

Interview with SIEGFRIED PEILTE

Holocaust Oral History Project

Date: March 11, 1990 Place: Palo Alto, CA

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Q: ZIGGY PEILTE. THE INTERVIEW IS BEING DONE BY ROBERT WEISS IN PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA, IN MARCH, 1990. ZIGGY, CAN YOU TELL US, FIRST OF ALL, WHERE AND WHEN WERE YOU BORN? AND THEN WE'LL GO ON AND ASK YOU SOME MORE QUESTIONS FROM THERE.

A: I was born in Labischin, Germany, after the First World War, when it became Polish.

Q: CAN YOU SPELL THAT?

A: L-A-B-I-S-C-H-I-N, is now Polish. I was born in December, 1903.

Q: WHERE DID YOU GO FROM LABISCHIN, POLAND? JUST ROUGHLY.

A: After the Versailles Treaty, after the First World War, we became Polish, we didn't want to become Polish. We moved the whole family to Berlin, Germany, where I attended school and worked in a bank.

Q: ZIGGY, YOU SAID YOUR NAME IS SIEGFRIED, RIGHT?

A: Yes.

Q: SO YOU MENTIONED YOU WERE IN BERLIN AND YOU WENT TO SCHOOL. WHAT SCHOOL DID YOU GO TO IN BERLIN?

A: Gymnasium. That is equivalent to high school.

Q: AND WHAT JOB DID YOU HAVE IN THE BANK? DID YOU JOIN THE BANK AFTER...?

A: I was an apprentice. I learned in the bank. Then I was years and years in the bank and I was, for a short while, working in a stock exchange in Berlin. And later on I became manager of a factory office, where we manufactured goods of all sorts. I also was very active in the youth movement, sports. That was all my life besides.

My father and I, were belonged to temple, also our life. And when it became hard, when the Nazis came, it was hard to keep a job because the factory where I worked they knew what was coming and they close the factory. So I worked for awhile for the Jewish community in Berlin. After that, in the last two years, I was not allowed to work anymore.

spelling?
I worked for (Mr. Friedig), an architect who, through me, got a lot of apartment houses to administration. And I worked with him, he even belonged to the Nazi Party, but he told me that he was forced to do it. But he was one of the nicest persons I have ever met. And I worked with him even after the Kristalnacht. He was so fond of me. Even when I told him I was going to leave he say, "Please stay a few weeks."

Now what happened in 1938. I lived in Berlin and when

(I woke up in the 9th of November, 1938, I saw big store windows smashed. And when I went to the office to talk to him he didn't know anything what happened. But we got a phone call from his sister-in-law. She lived in the neighborhood with one of the most beautiful new round temple. It's on fire. On that day I had an appointment for a date with a friend of mine. And to go to his place I use, they call it the (Ringbahn), who goes around the inner city of Berlin. And when I passed the temple, the most beautiful temple. Was (Anenstrasse) I saw this temple on fire. And when I came to my friend, I got a call from my sister, Ella, where I lived there, that my youngest sister, Lisa, called up crying that they just took her husband away to a concentration camp. And I should come home and live with her.

spelling?

(And on my way, I had to use a streetcar and when I saw all of the people with big sticks smashing windows and so on. And when I had to pass, to go to my sister on the streetcar, I had to pass the newspaper section where one of the biggest newspapers in Berlin belonged to a Jewish family. And the streetcar stopped because there was a big mob there on the stop. And I didn't know how to turn. If they would have seen me they might have dragged me out and so on. But I turned and turned and turned. And after a few minutes, the streetcar continued.

(And I went to my sister, got a little luggage, and we went by taxi, I was afraid for my stuff, on my way to my

sister, Lisa's house. I stayed with my sister for another two weeks till the coast was clear. Till they wouldn't come anymore to her house because they took already her husband.

That was the Kristalnacht, and after the Kristalnacht. We didn't know for awhile where her husband was, if he was still alive, and so we didn't hear anything. And my sister always cried every night. Every knock on the door she thought it was Eric coming home. But it was not. Finally she went to the Gestapo. They told her, "If you leave Germany within four weeks, you'll get your husband out."

Q: WHAT WAS HIS NAME? ERIC WHAT?

A: Eric Cohn.

Q: C-O-H-N?

A: C-O-H-N. When he came home my sister and her husband, they gave up their business what they had, and went to Genoa in Italy. And went to Shanghai. The only place that was open, as long as you got there. So you went on Japanese ship to Shanghai.

Q: FROM GENOA?

A: From Genoa, yea. And then, in February, two of my other sisters with their families went on a ship from Bremen in Germany to Shanghai.

