you were in a condition--when you were on the train and you went out to buy something, and the train left, you could just safely walk after the train and get it at the next stop. It took us two weeks to get from one city to the other.

Q How far is that?

A It wasn't so far at all, maybe a hundred miles or something. I don't know. I'm not familiar with that area really.

Q How much time has elapsed now?

A I would say--we were liberated in February and the war was over in May. In May we were in Odessa. So that was a month and a half or so. So then we came to Czernowitz and Czernowitz was called before the war "Little Jerusalem" because most living there were Jews. Also the non-Jews spoke Yedish. It was such a Jews dominated city. So the Romanians took all the Jews in Czernowitz and put them in a camp. Those people came back just two or three weeks before we came. So we came to Czernowitz in a train and then we walked to that school or whatever that was vacant for the prisoners. When we walked, there were people on both sides. They gave us food and all kinds of things. They gave us so much that they had to send a boy with us to carry the stuff.

We lived there for awhile and that is where the food

we got wasn't very good for our condition. That's where the blankets came in. We took the blankets and we went to the market and we sold one blanket after the other and bought food for that--white bread and potatoes and things that we could eat. After I was in Czernowitz for a while--first my brother became very sick--there was a time when he could only walk backwards. He was very sick. There is a touching story I want to tell you before he became sick. Jump a little back and forth.

My brother always was religious, even before he came into the camp. On (Chavetz) he wanted to go to the synagogue. One evening, Friday, we went to the synagogue and after the synagogue an older man came to us and he says you're going home with me and he took us to his house. When we came we noticed other people bring food. At night, after we have dinner, he took out beds, the blankets and mattress from his bed and he put us, something to sleep on floor from his bed and his wife's bed. So we stayed there. We realized how touching, because when we were in Germany you had to have a guest room, and you had to have that and that. They took two strangers and put--so then we took them back to the synagogue and then some other person took us home for lunch. After lunch he gave me something to drink and I fell asleep. After that we went home to the place again.

My brother at that time--he certainly felt pain, and he says you know, I can only walk backwards. We came to the camp. After a few days or so I became very sick. I had a

high fever, high temperature. So the doctor sent me to a hospital and he thought it's typhus. There was a few typhus patients there in the room. After awhile the doctor there felt the symptoms were not like typhus because I had a fever in the morning and then it went away and then I had fever at night. So he sent me back. In the camp there was an Italian doctor--well, in the meantime where I was in the hospital they sent some people away to (Mausay) and from--no, no, to Odessa and from Odessa they send them in the boat to Mausay. But my brother says, no way, my brother's in the hospital, I'm not going. So he stayed behind with a few other people. So after I was released from the hospital I still--they didn't know yet. But this doctor says, he looked in my eyes and he says I have something in my lungs. They sent my brother and me into santatorium. That was a hospital for people with tuberculosis. So we went to the hospital, both of us. I still had that high fever in the morning and evening. They found out that I had malaria-- you can get from mosquitoes-- you can also get from lice. In Russia there are a lot of lice. Lucky or unlucky for us, there was a Jewish doctor there and he went to Romania. He was a specialist. The Russians caught him there and they brought him back because they needed him in the hospital. So he run this hospital. He started a treatment with me. Once I had the malaria, I got--they gave me some tablets, which made me totally ill. They gave me other tablets and I usually didn't take all of them. They gave me kenine, which is a very strong medicine. After the

malaria subsided a little bit, they gave me some treatment for the lungs, like blowing some air in between the lips and the lungs--so we stayed in the hospital for I would say about 3 or 4 months. In this hospital was also Russian, and there was one Russian boy and we were in the same room. This boy was sent to prison because he was late for work. There, he got sick.

After we both were better they decided we have to go now, back to Holland. We had to arrange the papers--they had to give us some papers. There was also a man from Paris. He was also sick and his name was Mr. Ross. So we pack everything ready. We were to leave about Tuesday, the 17th. Everything was ready and then Mr. () says Tuesday, the 17th, I'm not going to leave. You can go without me, but I'm not going to leave--because it was a bad day for him--Tuesday the 13th or the 17th--I don't know what it was.

Anyway, we had to change the dates which wasn't easy. Now, the people in Czernowitz--most of the Jews told us not to go anyplace because what the Russian tell you, they send you back to Holland, but they actually send you to Siberia. Most of the Jews said, don't go. So we went. At that time most of the people were Russians in the train, Russian soldiers. They always shared their food with us. It was amazing. We had a good opinion of the Russians at that time, in general.

