United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Issac Nehama
June 2, 2003
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of an audio taped interview with Isaac Nehama, conducted by Margaret West on June 2, 2003 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Bethesda, Maryland and 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.

Interview with Isaac Nehama
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Beginning Tape One, Side A

Question: -- States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Jeff and Toby Herr collection. This is an interview with Isaac Nehama, conducted by Margaret West on June the second, 2003, in Bethesda, Maryland. This interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's post-Holocaust interview project, and is a follow-up interview to a USHMM videotaped interview conducted with Isaac Nehama on October the 22nd, 2002. 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: My name is Isaac Nehama. I was born in Athens, Greece, April 29, ninetweent-- 1926. I returned to Athens from the partisans. I was stationed at that time in Thessaly, in the city of Lireza, which is the capital of Thessaly. I returned to Athens t -- either towards the very end of October, '44, or beginning of November '44. Approximately two or three weeks after the liberation of Greece -- actually, the Germans left Greece because the Russians were about to enter Yugoslavia, and therefore their retreat would have been cut off. So the Germans essentially left Greece.

Q: And when were you reunited with -- with your father?

A: Well, I arrived in Athens on, I remember, a Sunday. And the reason this is prominent, because I think Sundays everywhere in the world are very quiet days, sometimes they are deserted. I arrived in Athens f -- with a bus that I had taken from Lireza perhaps around four or five o'clock in the afternoon. I called from the bus

station, and I was told to immediately come. I took a taxi, and when finally we were approaching our neighborhood, and my house, I expected to be greeted in the street by my two younger brothers, but I saw no one. In fact, there was not a single person in the street. And I walked up to our apartment, I rang the door. A woman came out, who I recognized to be the woman whom I had seen in t -- in Lireza two weeks or so previously, who had told me that she had been passing through, and she had a message from my family, they were, all of them anxious, waiting to -- to be reunited with me, and she was the one who even gave me money for the -- for the fare back. Of course, I -- I now know, and -- or soon learned that my father had given her the money to -- to give me for the fare. In any case -- so she -- she s -- immediately, without even -- I think she didn't even say a -- any words, but simply with a finger pointed upstairs to the apartment of our pre-war neighbors, a family called Shabitai. I didn't know what to make of it, why would I have to go to the Shabitai's to see my family? So I went one more flight, and I knocked on the door, and Mrs. Shabitai opened the door, and she embraced me, and I was shown into their living room, and then I saw my father, and only my father, with Mr. Shabitai. I -- I -- we embraced, and I immediately asked where is mother, and -- and -- and Sam, and -- and Mekko, as we used to call the youngest brother. And my father was crying, and I think un-unable to explain, and Mr. mi -- Shabitai said that th-they were not there, they were -- they were caught, but that that wasn't the time to explain. They implied that I must have known that terrible things happen, and that my mother and brothers were caught, and no one knows -- knew where they went. That was the -- the reunion.

Q: Tell me how you proceeded from -- from that im -- immediate reunion, to beginning to plan where you would live, and how you would put your lives together?
A: Yeah, but I have to -- to cover iv -- the brai -- brief period that occurred about two weeks after my arrival. I -- in -- in the beginning of December of ’44, there was a brief civil war between the left -- political left, and the government, and also the British forces in Athens. And these troubles primarily occurred in Athens. There -- there was fighting in the street, and all of us were sort of hiding to try to avoid being injured. Then, in about 15 days after the start of the troubles -- I s -- even then we called it the events, our neighborhood was liberated, and as I recall by a small group of English parachutists, I remember their red berets. So that was the beginning of what I thought was going to be normalcy, but very quickly, two days later, I was standing in line to buy some food, which was unavailable, and I was arrested by Greek gendarmes, taken, interrogated. They wanted me to reveal names of known leftists. I explained to them I had been gone for slightly over a year, I knew nobody, I was not politically active. But it -- nevertheless, I was -- I was taken in a c -- little camp out -- out -- outside of Athens, and eventually to Africa. But very shortly, through the intervention of relatives, I was freed, and came back. So I think it was, essentially in the beginning of ’45 that we even began to even think about the restoration of our lives. Since as soon as I finish high school in 1942, the universities were closed, and I couldn’t go on, and my father had resumed his occupa -- work with -- he was chief accountant of a large textile firm in Athens. So he resumed hi-his -- his profession. Also, I must note that the apar -- our apartment in Athens, where we lived before, a -- a couple, a husband and a

wife, one of them being the woman who gave me the money in -- in Lireza. They were occupying half of the apartment, they couldn't be evicted, or -- or -- it was out of the question to -- to -- to -- to -- to take any action. So my father and I sort of lived in half of the apartment, until about six or eight months later, after Sam returned, Mr. and Mrs. Stasinopolous, that was their name, eventually left, and went, and found another -- another apartment. So immediately I -- I then began getting preparations for taking the entrance exam to the Polytechnic Institute in Athens, which I -- this usually took place in the end of August, beginning of September. And indeed, in -- in September of '45, I took the exams, and I was admitted, and I -- I had one semester in the Polytechnic Institute, before I had found out -- which we perhaps will go into in -- in a moment, that my father had begun to, without telling me a word, working assiduously to find a way for me to study all -- abroad, which he eventually was successful, and -- but that's ano -- a different chapter.

Q: Yes. When you were a teenager, you had been working. What was the work that you were doing then, and you were doing it until 1943?

A: Well, I -- I -- I -- as I said, I finished high school in June of '42. Since the universities were closed, then it was unthinkable, I think, for my father and mother that I would simply remain idle. So I was -- my father found a job for me. Let me describe it as being the clandestine, or an illegal market in currency. There was a -- not a black market, but a clandestine market of currency in -- in -- in Greece during the occupation. What was exchanged were principally, and almost exclusively, gold coins, either British sovereigns, French gold francs, or Swiss francs. Occasionally -- and the

only non-metal currency that was acceptable were U.S. dollars. And also, occasionally, small bars of gold. So, this individual, who was originally from Salonika, and who was a -- in the stock market in Salonika, the legal stock market, he had, with his family, escaped from Salonika, established himself in Athens, and then started a -- an office by himself. A bureau conducting this sort of activity. Very briefly, the way it worked, if somebody wanted to, let's say sell or buy gold coins, against drachmas -- because drachma of course was, in the occupation, highly devalued. The -- the value of -- th -- the price fluctuated according to the political fortunes of the allies. For instance, while Rommel was advancing in North Africa, then the pound, and the dollar -- or the gold pound and the dollar, would then be def -- deflated. And when, on the contrary, when the allies began to -- to -- to -- to -- t -- to win, and turn the tide around, then the -- the -- the drachma would be more highly valued, because it would have s-some value other than what the piece of paper that was the currency during the occupation. So this is what, essentially, he was doing. And my job was -- I didn't do the trades, but I had to deliver to a buyer, or -- a f -- f -- first of all, even to deliver a roll of let's say, 10 gold sovereigns to the buyer, I had to go first to the seller, to his house, get the roll of coins, put them in my pocket, and deliver them to the -- to the buyer. It was, let's say, a dangerous activity because possession, let alone trade in gold, was illegal. If I had been caught, I -- I would have been jailed, shot, or whatever it was. Even conducting this sort of business was -- was illegal. So there was a f -- the front was that -- there we -- we had a number of shelves in the office with textiles. Woolens, and some silks,

pretending that it was that sort of business, but actually, the -- the business itself was the -- the currency.

Q: And was this a Jewish enterprise?

A: Well, it -- the man, his name was Haim Romano, happened to be a Jew from Salonika, but th-the traders were both Christian Greeks, as well as Jews.

Q: Mm-hm. And when you mention your neighbors in the apartment above, were -- were they Jewish? And I know that your parents sort of social network was generally family contacts. I think people they knew from Monisteer, or --

A: Relatives.

Q: -- it was a -- a Jewish world in which they led their lives, would you say?

A: Yes, yes. Well, and the Shabitais were Jews, but they were not Sephardim. Mr. and Mrs. Shabitai -- Mrs. Shabitai was from Yarninar, and Mr. Shabitai was from Trikola. Both of them are what is referred to as Romaniots, which can be explained either as Greek speaking, or negatively, non-Ladino, not Judeo espanole speaking, or they were not descendants of the Jews who were expelled from Spain in 1492. In contrast, my parents on both sides -- both of them were born in Monasteer, traced their ancestry to the Sephardim who left Spain, and eventually ended up in that part of the Balkans, which was, at that time, a part of the Ottoman Empire.

