

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Mike Vogel
July 10, 1997
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of an audio taped interview with Mike Vogel on July 10, 1997 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

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Beginning Tape One, Side A

Question: **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum, **Jeff** and **Toby Herr** collection. This is an interview with **Mike Vogel**, conducted by **Dan Gediman** on the 10th of July, 1997 in **Indianapolis, Indiana**. This is a follow up interview to a U A – a **USHMM** videotaped interview conducted with Mr. **Vogel** on July 14th, 1989. The **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum gratefully acknowledges **Jeff** and **Toby Herr** for making this interview possible. This is tape number one, side A. So let me just kind of get a level on you.

Answer: Mm-hm.

Q: If you could just tell me –

A: Testing, one, two, testing.

Q: How about just tell me – introduce yourself and tell us where you'll – where we are. Tell –

A: Ah, my name is **Michael Vogel**. I'm being interviewed by the Holocaust Museum of **Washington, D.C.** We are at our home at 6531 **Sunset Lane, Indianapolis, Indiana**.

Q: All right, that'll work.

A: Is – am I coming through?

Q: You're coming through fine. The one thing I'm going to do is just tilt this slightly. There we go. What they've asked me to do is before we get started talking about your life since coming to the **U.S.** is – there are a f – there were a few gaps in the video interview that you did almost 10 years ago, and there were a – a short list of things that they wanted me to ask about, to clarify certain –

A: The spelling and stuff?

Q: Well, that separately, you got that list.

A: Yeah.

Q: That – that's something we can do at the end of the interview.

A: Fine.

Q: But there were a couple of specific things that they wanted me to ask you that pertained to details regarding stories that you told before.

A: Okay.

Q: So, I'd like to start with those and then move into your life since the war ended.

A: Fine.

Q: In your previous interview you mentioned that on the – the march from **Landsberg**

–

A: **Landsberg**.

Q: **Landsberg**. That several guards asked the prisoners to quote, sign that I was good to you, that I gave you bread.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: What did they mean? What were they expecting of you?

A: Well, I've seen it, I've seen the paper, I've seen the paper in their hand. These were actually Wehrmacht guards by now, so most of the SS guards ran away. But as we were marching with these Wehrmacht guards, from the lans – last concentration camp, which was a subcamp of **Dachau, Landsberg**, we were supposedly marching towards the **Tyrolean** mountains, and they knew the ne – end was near. Of course we – we had – we had to push a wagon behind us so if anybody fell, that was just throw 'em in the wagon, so nobody was – be left on the road. And this piece of pa – they wrote these pieces of paper and they tried to give it to the persons on the end, on the edge as they were marching. Here, would you mind – would you sign this for me, and tell them that I was good to you, that I helped you, that I gave you some food. Some people did sign. I've seen some people sign. Wha-Wha-What – what could a poor – poor soul do? In the – they never came to me personally, but I've seen them being done. So this was the death march, so to speak a death march because lot of people were – were falling like flies. I was one of the fortunate ones, I was still strong enough because of – of the slave labor that I performed prior to that, of eating a little better. So, during this death march there was also a American Air Force air raid on a munition depot very close to a town called **Würzburg, Germany**. And from there as the – th – as the Americans were bombing, I ran and I successfully escaped. And soon after I was picked up by the **United States** Armed Forces.

Q: Th-Th-The questions I'm going to ask you in the next few minutes are very disparate, they're – they're – they're not in chronology necessarily, but they're, again, picking up on things that you mentioned before. Did you ever get over your fear of doctors and dentists? You referred to that.

A: Unfortunately not. I – from day – from – ever since I've been out of the – the death camps, concentration camps – when I met my wife, I got married, I had – I had problem with my teeth. You know, there – there is saying, your teeth are alright, but your gums have to come out, and that was my case, and I was deathly afraid. Once – I once ran away from a dentist in the army. I don't know if I ever s – mentioned that to – to – to the Holocaust Museum. I was taken by another – another G.I. with – to – to go to the dentist because I had awful ba-bad teeth and pain. And I was sitting in the chair and I ran away from there. I'm still scared of dentists, I'm still deathly afraid of shots. I'll tell you an – a little story about what happened to me a few years ago. As I mentioned to you before, I wa – I was involved in soccer, not only as a coach and a referee, but as a player. I was playing a soccer game and I got hit by a man and he opened my f – my forehead. I ended up in a hospital. And a friend of mine, the one I showed you on the picture in – in the wall there, took me to the hospital and then they called my wife to come to the hospital. They wanted to give me a tetanus shot. I would re – I refused it, I would – I fought it. My wife almost left me because of that, she was so upset with me. That tetanus shot was so important because I was hit, and also hit a door, and the hor – door had a little steel [indecipherable] I was – and doctors fear is

still there. When I go to examination, I am awfully fearful what they going to do to you. Very much so, even today. I'm afraid of when they look for po – prostrate, you know, when they do th – do that little finger job on you. That scares me, that scares the hell out of me. When they take a little blood from the fingers, that scares me. So that fear is from **Auschwitz**, unfortunately, because I've seen **Mengele** e-e-every day on th – on – on the tracks. So the doctors always scare me, and they shouldn't, they really shouldn't, not today. And especially since I have a daughter who is a physician. But I'm still afra – a-afraid of it. I'm very much so.

Q: Have you ever made any efforts to do anything about that? Have you –

A: N-No. See, there are two things that I am afraid of. Doctors and dentists is two, and I'm also afraid of water. Water scares me for the simple reason because in **Auschwitz**, I was sent to a **shtraf**(ph) commander once. **Shtraf**(ph) commander meaning that they caught me es – organizing food for Jewish girls [**indecipherable**] commando, and they send you to a sin o-o-operation, so they call it **shtraf**(ph). Sin – sin – sin commando, which meant that we were forced to cut seaweeds in water. We had a chain – chainsaw like, but with the one guy on one end of it, the other one the other end, gonna pull it, was like a sickle, which would cut it. And there would be a **kapo**(ph) – a – a [**indecipherable**], a **kapo**(ph), a – a person who was in charge of us behind us with the SS man, and they would dunk our heads in the water and kept us there until we could not breathe any more. So I – I – I went through that for a couple of weeks as a – a-a-as a **shtraf** commander, as a sin [**indecipherable**]. So whenever – whenever we go to a

beach or something, I only go up to my knees. And not one of my children, of the four kids, were swimmers, because of me. And of course, now they are learning a little bit. Some of them are – a couple of them are still afraid. **Arsani's**(ph) a swimmer now, his ti – his children are a swimmer. Our daughter the physician, she swims now, she was always deathly afraid of water, because of the – because of me. So those are the things that scare me, scare the hell out of me, doctors, dentists and water.

Q: Makes sense. I'm gonna re-rearrange the microphone so it's a little less bothersome for you and you can move around better.

A: Can you –

Q: It's fine, it's -- that just gives you a little more free reign.

A: Oh, okay.

Q: Although it's off s – the chronology a little bit here, I would like t – well, I'll come back to this, th-the – how you think – what you – how you think your children have been affected by what happened to you is something I would like to talk to you about.

A: Do you – you want to talk to me about it now?

Q: Well –

A: Okay.

Q: All right, we're there, so let's – let's –

A: All right, let's – the children, our children. Well, when I arrived to this country, May 10th, 1946, I came from the army, so it was a little different for me than the most survivors that arrived here, because most survivors came on a diff – in a – i-in a – in a

different way. I was helped with the **United States** armed forces and also was very helpful that I had an aunt living in **Detroit**. So when I first met my wife, my future wife, we started dating, we – also a survivor, you know. She didn't have much family, I didn't have any family, so you lonely, I'm lonely, let's be lonely together, the old saying what is the – one survivor said it at one time, if I may use his phrase. So when we got married, February 22nd, 1948, it will be 50 years coming up in the next – th-this February, I asked my wife, why don't we – let's not talk any more any other language except English. My English was fairly decent except I had the ar-army language, which was not the cleanest language in those days, of course. That's how I learned. And we decided – she was a little bit against it. She said no, we should talk to the children other languages also. She was much smarter than me, believe me, because the kids today could have – although they speak some languages, but they could – today they could have learned much more. So, how did it affect my children? First, we wouldn't talk about our experiences. Another mistake we made – I made, anyway, it was – I'm – I'm taking the blame for that. Reason we didn't want to, why hurt them? Why let them know how much we suffered, how much we went through? But the kids knew they were different. Our children soon, as soon as they started school found out they were different. Number one, they didn't have any first cousins. They didn't have any aunts and uncles. No grandparents. There was never a grandmother to – to – to hug them and kiss them or whatever. School functions, for parent and grandparents, there were never any grandparents around. We used to adopt grandparents for them. In

Detroit we use to a-adopt a lady in the apartment building. She was nice, and th – Grandma Goldstein, that was her grandma. She did – she had one daughter, an old, old maid, never married, so our children became her grandchildren. So the kids were – knew they – and yet they knew, they knew why something was wrong, but we never talked about it. The only time the kids would – our son was the first one, who was the oldest. When I joined this soccer team in **Detroit**, which by the way was founded by German Jews who arrived to **United States** in the 30's, just before **Hitler** got to them. And I joined this team and pretty soon – there was a tryout – pretty soon there were more survivors joining this team. So after soccer games we would go to someone's home, yours, mine or someone else's and had a cookout or dinner, or whatever. We would start talking about the game, then we would start talking about our lives in America, how – how are we doing, how much money do you make. And before you knew it, **Auschwitz** would come to the – to – into the – into the conversation. And our children, especially our son, would always listen from be – from behind the door. And – and he knew – he – then he would tell his sisters, you know, I just heard something about Daddy, or I heard something about Mom, about what ha – what happened to them in the camps. So we didn't want to talk about these experiences to them. And ar – then, let me tell you about the – the – the – the local Jewish population. **Detroit** is a big metropolitan city with a large Jewish population. We, Agnes and I, my wife Agnes went to a school to learn English. I – at the Jewish Community Center in **Detroit**, and our soccer team will also meet there. So, I didn't go to that school because I – I – I – I

felt I – I had enough of schooling, which was another mistake. Would have listened to my wife I probably would have been sometime a teacher today somewhere. So we – then we tried to tell the local population, the local Jewish population, our – our own people in – in the Jewish Community Center. We had a Purim play, we went to a Purim play, and then all of a sudden we start talking to these people about **Auschwitz**, no – number of us in the soccer team. And the leader of the group says, that's enough about **Auschwitz**. Let's go back to singing and playing the music again. So nobody want to listen. My own aunt, may she rest in peace, my father's youngest sister, who lost everybody in her family, she lost two sisters, she lost her brother, she lost all her nieces and nephews and – and – and – and all her cousins, she wouldn't – she, coming in 1939, emigrating to this country in 1939 from **Vienna, Austria**, she didn't want to listen. So we decided not to talk about it. The first time I was able to talk about it was when our youngest daughter asked my wife to come to her eighth grade junior high school to speak, and the next day my wife forced me to go there. Yet, I didn't tell them a story like the story should be told. I kind of whitewashed it. I was afraid to hurt people. So that took a long time. So my children, at f – at first they were resentful, they said Daddy, why didn't you tell us? Why – you know, th – they didn't come and – and say to me, you – you – you were wrong, you – you should have done it. But you could have told us. I didn't want to hurt you honey. This – this is simple, it's a – it the o – it's the way it is, I'd – it just – I don't want to hurt strangers, let alone my own children. So they're different. But today they're very much involved. My daughter, the

oldest one, the physician was on the Holocaust Committee with me, which I am a chairman of [indecipherable] local – local Holocaust Committee called Jewish Committee Relations. Both – all three of the daughters went to second generation meetings, second generation of Holocaust survivors. In nineteen – January 27, 1985, I took two of my children, my son and my middle daughter, the New Yorker, the jeweler, with me to **Auschwitz** for the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of **Auschwitz** being liberated, if you can call being liberated by the **Soviet Union** a liberation. And they came there. I showed them, first of all **Auschwitz** number one, that was the first camp that I was taken to. I showed them the barrack that my father was last taken to, block seven in **Auschwitz**, called the **Krankenbau**, the sick bay. Sick bay without doctors. I showed them that barrack. This is where they took my – your grandfather last time, to the ovens from. I showed them block 16 where I s – where I was living on the – which by the way, block 16 today in **Auschwitz** is the Czechoslovakian block, a-a-and they have some artifacts in there. And we spend there a couple da – two days in **Auschwitz**. And then of course in 1990, I went back again to **Auschwitz**, but this time I took agn – took **Agnes** with me, the same middle daughter and the youngest daughter. This is where we made a film called, “**Auschwitz**, If You Cried, You Died.” So I sh – there I really pored my heart out to my children, to show them what Auschwitz is all about, what it was all about. I took them to every – see I was working as a slave laborer, a place called **Kanada** commando, unloading incoming Jews from every – every Nazi occupied European country. And this is where

I gave my two daughters and my wife, who has not been to **Auschwitz**, their exact feeling what **Auschwitz** was about. I explained to them crematorium one – crematorium one, which is in **Auschwitz** number one, which is still standing. Then we went to **Birkenau**, which is the **Auschwitz** number two camp, and I showed them the **crematorias**(ph). I worked as a slave laborer at **Birkenau**, 600 yards from the gas chambers and **crematorias**(ph). So the kids today know much more than they should have known years ago, which I was afraid to tell them, to hurt them.

Q: What ways – so much to talk about at th – I’m – I’m – I’m trying to think in terms of doing this in a – in an order that would be useful to future people listening to this, but other ways your children were affected, you – you talk about that they have, in a second hand fashion abs – absorbed some of your fears. Have – is that something that you’ve ever talked to them about over the years?

A: About my fears? Well, the kids were always afraid that they would hurt me i-if they would talk to me about my fears because you know, it’s bad enough that I had it, you know? My son tried a number of times, he says, Dad, you know, you can go to water. You can swim with the – look at your grandchildren, look at your little granddaughter, she dives from this big diving board. He says, you don’t have to dive, but you can go in the water deeper than you go into water. They tried it, but I – I – I-I – i – we were in Israel, we just got back from Israel last week. We went to the swimming pool. There were kids playing with a ball, I was playing soccer with them, you know, in a group. I didn’t want to go in that water. I went. Little – little above my knees, and anything that

– a-as soon as I feel the water above, I get scared, still to this day. So the fears, well, the kids tried, but s – you know.

Q: Have you ever done anything – I don't want to dwell on this too much, but in terms of your – your fear of doctors and dentists, have you – you know, there are certain dentists, for example, who specialize in people who are phobic about dentistry, and who, you know, are particularly sensitive to that, and –

A: The only way any dentist could touch my teeth, or es – extract them, have to put me to sleep. That's – I – no other way I would have done it. Yet, when I lost all these teeth – of course, I – when I got out of **Auschwitz** I had hardly any teeth left, but when I lost the rest of them, this guy, this dentist was very gentle, whom I still have – course, now I don't need him, I only got thr-three teeth left. But even then, he knows how sensitive I am. When he cleans the remaining on my teeth, he makes sure that I get enough Novocain into me that I don't feel not even his – I don't even feel his finger. My lips and mouth is frozen for a whole day after that. So I – i-i-I – I don't know, I don't think I would want to be the doctor that I should be his patient.

Q: Out of curiosity, I know you've – again, we're jumping ahead, I know that you've had a lot of contact with other survivors in the past decade or more.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Are – do you share common fears along those lines?

A: There are some of us that have the same fears, and especially those of us who – unfortunately two of them are – two of them died in the recent years – those of us who

spent in **Auschwitz** more than two years, because we didn't live through because of doctors, because the doctors were there to kill you. But they had the same fears. I have one friend who died in **Skokie** al – two years ago, **Joe Neumann**(ph). You – you mentioned his name [**indecipherable**] misspelled it anyway, but Joe was the same as me. He had – unfortunately, he died of an aneurism and – and a heart problem two years ago. He was the strongest prisoner ever, among us. He was seven years – seven, eight years older than me and he looked like a real -- a real born Nazi. He had blonde, blue eyed – blonde hair, blue eyes. And **Mengele** liked him so much that he never believed he was Jewish. He never – he always told him, **Du bist kein Jude nicht** – you're not a Jew. You – you are – you are a German. And he spoke pretty – pretty good German, too. We all did from **Slovakia**, you know. So we – we – and the other guy in f – in his hist – he was historian, his name was **Eric Kulka**. **Eric Kulka** was a – wr-wrote a number of books. In fact, he wrote the first book, him and another guy in pra – li – who lives in **Prague**, his name is **Ota Kraus**, they wrote the book called, "The Death Factory." Started in 1947, you can imagine, not even two years after Auschwitz, they started this book. And I happen to have a copy of it also, but it – that book was printed in many, many languages. And this guy **Kulka**, he too had fears of doctors.

Q: Makes sense.

A: We've seen what doctors did to our – in **Auschwitz**. We knew when someone was pulled from – from – from the bunk and being castrated by **Mengele**, or give him the –

the injection, the shots, th-the – the penal what do you call it? The – the – the shot that kills you that th-they use in the pri – in prisons when the death sentence fe – then th – so they give you shots to kill you for – from a death row.

Q: I don't know what chemical that is.

A: Phenyl – penal – some kind of a thing. Well, I – I can't think of the name now, I'm sure it'll come to me. And these were the shots that were given in **Germany**, in – in the – in – in – in the concentration camps.

Q: What about other fears, general fears? When you – when you were here, when – when the war was over, when you were – I don't know when we want to start talking about this, but you must – I'm assuming you had some other fears, fears of –

A: Well, let me just – okay.