Q: WHAT WERE THEIR NAMES?

A: Their names were Reuben, and the other one was Benedict. Then I lived with her, they didn't come to me because Ella's husband was an Hungarian citizen. And the Germans couldn't

touch any Polish citizen or foreign country citizen because they were protected partly by the consulate. But they only could do it to us Germans because we didn't have any... Anyway, they went to Shanghai and I wa staying with my cousin, Binder, who didn't want to go to Shanghai. They thought they might be able to go to Israel.

Q: NOW WHAT WAS YOUR COUSINS' NAME?

A: My cousins' name was Binder, (Sali) and (Mati) Binder.

Q: B-I-N-D-E-R.

A: All that we found out later on, they was jailed, were put in aa concentration camp. If they would have gone to Shanghai, they would have survived like my sister did. So, I didn't hear anything from my sister. In the meantime, I registered in 1937 with the American Consul and I had a registration number. The registration number, according to our experience, should have been able to get out in one year. In the meantime, they took people in the concentration camp and so on. So we were more and more restricted in our daily life. What the Germans did for us, they let us have our own culture. Like, we had our own movie, our own concerts. Our theater, we were only allowed to play by Jewish composer, Like Offenbach and Mendelssohn. Otherwise, we were not allowed to go in the big parks. There was one bench, yellow color for Jews only. So it was harder and harder for us.

I tried to go. Whenever I came to the American Consul, he always told me, "You need more affidavits." And I got in

touch with my cousin here in Brooklyn and they sent papers, but every time I came to the Consulate, he told me that it's not enough. Because we had to declare that we would not be dependent on the government.

Finally, after I brought all my papers together, I had to put \$500 in the bank. In New York, when I arrived I should have some money. And my sister in England, who left in 1938 for England with her husband and her son...

Q: WHAT WAS HER NAME?

A: Their name was (Neustadt.) My brother-in-law, (Neustadt), Leopold, was the one in London. And his parents with one son, Leopold, and a sister, went back to Berlin. And my brother-in-law was even a soldier in the German Army and was prisoner-of-war in Russia. And in 1938, he met a friend in Berlin on the street and the friend said to him, "Leopold, what you are still doing in Berlin? You can go to England because you are English-born." So he left half a year later and could go to England without any trouble because he was a British subject by birth.

When I finally came to the American Consul, she said to me, I remembered her name, it was North, N_O_R_T_H, said to me, "Your papers have arrived, but your quota number is not due for another year." And here it looks very bad because the Germans restricted us more and more and we know that war was imminent because the Allies didn't do anything to stop the Germans and that's important. And you hope that Allies would

stop them, but nobody stopped them. So, everyday it was just getting worse for us but finally in England, my sister found a nice man, Lishek, in London...

Q: HOW DO YOU SPELL THAT?

A: L_I_S_H_E_K, he have an affidavit for me so I went four weeks before the war broke out, I went to England. I had friends who went to France. And even one of the ships who went to Cuba and was turned back here from the United States, we never heard from him again because the ship went back to France. Only the ship who went back to England, they survived. But the ships who went to Holland, these people who were my friends, I never saw them again and they died.

Before I left Berlin, I had good friends and they saw me off on the station when I left but I found out later on they were in a workman's camp and they were killed later on. I never heard from them. The only thing I know, all my friends, they were all killed by the Nazis.

Q: DO YOU KNOW WHICH CAMPS THEY WENT TO?

A: No, no, I don't know which camp. I even have relatives, an old lady, an old man, they never went to Berlin and one of my cousins, he was a cantor in Potsdam, and they were sent to Poland. Concentration camp and they were all killed. The only ones of my family who left, left through Shanghai and so on.

Now my impression is always, if the world would have been open, if the nations would have opened their doors, then six million Jews wouldn't have died. Because Hitler let you go if

you leave everything behind and that is why I go out. Now, before I got out I had to tell them what I take along. I had to take a list and how much I paid for a new suit and I had to give the same money back to them. But that was a minor thing.

But finally when I came to England, I was not allowed to work. I lived with my sister there for one year. And in Berlin already I had met a nice girl and fall in love with her. And she went on domestic permit to England. That means she had to work in the household doing cooking and cleaning and so on, but she got out of Germany. She had a boyfriend who, we found out, he was killed by the Nazis.(Inaudible.) But I fall in love with her, like I said.