Q: Mm-hm. Do you think that your group had any -- was there a Sephardim look? I mean would -- could you -- could you say that you were slight in build, and dark, and -- I mean, is -- was there a difference between the Sephardim and the Ashkenazis?

A: Do you see any difference? No, no, I -- I -- I don't recall -- really I think that I couldn't distinguish any surface difference between the looks of my family or our relatives, and other Greeks. They all have, perhaps the same kind of Mediterranean look, which not even -- has even particularly darker skin coloration. Of course, a -- a -- you -- you -- you would find very rarely, even among Greeks, or -- or Turks, or southern Italians, or Spanish, blonde people. But there were a few there, but otherwise there were no such characteristics of Sephardim. The thing that was distinguishing, of course was that my parents spoke Ladino to each other, and my maternal grandmother, who would come and visit us, at least two or three times a week, she lived with an aunt -- a sister of my mother's, that's the only language that she understood, and we had to speak to her, and she spoke to us with s -- Ladino.

Q: Mm-hm. Was Ladino your mother tongue?

A: Not mine. Mine was, well dual, Greek primarily because of my friends and going to school, but at home it was obligatory to speak French, bo -- my mother was a teacher of French, and my father had studied in Paris, or -- we -- we were obliged to speak in French.

Q: But you don't know what you spoke first as a child, or -- or fr -- from the very beginning? Perhaps you were speaking Ladino and French right from infancy on.

A: I -- I don't believe that I spoke Ladino. Perhaps, before I began to go to school, I believe, and I -- I seem to -- I recollect that I spoke to my parents in French.

Q: I'm backing away now and coming -- thinking again of your father at this time. Do you have a sense of how he was coping? I mean, he had lost his -- at this particular

point, he had lost his wife and two sons. Do you have a sense of what gave him strength, and what his state of mind was?

A: I can only surmise -- I -- I have to -- because this -- it occurs, and I think about it very often. Or in discussions I have with people. And I always have to remind myself and my interlocutors that at least in those times, and -- and in -- in that particular part of the world, parents were not really very communicative about personal and intimate things, with y-young children. I -- I -- I think -- I -- I -- I ca -- I recollect from cousins that they began to have conversation as between adults, and equals with their parents, after they themselves had matured, and were married. So I don't think that there was, let's say, reluctance. My father used to be a great storyteller, but I must say that very seldom, o-o-other than in passing he would say how dinner was in -- on -- on high holidays in Monasteer, how the dinner would be prepared, and things like this. A episode of things like this. But not very much about personal life. But coming back to your question, there was very little exchange between us as to either how we felt -- I told him about some of the things that I had thought about during my sojourn in the Greek mountains with the partisans, but really very briefly, and I think mostly superficial. We didn't go into -- into that. Knowing my father as I recollect him, he was an individual of -- you know, he was lame, as you know, because of polio, and he had a club foot. So he was always hobbled. He always wor -- wor -- walked with a cane. But he -- he had a -- an inner strength that became evident to me very rarely. I think you -- you know the example of his urging me not to be caught alive by the Germans. So, I can only imagine the -- the pain that he had with the loss -- or at that

time, you know, we still had a very, very faint hope that perhaps they might return. We -- remember the war was not over in Europe until April -- end of April ’45, so the pictures of -- and -- and -- and stories, and -- and things about like the horrors of the camps was still totally unknown. So there was a -- a -- a residue of hope, although very, very slight, that they mi -- they might come back. And the focus, therefore, was I think a -- a tacit -- a mutual understanding that we had to get on with our lives as best we could, and so my father resumed his work, and I then resumed the preparations for taking the exams.

Q: Mm-hm. You know, wh-when I asked you that question, I was thinking of his admonishing you to not be taken by the Germans. And I think he spoke of that, I’m assuming, because you had shown your determination not to go into hiding, but to go to the mountains. And you were the oldest, and you’d had your Bar Mitzvah. And times were times of duress, I -- which prompted me to think perhaps he was more open in what he said to you.

A: Well, but you have to remember that -- th -- it was such a special moment, I -- I cannot conceive of an -- a recollection -- let me back off, very quickly. In the summer of ’39, my father took me to a -- there’s a -- a place about a hundred kilometers from Athens, it’s called Lutrikey, and it’s a -- sort of a spa, because it has water sources that are -- contain rad-radio activity, radium. And they were thought to be very beneficial for whatever a-ails you. It was essentially a resort. And so we went ahead of the rest of the family for three or four days. It was shortly after by -- my Bar Mitzvah, and I still remember the first time that -- so we were the two of us, and is the first instance that I

recall my father telling me, for example [indecipherable] personal plans, that he had begun to -- I see -- remember telling me -- put some money aside, and part of plan was we were going to leave the apartment where we had lived for -- since I rec -- I recall. And we're going to buy a house. So it was the first time that I had heard my father telling me of something about his -- let's say dreams and plans for the future. So, in other words, it was the first instance where I think I was tr -- being treated as an adult. The unfortunate thing is that as soon as we returned, the war started, in September of '39, so we too -- September thir -- or -- or -- or that summer of '39, it's the last summer -- and that in 1940 because the war didn't touch Greece until the fall of 1940 that are the last two summers that I can recall of being if not happy, at least -- I have to use a French word, insouciance, that we were not bothered. The war had started, it was a terrible thing. My parents had both gone through the experience of the first World War, and it's horrors in Monasteer, but it was so far away that it didn't yet begin to touch us until the fall of 1940. So, it's a long detour to what's -- what -- what you ask. So I -- I -- I think there was a tremendous amount of resilience, and strength that -- in my father, which was not apparent on the surface. When he admonished me not to be caught alive by the Germans, I think it was because he knew from all the reports of the 30's, since the rise of Hitler in Germany, the history of the -- of the Jews in Gaspora, all these things, you know, get farely concentrated, and simply -- al-although I don't think he -- no one knew at that time of concentration camps, but he knew that it was not a good thing to be caught alive by the Germans. So he -- he -- it was a second

instance of I -- his addressing me as an adult, and telling me that it's better to -- to be dead, than be caught alive.

Q: And I would assume then, that there might have been more confidences shared at that stage in your life, were it not for the fact that I think you s -- you also talk earlier in your interview on videotape about the pall that descended, so that it became a situation from your parents when they -- their fears were something they di -- they wanted to protect you from.

A: F -- yo-your absolutely correct about the pall, because it was so palpable, I -- I can still feel it. I don't re -- recall that there was, let's say, a smile on their faces after about mid or early April of 1943, because the news began to come in very quickly about both Monasteer and Salonika. Those occur about two or three weeks apart. And the -- although -- sou -- a few things were written up in the papers that was really not -- some that was really spoken, but they knew from reports of relatives. And as I say, I -- from then on, I don't recall their being a single smile in their faces. Now I've lost track of what you asked.

Q: Oh, and they wanted to protect you, I think, from their fears.

A: Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, okay. Ye-Yes. Really, I think it would be a stretch for me again to say that that was the motivation. Surely -- I'm sure that they wouldn't want to alarm us, especially my younger brothers. But even to me, they -- they didn't say things because they knew that I would have -- I wouldn't have that much to contribute. But it was -- it was a sort of shielding, but I think it was primarily because they themselves were, first of all, not only so crushed by what they had heard, but the

principle thing was that they be -- I'm sure now, in retrospect, that they were mulling what to do in case so -- something like this would reach Athens. So I think their total preoccupation for all that time after beginning of April '43 was precisely what to do. That's why when finally it did occur, September of '43, after the Italian armistice, then suddenly, and for the first time, we had a family council, something that had never occurred before. And my father and mother sat us around the table, and with very few words, told us what we had to do. Therefore, all these preparations must have been part of what they -- they were preoccupied in what they were preparing to do. Because i -- I -- I --

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 Isaac Nehama. This is tape number one, side B.

A: I believe we were talking about the situation a-after April '43, when the news from Salonika and Monasteer came, and I think I was alluding to the fact that although our parents did not take us into their confidence about their concern, their worries, but I can only surmise, and I'm almost positive now in checking with my brother, that a lot of the time, intervening time, was spent in preparing for -- not inevitability, but in -- in the event that the same thing would occur in Athens. Because I cannot explain in any other way, the fact that practically as soon as the signal was given to disperse in Athens, the plan was already in place about where to go.

Q: And the plan about where to go raises lots of questions for me about the -- the friends, or the people with whom you -- your family, not -- not you, ultimately, sought shelter, or -- or -- or homes, and the extent to which those people took risks, or did not take risks.