Q: – of the police, fears of –

A: Well le-let me – let me start with the fears. When I was first picked up in **United States** Armed Forces, number one I didn't speak any – speak English. I spoke German, I spoke Hungarian, I spoke Russian, I spoke Polish. And the only reason I got along with the army, because there was some people that were born in this country of Polish parents, of Czech parents, of Slovak parents and then I could communicate with them. And there was a guy from **Boston**, of all places, and – a Jewish fellow by the name of **Feldman**, he was a schoolteacher. And he would teach me English, how did he teach me English? By making me read "Stars and Stripes" and also the army sent me to a school in – in **Germany**, in occupied **Germany**, I and E school. Information

education. Who was this school for? This school war – was not for people to – to learn English, this was people from – from the illiterates. People from the south – and I'm sorry not – I hope that nobody who listens to me, I don't think everybody in the south doesn't know how to read. But these were guys who didn't go to schools. And they had to write home letters from the armed forces. It was – they – they knew how to carry a gun and shoot it, but they had problem reading or writing. So the ar – **Feldman** was teaching this class called I and E, information education. And there would be a blackboard and on this blackboard there would be a letter. Dear folks, today I am in **Frankfurt**. I am fine, hope you are too. Love, your son **John**. And I would l-learn how to read and write that way, plus this **Feldman** made me read "Stars and Stripes." And he would teach me English. I have a knack for languages and I learned the language quite – quite qu-quickly in th – the American language, as well as other languages.

Q: We were talking about fears –

A: Fears.

Q: – and how you dealt with them over the years –

A: Ah – oh – okay –

Q: – other types of fears.

A: All right, I'm sorry.

Q: It's okay.

A: Well, I got you – I got you this one. Now, fears in the army. I had fears in the army. Any time I've seen soldiers march, I've always looked back to see who was behind me. Those were the other fears. There was a Red Cross field director who had a woman working for him, woman Red Cross, also a field dire – field person. She was from **Milwaukee**. Her name was **Wanda Waleiko**(ph) **Wanda Waleiko**(ph) was like a psychia – psych-psychologist and she was in charge of me. She would always talk to me, try to get me back into – the ar – of course, in those days you didn't have psychiatrists like you have today. And she would try to talk to me and calm me down, and – and – and she was the one who tried to get the fear away from me, because she – they knew – soon I – when I ran away from the dentist they knew that something is wrong with me, that th – something has to be done. And I remember they gave me a capsule to take to calm me down. And I don't know how to take this capsule. So what I've done, I opened the capsule and I put the powder in my hand from the ca – th-the contents into – and it was awfully bitter and that's what I took. I didn't know that you can take the capsule and just swallow it and it dissolves. Who knew that, you know, from where? So, fears? Then I came to this country, I had fears here. I had awful fears here. I was afraid of policemen. I was afraid of anything that – that had authority over me. See, I had my first job in this country in Detroit, Michigan. And my uncle, who was my – my – my aunt's husband, he was a c p – accountant, **C.P.A.** And he would help me, reading the **Detroit** News and **Detroit's** Free Press to – in the a – want ads. And there was an ad in the paper, foreign speaking salesman wanted. So my uncle put

me on a streetcar, and I went there. That's how I got my first job. And first job was working in the – in the store, **Zolcara**(ph) department stores in **Detroit Michigan** on **Jefferson Avenue**. And the store – we would sell merchandise to foreign people, Americans that were – came from a foreign country. That would – now, war is over, they had relatives in **Europe**, in **Poland**, in **Hungary** and wherever. They would receive letters from – from their relatives and we would read the letters and they said, Anna needs a pair of pants, **John** needs a pair of shoes. Here is a piece of string, this is the size of his foot. Here's a piece of string, this is size of his waist, for pants. And that – so that's what we used to do, that's how – that's – that ma – was my first job. Then I wa – started to lose a little f – little – little fear already, but I was still, if I can say it in those words, I didn't have the trust, the faith. I'd a – I was always a – always afraid that – that – th-that it's too good, you know, that it can't be, th-th-that's – you know. I always look behind, who is behind me. And it took me a long time. Took me a very long time, took me a very long time.

Q: How long? Years, decades?

A: I would say it took years, years. Five, six years or better. When I met my wife, and we started getting the children, even then I was always fearful, always very fearful about my kids. It shouldn't happen to them what happened to the kids in **Auschwitz**. So it took a long time. And the nightmares, you know, they were there for a long time, and – and let me tell you, even to this date, they don't stop. You know when they come the strongest on? Let's say I'm invited to speak at a university or a high school

or college or civic or – or religious organization. And while I'm speaking, I'm fine. Now the questions come, and the questions bring back – bring out more than actual presentation because – see it – while I'm speaking, I don't use any text. I never, never, never use a piece of paper when I speak. I – I can't stand reading my life story at **Auschwitz**. But when I'm speaking, I'm reliving my time in **Auschwitz**, my time in **Sachsenhausen**, my time in **Landsberg** and so on. And I – then I gotta – and it's all there in front of you. Now you see yourself, you actually see in your own visual mind, you see the days that you unloaded, the days that the selections are made at **Auschwitz**. So you see all that, you know. So you live that – you relive that. Now I'm finished the presentation. I'm driving home from 60, 70, sometime 100 miles out of the state, sometimes be different states. And as I go home I'm – now I'm trying to calm myself down. I go to bed at night and I get nightmares. You know that – never a day goes by that **Auschwitz** doesn't come ba – come in your head. And it isn't because they tattoo a number on my arm. That is, you know, here I am. The same way with my children as they got older. I tried to tell them a little more about it, you know, and then – now they're in college. You worry about them away from home. Then they come home with boyfriends. You know, from the – from the – from the day they were born, when there was bris, when there was a circumcision, people are there, my a – my aunt, my wife's uncle is the godfather, and you're looking for people to come to your – there. I'm looking for the people that never show up. I'm looking the people that I wanted to be there, they're not there. Our ya – oldest daughter got engaged. Young

man came to ask for her hand. And I – I broke down something terrible. Broke down something terrible, from happiness and sadness. Here I've got a daughter who is ready to get married. She will never see her grandmother, never see her cousins, never see anyone else at her wedding, you know. And then, when there is happiness and sadness, who do you share it with? Just with the immediate family. Your wife and your children. And your children try to calm you down, they try to come to you and, you know. And I feel very sad about those things, you know. Now our little daughter in Switzerland is gonna make us grandparents, okay? So here she is, 4,000 miles away from us. And my wife and I, we insist we're going to be there when the kid is born but how do we – how do you figure that out? Yeah, so – yeah.

Q: When you were there in the army camp after the liberation, did they understand what had happened to you?

A: When I first got picked up by the **United States** Armed Forces, called 774 tank battalion, this was before the camps were even near. They were – this was quite a ways from any camp, away from **Dachau**. And when I showed them this number, when I told them what it's all about, this Polish American from **Chicago** brings over his captain, his name was Captain **Yogerling**(ph), and he brings him over who is a – who was an attorney from home. And he's try – he's telling him what I tell him in Polish what happened. They were sh-shrugging their shoulder. They had no idea what I – what I – what I came from. They seen a guy who – who weighed nothing, like me, I was a – a skinny skeleton runt. And they tried to feed – first of all they cleaned me up

from head to toe, they had the – they had these traveling showers, what the army shower had carried around, they were wide open and they had water, and they had a little shower head and then they gave you soap and **DDT** powder to spray you. And then they gave me clean uniform, clean fatigue, clean pair of boots. First time I had underwear on in almost three years, an-and socks and pair of – pair of army boots. And tried to tell them, they knew nothing until they hit the first concentration camp. And even then they didn't understand. They're seeing this mass of bodies coming out of cattle cars, gotta – or coming out of – just walking over dead people. They couldn't understand how could anybody do this to anybody. And then I start to tell them. See, this is what happened in **Auschwitz**. This is what happened in the camps, in the Nazi death camps. And then, of course, they started, you know, being rowdy on the streets. Every time they seen a German on the bicycle they kicked him off, took his bicycle. They did all sorts of things just to – they want to beat up every German they've seen on the street. Of course the – the officers stopped them because he – you – you don't – America you don't – you don't do these things in **America**, you don't do these things in war. So they di – really didn't know, didn't have the slightest idea. And they didn't know how to treat us. What they would do? Every American, naïve, goodhearted American **Joe** would give you – this G.I. Joe would give you his k – K rations, his C rations, feed the heck out of you, give you a sh – **Hershey** bar, and then top it off with a cigarette, with a **Camel** cigarette. And in the meanwhile, they were killing you, because th – our bodies couldn't take the food. The mal-nutritious body just could not

take that type of treatment. Then the medics came, so what did they do? They came to these camps and they took their uniforms off and burned them, and put on whatever clothes they could get from **UNRRA**, from any organization, they start putting clothes on us. As good as they were, thousands and thousands of survivors died after ha – after the – after liberation.

Q: Just because they didn't know what to do for you.

A: They didn't know what to do with us, until the medical groups came when they finally decided that that's not the way to treat them. And then, of course, then they opened the displaced person camps, and which I was not part of ba – part of one, but – and I've seen displaced person camps, and let me tell you, I'm glad I wasn't a part of one, because displaced person camps were just like camps. They were not like Nazi –

End of Tape One, Side A

Beginning Tape One, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of a **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with **Michael Vogel**. This is tape number one, side **B**. And as the tape was ending you were explaining that because of malnourishment, that when you would – when the **G.I.s** in their – in their well-meaning way would give you food that was too rich for you and in too large quantities and that it – your bodies couldn't handle it. What was it like for you when they first gave you food?

A: Well, when I was picked up at the **United States** forces, and – and the field kitchen was operating, you – you – they had all field kitchens, I don't know if you know what

a field kitchen is, but it's an army unit kitchen. And they tried to f – they fed me too, and I had a problem. The first thing is, the food went right through me. And I was very fortunate, we had a medic on – with us, a medical unit with us, and they gave me some – some – some coal tablets, you know, charcoal tablets to stop – stop my – my – my – my – my –

Q: Diarrhea?

A: Diarrhea. And one of the doctors tried to s-say di – don't give him so much food, you know. Of course that's easy for – for him to say don't give me so much food, because he didn't stand in the chow line wi – like I did. I had a [indecipherable] on the chow line and I piled it up. Of course, it got better with me, I was one of the fortunate ones for this reason, because I was a **Kanada** worker, I was also in a better physical shape than the other prisoners were. So I had a little more. Although I had swollen eyes and swollen feet and swollen hands from malnutrition, but I was not as bad off as the other ones. So it took less time for me to digest – to – to – to – to be able to digest the food. And it took awhile, I would say it took a couple of weeks at least, but I was always hungry. I was always the first one in the chow line. And then I st – then, of course, put me to work in the kitchen, see, and I was working you n – in – in the mess kitchen. So that was even better. And we had a – we had a cook, this mess sergeant, I don't know if you know what a mess sergeant is. That's the guy who is in charge of the army ki-kitchen. He has cooks under him. His name was sad sack, they used to call him sad sack. And he would kind of take care of me and we used to – he

used to go into town and – and we used to – he-he was stationed in **Furth, Germany, f-u-r-t-h**, which is a s – a suburb of **Nuremberg**. But I found out of course, many years later, **Henry Kissinger** came from **Furth**. And he would go to this small town, go to the farm, steal a few chickens, steal some fresh milk and bring them back to the **G.I.s**, bring them back to the kitchen. And we had fresh eggs. Normally we used to have powder eggs, the army powder eggs. And he would take me with him in the Jeep and we would go organize. The reason he took me with him, because I spoke German. For a couple of cigarettes he would get anything he wanted in a farm – farm place. So for me it's – didn't take as long to get down to the system where I could eat.

Q: What other physical problems did you have once they – you were there with the army?

A: Well, at Auschwitz, my fingers and my toes were frozen. So, I had very poor circulation in my – in my hands, in my feet, my blood circulation. And when I was examined, which I can show you, when I was sworn into the **United States** Armed Forces, when I was examined by the medical group of – in the army, they did find a little – they don't put it down there as much, but they found some wrong. I had cracked fingers, my fingers opened up because of the froze – ba – frostbite and same thing with my toes. My – all my hair fell off from my legs, and that was because the blood circulation was poor. And my fingers, even to this date, when it s – gets real cold, tips of my fingers get white, even with gloves on. So that was one medical problem I had. Other than that, I didn't have too many problems, medical problems,

except being afraid of doctors and not going to one and probably if I would have gone to doctors and they would have possibly gave me some sort of medication to – to – to make me better, I probably would have been better. But I – I – I healed quite fast.

Q: Did the **G.I.s** there, did they ask you about what had happened to you? Were they –

A: I found some of them that got to be interested much later. See, when I was with – picked up by the army, last days of ni – o-of March 19 twe – 1945, first part of ma – April. April 6, 1945, President Roosevelt died, and I was already in with this unit. 74 – 774 tank battalion, and I remember over the army radio system came the news and everybody was so hushed up about it, so you know, President **Roosevelt** died. That was April 6th, 1945. And by then I was getting, you know, much better. So some of the boys after the war, May 8th, 1945, some of the boys – I found a couple of Jewish boys in the sa – in the unit. One would not eat un-kosher food, so he was given special – special food. And this guy wanted to know more, a little bit more about it, and since he found out that most of the Jews were murdered in **Europe**, so he started asking me the questions, so I would talk to him a little bit about it. Then, was a chaplain there also, and the chaplain would ask, but very few people really cared, because you know, here were these young boys, 19 – 20 – 21 years old boys away from those – 4,000 miles away from their home, they would sing [sings] I'll be home for Christmas, 1945, you know. Or singing that type of song and worrying about one thing only, letters from home. Mail call was the biggest thing in the world because you were late – letter from your mom, from your girlfriend, from your brothers, from your sisters and this was the

big thing. I was a small fry. Here I was, a Jewish boy who survived concentration camps they knew nothing about. And not only they knew nothing about, some of them could care less. To them a crap game was more interesting than my story, which I didn't tell, to certain groups. I tell you, this Jewish guy, a Sephardic Jew, is a – came from a Spanish type of family, and he was very much interested. He was a religious person and he wanted to know what ha – why did the Jew – why did they do it to Jews, he would ask me. I wish I could tell you why they do it – did it to Jews. But the Jews were the one earmarked for ba – to be – to be murdered. And he was the only one that I would conver – oh, and the teacher, sorry, **Feldman**, who came from **Boston**. He was another one, he wanted to know what happened, because his parents and his grandparents came from somewhere in eastern **Europe**. But other than that most of them get a furlough to go to **Paris** to have a good time with the girls. That was the main thing. Get a weekend pass, or go to town. We were stationed then still in Germany, but on the way from **Germany** towards **France**, because this unit, 770 – 774 tank battalion, these boys had enough points – and let me explain what the points were. Points were, if you served in service that such and such – long time, you were given points for each month. And if you were married and had family, that was extra points, so you could come home earlier. Now this bat-battalion, 774 tank battalion was ready to go home in September 1945. Now here they go from **Germany** with a convoy we going towards **France**. We ended up in the camp called **Camp Lucky Strike**. **Camp Lucky Strike**, the ne – Holocaust Museum has a photograph of me in the

Camp Lucky Strike, in a tent picture, I'm – I'm in a tent over there. Outside a tent, I'm sorry. And now we come to **LaHavre, France**. And here's an interesting story. I'm sure I told this to the Holocaust Museum, but I'm going to repeat it if I – if I did, so I'll repeat it. **LaHavre, France** was an embarkation, it was the – this ab – th – where the camp – embarkation camp, this is where you got on ships to go back home. Now here is my unit going on a ship called Lieutenant Colonel **James Barker**. That's the troop carrier. The na – that ship is named after this colonel. Now they don't know what to do with me. They wanted to put me on a ship, and I'm ready to go. I would be going on the ship with them to go to **United States**. Well, Captain **Yogerling(ph)**, who is an attorney from home says, we're gonna get him in trouble. What they wanted to do, the other captain wanted to do, take him – go into **Boston**, to – tha-that was our – the – they would stop in Boston, we would get discharged in **Boston**, get our – get our papers in **Boston**, and then leave for **Boston**. Get our papers and everything else. Discharge papers. Well, Captain **Yogerling(ph)** felt if I'm going to be put on a ship – the other captain said, let's take him on with us, put him on the ship and when we get to **Boston**, turning him in to the authorities, to immigration office, and tell them he's got an aunt here he – he can go to his aunt. Now, Captain **Yogerling(ph)**, who is an attorney from home, this is nuts, this is illegal entry to **United States** and he will be punished, he will – he will be sent – sent back to where – wherever they send him back. So Captain **Yogerling(ph)** decided un – took me on a **Jeep**, with my duffle bag – and the guys collected money. The – the – my group, company **A**, which I was with,

they collected dollars to give me, you know, to – so I have some money with me. They took me – Captain **Yogerling**(ph) drove me to Camp **Home Run**, which was – that was the name of the camp, which was an embarkation camp, but I'm going to tell you what the camp meant – may be an embarkation. Replacement troops. This is what the troops will be coming to replace the troops that went home. And I went to the Camp **Home Run**, the Captain **Yogerling**(ph) took me with him, took me to the camp commander. And the camp commander kind of welcomed me, they got – they stuck me with the name **Chesskey**(ph), you know, that was the – that was given to me already by this unit. Captain **Yogerling**(ph) said that's what they call him, **Chesskey**(ph). So I got into this camp, and what I be gi – what kind of job they give me? To be in charge of a officer's dry cleaning and laundry, manned by German prisoners, all right? First thing the captain of – of – of **Home Run**, Captain **Home Run** tells me who was in charge of us in that area. He says to me, **Chesskey**(ph), you're going to be working, you're going to be in charge of this laundry. Now, there are German prisoners there. We didn't come here to make concentration camps, we came here to bring democracy. And that's what it was. I was there, I was sworn into the **United States** Armed Forces at Camp **Home Run** with another fellow, whose name is also misspelled on the list you have, whose name was **Raymond Delafonte**(ph) **Quinones**(ph). He was a Spaniard, not Jewish. Now we sworn into **United States** Armed Forces. However, it was a wrong form, a regular army form. **United States** has two armies. Army of **United States** and regular army. Well, the colonel who swore us

in tipped [indecipherable] over it and put down Army of **United States**, sent it to the war department of **Washington**. Oh, I would say a couple of months later, came back disapproved. Attached new forms to re-sign. In the meanwhile, my aunt was found in **Detroit, Michigan**. There was a Jewish chaplain whose na – are also from **Chicago**, in Camp **Home Run**, whose name was **Michael Lipschitz(ph)**, and **Michael Lipschitz(ph)**, I to – showed him I f – my aunt was found too, by the Red Cross and by the army, what do I do? He went to the colonel, the company – the – the – th-the – the – the camp commander and he told him the story, so I didn't have to re-sign. **Raymond Dellafonta(ph) Quinones(ph)**, soon as he signed the new papers, was shipped to **South Pacific**. And this what would happen to me. Now waiting for my aunt papers to come, and the army papers came, the army gave me referral to go to **Czechoslovakia** go pick up some passports and – and – an-and birth certificates. But sha – never got a birth certificate. Passport I bought in – in Paris at the Czech embassy, and I came to this – and that's how I came to **United States**.

