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United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Cornelius Loen
July 11, 1999
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of an audio taped interview with Cornelius Loen, conducted by Regine Beyer on July 11, 1999 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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Interview with Cornelius Loen
July 11, 1999

Beginning Tape One, Side A

Question: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Jeff and Toby Herr collection. This is an interview with Cornelius Loen, conducted by Regine Beyer on July 11th, 1999 in Mr. Loen's home. This is a follow up interview to a USHMM videotaped interview conducted with Cornelius Loen on November fifth, 1990. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum gratefully acknowledges Jeff and Toby Herr for making this interview possible. This is tape number one, side A.

Answer: Do you have it on?

Q: That's it. So --

A: 1990, nine years ago --

Q: It's a long time.

A: -- nine years ago, Washington, frightens me.

Q: Yeah. Frightens you?

A: Was a young man.

Q: You still are a young man --

A: Yeah, well --

Q: -- but -- but -- but before we get off, I should ask you my first question, actually.

A: The age.

Q: What is -- of course the age thing. How old are you, when were you born, and --

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A: That's -- that's interesting.

Q: -- and your names.

A: I have to tell both, huh? Okay. Born in 1922, May the second in Novi Sad, Yugoslavia, which m-means I'm s -- 77 years old young. But I feel 57.

Q: Good.

A: What else?

Q: Your names?

A: Cornelius Loen, spelled L-o-e-n.

Q: Were you -- were you born that name?

A: No, no. My original name was Lowenberg. Mountain lion in German.

Q: We t -- we -- we talk about the change of the name a little later on --

A: Of course.

Q: -- since this is sort of the official introduction. And now that we know who is talking to us, I would like to begin with liberation. How was liberation for you, when was it, and -- and what kind of state of mind were you?

A: Circumstances, okay. Well, I was in the labor came and one day my older friend approached me and said, Cornell, next morning when the train pulls out from the station, you and I are staying, and we going to hide someplace. We are not leaving with this train. Cause the train was going on and on and on of course. And, of course, my -- my closest friends were my age, see, he was a little bit older, maybe wiser, and he had certain ideas, you see. So next day as the train was ready to pull out, and that

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was in hunga -- Hungary, of course, he -- the train started to move and I had sort of, you know my younger friends, they were all going up on a train and I was ready to move on the train and he grabbed -- fortunately he grabbed my arm, he says, we're staying. And we didn't stay. And the train pulled out, and then we hit the road, and we walked on the highway. And after awhile we got off the highway, because it was dangerous, you know, trucks were coming with Hungarian soldiers, and maybe German soldiers, we didn't want to stay on the highway, too obvious. So we moved off the highway and about maybe quarter of a mile, half a mile, and there was some water there, and some little river, and we just sat down there and was waiting for the dark. We're thinking what's going to happen now, see? Actually it was -- well, it was Hungary in no -- ru -- th-that -- it was Romania, Romania at that time, yeah, because it was always back and forth Hungary and Romania and back and forth. And before it got dark, some Hungarian soldiers stopped on the highway and came towards the river. So we got sort of a little bit scared, but then you have to act cool, right? And as they were getting closer and closer, we got up and we waved to them. [indecipherable] come over here, here is the river, see? Came over, sa -- and they came over and then one of them asked us, he says, what are you doing? We says, ah, we got late -- we got off the train -- w-we missed the train, we're waiting. Oh. They didn't make a big issue out of it, we're lucky. Then they left. Later it became dark. A Romanian farmer came across the river and he said he is willing to hide us. So all right. Actually it was four of us, yeah, this older guy, me and two other guys

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[indecipherable]. So, we accepted, what choice do you have, right? So we went -- he took us to his little farm and we went upstairs in his barn and we were hiding there. We were hiding for a few days and suddenly we hear guns, guns, guns, Russian guns getting closer and closer. We had food, we fed us potatoes, we're not hungry, had water and everything. And -- and then he came -- one evening he cames over and he said the Russians are next door in the next village, but they celebrating. So, d -- you know, how long are they gonna celebrate? But two days later they came, the Russians and the Romanians. First thing is a Romanian soldier I remember, first thing he did, he took my watch. So wa -- so I asked him, I says -- some -- somewhat we conversed, you know. I said, why are you taking my watch? He says, I have to give it to the Russians. [indecipherable] okay. The next Romanian took my shoes, which I didn't mind because it had nails from inside, you know? So he gave me his shoes. I think it was a good trade. Anyway, so then we -- no, says, well let's start an -- let's start walking. Walking the -- th-the aim, the goal was to reach his hometown in Hungary, which was probably hundred miles from there, roughly. So we're walking, maybe we get some rides. So we walked on the highway, see? And so the Russian Cossacks on horses on the highway, shooting apple off the trees, and all that. And then came a Russian -- Russian soldiers, you know, on -- on -- on trucks, they stopped, and they asked us, they said what -- who are you? Says, well we are, you know, we were in labor camps. Th-Th -- actually didn't know exactly what you are talking about, this -- they didn't know. What do they know? So it's -- one

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[indecipherable] ask who -- who -- where you from? I says, I am from Yugoslavia. He says, wh-wh-why aren't you fighting with the partisans? [indecipherable] going to explain it. But anyway -- and I spoke Russian, fortunately. That was another thing by the way, my f -- my -- my f -- older friend was smart too, he knew with me -- he was going need the Russian language. So he was not stupid. So I spoke Russian. Okay, so oh, oh, all right, fine, fine. And a Jewish officer, Russian officer came over and was talking to me, so, are you Jewish? I say yes. He says, okay, I am too, he says, but be quiet, don't tell the Russian soldier that I'm -- they don't know that I am Jewish. Interesting. I don't recall now if that truck, or we -- I think we took a ride with them, they took us for a few miles, 20 - 30 - 40 miles, then we got off again. Well, eventually, in about two days, we got into his hometown. His wife was there, of course, his wife was a Gentile. He was also half Jewish like I was, I didn't mention that. His wife was Gentile, of course. And in his hometown, there's absolutely no sign or war. There was no sign of war, it was peace. Food like in the peacetime. Duck, geese, anything, it was just [indecipherable]. So we s -- I s -- the two guys and myself, we staying by their house, and we stayed with them, of course. The name of the city was Bekes-Gyula. It was about maybe 60 miles from Budapest --

Q: Right.

A: -- 60 - 70 miles from Budapest. We stayed there. I did not know at that time if my parents are okay -- they lived in Budapest, see? And I had a brother who was in Borr, Borr was a famous camp, you probably heard about it, the copper mines, you know,

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and they took from Hungary, these kids to Borr in ’44. Later I -- somehow I found out through somebody who came from Budapest that my parents are alive, but my brother died, he was killed in Borr. He was murdered in Borr. Later, after the war, my cousin went to Borr by the way and recovered his body and brought his body back to Novi Sad, to my hometown, where he was buried. Now, the idea was to get to Budapest, but Budapest was not liberated yet, that time, well, they were still fighting for Budapest. And then I got a job as an interpreter with -- in a Russian h-hospital. The commander was Jewish, by the way. We became sort of friends.

Q: That was in Budapest?

A: In -- no, that was still in -- in Bekes-Gyula.

Q: Ah.

A: In Bekes-Gyula, and [indecipherable] of course, from Budapest gets liberated right away, we’ll go to Budapest. Sure enough, we went to Budapest with him, with the Russian commander, and arrived in Budapest -- it was unbelievable, of course. People starving on the streets, coming over to the truck, begging for food, will give you anything. Gold rings, whatever you have, for a loaf of bread. Was pathetic. And the city looked, of course, terrible. It was just a day after liberation, still t -- heard shootings and everything. And now the idea was to find my parents. Well, I knew where they lived, see, because I lived in an apartment too, before I went to labor camp. So that was no problem to find them. So we -- we drove over there, with the truck. And my mother opened the door. She didn't know I was coming, of course, she

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opened the door, and she saw me, it was unbelievable, you know, like ah. She didn't know the circumstances. And then -- course we talked about my brother and everything, and they were in good shape, they were lucky, and then -- of course we invited -- the Russian commander stayed there in the apartment, he s -- he lived there. We -- I don't know how long I will stay, but I was very lucky. I remember one day in Budapest, I was walking down the street, and came these Russian soldiers, surrounded a whole block and took every man, every man from that block, they took into a backyard, into a big backyard, a schoolyard or something. I did not like the idea, I knew there is something wrong here, something is going to happen. So I said, I better work fast here. So I found a soldier in the group there, and I told him, hey, do me a favor. Go over to this place -- I gave him my mother's address -- find my commander, and tell him to come over here immediately, I need him. I was very, very lucky, cause the Russians were unreliable, very unreliable people. Big liars and unreliable. Now, first of all, he has to find the place. He's not a Hungarian, you know? I just give him an address. Then, he has to go, to begin with. And then he has -- and then he has to find the commander in the house and bring him over here, because this is a matter of time now, right. He did go. He did bring the commander, and the commander came in. I told him what the story is -- well, he knew, so he talked to the commander in the yard and told him, this is -- I need this man, he is my interpreter. I need him, you have to release him. Okay, that's it. He saved me. I don't have to tell you what happened to the rest of the people. Russia. Took them to