A: All right. A couple of weeks before the dispersal, a friend of -- a sc-schoolmate -- I -- I would speak about my role first. Although again, I hadn't discussed this with my parents, but sensing what was happening, this school f-friend, Thanasis Mikalopoulus, who is a Christian Greek, I had told him that there may come a time when I may have to go into hiding, and then -- we were close friends, but I hadn't even met his parents. He says, "They'll be n-no question, you will come and stay with us." So that sort of was done. When then we had this family council about where to go, I will tell you very quickly, my -- my father -- first of all, no Jewish family, really more than three or four at most, could possibly be hiding all together, because it would have been very apparent, no matter where they were hiding, that neighbors would immediately see, suddenly, not one or two, which you can justify as being my visiting relative from the provinces. Well, not suddenly, you know, a whole -- a whole family. So, this person was essential. My father went and -- and stayed for a certain period of time. Certainly until my departure from the mountains about a month later, with a -- a couple, they were childless. Both the man and the -- the -- the woman -- his name was Tenasias, her name was Ellie, they were both working in the same company that my father did, so they were both colleagues, as well as friends of long-standing. Next door to our house in Athens, to our apartment, was a man who had a small store that was really a mini

variety store. By that I mean he -- he sold tobacco, cigarettes, newspapers, but also in the back o-of -- he had thread, and needles. It was that -- that sort of convenience neighborhood store. And over the years my father had become very, very friendly with this individual, and he had a house in one of the suburbs on the eastern side of Athens, really a -- a vi -- a far suburb. And that's where my mother and two brothers went. So when we dispersed, that's how we -- that's where we went.

Q: Yes.

A: You ask about risks. Well, really all of them took risks, and the same risks, because the Germans made it known that sheltering Jews, or sheltering people like members of the resistance, whether arm resistance or the political resistance was a capitol offense, an -- and from time to time they would shoot them in the street. So taking risks was quite a -- a -- well-known, and all of them took risks, and the same risks.

Q: Mm-hm. I was interested in the -- what took place in Germany, and it seemed to me that -- and I think you mentioned this, that Greeks helped the Jews, and they said, "We're all humans." It's common humanity. But I think it's worth you discussing that more, just because something happened in Germany where -- perhaps it was baser instincts of humans were worked on, but they began to see the Jews as not human. And that enabled them to collaborate with the Nazis.

A: Well yes, but remember, it took quite a bit of time, and quite a bit of history for things of that sort to take place. Look at Bulgaria. In 1941 they pass a law, which has about -- magnificent Orwellian title, the law for the protection of the state. But it was almost patterned -- similar to the Nuremberg laws, and -- and most of it's provisions

were clearly anti-Semitic. Or what happened to the Romanian Jews? Half a million people were -- most of them massacred by the Iron guard of Romanians themselves. Or the -- the Jews of Serbia and Croatia? Most of them died of starvation by the Ustasha, th-th-th-th -- the -- the Croatian Fascists. So, the Germans, by no means had -- didn't have, you know, the exclusive patent to brutality and cruelty. They rose it to -- to heights of subtlety and -- and demonic deviousness. [indecipherable] Salonika Jews, they were telling them that they gonna send them to Kraków, and -- and un-unfortunately, the -- the chief rabbi, who was the leader of the community in Salonika was a -- a gullible, naïve, stupid individual, who then tried to reassure the -- th-the Jews of Salonika that their brethren in Kraków were going to take care of them. Of course, the Germans didn't tell them that Kraków had already been totally eliminated. So this kind of a thing hadn't reached Greece or Italy. Maybe -- I don't know, maybe the ethnic character, it would never have taken root, but I have to admit that I often think that we have failed miserably, in the last 50 or 60 years. When I was in the mountains we thought that that was going to be the end of this sort of brutality, and one sees it repeated over, and over again, as if these things didn't happen. So I feel a personal sense of failure, that my generation has done something terribly wrong.

Q: Also, do you think that the role of the Greek church was very critical in being outspoken and saying that we oppose this?

A: Look, le-le-let's put things perspective. There was really one extremely courageous voice, that's was Thamskino's, the archbishop, who not only protested openly, and who I think, perhaps -- I don't know if it was mentioned in the videotaping, he was

threatened by the German general Stupa that he would be shot, and Thamaskino said, "Greek clergy traditionally have been hanged." And he expected Stupa to follow the same tradition, yeah. But look, I know of no really massive -- by that I mean even in t -- in the [indecipherable] of Jews that were saved through the action of the Greek Orthodox church. The -- it is a fact that Thamaskinos, the archbishop said that Jews would find refuge in monasteries, but I really don't know of a single case where Jews survived because they were sheltered in monasteries.

Q: Yeah. There are not remarkable stories of righteous acts, then?

A: Oh, there are -- there are lots, but they -- they -- they are not on the part of an organized body, wha -- be it the church. For example, the then chief of police, Evert, he -- I mean, in the German occupation, he personally issued or gave orders, and faked id -- identity cards were issued to Jews. These -- these were acts of heroism that are -- really were individual. Other than Evert, and this act of Thamaskinos of open protest, all the other Jews who were saved was through the act of, I think, great humanity, first of all, and even at times against a -- a -- you know, a palpable danger on the part of individual Greeks.

Q: Let's go on now to the reunion with your brother Samuel.

A: Well, as you recall from the other tape, beginning in May, or June of '45 as I recall, when the first news of the liberation of concentration camps, then -- and -- and -- and -- and DP's -- displaced persons began to be processed, then there were both -- there were reports both in the Greek newspapers, and also on the radio of rec-recitation of names of the known people who were -- would be returning. And I found this out from

a neighbor in the -- in one morning, that she had heard my brother's name. But within really t-two or three days shortly after this news, Sam already had been moved, eventually from Germany to Italy, Bali, and then to Pardres, and then he called on the phone and told us that he was arriving, and I went to the station and -- and there he was. Well, i-i -- first of all, I cou -- I didn't recognize him right away, because he had grown so much in the brief year and a half that -- almost two years since I had see -- we had seen each other. And two things I think, or one thing s -- that struck me was that his behavior, at least outwardly in the days and weeks after his return, to -- at least to me it appeared as if he had not really -- or -- or -- or all these horrors, and all these experiences had not left such a -- a -- a mark on him, because he -- he would laugh, and sing, and -- and I remember he was into -- into jazz, and -- and -- and modern music, and going out with -- with friends. Whereas I had really, in the -- in the -- in the months in the mountains, I had spent a great deal of time just thinking about what had happened, and also looking to a much better situation afterwards, and I had all kinds of plans, and especially about my mother, who was always a very demanding woman, and who I thought was not -- never satisfied with my accomplishments, and that she would be very proud about things that I was going to do. And -- and -- and I had been, I think, much more touched by the events than I could see Sam. Of course, it's very difficult to read what is really deep in -- in somebody's mind, or psyche. But at least outwardly, I was astounded at the resilience of human beings to go through this -- this horror which you would begin to see in newsreels and read progressively in books, that the term Holocaust hadn't even been invented yet. But I was astounded.

Q: And did you -- were you able to come up with any explanation of how Sam could be coping?

A: Well, the only explanation was that -- that simply because he was not only young, absolu -- in absolute terms, but that -- that in that period of 13 or 14, there was more elasticity in -- in -- in somebody's mind and character and emotions than there would be -- we only had four years apart -- in any -- in any case, it -- it -- I was much more affected by the -- by the war experience, all the events, than I saw Sam being affected. And that's -- simply surprised me.

Q: Mm-hm. How did you view, subsequently, your decision not to remain in Athens, but to go to the mountains? In a sense it seemed to me you -- your -- you were in hiding, but you were in hiding with the partisans in the mountains.

A: All right. I have -- I have thought about this thing very, very much, but I -- I can really tell you that it was not resolved of a great deal of rational thinking, and weighing of factors for and against. I can only ascribe it to pure instinct, number one, to a aspect of my personality that I simply -- when I thought about it, I re -- re-refused to -- to -- to -- to s -- to s -- to accept the possibility of remaining in hiding for an indeterminate period of time. I had never been away from home, although the Mikalopoulus's were very kind to me, they accepted me, th-th -- Thanasis, my friend, was the only child, the only son, and -- and there was never any hesitation, accepting me as another, but it wasn't really that I felt a stranger, simply that I could not withstand a life of continuous hiding, which then made me an -- and the moment this took root, then what I call personality, I -- I've believe that what is referred to

sometimes, I'm goal oriented. That means I -- once I set a -- a target, then I -- I do whatever I can to -- to -- to reach that -- that outcome. That was what propelled me. The -- it wasn't really based on any other set of weighing of rational pieces of information for or against. That was going to be it, and I was going to a total unknown. I didn't even know where I was going.

