

Interview with PAUL ZENNER  
Holocaust Media Project  
Date:           Place: San Francisco, CA  
Interviewers: Peggy Costner & Lori Feldman  
Transcriber: Rebecca Lindsay

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Begin Tape 1, Side 1

Q: ...QUESTIONS ARE TO LEAD YOU INTO TALKING. ITS NOT SO MUCH US ASKING QUESTIONS, BUT WE WANT TO HEAR YOU TALKING ACTUALLY. MAYBE YOU COULD START BY TELLING US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT WHERE YOU WERE BORN AND YOUR EARLY LIFE?

A: I was born in Czechoslovakia in (Sudentenland), which was about - not about, it was 1930. It was a part of Czechoslovakia, I mean it was about where the Germans first invaded before they invaded even Austria, or anything else. So its, we were one of the first ones who had to flee, since the Germans were there, and we had a farm and a butcher shop.

My Dad had cattle. It was a small, no it was rather large village. We were doing very well. It was, I guess we were, there were already about two Jewish families in the village, and I remember my early life was a lot of fun. So I remember my times with my Dad. It was a lot of joy. It was completely different than I believe that a city boy would have had, and most of the Jewish people there growing up in Europe.

[Telephone rings]

Q: STOP IT! OKAY, YOU WERE TELLING US ABOUT YOUR CHILDHOOD ON THE FARM.

A: I don't know if I ever had a Jewish friend. When I used to

go for religious instruction later on, we had to drive I don't know how many miles, but we had to go, and it was once a week or every second week, I don't recall anymore. We had to drive to the city for the instruction and then we had to go home, and that's about all I remember about this time. When the Germans arrived to (Sudentenland) we had to flee and leave everything there, and we came to a city in Czechoslovakia, (L-----).

There we stayed with some relatives and it was very hard because where I come from that's a bilingual community, and it was German and Czech. My Dad mostly spoke German. In my house mostly was spoken German. After leaving my home and arriving in (L-----), we start mostly speaking Czech again, but I recall that my schooling was one year German, one year Czech, and it was just to give everybody a chance to get the worst of me.

In (L-----) we stayed with a relative - I don't know how long it was - till 19- it was in 194-, end of 1941 or beginning of 1942. We were one of the first transports to (Terezine). I only remember my number of transport was L, L254 and at that time I must have been about nine years old, and we arrived in (Terezine).

It was a day, the day we arrived in (Terezine) it was the day they were, I believe it was seven - five or seven - prisoners they were hanged for trying to escape. At that time I didn't know about it, I found out about it later on. But to me it was a very big adventure. For some reason I couldn't get the grasp of it, what really was happening.

In (Terezine) we were separated. My mother went to a different dwelling and my father to a different one, and I went to a completely different one. I don't really recall what my impression was at that time, I kind of felt sorry that we couldn't stay together, but being surrounded by a lot of friends was - I mean boys that I made friends with - I can't, took the bitterness out of it, of the separation. I made a lot of friendships with the boys and we stuck together.

Q: THESE WERE NEW FRIENDS OR YOU KNEW THEM?

A: No, I didn't know anybody yet. Oh, I forget one thing! There was a time, between the time we left our home and went to (L-----), for a short period we went to live in Prague. There I was, there I joined a musical group that was supposed to get out to Israel and travel around the world, kind of a singing group; a copy of the Viennese boy singers. Before it came to realization, it actually was impossible already to get out of Czechoslovakia, so we couldn't make it.

There's one small thing I remember that might be of interest: We came from a fairly close family. My mother's family, her brother left - it was fairly small - her brother already left for South America with his, and left the child with his grand-parents because he thought that he doesn't want to put the child - the child was at that time I think about 4, 5 years old - didn't want to put it through the rigour of war and so, I mean not the rigour of war, the new home. They were fairly wealthy in Czechoslovakia, he thought the war with the situation will end

and he will have the child brought over or they will come back. They left the child with the grandparents naturally; the child later on perished.

My father's family was a very large family. With them we stayed in Prague. I only recall that we wanted to get out and we wanted to get out as a group, and there were some that got permission the family to come mainly to Canada, if I recall very well. But we wanted to come to the United States and I recall at that time, that one of my uncles - then there were 14 children in my father's family and all wanted to go, all the family wanted to go together to Europe - so I recall that one of my uncles wrote at that time Mrs Roosevelt and if she could help us to come to the United States. Mrs Roosevelt sent the whole family visas to come to the United States! And again, that's what happened to a lot of Jews, that we couldn't decide that we all suddenly wanted to go, because leaving the properties there and that, and unfortunately didn't take advantage of that. So nothing realized, we went back to ~~Longley~~ (Longley). I didn't leave, which my parents I don't think only wanted half-heartedly anyhow. So at the end of '41 and '42 that's when we left for the concentration camp, so...

Q: SO YOUR FAMILY REALLY DIDN'T KNOW THE SCOPE OF WHAT WAS GOING ON?