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Russia. Many of them probably died. Matter of fact, not in that group, but I know my father's -- one of his good friends from Yugoslavia originally, who was in a German concentration camp, and who came back liberated from ra -- from Germany, was caught in one of these Russian affairs, you know, taken to Russia and died in Russia. Terrible. I --

Q: W-We should probably add that your mother was a Gentile and then stayed in Budapest for --

A: Yeah, of course, that's why -- exactly, that's why how could -- she could stay because she was Gentile, and she lived in this apartment house, and the -- the land -- not the landlord, the -- the -- ha -- the keep -- not e -- the manager of the house was also, of course, Gentile and he told the soldiers when the soldiers came a few times, who are these people, he said, this is Mrs. Loen -- Lowenberg at that time, of course, and she's a Gentile person, you know, she was [indecipherable] the name, her father was actually German, the mother was Hungarian. Of course, my mother did convert, you know, but they didn't know that, originally. And then she had the opportunity to save a lot of Jewish people from this apartment house. They were moved, before, to another apartment house, downtown Budapest and my mother used to take food there. Yeah, she ta-take them -- took them food, let her in, you know, and one time one of the guards I think was objecting and so forth, and what she said, you have to let me in because these people owe me money. Something like that, you know, sh-

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she's smart. And -- and she has -- I don't know if Masha mentioned it to you in j -- in Jerusalem she has a plaque, you know, and sh -- okay.

Q: Yes, she did mention it, but we should talk a little bit more about it later on because there was also a celebration in Los Angeles, I understand [indecipherable]

A: Yeah, oh yeah, big one with George Putnam.

Q: Yeah [indecipherable]

A: Oh, she said that?

Q: She said that

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: -- I would like you to say that a little later when we --

A: Yeah, okay --

Q: -- when we get to that topic.

A: Okay. So anyway -- so then, a wa -- as I say, I was lucky, he saved me. Then I went back to -- I was going back and forth from this Bekes-Gyula, you know, where I lived with my friend, because th -- I lived there, actually. I didn't move right away back to Budapest. And we used to do some funny business, we went to Romania from Hungary and smuggled certain things. Like one time we smuggled a carload of sugar, and the Romanians mixed it with salt, so we had to throw the whole thing -- that reminded me, Stalin -- Stalin said once, he says, Romanians are not a nation, they're a profession. It's true. Was very, very disgusting, but what can you do? Amazing. I told the story the other day to a Romanian guy about the sugar, so he said

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right away, they mixed it with salt, didn't they? So he knew. This was now, in 1999. See, a Romanian. Takes a Romanian to know. But my friend, by the way, where I lived in -- in -- interestingly enough, I remember he had a brother who lived in London, who went to London before the war, and he was on the British Broadcasting Corporation, yes? His name was Haytai. I don't know what happened to him. I don't know what happened to the brother. I know one thing, the brother where we lived, it was very nice, and the wife was nice, but they were constantly fighting, which made it sort of unpleasant sometimes, you know, to live and stay and eat in a place where the -- th-the host and the hostess constantly fight. The reason I don't know. But anyway, he was too much in business, he was a businessman and preoccupied with business, and I think that's what she objected to. She was fairly young woman yet, you know, the man comes back after, you know, so many years from a labor camp and then he -- 99 percent he spends in business, you know, and one percent with the wife. But then -- then eventually, of course, we split because I did go back to Budapest and -- and stayed with my parents. Now the goal at that time was eventually to go to America where my older brother -- Masha, I'm sure mentioned it to you, Ernest le -- came in 1938, he stayed here. So we have to get somehow out here, and -- and the parents were working on it, too, but I had to leave, somehow, Hungary and go to Austria, sort of the bridge, then from Austria to America. So I had [indecipherable] first to cross the border. Couldn't go it legally. So at night, with one of my good friends who was with me in the labor camp, he was -- by the way, I don't

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know if I mentioned it before, that a lot of the guys were killed from -- on that train when we left -- oh, I didn't say that, yeah, where he pulled me away from the train and the train went on, lot of these kids were -- lot of them were murdered later in Czechoslovakia.

Q: How do you know that?

A: We knew, we found out from somebody else. Yeah, that was a fact. So that was -- I was really lucky. Who knows what would have happened? But this -- this guy -- this -- this kid who le-left Hungary with me to Austria, Segeti Pauli was my best friend. He also escaped the train, the same train, a few stations later. So whoever escaped [indecipherable] well, anyway, so at night we crossed the border, paid a few forints, or whatever, panguat, I don't remember the currency, and we crossed the border and came to Austria. So then we went to Vienna first and then [indecipherable] I was to get to a displaced camp, and we knew about two displaced camps in Linz, Linz on the Danube. It's between Salzburg and Vienna, about halfway. And so we went to this -- that was easy when you get to a displaced camp, right away you register, you know. First we went to Lakeside, which was pretty lousy conditions, but then we went to Bindermichl. Now Bindermichl was like a -- a Hilton in comparison with Lakeside, right? And got a nice room, kitchen facilities. So -- he was married, by the way, my friend, married. And so we stayed there, he and his wife and myself.

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Q: Before I ask you more questions about that, I would like to just ask you one m -- other question about wartime experience. Was there a difference that you had because you were half Jewish?

A: Oh, of course it was different, because ev -- first of all, we were -- well, i-i-in -- in that camp it was different because there was never a danger of being killed, you see? Food three times a day. I me -- not weinerschnitzel, you understand, but beans -- bean soup, a -- but food. Coffee, everything. No problem. The commander was a lieutenant, nice guy, alcoholic, was drinking, you know? And just did what he had to do. Were never any beatings, were never any threatening. Matter of fact, we didn't know at that time what was really going on, except once, where in the very beginning for instance, on weekends, I used to go back to Budapest, to my parents on weekends, it was so easy. And then we stopped at one station and there comes a train from Budapest, with people, you know, they were taking them to Poland in cattle cars. People just crying for water. So what's going on? This was the first time that we realized that something -- something is going on, you see? And -- but we couldn't get close to the train, they didn't let us close. But as I say, it was -- a lot of half Jews were killed and murdered in Auschwitz, you know, I was just lucky that we stayed there and nobody bothered to -- to -- you know, to take us anywhere. So we stayed -- a mat -- fr-from that place, by the way, then we moved, a few months later, to another place that was in Romania, Gerdameshtahausa, also we were lucky, also circumstances normal, we were burying Hungarian soldiers, they brought them from

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Russia, you know, and they're burying them, I remember it was one of the tasks we did. And in the f-first place, we were -- we did -- we build railroad tracks, you know, and unloaded railroad cars, you see. And then I remember one day German troops came, and I st -- I -- speaking German of course, so I spoke to one of the Germans and they said -- he says, today the invasion started, he told me, it's a very good feeling. And I say, oh really, bah bah and da da da. But as I say, we were lucky, you know, it was luck. Many, many times it was really luck, lucky circumstances that nothing really happened. Th --

Q: So let's -- let's go to the DP camp then, the Hilton, quote unquote, where you stayed. What -- what did you do there? What -- what happened?

A: In the -- in the camp?

Q: In the camp, yeah. Well now, going back to Austria, to [indecipherable]

A: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, Bindermichl, Bindermichl, Bindermichl. I was -- I was thinking of something else, well okay, anyway, in Austria, okay, so that was in Bindermichl, right? So in Bindermichl, nothing, black marketing, you know, no -- no big things, whatever we could do. Well, I didn't do too much in that, and I was not a -- a real expert. Some guys made a lot of money. But any -- one day I was walking down, oh, you know, in -- in the camp itself, and I saw this girl. Masha, yeah. It's a beautiful girl. Said, where did she come from? She was absolutely stunning. So it's ju -- un-unbelievable how beautiful she is. So we started talking, you know, da da da da da da, talking, talking, talking, and then started going together, I invited her

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[indecipherable] to a concert, she says, what's a concert, you know, she'd never been to a concert. She would rather go dancing, like you. But anyway, then I met her father and her stepmother, because her mother was killed in the camp, of course, with her sisters. And so we got closer and closer, and so I says -- well, eventually we got married.

Q: What did you like about her?

A: Well, she was very attractive, very attr -- different personality, she looked so different than anybody else in that camp. No, really, she was really beautiful, I -- I fell in love with her.

Q: Describe her.

A: [indecipherable]

Q: Describe her. What did she look like?