From there we went to Lamberg. From there we went to

Odessa. In Odessa we were only three, independent. We had to go to the commander of the city. When we left he told us to call Israel. All the Jews are friends. We went to (Loofov), little City on the Black Sea. We have no transportation. We walked. Then came a wagon with a ox. At that time wagons were pulled by oxes. We asked him if we could get a lift. So we were sitting on the lift and we were on the street and there was the Black Sea and suddenly Mr. Ross started laughing. I said what's so funny and he says, well wait until I tell my daughter. She's in Paris. I went with a ox, wagon, along the Black Sea.

So we came to Loofov and we came to one place and then we came in a santatorium--it was an old school which was right on the Black Sea. They had a latrine which was a toilet. We were sitting in the morning to see the sun go up and was very impressive. Until that, we always see the sun go down.

From there we went to Hungary with a train--a very long trip again to Hungary, to Budapest. Budapest, at that time, was pretty broken. From there we went to Vienna with a train. In Vienna we went to synagogue. We knew that we were together with the person who was in Theresienstadt and he was the (Shamus) in the synagogue. So we went to that synagogue and we met him and he told us there is a red cross place where we can go and we can see what happened to our fellow parents. So we went there. We didn't find my father, but

we found my mother registered and it said (Schmedaberg). That's the place where we lived. So we knew that my mother was alive, but (Schmedaberg) was puzzling for us because we would never' thought she would go back to (Schmedaberg) because it was Germany. Also we heard from somebody when we were in Czernowitz--some other person who came with a later transport, who was sent on to Theresienstadt with a later train--he told us that my father was sent away. So we suspected that my father would not have survived because we knew that he was over 50, but my mother was in great shape.

From Vienna they took us with train to --not a train, with a plane to Paris. Once we got to Paris, they took us to a school where they collected all the free prisoners. From there they brought us into a home. We told them we were Dutch, from Holland. There they brought us into a Dutch place, where all the Dutch people were. Holland didn't take anybody back before the (Sheck)--what their identity and so on. There were some Dutch people who were collaborating with the Germans--who were working for the Germans. Once we came into that place the first thing we came in and we run into the arms of our friends from Holland who were also in the camp. We went together and they were sent () From there they were sent to Africa. They had papers and they came back and we met them. So they went back to Holland the next day. We gave them--they know our address, our connections and so on--the people we know -- said if you go back, bring

us in connection with people and tell them that we are alive.

So we stayed in France for awhile. We became sick and they put us in the hospital. From the hospital--my brother was most sick at that time than I. They told me to go to the Jewish agency. I just remember something back. It's kind of funny too. Let's go back from Vienna.

When we were in the camp in Russia, we got word from the French we got cigarettes. We didn't smoke, so we collected all the cigarettes. When we came to Vienna we had a lot of cigarettes. We went out to the market and we said we wanted--I still had Russian clothes. We have cigarettes and we want to exchange them to clothing. Somebody told us yeah, I have very good clothing. So we went with with him and he sold us some ski boots and the pants--stripes. We only look at the quality -- a jacket. We looked kind of--very funny.

We came to friends. Then we--they told us to go to Jewish agency and register. I went there and was waiting and waiting and finally a lady came. Her name is Mrs. Fazall. She see me sitting there and waiting and usually people pushing. She asked me where I come from and I told her I was in Blackhamer. She happened to have a son that was also in Blackhamer. I didn't know him. So we became very good friends with them. The first thing they did was give us some decent clothes to wear. We looked awful funny going around with smoking--tuxedo stuff--it was kind of a tuxedo.

We came into that hospital. From that hospital they sent us to a sanatorium, near Paris--I don't remember the place anymore. At that place we stayed for awhile. We were better and were released. We came back to France. That lady--her and her husband, they lived in a hotel. They arranged for us another room in the hotel. She actually was from Vienna. The first time she invited me for dinner, my brother was still in the hospital, she had noodles with chocolate. In Vienna it was sort a delicatessen, but I ate it anyway. We became very good friends. Then after I was in Paris, they decided I needed a small operation. So I went to the hospital.

In the meantime, those friends from us--they went back to Holland. They could find my grandmother, who was in Theresienstadt. She was sent by transport to Switzerland. I should go back a little bit.