A: No, they did not know the scope. We know there were transports going. I really don't know to what extent my family knew it because I was protected, I was nine years old. I know that the scope was there because I already couldn't go into school. I had

private instructions and it wasn't easy we lived with my, suddenly we came from the big giant house and we start to live with my family, and started to live with the family in Prague in small apartments, larger apartments. Sure it affected me, but I really, I don't know, I just believe that they wanted to protect me or didn't tell me anything about the, you know, what they thought. But I don't think they really knew the scope at that time what really was happening, even though one of my cousins had to, they - was in the first transport to (Lodge) from Czechoslovakia. He left earlier than we, so I just remember for example, as far as the protection concerns, that when we fled the first time I was very attached to my dogs. The one thing I remember very well was that when we fled the first time I had two dogs that I just was in love with, and we didn't take the dogs along because we then came to live with relatives in a strange place. I recall that I was crying all the time and I didn't eat and it was getting very serious. They had to call the doctor and my Dad - today I just..I mean later on I realized what it meant - he went back into the German-occupied territory to bring me my dog because I just stopped eating completely. I was just attached to those dogs and he brought it. I recall that when - we went after that to the camp - the dogs stayed with us, and when we went to the camp I entrusted the dogs to the chauffeur of my uncle. One of the first trip when I came back from the camp and we were liberated, I went to visit the dog who I was pleased still knew me. So that's how, that's in the terms I was thinking. I wasn't thinking how it will be or how it won't

be, I really didn't know, it just was more the adventure to go. Not a happy adventure because we were wrapping and packages and we really looked like the proverbial refugees that you see at Statton Island pictures and things like that, with luggage.

When we arrived to (Terezenshtatt) most of the...we had to have a limited amount of things, most of them were taken and we... I was assigned to L417. First I was assigned, I believe it was with my Dad and then, I really don't know how to say it, its in Czech it ("cassari") its a military building, where we stayed.

Then I was assigned to the old school which was a school in (Terezenshtatt) which was only for children. Actually to one way I was fortunate, because I was one of the few people who stuck it out of (Terezenshtatt) for three and a half years, just by plain luck. My Dad was transported, he was transported to (Os-----) where he died, and most of my family except my mum...and we stuck it out for three and a half years over there. So I made quite a few ties in the...with some other boys that were after the end of the war liberated, and actually we still stayed in touch. There is no year when I don't have visitors coming in from Sweden and from Holland, and who are friends from the past, or from Boston and Brazil, and we keep in touch. Very seldom we write to each other, but if there's something coming up so we keep in touch.

I was too fortunate that in (Terezenshtatt) my father's cousin was chief cook and my father became a cook, and so there was

supplemented food right there. My mother was working in the factory where they were producing splitting slate which was for the aeroplane and she became very efficient there in the factory. She became not the head of it, but she had a very good position then. Later on I worked nearby, which were barracks which actually, that the factory consisted of wooden barracks. I was working there in the industry of parachutes and leather items for the S.S. We were working on...my recollections are not too clear of the timing and how long I worked there.

I remember some of the people, especially a old Viennese mastercrats man who was at that time 70, and took a liking to me. Or maybe he was seemed 70 to me when I was nine years old, maybe he was just fifty [laughs] I don't know!

So it... besides being concerned with food and getting as much food as possible, things were going smoothly considering where we were, except that later on they found a spot on my lungs and I was hospitalized for about half a year. I was in the hospital which was small sign of the, to the (179) and which with the years after the war, I mean completely cured, and I don't seem to have any kind of problem with that.

Q: WHAT WAS IT LIKE IN THE HOSPITAL? WERE YOU ABLE TO GET VISITS?

A: Yes, I was able to get visits in (Terezenshtatt). I was able - actually, I do not recall her, some people recall her, I had a nurse, I don't remember her name, I which I always, I won't remember (I probably could find out), which I took a very big

liking to, and she was a very humanitarian person. She was, before the incarceration, she was a secretary to President (P-----) and her stories always fascinated me. I don't know, she looked like a old maid, I don't know if she was a old maid, but she was a very gentle woman and very kind. So I actually, through her I got some understanding of some educational she was reading, she even came and read for us while we were there, because it only was for children at that time. There were about, I don't know, about thirty to forty in the room. It was rather a small room but I don't have too many special recollections about that.

After that I have recollection when at thirteen I had in (Terezenshtatt), I had my barmitzvah and it was rather...I shared my barmitzvah with other boy of the same age because it just was too much work to learn the whole of torah for one person. So we shared it, our barmitzvah and it was in a cellar, we had it in a cellar. I hardly remember any gifts I got. I got some broken pencils and pens and the only thing I really remember that somebody saved some bread and make me a breadcake, and it was a real great thing to have, that breadcake at that time. The only trouble was that I had to wear long pants which I didn't like, and we had some place found some, because we boys were still running around in short pants. That's the only time and it was, well it was in January, and I still didn't like to wear those long pants. That's all I remember from my barmitzvah, and the breadcakes. Looking back at it, it sounds bad, but at that time

it was very festive because whoever could come, and it was very dark in the cellar but even through the whole thing, and then the great part was that I only had to learn half of my torah! So that's how I remember my barmitzvah there.

I am talking sometime to, when we see each other, with my friends and for some reason when we talk to each other, we do not go into the gory things, the real holocaust things. We remember friends and what they did and how they did it, and we just consider ourselves very fortunate that we stayed in (Terezenshtatt), (Terezine) at that time, that I had the opportunity to stay there till the end of a...till the Russians freed us; that I didn't have to go to any transport. The realization of the enormity just came on later on, because it came probably with age, it came with the realization that all those people didn't come back. From my father's side there only came back from the fourteen, one that stayed in flight to England, to London, and one uncle and one aunt. The rest all of them perished. From my mother's side, her father and whoever went perished. The other uncle stayed in South America.

So that's how we got - we had hours sometime of kind of a secret education, where we had for students that were only eight, nine years old, we had over-qualified teachers, because we had all professors from universities. If somebody really wanted to absorb something in the short time, they could give us an education, I'm sure they could. It was of great help to me later on to meet Dr (S<sup>(234)</sup>-----) from the (B<sup>(235)</sup>-----)

university, who was teaching German at me at that time, Dr Klaus and I just...At the time I didn't rather enjoy it, but looking back at it, I think it was, those bits and pieces of information that we got was rather...Specially I am very grateful on the veering me in the direction of literature, and I really appreciated. Since I was at camp, even when I was at camp, I tried to pick - we used to sleep on bunk beds which were three little bunk beds - and I always tried to get the bed closest to the exit light, because then I could read in the evening all the books I could scrounge someplace, and really enjoyed it reading till one, two o' clock at night sometimes, and that's how I remember...