A: I don't [indecipherable]. I don't know. It's crazy, it's crazy. And so, you know, she had -- sh-she -- she -- she knew that I was -- had plans to go to America, too, and -- she had boyfriends, of course, before. As a matter of fact, she had a boyfriend who went to Italy. And he found out later from my friends -- my friends, you know, the one I told you I lived with, and his wife, he went to Italy and he met this guy, and this guy told him that he has a girlfriend in -- in Austria, and he said who? So he says, you're too late. She's -- she's getting married. Funny.

Q: So whe-when did you marry?

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A: ’47. 1947.Yeah, she was very young. Course, I was what, ’47, I was 25, Masha was probably, what is it, 18. 18? Yeah, I think she was 18. I think.

Q: [indecipherable] 17, no?

A: 17 or 18, something like that, yeah.

Q: She was born in ’30, 17.

A: Yeah. Was very young, very young. But we got married in -- in -- in Bindermichl, you know, Jewish wedding, break the glasses, everything at the end, you know?

Q: Oh, did you -- were you brought up -- you were brought up in the -- in the Jewish tradition?

A: Well yeah -- y -- really yes, that’s interesting, yes. See, my father was Jewish, my mother was Gentile, but as I say, my moth -- mother, at one time, she converted see? And i-it was a -- it was a jew -- not a religious Jewish home, you know, but tradition. Jewish holidays we celebrated. My father’s father, I mean, he was more -- you know, more Jewish, but -- but we celebrated the Jewish holidays, all the Jewish holidays. So it was a -- it was a -- really a Jewish -- I was Bar Mitzvahed when I was, you know, 13. So -- so was my older brother, too, and my -- my middle brother, who was killed. And I had interestingly enough, strange but true, I had cousins in Hungary who were Hungarians, and pro-Nazi. Well, of course, you see this is s-sad but true, pro-Nazi. I had an uncle, my mother’s brother, who walked in the night when the Hungarian army came into bu -- to -- to -- to Novi Sad, to my town in 1942, he walked in in a Nazi uniform. That’s my brothers -- my -- my mother’s brother, my Uncle Steffie,

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comes in with a Nazi uniform, with the hackenkreuz, you know, on his left arm. He says, I'm sorry [indecipherable] -- he was drinking, he liked to drink. He says, I'm sorry, but I can't help you. The reason he came. He says, I can't help you. Sad. And his wife too, of course they were all brought -- and like I say, my -- my cousin in Budapest was in Hungarian army. We all s -- the youngsters, you know, they used to come to Yugoslavia in the summertime. We were pretty well to do, you know, they were sort of poor people, so they -- we brought them, you know, to Yugoslavia on resorts, you know, they stay there. And they were always, you know, different than we were. Th-They were -- were Catholics, you know, pretty religious Catholics. So we always had these political arguments, you know. And there again, they -- they couldn't help us too much when was a big pogrom in Yugoslavia, in Novi Sad, you heard about it, in 1942, when they killed 1500 Jews in one day and everything, and nobody would help, nobody. You couldn't go to anybody. That's when --

Q: So they didn't want to help.

A: Nobody help. Th-That's when my -- my father's brother and his wife and the daughter and the whole family was killed in one -- they shot and thrown in the Danube river. Was very, very cold day. They -- the Danube was frozen, they had to dig holes to shoot. And the Croatian people, the Croatians across the Danube river were applauding. Nice. Very nice people, Croatians. Murderers. But anyway, like I say -- okay, so Masha and I, right, so we started corresponding and writing to America, to my brother and getting the affidavits ready, da da da. My parents left

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Europe earlier, they left in -- yes, in ’48, one year before we went. And bad luck. As it happened, my father send a lot of things in mail, Persian carpets, yeah. Nice paintings. A Persian carpet is the most valuable item. Everything was stolen. All the crates came empty and the insurance company didn’t pay a nickel because the things were open. But yet that’s why they said they could -- they -- he said, the things were stolen in Europe obviously, not during shipping. He couldn’t collect a penny. That was like the [indecipherable] now, you know. He didn’t pursue that, he shou -- and I s -- and I am sure it’s too late now for me to do anything about that. I don’t even know --

Q: So he-he -- he -- they ha -- came here and had nothing?

A: Noth -- and the cou -- [indecipherable] empty so they couldn’t prove anything. That’s ridiculous. I don’t know if I could do anything about it today because I don’t -- do not recall, now everybody died there -- died -- mother died, my brother just died a -- seven, eight weeks ago, my older brother. So I have no idea who they arranged wit -- with. Could have been a German company, I don’t know. But anyway, that was --

Q: Let’s -- let’s talk a little bit more about Austria. You worked for the Joint?

A: Yes, the Joint Distribution Committee.

Q: Could you say something?

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A: Yeah, I worked for the Joint for -- since 1947 to -- in ’49, two years, in Linz, in Linz yeah, with -- spoke English already, some -- not as well, but pretty good. Good enough t-to be able to work for the Joint.

Q: What did you do for them?

A: Just office, you know, working in the office. Nothing, no special -- clerical work, mostly. You see, it was the American -- I remember one of them, what was his name, Antel was the first one. He was in charge and he -- I don’t know, I heard some shady stories about him too, doing some business, you know. The next guy was Kaufman, came after Antel, he’s a very nice guy, Kaufman and his wife. We came very, very close. As a matter of fact, he was from San Diego, and later, when we came to America in the early 50’s, we met once in San Diego with this guy, yeah, he was -- he was a terrific guy. But the Joint was a great organization, it was really beautiful, you know? Would have been very, very hard if you wouldn’t have any help or, you know, support.

Q: Did they approach you, or did you want to work for them?

A: Oh, you know, I do -- I -- frankly I do not re -- I think I probably went there. I -- I can’t exactly remember the circumstances, but I -- I would say I probably went there and tried to, you know, get a job and I got a job. We have a lady here right now, a good friend of ours, Lydia, she worked for the Joint also, in Linz.

Q: How many languages d -- and which ones did you speak, by the way [indecipherable]

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A: Well, at that time I used to speak, of course, Hungarian, which I do speak fluently right now. Could say that was my mother tongue in -- Hungarian. And then Yugoslav, of course, Serbian. And German of course, I spoke as a kid. And then later I studied Russian in the [indecipherable] schools, you know, cause I knew eventually I might need it. And -- but I -- I forgot already Russian quite a bit. It's easy -- you -- you have to keep up languages, it's -- it's -- it's very easy to forget. Very easy to forget. And French, I used to speak French quite well, also, no practice, you know, in many, many years, you forget. It's a beautiful language.

Q: Okay, before we go on, it's already time to switch the first --

A: [indecipherable] time.

Q: This is the end of tape one, side A, interview with Cornelius Loen and it's -- we're actually having a good time.

A: After, yeah -- it-it's off?

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 Cornelius Loen. This is tape number one, side B.

A: Ah [indecipherable] here.

Q: So how did -- yeah, you -- so you were about to go to America.

A: Exactly. Now we are on, right?

Q: Yeah, we are on.

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A: Okay. And -- yes, so waiting for the papers, was only a matter of time. As a matter of fact, Masha's parents got the Canadian papers before we got ours. Oh yeah. They -- they got it in '48, I believe, yeah, had to be '48, and they went to Canada, cold country. As a matter of fact, I had to lend -- my father-in-law was an excellent tailor, and he made me a -- a gorgeous winter coat. I had to give him my winter coat because I figured in California you don't need a winter coat, and he's was -- I gave him my -- his creation back, which he appreciated, certainly. Toronto. And they did leave in '48, and we of course, stayed another full year before we got the papers in '49. That was in July.

Q: How did you live then, and how did you make your living, or how did you survive in that year -- during that year?

A: Oh, that -- there was no question, so we got food, you know, there's food from, you know, through the Joint, and s -- there were never a problem.

Q: So what was --

A: Never a problem.

Q: -- when -- when you came to America, what was it like to see your brother again? Your relative --

A: Oh, you don't want to hear the boat, the story on the boat and everything, not important.

Q: Ah, tell me the story of the boat again, too.

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A: Yeah, well it's no big deal, I mean, we got this -- we boarded this ship, Royal Eltinge was the name, it was one of those Liberty ships, you know, in Bremen, right, Bremenhaven. And I don't know what to tell you, I got seasick right away in the first few hours, in the channel. It was the -- one of the biggest storms. There's always a storm there, but this was one of the biggest, supposedly. It was absolutely terrible. Those days, the boats, you know, they were not balanced as well as they are now, supposedly. But anyway, it was ter -- Masha too, oh. Couldn't eat for at least one day. It was just terrible, terrible experience. And some people were eating and drinking. It's amazing, you know, some people don't get affected by it. And that -- on the boat, of course, I was the interpreter, I remember. You know, every so on I had to go on the microphone and tell the people about the situation, da da da da, prepare them for everything. And took about 12 to -- 12 days I believe, because we went to New Orleans through New York -- it's a longer trip, and as far as seasickness, then it stopped and the sea was calm, no problem. Then we arrived in New Orleans, was August, and received by the Joint on the pier and then they took us for dinner. The first time in my life did I see white bread. You know, that so-called white bread, which we didn't see in Europe, and it looked interesting. It -- it -- it -- it -- I thought it was a cake, first, see? Was hard to get used to it though.