What happened in England, they were afraid the Germans would invade England and the German Jews might be helpful in the language, to help them show them directions and so on. So they put a friend of mine in the Isle of Man, in a camp. There were women in the camp. Elias, my friend Elisa, and they didn't come to me because I lived with my sister who was English subject. We had a friend. And one morning, he came to me, I heard that they come around the next morning and they might pick people up and send them to the camp. Before the English asked me, I should serve in their Pioneer Corps, but I refused because I didn't get any compensation from there, so they couldn't threaten me that they wouldn't support me anymore. Because I never asked them for any

support, so I was independent.

Q: WHAT WAS THE PIONEER CORPS?

A: Pioneer Corps was part of the British Army. They were in the (inaudible), they call it and those people were even sometimes sent over to the Continent. But they couldn't force me because I didn't depend on them. But I told them, "I want to go to America." So they told me, "You will keep your visa when you get it, " and so on.

But I didn't believe them and one day, when the friend told me they might come the next morning, I said to him, "Let me wait for the mail," and what happened, in the same morning, in the mail, I got the invitation from the American Consul to come for a physical. And before I left Germany I bought a ticket on luxury liner, Bremen, to come to the States. Of course it was all gone, to the war and so on. So I had to buy another ticket and I came over here in 1940.

And I worked here, starting as a dishwasher, a waiter, and then two years later I was drafted in the army. After three months in the army, I became a American citizen and six months later I was sent back to England as an American soldier. And I had a chance to see my sister in London again. And I found out where is Isabella Rosenberg, the girl I fall in love with the first time when I saw her. But in the Army, when you are overseas, you couldn't write where you are, you only could write, "somewhere in England." So I found out, it was an organization. Whoever comes from the Continent first

comes to the Bloomsbury House to register.

Q: WHICH HOUSE IS THAT?

A: Bloomsbury House. They have all these refugees from Europe register.

Q: WAS THIS A JEWISH ORGANIZATION?

A: No, yea, it was partly Jewish organization, but in connection with the government, the British government.

Q: OK.

A: And I wrote to them that we are stationed "in England somewhere."

Q: "SOMEWHERE IN ENGLAND!" ARE YOU STILL TRYING TO PROTECT THE SECRETS?!

(spelling?)
A: No, but I forgot. Could have been outside of (Bornemous) where we were stationed. And after D-Day, we got the first casualty from the beachhead. That was an awful experience. But anyway, while we were stationed in (Trawbridge) I started to write to the Bloomsbury House. "Give me the address of Miss Rosenberg."

(spelling?)
My sister met her before I met her, I introduced her to my sister, but my sister told her she didn't hear anything anymore from Miss Rosenberg. So many people left London. So after I write, I got a letter back from the Bloomsbury House telling me they are not allowed to give me her address but they forwarded my letter to her. And finally I got a letter and it was a blue envelope all the time. I loved them. And then she told me that her fiance got killed from the

Nazis. And we start to write to each other. And every time when I met her, I wrote her I would be there so and so, we moved, "somewhere in England," I couldn't tell her where. We never met. And my sister didn't know either where.

And in 1944 our outfit went to the Continent after thirty days after D-Day. And while we were there in the Battle of the Bulge. When the Germans were close they told us, we will have to draw numbers. According to regulation, that with hundred patients you leave behind, so many enlisted men had to stay with them. So I remember I told them, "No matter what number I draw, I will not stay behind." If the Germans see me with my accent and everything else, my name, I would be in danger. So I draw the number 83. I knew I wouldn't have any chance. But anyway the Germans, after the Battle of the Bulge, they didn't come through.

And then I wrote my friend. We wrote each other. At first, my sergeant wouldn't allow me to see our commanding officer. But in '44, in September, we received three hundred German prisoners-of-war. And my Commanding Officer knew me, we had about twenty soldiers from Germany but he picked on me. So he told me, his office is my office and I was to interview some three hundred prisoners-of-war in a big barrack. And he asked me, "Do you want to go in?" So I said, "If you tell me to go in, I go in." Without an escort and so on.

So when I come to the gates a German First Sergeant

saluted me. And then he took me into the barn, it was lunchtime. There was three hundred prisoners-of-war laying on the straw, eating. And the sergeant say, "Ach tung." And all three hundred prisoners got up and I said to myself, "Two years ago, you all spit in my face. Now you stand at attention."

But, then the war came to an end and I asked my captain, I'd like to get married. You had to have permission from headquarters to get married. I want to marry her in England. How do you get to England? We had to draw the name out of a hat, of five hundred people. And he went and it took him two weeks to come back and forth. So I told him, "How can I ever get married?" Then, in the meantime, I sent a form letter to Isabelle. "I want to marry you, will you sign the letter?" And she signs the letter. So I told him, "How do you get here?" And he told me I'd get a new quota number in May. But in May, the quota number never came. And I had a very nice commander who was in charge of our unit, he was Dr. Klepfer. K-L-E-P-F-E-R. He was from Indiana. In private life he was in charge of the whole state hospital in Indiana. Superintendent, he was. He was a very nice man.