Q: Was part of it your wish to be actively resisting?

A: No. The active wish was to survive.

Q: And I wonder if you talked with your father about this, but it seems that for those in hiding, they must have been -- have felt imperiled. I mean, when they'd go to sleep at night, you never knew when you wou -- would be denounced. I think of how fearful a time it must have been when the rest of your family, your mother, grandmother, and brothers were taken for questioning. Did you talk to your father about what that stage was like for him?

A: The answer is, we didn't talk, but -- and I again, I surmise that -- l-let's put some dates, so we -- we -- we will know what we are talking about. My mother and brothers were caught towards the end of June, beginning of July of 1944. They were incarcerated in the detention camp of Hithari. And on July 29, they were put on board the last transport that ever left Greece, together with the 1800 Rhodesian Jews. I can imagine that my father learned about that not because anyone went and told him. There was no such contact, but he must have surmised, because they say from a negative side, lack of contact from time to time, my mother, or Sam would go to my father, not so much alone to see him, but also to get money. Also, perhaps -- we didn't

cover that, I don't believe in the video interview, but I know subsequently, that my father changed hiding places three times, because -- you know, the -- you can only maintain a -- a pretense of a visiting relative up to a certain point, all right? So there would come a time when it was time to go. Some -- ok -- times there were o -- really ostensible reasons that people would suspect, or even somebody would whisper and say -- they begin to s -- to know that you are Jews, whereupon both the family who were doing the sheltering, as well as the sheltered, knew that it was time to -- to move. So my father moved three times. At the time of, I think, the capture of my mother, grandmother and brothers, he -- it was finally in the last place, the third place, before the liberation. And simply, he must have realized that something had happened, because there were no contact -- there was no contact. Of course, he found out immediately after -- after the liberation.

Q: Mm-hm. What did Sam later tell you about that? I mean, were they -- were they brutally treated, because I -- I think the Germans would want to find out where your father and you were?

A: Yes. Yes, this is a -- a -- really a very painful a-aspect to me, because of what Sam told me. In their interrogation, the beatings that my mother and he were subjected -- not the young one, not the me -- Mekko. And they kept on asking them about my father's and my whereabouts. Of course, in -- in a case for me, she did not know. And then Sam told me that for months, and months, and months, my mother was really destitute, and -- and -- a -- I mean, extremely concerned about what had happened to me. She did not know where I had gone. I'm sure my father told her, "He's gone to the

mountains." But even with my father I didn't com -- there was no way to communicate and -- and send notes from time to time, I'm -- I'm fine. There were no ways of doing that. So the combination of her concern about my fate and whereabouts, and -- and the brutality and the beatings, and -- and the other thing which is so revealing about my mother that Sam mentions in his interview, was her almost foolhardy defiance of the Gestapo. Of cursing them, of calling them criminals, of telling them that their comeuppance would come very soon. This -- I mean, either heroism -- you know, that's un-unthinkable, or foolhardiness, another thing my mother was a foolhardy person. But it's an aspect that's -- is so telling about -- about her. I don't think that's -- I don't even know if my father knew about these events. They didn't come up. I didn't learn about what I just related to you, until I saw Sam's interview with the sh -- the Spielberg foundation.

Q: I think you had mentioned earlier that in that family, that one family council meeting, you had agreed that you would never disclose where each of you were. And it's interesting therefore, your mother's defiance. But I wonder also if you had her determination. She was a strong personality, I think, and it may have been that spirit from her that drove you to go to the mountains.

A: I would like to think that that's the case, but I have to also confess that it was not, again, a conscious thing. In other words, I -- I -- I set my -- I became determined to do it. I even -- I mean, in -- in retrospect -- no, you know from my thi -- the other interview, that I didn't even have an identity card. I -- I -- I manufactured one of them, which really would not pass scrutiny even by a -- an idiot, but fortunately we were not

stopped. S -- the fact that -- that -- that I did it, that I didn't know where I was going to end up, it was something that -- that simply drove me, and if it was a part of -- a similarity in -- in character traits, that's what it is.

Q: What did you later learn from Sam about your younger brother? I'm wondering if your mother protected him? I -- I -- I think he was -- he would be 10 when he died, I think.

A: He was nine.

Q: I wonder if she would hide from him something of the horrors, and -- but I don't know what you learned.

A: Well, really very little. Mekko, as we used to call him, well, his name was -- Mechalmar was his first name, was too young. An eight year difference, as you know, is immense among young children, although I re -- I remember I -- when he was two, or three, or four, I was his protector, I would take him to walks, and to play in a number of places near our house. There was a square with -- in a garden, in a playground. But we did not exchange things. I -- I don't th-think I [indecipherable] my mother. Obviously she protected him in the sense of making sure that he was fed, and -- and clothed while they are -- they are hiding, under those circumstances. But, you know, as you -- as you know, children sense, even much younger, so I'm sure that he knew that these were dire times, and I -- I think someone refers the fact that actually the -- the capture, the denouncement was perhaps that both children, in the last place of their hiding, they went out to play in the streets. And maybe more than they should have, and therefore, seeing strange faces, perhaps, gave some people who were not

particularly sympathetic to the situation, to spread the word. Not maybe maliciously, but once these kinds of things came in, well, there are strangers in this neighborhood, you gotta remember that the people who discovered them were Greeks collaborating with the Germans, and who perhaps, a the -- I -- of -- out of ideological reasons, but in order to maintain their jobs, they became more zealous than -- or more [indecipherable] than the king, as the saying goes. So they went out of their way to -- you know, to -- to chalk up captures. And that's how it happened, because they exposed themselves a little bit more than -- than they should have. But at the same time, they were young children, and they had to get out and play.

Q: Have you felt a wish to f -- try to find out who revealed where your mother was? I mean, oh -- did you even feel a wish to do that?

A: I a -- I've asked Sam about that. There is no -- no one knows who did -- if there was really someone, or more than one who actually denounced. I think simply, as I say, the word spread around there were strangers in the neighborhood. This got picked up by these roving collaborators. Now, what is known, however, is that when they were taken to the detention -- to -- to the offices of the -- of the Gestapo, and -- and the names are very well known, the two or three Jews, including this horrible man named Hasson, who was a terrible collaborator with the Nazis, who made it his job to go and discover hiding Jews, and -- and -- and -- and capture them. So in -- in -- no one knows, really who -- single person, or other people who did the da -- see -- see -- see -- one of the unknowns.

Q: When your mother was taken and -- well your, your mother with the -- the -- your brothers and --

End of Tape One, Side B

Beginning Tape Two, Side A

Q: -- is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Isaac Nehama. This is tape number two, side A. I was interested in knowing when your mother was taken for questioning, with your family, where they were -- where they -- that Gestapo questioning would take place.

A: Yes, according to Sam, he -- they were taken to Gestapo headquarters. Now, let's not think that they really went to the office of the chief of the Gestapo in Athens. The ger -- the Germans, they had a -- a major office building in the center of Athens, not very far from Constitution Square, which was known as the commandatura, which was a c-combined office of the headquarters of the German occupation forces in -- in Athens, the Gestapo had. And because it was a large office building, it had also a -- a large basement. That's where they were -- they were taken for interrogation. Let me just simply tell you that I don't know if it is -- what kind of poetic justice, or anything like this, when I was taken by the gendarmerie after -- that's where I was taken, in the same place. But that's where they were taken.

Q: Yes. Now, to what does Sam attribute his having survived?

A: We have ta-talked about that. I think essentially, one -- if one has to take a single reason -- well, first of all, let's say two. One that at their arrival in Auschwitz, in the morning of August 16, of 1944, parathetically -- can I say how I -- we know that? Yes, because I looked at the da -- the so-called danuta Auschwitz chronicles as they are known, which is entries, almost like a diary every day of oc-occurrences. And the entry for August 16, it talks about the almost 2000 Rhodesian Jews. It doesn't tell the

complete story, there were another har -- 600 non-Rhodesian Jews among them, my mother and -- and -- and brothers. They arrived there, and in the -- this of course, famous separation, the re -- the single reason that he was moved to -- towards the labor camp, was because of his height. He was only -- ’44 -- he was 14 years old, but he was a lot taller than his age, and he also credits the fact that the month detention in Hidari outside of Athens before the transport, where he was forced to do stupid, meaningless labor of moving rocks from one place to the other, had -- and the food was good, also, there, amazing because it was the Red Cross who were feeding them, that he -- he gained enough muscle so that in the separation, he was then pointed to be taken to labor -- all right -- to the labor camp. Once then in the labor camp, after the famous three or four weeks of so-called quarantine, then he was taken to a section of Auschwitz called the boodi, which was a set of farms that were being worked on by a combination of Polish and German farmers, and the inmates were doing the -- the hard labor. But the survival in boodi, in particular then the survival in the famous Death March in the winter of ’45, when Auschwitz got shut down because of the Russians coming in, and they were taken elsewhere. Sam credits it to the care of older men, who took him, as they did also other, younger kids, under their wings. In particular in protecting them about -- especially what not to do. And what to be a-a-aware of, because as we know, human beings in those circumstances did terrible things to each other, stealing bread, just sort of pure survival. So he believes very strongly that one or two people took him also under their wing, and -- and it was through them that he was able to survive.

