

Interview with JOSEF HOCHFELD
Holocaust Oral History Project
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Q: ON DEC 2, 1988 ON BEHALF OF THE SAN FRANCISCO ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF THE HOLOCAUST CENTER. I'M WITH MY PARTNER, EVELYN FIELDEN FROM NAPA AND I'M INTERVIEWING MR. HOCHFELD. SO WOULD YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF?

A: My name is Josef Hochfeld. I'm spelled with an "f", not "ph," the European spelling. I was born in Germany, in Hamburg, on the 8th of April, 1912. I attended schools, () in Hamburg and I graduated from high school in 1930. It was a very progressive school. We had quite a few Jewish students, we had Jewish teachers and the school was exceptional. It was also co-educational.

Q: WAS THIS A PUBLIC SCHOOL?

A: It was a public school, yes. And it was not a Jewish school. We travelled quite a bit, our school, as part of the educational program. That was also exceptional. I don't think many German schools did that at that time. We had a chance to travel the first time to southern Germany and Austria, the second time to west Germany and Holland and the biggest adventure was a four week trip to England, where we spent 2 weeks in London and 2 weeks in Yorkshire in a little place called (). As I say, it was part of the educational program. It was not during vacation time. We visited museums and churches in order to study certain styles like Gothic, Romantic and

so on. And my interest . That's why we are still travelling quite a bit.

Q: WERE YOU BROUGHT UP ORTHODOX?

A: No, I was bar mitzvahed. And it was an Orthodox congregation. And I really didn't feel very close to them. I was, what you might call, an assimilated Jew. I didn't get very much Jewish background from my parents either. My parents were a typical middle class family and they were Jewish, but we paid taxes, I think, for the congregation. We had to do this in Germany, but otherwise not. Of course, once Hitler came to power, all the Jews got closer to the Jewish community, for social reasons. And that's where I met my wife, too, and of course she has a much better Jewish background than I. We belong to a Reform congregation in San Francisco now.

Q: DO YOU HAVE ANY BROTHERS OR SISTERS?

A: Yeah, I had a sister who was 2 years younger than I and who left Germany in 1938. She had the option of going either to Brazil or to Belgium. Unfortunately, she planned to stay in Europe and opted for Belgium and I never saw her anymore. She got married over there, they had a baby daughter and when the Nazis invaded Belgium she was rounded up like so many other Jews and ended up in Auschwitz. But I was never able to find out exactly when she died. I'm sure she was gassed like everybody else.

Q: WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR PARENTS?

A: My parents? We were able to bring my parents out to China where I also landed. I didn't talk about that yet. And when we left China, I was very lucky that I was one of the small minority. I think we were only about 100 refugees. And we were able to bring them out also to the United States. We left China I think in January of 1948.

Q: DID YOU HAVE ANY EXTENDED FAMILY IN GERMANY?

A: Yeah, families at that time used to be much larger. My father as well as my mother, they had several brothers and sisters, probably around seven each and practically all perished except one uncle who was able to leave Germany for the United States, I think in '38 probably, he and his wife. He didn't have any children. Then I had an uncle in Leipzig. Even though he was Jewish, his wife was non-Jewish. So he survived the war. I mean, he led a pretty miserable life but I never saw them again. I mean, we were in correspondance but I can't tell you anything about the conditions under which they vegetated.

Q: WHAT WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE ABOUT BEING A JEW IN GERMANY IN THE '30's, IN RELATION TO ANY PREJUDICE?

A: Hamburg was a comparably liveable city and I didn't really encounter that much prejudice by the German people. Of cours, they tried to avoid me, not that they didn't wany to talk to me but they were more concerned about their own safety. They probably considered it

not safe to be associated with a Jew or Jewish family. And I realized that, that's why I associated more or less with only Jewish groups. I studied for 2 years in Leipzig - I'm a pharmacist, retired now for 14 years, and actually I also joined a Jewish group. I was a student at the University and I had contact with non-Jewish students. We had a very good relationships. But, of course, I didn't have any social contact with them.

Q: HOW LONG WERE YOU ABLE TO STUDY? TILL WHAT YEAR?

A: Until 1935, in April, when I took the equivalent of the state board examination. In Germany, the examination takes several weeks. You have an oral examination, a written examination and an examination of the lab. It was a very exciting experience because a new law came out, nobody knew how to interpret it, whether it applied to me or not. I was told by the dean of the School of Pharmacy at the University of Leipzig that I couldn't continue because they didn't know whether it applied to me.