There are so many little stories I can tell you about...some are funny, some are not so funny. But, anyway, then she wrote back to me that she wanted to marry me and how do you get there. But finally, in June...that's another story. To go to England on a seven day pass. First, you

went to Liege, then to the German border, then you pick up about a thousand soldiers going to England. From there we went to Paris. In Paris we stayed overnight, and then we went to Le Havre, outside Le Havre. Beautiful. We were very well treated and we got new uniforms if we need some. Before I wrote to Isabelle that I would, in May, get a quota, and we'd get married.

So she worked. She was a head of a chiropractic clinic. Isabelle was in charge of a chiropractic clinic outside of London and she went to my sister, she told her, her brother and she will get married. And she was waiting for me but Ziggy didn't come because he didn't get a quota. Of course, I couldn't call on the telephone because that was against army regulations. Ziggy lived by army regulations! Very strict! And you know, with my language, I had to be very careful. Anyways, that's besides the point.

So, finally, I wrote a letter that in June we would come. So we went the same day, we went to Paris and so on and so on. And when I came, she didn't get my letter, but we called her and she came. For five years we didn't see each other. And we got married. On a Friday night by a rabbi Gluck. In my sister's house, they had a beautiful garden and we got married there. And we had three days honeymoon and I had to go back to Belgium again. And there she followed me. I saw her once more, twice more, I saw her. Then in March, 1946, she came as a war wife. And that is the story. After that,

I worked for the government over twenty-five, twenty-eight years. And that is the story.

Q: THAT'S VERY NICE. ZIGGY, CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE BET MORE ABOUT, BACK IN THE EARLY 1930'S. WHEN WERE YOU FIRST SENSITIVE TO THE RISE OF THE NAZIS AND THE TREATMENT OF THE JEWS AND WHAT WAS YOUR, LET'S SEE, HOW OLD WERE YOU THEN? YOU WERE, WHAT, IN YOUR LATE 30'S?

A: Yeah, in the 20's. You know, we have so many special (inaudible) in America. People ask you, "Why didn't you leave earlier?" When your parents were born in Germany, I was born in Germany. We only spoke German. We went to Hebrew school. We became Bar Mitzvahed. We had one of the most beautiful temples and we didn't know something like that would happen to us. Maybe it would last only a few years. And in 1933 when Hitler became chancellor, you start already in stores where you never knew there were Jews. You didn't even know they were. Because they knew exactly, they had in every house, in every house they had some spy. So you know we were Juden.

And so it started slowly and slowly that we were not allowed to go to the movies and so on. And we were restricted and everything. And then, finally, they went ahead and make the Aryanization of the stores. So we had big department stores, they had to be given over to Aryans, to Germans. So slowly and slowly, they cut our throat. Slowly and slowly.

Q: NOW, YOU MENTIONED, YOU WENT TO GYMNASIUM. WAS THERE ANY

PREJUDICE FROM OTHER STUDENTS? THAT WAS BEFORE HITLER, BUT DID YOU SEE ANY PREJUDICE WHEN YOU WERE GOING TO SCHOOL?

A: Of course. We always had anti-Semitism in Germany. But the same that we have here, in America. We always had it. Now in the city where I was born, there was about 2500 people. 200 people were Jews. And my father was the (inaudible.) Every Catholic and so on, had their own school, and (inaudible) in the public school together. There was a Jewish public school, Catholic and Protestant, like parochial. My father belonged to (inaudible) and I played with the Christian people and so on.

Of course, there was always a background of (Judeaufnah). For instance, in Germany, we couldn't become (Yach). Couldn't become a high officer in the army and so on. Here in America, I was amazed when I came to America, that there was a (number of Klauses) too. In the colleges. They make an application and (inaudible) and the evidence not to take you. You have the same thing that you have in Germany.

Kaiser Wilhelm gave, I should have brought that book along, Kaiser Wilhelm gave, for instance, to the temple, he gave marble stones and so on. I mean, we lived in a society where we Jews couldn't vote for the higher parliament. Only the lower parliament. But we lived a normal, peaceful life. I went to school, the gymnasium, I was in a boarding school. There was always anti-Semitism. Always. But as long as I remember we never had any problems. We were very well liked

(in the small city where I lived. We had a freedom of religion, everything. We had no trouble. Till Hitler arrived. Now I (inaudible) Hitler exists. Only in the misery of people. They were too harsh. The Versailles Treaty was too harsh. So they want to demolish the whole Germany. And there were a lot of people out of work and they destroyed factories and so on.