Q: Where did you – did you go to **Boston**? Did you –

A: No. When I came to **United States**? No, no, I didn't go with – on a ship.

Q: So you flew?

A: I flew on **TWA**. It was a – they had e-e-emergency flights, like for instance, let's say a **G.I.'s** mother is dying, or died, they would – they would fly him home. And I was on one of those planes and I was on the standby, and they had found a seat for me.

And I came to **United States** May 10th, 19 – May – May 10th, 1946. Took 17 hours to get here by **TWA** flight.

Q: Had you ever been in a plane before?

A: No.

Q: I didn't think so.

A: Never.

Q: What was that like?

A: Scary, because first of all it was very noisy. Awfully noisy. We stopped in – in – in **Iceland**. That's where we, I guess –

Q: Refueled.

A: – refueled, yeah. And I was scared t-to death. I came to **New York** on a Saturday morning. I went to s – went to a family that knew my family, that knew my aunt and also knew my parents. These were religious Jews, of course –

Q: How – how did you find them? How did you find out –

A: Oh they – I got my aunts – my aunt gave me the information. Oh, I got to – they were the ones who helped my aunt to – to – to get transportation for me. There – they were in – fur manufacturers in **New York City**, quite Orthodox religious. Very – in fact, very Orthodox religious. And I arrive on a Saturday, Saturday morning. So I went through the immigration office and you gotta pay head tax, six dollars head tax. And I had money sewn in a duffle bag, but I didn't want to [indecipherable] duffle bag [indecipherable] because they told me that you're only allowed to bring so much

money. I didn't have six dollars. So the immigration officer was a Jewish guy and he paid for me, and he says, I know. I saw y – I tried to call the **Birman**(ph) family, the people that I went to, they lived in **Brooklyn**. And he says, don't even try calling him. They won't answer this – the phone on a Saturday. So he put me on a subway to get to **Brooklyn**. And that's how I got to the people. I knocked on the door, I – and they were – had the Sabbath lunch. I come over there and then they direct me to the bathroom, and what do I do in the bathroom? I shave. One of the son comes in he says, you don't do this on Saturday. I come out, eat lunch, put a cigarette in my mouth. You can't smoke on Saturday. So the old man, Mr. **Birman**(ph) says to me now, you know, I am not God's policeman, but you can't s-s-smoke here on Shabbas – on Sabbath. But they were very, very lovely people. They helped me. In fact they – they took me to buy me the first suit. You know, they were the new manufact – in those days th-things were still on ration, so to speak, you know there was a – nothing was – you couldn't buy a shirt there – a shirt, or suits. They took me to a suit manufacturer and bought me a – bought me a suit, shirt, tie. Then they took the la – Mrs. **Birman**(ph) took me next day to **Macy's** and bought me a pair of shoes. And I took my uniform, of course home, my army uniform.

Q: So, I'm trying to imagine, here you are, you've just come over from **Europe**, from **Auschwitz**, a-agreed wi – with the period of time with these **G.I.s** and you get on your first plane in your life and you come to **New York**, one of the largest cities in the world, I think it was the largest at the time.

A: Mm.

Q: And – and all of a sudden you're on the subway. Had you been in a subway?

A: Never. Never.

Q: It just seems like –

A: Never been on a – never been on a bus, let alone a subway. I was in – in Jeeps, and I was in trucks, in **G.I.** trucks. That – that I drove. Motorcycles the **G.I.s** used to steal from the Germans. But then, never on a subway.

Q: I know it's 50 years a –

A: All I had on me – all I had with me was my uniform, my duffle bag and my field bag. Do you know what a field bag is like? A carry on bag to **[indecipherable]** you would call it today.

Q: I know it's 50 years ago, but do you remember anything of that day and what it was like to see **New York**, and –

A: I'll tell you something, I was gazing up in the sky. I never forget when the guy put me on the subways tres – train, and he told me what station to get off, you know, watch for the station. And I asked people next to me, could you help me with the station? And that's how I got off. And then I got to **Brooklyn**, now I gotta walk up the steps from the k – from the – from the subway to the street. Now what's – that's not too hard because it was all written, you know, there's a – the streets were marked. And that wasn't too – too hard, but what was the hardest part, Saturday evening after Sabbath, the **Birman**(ph) boys and their wives, they were older than I, took me for a

ride to **Manhattan** to buy a newspaper. They wanted to go to **Manhattan**, to show me **Manhattan**. I never seen anything like it. I've never seen so many tall buildings. My li – my – was scratching my – stretching my neck like a giraffe, you know, that's all I was looking at. And next day, Sunday, they had a summer home in **New Jersey** on the le – on the lake, so they took me there. So that was my introduction to **United States**.

Q: How long did you stay with them?

A: A little – little over a week. In fact, they were talking maybe I can work for them in the – in the fur factory as a runner, as a you know, th – gopher, you know. But my aunt insisted I, after all, I'm her brother's son. So I went to **Detroit** by – by train, by train.

Q: Now, you'd been on trains, obviously.

A: On trains, yes. On trains in **France**, I mean, in the army. Yeah, I been in trains in **Slovakia** too.

Q: Mm-hm. So you took a train to see her, she met you at the train station.

A: She met me at a train station, yes.

Q: Now, you'd never met her, obviously?

A: Oh, I met my aunt in –

Q: Oh, that's right, before '39, yeah.

A: Before '39, yes, I met my aunt and my uncle. She was the only one that survived because she is the wa – only one that ran away. In fact, we have a letter here at home, a number of letters from her and to her, what we used to write, my parents and kid – all the kids used to add a line or two. My aunt asked to – my mother asked my aunt to

take – take me with them when they left for ya – for the **States**. My father wouldn't let us – la – la – wouldn't even hear of it. He felt it's going to go over, nothing is gonna happen to us.

Q: What was it like to reunite this – she was now your only relative?

A: Only relative, yes, and her – and her son. She had a little baby boy three years old.

Q: What was that like? Was that just –

A: Well, you know, I wish I could explain that feeling. I – of course it was emotional to her, you know, but me, it's a – you know, I been by myself for so many years, you know, this is – so I came to her ap – she had an apartment, she gave me a little small room with a **Murphy** bed in it, and I really don't know ho-how to explain that feeling, it was – it was kind of strange feeling, here I am from the camps, from the army, into civilization. Didn't know how to cope with it. I had a hard time coping with it.

Q: H-How would that manifest itself? What – what did you – you had a hard time coping, how would that play itself out?

A: Well, as soon as I got a job I kind of readjusted because I got busy with – with my work. Now I'm going to tell you how – interesting how I got the job. Foreign speaking salesman wanted, that's how I got the job. Mr. **Zolcar**(ph), the boss was in th – five foot man. He had two sons working for him in the store and a son-in-law, and me, plus a few other people and the manager of the store, whose name was **Joe Zwartney**(ph). And when I got there the old man looks at me and speaks with a Yiddish accent, he said, are you a salesman? I told him I just came to **America** a few days ago. And asked

me what languages you speak? I tell him. He said, go in the shipping room – the stock room, see **Joe Zwartney**(ph). **Zwartney**(ph) spoke a number of languages, American born Pole, Polish guy. He spoke Yiddish, he spoke Polish, he spoke Hungarian, he had all the languages, because that – that was a store. And the old man didn't tell me I'm going to pay you six dollars, or seven dollars or whatever, he didn't tell me how much he's going to pay me. This is Monday morning, Saturday is payday and everybody got paid in a small envelope, cash. He gave me 56 dollars, my first week's pay. That's a lot of money in 1946. So I stayed with him for almost six years and I learned the business, then I became a shoe buyer, that's how I knew the **New England** shoe companies. And I stayed with him until six years, then I went to work for another company, and I ended up with the company I mentioned called **Shopper's Fair**.

Q: How long were you in **Detroit** before you met your wife?

A: A little – my wife got there in March 1947.

Q: Oh, I see. So you were there for –

A: I was there from May 10th, 1946 until March 1947 before I met her.

Q: Tell me about what life was like for you in that period. Other than work, what would you do? What did you do with yourself?

A: Well, I played soccer. I went to the Jewish Community Center. I met with people like myself, other survivors. We became – we were called the new Americans. We had meetings. We had people that would do music, you know, all sorts of music and we had people that were interested in our life stories. There was a guy who owned a

supermarket chain, a Jewish person who was a – quite a philanthropist. He hired a number of us – not me, but he hired a number of the boys to work on supermarkets. Some of them he made managers i-in there – in – in there – in s -- in some time, as – as soon as they learned the tricks of the trade, so to speak. So we – we kind of kept to ourselves, because – you know what they used to calls us? Greeners. Greeners mean green people.

Q: New.

A: New people, and greenhorns. They call us greenhorns. In Yiddish **griners**(ph). And that's how we kept going. Soccer was really helpful to me. It got all the anxiety out of you, the nervousness out of you. You kicked the ball you were kicking the Germans, you know, an-and that type of thing. So – and of course I met some good people in soccer too, some of the old time Germans who came here before us. One was the Metropolitan Life Insurance salesman, he's on the picture with – on th – on the soccer team with us, he was our manager. And every person who played for him bought his – bought the policies, and that was his business.

Q: Did you, when you were wi – together with these other survivors that you were socializing with and playing soccer with, did you talk about your experiences much with th –

A: Among ourselves, yes. Among ourselves we used to. You know, we didn't believe ourselves that we still were free yet, you know, we were still, you remember what happened there, you remember what happened here. And remember when you worked

over there and you did over there, and then – and that type of – oh, **Auschwitz** always came up. See, because we were one of the first ones in this country, and some of us were old time survivors. You had some Polish Jewish boys there who not only suffered in **Auschwitz**, but suffered before **Auschwitz**. They suffered in **Warsaw** ghetto and **Bialystok** ghetto, **Lódz** ghetto. So these guys, from '41 on had a – a hell of a tough time with their – in their lives, lost all – everybody – I don't remember anyone of these boys who played on the soccer team that came with a sibling or a parent. Lone survivors. Yeah, one of them did. One had a brother, yeah. And he is on the – they're both on the team with us.

Q: Did you find that you were any more or less comfortable in their company than with other –

A: No, because I soon became friendly with American – American boys. I met two brothers, two Jewish boys, you know, **Fleischer**(ph) boys. Their name is – last name is **Fleischer**(ph), **Matt** and **Ben Fleischer**(ph). And both of them were in armed servi – one was in the army, one was in the navy during World War II, and we became quite friendly. And I-I st – I started to break away from that group and started to find more American friends. Soon my wife and I – of course we be – we did belong to the newcomer club, that – that we did, that we joined. It was a – it was a club that you joined and then it was all survivors. Or survivors married non-survivors. You know, like one girl married an American, the other – the other boy married an American girl, you know, that was – that ca – that type of a mixture. I-I-In the 40's, you know, the

shidduch – the – the – the – the matchmakers was – was – was – the still – still in action among the Jewish crowds, among the Jewish parents. You know, they would ask who are you, what are you, how old are you? Boy, have I got a daughter for you. You know, that type of story, see? So with me, it didn't work that way. I was going with another girl before I met **Agnes**. I shouldn't say it so loud. And all this girl wanted to do was get married. And anything and anything – anything goes, but she wants to get married. And my aunt was in love with the girl. She thought she was the greatest thing for me. But I found out soon that she was not for me, and when I met **Agnes**, see. So –

Q: Tell me about meeting your wife.

A: It's a very interesting meeting, actually. As I told you, there was a school at the Jewish Community Center what was teaching newcomers English. But we also had meetings there with the – with the soccer team, the Jewish soccer team, these were called the **Maccabees**. And I would go to t – Thursday was our meetings and Thursday was their school. So every time you went to the meeting, after the meeting I would walk into the class – I knew the teacher, to look to see if there are new girls in the class. Well, here I see this young, good looking lady, **Agnes**, with another man who came with her, also a survivor and he walked her, it was – it was a walking distance from the me – it wasn't that far, maybe a mile walk. And I started walking with them. And being an old American already, almost a year, I took them to **Saunder's**. **Saunder's** was a ice cream and – and confectionary place where you could buy cakes,

ice cream. Being a hotshot I knew what to buy, ap-apple pie and ice cream, you know, and coffee. And then I walked them home, and I got – kind of pushed this guy aside, and before you knew it, we started dating. We dated from I would say end of March '47, and then the following year, February, we got married. February 22nd. And the wedding was in a house, **Agnes's** aunt's and uncle's house. Wer – we got married by the same rabbi who married **Agnes's** parents in **Hungary**. Name was **[indecipherable]** and he married us. Gypsy music playing, because these were Hungarian Jews, Gypsy music they brought, playing and – you know. And, a nice – nice affair, la – home – home – home in the house. **Hippa**(ph) and th – you know, the canopy. And one of my friends was my best man, an American boy who became – was my best friend. So that's how we met and we got married.

Q: I want to slightly move your mike stand to just –

A: Li – blocking you?

Q: No, no, it's just – it turns out that it's better for you **[indecipherable]** hear, because if you're looking at me, it's closer to the mark. You've told me that living with your aunt, that she was not interested in talking about what had happened –

A: No.

Q: – that she was very much, you know –

A: Well, she was afraid of it. She was actually afraid of it, she didn't want to talk about it. My aunt had some psychological problems, I think. We found out much later she had **Alzheimer's**. But she never wanted to talk about it. She had a only child. After 18

years of being married, the kid was born. They didn't want to have any children in sh – in **Austria**, so they came here and it took them a long time before they had the child. And now is no – he is now in his 50's. He was – he was three years old in 1946, so in his 50's. What is – what is he? How old is he?

Q: He would be 50 fi – 55.

A: Yeah.

Q: Is he – is that your only relative?

A: That's all, yes, mm-hm, my first cousin. Very prominent attorney in **Cincinnati**, one of the largest law firms, and not only in **Cincinnati** but all over the wor – all over the – they have some in **Europe**, in – in **Asia** they got law offices. And he is a – he was the first Jewish boy hired by this law firm. It was **Taft**, with one of the **Taft** family, and **Hollister** and as – and it's a huge, huge law firm. And he's now a partner there for last, I would say 15 – 20 years. The first Jew to become a partner of a – of a very kind of Christians – for Christian organization.

Q: Hold on one sec, I have a feeling –

End of Tape One, Side B

Beginning Tape Two, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of a **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with **Michael Vogel**. This is tape number two, side **A**. Are you close with your cousin?

A: Very close, yes, yes. We are – I'm close with his son, they also have one child, same – he follows the same pattern as his parents did, one son, one boy. And he's now just graduated one of the big colleges in the east, and he spent some time in **England**. He's back home now, taking some time out to go to grad school. And I'm quite close with him. He does look like my father and his son does also look like my father. And – red hair like my father had, fire red hair and a very bright, bright, bright guy. My children love him, you know. He comes – Thanksgiving is never without him. In fact, he's very upset with me, I was supposed to be there last weekend. He wants us over there so we'll – we'll see if – if I can get away from soccer this weekend, we'll go over there.

Q: Tell me about your anger, either contemporary or previous. I mean, over the past 50 odd years since the war ended, have you been angry and – and where does your – where do you direct that?

A: Well, I don't know if you can call it anger. I call it resentment.

Q: Okay.

A: Resenting that about myself, that I don't have anyone – anyone from my immediate family in the – close to me. I had a brother who was a strong, feisty young man, young boy. He was murdered weeks after he wa – was taken away by the Nazis. I had a

sister, you've seen her picture, pretty strong girl, another one who **[indecipherable]**.

My father, a strong cattle and horse dealer, who fell to the Nazis like – like this. So my anger is, why me and why not them? At least, why not me with them? This is wa – this is what it is. There are times I feel so lonely about it, so lonesome, yet I am so close with my children. This is all I have, my children, my grandchildren. But I'm missing the most important thing in my life. If you can call it anger, that's anger. But I resent, I f – I say why it had to happen to me?

Q: Do you – is it – is your anger at God? Is it –

A: God? I have a problem with God. I have an argument with God. Of course, he doesn't answer me. I never lost the identity where I came from. Never lost that I was born to a Jewish family. I was born to a God fearing Jewish family in easter – in **Europe**, in ch – in **Slovakia**. In fact, I was quite religious, for a number of years. When I got to **Auschwitz** I still had belief in religion, a belief in God, but I soon lost that. If God wanted to punish us Jews, if we did something that terribly wrong, punish us for a day, a week or three da – whatever. But let us suffer from 1939 in **Slovakia**, in **Poland**, in **Ukraine**, in all the other European countries, from 1939 til 1945, let us being systematically murdered, thrown into the ovens. And me, working the ga – working that railroad tracks, and seeing that with my own eyes, knowing what these mass of thousands upon thousands of people were being herded like sheep, not knowing where they're going, I have an anger with God. I have a problem with God. If it wouldn't be for **Agnes**, I probably would never stepped in a temple, my foot in a

temple. She says, we have children, we have to do something. We have to let them – let them do, and then when they get older let them – let them lead their own way, but teach – show them the way first. Well, we did that. Our son was Bar Mitzvah, our little – our young – oldest daughter was Bat Mitzvahed, the other two weren't. But I still when I go to the temple I feel like – like a hypocrite. Where was God for three years, letting this happen, the systematic destruction of every Jew in **Europe**? That's my anger with God. You know, in Yiddish there – I – I – there's a saying, **Ehob tsores wich hemas borach** (ph). I've got troubles with God, problems with God. Where were you – wh-when – where were you? There's some time I'm speak to a group of Christian churches, some – some guy came up to me after the questions and he's – he – he may [**indecipherable**] while – while I was answering the question he came up to the – to the microphone and he says, but you Jews were the chosen people. So I, being a sarcastic with a sick sense of humor, well why didn't God choose somebody else for this? Why were we chosen to be burned and gassed? So th-th-this is my anger. I don't have an ounce of hate in me. Anger is not hate, because if you hate, you die inside. I'm angry because this happened, and I'm angry because I'm the only one from my immediate family. Wouldn't that be wonderful if my brother would – could see his nieces and nephews being a success?