After my father was sent away and my mother--there was only my mother, and my grandmother stayed. My mother in the middle of the night, came to my grandmother--my grandmother came to my mother and says Eulla, I got a letter to be sent away to Switzerland. Now who was believing the Germans, that they would send someone to Switzerland? My mother took the letter and read them and she says, you are going. And she says, do you want to send me to death? She says no, this is different. That's a different letter. But see, that was (Stofbenadof). He worked on that to exchange German prisoners

with Jews. So my mother--my grandmother, she took her to the train and they didn't have those real freight trains. So my mother knew that she would go to Switzerland. So she actually went to Switzerland. Then those friends who went to Germany, they knew that my mother--they let us know that my grandmother is in Switzerland. Through all this, my mother actually went back to (Schmedaberg). When she came back--I talk about that--it's kind of interesting.

So she went back--what happened--in Theresienstadt when she was liberated, she had a lot of potatoes. In the end there were a lot of potatoes from all over. She sold potatoes and she took German money and everybody said this woman is crazy, to sell German money to Germans. So sold a lot and had a lot of German money. After Theresienstadt, she also had no identification. She went to the consulate--there was no Dutch consulate, but there was a Swedish consulate in Prague. The Swedish consulate had a Dutch representative there and she told them she came from Holland. They gave her a letter written--I just found the letter and it's such an important letter. They gave her a letter that she is Dutch citizen. It was written in Czech--so a Czech letter that she was Dutch citizen from the Swedish consulate.

So she had the letter and went out to the consulate. She found the closest person there who spoke Czechish and she asked him could you read me the letter. He read the letter and says yes, you are a Dutch citizen. That was all

she needed. She went out immediately and bought a Dutch flag and put the Dutch flag on. She had all the money. As soon as there was transportation--she left her things by some people and when she came back, picking up her things, those people, they use the towels from my father which was left as a curtain. So she took out the towels and say, no that's mine. So she picked up whatever and she went back to (Schmedaberg). She went through Czechoslovakia on the hills on the boarder and on the boarder, the boarder guard recognized her. He took her down to the factory.

She went first to the Russian commander there and she says, I'm Mrs. Weinstein. I come back. This is my house. That's my factory, my things. The factory was working and they make coffins at that time. So she went to the City Hall and she says, I want my stuff back. I'm just coming back from the camp. He says yes. First of all, they were skeptical. He was Jewish and he told her, speak Yedish. She says I don't know Yedish. In Germany we didn't speak Yedish. So then he was convinced she was Jewish. He says, okay, I have to go with you to the commandment in (Ushberg). But I cannot go now because my driver is not here. She says, oh, no problem, I drive you. She drove him to (Ushber) and she get all the papers sent by the Russian commandment. Then she came back and she went to the people who lived in the house and say, hey, that's my house. So they had to move out. The person who took our furniture when our house was

broken, he furnished the whole house with things. Part of the things are what he had from us, part of it he replaced--so the house was all fixed.

Then she went to the factory and she says well, you all stop making coffins now--no more coffins, we making furniture again. So she started making furniture and since she had all that money she got from the potatoes, she had plenty of money to pay them their salary. So she started making furniture--so it was running for awhile.

Then the Russians had things they took. They came--you know at that time--German factories--they took all of machines and everything to Russia. So one time, she seen a bunch of Russians there who wanted to close the factory, dismantle the machines and send it all to Russia. She says, oh no, that's a Jewish factory. You see, I'm Dutch. I'm from Holland. She also ran into some Jewish officers there. They say okay, we will not touch your factory there. So that was one of the factories that was working there. Then, my mother heard from the friend who seen us after liberation. He went back to Theresienstadt. He told my mother, I know that your two sons were liberated, but I don't know what happened. So my mother wrote to Holland; she wrote to the Red Cross; she tried everything to find us. They all thought this woman is crazy. She thinks that her sons are alive, but she doesn't know what she is talking about. So people came from the Red Cross to (Schmedaberg) which we came () then to see her--what happened, what's all this correspondence.

My mother had a good friend in Theresienstadt, who worked together with us and after the war, he also was a cabinet maker. We worked together. After the war, she asked him to (Schmedaberg) to run the factory, because he was a cabinet maker--he knew about it.

After, we contacted my grandmother in Holland and then they make the contact. So they let my mother know that we are alive. When she heard that, she became unconscience. So afterwards, we knew that my mother was alive. We were in Holland.