Then comes along Hitler and tells them (inaudible). The German people like being in a uniform. He tells them, "Deutschland, Deutschland, uber alles." That is why he caught them. So he gives them uniform and labor camps wherever they work. He kept them busy in munitions and so on and nobody stopped him.

(So I only can tell you, I went to school, gymnasium and so on. I never really had any problem with being a Jew. In a small town. Now my father was twelve years president of synagogue, a small synagogue. With a rabbi with his own house and a (inaudible) with his own house, with the (Shamus) with his own house, we lived normal. I only remember that we were never bothered as a Jew.

maybe
peyes?
word?
(Now in Poland, it was maybe a different story. See, when people came to us, people with (palus) were strange to us. Were strange to us. I know my father gave a lot of money to them. We sent money to Poland. And is what you always hear and hear, always say, "It's a German Jew." Like we are the biggest (Amerauretz) and so on. People don't know.

For instance, in Germany, there is no separation for religion and state. Like here. Now the Jewish people, we had, where I worked for a short while, after our factory closed, we had one of the biggest... For instance, when the government of Germany sent to our Jewish community a list of all Jews. If you belonged to a temple or anything, as long as you were Jewish, you had to pay a tax to the Jewish community. Even if you don't believe in Judaism. When they said that Mr. so and so paid such percentage then the Jewish community were entitled to thirteen percent of what he paid to the government. We even had the right, in case you don't pay, we could send our marshall and could confiscate...We had about a thousand of Jewish people work there and all kinds of, in the tax office, in the cemetery office. There were thousands of people. Same as civil servant. So I say we lived a nice peaceful life till Hitler appeared.

Q: NOW, THIS WAS IN BERLIN, RIGHT?

A: No, it was a small city. That's where people lived a peaceful life. I don't remember, there were some pogroms, a hundred years ago, in a distant part of Germany. I don't know, in Speier and so on, I don't know exactly. But not in my time. In my time, we lived a nice, peaceful life. That's all what I can tell you.

Q: TELL ME ABOUT THE FACTORY. NOW, THIS FACTORY THAT YOU WORKED IN, THIS WAS OWNED BY A JEW? WHAT KIND OF A FACTORY WAS IT?

A: We did leather goods. Like (inaudible) and all kinds of leather goods.

Q: RELIGIOUS THINGS?

A: No, no, not really. See, the big department store in Berlin, the (Herman Kleets) were all in Jewish hands. One of the biggest ones. And these people originally came from the province of Pozan. They came from there and they started like people start here. Like Nieman Marcus, started as a little one and then they become bigger and bigger. Because they were in Jewish hands. We had big industrialists in Germany. Hitler promised them something and they believed him. But, in general, most of the German people said, "Oh, the German Jews helped Hitler." Probably there was some big industrialists that he told them, "I'll make you so and so, and so on," but in general people, we never helped Hitler. On the contrary.

SKIP IN TAPE

A: We were in Fort Dix. And I listened to a voice from Boston and I thought I was in the German Army. The way they talked about the Jewish people.

Q: SO IT'S NOT RESTRICTED TO JUST GERMAN PREJUDICE, BUT WE HAVE IT HERE IN THE UNITED STATES.

A: I told you, everywhere. When people go to the university here and they say they want to...My name is Cohen. No, I had trouble already. Why did so many Jewish people went to Mexico? To South America?

END SIDE I

BEGIN SIDE II

A: ...to South America to become a doctor? Because they couldn't get in here. Why? Because, it was because they had a Jewish name.

Q: BUT BEFORE YOU LEFT BERLIN, WERE YOU AWARE OF ANY KIND OF RESISTANCE OR AN UNDERGROUND, A JEWISH UNDERGROUND OR ANY PLACES TO HIDE OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT?

A: There was no Jewish underground. It is impossible. Because in Berlin we had two streets where most of the Jewish people from Poland...

BREAK IN TAPE

...and so we lived in a big house. Maybe there was fifty people living in the house. Maybe there was one or two Jews. There was no Jewish resistance because we didn't have any... I don't know what you people think. People ask me after I came, "Why didn't you take a gun?" We didn't have any guns. There was the Jewish war veteran, who served in the First World War. You know? They were treated badly by the Germans. Dr. Offenbauer was an officer, he was a doctor, you know. But they took away all the rights, too, from us. For instance, a decree of Hitler that we were only second class citizens. Every man had to have the middle name "Israel" and the women had to take the middle name "Sarah." On my passport was "Siegfried Israel Peilte." On the outside, I have at home, on

the outside is a big "J." Juden.