Q: You didn't like it?

A: No, no, no, no, no, no. Well, I didn't realize that the only way that you can eat that is toasted. But a lot of people do eat it, you know. Then, let's see, New Orleans, we

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must have spent one day, maybe, one and a half days. And then, by train of course, we drove to Los Angeles. First time I saw, actually, black people. Still segregated. On the train, in the restaurants, which was amazing to us. But they told Masha -- Masha -- I remember Masha -- one of the girls in the Jewish committee that told Masha, don't -- don't -- don't talk about it, don't pay too much attention to this, you know, this -- this is just a facts -- facts of life. It was interesting, to us it was a very, very unusual experience, in '49, right?

Q: Well, how did you feel about that?

A: Well, it -- it was weird, it was strange, you see. We didn't see any arguments or fighting or anything like that, but it was still -- the restrooms, you know, colored, white, colored, white. Was sort of weird, especially after in the concentration camps, you know. So -- okay, so we arrived August -- end of August, I believe, I -- in Los Angeles. My brother, my sister -- ex-sister-in-law, and her daughter, who was a young girl, waiting for us on the union -- Union Station, yeah, right. So we arrive, the [indecipherable] and we drove over to my mother's house. My mother that time -- yeah, the moth -- the -- that time, yeah, my mother lived still with my brother in my brother's house in Burbank. A real hot day, real warm day. You know, celebration, hi, kisses back and forth, hello. Haven't seen my -- my brother since 1937, yeah. He had a -- some business going here. Masha must have mentioned it to you about the scooter business he had during the war, he didn't see -- during the war he had -- he was not a -- unfortunately he was a real intellectual, a very bright man, very

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intelligent guy, but business sense he did not have. It's -- it's interesting how some people, you know, they're just born with a sense of business, you know, they can make anything out of nothing, see? He was a kind -- he was just too much of an intellectual, and he n -- he knew too much. Later on, of course, he became a management consultant and he was actually doing good jobs, you know, for many, many companies. But on his own, he could -- he would never succeed as a businessman. His -- his good friend, who he came with to America in 1938, he was just the opposite, you know? He came from a business oriented family, his father's own -- anyway, he went into the clothing business and eventually made a lot of money in the clothing business [indecipherable]

Q: Did your brother what -- what had happened? Was he in-informed?

A: In the concentration -- you mean, in Europe? Somehow, not much. Later, you know, he found out. Lot of people didn't really know. We didn't know, in -- lived in Europe and didn't know too much i-in the beginning, you see? He didn't, he didn't. He heard about, of course, my brother being killed in -- in -- in -- and then whatever is in the papers here about the concentration camps. Radio, television, as much. So, then we stayed there, I think, in their house for a few days and then we eventually moved, my mom, my father and Masha and I moved to West Hollywood. West Hollywood, Clark Street, in 1949, yeah a few -- a month later, I think, or maybe two weeks later we moved. Oh, it was impossible situation to live, you know, six people in one house, seven people. And on top of it, my late brother, as I said before, he just

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died a few weeks ago, and was 84 years old, he was not the easiest guy to get along with. A very complicated man.

Q: Did your mother and -- and Masha get along that well, or your --

A: Masha, Masha, yes. In the beginning it was a little bit hard, you see. They -- lot of -- unfortunately many times, you know, parents do not accept, oh poor little son, you know, they -- ridiculous, and it was tension, tension there in the beginning, much tension. Matter of fact, eventually -- I don't remember how many weeks we stayed together, but eventually we had -- we moved. Not far from them, a matter of fact, few blocks from them, but we had to move to another apartment, Masha and I, because it was just constant, just tension. And even with my brother, Masha never really got along, all these years, was always -- but as I say, he was a difficult guy, he didn't get along with his wife either, and with his daughter, his own daughter hasn't spoken to him for 15 years at least, maybe 20 years. Later she -- just last few years, two years ago I think she made peace. So she realized he's getting, you know, older, older, older and then -- but it -- it was not easy. The beginning was not easy. But we had a good time, we --

Q: When you started looking for -- for -- for work, what -- did it help you that you spoke languages?

A: Well, ha -- yes and no, no -- you know, I -- first I says, gonna get a job, I went to the Roosevelt Hotel, I remember, on Hollywood Boulevard, trying to get a job, you know, I speak several languages, da da da, fill out an application and nothing

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happened eventually. Then the first job -- actually the first real job I got was in a motel. Nice, huh? Fa-Fascinating job in a motel on Sunset Boulevard, East Sunset Boulevard, that's near Los Angeles, downtown. Night job. I can tell you, it was fascinating. I didn't realize that time that it's dangerous or not, hold-ups. But it was a job, I got it through a Jewish organization, as a matter of fact. A Jewish guy owned that motel. As it happens, the motel is still there. It's '99, I saw it the other day, I drive by it quite often. I don't know who owns it. I'm sure not that Jewish guy because he was an old man, but it's there.

Q: Were you armed in that job?

A: I -- no, armed, are you kidding? Not even a knife. Nah, it's mostly guys came in with girls, you know, at night, to motels. And pay was very low, pay was very low. I didn't stay there too long, I believe maybe two -- two, three weeks, four weeks at tops. That same time Masha had a job downtown in a factory, she probably told you, yeah. Then after I left the motel -- trying to remember now, recollect here, what was my next job? Oh yeah, my brother had the neighbor in Burbank, he -- and this is a German guy, Erb, Max Erb, he had a downtown Los Angeles -- scientific instruments he used to sell, import from Germany, Zeiss, you know, and microscopes, and sell and rent to USC and UCLA, see? It was a big business, and I got a job there in the shipping department, I remember, in the shipping department. And I was there perhaps five, six months. Couldn't get along, something happened, that was it, that was the end of that story. Then I joined a milk company here, Arden Farms as a

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salesman. As a salesman I was soliciting new accounts. You know, o-opening new accounts for the milk company. Tho -- time -- it's still business, but tho -- those time -- those days, I mean, it was big business, this home delivery business. And it was a fairly good job, and that was a union job. That was the first time I joined the union, which was good, because I belonged to the union all my life. I worked there, it was an easy job, I met a few nice guys who helped me with opening accounts, you know, because they knew a lot of people on the street. That made it a lot easier, cause you get -- you worked on commission. Was -- was a -- basically was a salary, a basic salary, which was not too much, and then whenever you opened an account, of course, you got commission for the account. So -- so Masha and I then -- we lived, as I say, we moved from L.A., from my parents and we had this nice little apartment, which Masha fixed up very nicely. And we had a nice life.

Q: Did you want children?

A: We didn't -- hm?

Q: Did you want children? You personally?

A: We didn't -- no, that -- that -- we didn't talk about -- we didn't think about it too much yet, in the beginning, you know? We -- we had fr -- [indecipherable] friends, for instance, our first friends was a dentist who was recommended by my landlord to my mother, who lived down on Clark Street, in West Hollywood. And Bestley was his name, and we met them, and eventually we became very, very good friends. They became our first friends in America, American Jews. Bestley and his wife, and of

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course they had a family already, they have kids and they lived in Beverlywood, and oh, he had a big job with Masha's teeth, you know, Masha had a big problem, you know, after the concentration camp, and -- but as I say, we became very good friends, we went to movies together and everything. And we [indecipherable] talked about is why don't you start a family, why don't you start a family? I says, ah, we got time, we got time for we get better situated and a bit more money. And then eventually we moved from West Hollywood to the valley. We always liked the valley somehow. We moved to the valley, to a very nice apartment on Deacon Street, where we had a crazy landlady who drove us nuts with keep the carpets clean, keep this clean, keep that clean, you know? So we couldn't stand it, so we stayed there about two months, and we moved out -- same street. We moved to an apartment which this young couple owned, very nice young couple who also became our friends, eventually. And then I -- just about in 1954, I remember I changed jobs again, I joined this company. I -- it was a confectionary company, wholesale. They were making a famous Baker Boy confection roll, was a cinnamon roll, you know, but very -- very -- already established in Los Angeles area, and they needed some more salesman and I am -- introduced myself, da da da da. So I joined them, and I started working for them, selling this confection [indecipherable] to markets, big markets and all -- small markets, snack shops, stores, everything eventually. It was a good jo -- also a union job, of course. Five days, eight hours. Had a van -- their own van, of course, I used, you know. And, as I say, it was a good -- good steady job, which we needed that

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time. Masha still had her job, I don't rec -- oh no, that time she had the [indecipherable] shop with a partner. So the income was fair, you know.