Q: I'm interested in also in knowing of the roles you as brothers fulfilled later, as the eldest son, and the winner of a scholarship, you came to the United States, Sam stayed with your father, and I -- I'm guessing that he felt an obligation to be -- to spend his life close to your father, emigrating after your father's death. I just wondered if you felt that you were a -- a cornerstone of the family, sort of succeeding in the -- in your new life, but fulfilling one critical role?

A: Well, re-re-recall that I came to the United States on a student scholarship, therefore believing that after my studies were over, I would return to Greece, and resume my life there. Why Sam stayed, I have really mulled this very much, and I -- I -- I don't have a -- a -- you know, an answer that I can be a hundred percent sure, but both my parents were really maniacal, I think, about making sure that we were well -- well educated. I -- the decision for me to become an engineer was cast at the -- I think the moment I was born, I think, f -- by my father in particular.

Q: Not a currency trader.

A: R-Right, right. Or -- or an accountant, as -- as he was. And I think that there was a -- a particular event. In 1952, Sam had, I think, just barely finished high school. He -- he may have been thinking -- I think he did, about going to university, possibly for commercial studies. But at the same time, coincidentally, my father retired from his occupation of -- his job that had gone on for 40 years, practically. And there were no pension plans as we know them here, but he was given a large final severance amount, which he then decided to -- to -- to use to invest in going into business with somebody who actually was the brother of my stepmother. My father had remarried, and so he

started this business, and I think -- I think -- I'm -- I'm almost sure, that it isn't that my father didn't push Sam to continue, or to -- to -- to pursue university work, but starting a business, he thought that it would be a wonderful thing to bring my brother in, so that he would also learn the business, and grow with it, and eventually of course, inherit it. Unfortunately, it failed for many, many reasons, including the fact that my father, while he was a wonderful accountant, was not a businessman. Plus also that his brother-in-law and partner turned out to be a crook. And -- and in -- in the meantime then, Sam had also married, and that's why I think he stayed.

Q: Mm-hm. It wasn't a matter of his feeling that he was forfeiting the opportunity to join you, perhaps?

A: No, look, although by the time I left, and I -- I know now that my father had started all his efforts to secure a scholarship for me, or -- or some means for me to go and study abroad. He even wrote letters to Churchill, inflating -- I mean, the truth, beyond -- you know, any conceivable acceptable level of -- of -- of -- of recognition. It's true that at one time, during the occupation, two Jews of the British army, that had, you know, been stranded in Greece, and were hiding, w -- they -- we -- hi -- hid them in our house for overnight. In his letter to Churchill, he inflated these [indecipherable] arrangement of British troops, and -- and -- and he was asking for no compensation of any kind, other then op -- an opportunity for his son to have an opportunity to study in England, if possible. The fact is that also he was starting the same thing with B'nai Brith, because he was a member of the B'nai Brith. In -- in fact, he kept all of these things totally secret from me. I had no idea what was happening until one -- when it

was a done deal, essentially, and he told me at one time. And actually, my first reaction was to -- to say, “No, I don’t want to her -- leave you.” You know. I’m saying all of that -- forgive again the detour -- to tell you that -- I mean, my leaving, and -- and -- and his decision that I go and study abroad, the sacrifices that my father would undergo to see his son educated, had no bounds. And I think that under other circumstances, he would have pushed Sam to do the same thing, even if then that meant that he would be left alone, you know, with two sons away. But as I said, the -- the -- this maniacal thing for education was so strong, the only countervaley thing, I think was that -- that -- that coincidentally he was starting a business, and therefore he saw that there was another avenue that would be open for my brother to advance. I speculate -- and I was telling this to my wife last night, that if my mother had been alive, Sam would not have gone into that business, she would have pushed him, regardless, to go and -- and -- and -- and study.

Q: It’s interesting, your story of your father’s efforts on your behalf, cause I was thinking of when you were -- when you went to Libya, he had intervened then, and -- successfully, I think, either was a New York Times reporter that --

A: Yes, well not -- not -- yes, of course, i-i -- my father immediately then contacted a cousin -- our cousins, and it was they who then knew the Times’ correspondent who then talked to -- to the archbishop, Thamaskinos. And it was that way that I was -- I was set free.

Q: Yeah, anyway, they're wonderful stories of a father's determination. Now, at this time, would many of the Jews of Athens have been thinking actively of leaving for either Palestine or the United States?

A: Very well -- ah, I -- I saw that question, I was laughing a little bit because I have -- I have to tell you what -- what happened. There was not, as in for example, Bulgaria. You know, in spite of all the talk about the Bulgarians saving 50,000 Jews, it's true that -- that they were not killed, but not what then the Bulgarians began to claim. But the Bulgarians, as you know, marched with their feet, and -- and from 48,000, there are only 3000 left. There was less of the mass exodus from Greece, but th -- recall also, that out of a population of 77,000 pre-war, only about six or 7000 survived. And I think in one of your questions was how many wer -- were sheltered. The best numbers that one has, about five or 6000 found shelter, either with Greek Christian families, or in the mountains. I don't mean the resistance, they just went up there, and were able to hide and lose themselves in -- in the population in the parts of Greece that they were known as free Greece, which included the region where I was. About 1300 were the -- in the resistance, in any case. But very shortly -- I mean, mid '45, immediately we had visitors from Israel, and I still remember young Israelis, but Greek speaking Israelis, but totally different, and -- and darkened from sun, and -- and full of muscle, and -- peasants. I mean, things out there that you don't necessarily associate with the appearance of -- of -- of Jews, especially those that live in cities who are -- live soft lives. In any case, they had been sent on purpose to recruit young men to come to Israel. And as you know, they did. Quite a few were then sent to what's called

Akshara, which was sort of a preparatory school for three or four weeks, to teach the rudiments of living in a kibbutz. And then it was -- all of it was clandestine, because one night, in -- at night -- and they were taken by boat to ships that were not in territorial Greek waters, and there they were taken, and then taken to Greece again in secret, because they didn't come as part of the British quotas, they were trying to violate. And some of them were caught and incarcerated in Cypress, in any case. So I -- I was, and some of my friends, lobbied intensely by the Israelis to come to Palestine, but the reason I'm laughing is -- y-you -- it's -- I recollect, and -- and I -- I think it's so unreal. Most of our preoccupation in questi -- questioning the Israelis about what kind of government are we going to have, if eventually a state is formed. Because our experience, you know, in the mountains, and things like this is we need to be democratic, and you know, almost Socialistic, and things like -- th-the Israelis would look at us as though w-we were nuts, and say, "Look, w-we have many things to do before w-we come to that point. The first thing to do is to try to -- to make sure that we become a state. When we become a state, then people will ha -- will -- will vote," and -- and we were surely looking for reassurances ahead of time. Well, and that was -- there was a very strong thing. The reason I didn't become extremely serious, you know, to the point of taking action, what they say -- first of all, A, I couldn't leave my father. Sam had not even yet appeared on the scene when these events of the contact with the Israelis occurred. Sam had not e -- yet returned, number one, and two, of course, the Israelis had departed, and then of course the British clamped down, and it wasn't even possible to do that any more. And then of course, my departure from the

United States, you know, made this thing a moot point. But yes, there was a very strong period of I would say two or three months, where practically I got on the boat to go to Palestine.

Q: Now, how much of an honor was it to have that B'nai Brith scholarship? W-Were there -- were there many of them, or very few?

A: Right. The first two were my scholarship, and -- and my second cousin, Jeff Levis. We left at the same time. First of all we -- even after everything was put in place -- you know, in addition to all the paperwork, visas, this and the other, examination by the American consul that we were at least mildly proficient in -- in English, enough to -- to claim that we were going to go and study in -- in an American university. But the major th -- thing that -- that -- that -- that one had to wait for -- and that nothing could be done about it, was to wait for passage, because there were no -- there was not much shipping still, it hadn't been fully restored. So it took about another four or five months of waiting to get booking on -- on a ship. So there were two -- it wasn't done on the basis, let's say, of competition. It was -- I ad -- really wa --

Q: It was your father's letter writing.