Q: WHAT WAS THE LAW?

A: The law was that Jews couldn't study anymore, couldn't take any examinations and the question was whether it applied to me. Because I started already, I was in the process of the examinations. So I decided to interrupt the examination just for one day, I think it was the examination in the lab, I lost one day. I decided to take the train to Berlin, to the Ministry of the Interior

and I talked to one of the officials and I got a paper that I could continue the examination but they couldn't guarantee that I would ever get the official acknowledgement that I took the examination. The only reason that I was able to study at that time was they differentiated between those students where the father was a former soldier in the German army. At that time students where the father was in the German army got preferential treatment.

Q: WAS IT IN HAMBURG OR DO YOU KNOW OF ANY OTHER PLACE WHERE THAT RULE WAS APPLIED?

A: What rules?

Q: THAT IF YOUR FATHER WAS -

A: No, that applied to all of Germany. I had a very good friend who studied medicine. He was from a small community, (Turinia). He was able to study there, he left for the United States and he was practicing medicine here.

Q: WHEN DID YOU FIRST NOTICE DANGER FOR THE JEWS?

A: In 1933 of course you always saw the SS people, at that time SA people, demonstrating. All these songs against the Jews. Jews were beaten up and (raschenschan). How do you say?

Q: RACIAL ABUSE?

A: Yeah. They didn't allow Jews and non-Jewish persons to have any relationship. And also when it was the first of April in 1933 when they started to boycott

all the Jewish stores all over Germany, but of course I only had first hand experience in Hamburg. I was in Hamburg at that time, I think I left a few weeks later for Leipzig where I started to continue my studies there. But what was very refreshing at that time - in Hamburg, I don't think you can apply this to other places, they did a fantastic business. In order to express opposition to the Nazis, people shopped in the Jewish stores but of course later this would have been impossible. But that was just a few months after Hitler and the Nazis came to power.

Q: WHAT DID YOU DO AFTER 1935?

A: In 1935, I worked in a pharmacy, still it was possible I think for about 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ years, I had a Jewish boss. In 1936, there was a new law that there were no more Jewish pharmacies so he had to sell it. And then I was really anxious to get out of Germany. I tried to work in different labs in the Jewish hospital and the clinical lab and then later in a chemical lab. So I thought, in addition to pharmacy, I had some other options. I had a certain background, as a pharmacy student you are exposed quite a bit to chemistry.

Q: WHAT WAS THE REACTION OF YOUR FAMILY FROM '33 ON WHEN THEY SAW THE DANGER?

A: I have to be honest. Many people, I think also many Jews and even non-Jews thought this never would last. Everybody thought this was going to end eventually and

nobody ever expected it to end the way it ended. When I finally saw the danger I was really anxious to get out of Germany and all the avenues were closed to me. My father-in-law, I suppose he used his influence, that's how I was able to get the ticket to Shanghai. Of course, there were thousands and thousands of Jews who were just as anxious.

Q: THROUGH THE INFLUENCE OF YOUR FATER-IN-LAW? HE WAS A RABBI?

A: A rabbi. But he had connections to one of the shipping lines, my wife could probably tell you more about it. He was a rabbi for the shipping line a few times and they did some business, so I think he... My wife has to tell you more about it. He approached the shipping line, so they made it possible that I got a ticket. I think that's what it was. I got a ticket, you know, to -

Q: TO SHANGHAI?

A: To Shanghsi. In Shanghai, I was very fortunate that I stayed there only for a few weeks and I got a job as a pharmacist in a British pharmacy in north China, Tientsin, where we were only about 100 German-Austrian refugees.

Q: SO WHAT YEAR WAS THAT?

A: That was in 1939. I mean, in Shanghai, people were starving and it was terrible. I mean we lived under awful conditions. I mean, you couldn't compete with the coulies. You had to compete with the coulies. In

Tientsin we didn't live like we are living here but we didn't suffer, I mean we were under Japanese occupation.

Q: WAS LIFE DIFFICULT IN HAMBURG DURING THAT PERIOD, FROM '35 ON?

A: It was getting more and more difficult, especially after, of course I left, it was getting more and more difficult every year. Of course, it was getting more and more difficult after Kristalnacht, but I left then in late January, or was it in February, after we got married.