Q: Were you ever suicidal?

A: Pardon?

Q: Were you ever suicidal?

A: Suicidal? No. No. In **Auschwitz**, yes, I thought about it, but outside of **Auschwitz**, never. When I married and started to see my children, I said here is my life. This is what I want to live for. In **Auschwitz** I was this close from running to the fence, to the electric fence.

Q: A lot of people did that.

A: I had typhus. 1943, I had typhus in **Auschwitz**, and I thought for sure that's the end of me. When you have typhoid fever in **Auschwitz**, your equilibrium, you lose that, you lose hearing, totally. You don't hear. And if it wouldn't be for two guys that saved my life in **Kanada** commando where I was working – under my ar – under my arms they would drag me through the gates. When I got to **Kanada** commando, in a pile of clothes they would cover me up and bring me some water, hot water to drink, with – with lemon if they could find it among the packages that the Jews brought with them. And that's how they – that's how they helped me come out of it. If they would left me in the barracks, I would have been in the ovens. And that's when I wanted to walk to the wires, and they stopped me. Unfortunately both of them died already. One died in **New York** and one died in **Slovakia**.

Q: You say you don't have an ounce of hate in you. Who do you – outside of having a problem with God that you've talked about, ha-have you struggled with who to blame for what happened?

A: The world. The world looked the other way. You know, we never believed that anyone knew about us. We never believed in **Auschwitz** that anybody knew what was

going on because if somebody would believe, somebody would do something. Somebody would stop. When I got out of **Auschwitz**, it took many years to find out wh-who knew and who didn't know. **United States** knew in 1942 that there were Jews being murdered in th – in th – in – in the camps. They didn't have all the details, but they knew. How did I find out? Through documentaries, through **Shoah**. **Jan Karski**, professor at – in **Washington, Georgetown University**. He was a Polish courier, he came to this country, came to **England**, came to **Switzerland**. He was talking to these people, to – to the presidents, the **Churchill** and no one wanted to do – they knew, they believed, but didn't do anything about it. In my stay at **Auschwitz**, on two occasion the international Red Cross came. Once in **Auschwitz** one, and then in **Birkenau** the following year. Not one time did the Nazis let them into the barracks. We were all lined up in a roll call place, standing sc – clean, with clean uniforms. They cleaned up the camp. You know what the cleaned up camp meant? They took all the prisoners who were looking like skeletons, or half skeletons, got them away from there, right in the ovens. Showered us, so you can call the showers. Gave us clean stripes. And they would bring forward – they would talk to – they would put the best looking guys forward, standing forward, and they would let them talk to somebody. How are you treated? Oh fine, everything is great. Course, if you didn't say that **[indecipherable]** Red Cross leaves and you know what's going to happen to you. The camp was swept clean there a – the – the – the – this – the grounds. That's how it was. So who do you blame? You blame the world, knowing and not listening.

Q: You know it's – to me it's interesting, because I didn't experience what you experienced, that everyone I've spoken to, and everyone I've – whose memoirs I've read or anything, directs their anger there, at the peep – at the rest of the world who s – who sat back and – and didn't do anything, rather than at the people who did do things, meaning at the people at the –

A: Well, let me put you to the people who did their things, okay? You see, I blame the world for not stopping the people who did it to us. That's – that's the first ones to blame. Now, let's go to the people that did it to us. Who did it to us? Not just the German Nazi SS, but the Slovakian Nazi guards, the Croatian Nazi guards, the Romanian Nazi guards, the Hungarian Nazi guards. These were all part of it. You know, I had at **Auschwitz** a number of guar – Croatian guards who had SS uniforms on, who were our guards. And these were the animals, these were the killers. They were bigger killers in – in a way sometimes than the Nazi Germans killers. I have testified since 1982. '82 - '90 - '91 - '92 - '93, against Nazis, former Nazi aw – guards and officers at **Auschwitz**. Out of those, three of them were not Germans. One was a Latvian, the one who elected to be deported. The other one, in 1990 I testified in **Honolulu** was a Yugoslavian. One in September I gave deposition on, two year – three – two years ago, a Slovak, from my country, and the other guy was a German.

Q: So clearly it was not only the Germans, I mean this is –

A: Well, my own town, who picked me up, who picked up my family? Our owe – our barber. Our family barber, his name was **Martinchek**(ph). This the guy who picked us up.

Q: Let me ask you a question. I'm embarrassed to say I can't remember th-the name of the author, but you'll know immediately the book I'm talking about, the book that has been such a controversy in the past few years, the **Harvard** professor –

A: Yeah, "**Hitler's Willing Executioners.**"

Q: What did you think of that?

A: I think it's one of the best piece of work ever done. Unfortunately it's written in – in such a high college terms, cause this guy is an educator, he's – he did his thesis on that, that it's – it – you have to read it twice to understand it, for the average person. But this man did something that was gutsy, that was plain, plain gutsy. He finally said something that we as survivors hoped somebody would say. It was the average German, the average person. It was not the hierarchy of the Nazis who did this, it was every German on the street that did this. This was **Hitler's** willing executioner. And you couldn't get a better title in that in a book. It's th-the – the writer who wrote it, his name is **Goldhagen**. I've got the book, by the way.

Q: But would you add to that th-the Slovak on the street, the Croatian on the street, the –

A: I would add every member of the Slovakian community on the street for the simple reason, why did the Slovak did it here? The Nazis told them, get rid of the Jews, you

know what's gonna happen? You're going to get their businesses, you're going to get their homes, you're going to get their monies. Now they got greed and – and anti-Semitism they had to begin with. They need – they didn't need – they didn't need much pushing and shoving. The – wh-who put me in the cattle cars? Wasn't the Nazis. I never seen a Nazi put me in the cattle car. Was – was the Slovak guards who, with his wife – with his rifle butts and – and bayonets that start sticking into you, shoving you into the cattle cars. Goodbye Jews. These were their famous words, they were the – they would all say goodbye Jews, good riddance. The guy who took my father's business became a Nazi. This – this [indecipherable] **Martinchek**(ph) who was a barber, he took another guy's name, **Benow**(ph), **Desdair**(ph) **Benow's**(ph) business, he – he worked for him before, now he's got his business. He put him in the oven – in-into the – into the cattle cars. So these were there. **Neilosh**(ph) in **Hungary**, the same type of Nazis, and **Romania** had them. **Yugoslavia** had all the Croats. **Franjo Trudman**, th-the president of **Croatia** i-is a big shot. He was invited to come to the opening of the Holocaust Museum, I almost died, I almost – almost – pardon the expression, threw up when I've seen him. Here comes a Croatian, I don't care how young he is, but his father was a Nazi and so is he and they're bringing him to the opening of the Holocaust Museum in **Washington**. He had no business there. He certainly was not a Righteous Gentile. These were the – these were the – these were the **Hitler's** willing executioner, not only in **Germany**, but in **Poland**, in **Ukraine**, in **Slovakia**. Every eur – Nazi European country wa-wa – wa – these people collaborated

with the Nazis. **Slovakia** became a fascist country. We had a president, who was he?

Josef Tiso, a Catholic priest – a priest. Very close to my hometown, that's where he came from. Anti-Semite. Jews the Christ killers.

Q: But you say you don't hate?

A: No. No. In spite of all that, I don't hate. But what I want – what I say is this, when the trial is begun, and I'm not talking about the trials one by one, I'm talking – the biggest farce were the **Nuremberg** trials. They brought a few of these bigwigs into the trial, people – few of them, **nicht schuldig**, not guilty, hm? Well, my dear friend, where was the rest of the world, of the Nazi world, that wasn't tried? What happened to the Nazi guards, to the Nazi officers who ran these over a hundred concentration camps and death camps? Where are they? Living the life of **Riley**, if they're still alive today, which most – a lot of them are. What happened to them? Absolutely nothing. In the Soviet prison they were mistreated, were beaten, sometimes they were starved, whatever, big deal. By the Americans? A slap on the wrist, two months in prison, released, go back home. Nothing happened to them. They were never on trial. These were the killers, these were – they should have been on trial. The-These few people they had lined up the **Nuremberg** trials, the few hotshots, the few Nazi leaders, that's nothing. They did nothing. **United States** should be ashamed for even performing that trial over there. That was an – absolutely a farce, nothing to it. The words of my captain, **Chesskey**(ph), we didn't come here to make a concentration camp, we came here to bring democracy. Beautiful, bring democracy. But punish the animals who

were killing my father and my mother and my sister and my brother. Nothing was punished, nothing was done.

Q: Do you think that if all of the guards and all of the – the people who were in charge at **Auschwitz**, the people that killed your family, if they were all executed, would you feel better?

A: Not – they don't have to execute them. Don't have to execute them. Bring them on trial, and bring the survivors to be witnesses. Bring the survivors to force these guys to tell their life stories, what they did. You know, I testified against a guy named ha – **Hanscun(ph) – Heinrich Hans Kunneman(ph)** in **Germany**, in **Dussberg, Germany** in '91 - '92 and '93, three times. Actually five times, because two times here, also, you know, at the – at the German – at the German consulates in **Chicago** and **Detroit**. Here is a man who was in charge of – of the counter-commando, one of the counter-commando pris – Nazis, in front of my eyes murdered a little boy about six years old. How did he murder him? We were unloading a transport of Jews coming into **Auschwitz**. This little boy is sitting inside a cattle car crying. **Hans Kunneman(ph)** ha – his name is **Heinrich, Hans Kunneman(ph)** tells me, go pick up that Jew. Pick up the little boy, set him down, kid is still crying. **Kunneman(ph)** walks by the kid because he starts to stop him from crying. With his boot he kicks the kid in the head and kills him right there on the spot. Little, little shaver, little kid. Ta – tells me to pick up the sack of Jewish shit and – and bring him to the rest of the people. There I am carrying the limp body of his little boy. **Hans Kunneman(ph)** was then already

training to be an opera singer, okay? As he walks away from killing the je – little Jewish boy, he is whistling an operatic tune. Singing and whistling an operatic tune like nothing happened. 90 – in 1990 I got a call from **Germany** from a prosecutor. I've got your name from such and such person, would you be willing to give us a testimony against – against a former Nazi. Didn't tell me who. Course we meet in **Chicago** at the ger – German consulate – the German consulate on **Michigan Avenue**, so when? It's like day after Thanksgiving. So I go over there for **Chicago**, they bought me a flight ticket or whatever, I'm in a hotel and I get there. I testify all day, from nine o'clock in the morning to break for lunch, til six o'clock in the evening. He opens up a book of photographs then, not today, then photographs with the uniforms and everything on. Identify this man on three different photographs, plus three other Nazis who also worked in the same position. Then I was taken to **Germany** following summer with my wife. Identified them over there just as easy. This a – this was a tribunal. Eight judge tribunal, not a – not a – a – a jury trial. I had a interpreter, and the – and the German attorney sitting next to me. There was **Kunneman(ph)** sitting, he had a court appointed doctor with him, he claimed to be very sick, and these eight judges. And I'm testifying and testifying. And I was asked, the third time I testified, what would you like that should happen, you know, cause otherwi – I knew I testi – because there was other people testifying. But they brought 17 guys to testify against him. 17 former prisoners. Not one of us meet each other – met each other. You came on the Saturday, stayed for three days and then you went to court, then you left, then the other guys

came on a Saturday. One guy at a time. So I was asked by one of the judges, how would I – what would – what would I feel that should happen here? After all, with your testimony the man should be sentenced. Well, I said, I really don't care if you sentence him. I just want one thing from you people. If this man will be willing to do what I'm doing, I speak about my experiences as a Holocaust survivor. I go to colleges, universities, high schools, civic, religious organizations. Let him come with me. Let him tell his – his story about what he did in **Auschwitz** for the 18 months that I knew him on the ramps. For the 18 months that he would direct people, select people to the gas chambers or to slave labor. Let him tell what he did and I'll tell mine – my story. The two of us together. That would be enough of a sentence for me. And that's the kind of sentence I was hoping the masses of the Nazis would get. The masses, in every German community. They should be taken to court with so – Holocaust survivors to be there and talk about it and tell them and force them to – to admit that not I followed orders like – like I was told, to do – what to do, I only – even **Eichmann** in 1961, what he said in – in – in – in **Israel**? I followed orders. Well, tell me why did you followed orders? You tell this to your community, in front of a survivor who is mentally and physically able to testify. That is what I am saying them – should happen to the masses. Not once of all these times I testified did I walk out of the courtrooms with a lighter heart, just satisfied that something was done, because there wasn't. One damn Nazi in **Honolulu** called me a liar. He was being tried, he called me a liar. He admitted being on the railroad tracks. He admitted walking and

marching prisoners from and to slave labor. And that's what I told, he was a killer and he calls me a liar. And what happened to him? He was deported to **Germany**. Big deal. I was told that there will be a trial again in **Germany**, you will be called. This was seven years ago.

Q: I was just thinking of – I don't mean to make a na – a direct analogy but I know that there are like drunken drivers who have killed people, who go talk to children in schools and say, you know, this is where this led me, this is what I did. Learn from me. Do you think that if – if these guards and officers and – were to do what you're talking about, that it would have much of an impact on –

A: On the civilization, or on me?

Q: On civilization.

A: Yes, it would have much impact because you see, Holocaust became fashionable the last number of years. It wasn't fashionable as soon as we got out of there. Took – you know, it took **Meryl Streep**, with the worst piece of drecky work, worst piece of crappy film, called, "**The Holocaust**," or whatever y-you – yeah, it's called – was called "**The Holocaust**." It made her a star. It was the worst piece of junk that was ever produced in ho – it's **Hollywood**, you know, it's a – it's a – it's a plastic. But what was good about it? That was – they had two, two things. One, the worst film. Second, it had the best thing. It got the attention of the pub – the general public. Well, this is what the general public now wants today. Holocaust is a very fashionable thing, not only because of **Spielberg**, because of Shoah, and any – any piece of –

documentary on Holocaust, true or not true – I-I shouldn't say not true, accurate or almost inaccurate, it has some affect on people. Now, **Anne Frank** has an affect on people. These guys would have a big affect if they would go to colleges and universities, schools and civic and religious organizations. Oh yeah, lot of s – lot of our population wouldn't want to hear that. They won't listen to it. Not because they don't want to hear, but because they don't think it's – that should be done. I-In **Germany** nobody wanted to do it. Listen, his book, hi – “**Hitler's Willing Executioners**” was the biggest seller in **Germany**. He drew more crowd in **Germany** when he was lecturing there, and there was boycotts there. Yet, this is what the people should hear. You know, pretty soon there won't be any survivors left. We're getting to be old people. Now, I'm not – I'm – I consider myself still one of the younger guys, but at the same time, every day you got less and less – there's less and less of us around. **A-A-Auschwitz** will only be a legend. Now who's gonna – other than the Holocaust Museum which I'm doing today, which I did in 1989 for the Holocaust Museum, who is going to be here? Just this. There won't be a living person to be able to say things like I say, or like other survivors who are capable of talking. So these guys should go out there and do that. And let me tell you, they would have a great audience. Very – there are so many people that are hungry to know why it happened, because ho – there are not that many of us that go to schools and colleges and universities. You know, some of us are getting so old that we – we – we fantasize. You know, some people fantasize and I get very upset with it, you know. If they don't

remember what happened to them, th-the-they say something different. And that's

what gets me very upset. And that even gets me u – gets me upset with sp –

Spielberg's interviews. I will not be interviewed by **Spielberg**, no way, no how. But let's leave that alone.

Q: Well, no, no, not really, because one of the things I was eventually going to ask you is your critique of the books and the movies and the things that have come about in the past, really, mostly the past decade.

A: Yeah, til 10 years. I mean, the bi – it wasn't – well, it became fashion – the Holocaust became fashionable. I call it the fashionable time for the Holocaust.

Q: So – so it's – I don't think it's not germane to this interview to your perspective as one who was there, about how you feel about how it's been documented, accurately, inaccurately, inappropriately, appropriately. In the – in the various ways that people have tried to do. So I – that was actually something I was going to ask you about.

A: Well, anything done in **Hollywood**, to me, got me upset, including **Simon**

Wiesenthal's story, when he was – did some – **Simon Wiesenthal** did some stuff.

And I'm – I'm very disturbed with **Simon Wiesenthal's** presentation of the – of the television movies. It didn't happen like that, number one and then it's a fantasizing there a little bit. I've seen these rubber blown up bodies being taken in **Mauthausen** concen – **Mauthausen** concentration camp, which is wrong, totally wrong, you don't do these things. You want to do something? Make a documentary. Documentary which – which you know how to do. The best ever film on Holocaust was "**The Shoah.**" The

eight and a half hour program by **Lanzmann**, the Frenchman who did it. This was a piece of work that is the best. Other than that, I haven't seen very li – I've seen very little that I would recommend. Oh yeah, the people will watch it – which I'm glad they're watching, because it [indecipherable] gets the attention. But a **Spielberg** movie? When I first found out that **Steven Spielberg** is going to make the **Schindler** stor – “**Schindler's List**,” at first I was wondering. I says, here is a guy who is going to make a Holocaust movie. He is a man who made “**E.T.**,” what is he going to do with the Holocaust? You know, he's got **Indiana Jones** and “**E.T.**” Well, when the – “**Schindler's List**” came to town, here to **Indianapolis**, I was invited as a Holocaust survivor to be there for special presentations, and I went. Here comes the elite Jewish community of **Indianapolis**, some of the elite guys, some of the big givers, what do you call, they come there. Everyone's got a popcorn in their – bag in their hand, puts their feet on – on – on the other seat and stretch themselves, I hope there's a – there is a nice popcorn movie tos – to watch. So here I am listening, watching, and watching because [indecipherable] what – what this guy could do, what he did with it. And I walked out of there really almost satisfied that he did a good job. If he'd shown any more atrocities than he showed in the film, I don't think people could have sit through it. Some of it was a little schmaltzy. I was a little bit – you know, I watched it so closely. When **Oskar Schindler** said at the end, I should have done more, I should have done this, I should have that, I – I'd – I didn't do enough, I should have saved more people, those words, well that was a little schmaltzy to me, you know. Th-That –

that – that they could have left out. Yes, **Oskar Schindler** did help. There's 5,000 survivors of that group that are alive today because of him. You know, 5,000 members of the families that came la – after. So that – that's – it was fairly – done fairly decent. But the other ones, I don't remember of any other one, other than **Sobibor**, "**Escape From Sobibor**," I'm sorry, that was done because they found people that survived **Sobibor** and these were the people that helped, same as **Oskar Schindler** got the – got the book from a – from a – from the luggage store in – in **L.A.** and here's these guys from th – **Long Island, New York** who were **Sobibor** survivors, they helped with the movie. Well, that was almost – pretty accurate. But other than that, there is nothing. Absolutely nothing. **Kirk Douglas** was in the movie one time, and I – I tell you something, I – I was going to go over there and kick the hell out of him for that movie. But if – but you di – what it is, the American public. They eat it up. They listen to it, they want to know. See, I'd – I – I become like a – like – like a **Mattel** toy, somebody wind you up and you keep going. Because all of a sudden they said, oh you – Holocaust? Call **Mike Vogel**. All right, so th – **Mike Vogel**, ah – wind you up, send you to the school. You know, that type of stuff. I've got enough here to write a book just – just for the letters I'd received from universities, colleges, civic and religious organizations, just – just the letters that they talk about my – my being there.