Q: SO YOU HAD A LIBRARY THERE, RIGHT? WASN'T THERE A LIBRARY?

A: There was a library in the room in the building. There was a a library there. It was a very limited library. And then there was, for example in our room, I believe there were about forty-eight kids. A very small room, and we sometime, the head of the room who was in charge of it was Arnold (Erbun). We sometimes were reading, in the evening we were reading books, I mean aloud. Waiting if somebody comes in or so, we had to stop if somebody was watching out, if somebody is coming and if nobody came. So we were reading aloud books and got this way some information.

Actually I am still on very good terms with my teacher and when I go to Miami I stay in his place. He actually lives part-time in Venezuela, part-time in Miami, and we have a great time when I go to see him. I feel rather very comfortable in his company. But we seldom talk about it and I don't know, one of the reasons why

actually I consented the interview is, is because there is a lot of people who want, to somehow, people who come back from the concentration camp, put them in kind of cubby holes. But I don't think it, it really shows it because I think they are exactly as diverse as anybody else and they don't want any kind of cubby holes, that are kind of being put out for them. It really rather bothers me that there are so many books being put out about the effects that's left on people to the good or to the bad, it doesn't make no difference. It did leave a effect like anything else would, but I don't think they...I think they very well fit into the society, if not better. I think in general it made better people out of them. Anyhow, the suffering, so...

Q: YOU THINK IT MADE PEOPLE STRONGER?

A: Some of them unfortunately it made weaker, because that was the mystery of it; some people that you really assumed to be very strong people, through duress they actually neglected, they became very weak; the people who you assume some time to be very weak, become very strong. I mean it just showed that under circumstances of stress, the people you suspect to be some of the strongest one were actually be the weak. I mean, the pillars of the family necessary didn't become the pillars of the family, and they become sometimes self-centered. The people you didn't expect who, to really have kind of social conscience, suddenly had the social conscience, and that really was a fascinating thing. It happened even after the war, the people who lived there, husbands and wives who lived a normal life and were very happy, and the camp sometime divided them, or it got them even stronger. You could see or

or realize that more under stress than you could have probably in normal circumstances. Well at that time though, I didn't care so much about it. My concern was food and my concern was survival, my concern was to see my parents once in a while, and see my friends.

Q: WHAT YEAR WAS YOUR FATHER TRANSPORTED OUT?

A: I don't know, I have it written down someplace. I think it was end of '43, he was I think transported, I don't know. Actually it was a very unusual situation because I knew that my mother knew how my father died, but I never wanted to ask her, because I thought it will just bring back memories. Just a few weeks before she died, I just took the courage and asked her. I was surprised, like if she would have been, it was, she wasn't well already. It was kind of surprised me, its like if she was waiting for it, for me to ask, and she was in relief that she told me that my father went to the transport, went with the transport. He died, immediately he was taken to the gas chambers in Auschwitz, and that's what my mother told me, and I knew she knew it. I knew my father died, I didn't know how. All those years it passes me and I never wanted to ask, and it was one of the simplest things. She just was waiting for it and she was happy, I think, I asked.

I had very good memories from my Dad, and I just sometime cannot understand, that having all those good memories, I somehow blame it some time on the time. It couldn't be so damn good, because I blame it on the time that with the time, you just kind of somebody idolize somebody more; because my father was a great person, but

it couldn't be so good like I think he is, maybe [laughs] so the time gives its kind of more a aura of it.

Q: HOW OLD WAS YOUR MOTHER WHEN SHE DIED?

A: My mother was seventy-eight, seventy-nine.

Q: WHAT YEAR WAS THAT?

A: About four years ago.

Q: OH, SHE LIVED A LONG LIFE.

A: She lived here in San Francisco.

Q: OH THAT'S GOOD, AND YOU NEVER HAD ANY BROTHERS AND SISTERS?

A: No. We, they wanted to have brothers, but the situation in Europe...you know, already, there were, it was a very bad situation already at that time. They probably even had to go leave our home, so my mother always said that they wanted to have more children, but they just were scared through the period of time, that they couldn't have the children.

Q: UH HUH. WHEN YOU WERE IN THE CAMP DID YOU, WERE THERE PREGNANT WOMEN THERE? WHAT HAPPENED WITH THEIR CHILDREN?

A: I don't remember. For some reason I...I'm sure they were taken from them there.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER?-

A: I'm certain. I'm certain because I heard it yes, so I don't know what happened to their children, I don't know.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER SEEING LITTLE BABIES THERE?

A: Well I remember visiting with my little cousin that perished after that, that lived with her grandparents, and she was about four, five years old. So I remember that, and they were transported after

that, and she perished.

Q: WAS THERE ANY?-

A: There was quite a few of that, but I do not recall really tiny babies or so, it just was not my list of interest at that time, I guess.

Q: WAS THERE ANY SENSE AT THE TIME OF HOW THEY DECIDED WHO TO PUT ON THE TRANSPORTS?

A: Well I guess I got more information about that, I got who they put on the transports, I got more information about that reading books later than at that time, whom they were putting on the transports. It was people who were needed in a certain industry. For example, my mother I am certain didn't get put on the transports for that reason mainly, because she was working for the war-needed industry. But then, I really don't think there were too many rules and regulations and it was really certain. There were occasions where you could to a certain degree, bribe your way like being a cook, but it didn't last either, it didn't last either because sooner or later you had to go anyhow. Just for some reason, I do not know why I was fortunate, to stay so long.