In the city where we lived, in (Schmedaberg), that was also known--that was in the mountain and it was very good there. It was also known for--it had a lot of winter sports, like skiing. In the winter, people came. But it also has a big sanatoriums. At that time there were a lot of coal mines, and usually became sick of tuberculosis and send them in the sanatorium. So we have big sanatorium. After the war there were a lot of Jews. Since my mother--the factory worked very good. She had money so she supported all the people in the sanatorium. When they had an operation, somebody had to pay for it. So she felt that her children are over there--help by strangers.

Then we heard in French that my mother was alive, and my father was not. We suspected that, but my mother told us my father was actually sent away with the last transport -- which they killed everybody. In Paris, the friends we met,

the (Fazel)--she said you know we lived in Switzerland. Oh yeah, the reason they were in hotel, they came back from Switzerland--they were over the war in Switzerland. She says, for you the best thing would be to go to Switzerland--in a sanatorium to get well. So she worked on it. Finally, we were sent to Switzerland. When we were in Paris, we lived in the hotel. Then I had to go to the hospital. At that time already, we were with telephone connection with my mother. My mother called my brother and every time he talked to her, he didn't want to tell her that I was in the hospital. So he talked first for him and then he talked for me. We actually look alike and we talk alike and we walk alike, too. So he always talk and she says, oh, I never get much out of Werner. He didn't talk much, because he didn't want to talk too much for me, so that she doesn't know.

Then I came out of the hospital and we went to Switzerland, to the rose. Then my mother always sent us pictures. In the pictures, were glued-in dollars. She sent us a nice picture and then she had a background and it was dollars. She sent us money, too. It was very dangerous to do that actually, because you could not send dollars out. Then she make friends.

We had a mine in our city. The Germans kept that mine; they filled it with water, because it was used stuff. Now, when the Russians came, they found uranium in that mine. So it became very active. The person who was in charge of the mine was a Jewish fellow--ex-communist. They actually were

communists in Poland already. They were in jail--a very rough life. So he was the head of the mine. He contacted my mother and says, we need boxes. So my mother make the wooden boxes for the uranium, to ship to Russia. His name was Gordon, and he had also some family in America. His uncle died; he was one of the executives at General Motors and left some inheritance. He had a problem on how to get inheritance to Russia--to Poland. Since we were Jews we had a deal with him, that my mother paid them out and this person paid my uncle here. So that's how we got some money out of Poland. So we got all this money from my mother to Switzerland.

After a few years, in '48--that was when, the liberation of Israel--when it became a state. I remember it was a big celebration we had in the sanatorium. Then we had to leave, I mean we were good enough. Oh yeah, my mother came visiting us actually in Switzerland one time--or two times. So we had to leave Switzerland and we say we going back to Holland. My mother wanted us to go back to Poland. So first we went to Holland and we lived there in a home. After awhile we went to Holland--my brother went first and I went later. I went by boat. My mother picked me up. When I see my brother, he says, you know we cannot stay here--that's crazy.

We see how my mother lived. She had a house which she had a fence around, our house--and then she had two watchdogs

outside, in the fence. Then she had in the back on the bottom--always she put wooden things in front of the windows and then metal. On the top, she had electric wire on the windows because it became very (undergenetic) See, the Germans all left and the Polish came out. One time, she got at night, a telephone call and says if she could go over to the factory and get an address for somebody. She says, are you crazy--calling me in the middle of the night? You scare me. He says, oh, you will be scared only tomorrow. The life was just impossible.

We decided we wanted to take a few of the machines to Israel and started selling some wood. Suddenly, there came a committee of 13 people to our house--communists. They wanted to see the books, and they looked everything around in the house. They turned everything upside down. So they were from the Internal--from the tax. They didn't find anything but they said well, we don't accept your books and we don't accept that, and all kind of things --I mean they just couldn't kick my mother out, because she was--for them--Dutch. She say, you owe us a few million dollars (slautase) in tax payments.

In the evening, the police chief from our city called and say Mrs. Weinstein, I have the order to come and pick you up in the morning. So she left overnight. My brother and I--we stayed on a few days. So it was actually, very--I took my mother to the train and she make a bag of lunch for us or something. It was one brown bag of lunch and one brown

bag of money. Instead of taking the money, she took the lunch. Then she wound up in Russia without money--with a bag of lunch. So she went to some friends and got some money, and she went to Paris.