Q: YOU MENTIONED BEFORE THAT YOU HAD A SHORT INTERNMENT. WOULD YOU TELL US ABOUT THAT, HOW IT CAME ABOUT?

A: It was, I'm pretty sure, it was November 10. I think it was in connection with Kristalnacht and with the killing of a Nazi diplomat in Paris by a Polish Jew in Paris. Many male Jews were arrested and I was one of those too. They arrested me, I was working in that chemical lab which was also owned by a Jew, but evidently he was able to continue operating it. This other law, I referred to before, just applied to pharmacies. They picked me up in the lab, took me to (Fussbergen) which is a local prison. I stayed there overnight and the next day, I'm pretty sure, they shipped us on a train to Sachsenhausen which is near Berlin.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER THE CONDITIONS IN THE PRISON WHEN YOU WERE THERE?

A: I think I was together with other German Jews. I

think...I don't really recall the details anymore.

Q: HOW LONG DID YOU STAY IN SACHSENHAUSEN?

A: I guess it was about 10 weeks. At that time, as you probably know, it was still possible to get out of a German concentration camp if you could provide proof that you were able to leave Germany. My parents had arranged for me to go to Brazil. And that's how I was able to get out.

Unfortunately, at the time of my release from Sachsenhausen, there were new regulations in Berlin that required a certain amount of foreign currency which they didn't require before. And I didn't have it because we were only allowed I think the equivalent of 10 Marks if I'm not mistaken. Or 10 dollars. So Brazil was out and I had to be out within 3 or 4 weeks otherwise they would have taken me back to Sachsenhausen. So I got a ticket to Shanghai. It was very difficult to obtain that ticket.

Q: HOW DID YOU GET THE TICKET?

A: I think I got it, I think my father-in-law who was a rabbi who had some connections to a shipping line was helpful and anyway I made it to Shanghai and it was appalling. I had not very much money. My sister who was in Belgium at that time had sent me half a pound and an uncle of my wife who I think was in Palestine at that time, I think he sent me also a few dollars so I had some money. But, of course, I was so anxious to save that money and

I was trying very anxiously to find a job and I never took public transportation there because, even though it hardly cost anything, I didn't know what was going to happen. But I couldn't find a job and I was living in a home there together with all the German refugees and I think about 20, 30 people to a room. And then-

Q: A PRIVATE HOME?

A: No, not a private home. I think it used to be a school, a former school. I think it was called (Waldhook).

*Spelling?
I'm sure he
meant to say
China*

When we came to the United States we had to stay a few days in Shanghai and it was absolutely appalling how these people lived there in the ghetto. I got a job in north China, in Tientsin, as a pharmacist in a British pharmacy. Conditions, compared to Shanghai, really were marvelous, you know! So when we left in early 1949 for the United States we had to stay for 5 days in Shanghai and I had a chance to see those conditions. I mean, they lived like coolies there and, of course, it was much better already because they were liberated. Americans had landed there and so on.

Q: YOU WERE MARRIED AT THAT TIME?

A: Yeah, we had married. I hardly knew my wife. We had dated maybe 2,3, 4 times before. And we had a date on the day of my arrest and, of course, I'm sure she knew what had happened. When I got out of camp I proposed. "I think I would like to get married." I figured leaving Germany for a strange country, it would be better to

marry somebody with a similar background. She said, "Give me a day," and after a day she agreed.

Q: GOING BACK, CAN YOU DESCRIBE DAILY LIFE IN THE CAMP?

A: We had a, I don't know, I don't know the English... You had to stand there for hours and hours you were not supposed to move and I mean some people, some elderly people, broke down and of course, they were kicked by the SS. Special people with a beard, special just like rabbis with a beard, they really mistreated them. We were doing some very unproductive work. I mean they had some rocks there. We had, of course, prison uniforms. We had to turn our jackets around and then somebody shovelled these rocks into our jacket, you know, this way. Then we had to run to the other side, dump them there, then run back, all day long. Very unproductive kind of work. Just cruel, in order to -

Q: AGONIZE?

A: Agonize, yeah. And, of course, quite a few people broke down, they couldn't do it. Of course, I still was young and I was very fortunate, I was able to do it.

Q: WHAT ABOUT THE BARRACK CONDITIONS?

A: The food, we didn't have to starve there, but the food, of course it was pretty miserable. And we had in all these barracks, what they call in German (Stumregister,) somebody who was in charge, the -

Q: THE ELDER.