Q: Let me ask you a question. Because you've done so much public speaking and – and you've told your story so often, in – since that time when your daughter, in eighth grade –

A: Yeah.

Q: – when you went to her class – I don't know how to ask this question properly, and
I mean no disrespect –

A: Okay.

End of Tape Two, Side A

Beginning Tape Two, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of a **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with **Michael Vogel**. This is tape number two, side **B**, and I was asking Mr. Vogel whether through repetition of telling your story in all the many times that you've told it now, whether it has lost for you any – any connection to your emotions, or –

A: It's a very good question. You know, although the story is the same, it's not the same. Like some – some – on many occasions, many places, comes out – you know, starts out a little different. It depends. Lot of time I'm looking at the audience. I – the stories – I – I can't change the stories, I can't exchange my style of it, I – but I tell it, but sometime it's much stronger, or sometime it's a little weaker, depending on the audience. But it's not – I don't feel it repetitious. I tell it from day one, before, during and after the Holocaust. And – an-and it's not a routine. It always like a new story, if you know what I'm saying. And when it becomes even more interesting, it depends on the audience, their questions. When their questions come, and when you talk to graduate students, when you talk to clergy, when you talk to people that are really knowledgeable, that – that some are even scholars, a-and book writers, then it becomes

even more powerful. You gotta remember, when I'm speaking to high school students, I don't get the same questions from high school kids that I get from a graduate student. So it becomes more powerful. And a lot of times it's surprising, some of these private schools, like high schools and even middle schools, ask a better question than some of the college students.

Q: That's what I was going to ask you, whether there's exceptions that rule.

A: Exception to that rule, yes.

Q: Do you have any – I realize you've done this many times, but is there anything that jumps out at you, an anecdote of – you know, out of the mouths of babes, some insightful question that –

A: I wish I could.

Q: Here I am, I-I've gotten through a – a tiny bit of the questions that I – that –

A: You got more to go?

Q: This is terrible. I mean terrible only that I'm taking so much of your time. There were a couple more. This is – I – I apologize for –

A: Yeah, right, right.

Q: – for not being better organized with this, but there are a few more questions that they wanted me to ask you that still pertain to the video interview that there were a couple of holes in.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: They wanted me to ask you about the trans part from **Auschwitz**.

A: To?

Q: Where you were going next. Was that –

A: **Sachsenhausen.**

Q: **Sachsenhausen.** Did you – did you know where you were going?

A: No. When they uprooted us nighttime from the barracks, **Kanada** commando was dissolved already. There were no more transports coming in. This is October 1944. We thought for sure that they're taking us to the gas chambers because we've seen so much, number one. Of course we didn't know that – we thought we were the last Jews alive to begin with. Now, here we go to the railroad tracks, and there are cattle cars waiting for us. And guards went with us, some of the guards went with us, only up to the camp, and then that is the last time we've seen them. We n – did not know what we going. Now we come to **Sachsenhausen**, and there is no room for us in **Sachsenhausen** in the barracks, because there's more prisoners in – everybody is on the street of the camp, not knowing where I – why and what. We find out from the other prisoners who came a little after us, that the Russians are already very close to pole – they are in **Poland** now. They could hear – hear the shots and that's why they were taken away from there. So now we found out why. And then, of course, **Sachsenhausen** is very close to **Berlin**. The Americans and the British were bombing **Berlin** like crazy. And yet, there were still killings.

Q: Let me step back a little bit.

A: All right.

Q: That's a r-reasonably long trip, isn't it?

A: I don't remember exactly how many hours, but say it was – **Auschwitz** was close to border of – the Czech and German border too. I would say five, six, seven hours, maybe longer.

Q: Oh okay, all right. What I was wondering about and what they were asking about is. I ha – I realize you'd been at **Auschwitz** for quite some time at – I mean you – wa – you – was – I'm trying to understand what it was like for you to be leaving and – and to be – have this uncertainty of where you were going, and I mean, to jus –

A: Well, we were like robots, it was – first of all, they don't give you time to think, you couldn't think. Among ourselves we would say, oh my God, where we going? Among ourselves. Think they're going to take us to kill us now? They – we figure they cleared some – some wooded area, shoot us and that's the end of us. First we thought, if they make a left turn as we marching, gas chambers. But they didn't make a left turn, where we going? Pe – cattle cars. Now we come to sa – **Sachsenhausen**. We don't know what we doing here. No more slave labor camps, no more slave labor **[indecipherable]** no – no – no place to go.

Q: Did you – we – were you talking amongst yourselves in the car?

A: Oh sure, sure –

Q: Cause it seems like –

A: – sc – I went with three of my friends who were my partners. One had died in **Israel**, one died in **Slovakia**. **Sydler**(ph), you have – you got his name on – on the list there, misspelled.

Q: That's why the list is there, so you can afterwards spell them properly.

A: Right.

Q: How long did you spent in **Sachsenhausen**?

A: I would say couple weeks.

Q: What was it like there, aside from being crowded? What – what did you do, how –

A: Was har-hardly any food. Nothing. Just walked the camp and slept on the si – in the si – we didn't sleep inside the barracks, we slept on the – o-on the grounds. There was no room for us. Dogs and guards, people dying next to you. All the – all you tried to do is to take off the – somebody's jacket so you can be a little warmer.

Q: So s – you said it was October?

A: October 1944.

Q: So it was already starting to get cold?

A: Yeah.

Q: Then how long were you in – in **Landsberg**?

A: Until March 1945.

Q: So that's how long?

A: From end of October –

Q: To March –

A: – to March 1945. In **Landsberg** – the only labor that we did over there, we worked the potato fields. They had some outside potato, buried potatoes and stuff. For the winter they would bury potatoes, you know, they had these potato like – like – like a little grave it looks like, you know what I’m saying?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And we would dig out the potatoes for food. And I was one of the fortunate ones, got the job in the potato field and I used to organize potatoes for my – for my friends in the camp.

Q: You mentioned briefly that – that you left **Auschwitz** with two close friends. What happened to them?

A: Okay, one was **Jacob Buchler**, **b-u-a – b-u-c-h-l-e-r**, and the other one was **Sydler(ph)**, his name was **Pishta(ph)** in Slovak. And both of these men – I ra – I left them and I ran from – you know. Both of these men ended up in **Slovakia**, back in **Slovakia**. **Sydler(ph)** ended up in **Bratislava**, the capital of **Slovakia**. **Buchler** went back to our hometown, which is called **Topol’čany**. **Buchler** and his nephew, and – and his sister, some – some of them that survived, ended up in 1948 in **Israel**. In 1981 my wife **Agnes** and I went to the first gathering of Holocaust survivors in **Israel**, June 11th, 1981. I did not see **Buchler**, I spoke to him on the phone. He, for some reason couldn’t make it, he was not feeling well, and we were talking. That’s the last time I spoke to him and then he died in ’85. However, his nephew, whose name is **Robert**, or **Yehasure(ph) Buchler** became a historian, went to schools, and as a matter of fact, I

just seen him last week in **Israel**. I've got a book here with me which is in Slovak about our hometown. Every member of that community of my city is – that was murdered by the Nazis, including my family, is listed in this book. The other man, **Sydler**(ph) ended up in **Bratislava**, worked there for awhile. I've got letters from him at home now. He – only thing he wanted to do, we should meet and go together back to **Auschwitz** and then go and beat every Pollack in the – in – in the streets. That's what he writes in the Slovak letter. And unfortunately, he wasn't well when he left **Auschwitz**. He – he was quite ill, and he died quite young. I would say he died before 1970. Oh, hell yes, before 1970 because in 1964, I – I lived in **Michigan City**, that's the last I heard from him. **Indiana**. And so, he died there, in **Bratislava**.

Q: You talk about not being able to cry in **Auschwitz**. "**You Cried, You Died**," the – the film you mentioned. What do you mean by that?

A: Well, you see, if you showed weakness to the Nazis, they liked that. They killed you for – for it even easier. But if you showed that you were – still had a little – little gutsy strength in you, they – they respected that a little better, if you can call it respect. You know, they – the – this guy I testified against, **Hans Kunneman**(ph), **Heinrich Kunneman**(ph), he had the expression, when he would see you after so many weeks, after week he sees you, you're still alive, you're still working, you're still striving, he would greet you, **Du alter bandit, du lebs noch**. You old bandit, are you still alive? And he said it with such a respect that you still fought the system, that you still survived the system, see? So, if you showed crying, you might as well lay down and

die. I couldn't cry for my father. First time I was able to cry for him, it was January 27, 1985, when I took my two children with me, when I showed them the window which I seen my fa – my father from – through, on the barrack that he was taken. Took me a long time. When I said Kaddish over there for my father in front of that window, that's when I broke down and cried for him.

Q: Do you remember the first time you were able to cry at all when you came back?

A: When I came to this country? When my daughter got engaged to be married.

Q: That was the first time?

A: That was the first time. I couldn't – I couldn't cry. Every once in awhile when I speak now, and the question comes out s – a little stronger than – a little more personal, about my parents, about my father, about my sisters, about my mother, once in awhile I hold back the tears and – I cried last week in **Israel**. Now, here's why I cried last week in **Israel**. I was asked by the Jewish Welfare Federation of **Indianapolis**, when we go to the – with the family mission to **Israel**, when we get to **Yad Vashem**, the Holocaust Memorial, would I be willing to address my group, the fellow – fellow – the travelers with me, at **Yad Vashem**, and I agreed to do so. Not only did I address them, but I also got my friend, this **Buchler**, the historian to meet me there, he teaches there at the – at the Holocaust memorial. And he told the group how I saved his life at **Auschwitz**, and that mi – made – made me – well, I broke down and cried. Took me a little while to calm down and tell my story after he left. So –

Q: Do you ever – once you started – when your daughter got engaged, was it any easier, thereafter?

A: Yes. It's – it's – it gets a little easier after you let it – let it loose, let go.

Q: Cause that's quite a few years.

A: Yes, '81. '81. I don't remember crying after – oh, maybe I – in my dreams maybe, I know when I have some bad nightmares.

Q: Can – what are your dreams like?

A: Most of the time I try to make them pleasant, but –

Q: The bad dreams.

A: The bad ones. The bad ones is **Auschwitz**.

Q: Are there particular images that reoccur?

A: See the faces. The faces of the Nazis. I can see every one of them. I can see them when I'm talking to you now. I can see the faces on the railroad tracks. I can see **Mengele** as clear as day. I'll never forget the beatings. The 25 on your behind if they caught you with organizing food for other prisoners. As you were carrying the bundles of clothing to the women prisoners who did the cleaning and disinfecting of the clothes, and all of a sudden the cane crook – the handle of the cane is behind your neck, and your neck and he pulls you down, he drops you, you drop your bundle and he pokes with that stick in the – in there, in the clothes and he finds some food and he – before you even turn around he smacks you right over the head with the cane, and he would ask, to what Jewish sow are you taking this? And of course, if you tell, the

Jewish girl is in trouble. If you don't tell, bend over, 25 on your behind. And you got to count. You count and he stops you. How many did I give you? 17. Wrong, all over again. By the time he st-starts all over again you already fainted, you're already gone. So those are the things. I've got marks on my – on my – below my belt now which never will go away. I've got a mark on my neck right here from a shovel by a Nazi. They didn't – life meant nothing to them.

Q: You know I – when I was getting ready to leave to come here, I was talking to a friend of mine and she said, would you ask him for me – that would be you – were there any moments of humanity? Were there any guards or anybody that worked at the camp, any of them that had little pockets of humanity?

A: Tell her that's a very good question. The work that we did, the **Kanada** commando, unloading incoming Jews and then, after the Nazis sorted them, selected them, you die now, you die later, then we start working with the belongings, with the artifacts. And among the artifacts is all sorts of watches, diamonds, rings, jewelry, because that was all confiscated. There were boxes for this merchandise, for these items. And the Nazis would march back and forth, back and forth. They were not allowed to bend down and pick anything up. But a Nazi would see a watch and he tells you, take that watch and take it to the latrine with you. And he would march you – with you – behind you towards the men's latrine. And you squat, as you got this watch in your pocket and you throw it to him on the ground. He takes off his rifle and with his rifle head he picks up the piece. So he's good to you for – for a day or so. But as far as compassion, as far as

any feeling towards you, the only compassion feeling if they could benefit, because they cou – they – they were all on the take. They all knew how. Everyone – every Nazi had their own prisoners who would organize for them. So they took care of you for awhile. But if he sees his superior coming towards you, regardless of what you gave him, he beat you just the same. So the compassion wasn't there. They had no compassion, none whatsoever. Yeah, there were some people that – I know of – of a guy who knew a Nazi from his hometown, and he was the worst animal to him. So there's – there was s – there was some of them that would throw me a piece of bread only because you dealt with them, only because you gave them something. And they let you organize. They turned their backs so you could eat. You know, turn their head and – and – an-and – and – and turn your – turn away so they couldn't – they wouldn't see it, because if they seen it, they have to beat you. They knew we were eating, because they needed our hands at the railroad tracks.

Q: Have you ever had – I think I know the answer to this, but have you ever had an opportunity t-to ever since the war, talk to anybody on the other side?

A: What side?

Q: Any of the guards, any of the –

A: Just in the trials. No-Not directly to them, through their attorneys, yes. We accuse them of – of things that they did. As far as per – one on one, no, never met anyone. I may have met some, but I did – you know, may have been one, but I didn't know who they were, you know.

Q: If you had that opportunity, would you take it?

A: Yes, definitely would. And I wouldn't do it with hate. I wouldn't do it with hate.

Conversation. I was asked to go on a program once and – and – with – with these – the hate group, you know –

Q: The clan?

A: No, clan and also th-the – the white **supremists**(ph) to go on – what do you – what do you call that guy who – who was fighting on the – he had a fight – fighting do – talk show?

Q: **Maury Povich?**

A: No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

Q: Oh, **Geraldo Rivera.**

A: **Geraldo Rivera.** I got a call from his – from his show to come on with – with two, one **supremist**(ph) and – from a ri-ri-ridge – from that ridge place.

Q: **Ruby Ridge.**

A: **Ruby Ridge**, and – and a – and a clan guy to go – are you nuts? I want to go on that program with these animals? First of all I wouldn't go on his show. **Geraldo Rivera** is not my person. That's not my kind of show, not my kind of people. And he's half Jewish, too.

Q: I know, I was about to say that.

A: No, that's not me, no. But I would go one on one, or I would go two on one. I'll be one, they'll be two. Let their t-tell their story. Let me tell you – this may not come –

this has nothing to do with this question. I have a friend who is a president of **PBS** in **Richmond, Virginia**, okay? He name is **Charles Sidna**(ph), Jr., historian on Nazism. Wrote a couple of books on **SS**. I met him the first time in 1990 in **Honolulu**. Last October he went to **Germany** and **Austria** with a number of historians for his ta – conference on Nazi German – Nazi German Wehrmacht from 1941 to 1945. Among them was also an **SS** guard, **SS** person who a – who was in there with him in the group. And here they are, they – there was a exhibit traveling to **Germany**, and there was very much – a lot of protest against that exhibit in **Germany**. But they were there and talking, each one had their own – own – the work. You know, one – one was on the Greek Jews, one was on –

Q: A specialty.

A: Special – sp – oh – own specialty, see, thanks. Also there was an Israeli boy who I met last week, my – from my hometown. He too was there, okay? He is a historian from **Israel**. So he was the only Jew, there was a guy from **Czech Republic**, there was a guy from **Poland**, there was a guy from **Austria**, there was number of ca – people from **Germany**, and they were talking. And they were demonstrating against him. Some German took a canister of salt and threw it through the window ins – in the building with a sign, here is your **Zyklon B** gas. That's – that happened last fall, okay? So my friend from **Richmond, Virginia**, the president of **PBS**, who made a film on me by the way, called "**65316**" and c – he calls me up and tells me what happened, and he also told me that he was there with an Israeli guy and he asked him where he is

from, he told him from **Slovakia** and from where, from the s – my hometown. And he says to him, I know a guy from that town, too – my friend from **Richmond** told him. He says, he lives in the **States**. So the guy says, I know who, **Mike Vogel**. **Mike Vogel** saved my life at **Auschwitz**. That's the guy I told you about. So here's a guy, pitches salt, grain of salt like **Zyklon B** gas into these people. So you see, Nazism, some of these animals, when – when someone shows, "**Hitler's Willing Executioners**," or someone goes there for this type of a purpose, they're still fighting it. They never admit.

Q: Now, I – I asked your wife about this yesterday. Have you had encounters – cause – cause you've gone back to germ – you've gone to **Germany** several times –

A: Mm-hm.

Q: – to testify. Have you had the opportunity to meet younger Germans –

A: Yes.

Q: – who were not alive then?