Q: Do you remember it as a difficult time for you to establish yourself all over again, or was it something that you didn't mind --

A: No, no, it was not -- it was not difficult really. I didn't have any problems, you know. Like at this job I got pretty easy and got into it very fast, smooth, no problems. Made friends easily [indecipherable]

Q: But your first friends were not survivors, they were --

A: Americans. Matter of fact, Masha pr-probably mentioned it to you that we didn't know about the survivors. The only survivor we knew was the one from the ship who came with -- on the same boat. And -- but I don't know why, I still don't remember why he didn't tell us that there's a lot of survivors here from Masha's hometown. But eventually, we somehow ran into them, see, and then we knew more and more of them. And a lot of them that all lived -- you see, we lived in West Hollywood, and most of the Jewish immigrants that time lived in a certain section in town Boyle Heights, which was eventually -- or re -- n -- yeah, that's right, later became Spanish, Latino. But that time was strictly Jewish, and they all lived there. And we didn't know, but through -- and this guy lived there also, this -- yeah, but he didn't tell us about all these people. Why, I don't know.

Q: Was it important for you to talk about -- t-to ment -- did you talk about at all, about your war experience, or did you -- did you not, to people?

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A: Well, it -- yes, yes and no, you see. Like, lot of these American people -- I remember the Jewish friends, the dentist, for instance, these people were -- th-that time, they were all Russian sympathizers. You see, we had arguments with them. We had arguments because we knew the Russians. We knew what they were, who they were. They didn't. See, they didn't s -- they saw it from another perf -- perspective, see? And this -- this was incredible. Later, they started realizing that we were right, but it took years. Remember when the Rosenbergs were killed, you know, they were all [indecipherable]

Q: And I meant to ask you how you felt about the McCarthy era, and the

A: Well, I didn't -- na -- no, I didn't like -- I didn't like McCarthy at all, no, I didn't like him, no, I didn't like him and then [indecipherable] and then Coen, remember? He's a -- no, no. To me, I was strictly against that. Strictly, strictly against some days, dark days. This -- as I say -- and then, of course, I said I joined this company and I was with them from 1954 to 1978. Can you believe that? Yeah. Meanwhile, David was born, of course in 1958. See that -- and we moved again. We moved from one place to the next place. But also in the valley, we stayed in the valley since first time we moved, we stayed, and we stayed in the valley. San Fernando valley.

Q: Tell me -- tell me more about David. Did you have any -- well, did you any particular sort of hopes, or did you want something that you thought, in terms of parenting, that you wanted to do or not want to do?

A: With him? For him?

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Q: Mm-hm.

A: Not really. Not really, not really. We didn't have any -- any plans like some people have plans, you know, and th -- tries to do this and that. As far as going to school later, we see -- I don't know why, just -- David was in sports very much, you know, he liked sports, so -- I remember, I used to be -- I think all the friends we had, all the friends we had had all sons, and I don't remember ever any of their fathers going with their sons to -- to sporting events. Nat -- none. They were still -- I don't know why -- I was -- I americize -- it was very, very much, you know, I became an American very fast. A lot of our friends were still in the European mind, you know? They never got accustomed to the American sports, really. That's interesting. See, I -- I caught on pretty fast, you know, baseball, football. And even nowadays, it's '99 and I would say 90 percent of -- of -- of the friends who came from Europe, no idea about baseball, or football. Interesting. They never got into it. And --

Q: What -- what else did you like about -- about this country? And what did you not like? What are the things that you were critical about? But first the likes, what -- what else? Football, baseball, I --

A: Yeah, well sports, of course, of course [indecipherable]. I -- I -- I don't know. I li -- I just liked -- I liked America right away, I liked the -- the people, you know. I liked the -- the -- the -- the so-called liberty, you know, that you really can speak and not be afraid to speak. Nobody is watching over you, nobody is following you, you know, we were leaving the horrible period there, so that -- that makes also a big

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difference, you see? Course, most people who came to America, even before, they came from the terrible circumstances and mayb -- you know, also bad things [indecipherable]. So it's -- was very refreshing, you know? Really different --

Q: Some things you --

A: -- you could argue. Yeah, pardon me?

Q: Some things you critiz -- you were sort of crit -- critical about?

A: The white bread. No, really. Even food, you know, you get used to the certain things which you didn't have in Europe. The hamburgers, and the -- eventually, a -- we liked it, we liked it, we never had any problems. We never had any problems. Never criticized too much.

Q: Did yo --

A: Pretty good life.

Q: Did you always agree with the strong emphasis of a Holocaust work in your wife's life, or did you have different --

A: Oh no, no, no, I agree with that hundred percent. No, had -- somebody had to do it. Cause if you don't do it, if nobody does it, you know, it'll be forgotten. There's a lot of people like -- would like to forget it, see? And you have to constantly be on top of it, constantly. It's ju-just something which is very, very important, so easy to forget, with this denial. This -- I -- I sto -- I still can't -- I-I can't conceive this, how some people -- people, how can they deny something like this? Is it -- is it really -- that really deny -- they really believe in it, or -- or are they just acting, is it part of

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acting? I remember this case when -- I remember, if you recall this Mermestein, they had a lawsuit against this American who -- you remember that case, yeah? Was unbelievable. How -- how this guy ever expected to win his case.

Q: Say a little bit more about that though, for the listeners who may not remember it.

A: Well, they -- an -- well, anyway, it was several years ago, this -- it was a guy, an intellectual man, you know, was not a nobody and he was not -- not a -- a -- right-winger or a skinhead. A man, a business man, and he denied the Holocaust, he said it's all exaggerated, it didn't happen. And then one of our friends, Mermestein, who went through the concentration camps, he says, he [indecipherable] you dispute it, okay, let's go to court. And there was a court case, went on for several weeks or months. 50,000 dollars I think it was, you know [indecipherable] the money, of course. And the man lost, of course he lost the case, went to court and he lost it, point blank. But it was -- it was unbelievable t-to -- how this man ever expected to win.

Q: Did you ever testify anywhere?

A: Me?

Q: Yeah.

A: Testify, you mean?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: No, I didn't. I did not. I did not personally.

Q: Did you ever go back to --

A: Europe?

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Q: -- to ger -- to Europe?

A: Yeah, we went back twice. I went back in 1967 to Novi Sad, to my hometown, with Masha, yeah. Well, 1967 there was still -- lot of the old friends were alive, and the relatives. That Uncle Steffie, remember I told you about, the Nazi th -- he was still alive, with his wife. Very poor.

Q: But what was it like s -- what was it like seeing him, though? I mean, here was the man who --

A: N-Nothing. Nothing, nothing, nothing. He wa -- you see, he ne -- I never took him too seriously, he was not dangerous. He was just like a -- a comedian to me, even then. Yeah, I know, I know, it sounds sad but true. You see, sometimes he --his wife was alt -- well, no, he had -- a-actually, there were some parts in the family who were much worse than he was, like my brother's wife's family. They were -- they were really bad. They were really -- they were involved in the Nazi regime much, much, much deeper. He was nothing, nobody took him seriously, this -- this Steffie, not even the -- the Germans or the authorities, nothing. But th-these people were dangerous, some of those people. Later, some of them came to America after the war, yeah. But anyway, in '67, as I say, we were there, and lot of our friends were still alive. Dr. Fisher and I didn't meet anybody from my -- my school days, but some of -- some of the other ones. I remember I stayed in this hotel -- Masha never mentioned it to you? On the Danube River, and Masha got bitten by mosquitoes and we asked the guy next day, I said -- the clerk, I said, why didn't you put screens -- screens on

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the windows? He said, you'd ruin the view. She was absolutely destroyed there mosquitoes, none of them bit me. See, different blood. Yeah, it's the blood, they can sense this, the mosquitoes in Novi Sad.

Q: I -- I -- I meant to ask you actually, did you ever like Austria as much as -- as your wife did, as Masha did?

A: I what?

Q: Did you like Austria ever as much as --

A: Oh Austria, oh yes. Oh, Austria's beautiful. Well, I was in Austria before the war also, in Vienna, many times you see, and Salzburg. But, with her -- oh, we loved it. It's -- it's a beautiful country, beautiful country. Salzburg is great, of course. Linz, Linz is not as beautiful as Salzburg. And then we went to the Wolfgangsee, beautiful lakes, you know. That's where this -- remember that [indecipherable] tragedy. Food -- food was good in Austria. [indecipherable]. Then, in --

Q: Okay. Let's -- let's stop for one second.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah, yeah, let's -- let's talk [indecipherable]

A: Yeah, went into -- Masha in Salzburg we ha -- we went to see Jedermann in [indecipherable], tre -- a tremendous experience. And we saw of course, Mozart, Marriage of Figaro, which is also fantastic. The scenery incredible, unforgettable.

Q: And di -- and you didn't mind that much to -- to -- to be in the country of where a lot of things started?