A: My father's letter writing, and his cousin, you know, Joseph Levi, that, you know, really made th -- there was -- I know now that two other such scholarships were given. They were not scholastic achievements, it was simply th-that -- that Jews in the United States sponsored us. Although it was B'nai Brith money, which it certainly didn't last more than one year. And I didn't know that. And -- and the only reason I was able to

continue was because the university then picked up the -- the sc -- the scholarship. So that's how it happened.

Q: Mm-hm. Then how did you travel to the United States, by boat?

A: Well by -- by boat, yes. The Volcania. It was two Italian ships that had been used during the war as transports. It had a sister ship called -- Volcania -- not -- not Lusitania, but it's is -- same Italian -- kind of Italian name, I'll -- I'll remember in a moment. It took about 13 to 14 days because we stopped in Genoa to pick up other passengers, and -- you know, it wasn't a very fast ship. And it took about, you know, maybe 12 days to get to the United States.

Q: What did you take with you? And you thought then you would be there for several years, for the degree.

A: F-For at least four years, for any -- four years, for at least four years. Well, of course, other than -- than items of clothing, I took very little else. Two or three mementos. First of all, for the man who sponsored me, who had to sign an affidavit of support as it was called, who I never met in my life, he lived in Kalamazoo, Michigan, his name was Osias Souvairdling, my father gave me a present to give him, which was -- must have been a very dear thing for him, it was a -- a cigarette case. He didn't even know if the man smoked, but it was really done of silver filigree, I think of -- of -- of wire, intricately done, and which I eventually sent to Mr. Souvairdling to thank him profoundly, when ha -- as I say, we never met. And so we came to New York, we stopped for three or four days, seeing relatives in New York. Jeff had a --

Q: And that would be -- you had a -- your father's brother.

A: Yes, Benjamin, and I stayed with him overnight. And then -- after all, we were also late, because it was end of October, and this -- and the semester had already started, so we were already a month and a half late. So we left New York to go to Chicago, and in Chicago then we parted because, you see, both of us had no choice, we were not given a choice about what schools to attend. We each told what we wanted to study and B'nai Brith then found the appropriate schools. I was then sent to the University of Illinois. So in Chicago we said good-bye to each other, I took the train down to Champagne, and he took the train to Iowa, because he went to Iowa State.

Q: And what are your memories of, the first impressions, of New York, of your uncle's home, of Illinois?

A: Well, all right, they were distinct. New York was of course something that only one saw in pictures, and in books, and still one had to -- to -- to really marvel at the c -- the -- the -- the sorts of things tha-that were hard to even imagine. Taken to the automat for example, I mean, the idea of pushing a nickel and then being served a meal was -- you know, not only strange, but for -- for -- especially mechanically minded people like myself. In Illinois it was very different because, you know, I arrived there the night in -- on November the third or fourth of '46. It happened to be the day before the semi -- the -- the biennial elections -- not presidential, but for two-thirds of the Senate, and the whole House of Representatives. And -- and -- and -- you know, naively, and -- and -- and I found out the following day that at that time, easily, about half of the people in the fraternity where I was being given room and board -- which was another thing that the B'nai Brith had arranged for me to do at the AEPi house, the majority of

them were veterans themselves, fliers, soldiers. And then when I asked them are they voting tomorrow in the elections, and they said, “What elections?” I was -- it was the biggest, first initial shock in my life, because one in Europe associated political awareness and movement always with university students. That’s where also the ferment would take place. And to -- to find out that the supreme indifference, and -- and a -- and e-eventually, this is -- became really, from -- from a critical thing, became an endearing aspect of American life, that I liked.

Q: What is it they say, if all is going well, you don’t need to vote, but --

A: [indecipherable] or something like that. Or -- or maybe the other thing that all politicians are -- are -- are -- are not worth paying attention to.

Q: How difficult was your adjustment to life at -- that would be Urbana, Champagne. I was just thinking of language, and then all the other adjustments.

A: Well, all right, language of course was really a bit of a problem, but it didn’t take me very long to -- to acquire language. The nice thing a -- the ni -- the good aspect -- not the good, the -- the -- the tolerable aspect was that for engineering, really language was not that essential. Or at least a very strong component. Some of the first courses one had to take, which first of all amazed me, was that I had to take, you know, algebra. Algebra. I had gone to a special high school in -- in Greece, preparatory to entering the Polytechnic Institute. What is -- algebra was already a foregone thing. And in fact, the first day I got to -- to that class, and I’m sitting there, and -- and -- and I see the instructor laboring over a formula, and -- and -- and very diffidently I asked if I could show another way, and I went, and then I showed the solution, and afterwards,

at the end of the session, he asked me to stay back, and he said he knew about my arrival, and he knew that I was -- I came from Europe and education was stronger there, and he asked me not to come back again. He says, “I’ll give you an A, don’t show up in class any more.” So I was able to overcome that. So I -- I believe that -- that I had some facility for languages, and so it didn’t become that much of an obstacle.

Q: What -- what were the most difficult areas of adjustment? I mean, were there -- were there cultural things that were hard? I mean, were you nostalgic for Greek food, did you miss your friends and family badly?

A: Really, I must a-admit that -- that -- that except for occasional bouts of -- not loneliness, of not really being with a relative or a friend, but there was so much to absorb from every aspect. Life in it’s little ins -- insignificant a-aspects, wa -- the shops, the stores, university life. Life in a fraternity, what young people did, what interested them. It is -- it was so -- so -- there was practically no time to really begin to feel any deprivation at all. The first time that happened was at the end of the first year, when suddenly the summer vacation [indecipherable] what am I gonna do?

Q: And you were 20 then?

A: Yes. So I really went to New York, and stayed with my uncle, and I was working in his factory, he was a manufacturer of dresses. Well, when the people in B’nai Brith found out that that’s what I was doing, they were horrified. I don’t know why. So then they arranged for me to go to a special camp that was run by the Quakers. They had six or seven of them around the country, but typically what it would be, the Quakers --

the Friends -- the American Friends Service Committee would invite f -- foreign students, about 35 to 40, put them in a place, usually a -- a private school, the grounds for a private school that -- since it was vacation time, and we would stay there for almost eight weeks, and the idea was to talk about life and -- and f-foreign affairs, and things like this, and we had every week some prominent individual from the university, a professor would come, or -- either of political science, or psychology, and he would lecture, and he would hold a -- a -- a -- a -- discussions under a tree. You know, kind of a thing and exchange ideas. And then of course, play games, go swimming, and things like this, and that's -- that's how tha -- th-th -- it was a first time when I suddenly found myself almost detached because the -- the house, the fraternity house closed, school was closed, I was going to go to summer school. And that's the first time that it hit me that now I'm again alone and on my own.

Q: What was your fraternity experience like?

A: Well, since I had no -- I had a brief semester which I went to the Polytechnic and still living at home, I -- I don't want to say it was strange, or -- or -- everything was strange for me, everything was new, and I had nothing to compare -- of course I had then, eventually a -- other schoolmates who didn't live in fraternities, who lived in dorms, or who lived in -- in rooming houses. What -- what I found --

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 Isaac Nehama. This is tape number two, side B. What was the fraternity experience like?

A: Well, as I said, I guess, since it was all new, I had to -- to absorb and ac -- and sort of accept, because I had no other frame of reference against which to compare. The only thing that certainly was a bit peculiar, at least to me, was that so much time was spent in -- in games, and recreation, as compared to study. But even within this type of environment, one was not obligated to do anything. I mean, there were certain events that one had to participate in, but what one did with one's free time, it was up to individual. So again it was -- it was a very good introduction to an aspect of American life, namely that you don't have to conform to exactly a particular pattern. It was some of it you had to do, some of it was entirely voluntary. And I -- I know that there were some fraternity brothers who were Americans, and who, like me, did not participate in all the games, and superficial other activities, and who were much more serious in studies, and things like that.

Q: It would have given you acceptance by a group, and I wondered if that was a very good feeling for a newcomer?

A: Yes, and again, since I have no other way to compare it, I would have to ask myself where if I had simply had a room in it, or -- or a place in a dorm, or -- or -- or in a rooming house, would I be able to, al-almost in one fell swoop, be a brother to f -- to 40 or 50 other people? I-It wouldn't have happened.