After a few days, we all went to Paris. From Paris we went to--she actually, my mother, had all the papers ready to go to America. But my brother and I--we didn't want to; we wanted to go to Israel. So from there we went to Israel. Then we went to (Mausay) and we went with a boat called the Exodus to Israel.

Actually, my brother and I wanted--my mother didn't want to go to Israel. When she came to Israel and she see everybody, she says from the little ghetto I came and now I'm going into the big ghetto. So we arrived in Israel in '49, very early--early '49--maybe January or so. The war was still on.

First we went into the (Maubarau) which is where they keep--where they take all the new things--all the new immigrants. From there we went to--my mother immediately called her family we had in Israel. My brother and I--we stayed. From there we went to Jerusalem, also in the (Maubarau). The first thing--we look for a job--so we got a job--my brother and I. Then after awhile we got an apartment--not an apartment--a house--an old--not old--it was a fancy house actually. But all the fixtures were gone; everything was gone--totally empty. We lived there with five

families--my mother and I. My brother and mother--we had two rooms and the other ones, all one room. We lived there for quite awhile. We lived in Israel from '49 to '55. My grandmother, who was in Switzerland--she has a son, my uncle, who lived in Chile. So she wanted to go to the son. She went to her son, and she actually visited us in Paris on the way to Chile. She--my mother wanted--that she come to Israel. In about '54 or so, it happened so that my uncle got married and she wasn't too happy with the daughter-in-law. She felt--yeah--she wanted to come to Israel, but my Rabi then told us, who was Hungarian--he says, don't let her come to Israel. It's not right that somebody lived in Chile for a few years--Israel is not the right place. So she came to Israel anyway. When she came, she says, how do you live?

See, we came out from the camp and everything for us was a luxury. We had two beds and we put a blanket over, so it was a couch. Then we had this orange boxes--they were wooden boxes then. So we put them together, put a blanket over, it was a big bed. So she felt we live primitive, which was right. I mean, if you come from Chile and you live for a few years in a very well situation--so she and my mother decided they wanted to go back to Burlin, because they had property. My grandmother had a lot of houses and part of the houses they sold or something--this was a mistake. So she wanted to go back to Burlin. I was very much against it. Also in Israel, in '55, there was a time when it was very--

with work. I worked for somebody and I got paid after 3 months or so. It was very hard to exist.

My uncle was in America, so I said I really don't like the idea of you going back to Germany--let's go to America. So we started to put the papers in America. In the meantime, my grandmother passed away. She had high blood pressure and a bad heart. So then, that's the way my mother and I came to America. So now I am here. Should I talk more about how I met my wife?

Well, we came to America--see, I was a cabinetmaker so I got a job right away. We lived here, but I always wanted to study architecture--I mean, I wanted to be an architect. That was before the war already. So we came here to San Francisco. First we had to do--we wanted a car. We bought a car for \$125--a '42 Chevy. We lived in an apartment. The first night we lived with my uncle in Los Angeles and he gave us his apartment, which was on Webster Street.

The first night or so, we must have left the door open. In the middle of the night, my mother woke up and it was a black guy in the room, going through the things. She was very quiet; she didn't say anything and then he went out. He went to my uncle's things and took something out. After he left, she screamed--Werner, Werner, a man, a man--after he left. So that was the first robbery. We were just, maybe a few days here--so we were kind of disgusted about that. He took some things--not very much.

So I got a job here and since we didn't like too much San Francisco, because it was not too much like--coming from Israel. So we decided we want to go to Los Angeles--well, I want to go to Los Angeles. So we lived here from awhile. We moved from there to another apartment. Then I gave up my job and we put everything we had into the car, and we went to Los Angeles.

To Los Angeles, we came in and it was terribly smoggy. As soon as we reached--our eyes started burning. We stayed one night in a motel. In the morning, I went to a synagogue there and about 12:00 o'clock, we took off there and went back to San Francisco. I called on the way and ask if I could get the job back--they say yes. Then we came back to San Francisco.

Here, I work daytime and I studied evening for architecture. After a few years studying--all this in the vacation--I always looked for an architectural job and never could find anything, because I didn't have any experience. Think, how you could get experience when you don't have a job, and how do you get a job without experience. After awhile, I make application and usually when we have vacation, I looked for a few days for a job and then got disgusted. Then we went to Lake Tahoe.