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A: No, no, because the -- well, they chang -- they changed it, or they tried to change, you know, certain remarks, you know, certain people behaved a little bit weird. But all in all there was no trouble, there was no problem. There was no problem. You didn't feel any animosity, you know. You f -- you felt like at home in Salzburg, we had a good time. Linz, too.

Q: Did you ever feel anti-Semitism at that time in -- in America?

A: No. Not really, no. Reading it, you know, in papers, you know, about sort of -- but you didn't feel it. No-Nothing was like, you know, Europe, after Europe anything was a -- was so bad, you know, that anything, even rem -- it was okay, it was okay. There was some, of course, you know. When I had these -- when the Rosenberg trials, of course, you hear some comments. But all in all, you didn't feel nothing.

Q: Bef-Before we go back, in a sense, to Los Angeles, and also I want to ask you about Israel, there was a little anecdote in New Orleans that I forgot to ask Masha about, but maybe you can tell me.

A: Oh with the -- the thing --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- oh, oh yeah, we arrived, and yeah, she saw this menu in one of the restaurants and she said -- she saw this in the writing on the menu, hot dogs. So she says, what kind of a country is this where they serve hot dogs? Was really funny. Really.

Q: How -- in --

A: But later she liked hot dogs. [indecipherable]

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Q: O-Okay. Did you ever go to Israel?

A: Yes. I was there, we see, once, Masha was there twice. And the first time we went in ’79, also a very interesting experience because Masha had -- she knew, see, that she had relatives, did she di -- tell you the story? She must have told --

Q: Yeah, that’s -- but still, you can [indecipherable]

A: Well, of course, all right. Well, she knew about her -- that she has some relatives in Israel, but she had no idea where they live and so forth. And we -- as we arrived in -- we went to [indecipherable] of course, Tel Aviv, and we stopped on one corner, and we asked the cab driver, this -- these people live here and here? He says [indecipherable] live across the street. Across the street, yeah. [indecipherable]. So it was actually Masha’s cousins, first cousins. Tremendous reception, oh, it was incredible. She never seen them, you know, never -- never seen them in her life, never corresponding with them. She just knew that her -- one of her aunts went to Israel before the war. There was actually two of them went to Israel before the war, two sisters, and one of them was a real bad character, yeah. One of those things, and Masha never liked her. She was there, and we met her too, of course, but the other one was a much nicer girl. And then she had two -- two -- two daughters, and the father -- from the sister -- from the cousin, had a big factory. He made appliances. We have one here, it’s an automatic tea maker. Terrific thing. In two seconds you get hot tea. He died also. So we had a very good time there, very good time. We stayed

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about two weeks in Israel with some friends from America, we came together. They had a ball, too.

Q: What was the situation in the country then? That was in ’67? This was --

A: No, no that was in ’79.

Q: Oh, ’79.

A: ’79 was okay. 70 -- six -- ’67 was bad, that was during the war time. No, the ’79 was okay. ’79 was very good. Peaceful, you know, normal. Was good. We stayed in the Hilton as I recall and saw the relatives, of course, every day. And they came to America later, several times, yeah. He had the -- the cousin’s husband had a -- a Fiat repair shop, Fiat di -- did -- I think repair, and dealership maybe, too. Just retired recently. That was ’79, of course. And then from se -- from -- from Israel we went to Greece, we took the Mediterranean cruise, Masha probably told you. Yeah, Mediterranean cruise to Istanbul. And then we saw -- saw the -- all the Turkish cities with all the Roman relics. Kusadasi, that’s near Istanbul, it’s beautiful. Istanbul was striking as you arrive. When you arrived in Istanbul from the boat, you know the -- the -- the -- the -- incredibly beautiful, but as you arrived on the pier and you landed, dirty. Dirty, unbelievably filthy, yeah. Very disappointing, but that was Istanbul. And then they had a great bazaar there, and they tried to sell you, of course, everything and anything. Everything is a bargain, everything is free. The most beautiful thing was, of course, the [indecipherable]

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Q: I think we better stop now, I have to change the tape. This is the end of tape one, side B, interview with Cornelius Loen.

End of Tape One, Side B

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Beginning Tape Two

Q: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Cornelius Loen. This is tape number two, side A, and I wanted to ask you about the change of your name, which occurred when, and why?

A: Okay. Change, okay, the original last name was Lowenberg in Europe, and when my brother came to the States in 1938, he changed it from Lowenberg to Loen, thinking that Lowenberg is a little bit too complicated, I don't know why. And as it turned out, Loen turned out to be more complicated, because nine out of 10 times, it's pronounced Leon. And imagine the complications, my father's first name was Leon, so they called him Leon Leon. It's not a joke, it's a fact. Terrible. Could never change it back. Once in awhile somebody will hit it right, Loen. But it was done and that's it.

Q: Okay, let's --

A: No, th-the -- there is a lot of Lowenbergs in -- in America. Can look in the phone book, you know? Maybe they changed it from Leon to Lowenberg. I kid.

Q: Okay, let's talk about your son David a little bit. When did you -- when did you start talking to him about your war experience in [indecipherable] or when did he start to ask? How did it happen?

A: Well, I imagine when he was maybe seven, eight, nine, 10, you know, Masha -- Masha -- Masha kept it real -- sort of a secret for a long time. I think she didn't even tell him til he was maybe 15. 14 - 15 - 16, you know, to introduce him. I was telling

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him more or less about my experiences, which -- you know, an American kid, I mean, they -- it-it's hard to him to -- to -- to -- to ac -- to ac -- understand this whole war situation in Europe. S -- s -- a lot of adults couldn't understand it, is -- you tried -- the kid, you know, was born in -- in America in a different world. It was not easy. Today, of course, he understands a lot more, and he appreciates all the -- the movies, you know, the Holocaust movies and Holocaust stories, which he's seen a lot of them. And he learned more about -- about those -- th-the situation in Europe from these movies than he probably heard from us, and this is the story in a lot of cases, lot of parents.

Q: What -- what do you think about some of -- have you seen some of the movies, and how -- how do -- how do you feel about the -- sort of the presentation of -- of the Holocaust in -- in pop culture?

A: Sh -- it -- I think it's very good. It's very good. I've seen it and the movies are all excellent, and I'm trying to remember, like I said, one of the movies, we just talked about it, my son the other day, he liked it, with this Hungarian grandfather [indecipherable]

Q: Well when was -- when was Schindler's List? That was probably the most --

A: Oh, Schindler's List was excep -- Schindler's List was some six, seven years ago already, I think.

Q: There was one in -- in 1978 which was sort of the first large success, and that was called, Holocaust. [indecipherable]

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A: Yeah. Oh, there was lot of them, there was a lot of -- I be -- the -- well, the -- talk about Schindler's List, the other day, I understand --

Q: Oh, there's another called, The Music Box --

A: That's the one I'm talking about --

Q: -- about a Hungarian.

A: -- that's the one that was Hungarian, yeah, exactly, with the grandfather who was a -- a Nazi, see, and it turns out it was an excellent movie with an excellent actor. Talking about Schindler's List, I understand that Schindler's wife is suing now, because she -- yeah, she claims that Schindler was not a womanizer. Interesting, isn't that something? After all these years. And, I don't know, ridiculous. I don't know what she's going to get out of it, or not, but that --

Q: Which events in -- in America were sort of really important to you, had an impact on your political, social, cultural whatever, sort of one or two examples of -- of things that were really important for -- in your life?

A: Oh, well you know the Kennedy assassiation, Kennedy assassiation was a terrible thing which affected --

Q: Assassination.

A: -- yeah, which affected all of us. Who knows what would have happened, you know, if he lived. And then of course his brother's assassination. And even nowadays we are not certain really -- I don't know if you are certain, or -- who killed him. Seems like it was a more -- more than one person. But this is -- this is forgotten, this

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is gonna be -- this is just part of history. And as far as, for instance, Roosevelt, Roosevelt to me -- see, I -- I didn't know, I never realized it, being in Europe, and -- during the war, to me, you know, Roosevelt was a -- a -- a -- as far as a -- a great president, you know, and being an anti-Semite or not, we did not know. Later, when we came to America, Masha had a discussion with a lady who told him -- told Masha that Hoover -- see, we thought that Hoover, yeah, Hoover, Republican, da da da [indecipherable] the Democrat, he says Hoover was much more for the Jews than Roosevelt -- Roosevelt. And later we found out it was a fact that -- course Roosevelt was under a lot of pressure from the Congress, you know the Senate, and he couldn't do himsel -- alone, but he could have done more, a lot more than he did. Remember when they send the boat back? Was a horrible thing. We didn't know about it, we found that out after the war, of course, about the boat.

Q: With regard to your faith, or -- are you a religious man?