A: Absolutely. I meet younger Germans not only in **Germany**, but I also meet them here, in this country. Students, c-college students, graduate students. And the question always comes, do I hate all Germans? Well, I said, I don't hate all Germans. However, all Germans my age and older, and some even younger were responsible for the atrocities that happened to us, that – that was done to us. Even if they themselves did – were not involved in throwing us into the ovens, but they were part of the process, part of the organization, part of the hate, part of the people that killed us. However you, as

a young German, I can't hold you responsible for the atrocity that happened to us – done to us by a – by your grandparents. But when you go back home, ask your parents, if they were old enough, or your grandparents, what did they do from 1933 to 1945? What did they do to stop the atrocities? What did they do to stop **Kristallnacht**? What did they do to stop deportation? What did they do to stop taking away Jewish shops and Jewish businesses? What did they do to burn Jewish temples? This is what you got to ask their parents, your parents and grandparents. But as far as hating you, I don't even hate your parents, let alone you.

Q: I have a dif – perhaps a difficult question. I'm sure you've heard all these questions at one time or another. Have you ever pondered if by a twist of fate you were not born Jewish, but you were born German, or you were a Gentile Slovak in your hometown –

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Have you ever pondered how you would have behaved?

A: You know, I never thought about that, but I probably would have been the same as the rest of them. I probably would have been same as the rest of them, because it was inbred in them. It would be inbred in me – **inbred-ed** in me, because as much as these Slovaks or Hungarians or Poles worked with Jews, worked for Jews or benefited by Jews or whatever, they were partners with them, or they were – they were part of their operation, they all were anti-Semites. And I probably would have been one of them. I grew up in it. You know, I referee soccer in **Indianapolis** in the state of **Indiana**.

There's a German man named **Hans Gut**, came to this country in the 50's with his

father. And **Hans** is in his 50's now, or better. "**Auschwitz, If You Cried You Died**," was showing the first time in **Indianapolis**. It was shown nationally, but it was shown in **Indianapolis** that time, too. I went to do a high school soccer game and **Hans Gut** was also one of their – one of – we were three referee – three – three people. There's two linesmen and a – and a – and a referee. And I was scheduled to do the game and **Hans** is getting out of his car and I'm getting out of my car from the park – school parking lot, we walked to the soccer field. And **Hans Gut** says to me, **Mike**, I've seen your film last night. But don't you think it's about time to stop this? Isn't that enough of blasting, basting the Germans, of constantly – constantly – he says to me, my father was also in the Russian front. He says, he wa – he too suffered. I said, well **Hans**, let me tell you a little bit about my father. Your father was in Russian front. He had the guns, ammunition, clothes, boots. He was dressed. My father was stripped naked, stripped from his dignity, totally dehumanized, taken to the gas chambers, starved – first starved, tortured. I said, my father didn't have a gun to turn around and shoot his – shoot people who were putting him in the ovens. Your father didn't have to join the army. My father was forced into go in the concentration camp and be killed. So what are you giving me this bullcrap about your father? So you see, people don't want to see, the people don't want to hear. And especially German people.

Q: I – I s – I saw a television documentary about certain Gentiles that had hidden Jewish families –

A: Mm-hm.

Q: – during the – the war. And one of the survivors who had been hidden by this Gentile man said, if it had been me, I wouldn't have done it.

A: He wouldn't have saved him?

Q: That's right.

A: That's possible.

Q: He s – he said, I wouldn't have put my family at risk that way.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: He said, so I don't understand this man who did this thing, who – who caused me to live and my family to live, and – you know, so now that I can have children of my own. I'm glad he did it, but I don't think I would have done it if I were him.

A: Mm, well, he's right. Not too many did it, cause if there were so many Righteous Gentiles, why else – if there were so many, why so many of us died, why so many was killed. Let me tell you my own personal experiment – experience with what you just asked me. First part of 1942, I was in a slave labor camp in **Slovakia** called **Nováky**. There was a good friend of mine whose name was **Josef Knap(ph)**, **Kanap(ph)** in Slovak, **Knap(ph)**. **Josef Knap(ph)** had a Christian girlfriend, name was **Terri(ph)** – **Therese** – **ter** – **terra** – **terries** – **Th-Therese**. Him and I escaped together from **Nováky**. He knew his way pretty well, he was about a year and a half older than me. We get to our hometown, **Topol'čany**, his – her father had a small farm on the outskirts of our city and we two boys, escapees, going the back doors, back ways so we will get picked up by this – by the gendarmes, by the police of our town. Came to

this house hoping that I would be able to hide there too. Well, the father of the girl, father of **Therese**, the father said, I'm taking **Josef** in my house and hide him, but I'm not taking a chance with two Jews in my house. And here I am, stuck out on the outskirts of our town, got picked up by police as I was walking back to town, beat the hell out of me, send me back to **Nováky**. In 1946 I went back to **Slovakia** with – through the army because I went to get my papers and those two are still married, of course, they had a child. And she cried. She apologized to me that her father wouldn't take me. Her father died since, but he wouldn't take me. So – but as fate would have it, I survived, she says, so at least I came to see them. **Josef Knap**(ph) died, let's see, 1990 I was in **Israel** and there was a Czechoslovakian gathering of Holocaust survivors, and there was another Jew – Jewish person there who travels from – to my hometown and he told me that he died a few months ago. So the Righteous Gentiles really weren't that many. As far as the guy said he wouldn't do it, I believe it, because most people didn't want to do it. My father had enough Christian friends and people that he dealt with, people that he sold horses and cattle to, that somebody could have saved us. Nobody was willing.

Q: You earlier were talking about, when I was asking about anger, you were saying that i-i – I'm paraphrasing, that most of your anger is directed at the fact that you made it and your – your siblings and your parents didn't. I – I – that classic thing that is talked about with survivors is guilt.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: You know, why did I make it and other people didn't. Would you call that guilt?

A: It's guilt, yeah, it's guilt. You know, people would also put – ge – put guilt – guilt on us.

Q: How so?

A: When I – '46 when I went to my hometown, was a small Jewish community left that came back, and th – some that were hidden. You know, how did you make it and my parents didn't, my sisters and brothers didn't? Why – what – why should you be the lucky one, and not – not – I – why shouldn't I have my brother or sister here? I had nobody left, and they're still putting – put the guilt on me. So they – the people put guilt on us. You know, at first I was even afraid to speak about it. Here I am, survived the camps and nobody else did – did it in my family, so why should I be guilty that I survived?

Q: So you were afraid that by talking about it people would – it would beg the question –

A: Would make the questions, yeah.

Q: – how come you made it?

A: How come your – your not dead, too?

Q: Hold on for a second.

End of Tape Two, Side B

Beginning Tape Three, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of a **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with **Michael Vogel**. This is tape number three, side **A**. You mentioned this trial that happened while you were living in **Detroit** that your friend **Kulka** or -- **Kulka** is that -- did I get that right?

A: Yeah, which one?

Q: I-In the -- in the -- in the tr -- video interview, you mentioned in passing that when you were living in **Detroit** -- maybe this is incorrect or they got confused, you were in the midst of telling a story about while you were living in **Detroit** and then you interspersed into that, or interpolated into that, talking about a trial that this fellow, **Eric Kulka** was involved with, and I think it confused the Holocaust Museum people, whether that was a trial that happened while you were living in **Detroit**.

A: While I was living in **Detroit**. I'm sorry. This was -- actually, I was not living in **Detroit** any more, I was living in the **States**. This trial was in **Germany**, okay? And **Kulka** was part of the trial and so was **Joe Neumann(ph)** -- **Josef Neumann(ph)**, **Joe Neumann(ph)**. The trial was held in **Frankfurt** against a former Nazi, and I don't remember which one it was. It was also photograph brought there and there's a photograph of me in -- taken by the Nazi documentation department. And -- and that photograph was used as evidence. Is that what they want to know, is --

Q: They were just wondering about th-the -- whether, you know, they were unclear what that trial was and whether it was happening in **Detroit**.

A: No, no, no, no.

Q: Okay, okay.

A: Trial was done in **Frankfurt, Germany**. This was one of the first trials of – of Nazi trials. This was later than **Detroit**, you know, I was not living in **Detroit**, I was – that was not **Detroit**, because I didn't know about **Kulka** in **Detroit** yet.

Q: Okay.

A: Okay. This was the trial in **Germany** against the former Nazi guard, Nazi – a Nazi guard. That was in **Germany**, and this photograph which I have – which **Kulka** by the way, gave me in 1981 in **Israel**, copy of it, this was used as evidence, this photograph, identifying the prisoners that were a – in that photographs. Je – Holocaust Museum has the photograph. They have it.

Q: Did you – you've already told me how you felt about **Nuremberg**, that you felt it was –

A: Mm, a farce.

Q: A farce. How much did you follow the various postwar trials that occurred?

A: Well, the trial that I really followed, the first one I have tried – I followed was **Eichmann** trial. That to me was the trial to be watched. And yet, to the last minute the guy didn't admit to anything. And he was the mastermind of the railroad tracks of the ca – of the cattle cars. He was the guy who – who – who had another guy, **Dieter Wisliceny** who was – who he – he sent to **Slovakia** to – to get us out of there, who he sent to **Greece** to get the Greek Jews. And – and – and this man to the last moment did

not admit – only thing he said, I followed orders. And as far as **Eichmann's** capture, it wasn't done because of **Simon Wiesenthal**, it was done because of the Israeli **Mossad**. And **Simon Wiesenthal** want – took it – the credit for that, but it is no longer the credit for – he doesn't take it any more, I'm sure of it. Excuse me.

Q: When you – jumping around here a bit –

A: Right.

Q: Prior to when you talked at your daughter's school –

A: Mm-hm.

Q: – during that large gap of time prior to that, that you lived in this country, and after you were close with this group of survivors in **Detroit** when you first came over –

A: Mm.

Q: – did you talk – how often would this ever come up with friends, coworkers, colleagues? I mean, you have the tattoo –

A: You mean – oh –

Q: – people asking you –

A: Oh sure, people would ask about the tattoo, of course. I used to make kind of fun of it, so to speak. This is my telephone number, this is my house address, which by the way, becomes my home – home address now, because when I bought this house – when I – when we were moving here 30 years ago, looking for a home and the real estate lady takes me in this neighborhood and I see a address, 6531. My number is 65316. I said, we're going to buy this house. My wife says, you gotta be crazy. I says

why? I never – I – I can never lose my – if I lose my way I know I got it on my arm, you know, I said – no, she says, don't – don't – let's not buy this house. I – so we bought it anyway, you know. So that's a sick sense of humor in me, you know. I bought the house only – not only because it was a good price, but it also had a right number. So coworkers, yeah, they always ask. Not co – s-strangers on the street, in a restaurant, when it's summertime you go there in a short sleeve shirt. They look at you first and they don't want to say anything, they're kind of you know. And what am I gonna do, cover it like this? No. So – you were in one of them camps, huh? Ye – wa – wa – one of them bad Nazi camps, huh? And I, oh yeah, I says. Could you tell me a little bit about it? I says no, not in a restaurant, you know. You got children in school, I said, we have a film over there. Or wa – you – ever go here, you can find out. You go to the children's museum, they have s-stuff on the Holocaust, you know. So th-that – that always comes up, always, there isn't – I tho – there isn't a day when somebody doesn't stare at you when you have the number exposed. I'll tell you another story. In 1961 we lived in **Cleveland, Ohio**. I was working for a company called **Shoppers Fair**. I was straightening out a couple of shelves in the store with my sleeves – short sleeve shirt on. A guy walks in, he says, you got number. I know man got number. Talks with an accent. I said oh yeah, you do? Okay. I bring him here. Next day he drags in a gu – brings in a guy, we were together in **Auschwitz**. This guy's name was **Mutti(ph) Klein(ph)**. He worked with my father with the horses at **Auschwitz**. We became f – of course, close friends until we moved to **Cleveland**, he – they – a-and –

and he eva – a-a-after awhile he got a heart attack. Then he retired in **Florida**. In 1990 we went to **Israel** ag-again for the gathering, and he didn't make it because he was ill. And there I met some people that know him also because they came the same time as we did to **Auschwitz**. We got home to **Indianapolis**, we found out a few months later he died. So that was also through his number because the guy seen me at work, stocking shelves at **Shoppers Fair**. So the number is always there and always comes up in the conversation wherever I go. And when I went to **Germany** to test – testify, I made it a point when we were free from court, and we went for train rides and went – anywhere we went, I would always [**indecipherable**] summertime, of course we were there summertime, I would sit there – and always would like to sit close to an older German, just to let him see the number. And they would look at you, then they put the head down and never look at you again. Probably couldn't get a – couldn't – couldn't wait to get off the next stop. Yeah, the number is there unfortunately and it'll stay there as long as I live.

Q: You talk – you've talked quite a bit about this gathering in 1981. What was that like?

A: This was the most – fir – first of all it was the first gathering ever, okay? This was the most emotional four or five days we had in **Israel**. We had a survivor village in – in **Jerusalem**. There were computers set up all over the creation – all over the place and every one of us was listed in the computer, who we were, where we came from. And this is how I met in person, **Eric Kulka**. I didn't know – first of all, I didn't know

Eric Kulka. I didn't know who **Eric Kulka** was. I get a message at the **Hilton Jerusalem**, note **Eric Kulka**, telephone number. Call up **Eric Kulka** and he tells me who he is. **Eric Kulka's** wife was murdered by the Nazis, so what he did, he took his wife's maiden name and changed his name.

Q: In tribute?

A: In – yeah, in – in tribute for his wife, yeah. He's got a son who teaches at the University of **Jerusalem**, also a historian and a writer of books. So **Eric** died, I was told the other day, last week, year and a half ago. Kidney failure. But he was much older than me, **Eric** was in his late 80's. I also saved his life, yeah. But **Eric** was quite a guy.

Q: Have you been to the museum – you've been to the museum in **D.C.**?

A: A number of times, yes.

Q: What was that like the first time you went there?

A: Well, the first time I went there was for the opening when – when the – when it was the g – the grand opening of the Holocaust Museum. That was in April 1993. The coldest, rainiest day you can imagine, it was so cold. And we – we said, it fits the occasion, the oc – the opening fits the occasion. Three of our kids came with us, two daughters and a son and my wife and I. And I was written up in the **U.S.** – the **U.S.A.** today in the – because of the opening. And this was too, very, very emotional. The – the – the demonstrators, they – the park police, of course, took care of them after awhile. They had demonstrators up to a point and after that they took care of them.

The-They blocked them off with buses, they could – you couldn't see them any more. And of course, it was so emotional. But the '81 in **Israel**, that is where I met **Kulka** and met some other people, a couple guys from **France** who worked with me in the **Kanada** commando. And then – that was the hardest part. That was the – that was the hardest part for me. When at **Yad Vashem** we heard a first speech by a – the le – one of the leaders of the group, and man there wasn't a dry eye in the place. This is when I really cried, when they start talking, my number is such and such. And then you walked through the **Yad Vashem** Museum where all the photographs of – original photographs of Nazis that t – took – the documentation, Nazi documentation took. As I walked through, I've seen the railroad tracks where I worked. And I've seen the prisoners whom I knew and I point – could point out who they were. And that broke me down. And **NPR** was there, she interviewed me, a lady interviewed me, I couldn't finish the interview, that's how bad I was. That was very, very emotional. And we went – since then, of course, we went to a few more gathering – Holocaust gathering. I had the great honor, because of the Holocaust Museum and the Holocaust organization, May eighth, this past May eighth, be invited to **Washington, D.C.** at the capital rotunda to do the Holocaust Memorial Kaddish. So I did May eighth in **Washington**, which was also very beautiful.

Q: So le-let me ask you a question about your faith. You – we've talked about your problems with God. I – I gather from talking to you and to your wife that you were less than enthusiastic about raising your children in an observant home.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And – and yet, you say the Kaddish.

A: What is it?

Q: And – and yet, th – you said the Kaddish –

A: Mm-hm.

Q: – and that –

A: [indecipherable]

Q: – is meaningful to you.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Are you – how can I phrase the question? Have you become any more comfortable or interested, or –

A: The last few years, last few years I – I'm – I go to the temples Friday nights. I'm still a little thinking about it, just what am I doing here, but yet I feel I must do it now, especially now. I'm getting older and it's time to identify myself more, not just by name, but also by attending the services, hoping to heal a little different.

Q: Is it helping?

A: Yes, I think it's helping. I think it's helping because the community knows me so well now and they identify me with this. The Jewish community relations which I am a chairman of the Holocaust Committee here in t – in our organization, and anytime something happens, they call on me. At the state capital rotunda here, I was asked to speak, als – May sixth, two days before **Washington**. They wanted to also make it

May eighth, I said, I'm sorry, I can't attend it, you have to get someone else. No, we don't want someone else, we want you. So we make it on May sixth. So they made it on May sixth and there too I spoke, and I was asked by the community to do the holoc – to do the Kaddish for the ser-service. So the community is kind of pushing me towards this sort of a making me part of – the Holocaust Jew to be the spokesperson. Any time they need someone, newspapers here, local papers, the television channels – there isn't a television program on Holocaust that I'm not involved in that they don't call me. When **Shpindler** – “**Schindler's List**” was shown, I was asked to be on the program. **Yom HaShoah** comes around, the Day of Remembrance, I am asked to be on programs. So I'm – now I feel I'm coming back to my roots.

Q: Do you ever wish that you were not born Jewish?

A: No. No, no, never. I am proud of my heritage, but I – the only problem I had was God and I think I'm healing a little bit.

Q: One of the things that they wanted me to talk to you about is y-your observations of what has been going on in the world surrounding you since you've been back –

A: Mm-hm.

Q: – from **Europe**, since you've been in this country. Through the lens of one who has had the experiences that you have had in the Holocaust, and I'm wondering – I'll ask you about a few things –

A: Mm-hm.

Q: – you – I think you overheard me talking to your wife about this yesterday.

A: Okay.

Q: Well, in a general way let me ask you what – what fears do you continue to have here? I don't mean fear of water, fear of dentists, but fears for this country, fears for – worries about hate groups –

A: Mm-hm.