Q: Yeah, it seems to me it was interesting that that was arranged.

A: Yes.

Q: And I wondered too, when you were later in the U.S. army, years later, were there any similarities with your fraternity days? I -- I was just simply thinking of group acceptance.

A: None, none. Of course, there -- there is a similarity, you know, whenever groups of people do similar things together, there are ties and camaraderies, and of course I leave out a big -- I was in the mountains, that's a different story, and participated in an action, and so forth, but in the American army I was not in any battle situation. Because there is a special ties that get formed when people share dangers. In the army, what was shared in the beginning was, during basic training, where you undergo a mixture of both discipline that is -- has some meaning, and a lot of mindless nonsense, which has even particular words in the -- in American army that we will not mention now in -- you know, the tape.

Q: Now, what fraternity was it, and what were the usual characteristics of that fraternity?

A: All right, the fraternity was called AEPi, Alpha Epsilon Pi. It was a Jewish fraternity, one of about, if I recall at that time, either five or six Jewish fraternities on the Champagne Urbana campus of the University of Illinois.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And -- and most of, I think of the 40 or 50 individuals, me -- students at that time, I think 90 percent were residents of Illinois from various parts, mostly from Chicago. And the rest were really from practically other parts of the country, there were three or

four New Yorkers, one from -- two from outside of Boston. And obviously I was -- I was the only -- the only foreigner.

Q: Mm-hm. Did you experience any anti-Semitism on the campus in general, or in those years? Were you a -- aware of any?

A: None. None.

Q: Tell me more then -- let's go on to your -- your studies. Y -- it seems your adjustment was very straightforward. You did your first degree, and you stayed on at Illinois for your later degrees?

A: Right, yes. After finishing the Bachelor's degree, i -- it coincided with the advent of the Korean war, 1950. When I got my Bachelor's degree, then that summer, the war in Korea started. A -- a number of friends and so forth, who thought they were be of imminent draftable age, did a number of things, including going to graduate school which they never thought or intended to go, in order to get deferments. Other even went to the length of quickly getting married, so they would be supporters of family. And then I -- I was told that I would be given a -- an assistanceship, a research assistanceship to continue to graduate school, which then enabled me to go through the Master's degree. Then I decided to continue on for the doctorate. And I went for the additional year, including then taking the oral exams. And the oral exams were -- were -- took place on June third, 1953, the date of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth. So I passed the oral. So what was left to d -- to -- to do was to write the thesis, and in fact my advisor and I had selected the topic, but I had run out of money. And there was no -- the assist-assistanceship funding was over. So it was a question of how I mi -- a --

going to be able to support myself. My professor had arranged for me -- my advisor to work for the summer at Bell Telephone Laboratories, just for the summer. And then, after taking the orals, I was offered a permanent position at Bell Laboratories. Well, I talked to my professor, and he said, “All right, it’s a little -- rarely done, but it can be done. You can arrange for to write the thesis in absentia.” Which was the plan. Unfortunately I was drafted a year later, and -- although after my release from the army, I intended to continue on -- to try to -- to write the thesis by -- in the meantime, at the University of Illinois, they stopped allowing thesis to be written in absentia, because of pressure from the legislature. And that sort of put an end to -- to that quest.

Q: Yeah, what did you write your thesis on?

A: What I was going to write the thesis on.

Q: Well, yeah what -- what were you planning earlier, to write it on.

A: Well, the topic we had selected was this, the realization of electrical networks, with real components.

Q: And did you work -- I mean, wa-was that an area you pursued in your work later?

A: A little bit, because since I was drafted, less tha -- in about a year after my starting arm -- permanent position at Bell Laboratories, there was a two year a -- in -- almost two years intervening in the army. When I returned, I changed departments, and I joined a completely brand new department, which really was going to, and did the work in -- in -- in the totally new generation of telephone exchanges, digital instead of the older variety. Which almost had nothing to do whatsoever with any of the special

academic interests that I had. It was -- it was a new universe, essentially of computers, and that's what to -- got me into that field.

Q: Yeah. Going back to the army, now had you become an American citizen earlier? You came here as a Yugoslav.

A: Right. This is something that we have not covered at all because it was not covered in the earlier interview. While I -- I was studying for the orals, in April of 40 thre -- 40 -- of '53, my landlady tells me that somebody's -- wants to talk to me, a gentleman appears, hands me a letter, I open it up, it's from the immigration naturalization service, I'm to depart United States within two weeks. Why? He says, "Look, I'm only the messenger." Well, you can understand my state of mind. I got on the train, went to Chicago where I had friends, told them the situation. The long and the short is they intervened. I mean, they got me to talk to a congressman, who then talked to the immigration department, immigration department renewed my stay for another year. So I thought that was going to be the end of that, right? Without my knowing -- I had told one of my professors what had happened , and while I was in Chicago, and even after my return two or three days later, without my knowing, four professors wrote to the then Senator Dograss of Illinois, who introduced a private bill in congress, and eventually became a law, known as the law for the relief of Isaac Ne-Nehama. It was signed by President Eisenhower, and by law I became a -- I was accepted as an immigrant, outside of the student visa restrictions, because student visa is a restricted class, where you are not allowed to -- to stay permanently. So I was now, because of the special bill, I was now a special -- a -- a -- an immigrant. So I would have to wait

for my five years, you know, to be -- to gain citizenship. But being inducted into the army, automatically within six months, then you become a citizen, for the very obvious reason that a country cannot ask you to defend it, and at the same time not recognizing you as a citizen.

Q: Yes.

A: So I became a naturalized citizen in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Q: Yeah, now -- and they intervened on your behalf with that private legislation, just you were a promising student, and they felt it was an injustice?

A: Yes, I'm -- I'm eve -- I'm very embarrassed to read the -- because I was investigated by the FBI, I mean, they had to go and interview them, and the glowing terms, I mean, make me blush even today when I read them.

Q: And then after serving in the army, you returned to Bell Labs, and continued to work in this exciting new field?

A: Right. But i -- i -- i -- i -- a personal aspect of my life is that it -- that just before I went in the army, I got married. In fact, I lived with my first wife in Colorado Springs, because after basic training in New Jersey, I was then sent to the fifth army's headq -- school -- signal school in Colorado Springs. And since in the army it's very important -- or even more important what you don't do, than what you do, instead of cleaning pots or -- or -- or being in the trenches, I was teaching in the signal school, reserve officers who were passing every three months, to take refresher courses in radio, telephony, and things like that. So that's where I spent my -- my two years. Upon our

return then, to New Jersey, I resumed my work at Bell Laboratories, but then there was a -- a rift, and in 1957, I was divorced.

Q: Mm-hm. Tell me about your first wife, what was her name and her background, and where you met, and so on.

A: Her name was Ann Greenberg. I -- I -- I -- two summers -- after the first summer I mentioned to you earlier, with the Quaker camp, I worked in the Poconos in a camp for boys and girls, as a waiter, to earn pocket money. And was very often sufficient to -- to -- to allow me to buy a -- an occasional movie ticket. Because the scholarship just simply provided room and board, nothing else. But then I had a friend and when finally I wa -- began to start working at Bell Laboratories stationed in New York City, then this friend that I had met in the camp told me about a young lady who was an -- an -- a friend of hers, and that's how I -- I met Ann. And so we were going out together, and in fact when I got my notice from the draft board to present myself for training, Ann -- I can only tell you subs -- from subsequent information -- her own parents were divorced, it was a -- a rather unhappy marriage, and she convinced me. I maybe n-not have taken a lot of convincing, I was a little bit hesitant because, you know, going into the army, goodness knows where I could be shipped. But she was persuasive enough to tell me that she would accompany me wherever we went, if it [indecipherable] allowed. The long and the short is we -- we got married. And she went to school in Colorado Springs, at the university because she eventually intended to go to medical school. When we return, lived in New Jersey, she enrolled at NYU. And she was -- began to have problems. First of all, academic problems, and then one

day she disappeared. The long and the short is I found out through a physician who was -- knew her from -- since childhood, that according to him, she was a schizophrenic. And he -- who -- and this -- this man urged me to simply get away as fast as I could. I was -- my reaction was, you know, “You’re just telling me that I’m dealing with a sick person, and you’re telling me to abandon a sick person?” But he convinced me that it’s the kind of a thing that has no hope for -- for cure, and -- and it would have been almost an impossibility. The long and the short is that I got a quick divorce in Mexico. It was consensual, it wasn’t contested or anything like that. That’s what happened.

Q: Mm-hm. On to the next part of the story, yeah.

A: All right.