Q: YOU HAD MENTIONED THAT YOU HAD KNOWLEDGE OF PEOPLE GOING THROUGH CONCENTRATION CAMPS. WHAT WAS THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS IN 1938, '39? WHAT WAS YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS AT THAT TIME? OR LATER CAMPS, OR ANY OTHER KIND OF CAMPS?

A: The only knowledge of us is Sachsenhausen. Sachsenhausen, where my brother-in-law was. Eric. That's the only one we knew. There was no burning and so on and so on. But what happened on the street - I had a friend, he was a brother of my friend, who was a little bit retarded. A little boy hit him, so they took (Mite) away and killed him. Now we know already, one of my friends, his mother, after a few days, got a letter from the City of Berlin that she should collect the urn from her son.

Q: COLLECT THE WHAT?

A: The urn. So we knew. But there was no resistance. Because we were not organized. You cannot compare to Warsaw. These people lived all in the ghetto. We didn't live in a ghetto.

Q: YOU HAD A JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER? YOU HAD A SYNAGOGUE? NOW, THE ONE YOU WENT TO, WAS THERE ANY ORGANIZATION IN THE SYNAGOGUE THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN HELPING JEWS TO ESCAPE?

A: Oh, we had an organization, they helped people to escape. But how to escape? How to escape? They gave them some money to buy tickets. There was no underground. There was no

underground. To escape. Some people did like that. They went on a tourist, to America, and then America sent them to Mexico or Canada and they enter, right? They'd be legal. And some people who were very rich, they transferred money through, they sent out export and then you get the money back and so on.

No, for instance in 1938, there was a decree that we all had to turn in our gold and silver. But we didn't. It's proved that during (inaudible) they took all the pictures and the paintings and so on were all taken from us. I cannot tell you. There was definitely no underground. Definitely. Maybe in other nations maybe. Maybe in France. But not in Germany.

Q: WHAT OTHER KINDS OF JEWISH SELF-HELP ORGANIZATIONS WERE THERE? WERE THERE BROTHERHOOD ORGANIZATIONS OR HEBREW AID ORGANIZATIONS?

A: Oh, for instance, we always had what the American and the other Polish Jews don't like. We had (Deutsche Statsberger Judische Loubens.) That means we are Germans but our religion is Jewish. And the Polish people hated that organization. Sure we had organizations. We had the B'nai Brith, we had lodges, and so on. We had all organizations. We had charity...In Berlin we had the big two Jewish hospitals. Two big Jewish hospitals. They were renowned. And you know the professors, we had Jewish professors. We had doctors, scientists. Sure we had. We lived a normal life.

Q: WHEN WAS IT THAT THE JEWISH DOCTORS COULDN'T TREAT ARYAN

PATIENTS ANYMORE? WHEN DID THAT COME ABOUT?

A: I only can tell you, but the Jewish hospital kept on going. Because they took a lot of non-Jewish people. For instance Helga, our friend, she worked in the Jewish Hospital in Berlin.

Q: WHO IS THIS? HELGA WHO?

A: (Rigermeyer), a friend of ours, Alice's..

ANOTHER VOICE - HIS WIFE?: Alice's sister.

Q: IS THAT FROM DEARFIELD BEACH?

A: No, she lived down there. We had all the organizations you have here we had in Germany. We all could function until 1938 then they cut us. Like they gave us our own theater, our own opera and so on. Like I said. We only could play by Jewish composers and so on. And we were always afraid to go on the street. You saw people come with a uniform you make a big circle. You get out of the way. Because you don't know, they could do everything to me. Because, like I said, we didn't have any protection. If you were a Polish Jew you had the protection. If you were a Hungarian Jew you had the protection.

So when Kristalnacht, the next day my brother-in-law (inaudible) he went to the German shipping line and bought sixteen tickets for Shanghai. On a luxury liner. And he needed a few more thousand dollars. The Jewish organization didn't have the money, they didn't want to give it to him. A friend of his, a Christian friend, he gave him the money,

the rest he needed to buy the ticket.

Q: THAT WAS VERY NICE. WHAT WAS THE NAME OF THIS CHRISTIAN FRIEND, DO YOU KNOW?

A: No. He worked with him. Now, for instance, my brother-in-law, my older sister Clara who died in Israel. In 1947 after the war was over, the Communists took over Shanghai and my sister Ella and her husband went to Australia. My sister Clara, her husband and their daughter and the son who was in Shanghai went to Israel and my sister died there.