Q: WERE YOU SCARED THAT YOU MIGHT HAVE TO GO?

A: I didn't know what was happening, where I'm going. We didn't know what was happening, so there was not...you actually...I was scared to leave everything. To leave my parents, to leave my friends, that's what I was scared, but I wasn't scared to go, because I really didn't have no...maybe I was overly protected, yes, that I didn't know, have the knowledge where I'm really going so,

Yit...I sure didn't want to go because of leaving everything, I knew it won't be any better (382), but I didn't have the knowledge where I'm really going

because I knew what's going...after all, I came there, I was about, how old was I? I was about 12 years old, and I came out and I... three and a half years later. Little less than three and a half years. Then we were sent by the Russians. So I was around for quite a while. I just remember that there was a time when they were giving away some sardines, and I was helping out, pushing carts with dead people. But that was part of life, you somehow, I don't know, you somehow get used to everything, so its very hard to describe this view on life today, and it is a view on life too. It was a question of survival more than anything else.

I remember there, very well I remember at that time, when the commission from Switzerland came to visit to (Terezenshtatt), and when they put on the big farce, I remember that very well.

I remember we were talking about artists. There was a artist, a very well-known artist by the name of (Speer). He was painting walls and he was painting paintings for the children's room, and I was rather impressed with that. They came with the camera crews and the front of the house where is the painting the bank, and money was printed, special money was printed, and I guess they deceived them. But things like that, I just bits and pieces, some-time I don't remember anything, it just comes out, talking to friends.

Just a short time ago, my friend Alex (L<sup>(413)</sup>-----) was here. At that time, his name was (B-<sup>414</sup>-----), her was professor at (Sp<sup>415</sup>-----burg)

university in physics, and he sometime lectures at Stanford. We were talking, and things came to mind that doesn't come...every... I mean, it just didn't come to mind all my life, till we were talking about this. Same happen with (Yenkedian) who was a psychiatrist teaching at a university in Amsterdam, no, near Amsterdam, and who too lectures here at Stanford once in a while. And when they come we talk things over, it just, sometimes it comes to mind, the things we never thought about for a long time. They all both had a different life.

Alex (B-<sup>420</sup>-----) was taken out from the concentration camp by the, through the orders, no, not through the orders, permission was being asked by, I believe it was King Gustad from Sweden, to get the nationals out. His mother became national Swede, to get the national out of Sweden, and he was taken out during the war, and he left (Terezenshtatt) during the war because of that order. He was one of the very, very few that happened in all the history.

(R-<sup>438</sup>-----), he was transferred, I don't recall to which camp he was transferred to a camp, and so...when we talk, the only friend - oh there's more! The time in <sup>with</sup> Michael Greenbaum who graduated at M.I.T. and lives in Boston, and doing very well. He comes to visit here very soon because, very often, practically really, because his son goes to Stanford. So when we talk I mean, he is about the same. Michael Greenbaum stayed in the same camp. His mother was there, his sister was there, so we consider ourselves

very fortunate to...If you are familiar with, are you familiar with I Never Saw Another Butterfly, the book?

Q: YES.

A: That...those were most of my friends, each one of them.

Q: OH.

A: Those were most of my friends, same age group, only the one that got published, were the one that died.

SPEAKER

There is for example, a small piece there by ( 456 )  
 You can never have in mind the date, there is a prayer book out where he is regularly every holiday. There is a prayer of his poems is write in the prayer book. I mean, you can't kind of a ancient; it feels terrible to read this prayer which is very uplifting, but you feel kind of ancient, being part of the prayer book! So that's..

Q: HOW DID YOU STAY IN CONTACT WITH ALL THESE PEOPLE? HOW DID YOU FIND OUT WHERE THEY WERE LATER ON?

A: One was, one...There is people I know where they are, I never had in contact with, but you know its kind of a...I know that my friend (Misha) has very good friend that writes me all the time, I don't know where to get in contact with him. You used to call it

SPEAKER

( 474 ). I know he is with (Merril Lynch), he is now Chief President or Vice President, I don't know, doing very well, and I never had a chance to get in contact with him. Then there is

SPEAKER

(Franca Myer) who used to be a teacher. He is in Los Angeles; never had a chance to get in contact with him. But I get in contact with those that were...even if its once a year. So, or if they come here.

SPEAKER

Actually last year I had somebody suddenly the drawing that I - after all those years I recognized him [laugh] - I mean it was with his wife, he stopped here from Canada. It was (Wolfie Baum) from I think he is a broadcaster in Toronto. It just kind of kept in contact by some secret group, I don't know what it is.

So, actually I was asked by the San Francisco Girls' Chorus when they played. I don't know if you are familiar...they put the music that I NEVER SAW ANOTHER BUTTERFLY. Yea, and that's from the San Francisco Opera Association, part of the San Francisco Opera Association. I was asked to introduce the thing, and it was very, it was their most successful piece they ever put together. So...

Q: WHEN YOU WERE IN THE CAMP DID YOU CONTINUE TO STUDY MUSIC OR SINGING?

A: Oh, I don't know anything! I used to study music when I, before the camp I-

Q: RIGHT.

A: My parents forced me to play the piano for, when I was five years old, and I guess that's why I never learned music, because I was forced to play the piano! [laugh] But I don't think I had a good ear, anyhow. No, I just enjoyed it.

Q: BUT THERE WERE PEOPLE THAT WERE IN THE CAMP THAT WERE STILL-

A: Oh, there were geniuses! I mean, there were people, I constantly hear. I just was, somebody was telling me that Mr Freud's sister was there. I was looking at the, you are probably familiar with (Mike Sporrack). Are you familiar with (Mike Sporrack), the artist?