A: The elder. Who, in our case, and I was never able

to find out, he was a former SS man. He was a former associate of Hitler and I don't know why he was a prisoner over there. He was a special case. He probably wanted to show that he was still a Nazi and he was testing us. He probably wanted to show his former Nazi friends that he is a Nazi, probably wanted to be rehabilitated, I don't know. I never was able to find out. He didn't give me any problems but he was pretty difficult.

Q: WHAT TIME OF YEAR WERE YOU THERE?

A: That was from November until January.

Q: SO IT WAS VERY COLD.

A: It was very cold, yeah. It was very unpleasant.

Q WERE YOU ABLE TO TAKE ENOUGH CLOTHING ALONG?

A: No, we had all prison clothing. I was sometimes very uncomfortable, especially when we had this -
how do you call this? (Apkahl?)

Q: ROLLCALL.

A: Rollcall, yeah, rollcall, yeah. And we had this rollcall. You know, that was the most miserable time. And also we had to watch if somebody, for instance, broke down. Or if they thought somebody didn't do what they expected him to do, they had 25 (Pacherlieben.)

Q: LASHES.

A: Lashes, yea. And we had to watch that. They were hanging them a certain period of time from a (Farule)

Q: POST

A: Post, yeah.

Spelling

Spelling

Spelling

Q: HUNG UP ON A POST?

A: Yeah.

Q: WERE YOU ALL JEWS IN THIS CAMP?

A: No. No that's another thing. I talked to you about this before. I feel very strongly about the Nazis. I still don't want anything to do with the Nazis, but there were quite a few German, I can't tell you percentage-wise, they were political prisoners. They were primarily Social Democrats and primarily Communists, also some Catholics. There were homosexuals, quite a few. There were (Papal-forcer)

Q: OH, SEVENTH DAY ADVENTISTS.

A: Yeah, I think so. And they gave the Nazis really the most difficult time because they didn't, and the Nazis really treated them very bad, because they didn't recognize Hitler as the supreme authority. I mean, they believed in God. Then you had regular criminals, you know. I mean, I wouldn't be, of course, it's a guess since we didn't have any figures available, but the non-Jewish prisoners formed the majority of the camp at that time. I don't know, don't quote me.

Q: DID YOU NOTICE ANY ACTS OF PEOPLE HELPING EACH OTHER? OUT OF THE USUAL?

A: Well, we tried, of course, to reassure each other you know, but I don't really recall. But we had certain hopes but of course we never knew when this ever was going to end. It was hopeful that some people were able to leave the camp

earlier than I did but then, of course, why not me? Why those people? Do I have to stay here all the time? "

When I finally left at the middle of January, there were still quite a few Jews and I don't know what happened to them. There was another campaign, half a year earlier, when they arrested quite a few Polish Jews. Oh no, not Polish Jews, I think Jews who had some kind of criminal records who were at one time in violation of certain laws, I think. I don't remember the details. And some of them still were in the concentration camp.

Q: WERE YOU ALL MEN?

A: All men.

Q: WERE YOU ABLE TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR PARENTS AT ALL?

A: Yeah, I was able to write letters. To a very limited degree, of course with censorship. I think they were also able to send me very limited... I don't really remember anymore the details. It's fifty years ago.

Q: WELL IT DOESN'T MATTER. I WAS WONDERING HOW WERE THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE JEWS AND THE NON-JEWS IN THE CAMP? DID YOU FEEL COOPERATION OR NOT?

A: We didn't have any contact. I mean, everything was very strictly supervised and we never had any contact. As far as I remember. Except for the guy in charge who told us what to do - a very unpleasant fellow. I don't think we had much contact.

Q: YOU WERE ALL JEWS IN YOUR PARTICULAR BARRACK?

A: Yeah, right. And you know we had the Jewish star. Political prisoners had red and the gays or homosexuals had a different one.

Q: PINK

A: Pink, yes. How do you know all about it?

Q: WELL, I HEARD IT AND READ ABOUT IT. WHAT ABOUT THE PHYSICAL STATE OF THE BARRACK? YOU HAD SEVERAL PEOPLE SLEEP IN ONE BUNK?

A: No, we had bunk, bunk above the other one. And there were probably about, I don't know, 20,30 bunks. And in the morning we were fed very early.

Q: WHAT WAS THE FOOD?

A: Gee, I don't remember.

Q: HOW ABOUT MEDICAL CARE?