Q: – political fringes, religious groups –

A: Well, the hate groups is one of them. You see, the First Amendment in this country is a beautiful item, but the First Amendment should stop somewhere. It should stop with these hate groups, it should stop with the – with the **KKK**, they shouldn't have their rights with the First Amendment, I'm sorry. Neither should have the skinheads and the white **supremists** shouldn't have that, the racists shouldn't have that, the anti-Semites shouldn't have that, they shouldn't have the First Amend – that should – that has nothing to do with the First Amendment. You may na – disagree with me, but these are – there's just got to be stop somewhere. Well, here is a guy who has got First Amendment rights, he killed 160 people in – in **Oklahoma**. This is the First Amendment. He shouldn't be even tried. He should be given to the people in **Oklahoma City** and they should take care of it. That's – may sound cruel, but look how cruel he was. So these are the fears I have, that because of our freedom in our ri – lives, we let all these groups do whatever they want to do and they murder, then we put them to death row and they stay there for 15 years and 16 times they say – th-the governor says a – a stay of execution and they stay, he goes back there and you feed

him and you spend money on him. These – these are fears I have. I have fears of these hate groups. I have fears of all these – all these anti-Semites, all these racists. You know, this is what – this is what scares me, this – this is – and now wa – why does it scare me so much? Because all you got to have, all you need, God forbid, is bad economy. These are the people that will lead the other middle **America**, and middle **America** is a na – dangerous world, believe me. I’ve seen them, I-I’ve seen them in action, you know, doing my – sometime my – some my speeches, I – sometime I get these middle Americans in there too. But these are the ones you’ve got to be careful with. The fundamentalists, the middle **America**. The ones who push the ji – push their religions onto you. These are the ones that you worry about. The white – white **supremists**, who are they? They come from the churches. What – lot of them. Th- They – they all God loving, Christ fearing white Anglo-Saxon Americans. And these are the ones that can lead the mili – militia that can lead this country into ruin.

Q: When you say middle **America**, what are you referring to? That’s a kind of a vague –

A: I’m referring to the – the white **supremist**, that they call themselves the middle s -- pure Americans. If you black you have no business to live in their neighborhood. If you Jew, you – your – you’re a bloodsucker. If you’re an Asian, if you’re any – any – any of these Asian countries, they hate you. Look what’s happened in – happened in **New York**, all these p – all these poor Koreans or – or – or Asians are working their – every member in the family is working in their little grocery store trying to eke out a

living, working, 24 hours a day open and they try to make a living and yet these – these – these animals, the whites beat the hell out of them. And – and their some – so do some – some blacks do the same thing to them, it was a ca – it's happened there was the blacks that came after them.

Q: Have you been any more concerned in the recent past than in the decades previous?

A: Yes, because it's – now we have the news media that keeps bringing it – bringing the – all these atrocities up, brings – bringing the news up, which we didn't have in the past like we have it today. I wish we had the news media during my time in **Auschwitz**, before **Auschwitz**, probably wouldn't have been – I – I – I don't know, if you had **CNN** then, who knows what would happen. But the – but it wasn't as bad in years back. Years back, yes, there was anti-Semitism, racism and all **[indecipherable]** I'm – I'm afraid always will be anti-Semitism and racism as far as – as long as we have this kind of a population as we have here, the – the – the – and middle **America** that loves the pure white people. So – but that scares me, it scares me that if ano – be another Holocaust, that can be a lot of troubles, that can create a lot of problems.

Q: What should we do to ward that off?

A: Indifference and education. Indifference, teaching people what indifference means, stands for. Indifference, don't look at me that I'm dark eyed and brow-brown hair and dark skin, look at me as a person, that I'm your neighbor, that I'm your citizen, I'm the same citizen as you are, and don't put the hate on me because of what I am, what I was born. That's the indifference. Education, teach these people what can happen when

hate and racism and anti-Semitism flourishes. What can happen when poor economy can bring these people to do what **Hitler** did to the Jews and other minorities.

Q: That was something I wanted to ask you about. Obviously other people died in the Holocaust, other than Jews.

A: Mm-hm, yes.

Q: The Gypsies.

A: Yes.

Q: Homosexuals.

A: Jehovah Witnesses. Jehovah Witnesses.

Q: Mm-hm. Have you had much contact with je – with Gentile survivors?

A: I haven't met too many. I met some, but not too many. Very few Gentile survivors come forward, very, very few. I had contact with liberators, but not survivors. And I wish I had contact with some survivors. There were Poles, there were – there were political prisoners. Of course, the criminal prisoners, you know.

Q: Priests.

A: Priests, Academians. Very, very seldom, I na – don't think I met maybe one or two in my lifetime here. And I don't even remember where.

Q: Just wondering.

A: I wish I would, because there are some around, believe me, there are some people around.

Q: I know that I read a book recently about the Gypsies and the proportion of – of the Gypsies that were killed –

A: Yeah.

Q: – gi-given the size of the –

A: Well, the – a-and they had a Gypsy camp in **Birkenau**, just – Gypsy family camp, and in – in less than two nights, two nights [**indecipherable**] boom, boom, boom, one, two, three, they murdered close to 30,000 Gypsies, and some of them had German army uniforms on, some of the men. Came from the Wehrmacht, they picked them up and brought them to **Auschwitz**. German Gypsies.

Q: What about outside of this country? We talked about the militia movement and the clan and what about things that you've observed outside of this country, **Yugoslavia**?

A: You mean the **Bosnia**, th-th-th-that – that problem there? It's a horrible item, horrible thing. **Elie Wiesel** went to **Bosnia** some years back and begged the people, don't do this to your people. Look what happened to us. He went to see th – some of the prisoners who he could see them through the – through the elect – through the fences and seen people with this – like s – looking like skeletons. But you know, there's a difference between Holocaust and – and **Bosnia** [**indecipherable**] **Yugoslavia**. The difference is all [**indecipherable**] had guns. They had weapons. They were fighting each other with weapons. Ethnic – a fa – wh-what were they fighting for? Religious – religion ethnicity, for ethnics. And with us, we didn't have guns or ammunition [**indecipherable**] it was different. But at the same time, it was a

holocaust. Look what they've done to a beautiful country, the **Yugoslavia**. Years before the winter sports were held in that beautiful part of the world, and now the whole country is ruined. Other than a – other than **Croatia** which is still in a fairly decent shape. So that was a holocaust. **Cambodia**, the boat people. **Vietnam** war was another one. You know, when **Vietnam** war first started, when it – when it was first started in the 60's, late 60's, I was for it. I was for the Americans. After all, here is the **United States of America**, you – you know, you go fight, don't – don't knock the soldiers that are going there. And after awhile, when I listened to my children who were at the time college age, you know, and they were going demonstrating in **Washington** against it, I tried to listen and reason with them. But kids, they're fighting for freedom. So the kids would tell me, what's freedom? It's 10,000 miles – 20 thou – 10,000 miles away from us, what kind of freedom? They're killing innocent children and women, is that a freedom? So when I first started I was very much for it, then I had to go with my kids. I've seen that what they were talking about, they were right. Maybe they were too radical about it. Maybe they went overboard, maybe. And some of them did. I mean, in spite of the drugs, they brought some – some good things out of it, these young people.

Q: What about – I was thinking – I – I mean, I'm not trying to make parallels to what happened to you, but I'm just wondering about things that have happened in history that might have particularly concerned you or chilled you or – or the – what – and I

was thinking about what happened in **Rwanda** in the past couple of years, where one side basically annihilated the other side.

A: Yeah, mm-hm. The **tutsu – tutu – tutues** and – and **Tutsi** then.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Well, that is a holocaust, a horrible, horrible, horrible crime. No one even there helped, re-really. What did they do? Th-They fly – a plane flew over and – and dropped some food and people were killing each other for the piece of food that they could find. In – in – look, **Bosnia** and **Yugoslavia**, no one helped five, six years ago when they should have helped. That's when they should have stopped right there. This is when the help should have come, not today with the sending – **Clinton** sends the army over there now? Now you send the army over there? Send the army there before the first shot was fired. Control it and try to do the **Dayton** before **Dayton**. You know what I'm trying to say? Don't go to **Dayton** after every – after nine million people are murdered. Go there before. Make the **Dayton** in – in **Yugoslavia**, in **Croatia**, in **Bosnia**. This is where you do it. Nobody paid attention. The next door neighbors, **Germany**, the **Hitler** y – nobody did anything. When I was there testifying in **Germany** in '91, it was still early enough to go there and try to stop all that. They were just trying to start – starting to shoot. That's the time to go there, but oh well, we can't send our sons to be murdered over there. Nobody asked them to be murdered over there, nobody is murdered there now. One [indecipherable] the guy got lost in the wooded area someplace, shot down or whatever happened to him and he survived.

And all you had to do was go there, send their armed forces over there and control them, send the **UN** over there before it happened, not after it happened. So these are the things that should be done. **Rwanda** the same way. Look – did you see all these starving little innocent children? Who did they hurt? Same thing like the one and a half million Jewish children murdered by the Nazis. Poor, innocent children. How many professors, how many scientists, how many teachers, how many doctors were murdered among these little one and a half million children? The same thing with the **Rwanda** people. Maybe they weren't professors in ta – i-i-in – i-i-in – but they were human beings and nobody helped. Everyone turned their head the other way. We were watching the news programs a – while we eating dinner and they would say to e – to wife – wife to a husband, look at this, isn't that terrible what happening over there? Oh, what's on tonight. You know, that was the end of the conversation. What else is on television?

Q: So now we do have **CNN**, now we do know, we – we can't feign ignorance.

A: And we didn't do anything. And we didn't do anything. We watching for **CNN** to bring us atrocities. Everybody is looking for something terrible to happen. **Middle East**, the fights, the – the – the – the fights between Palestinians and throwing stones, they're throwing rocks, they're doing – they – they're burning tires, the – the – the – that – this is what **CNN** is for, this all the newscast is for, but no one does anything.

Q: What would you suggest people do?

A: The big countries, the powers should be the ones. You know, I know it sounds – sounds like easy task to do, but we should be the ones to be the guards of the world. And not with guns and ammunition, but sending people to try to solve their problems talking. Get into the table with these people. Get to the – to get to the com – get to the conferences with these people. There are some people it's hard to talk with.

Q: You know, I'm just thinking – oh, first of all, I want to check my tape.

End of Tape Three, Side A

Beginning Tape Three, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of a **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with **Michael Vogel**. This is tape number three, side **B** and we were talking about ways of intervening to prevent future –

A: Holocausts.

Q: – holocausts. And I was thinking, you know, of the – the real notorious leaders, political figures, **Hitler, Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot, Idi Amin**, the – the Serbian leader, **Milosevic**. How do you – these people don't seem very reasonable, from everything I've been told.

A: Mm-hm, yeah they aren't. They're not reasonable. But these are the people that the governments, like **United States, Soviet u – or ru – former Soviet Union**, anyone who has power should go to these people and say, enough killing. Let's sit down and talk about the **tuti – Tutus** and let's talk about the Bosnians, let's talk about the Cambodians here, the **Pol Pots**, the – the killings, it's got to stop. And someone has

got to do it. Now, I know it's not easy and I know you – somebody's going to tell me that I'm full of bull talking like this, because who is going to mix in in someone else's kitchen? Well, s-someone has to mix in in someone else's kitchen, because we can't go on like this. One thing stops, something else starts. There is never a dull moment as far as somebody killing somebody. One country. These [indecipherable] Rwandan people, these – these little innocent children should be saved. Who's going to save them? Not the **Tutsis** and not whatever you want to call them **Tutus** or **Tutsis**, it's gotta be done by a powerful country and it's got to stop. And if somebody said well, we have enough problem in this country, we have racism and anti-Semitism here, sure we do, but in the meanwhile we're not starving, and those people are starving. And those people have to be put together, those people had to have help with the – from our technology from farming and for everything. Everyone – if you help people to – to feed them, you're gonna start – you're gonna pa – st-stop a lot of these atrocities. Education.

Q: Do you – do you feel reasonably safe here now?

A: In this country, yes. Very much so. I – I feel safe because this is the best country in th – in spite of all our problems, in spite of all isms that we have here, this is still the best country in the world, and I've been around a few countries. I've been around **Europe**, I've been around the **Middle East**. This country is the country that I love, and like I tell my children, you can sing **America** [indecipherable] three times a day, cause there's no other country like it.

Q: Why? Why is it so great in your mind?

A: Because of the freedom, because of the freedom of speech, that you can say what you – what you mean and no one's going to arrest you for it, no one's going to shoot you for it. You couldn't talk like this in s – in **Russia** even today, you couldn't talk like this in some of the European countries, unless you go on the streets and start fighting like they do in **Ireland**.

Q: Tell me about becoming a citizen. What was that like for you?

A: That will stay as one of the f – best thing ever happening to me. Of course, I could have been a citizen much sooner if I would have stayed with the **United States** Armed Forces. I could have become a citizen as soon as I left **La Havre** on the way to far east **Japan** to – to be a replacement soldier to occupy – the occupying forces. But since I didn't, I had to wait and I got – I was taken – I was make a ci – made a citizen in **Detroit, Michigan**. And when I went to the federal court, after I took a test – you know, they give you so much time to – to – to learn the test, who was the 16th president, who was this, who was that, and to become a citizen, with a number of people with you, and you get the oath and they give you a flag in your hand, that was the greatest thing ever – ever for me. And I've tell you, I have never missed an election. State, federal, presidential, none of them, never. That is my right and I kiss the ground for that.

Q: Have you gotten involved much with politics in this country?

A: Not really, not really. The on – sometime when I speak about my experiences, politics do come up and I very kindly turn it down because I am not knowledgeable in politics. I read the papers, I have my opinions. My opinions are for me and my family. I will not s – force something on someone else. I will not tell you that I'm a Republican or a Democrat because I am a person for persons. And that's the way it is, I don't get involved. I do help once in awhile with some campaign people, they say would you do this or would you do that. I don't do any fundraisers, but I help sometimes, organizations, you know, they ask me to. I don't belong to too many organizations. I belong to the men's clu – men's brother – brotherhood in our temple, and I'm a member of the temple [indecipherable] the Jewish community relations. And I have the highest soccer referee license you can get, and those are the organizations that I'm part of.

Q: I wanted to ask you about, and in the context of your st – putting the soccer into this context, what things have given you pleasure, have given you joy since you've been back from **Auschwitz**? What are the things that you have, in the past 50 years gotten the most –

A: Well, first and foremost, my children and my wife, that's the first thing. There's n- not the greatest pleasure than to see childrens achieve, and I can say about my children, they're all achievers, every one of them. Second, of course, watching my grandchildren being born. That is another pleasure, there's five of them and sixth one coming. I am not much of a art museum person, but being that the childrens are very

much involved in arts, I do go with them sometimes, in fact Sunday we went to the museum with my wife. And of course, the enjoyment that I have is teaching young people the game of soccer. I happen to be one of the people, unfortunately the second person that was part of it passed away at a very young age, at the age of 47, an Englishman. The two of us started soccer in the state of **Indiana**, so to speak. So to speak, no, we – we used to travel the state to give clinics to coaches and to kids. And we would take our players, who were already more knowledgeable in soccer than the rest of the state of **Indiana**, and take the kids with us and we would let the kids do a lot of the soccer s – stuff for them, you know, to teach them how to handle a soccer ball, how to – how to balance a soccer ball, how to juggle a soccer ball. And we also helped them to buy equipment, soccer equipment. We went into that business, the two of us, for awhile. So that's another pleasure that I have. This year I was selected – elected to the soccer Hall of Fame, State of **Indiana**. I have number of trophies which I received from my job as a soccer person, as a soccer coach and a soccer referee, number of citation. Oh, there is a humanitarian award named after me also, I don't know if I showed it to you or not, but there is one. It's hanging at one of the – the largest school – the larger high school in the state of **Indiana** called North Central High School. This just called the **Mike Vogel's** Humanitarian award. Every year a person is added to that award, which is hanging at the school. I have a copy of – a – a small replica of the award here at home, and that was given to me three years ago for soccer and other humanitarian things that I do.

Q: What are the other things that you do that you've gotten involved with in terms of f
– philanthropic activities or – or –

A: Just lectu – mostly lecturing, speaking, and of course last May 24th, I was given the
honorary doctorate de-degree of public service at one of the f-fine university of state of
Indiana called **DePauw** University, which was given to me at the graduation
commencement May 24th. That was a nice one. Last year I was selected in the state of
Indiana for the **Jefferson** Award. The **Jefferson** Award was founded by **Robert Taft,**
Jr., Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and a guy named **Sam Beard** whose father was a
congressman at one time. The **Jefferson** Award is given to people who – ev-every
state – this is – this is nationwide –

Q: Mm-hm.

A: – who do volunteer work, like speaking and helping the children and teaching
children and doing li – working with homeless and so on. Each state selects their own.
There was 127 people nominated from the state of **Indiana**, only 10 are selected for
the na – for the **Jefferson** Award, and then there is a luncheon at the hotel here in
town, and the 10 people that were the winners of the – from the 127 and their families
and friends, they all come to the lunch, and you have a sponsor. I was sponsored by
“**The Indianapolis Star News.**” And this year – last year they gave, for the first time,
a 500 dollar money to be given to your charit – favorite charity. My money was given
to the Holocaust Museum in **Washington**, my 500 dollars. And from the 10 people,
each state selects one person to represent the state in **Washington, D.C.** So now you

won the national award. You come to the national award for three days and you stay in **Washington** at a beautiful hotel. You are allowed to bring one guest, in my case I brought my wife. And then there are two gala dinners and lunches, and you meet the other people and everyone talks about what he did. You give – first evening you get two minutes to say how did you come to given – be given this en – honor. Then the gala dinner is held on Tuesday nights and this dot – this year was – last year was held at the women’s museum in arts, and it’s a beautiful, beautiful dinner, a dress up dinner with all sorts of dignitaries there, and congressmen, senators. This dinner was funded by **Heinz** company, h – **Heinz** 57. And the guests are first asked to come down, e-each given a number of table where you are sitting and we were asked to sit at a front table. And when we got there and my wife – and the guests go down first. Then they announce us one by one, alphabetically order and you shake hands with all these dignitaries. And when you come to your table – when I got to my table the president of the **Jefferson** Awards, **Sam Beard** comes up to me and he says, after dinner I would like to speak to you. Well, I didn’t know what he wanted, so little nervous about it, but anyway, dinner was over, we come to the hotel and he’s talking to me. He says, tomorrow morning we’re going to the **United States** Supreme Court and I want you to be the closing speaker. I’ll give you three minutes to speak. I got a little nervous. I told my wife, what am I gonna tell them? She says, why don’t you jot something down? I said, you know how I am with writing. What am I gonna – you know, I don’t want to tell them about the Holocaust too much. So I started writing but I threw it away. Next

morning we go to the **United States** Supreme Court. **Sandra Day O'Connor** opened our session. And **Sam Beard** was going to introduce me to speak. I was fol – I followed **Sam Nunn**, the guy who was – was – founded **C-Span** and **Julian Bond**, you know who he is? Okay, and **Rosalynn Carter**. And I followed **Rosalynn Carter** – **Rosalynn Carter**, the pr – former President **Carter's** wife. So I gave them a three minute speech. That was the greatest honor I could – anybody could bestow on me, speaking at the **United States** Supreme Court.