A: No, no, that's one thing, never, n -- I'm -- you know, certain traditions I keep because Masha -- Masha is not traditi -- she is not religious either, really. But, like every year, on Pesach, we go to this family [indecipherable] tradition, but to temple. Only go to temple when I go to a Bar Mitzvah, somebody's Bar Mitzvah, but I never been -- the only one who was actually religious in my family was my grandfather. He was religious, I remember. And his daughter, my father's sister was singing in the temple. She had a great voice, she had a great voice, and she was singing in the temple. But myself, never. My brother was never religious, my son, absolutely not.

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Q: Let's -- let's talk --

A: I --

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah, go ahead.

Q: No, you go.

A: Yeah. I don't know if really being religious helps one way or another. I don't know, I don't know.

Q: Do you consider yourself a conservative man, or -- politically speaking, where -- where do you -- which side are you on?

A: Well, I'm -- I was always voting democratic and I was [indecipherable] I mean, I'm quite liberal. I'm quite liberal, you know. I always was. Father was also liberal, I remember. Mother didn't care too much about politics. Ma -- my --

Q: Let's talk -- let's talk about your mother. You d -- you did say that -- oh, and Masha told me also that she was honored as a Righteous Christian --

A: Correct.

Q: -- here. Tell us a little bit more about that, whe-when it happened here in -- in Los Angeles?

A: Well, it happened, there was a celebration in -- I think it was the Hilton hotel. Don't ask me the year, it was a long, long time ago, I remember. And it was a great evening. Master of Ceremonies was George Putnam. And they honored a lot of people from different countries and one of them was my mother, which was a -- that

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was a great experience, of course, a beautiful thing. And what she did -- what she did was great, because you have to remember, i-it sounds easy now, but when she did it, it was dangerous. Lot of people in Europe who were trying to hide Jews, some way, in one way or another, were killed, cause there was a lot of informants. See, like this -- this -- I told you the -- the -- the manager of that apartment house, he knew exactly what the mother is doing, and he could have -- one word he says, boom, she's gone. The -- the leader of the Hungarian Arrow Cross party, Szálasi, lived across the street from her apartment house, for instance. So she was in constant danger, but she did it because she had to do it. She had a heart, a conscience, and she liked those people. She knew a lot of those people, you know, she saved.

Q: Did you ever meet anybody she saved?

A: Well, one I knew -- actually, no, I wa -- only one couple I knew before, from before, you know. He was the landlord. He owned the apartment house where we lived. That's the only couple, the other ones I did not -- no, I didn't. After the war, I d -- I don't know what happened to them. It's a good question. I should have asked my mother what happened to some of those people. I don't know if she ever met them after the war. It's quite a few families, quite a few families. It was a long time. They were in for -- well, you see, the -- the -- in -- in Budapest, actually, the -- th-the most dangerous situation was in the last six months, eight months of the war, yeah. In Budapest was -- life was quite -- fairly normal til then, but then it started, you know? Eichmann came in and he says, final solution, this is it, and then they started, you

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know, that -- taking most people to Auschwitz. That's when the Swedish guy, you remember, Wallenberg, tried to save -- saved quite a few people also, and then disappeared in Russia, which is --

Q: In the videotaped interview, you spoke about that you are a member of a -- a se -- a Serbian Jewish [indecipherable]

A: Society, yeah, we had a --

Q: Tell us -- tell us a little bit more --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- how did it come a-and -- yeah, I [indecipherable]

A: Yeah, this is quite interesting, yeah. One day, we met, in this house here, we met with some Yugoslav people from Belgrade. A Serbian guy with a Jewish wife, and came up with the idea to organize a -- a Jewish Serbian society, because you know, the ger -- serban -- Serbs suffered al-also under the war a lot, a lot, of course. And we -- it was a group of people about, I would say, maybe 16 people here, we met, and we formed a society. They had another Jewish Serbian society back east, I understand, so -- but we -- we are not in connection with them. See, we're a separate unit. And then we had meetings every so often here and Pacific Palisades with the people. It lasted for quite some time, but then the political situation in Europe started with this Yugoslavia, with -- especially now [indecipherable] with Kosovo and everything, but long before that already, it's got pretty bad and we figured we better stop. And then we stopped the meetings and somehow the whole organization fell apart and we lost

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contact completely with them in Yugoslavia. They were from Belgrade. Very nice people.

Q: What --

A: He was in politics, the husband. He was a politician, you know, f-forgot his name, and she was quite the intelligent woman also.

Q: What -- what is your perspective on this -- on this whole political development? Do you think that the Serbs have gotten a bad rap, in a sense, or what -- how do you feel about this?

A: I -- I -- I do think so, I do think so, you see, but it's very hard to prove one way or another. You see, Kosovo -- I don't know if you recall from history, the historical thing, in the -- 1480, I believe, the Turks massacred, you know, the Serbs in Kosovo, and they won the war, and they were sitting then on yugosla -- on Serbia for 500 years. Turks, see? And they were Muslims, of course. Frankly, I do not recall how the Albanians came into Kosovo. I -- before this whole thing started, if you will ask me, I -- I wouldn't have known if -- if there's Albanians in Kosovo [indecipherable] Serbia. So is very hard to say, but why -- why Clinton picked on Kosovo, and not on -- on -- on Rwanda, and many other places in the world, I don't know. I really don't know. But it's all over. It's all over. And Milosevic is still there. What's going to happen to Milosevic I don't know. He doesn't know either, I think. But he is there.

Q: H-How do you feel about American involvement in all of these different things that pop up? Do you approve, basically, or --

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A: Sometimes yes, sometimes no, but as I said, you see, it's all political. Look at -- look at what happened with -- with Saddam Hussein. Nothing, right? He's still there. What did we accomplish? Absolutely nothing. So it's hard to say, you know, it looks good, it looks good for awhile and then everything cools off, and everything goes back to normal.

Q: And when you said the -- at one point, when the political development in Yugoslavia stopped, you thought in the alliance, we better stop, what -- what was the -- elaborate a little.

A: Well, because -- you mean, with our Jewish society?

Q: Yes.

A: Because we figured it's not a very good idea, you know, we were -- well, we're not afraid really, but we feel we better lay off, let it -- let it cool off a little bit before we start again something. It's -- it's not -- it was not a good idea. It was a good idea originally, see, but then it would have been hard to keep up with the members. Some of them really got scared, I think. So how can you sympathize? How can you sympathize with the Serbs? See, and all the -- th-the newspapers and the media was against them, the -- the -- the k -- the -- the -- the killers, you know, genocide here and there. I mean, how can you have a society and sympathize with them? So we just figured it's -- it's better -- Lydia, one of our good friends, you know, was very much for the society. She was reading these articles, says Cornell, it's impossible. Says, come on, how can we have this society? Doesn't make any sense. And now you

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know what's going to happen in Kosovo? The [indecipherable] gonna start killing the Serbs. It never stops. Never stops in the small countries, you know? Look what the Croatians -- look what the Croatians did to the Serbs several years ago, was a tremendous massacre, Clinton didn't lift a finger. It was obvious what's happening. So everything is -- everything is, you know, political and --

Q: When you think about your identity now, who -- who are you? What di -- what -- how do you --

A: An American, oh of course, after, you know, after all these years, you -- you can't -- you know, when you lived there, you were a Yugoslav, right? And you -- you left Yugoslavia, and was the ca -- labor camp. I mean, you came to America, you became an American. I mean it -- this is so natural. I don't think -- I really don't think anybody, after 40 - 50 years can possibly have allegiance and feel anything for your old country. It's impossible. Oh, they play -- let's say Yugoslavia plays soccer against Hungary, you would root for Yugoslavia, you know, or against Germany. That's about it. But if Yugoslavia will play U.S., you'll probably root for U.S.. You become an American. Don't you think? Don't you agree that most -- most cases --

Q: Yeah. I think after so lo -- after so many years --

A: Absolutely, absolutely. And then, of course, don't forget you have children who are born here, who are definitely hundred percent Americans.

Q: What -- what is important in your life right now? What do you -- what do you take joy in, or what is really --

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A: Well, being 77 years old, you know, I -- I enjoy life, and I just hope that I am -- be lucky enough not to develop any crazy diseases, you know, like -- a la -- as I say, cataract in my right eye, no big deal, no big deal. But as long as you can stay healthy and be happy with your family, you're okay. No -- no ma -- no major troubles, no major troubles. That -- that's -- that's it, you see, though, Masha too, you see, she is -- she has little problems here and there, but no -- no -- nothing really major. But you have friends, you hear right and left, you know, this and this, and this one cancer and this one died, and is dying [indecipherable]. You know, you get older, and I mean, it's different. It's not like you were 17 years old, you don't think about things like that. You don't think about dying and disease, and -- nothing. That's old age.

Q: Do you think you were able then, to rebuild sort of a rewarding life, here?

A: Yes, of course, of course. My -- yes?