A: I had, at one time, an infection and a fever and a sore throat, so I reported it. And they gave me some medication, some sort of type which just came out, with which I wasn't familiar. I mean, even though I am a pharmacist by training. It was called (Prontozo.) And I was scared because one of the reactions was red urine, you know. And I thought it was blood, but... So they looked after our medical needs, you know. At least this one case. I mean, this was the only experience I ever had.

Q: DID YOU NOT GET A NUMBER?

5, 11, 12

A: I had a number.

Q: YOU DID GET A NUMBER. ON YOUR ARM?

A: No, no I didn't. But everybody had a number.

Q: BUT YOU WERE NOT TATOORED.

A: No, no. I wasn't tatoored. I forgot the number, I think it was 10,020 or something. When I was asked by one of these SS hoodlums, "What is your name?" I had to say "I'm prisoner number so and so." Not I'm Josef Hochfeld.

Q: YOUR NAME WAS DENIED.

A: Yeah.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER ANYTHING YOU PEOPLE DID TO KEEP YOUR SPIRITS UP? FOR AMUSEMENT? ANY OF THE POSITIVE THINGS?

A: I think in the evening, we talked among ourselves. I mean there were several people who, if I'm not mistaken, were from my area, from Hamburg. I mean, I knew some of these people so we had mutual friends. I think, for instance, my wife's cousin was there and we talked about my wife and her cousin knew that I had dated her and he taught me something about her. And, of course, I was anxious to see her again. There was another fellow whom I used to know in Hamburg very well, whom I met just by coincidence in San Francisco again, who was quite successful here in San Francisce, a painter. I don't know whether he painted the cable cars. And we were together and I met him here again and I knew him quite well in Hamburg.

Q: DID YOU GET SOME READING MATERIEL AT ALL? WERE YOU ABLE TO GET BOOKS?

A: No, I don't think so. I don't think so. No, we were entirely isolated. We didn't know what was going on in the world.

Q: DID YOU KNOW OF ANY PRISONERS WHO WERE OUTRIGHT KILLED IN THE CAMP?

A: No, I never saw of this happening. I'm sure there were quite a few killed and especially some of the older and weaker fellows, they just couldn't keep them. They were breaking down and couldn't keep up and I'm sure that some of them must have died.

Q: THEY COLLAPSED?

A: They collapsed, yea.

Q: SO WHEN YOU WERE RELEASED FROM THE CAMP YOU GOT MARRIED, YOU WENT TO CHINA...

A: I went to China. I left for Shanghai and I stayed there for several weeks. Living conditions in that camp where I stayed were pretty miserable, we were supported by some local and by some American Jewish organizations, but I always was hungry. I mean, I never thought that I had enough to eat.

I had contacted already on the boat, on the way to China, a dentist friend in north China, in Tientsin, and I contacted a lot of other people too, in Manila, but nothing worked out. But I contacted this one who was a very successful dentist in Tientsin and I was lucky, I

got a response. He said, "Yes, yes, I talked to the owner of the largest pharmacy, British, and he needs somebody." And this dentist was very successful, he was the most successful dentist in, I mean, all the society people came to him. And he was very influential. And he made it possible for me to get the job in Tientsin. Of course I didn't have any money, the pharmacy paid first-class for me to travel from Shanghai to Tientsin. It was quite a change, considering the miserable conditions in Shanghai.

Q: WHAT WERE THE CONDITIONS IN SHANGHAI?

A: Conditions in Shanghai - it was getting very warm, in May, and I was perspiring, had all kinds of skin infections and it was getting so bad that I was confined to a hospital for two weeks, approximately. I had one boil after another and in order to treat it, you didn't have really very good sanitary conditions, so you couldn't wash yourself very well, so I suppose that was responsible for all these infections. So I was confined to a hospital which, I was very fortunate because at least I got enough to eat, so while I always had the impression I was very hungry all the time before, of course, I was running around all day and it probably also contributed to my additional caloric needs. You know, I was burning calories in order to find a job.

And nothing materialized in Shanghai, so it was

such a pleasant surprise when I was able to get that job in Tientsin. In Tientsin, conditions were much better . There were primarily, I mean, I'm talking about the German Jewish refugees. There were people with professional qualifications, there were engineers, dentists, physicians. There were a few unqualified people but they also made comparatively a decent living there.

Q: HOW DID YOU MANAGE FOR THE LANGUAGE?