Q: It's a long way from – from the **K** rations at the –

A: Well, it was long way from **Slovakia**. And I told them, 50 years ago I arrived to this beautiful free country called **United States of America** from the ashes of **Auschwitz** to life. My parents, my grandparents, my two brothers, my two sisters all perished, all de – murdered, gassed and burned in the largest death factory of all Nazi concentration camp. Yet today, I have a mission. My mission is to speak for the six million who cannot speak for themselves. Today I speak at colleges, universities, high schools, civic and religious organization. Not everyone is an anti-Semite in the world. Not everyone is a **Kurt Waldheim**, **Marge Schott**. Yet, look at me, **Mike Miso Vogel**, Jewish boy born in a small village of **Slovakia**, speaking to you in this great place called **United States** Supreme Court of **America**. I thank you for this honor. That was my speech. I – I missed a couple lines, but that was my speech. And I tell you, my wife tells me that everybody cried. So, that was the honor. I had a beautiful speech also at **DePauw** University. I mise – I got it here to show you, but –

Q: I – I know we’ve been doing this for awhile, I – I – trying to focus on the – the few last questions that – that I want to make sure to – to fit in here. Many of the things I wanted to ask you you’ve already – we’ve already talked about just in the natural flow of our conversation. I’m just looking through the list here. Talked about that. There – there’s some – some questions that they’re asking everyone just to – to sort of see what the similar experiences of other survivors have been, so this is a very general question and I mean you – you’ve touched on this in many ways, but can you talk about the long term impact that your experiences during the Holocaust have had on you? That’s a – that’s a tough – I think it’s a pretty enormous question. It’s – it – for example, we talked about in your family and raising your children. How about in terms of trust, your ability to trust people?

A: Well, it – that took awhile also. That took – took quite awhile before I – before I believed or trusted, cause you know, that was not an easy part for me to do. How could you trust after you went through what we went through? How could you have faith in so-someone, you know, in someone’s word, but you didn’t, you know – here in this country, the BS system gets – gets – gets in the way, you know, and people tell – tells – tell tales. Yet, I had a hard – I had a hard time with trusting. I trusted my wife and children, but I was afraid to trust someone else. So that took a long time. Today I can tell by a person’s handshake. When the guy looks in your eyes when he shakes your hand and he shakes it like he means it, not like a dead fish, you can almost say

that here is a guy who is halfway decent and honest. So I had a hard time with trusting.

Faith and trust was a hard thing for me, hard thing.

Q: What about just being with Gentiles?

A: No problem, none whatsoever. None whatsoever. I-I have a tremendous sense of humor, I tell jokes about ra – not racial, I'm talking about ethnic jokes, to me that's – I tell them all the time. But I have no problem with Gentiles.

Q: But I meant when you first – whe-when you first came over, were you –

A: Oh, when I first came over? Well, I first came over to **Detroit**, we lived in a Jewish neighborhood. So only Gentiles I met was in the business world, wa – you know, in the store that I worked in. So I didn't have too much outside of my business life to do with the Gentiles. But now, today, I have no problem with them. I – I work with them, I – I play soccer with them, against them, and they all respect me, I respect them. I have no problem whatsoever.

Q: I was just wondering if that took awhile –

A: No, no –

Q: – to develop?

A: – no, no, not in this country, not at all.

Q: I know you've traveled back to **Europe** for different reasons and I know you went to your wife's hometown.

A: Yeah.

Q: Have you been back to **Slovakia**?

A: I have no desire, none whatsoever. I don't want ever to step in that Slovakian town that I came from. And people tell me I'm crazy, that I should do it, I should see what it's going on. A friend of mine who just gave me the book I told you about, he just came from there. It was just before – when we got to **Israel** he – day before we got there he got home from there. And it used to be a 14,000 dollar – 14,000 population is now 40,000. And he said there are no Jews there, of course, and th-there are no Jews left in **Slovakia**, I mean sla – any Jew who would live there would be crazy. But I have no desire to go there, no. I went to **Prague**, but not – not to **Slovakia**. I went to the **Czech Republic** which was then still **Czechoslovakia**, but I have no desire. I don't want to see a Slovak. I understand your mom comes from that world, but –

Q: She's not born there. That's her –

A: Yeah, that's her ma –

Q: Her ancestors, yeah.

A: – her parents, yeah.

Q: Are there sounds or smells that evoke past experiences for you?

A: None.

Q: No, okay.

A: Nothing.

Q: You're walking down the street and there's something, boom.

A: No, ba – something burning? No, nothing.

Q: A few more historical things that – we talked about **Vietnam**, we talked about **Eichmann's** trial, we talked about – what about the **McCarthy** era?

A: Well, let me tell you. Then I was such a strong American believer, so strong anti-communist, cause I knew what that was, communism, that I almost went along with that – that program and – and – almost. But then, of course, when I heard the way **Joe McCarthy** was handling the – it was on – televised in those days, you know, and I just couldn't – this guy was a hate monger. And I considered him worse than the Nazis after I've se – after I seen him for awhile. At first I said, he's fighting communists, it's good. **Hoover** is fighting communists too, that's good. But neither one of these guys were good a – good Americans, so to speak, because they were hate mongers. **Hoover**, what did he do? He went after the wrong people all the time, you know. **Martin Luther King**. What did he want from **Martin Luther King**? Here was a man who was a peaceful demonstrator. He pi – th – he th – he never wanted to throw a rock on anybody, he didn't do any of that, he was very peaceful. He put him to jail, he put him to jail, and he was nicely quiet, with his good voice, telling the world what it's all about. **McCarthy** was just as bad as the Nazis. He went after people whom he consider – whom he – whom he accused of being a communist. He took so many lives away from people – so many livelihoods away from people in – in – in those years. He was the – one of the worst thing – he was an animal.

Q: Did it frighten you at all? I understand that you were supportive of the – the – the larger aims and the – were a good anti-communist, but w-were you frightened at all to

see – I mean, there were some similarities it – it seems, in retrospect with the techniques used to accuse people and – and you know, neighbors against neighbors and –

A: Right, right.

Q: – people turning each other in, and –

A: Mm-hm, yup, yup. I'd w – it frightened me, because it was similar like what happened – here – here is a Jew living, here is a – you know, they're – they're telling on people, or how to catch people, telling on your neighbors to save your own skin.

Q: Oh, we'll let you go if you tell about all the other people in your club.

A: Yeah, well, that's right. We'll – we'll – well, your okay, but you tell me e- everything about the other people and your – your – you're a free man. And that's – that's what McCarthyism was.

Q: Did you know anybody that got ga – caught up in that, was a victim of that?

A: No, not really. I knew – I knew someone in **Binghamton, New York** when we lived there that he was falsely accused – she was falsely accused. She went once to a – a communist meeting with her – one of her friends and they accused her of being a member. This was during the **McCarthy** era. But of course did – nothing happened to her. And he – her husband was working for **GE** at the time as an engineer and they could have gotten in trouble, you know, he could have lost his job.

Q: I was just wondering because there were a disproportionate number of Jews involved, Jews in the –

A: Lot of Jews involved.

Q: – labor –

A: Labor and actors, and –

Q: – and – and academia.

A: – academia, yeah.

Q: And so many – it seemed like if you were involved with any sort of Jewish youth group in the 30's –

A: Mm-hm.

Q: – well, that was enough reason to be.

A: It was the – the **Workmen** Society was another one, Jewish group, **Workmen** Society and they all called them communists, because it's a **Workmen** Society.

Q: You were too old to be drafted for **Korea**, correct?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: You – you –

A: Well actually I wasn't. No, I wasn't.

Q: Yeah, I was thinking you would have been just in the – the –

A: In the 20's.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah, I wasn't. I was in the 20's.

Q: Mm-hm. Did you – we – you – you mentioned **Martin Luther King** earlier, with some – clearly someone that you re – had respect for.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Tal – let's talk a little bit about the – the Civil Rights movement in this country, the – for blacks that were looking to –

A: Mm-hm. See, when I came to this country, there was still lynching in the south, okay? In the 40's and 50's it was – late 40's, it was still – you could still – there was some lynching in the south, and we couldn't understand it. When we – when we move – when I first met my wife in **Detroit**, went to look for an apartment in the apartment building, there was a sign, no Jews, no dogs, no niggers. Now this is coming from **Auschwitz** to si – to this, right? Now, let's go to the Civil Right movements. I never marched with them, okay, never went with them anywhere, but I was very much for those people, very much so. The demonstration, the burning, the si – the big cities like **Detroit** was burning, **Los Angeles** was burning. I was against that, that part bothered me. What were they burning? They were burning their own neighborhoods. That was the worst part, you see, that part was wrong on them. But wha – what e – what else were they doing? They were looting. See, that was wrong – wrong, too. See, they went the wrong way. They were afraid to go to the better neighborhoods, but they went to their own ne – they burned their own neighborhood, burned their own houses down, burned their own storekeepers down. So – but I tell you, racism and anti-Semitism unfortunately, unless the whole world will change, as – and it's gonna take awhile, the whole **United States** will change, it will stay with us.

Q: What would you i – if it were in your power to engineer how things were done, let's just say in this country, not even the world, where would you start to – to stop anti-Semitism and racism?

A: Now, or then?

Q: Now.

A: Now?

Q: If you were starting – if now they said, **Mike Vogel**, you're in charge of **Indianapolis** and how we're gonna do things from now on, wh-where would you start?

A: I would show them what racism and anti-Semitism can do to a folk – can do to people. I would tell them about it. What can happen when – when anti-Semitism and racism flourishes. That people are being murdered, people are being deprived of freedom, people are being deprived of that. If this is the kind of world we want in the **United States**, this is not what we need. What we need is education. We need people – better schools, we need to teach people about indifference, we need te – teach people about all of us are equal and that's what we should do. As a survivor I'm speaking to you today that racism, anti-Semitism should be abolished an-and quickly.

Q: It's not an act of Congress though, that you can –

A: Unfortunately, it's not an act of Congress, yeah. And we have some people there in the Congress that are – that are anti-Semites or – or racists. They try to be nice, but

they're – they're – they're – right down – deep down they're – they're – they're racists and anti-Semites.

Q: Are there any people – let's see, how can I ask the question. Have there been a-any p-political leaders or individuals in – in the – in the intervening 50 years, other than **McCarthy** who we talked about, that you were particularly worried about, or that – fearful about, or that – that you thought were –

A: Oh, during the **Demjanjuk** trial in **Israel**, there was a cup – there was a guy from **Ohio**, can't think of his name, a congressman from **Ohio**, but he was an anti-Semite and he didn't m-mince words about it. Another one is **Pat Buchanan** is – is the one that I fear a lot. And I don't know why he always ends up getting the same job back on **CNN** on – on – in same program he gets on. He is another guy that I'm deathly afraid of that if he ever gets any power, what he could do. He is a clear anti-Semite who denies the Holocaust very much. Him and his sister. And one of the actors, **Marlon Brando**. **Marlon Brando** was on the lar – **Larry King** show last year, before I went to the **Jefferson** awards. And he said **Hollywood** is controlled by Jews, and if you don't go through the Jews, you don't get anywhere in **Hollywood**. Now look at him, he has made millions in **Hollywood**, and if **Hollywood** controlled the Jews, they certainly helped him.

Q: What in particular concerns you about **Pat Buchanan**, for example, what's your fear that –

A: **Pat Buchanan**, his politics. He sounds like an anti anybo – anti-all – all an – he’s an anti-Semite, anti-race. And he’s the one who protected and defended **Demjanjuk** through the government, **OSI**, Office of Special Investigation had the wrong man, as far as being **Demjanjuk**, but did not have the wrong man as far as being a former Nazi guard. He was.

End of Tape Three, Side B

Beginning Tape Four, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of a **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with **Michael Vogel**. This is tape number four, side **A**, and we are finishing up the interview with a last couple of questions and you were in the midst of –

A: **Pat Buchanan**?

Q: – yeah, and th – you mentioned the **Demjanjuk** –

A: **Demjanjuk** was the guy who was called th – th-the – the – them – the – they – the – **Ivan** the Terrible.

Q: Right.

A: You know, it was –

Q: **Treblinka**?

A: – **Demjanjuk**, yeah. He was one of the – he was a – supposedly in **Treblinka**. But it ended a – it turned out he was not in **Treblinka**. He was not **Ivan** the Terrible. He was a ca-camp guard, a Nazi camp guard in **Sobibor** and two more other camps. They also got the wrong information about him. He came to this country illegally, lying about his past. He committed crime against humanity and he should be punished for it, but he wasn't. Oh, he was punished, he was a year and a half in prison in **Israel**. **Pat Buchanan** was very much against the Holocaust. The people do not remember what happened. The people identified him wrongly and he was never a Nazi. He was a poor Ukrainian who came – emigrated to **America**, went to work in a **Cleveland** automobile factory, where he made a damn good living and never revealed his past.

Demjanjuk was a Nazi, and he's living in **Cleveland**, maybe not as comfortably as he'd like to today because of all that had happened to him, but he's still there, free man and his children think he's the greatest thing on two feet.

Q: I'm – I'm winding down here.

A: All right.

Q: Did you – ho-how would you say you were – have – okay, how can I – we've talked about that. Does a day go by – I know now you're rather involved with – and speak about – an-and you've got many books and – and correspondences with other survivors and with academics and writers and whatnot. Prior to this time, do many days go by that you're not reminded of your experience?

A: Unfortunately not. **Auschwitz** always comes up, always, every day, somehow or other – some – some – somewhere or other. You know, especially since the Swiss situation happened, I was asked – in fact, I was written up in the paper about the Swiss ca – Swiss monies, gold money. Well, it – it – it got so that every day I was being called by someone in the – in the media, just about. And I must tell you this, that I certainly didn't know about the Swiss money. Didn't know about the Swiss gold. I knew about the gold that was yanked out of the Jewish teeth. I knew about the money that was confiscated from the Jews when they arrived to **Auschwitz**, but I certainly didn't know that it went to **Switzerland**. There are gold bars in **Switzerland** with – with a swastika on it and – in – in – in **Switzerland**, in Swiss banks. It came from **Auschwitz** and other camps, that it was yanked out of teeth that they were gassing. So

never a day goes by without something happening, something somebody mention – mentions **Auschwitz** to me, or somebody comes up to me and asks me something about it. Unfortunately that's part of my life.

Q: Do you ever wish that you could just say, you know, I'm going on vacation from this?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: You know, I – for the next –

A: There are times.

Q: – for the next –

A: There are times that I say, hey listen, not today, okay? You want to see me, come to hear me speak someplace else, but leave me – let me eat my lunch. But you know, it never happens. Some guy went up to me, oh I seen you in the paper about the **Jefferson** award. I've seen you in the paper about a – about the doctorate degree you received at **DePauw**. And it's – it's always starts and you – you know, I'm – I'm the – I'm a people's person so I – I – I – I don't want to be rude to anyone, so I gave them a couple of minutes and that's it. But there are times I say, listen, not today, please. Let's – let's talk about it some other time.

Q: You – you talked about how you ended up speaking about your experiences to your children and – and how you wished you'd handled that differently. Now you have grandchildren. What conversations have you had with your grandchildren and how has

–

A: Much more than my children.

Q: And it –

A: Much more.

Q: Why don't you just talk maybe about one grandchild and – and how you've – came to talk with them about it.

A: Well, first we have an o – grandchild that's 21 years old now, she is – so she came to me and she has my film. She came and brought the film to school, and she asks questions and I tell her. This grandchild knows more than my children ever did. But I have the youngest grandchild and – I should say the 10 year old granddaughter who came with us to **Israel** on this trip, and she was allowed to go to **Yad Vashem**. This kid stuck with me like glue while I was speaking and she would not leave me for a moment, she was so tight next to me, holding onto me. And after that, she says, Grandpa, that was very sad. The museum and also your speech. So th – our grandchildren know much, much more now than our kids ever knew. So the 10 year old asked me to promise her when she is 12 years old, she wants to hear the whole story. She says, by 12, I'm gonna be better equipped to listen to it. And I will do it for her. Just before her **Bar Mitzvah** – her **Bat Mitzvah**.

Q: Hm. We talked about that.

A: Didn't you finish yet?

Q: Just about. Trust me. We talked about that, talked about that. We really talked about all the things I –

A: We gotta do the corrections over there.

Q: Yes, but that's not something that need – need be done on tape.

A: No, no? Okay.

Q: You can just – we just need the correct spelling of each of those names.

A: Okay. All right.

Q: The last question I was going to ask you, I – I think I basically already asked you, and that's how do we keep this from happening again?

A: Teach the people. Let them read the history books. Indifference. Indifference is a word that I started using with **Elie Wiesel**. And that's the word that is very important. Don't look at me what I look like, look at me what I am. And listen to me what I got to say.

Q: Is there anything you would like to say in closing that we haven't touched on?

A: No, I think –

Q: – that you feel strongly about?

A: – we – we covered just about everything, but I want to say something about the Holocaust Museum in **Washington**. I respect this organization very, very much. The staff at the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum, whom I respect an awful lot. Everyone that I ever was in touch with, in contact with. These people are professionals. And I hope when the day comes that there no longer will be any survivors, that these people at the Holocaust Museum will carry on, so **Auschwitz** will

not become a legend. I want to thank them for all that they have done. Thank you, Holocaust Museum.

Q: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. **Vogel**. This concludes the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with **Michael Vogel** on this 10th day of July, 1997.

Thank you.

A: You're welcome.

End of Tape Four, Side A

Conclusion of Interview