In the meantime, we bought a house and my mother and I--we lived together here. I still studied. The first job I got--because I always had my resume with me, and that was when they built the Golden Gate project here. It was in the sixties. All the architectural offices--well, they needed

model maker and all the model maker were on the contract of another firm. That firm was

history book architects. They found themselves without a model maker. They looked through their things and says, what we have to do here--we have to make our own models. So they look around and says, hey this guy--he's a cabinet-maker. He for sure knows how to make models. So they called me and was just before Christmas, a few days before Christmas. She says, are you still interested in a job in architecture. I say, yeah, sure. She says, well, come down and we'll talk. So, they told us they need somebody who makes the models and they will take somebody to --somebody from Los Angeles. I say when should I start and he says well, right away.

So I went back to the factory where I worked. I worked there almost 5 years or so, or longer. I say well, I have to quit, because I have this other job and they need me right now. The people says, are you crazy--now is before Christmas, you're getting a bonus--you walk out?! So then I started working for that place. But of course, if you are on the higher level from the profession you know and then suddenly start in the architect's office, where you just start--I started for less than half the salary. And so I was happy to have it--and so I worked for this and make the models, and happy that I got a job. I stayed on for about 10 years. Then I decided I want to get married.

While I was studying I didn't socialize too much. I did

the normal things--you know, dancing and so on, but I didn't really met--I met some woman but it didn't work out. Then the rabbi from our Synagogue says you know, you should go to New York to meet a religious girl. So I went to New York in the (Catscol) a week. I met some girls but they didn't want to go to San Francisco. In the East, San Francisco has a name like being out, out.

Then one day, we went to the Synagogue. I was sitting and then came a young man with a family and was just sitting next to me. He has 2 sons and we got to talk. He came from Gilbralter. You see our synagogue has a (maritzha)-- woman one side and man on the other side. So I looked over there and I talk to him and he is an artist. He came from Gilbralter and now he is 5 with his family--a success here. He said this is my wife, my daughter and I says who is the other lady--young girl. He says, oh, she is my cousin. And it happened so that she was divorced and sitting next to my mother. My mother talked to him. So then my mother left for home and I told him, why don't you come to (Kedish) to me, because somehow I liked the other girl. So we came to Kedish. My mother was home--she expected some visitor at home in the afternoon and she had a cake and so on.

Suddenly we came home with 5 people--6 people. She opened the door and she says, what's going on. I say, oh, we're going to Kedish and they didn't want to come to Kedish and she says well, we cannot come 5 people to your mother.

I say why not? I do that all the time. So then they came to Kedish--my wife tells it better. She noticed that when I say Hi to him--I say Hi to him; I looked at her. So then we had Kedish; we had some cake and some things. Then they left.

It happened that just came from Gilbralter--my wife came earlier from Gilbralter because--no she came from Morocco. She came here as a student, because the situation became Arab--you know, the Arabs took over Morocco. Tangia was international--was a very beautiful life. But then the Arabs came. They took it over. So all the Jews left. Most of her friends left and most went to Canada. She had a cousin here. The cousin was married to a lawyer. So she called the cousin and she also has a sister who works for the airlines. This sister always came to San Francisco. She says if you talk to my cousin, tell the cousin to send me papers so that I can come to America.

So the cousin send the papers and she came here as a student. She lived with this American family. She spoke French and they love to have a French girl. So she lived with a lawyer. Then the sister wanted to have her sister come from Gilbralter and she brought the whole family from Gilbralter. In the time they came here, she went to New York. They lived in a hotel across from the Fairmont Hotel--that used to be apartments--now it belongs to Fairmont.

The children from that family--they were Orthodox.

They wanted to go to synagogue. They met--their rabbi gave them a name for somebody in our synagogue. They came to his permits--where this person's permits were, who wasn't on that same (shavez). It was a week later, so they just walked in there and since they didn't know their name--the way how to go by bus--they ask my wife then to take them to the synagogue. It was actually the first time my wife came to any synagogue in America.