A: You were able to get along with English and over the years we also picked up Chinese. We had an arrangement, my wife was young, she was approximately 7 years younger than I, she couldn't finish her education, normally she also would have gone to college but during the Hitler period of course it was impossible. She gave German and English language lessons. And we had an agreement there with a Chinese teacher whom she taught German. He was very fluent in English and he also knew some German, but he wanted to improve his German. He was a very, very educated fellow. He was a high school teacher and he wanted to read Goethe, Goethe's Faust in German, you know. So he gave us Chinese and in exchange my wife gave him German. So that's how we picked up Chinese. And I went back 3 times to China and I still speak some Mandarin, it was very helpful.

Q: HOW LONG WERE YOU IN CHINA?

A: About nine years. And my wife followed me about six months later.

Q: DID YOU HAVE CHILDREN THERE?

A: Yeah, we had a son, he was born in Tientsin and my wife had a miscarriage afterwards, so we only had one child. And he came with us to the United States in early 1948. It was a very difficult time here in the United States. I was able to save some money, always a good job. I was a pharmacist in a Jewish hospital, there was a large Russian Jewish community. They didn't have any pharmacy so they asked me to organize it. And I worked also for a Swiss company during the war, as a chemist.

Q: WHAT YEAR ARE WE TALKING ABOUT NOW?

A: The war years. Tientsin was under Japanese occupation.

Q: I UNDERSTAND. BUT YOU WERE IN SHANGHAI, YOU SAY, FOR NINE YEARS?

A: No, no. I was in China for 9 years. Maybe I didn't explain this well enough. I wrote this letter, maybe I am confusing you now?

Q: NO, YOU SAID YOU...

A: We were out last night, it was after 12:00...

Q: YOU LOOK TIRED.

A: And I got up before 6:00 because I'm pretty busy these days. So I may have confused you now.

Q: I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU WERE NINE YEARS IN CHINA, THEN YOU CAME TO THE UNITED STATES IN '48?

A: Yeah. And I stayed only for a few weeks in Shanghai because we contacted this dentist who made it possible for me to get this job in Tientsin. And in Tientsin, I never was without a job. I worked first for the British pharmacy, then, once the war started, of course the British pharmacy was taken over by the Japanese. I worked at the Jewish Hospital as a pharmacist and later I worked for the Swiss company. My last job was with the United Nations as a pharmacist of medical supplies.

Q: HOW DID YOU FEEL AS A JEW IN CHINA?

A: It was a large Jewish community in China, also in Tientsin. They were primarily Russian Jews, Polish Jews, but there were also, before the war, quite a few American Jews, British Jews, German Jews, French Jews. And we had our own synagogue. It was an Orthodox synagogue and I never went there and my wife, even though her father was a rabbi, I don't think she ever went there. Only after the war, after we were liberated and the first Marine division landed there. They had a Jewish chaplain who was wonderful, I mean, he was Reform and we went to all the services, and it really appealed to me. I mean, I don't know what your background is, I don't know whether you are Orthodox or...

Q: NO. YOU'VE SAID YOU WERE ABLE TO GET YOUR OWN PARENTS OUT?

A: Yeah.

Q: WHEN WAS THAT?

A: That was in 1940. They came by, I think you mentioned earlier to me...

Q: SIBERIA.

A: Yeah, by Siberia. They came directly to Tientsin. Later, after we had left for the United States in early '48, I was able to bring them out of China. It was meanwhile under Communist control and we were able to bring them out to the United States.

Q: HOW COME THEY COULD NOT GO OUT WHEN YOU LEFT FOR THE UNITED STATES?

A: They didn't have a visa and I don't think I would have been able to support them at that time. Because we had originally had the intention of joining my wife's relatives in Michigan. My brother-in-law was teaching at Michigan State University and then we found out that Michigan required citizenship.

Somebody on the boat suggested, an American, "Why don't you go to Nevada, the requirements are so much easier in Nevada." So, 2,3, days after I arrived in San Francisco, I travelled by Greyhound to Reno, and I went to the State Board of Pharmacy and I was told the same requirement, also citizenship, in order to take the state boards. I didn't like Reno anyway. I mean I think I was very disappointed.