Q: UH HUH.

Sp. A: Oh! (Jackson Sporrack). Are you?

Q: UM...

Sp. A: I was just talking to her widow, and she showed me, her husband was commissioned to do an etching of Sigmund Freud. So she was telling me, she says she was in (Terezenshtatt), and I mean, there were people there that you wouldn't have contact with in a normal world, coming from a bigger village or so. I mean I had the... there were people you couldn't meet any place else, and they were Sp. all concentrated in (Terezenshtatt). They sent a lot of really older Jews from Vienna and from, they came from all over, and the capability was unbelievable. Perhaps if somebody there was, I was Sp. in the same home like (Gideon Klein), who was a genius at a very young age, a composer genius. (Spreidling), I was in the same home, who was a genius at that age. Gideon died. There's many a book written about him. It was just rubbing elbows with people like that, but I didn't realize it at that time, it just... Actually, to refresh my memory I was looking yesterday in some of my things. I didn't take too much trouble, and I find out, I found a sheet of caricatures we did from our room. I found it, and looking at those faces, then we realize who it is. I didn't see it for years, just because you came, and then I had checked the Sp. names bag. So I still had that sheet from (Terezine). Its kind of falling apart now. I'm going to probably copy it and send it to all my friends, 'cos I don't think they have it.

Q: ITS ABOUT TO RUN OUT.

End Tape 1, Side 1

Begin Tape 1, Side 2

Sp. A: I like, one of the books I like, some of the books I like from the time of the holocaust are (P\_ \_517\_ \_ \_), because his book are very human. As far as I'm concerned he's (518) for me, all that he took his life after that. I wonder why he took his life after that. I hope it wasn't because of the burden that he survived. I hope it was, like some people say, that he was suddenly sick or something like that, and he didn't want to die or...but his books I like.

His, there is a treaties in one of the books where he talks about the feelings he should have too, with the Germans. I like that part. I don't know, I just, because its such a human approach from his side, and he tries to see it, he tries to see it from both sides. There is some people who do not have the charity of forgive-ness like he has, and I just admire it about him.

Q: WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY BOTH SIDES? WHOSE? WHICH SIDES?

Sp. A: Not both sides, you cannot see both sides. I didn't mean it that way. I...there are people who for example everything is black, everything is white, there is no bending in a way. That's what I want to point out, that there is people like (Primoridi) who could say, there was a approach on the Germans. After that, somebody ask him, and I don't know in which of his books it is, at the end of one book where he says, "I received a letter, some-body asked me what my approach should be"; and where he realize that he just cannot go through whole life through hate. I mean, I definitely believe you shouldn't forget, but you shouldn't forget,

but live in a way that you still can live a normal life without  
 (614) . If you only remember, then it would be kind of  
 sad, because there must be some good things that are to remember.  
 So that's what interest me about him. I am fairly actually, I  
 didn't start it yet, I am reading...my daughter just gave me a  
 book Hassidic Story about The Holocaust, which is looking for the  
 dreary I don't know...

Q: WHEN - IT WAS THE RUSSIANS LIBERATED YOU?

A: It was the Russians that liberated us.

Q: WHAT HAPPENED THEN?

A: Well, what mostly sticks out in my mind when the Russians  
 liberated us, what was sticking out in my mind then; before the  
 Russians liberated us there came the transport that came from the  
 East of (people who went through ), the left over people from  
 the other concentration camps, and they were really, really in bad  
 shape. Then you really the realization hit you, how mishandled  
 they were.

Then the Russians liberated us. All I remember we run away with  
 my friends to (631) , which was nearby and where the  
 Germans kept their food. We sat down and somehow the first room  
 we had was a room with sardines, and I couldn't eat a sardine for  
 fifteen years! We got very sick, having eating sardines! That I  
 remember. *Sitting on the floor*

Then I remember where they caught some S.S. men and they were going,  
 the people cheering the Russians, and the S.S. men being beaten

there, and that I remember. It didn't please me at that time, somehow...but that's the... We got liberated by the Russians when they came.

Q: I WANTED TO ASK YOU A COUPLE MORE QUESTIONS ABOUT WHEN YOU WERE THERE IN THE CAMP. WERE YOU BASICALLY WITH THE JEWS, JEWS WITH JEWS, OR WERE THEY- ?

A: Only Jews.

Q: IT WAS ONLY JEWS?

A: It only was Jews. There were some probably, one of the boys here his parents were one of the biggest industrialists in Czechoslovakia, and I think the mother I believe was Jewish, the father wasn't Jew. I would respect his wish, and I would say he wasn't a Jew! [laugh] Because I don't think really he had a Jewish life, the war make him aware that he's a Jew, that's how I feel about it. He was a very nice guy 646, she's in Australia now. I...there were only Jews or half-Jews, I mean that I know about.

Q: BUT THERE WERE DANES THERE - DANES AND OTHERS...

A: But they were Jews, no? I suspect.

Q: THAT THEY WERE JEWISH? MAYBE. BUT IF THEY ALSO HAD PEOPLE LIKE - I DON'T KNOW ABOUT IN YOUR CAMP - BUT IN SOME CAMPS, GYPSIES AND HOMOSEXUALS?

A: Yes, we didn't have that, we didn't have that. (Terezenshtatt) was a camp - I'm sure there were gypsies and homosexuals - but (Terezenshtatt) was a camp, the main purpose of (Terezenshtatt) was transport coming and going out to death camps. So there was a tremendous traffic always in (Terezenshtatt). I mean, to survive

there three and a half years, that was a achievement itself. But it wasn't a achievement of the individual, it was a achievement just for the bookkeeping or something, that I didn't get sent out.