Q: No, just keep -- continue. I just --

A: I would [indecipherable]

Q: -- just want to say look -- look around a little bit in your -- in your -- in your home, and describe a little bit what -- what you see, and what it -- what it means to me -- what it means to you, and also what earthquakes have done to it at one point.

A: Yeah [indecipherable] don't -- don't mention an earthquake, th-that was -- that was the most horrible experience, devastating. Although I -- you know, we -- I was reading once in a paper that -- that -- that hurricanes are much worse. It's possible. Well, of course, it lasts much longer and it does more damage. But, of course, it

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depends where you live, like even in Los Angeles, you know, the big earthquake we had in ’72 -- no, ’72 was the first one, when was this big one? I’m trying to remember now, this was in the -- when was the last big one? See how I forget?

Q: It was not long ago.

A: No, no, no, in the 90’s [indecipherable] well, anyway, it was -- it was bad here, pretty bad in my house. Lot of -- lot of damage. Some places were worse, much, much worse, you know. Down -- down the street, a few blocks from here it was much worse. So we are also relatively lucky, and we were lucky, too, that I had the insurance, earthquake insurance, which a lot of people didn’t have. I had some, and -- which saved us quite a bit, becau -- headaches, money mostly, because a lot of damage in the house itself. The -- there was one cabinet, I told you, it’s amazing, phenomenal, one cabinet, there’s a lot of [indecipherable] pieces from Spain, and this cabinet stayed sta -- stood still, sa -- didn’t move. A lot of things -- the rest of the things, lot of breakage, lot of damage. Lot of damage. But we survived.

Q: Describe the [indecipherable] yeah, de-describe your home a little bit. Wer -- what --

A: We have one -- we still have a lot of paintings here from Europe, brings old memories. Nice paintings from -- over there from my hometown as a matter of fact, don’t see it here, it’s upstairs. Snow -- winter scenes that you don’t see here, snow. And then here’s quite a few paintings from -- I got it from my father, Bermrita famous hu -- Hungarian painter, and then [indecipherable] was a Hungarian painter

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also, still life paintings. That's all from Europe, the-these things were not damaged, fortunately. We had some Dresden figurines, which of course went to pieces. Yeah, broken. Meissen, had a few Meissen pieces also. Can't -- irreplaceable, unfortunately. Had a beautiful lamp here from Portugal, bird, did not break, luckily.

Q: You lost things in your life quite -- quite a few times.

A: Yes.

Q: I mean, also mater -- also material things.

A: Yes, yes, ye --

Q: But you always -- you always pulled through somehow. Talk -- talk about that.

A: Yeah, well, material things, of course, we had the -- going back to Europe, my father, we had two cars. First we had a 1922 Fiat Torino. 19 - twe -- I mean, I'd like to have that car now. That would be worth a few dollars, I imagine. This car was confiscated by the Hungarian army, and it just disappeared during the war. We never had it -- I remember my uncle used to drive that car, he was an insurance broker from -- in my father's insurance company. He used to drive to the country on those lousy European roads, you know. And if I tell you that that car had ar-around 200,000 miles when it was stolen. You know, it's 200,000 miles, it's a pr -- incredible. Well, it had a few repair jobs, I remember, but still it was in good shape, still driving. Torino, Fiat Torino. And then later, Father bought a -- a 1938 Chevy for 800 dollars, brand new. Well, 800 dollars in 1938 was 800 dollars. So -- comparatively speaking, but -- and that car was also confiscated during the war, and disappeared, which was

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unfortunate. Then later, of course, the -- I'd -- I don't think I mentioned it here about the --

Q: You did mention the lost luggage --

A: -- about the luggage --

Q: -- yes.

A: -- about the luggage, did I mention it?

Q: You did.

A: Not on -- did I here?

Q: Yes, you did --

A: Oh, I thought to you only.

Q: -- but you could still --

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: So you lost all of [indecipherable]

A: Yeah. And then, of course, we had a beautiful house in Novi Sad, that beautiful house which we always lo -- al-also lost. And then we got some compensation for it after the war, a ridiculous amount, I hate to mention it, it was just nothing. But a beautiful big home, and what -- we had about 10 rooms, and a big backyard, statues, we had two statues made by a quite famous master there in -- in -- in Yugoslavia, who incidentally committed suicide in Israel, his name was Coura. It was a -- quite a -- quite a -- it was not Mestrovic, but he was great, well known. And [indecipherable] and of course it was during the Communist, you know, it was confiscated and a lot of

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families lived in that house. And somehow we got some money out of it, I don't know how and who, the Yugoslav government [indecipherable] paid some compensation. And ma -- ma -- my mom, late mother, she got a check and then she gave both sons something, and -- you know. What else was there?

Q: And you lost your luggage, but then later on th -- you lost things again, right?

A: Yeah. Well, but the luggage, that -- that -- that was -- that was a big loss, because that -- very valuable things, you know, and the -- nothing for it, nothing for it. Lo -- lo -- later we lost a little money in investments.

Q: Did you ever have any --

A: See, some people --

Q: -- did you ever get any compensation from -- from -- for -- for the war?

A: No, no, I didn't, I didn't. Only Masha. I didn't get any fortu -- unfortunately, as I say, I went to one lawyer once, and -- the Lowenberg lawyer I mentioned to you and he told me that there's nothing he can do with -- with my case because I was not --

Q: You did mention -- yeah, I'm sorry to interrupt you, but you only said that to me privately in the car, maybe you should say that as an episode [indecipherable]

A: Oh, the -- the Lowenberg?

Q: Yeah.

A: Oh, oh, the [indecipherable] the story, yeah, yeah, was interesting. I went to this German lawyer, name was Lowenberg and he looked exactly like my father. I told my wife to take a look. I mean, this is -- this is ma -- like my father's brother. And

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then I asked the man where he was born, and he said he's -- he's from Vestva and that's a part of Germany, and as it happens, my father's grandfather came from Vestva, so he could have been a relative. But he was not a nice guy, he was not a nice lawyer. Very unfriendly, very uncooperative, and as I say, he was very negative. So I said to my wife, you know, wasting time here, nothing we can do. But there was another lawyer also who told me that there's nothing he can do with Yugoslavia. Nothing he can do with Yugoslavia. And now lately, there were stories that if you were in a Hungarian camp, a Hungarian labor camp, that you are eligible for certain compensation from the Hungarian government. So I wrote a letter, I wrote a letter and no answer yet. But somebody told me -- somebody told me, a Hungarian woman, she says, all you can expect from the Hungarians, if you -- you do get something, being in the labor camp, some money, but you're not going to get the money, the money is going to stay in Hungary, and you have to go to Hungary and spend the money there. Nice, huh? And, again, it's only a nominal fee, she says, nothing, nothing to get excited about. Well, that is her opinion, but I don't know, I'm still expecting an answer from a -- I think Chicago is the lawyer. [indecipherable] even happens if -- well, sure I should get some compensation, being in a camp. It was a labor camp, it was a slave labor camp, you know? I-I didn't go there voluntarily, best years of my life. Spent there, how many times [indecipherable] about two years. I have pictures also, I have photos from the camp, which is unusual, a lot of people don't, of course, you know, yeah, but I was in the camp there with the commander,

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with the sergeant and the whole thing, the whole group of people. So [indecipherable]

Q: So, I'm kind of out of questions at this point. Is there anything that you would like to -- to add, or say or something I didn't ask, or that you really want to -- to add to this?

A: No, what can I say? As I say, I'm married to a great wife, who is the greatest coo-cook in the world. Very beautiful girl. Didn't change too much. I told you in the beginning she was the most beautiful girl, she still is. She's very nice to me, and she -- we have a beautiful son who presently lives in Las Vegas and calls every day. Very -- very devoted, very devoted son, very, very nice kid. Very unusual. You hear stories, you know, from people where their children are just a -- forgot their parents, and bad relationships, and to have a son like him is -- is -- it's a -- it's a jewel, a present, really. But the way we brought him up I think is a lot to do with it. The bringing up, you know? Always close to him, always nice to him and that's why he's nice to us. He really likes us, you know? Comes twice a year, three times a year from Vegas on vacation. He's coming in a few weeks before Masha's birthday, already happy about it.

Q: I have one more question after all. Did it make a difference any way or another that you were married to a survivor, too?

A: Oh no, no, I'm happy. No, absolutely not. I was a survivor too.

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Q: No, I mean, was it -- was it -- was it even a help? Was it important in some ways even? I mean, I didn't mean to be negative about it, just [indecipherable]

A: Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh. I don't know. I usu -- we just met, you know, and I just happened to meet this beautiful girl. [indecipherable] really, survivor or no survivor, if she was no survivor, she's still a beautiful girl.

Q: On that positive note, this concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Cornelius Loen, and this is the end of tape two, side -- side A.

A: Yeah.

End of Tape Two, Side A

Conclusion of Interview