So I contacted the School of Pharmacy and also the State Board of Pharmacy in San Francisco, I think the office itself is in Sacramento, and I was told that

California only had required what they used to call the first papers. So that's why we decided to stay in San Francisco. We didn't get any support from the Committee. I mean, I was able to save some money. I really didn't have much money but I was contacted by the Jewish Committee and they were very anxious to get rid of as many people as possible in Shanghai, which I understood. And they said they would pay the expenses to get me to another place. But I didn't need their support, I was able to support myself. I wanted to finish my one year requirement as the University of California so they couldn't really force me to move to any other location.

Q: HOW WERE YOUR PARENTS SUPPORTING THEMSELVES IN CHINA DURING THAT PERIOD?

A: My father, he really did very well. Typewriter ribbons, he sold them in offices, and office equipment. And he made enough money to support himself.

Q: AND WHAT ABOUT YOUR WIFE'S PARENTS?

End of Side A

Begin Side B

A: My wife only had a father. She lost her mother when she was 11 years old. Her father was a rabbi and when we got married, she didn't feel she could leave him immediately. So she stayed for about half a year with him then she finally also left. And she, of course, had a very difficult time to leave Germany, too. And the war

had already started and she just went on a German freighter and she landed in

Break in tape - long pause.

Q: YOU WERE SAYING ABOUT YOUR WIFE'S ARRIVAL?

A: My wife originally had planned, of course, to come directly to Tientsin, but she couldn't on account of the flood we had in Tientsin. It was terrible. Nobody could get into Tientsin, so she was stranded in ().

There also was a Jewish community support for her but I had to give her financial support and about four weeks later, I think she was finally able, after the flood subsided, she was able to follow me to Tientsin.

Q: IS THERE ANYTHING YOU THINK OF, YOU WOULD LIKE TO...

A: No, I mean my parents in China, but I think this is immaterial. You know there are some ironies, being a German citizen. You know, you don't have to record it I want to make it very short.

Q: IT'S ALRIGHT.

A: In 1939, the Japanese had quite a few problems with the British and the French. Not so much with the Americans, quite a few tensions. There was a French and a British concession. So it came to a climax. They surrounded those concessions, what is the English word for that? Nobody could get in and out of the English and French concession.

Anyway, we were still German citizens and the irony

inadequate

is the German consulate gave us a document. And, I mentioned earlier, most of the German Jews had qualified professions. But the rare few didn't have any qualifications and some of these people were able to make lots of money. And, I mean, I think it was unethical. But I mean, not only German Jews but also Russian and so on. They were able to smuggle truckloads of merchandise into the British and French concesssion. They just showed the Japanese their German identification with its swastika and they make lots of money.

And this was one example. Then, later, after the war had already started, I think we still had our German papers, Russians and German Jews were able to smuggle merchandise to Shanghai on the boat or by train and then buy other merchandise and bring it back to Tientsin. And those people also were making lots of...Now I certainly would have been able to make much more money if I had done that too, but I didn't have the nerve to do it!

Q: WHAT KIND OF PASSPORT DID YOU HAVE, FROM GERMANY, WITH A "J?"

A: With a "J". As you know, the German Consulate issued us this document without a "J", so people were able to... You know, I telephoned Herb Caen because he was incorrect. There used to be a consul here, Wiederman, in San Francisco, he was Hitler's superior officer in theFirst World War. Captain Wiederman. And when we found out about that in 1941, after the war had started with the United States, he would be transfered,

he would be our consul in Germany, I mean the Jewish community really got scared...

Q: WAIT A MINUTE, A GERMAN CONSUL, NOT IN GERMANY BUT...

A: No, I mean, I'm sorry.

Q: IT'S ALRIGHT, I JUST WANTED TO RECTIFY IT. IN TIENTSIN.

A: In Tientsin. Yeah, he was transferred from San Francisco. I mean the war had started in the United States so the German government had sent him over to Tientsin. And he was a most pleasant surprise. In 1934, we were still under Japanese occupation, he came out with a very strong anti-Nazi speech. And you know in 1939, we had, in the pharmacy where I used to work, we had quite a few German customers. Once the war between Germany and England had started, all the German customers stayed away. Except one woman, and she was a girlfriend of Captain Wiederman. And I don't think she would have dared to do this without his...He helped two German refugees in getting some papers. And he was, we had the Marine division coming over, he was immediately arrested by the Marines. He was shipped over to Germany. And we were told he was one of the key witnesses against the Nazis.