Q: AND THIS WAS CLARA? WHAT WAS HER MARRIED NAME?

A: Ruben.

Q: OH, THIS WAS CLARA RUBEN. SHE WENT TO ISRAEL? WHERE WAS SHE IN ISRAEL? WHAT TOWN?

(Selling?)
A: She was buried in (Anana). When they came to Israel, they lived in tents. That was the housing, tents. She died when she was young. And my other sister, Ella, and me...Lisa went with her husband. They went to America and then went to Rochester, New York. And Ella lost her husband in Australia and I have her the affidavit and she came to America to my brother-in-law in Rochester and stayed there.

Now what happened, see, during the war I didn't know what happened to my sisters because I was a soldier in the army and we didn't hear anything. I heard once through the Red Cross about my sister. Once I heard. And then I didn't see my sisters from 1939, then I saw them about ten years later, I saw them again. Like I said, there was no

underground group in Germany. There might have been, but I don't know.

Q: YOU WERE NOT AWARE OF IT.

A: I was not aware. How could there be? Because a city of 150,000 people in Berlin. We had the most beautiful temples. People here tells me Reform, in Germany, everything was Reform. Out of the sixteen temples we had in Berlin, the smallest synagogue was Reform.

Q: ALL THE REST WAS ORTHODOX?

A: Orthodox, Conservative.

Q: WAS THERE CONSERVATIVE THERE?

A: Yeah, women and men sit together, some with organ. Yeah. Beautiful, beautiful. I'm sorry that I didn't bring the book.

OTHER VOICE, WIFE?: Should have brought the book.

A: I did not bring the book. I could have shown you the temple, how it looked.

Q: THIS IS A BOOK OF WHAT? TEMPLES IN GERMANY, IN BERLIN?

A: Jews in Berlin before and now. I've taken it back to Ruth now. What happened, a few cities like Berlin, invite Jewish people who are born in Berlin to come and see them. So thousands, thousands went to Berlin. (Inaudible). And they gave you beautiful hotels. They gave you spending money.

Q: DID YOU GO?

A: No, I didn't go. Because when I made obligation, I was living in Seattle, Washington, a cousin of mine, and she told me that we are going. So Isabelle saying, "Let's write to

them, to go with them." In two weeks they would be in England and then from England we'd like to see Germany again. So we wrote to them and then we came from the West Coast, in September we always went to my sister's in London for her birthday. And when we came to London, I gave the London address. I said we'd never hear from anybody but you don't know the Germans.

All of a sudden we got a letter. "We received your letter but you didn't give us any time to accommodate you, but whenever you come to Berlin come up to our office." So when Isabelle and I came to Berlin, we went to the office and they gave us tickets for an opera. Not just in the balcony, in front.

Q: THE ORCHESTRA.

A: Orchestra. For opera, sightseeing tour and a beautiful dinner.

Q: KOSHER!?

A: Then I saw the temple. There was a story. I worked for the government. (Inaudible) worked for the army. Told me one day he is going to get transferred to Berlin. I said, "I come from Berlin." He said, "Whenever you come to Berlin, you look me up." So a year later (inaudible.) So in 1963 I wrote to him, "we are coming to Berlin." So he say, "Alright, you can stay with us in officers' quarters because you're a civil service employee." So I told him, "No, we are staying in the city, in Berlin. I wanted to see my father's grave. Maybe

you can help me get through Checkpoint Charlie."

So he wrote back to me, "I'll pick you up from the airport, when you arrive." I rented a hotel room. So when we came to Berlin, he was there, picked us up and he showed me part of Berlin. And the next morning I went to the (Hazanenstrasse.) That was the temple I saw burning. It's now... I noticed a resemblance to a temple. The City of Berlin, inside is a big auditorium and there's a Jewish restaurant there too and only the entrance of the old temple, beautiful, if left against the building.

So I met with a little man. We said, "We would like to go to (Balsazeh), that is the Jewish cemetery where my father was. He said, "You know, it's very hard. You have an American passport?" I said, "I know somebody here from Israel. He takes people across." I said, "I've been here for maybe a few weeks, I don't know if he's here." So he say, "You'd better go back to your hotel, they know all the tricks."

So we went back to the hotel and the concierge, I told him. "Wait a minute," he said. "When do you want to go?" I say, "At ten o'clock." So the guy came, we had a station wagon and we went through Checkpoint Charlie where we had to get out and they checked our credentials and had to buy some East German Marks and they took our passports. (Inaudible sentence.)

The guy talked to us, but you don't know who he is. So

we went to the cemetery and I found my father's grave. It is about as high as that marble. Marble, with an inscription. My sister, Lisa, was there before. So I found the grave. And my father. The inscription's there but it was very bad. But later when my sister, Lisa, was there again, she took care of that. Anyway.