So she was by us and then I said, you know tonight is the Polland dance. Can--I will call you. She gave me her telephone number. I have a very bad memory on numbers, but her number was a combination of my mother's birthday so I remembered it, because I don't write it up (shavez). After (shavez) I called her and then took her to a dance. Her cousin--you know, the mother from the children--told her right away, don't worry he'll call you tonight. So I called her and I took her to a dance in the Fairmont. It was a Polland dance and I wasn't the hottest dancer. She's a very good dancer and I wasn't, so sometimes she says you're stepping on my foot. On Sunday I took them out, to a trip--her and the other children--they had no car--to Stenson Beach. We talked. We became closer and closer. On Tessa--that was before--yeah, then she had some problems with her passport.

I make up my mind that she is the right one for me. My mother had that house; and we had a friend; and she had the

house and she wanted to sell it. So one time I remember I took her out to some club, and it was in Chinatown. We walked and I talked to this lady--and I told her, you know I want to buy that house of this lady and remodel it. She says, why do you want to buy the house? I said, I want to get married. She says, you want to get married--to whom? I said, to you! That was my proposal.

Then she had a problem with her passport, so we went to the immigration. She asked him and so on--and he turned to me and says, who are you? I say, I am her fiance, or future fiance. He says, so what. So why don't you get married and you have no problem--because what happened to her she had the visa, but she had no passport. In Morocco before you get a passport renewed, you have to pay him and you have him--it takes a long time and she wouldn't have got the passport in time. He says, well, just get married and there's no problem. So then we got--well, actually that was after (Pessa). After Pessa--I invite them all for Pessa, to our house and there, where we got engage, I gave her the ring. Then we said okay, we go to the City Hall and we get married. So we set a date on (Umatzawood). That's another date where you can get married, and we got married.

It was funny because we got married by the City Hall, but we couldn't--I couldn't get married in the synagogue, because at that time my mother didn't have the means to hold onto the house--you know it would be a hardship for her

when I move out and she didn't work. She got the pension from Germany, but it wasn't enough. So I decide I would build a apartment downstairs, what she can rent--that pays for part of the rent. I had to do that before I move out and get married. It was really funny, because I took her-- we got married in the City Hall with everything. Then I took her on a trip, to Oakland, to the park. Then we had dinner at (JacTar) and then I took her home. So she only was my half wife. I worked in the office; in the evening I built the apartment--actually it was a room, but I built a bathroom. Then in August I was finished; we set a date and then we got married.

Q That was what year?

A That was in--I was married--I'm going to be married 26 years now, today. So today is '90--'64 something.

Q Where is your brother at this point?

A My brother stayed in Israel.

Q He stayed?

A Yeah, he got married--when we were in Israel. He has five children and I don't know how many grandchildren.

So then we had my daughter first and my son. They are now in Mountaindale, both in the community--they learning for rabbi--going to be rabbi.

Q You mentioned very briefly having not spoken much to your children about your war-time experiences, and I'm wondering if you could elaborate on that a little bit now--

about why you haven't told them and what you hope for them to understand after they see this tape.

A Well, I always felt that this was my past and I don't want to burden them with it. I wanted them to live happy growing-up life and not be burdened with this. It's not a very positive thing to talk about. That was the main reason.

Actually, I don't think so much about it. I think that people were more affected when they were older. I mean, I was 15; then it started and I came out--I was 18. Sometimes in a life--I think that we were not enough mature to see the real impact in that age. I know that it affected people maybe 30 or so. They were more aware of it. I think even that my brother talks much more about the camp and so on than I do. It's also personality. I very seldom think about it.

For instance, my brother-in-law gave me a book which--I really didn't want to read it, because this person was in the camp--I mean, he's a German and he became Christian before Hitler. But he was still considered Jew by the Germans; they didn't care. So I didn't want to read the book--I say why should I read it when the guy is not Jewish. Then I read it anyway. I started a little bit, then I noticed he was in Theresienstadt. Our stories was very much parallel. He was in Germany--I wanted to find out mainly--I read the book because first of all, I wanted to find out what happened in Germany. That was terrible. The people were hung like

animals. In Theresienstadt, I wanted to find out what happened after I left. But it happened that he left at the same time I left, and he went also in the camp. He was much older; he was already a lawyer in Germany, or Judge in Germany.

So I read this book and I was depressed for two days -- three days or so. It really showed me many things which I missed. We were at the same time--like what I felt was exciting and was something nice. You know, like when they make the movie, they took us out to the river--we swam and so on. For him that was the worst thing. It was a slap in the face. So that might be the reason--might be the age when you go through certain things.

Q Do you and your brother ever talk about the camps or any of your war, pre-war experiences?