Q: I'D LIKE TO CLARIFY ONE THING TO ME WHICH IS UNCLEAR. THE GERMAN CONSULATE ISSUED YOU PAPERS WITHOUT THE "J." NOW THE GERMAN CONSULATE REPRESENTED THE NAZI GOVERNMENT.

A: I know, I know. But that's the way it was. (To his

wife) Do we still have it here, do you know where it is? (Wife's response, "No.")

A: I have it here somewhere.

Q: I BELIEVE YOU.

A: I still have this little passport with our photos and it says that we are German citizens without a "J".

Q: WHAT ABOUT THE JAPANESE?

A: The Japanese, I don't think they were really able to differentiate between Jews and just... Incidentally, we were talking about Wiederman again. We were told that the fact that the German Jewish refugees in Shanghai got a restitution payment from Germany, was on account of Wiederman's testimony. The German Nazi authorities, after the war, denied that it was German pressure which was responsible for the ghetto. But Wiederman testified to the effect that it was German pressure which... And he was Hitler's superior officer. And he never responded. I called Herb Caen. He had an article on Wiederman being a big Nazi but maybe he was a Nazi here in San Francisco but he certainly didn't act that way in China.

Q: I HAVE ONE MORE QUESTION ON YOUR PAPERS. (TO THE WIFE) DID YOU HAVE TO TAKE THE NAME TOO?

(WIFE): Yes.

Q: BUT THE GERMAN CONSULATE TYRED THAT IN YOUR PAPERS TOO?

A: I don't know, I don't think so. I would have to look it up, I don't remember.

Q: IT'S ALRIGHT. BECAUSE TO ME IT SEEMS STRANGE THAT THE GERMAN CONSULATE WOULD ISSUE YOU THOSE PAPERS.

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A: I mentioned earlier my father. He went to all those offices, in order to sell office equipment, typewriter ribbons and so on. And some of his best customers were Germans. And I told you about the miserable time I had in Shanghai. A Jewish friend of mine gave me the name of a former German friend who worked for Bayer, a representative of Bayer in Shanghai. He gave me this address and I contacted him and he said, "I will try what I can do for you," and invited me for coffee and cake in a very expensive restaurant. He says, "I am going to do something else, I am going to put several ads into a paper, 'Pharmacist looking for a job,'" you know. And he did this out of the goodness of his heart. That's why, I really have mixed feelings about the Germans.

Q: SO YOU'RE SAYING YOU HAD SOME REAL RESPECT FOR CERTAIN GERMANS?

A: Oh yeah, definitely. We had a very interesting experience a few years ago. We were travelling in Greece, my wife and I, I think it was on the island of Rhodes. We were there for several days. We were with a group. And there was a man among us, he was a German. We had the impression all the time that he tried to make contact with us. And my wife said no. My wife used to have a very much stranger anti-German sentiment than I. "I don't want to have anything to do with him, he's our generation and he could have been a Nazi."

But anyway, he finally succeeded approaching us and

we had a wonderful time with him. He told us that shortly after the war, he was invited by the State Department to the United States for several months at their expense. And we found out a few days later, after we left Rhodes, he said, "I'm glad we had a chance to talk, I just wanted to demonstrate to you that there are some Germans who are not Nazis." And he was a German Consul in some country.

Q: YOU MENTIONED THAT YOU TRAVELLED RECENTLY TO GERMANY. WHAT'S YOUR OPINION OF THE CURRENT GERMANY?

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A: We were invited by the Hamburg (). I mean they didn't pay for the transportation but we were in Europe anyway. But they provided us with a hotel room and gave us tickets for theater performances. And they were very helpful and I had a chance to meet four of my former classmates and they went out of their way to make it a very pleasant experience.

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I had seen them before, we had a school reunion. One of my former schoolmates, not classmates, is a very well known German and I found out later, it was Helmut Schmidt, the former German chancellor, you know. And what was amazing at that school reunion was the Helmut Schmidt was the German (Bundeconslor) Chancellor at that time. He was there too, he took off for three days. Everybody knew he was there but nobody mentioned him. He was just one among many other people. Two of the speakers were Jews, former German Jews, both living now in England. One was my former Latin teacher. He gave one of the

speeches and the other one was a former student. And
the other two were non-Jews. It was a wonderful exper-
ience. As I said before, I (). I mean,
Helmut Schmidt had to serve in the German army. He was
kicked out of the Hitler Youth, I was told. They never
knew that he was ().

Q: WELL, IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE?

A: No, no, that's about it.

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