Q: IT WAS LIKE A MISTAKE THEY MADE YOU MEAN?

A: No, not necessarily a mistake, because there were a few people who survived, but it, I don't know by what reason it was determined.

Q: ABOUT HOW MANY PEOPLE DO YOU KNOW WHO SURVIVED?

A: How many people? God! I would hate to put a number on it, because I probably meet people who survived and I don't know who they are. Yes, but I, my extent, but mostly is with my clients and customers who are mostly not Jewish. So if I see, they come in my family, and we are very close family, we see each other once in a while. But I couldn't say, I don't know too many, except the old people, and I don't make it a point to get together with some -body, so...

Q: THE (DIALYSIS) YOU SHOWED ME, AREN'T YOU THE FIFTY-EIGHTH CHILD?

A: But I got, some place I was reading that statistic.

Q: OH! [laugh]

A: That's not my statistic. I mean that's a statistic I believe I was reading, maybe at the end of the book; I don't know, it comes from some place.

Q: OH. I SEE.

A: Its not that I took a actual count of it. It would be practically impossible.

Q: RIGHT.

A: Now I'm talking not the children like you saw here on the

because that was at a certain time there went a lot of children through that room. That was at one time somebody - I don't remember. There were some that didn't stay very long. Yes, so and the whole house consisted of quite a few rooms . So, but I picked it up. I don't know if it was from this book or from some place I picked up.

Q: SO WHEN YOU WERE IN THE CAMP, DID THEY HAVE YOU ASSIGNED TO DIFFERENT WORK DUTIES?

A: At times I was assigned to work on parachute springs, and for S.S. we were making leather goods, from wallets to all kind of things. I was apprentice there, and then I did all kind of garden work, which was very good, because we could steal carrots and things like that. So I, but we still had our time after work, that we still had our time.

I admire the dedication of some of the people with this kind of calibre, teaching us still after...preparing us, you know the... because the transition was very bad anyhow, to go from missing out three and a half years of school. When you suddenly have to go back to high school, and go to high school without, with this kind of a... Right after the war I was sent to a camp, I think it was called (                          ), and we were given lessons there for the transition prepared. I think at that time, it made me lose my concentration because I was... From morning to night when you study, you know to miss out three and a half years... I somehow cannot concentrate on things very long, because of that, academical things, I am mad I couldn't concentrate on that.

Q: SO WHERE DID YOU GO AFTER THE LIBERATION?

A: After the liberation we went to Prague. There was a, there a lot of people went there. There was a set of buildings where the S.S. used to live and the Generals called ~~695~~ in Prague. Those apartments were vacant, and that's where we went, and with my mother and my father's grandparents who survived. With them we were there, and then we left on 194- 1947 we left for South America, where my uncle was. In South America, he was in South America.

Q: WHERE WERE YOU IN SOUTH AMERICA?

A: Equador.

Q: AH, EQUADOR. HOW LONG DID YOU LIVE THERE THEN?

A: For a little over four years. Then we came to San Francisco.

Q: WERE THERE A LOT OF JEWS DOWN THERE THAT HAD COME AFTER THE WAR?

A: Not a lot! You don't expect in Equador to be too many Jews in ~~706~~ ! [laugh] But it was okay! It was okay. There's a very interesting book, and I don't know if you are familiar with it, I think its called Of Love And Hate. Something like that, by Samuel (P\_\_ ~~708~~ \_\_). He was advisor to Kissinger so...and what I admire about that book; here is a story where - about twenty people told me about the book, "Paul, read that book! Paul, read that book!" - and I read it. One day the UPS girl walks in with the book, she says, "Paul, I think you should read that". I used to go out once in a while with her. So we go, we're very good friends then . I says, "if she tells me to read the book, I'd better read the book!" So I was reading

the book, and I think that all the people miss the...I love the book because its a man..Samuel (Pissard)<sup>716</sup> became a very famous international lawyer. What I like about that book, why people probably recommended that book, is because Samuel (Pissard) would have been when he got out of the concentration camp, he did all kind of black market business. He was about the same age like I am, and he would have been probably a good dope-pusher or some -thing, if he would have continued like that. But what happened to Samuel (Pissard) is that he got some relatives, he found some relatives in Australia who took him in, and who gave him a direction, and he became a giant! I mean he...and that interest me very much. I mean people probably recommend it because I went there in the camp, and I afterwards went some place.

What really interested me in the book afterwards, was his same approach to Peace. I mean he has a treaties about Peace there that's just fabulous, and I recommend it very much. Its funny, the only thing I don't like to - you probably, I don't know if its your first interview, is it?

Q: YES.

A: So if you are your first one, then I think I am a little bit different than the other ones will be, because I can remember and I don't want to dwell on the bad things. <sup>maybe I don't have so many bad things</sup> You know, to say the holocaust so... Maybe at that time it didn't impress me the bad things so much. I am talking from that time, not what I read now and tell you what I read, how terrible it was. It was terrible. It was terrible, it was a real disintegration of society. I think

my parents tried the very best to protect me from it. It was bad it was, and I sometimes don't know any better. There is a book out too by - I think its a thesis. [phone rings] A book about...[phone rings]

Q: SO, WE WERE TALKING ABOUT AFTER YOU GOT OUT OF...THE LIBERATION. HOW DID YOU DECIDE WHAT KIND OF A CAREER TO PURSUE?