A Yeah, we do. Uh-huh. Yeah, we do remember that but not the bad things. There were good things, too. There was in Russia--I know that when we had the money and--we stopped in one station and they sold the whole chicken. We bought the first whole chicken we ate, after the war. Once we were in the camp--what we were thinking most of were of course, our parents. Did they survive? And then food. I know that we were once laying and sitting and got a potato. Somebody says, oh, we could only eat as many potatoes as we wanted.

And there was one interesting thing also. We had a friend and he was a banker. We knew him from Germany and then they went to Holland.

His name was (Florsheim). He was in Theresienstadt and was working, cleaning the toilets. He was very conscientious because if you don't clean the toilets, people get sick and so on. My mother went to him in Holland. He didn't touch the door handles because of germs--he had somebody to open the door handles for him. She asked him in Theresienstadt, do you remember when you had somebody to open your door handles? He says, Mrs. Weinstein, after I'm coming back I'm going to have somebody again to open door handles. How we survived--but that's the attitude. Some people didn't live in the dust; they live further out. He was already thinking of coming back.

When we talk with my brother, we talk about things like this. But since he's in Israel we only talk--well I was last year in Israel. We don't talk about the past.

Q Obviously, the man who had someone to open the doors for him was older than you were--

A Oh, yeah, sure.

Q And had probably a larger framework to work from. But, what did you think of from day to day that kept you going?

A Well, first of all, the human being is very strong--much stronger than people think. What keep you going--well, the will to live. I mean, the will to live is tremendous. You have only one life. That's what you have and you hold onto that and you protect it--like we think

about we will come back to Holland. We will go back to have a life. If people don't have that, I see many people who let go--who gave up. But, we have too much to look forward to. That's natural--nobody risks his life. Nobody tries to do anything over there. We were always low profile. That's a natural thing that people want to stay alive. Really, you don't have to have any tremendous convictions, or tremendous goals or something.

Q Do you think your faith helped you--did you pray?

A Well--my brother's faith helped, yeah. He prayed. I wasn't religious at that time. I became religious in Switzerland. Well, faith can help but I don't think so. At that time we were thinking of getting something to eat. We were not very philosophical at that time.

Q Why did you become religious in Switzerland?

A Well, I think the surrounding--a religious surrounding and we see that. My brother was religious and I think it came kind of naturally. I learned there were some people we had some opportunity to learn some and know something about religion. I would say the surrounding made a lot difference.

Q I was a little confused about some of the timing when you left Russia and you heard that your mother had gone back to Germany. You had communication with her and you were writing--what was the time frame there?

A Well, actually we suspected my mother in Vienna.

We suspected that she was alive, but we didn't realize that she would have gone back to (Schmedaberg). Because from Vienna to (Schmedaberg) is very close. We could have just taken a taxi. So actually we heard only that my mother was alive definitely in Paris, in the hospital--that we got the letter that my mother is alive and my grandmother is in Switzerland.

Q How long after the liberation was it before you--

A After liberation, it was almost a year.

Q Werner, I just was wanting to ask you to comment on what you would hope, people learning your story, would have to reflect upon--what they would take from your story and use in their own life or pass on what they would learn?

A First of all, you learn that it could actually happen. Because, that's what we have in a few years with some kind of a propaganda, that the (Horfswitz) was never existing and so on--that it was real--that you had real people who were there.

Second, is that it's very hard--I mean it's very important for people to realize that cultured people, like the Germans were, could get down to that level--to do the things they did, because of a influence of a few people and also of a lost war and for promises. We can never be too sure that it never can happen again, because it can happen again. So, we always have to be aware of that it happens. The only thing that protects us, besides God, is how

important it is to have the State of Israel. We just seen recently with the Jews how important it is to have your own state, and have a strong state. We didn't actually have any place to go. Even the people who the Germans left out-- they have to be turned back to Germany, because nobody wanted them. That's what we have to learn, that State of Israel is terribly important--for not only Israel, but for all the Jews in the whole world. Of course, God helps us to keep that state. It's strange that things started in Germany, because also the reform movement and so on started in Germany. That might not be the right way to go. It might the right way rather to--the taller way and not to--to get away with all kind of reform.

That's about it. Thank you for the interview. I think it's a good work. It's important work you're doing.

Q We can't do it without you. Thank you very much.

A Thank you.