Finally, the guy was waiting for us outside of the cemetery and we came back and we talked. And Isabelle said, "Don't say anything." When we passed Checkpoint Charlie, we were in West Berlin already. Then we could talk.

When I came back to the hotel, there was already Captain White's telephone call. So I told them everything. We went upstairs and I was sitting down and cried. I said, "I did what I wanted to do. I wanted to see my father's grave. For years and years I wanted to see that. And I did it." And then Isabelle met a cousin of hers. She was hidden by the Germans. Was she happy to see relatives again, you know! And we only stayed there two days, then we went back to, oh Switzerland and around. It was part of our trip.

Q: SO YOU REMEMBER THE COUSINS' NAMES WHO WERE HIDDEN IN GERMANY? ISABELLE'S COUSINS NAMES?

A: No. Thousands of them. Thousands of Jews were hidden by Germans. My friend, Friedrich, I wouldn't be surprised if he did that too. Thousands of people were hidden by them. You went to Yad Vashem?

Q: YES.

A: Did you see the names of people, when you go to Yad Vashem, people who were saving Jewish people?

Q: THEY WERE RIGHTEOUS GENTILES.

A: I hate the Germans, but that's what it is. There were so many people. I know other people who I met here who, they say, they survived Germany because they were hidden by Germans. There's no doubt about it. Now, in '38, I could go to the houses and talk to people and so on. There was a complaint by a family about whatever they complained about that I came to them. I had to sit down and I had my coffee. And that guy who had that black uniform on, said to me, "When you see me on the street, just look away." I have to look away. That's what it was. So I would go to them, they'd say, "You have to have a cup of coffee, you have to have a cup of coffee." I mean, really.

I personally was never harmed. Thank God. Like I said, people have the wrong impression of up Jewish people in Germany. Our rabbi once lectured about that religion comes from Germany. Methodist came from Germany. And we have the yeshivas. We have a really a cultural life.

Q; FROM WHAT I SEE, THERE'S VIRTUALLY NO JEWS LEFT IN GERMANY.

A: Yeah, there are about 5000. Most of the Jewish people who are in Germany, they were not born in Germany. They are mostly disgraced persons.

Q: WHEN I WAS IN GERMANY IN 1960, I VISITED VARIOUS SYNAGOGUES IN STUTTGART AND IN FRANKFORT AND WHAT I SAW WAS, IN 1960,

FIFTEEN YEARS AFTER THE WAR, OLD PEOPLE WHO SENT THEIR CHILDREN OUT OF GERMANY BUT THEY SPOKE GERMAN, THEY WERE BORN IN GERMANY. THEY WERE NOT GOING TO LEAVE BUT THEIR CHILDREN WOULD LEAVE. AND SO NOW, A GENERATION LATER, THE CHILDREN ARE GONE. WHO'S IN GERMANY NOW? ISRAELI BUSINESSPEOPLE CAME BACK, AND DISPLACED PERSONS CAME BACK...

A: And displaced persons, they got rich. They got very rich. Isabelle didn't want to go, in 1963, she didn't want to go to Munich, where she was born. She didn't want to go. But in 1968, we went. She invited by her sister in Munich. We arrived a little bit late, I guess the office was closed already. When we came to Munich, we called up. There was somebody on the phone, he say to us, "Are you so and so?" We say, "Yes." "We are waiting for you. You told her you're coming on that time. Your ticket for the opera, for the theater will be sent over for you. You will get them in a half an hour."

Now, Ruth was invited by a smaller city in Germany. They don't know what to do with them because they have a bad conscience. All the small cities. The big cities invite people to come back. I didn't. But I was already three times. I saw my father's grave. And that is the whole truth.

When I was sitting there and thinking about what had happened to me. Wherever I will go there will be a synagogue and there will be people who pray in the same way I do. No

matter where I go. That's the truth. I always have that in my mind. Somewhere I'll meet Jewish people. I never came personally to it.

Q; YOU WERE NEVER TOUCHED PERSONALLY BY THIS.

A: Never.

Q: YOU'RE LUCKY.

A: You know what somebody said? Why me? No, don't. Don't.

Q: THE FOREGOING WAS AN INTERVIEW OF SIEGFRIED PEILTE WHO CURRENTLY LIVES IN DEARFIELD BEACH, FLORIDA, AND WHO GAVE THIS INTERVIEW TO ROBERT WEISS IN PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA. THIS INTERVIEW WAS TAPED ON MARCH 11, 1990.