A: Well it was decided practically for me, as I remember! [laughs] So its, I came to South America and I had a choice, going to school. Now I knew very no Spanish, and I went to the school of modern languages in Czechoslovakia, but I couldn't 748 . When I came there, I was given the opportunity maybe to go to school, but then there were two stores there; one was a jewelry store and one was a furrier. The furrier was a very good 751 . It was very important here, it wasn't a question that there were selling some fabulous coats in South America, it was just that it was the best. So I was given the opportunity because do you want to do that, or do you want to do that? I actually choose it because I like the man better than the jeweller. I like the furrier better than the jeweller, so I choose it, and it became, it was a little bit boring previously, than I just had ordinary people.

I started my business with the friends of my mother and we had a ~~here a little thing~~ little thing there, but it worked out now its not fascinating now, that is alright for a few years 760 working for your own is a very big responsibility.

Q: YOU MENTIONED YOU HAVE A DAUGHTER.

A: I have a daughter.

Q: HOW OLD IS YOUR DAUGHTER?

A: My daughter is twenty-six. She is married, they have a son - just did his first video at school. 767

and my son is twenty-two, and going to finish this year hopefully.

Q: HAVE YOU SHARED ANY OF YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH THE KIDS, WITH YOUR CHILDREN?

A: Yes, I shared my experiences with them. Not in a pushy way, I mean, I'm very surprised my children don't ask me more, it really surprises me. For some reason, maybe its my mistake, but for some reason sometime 774

"Why don't you tell them?" So I don't think I really had the right idea. With my daughter I shared a lot of talking about it, actually she did some writing about it, but not in a...just for school when she was at U.C. Davis.

I think the comprehension of my children, unfortunately I think are lacking. I don't know if its because of me, that I couldn't present it in a better way, or their lack of interest. I really don't know, but having a lot of those friends coming to San Francisco, they're exposed to that. They come out for dinner with us and all we talk about 784, and sometimes they think that, my daughter says "Dad, you never said anything bad about it!" [laugh] You know, it somehow hits you, I mean when you are with your friends you really don't want to remember the bad things. I think not that its good, but for myself its good, not to remember the bad things. I mean, I cannot go around life and always remember

that my Dad got killed. I had a fabulous relationship. I came from a very protected family, I didn't meet a woman who was the worse till I don't know, 'till I was twenty or something. So it was a very protected life I had, and maybe that was it.

I was writing with my friends, we even kept in correspondence when we were teenagers, writing. When I left Europe we were writing chess games, and sending from South America to Czechoslovakia. 798 Cuba, even then we were brain chess by mail, but just to keep in touch. It was a lot of fun.

Q: IT MUST TAKE A LITTLE TIME TO WIN A GAME THAT WAY!

A: No, its an initiative to write you back [laugh].

Q: I SEE!

A: You know, especially when you win! [laugh] I mean that's probably what it was, because there's no big hassle with... We didn't write so often, I even don't know if we ever finished. So...[laugh] But we are fairly in contact, I just had my birthday, I get cards from my friends. When I came to San Francisco, I had money here from my friends from the camp, that I didn't see. Its a good feeling that if ever something happened to me, you can rely on the friends. I had relatives in Florida, but I stayed with my friends in his house my teacher its no fun to take your girlfriend to the teacher 811 [laugh] I don't know, I don't want to make it that the person I hardly ever talked about my experiences was my wife, and I don't think she would ever understood it. I think she would have taken it the wrong

with my family because some of them were in the camp 817  
with my aunt, she was in the same camp, but she survived the camp.

Q: DID YOU GET TO SEE YOUR RELATIVES A LOT WHEN YOU WERE IN THE  
CAMP?

A: I probably could have more but I was not too interested.  
I wanted to see my friends, my parents, in the end they all got  
821 the closest 823 all got killed. My grand  
-parents who stayed in the same place, they got killed. My father's  
parents they saved themselves.

Q: HOW DID THEY MANAGE TO GET SAFE?

Sp. A: They were in (Terezenshtatt). Who knows? For example, see  
this here?

Q: UH HUH.

Sp. A: I bought that in (Terezenshtatt) when I was fourteen years old,  
for one and a half loaves of bread.

Q: BOY! THIS ONE HERE?

A: Oh, that's a 830 that's a earlier

Q: OH THIS ONE?

A: This one here its from the 832 museum.

Q: BOY! I WAS NOTICING IT EARLIER. I REALLY LIKE IT. ?

A: It cost a fortune. I bought it and 834

[ 834 -

— 839 |

Sp. I have some very interesting colours. I had some (Speers). I don't  
Sp. know what his first name was; he is Dutch, (Speers).

842 - 844

I had a colours, and I have some vase and I...

Q: YES, IN THE BOOK, THE JEWS OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA, I THINK THEY MENTION 848 (SPEERS).

A: Yes, he was, I didn't know, he is not mentioned enough, what he achieved. I wonder why it is, I cannot intend...there is a reason behind it. Maybe he was to a certain degree collaborating with the S.S. during the period when the inspection was from Switzerland came, and he did all the... I don't know why he isn't mentioned more often, because he was a very good painter, very good aquatics especially. His son, I understand, is a painter too. He is in school 854

Q: IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY FOR THE TAPE?

A: I don't know its, I am, its till now lately, but I'm reading another very good book 858 Its a book out by Gilbert, I don't know if you are familiar with it. Now, I think anybody who reads it doesn't have to read anything anymore because its so detailed, its so very good. Its not sentimental, I think its more dry-cut than anything else, but it gives you a very, very good picture.

Whom I like about sentiments is 865 , I just love it descriptive point of view, I just love 867-869

I really don't know, but I think it will be different. I just see all those people being put in a cubby hole. We were talking about that girl, that's what it was, who is from Canada, and she wrote a book about children of the holocaust.

Q: OH 873 !

A: Was it a doctorate thesis? I don't know.

Q: NO, SHE WAS A REPORTER.

A: Very good!

Q: SUSAN-

A: Very good!

Q: I DON'T REMEMBER HER NAME, BUT YES SHE WAS A REPORTER.  
EPSTEIN.

A: Epstein!

Q: SUSAN EPSTEIN.

A: Yes.

Q: I HAVE THAT BOOK.

A: Yes, very good! I really like that book. Very good book, but suddenly after you read that book, and even the judgement of the children of their parents, they were put into a cubbyhole. They were put like something wierd, like something else, they didn't fit into the society, and it really bothered me, it... I can't understand why they, it make them like they were looking at the world differently. I mean, if you lost somebody you love, then you forget about it the whole...it doesn't happen necessary to associate it in any way, that picture, and it really bother me. It was, her book I liked, everything else I like, but it somehow started putting people into categories. Maybe the way she pick them up, the whole 888 I'm just wierd, I don't know 870 my friends, but I have a feeling that the people who feel more like me, are the people who 893 (won't give an interview?) . Yes, I cannot imagine Alex 894 giving you an interview, from Sweden that friend of mine, I cannot imagine that, because he is - good or bad, I don't know - but he is very assimilated into the society. I don't think that somebody he does the right thing, I think he distances himself too much from it...because when you're with academic standing or, I don't know

Sp

why, but I don't think he does the right thing. But people like that, so you really sometime don't get the right picture, because people like that - 902

Q: RIGHT. [pause] DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WANT TO ADD? WELL, JUST ONE MORE THING I'VE BEEN KIND OF WONDERING. WHEN YOU STILL LIVED IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA BEFORE YOUR 905 DEATH, DID YOU EVER HAVE ANY ENCOUNTERS WHERE PEOPLE COULD HAVE STOOD UP FOR YOU BUT DIDN'T? NON-JEWISH PEOPLE.

A: Looking back at it, anybody could have stood up. Looking back at it, there's a famous saying by - I think it was (Pasteur) - what's his name, the German (Pasteur)...oh, I don't know what his name is. There's a saying, are you familiar with it? I have right here on the wall?

Q: YES.

A: He says, "Well first I wanted to stand up for you..." No, let me get it.

Q: I THINK I KNOW IT-

A: No, no, because that's very relevant and I think that's very important. And I think that's very... [goes to get it, microphone gets knocked or falls] Does it work?

Q: YES. 921 "IN GERMANY THEY CAME FIRST FOR THE COMMUNISTS, AND I DIDN'T SPEAK UP BECAUSE I WASN'T A COMMUNIST. THEN THEY CAME FOR THE JEWS, AND I DIDN'T SPEAK UP BECAUSE I WASN'T A JEW. THEN THEY CAME FOR THE TRADE UNIONISTS, AND I DIDN'T SPEAK UP BECAUSE I WASN'T A TRADE UNIONIST. THEN THEY CAME FOR THE CATHOLICS, AND I DIDN'T SPEAK UP BECAUSE I WAS A PROTESTANT. THEN THEY CAME FOR ME, AND BY THAT TIME NOBODY WAS LEFT TO SPEAK UP." YES.

A: And I think that's how it was.

Q: SO YOU THINK THAT PEOPLE...

A: Looking back at it. I remember my parents trusting some people very much, and giving them things so when we come from the concentration camp, that we get those things, and they kept it! I remember people who we didn't expect that will help us, they help us.

Q: SO WHEN YOU CAME OUT OF THE CAMPS AND YOU WANTED YOUR BELONGINGS BACK, THEY WOULDN'T GIVE YOU YOUR BELONGINGS BACK?

A: Sure. I remember we had a coin collection and he kept it in a safe, and the safe, and I remember the man's answer was that he doesn't have it because he burned it. Now you cannot burn a safe, but I mean it was gone! I mean, its human nature, you find it every day, it could happen to you, it could happen with your friends, so it just happen like that... I am sure that a lot of people could have stood up for us, and I don't even know if we would have let them stand up for us. If somebody would have said "We will hide you", maybe we wouldn't have accepted it, who knows? Yes, I mean, people become attached to their properties, to their home, to, they don't see the reality. I mean, nobody expected the reality to be so grim, so that's... Its very hard to look at it backwards. I think its a very, very hard... When I read those books, to imagine the Jewish communities of the Polish 952 compared to the Jewish communities that was much more liberal in Germany and in Czechoslovakia. For some of the Jewish community in Poland today, if they would have had the opportunity to leave,

and didn't leave, they were crazy! 957 the Jew looking back at it they were crazy too, the Jews in Germany, that they didn't leave; but I mean at that time, they had property, they had everything, I mean it was a different kind of a...

Q: RIGHT.

A: Yes, they were persecuted there already. The Germans were persecuted [laugh], they didn't know about it. So it was the same in Czechoslovakia. We didn't feel...my parents were probably the richest or ones of the wealthiest in the whole town we were in, and we felt very good. So...

Q: BUT THAT GUY DID TAKE CARE OF YOUR DOG?

A: Eh?

Q: THAT GUY, THAT CHAUFFEUR?

A: The chauffeur? Yes, he took care of the dog and the dog knew me when we came back.

Q: WONDERFUL!

A: The second person I went to visit, I only was went home once, where we lived. There I went to visit - we had a man who does all the repairs in the house and I took a liking to him. He must have been eighty years old. He told me the wierdest stories when I was growing up as a child. Actually, he got me drunk once on a New Year, at six or five. Him I went to visit, he was such a great person, I just liked him. I came to the village and he was an old man 977 still at eighty or ninety or whatever he was. He says, "Pauly!", and that meant more to me than seeing all kinds of people! So, it was my old babysitter! [laughs]

End Tape 1, Side 2

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