Q: W -- y -- in your years with Bell Labs, I’m sure there were particular successes, and difficulties, and -- I mean, how do you look back on those years, and what would you have us know?

A: All right, all right. Well, you know, there was always a kind of phrase to describe the Bell system. We used to refer to i -- i -- to it as -- collectively as Mother Bell. So one can conjure up a -- an older woman, rather buxom, you know. Warm, that you feel warm in -- in -- in -- in -- near her. Well, in other words, it was a magnificent preparation for a career, because first of all you -- you were among individuals of extreme capability. Bell Laboratories recruited only the upper one percent of graduates in American universities. So there were no idiots there, and -- and you couldn’t really make it through with hot air, you would be found out right away. So it was a -- a very,

very demanding -- well, not demanding, but -- but really very mar-marvelous preparation. By the same token, it was a -- an extremely inbred thing. We -- we thought collectively that we knew everything. And -- so in -- there was a little bit of a struggle because there was no formal thing. My dreams always were that when I started my career, I would be taken under the wing of an experienced person who would take me slowly through the -- and it didn't happen. It isn't that I didn't learn things from colleagues, I did, a great deal. But there was no former -- you were essentially left on your own. And there came times I think almost three or four weeks after I started, that I really had terrible time believing that I was earning my paycheck under false pretenses. That -- that I wasn't doing anything valuable. But I very quickly got over that, because I began to do serious things. And then I got drafted, and I return, a-and -- and then it happened that we were working on the first field trial of this first ever new telephone exchange, what has taken Bell Laboratories biggest department of 400 people, six or seven years to prepare for the field trial in Modess, Illinois. And I started the -- the -- the system, and I came to the conclusion that it will not work. Not -- not that it will not work, that it -- it would not accommodate the kind of capacity that it was aimed to, something like 20,000 or 40,000 subscribers. My analysis showed that it would barely make it for 2000 subscribers. Well, it was solid enough thing that my own supervisor believed it, and f -- you know, typically then I was -- I gave it a -- a presentation. And of course the first reaction was one of horrible shock and -- and -- and -- and -- and disdain, but the stuff was solid enough, and that was -- I became a -- immediately a rising star. I was almost, I think, thrown out into the street, and within a

week I became a fair haired boy, and I got promoted, became a first promotion supervisor. But then I got the notion, a year after I became promoted that I really wanted to be in a higher stratum of research, and I left and went to the Rand Corporation in California, where I was going to work, believe it or not, it was a joke, really to [indecipherable] subsequently on artificial intelligence, because two people who had written some papers, told me that they had funding from the Air Force to start an effort, and I wanted to be a participant there. When I got there, simply the -- the plans were totally different, never as I said, and that experience at Rand was, in itself of a different kind, but equally rewarding. Your --

Q: And how long did you stay with Rand?

A: I stayed for two years. Then one f -- day I got a call from my former boss at Bell Laboratories, who was ready to retire, and who told me that the Bell system had been asked by the government to assist the government in the Apollo program. And he was simply asking me where I would talk to him. And he asked me not to hang up on him. I said, “I respect you too much to do that.” The long and the short is they -- and I’m talking about -- I -- but I don’t know anything about rockets is what -- I don’t know either, and I’m -- I’m 65 and I’m willing to learn. The long and the short is that -- do you want to hear a interesting story?

Q: Yes.

A: All right, good. I -- because I had a lot of leave coming, I flew to east, I spoke to them, I came back, I spoke with Paulette, and I decided to reject their offer, that I was happy what I was doing at Rand. That was a weekend. On Monday I go back to my

office at Rand, and the telephone rings, and it's the secretary of the president of the Rand corporation. She says, "Frank Wright to see you." I had met him once. What's the president to do with me? I go to his office, he greets me, he says, "I -- I understand you're considering leaving us." I was, you know, f -- absolutely -- you know, and it showed in my face. H-He saw it, he says, "W-W-Wait," he said. "it isn't anything nefarious, we don't have a -- a secret police. It's very simple. Julian West," who was the vice president at Bell Laboratories with whom I had talked to that previous day or two, "is a West Point classmate of mind, and he called me, he told me that they want you. And so what do you think you are doing?" So I told him, "I'm going to stay." He said, "Fantastic." I sit down, "What are you doing?" Well. He said, "And what do you think of the Apollo program?" So I began to say, "Well, this is probably the biggest thing since the building of the pyramids, the greatest," -- so I didn't know that he was almost setting a -- a -- a trap, and I was waxing so eloquently about, you know, going to the moon. Then he said, "I -- I th -- I think like you do." He says, "Let m -- let me tell you -- let's do the following," he says. "Why don't you go? Within -- because if you don't, you may regret it later that you didn't participate. But you go, and within two or three months, you will know whether it's really s-suits you. If it doesn't, come back. There'll always be a place for you here." What a wise individual. So I -- I --

Q: An inter -- it is an interesting story.

A: [indecipherable] and that was the end of it. I -- I didn't return.

Q: So that you then continued to work on the Apollo program?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: Oh, well.

A: Yeah, that's why we came to -- to Washington.

Q: Well tell me for how long you worked on it, and --

A: Yes, from 1962, till 1968. And this is at what -- at that point where already the plans for Apollo already had matured. My department -- I was head of one of the five departments in the company. We were already beginning to think about voyages to Mars, believe it or not. But another opportunity o -- arose. A friend of this boss of mine, who re -- who attracted me back to the -- to -- to the Bell system, then had a -- a -- a wealthy individual friend who lived in f -- in Philadelphia, and who was willing to fund new companies. And the long and the short is that I left the Bell system, and I founded my own company.

Q: This is very fascinating, I thought you'd had a career, you know, an unbroken career with Bell Lab.

A: No, no, no, no.

Q: And this would have been a very exciting time with the Apollo program.

A: Yes, it's an unmistakable time because I don't -- it ha -- is -- it has been studied, it has been written up, namely how so much enthusiasm, because fo -- you could see -- and I traveled a great deal, because this program was all over the United States, we didn't think about nine to five, or working hours, weekends. The enthusiasm there, of going and doing something like this was so [indecipherable] and -- and -- and -- and it -- it encompassed practically hundreds of thousands of engineers, and -- and people around the country. The enthusiasm was -- was great. It has not been replicated. But if

I may tell you that things like this have occurred, and I can assure you that I have not really been an instrument in choosing the situations, but throughout my career, Bell Laboratories, the new telephone system, then the Apollo program, the Rand Corporation artificial intelligence. In other words, what I'm trying to emphasize is that these things occur both in companies as well as in -- even in countries, very rarely, where you undertake something where there is no precedent. Because when you are in situations like this, then ideas flow freely. When you are in a -- in a environment with a lot of tradition, and you say, "Well, what about this thing?" Then they'll say, "Look, we've tried that." Or, "We don't do things like this around here." When you are in a new situation, then all ideas are given free reign. Now, all of them are not equally good, and some could be good, or even better than what was -- which -- which was in, but even countries don't have the luxury of pursuing two or three avenues in parallel. So to be in a -- in -- in a -- in a -- in an environment like this, it's the -- it's -- it's almost like getting drunk, or smoking -- which I don't know what smoking pot or any of these things would be, but it's -- I remember the early 50's in the Bell Laboratories. Unless you are either under narcosis or an utter idiot, you couldn't help but stumble on new inventions, on new ideas. It was a kind of a ferment that occurs very, very infrequently in the lives of companies, or the survivors in -- in even the [indecipherable]. Somehow it occurred two or three times in my career. None because I chose them like this, just pure luck.

Q: Yeah, so you've been very privileged --

A: Yes.

Q: -- to be in these sort of intellectually exciting --

A: Right. Yes.

Q: -- areas. Now, when you would be with the Apollo program, how would that fit with Sputnik? I mean that -- Sputnik would have happened, and have --

A: Oh yeah, [indecipherable]

Q: -- Kennedy, yes, and -- and we would have been sort of fast and furiously pursuing space flight --

A: Right.

Q: -- just at the time you'd be -- yeah, well --

A: Well --

Q: -- you'd be working on part of that program.

A: Well, Apollo was -- was -- was -- was done on purpose by the Kennedy speech in Congress --

Q: Yes.

A: -- to send a man to the moon. The fact that it was done not so much in response to Sputnik alone. I mean, we were pursuing manned space flight. The Russians beat us by a year, but as events eventually showed, really, eventually the a -- the American technological superiority is what made -- made the difference.

Q: Yeah, and a -- but -- was it -- well, I was just thinking of reading about someone named James Webb, I think, who --

A: Oh, James Webb, yes. James Webb was the -- the -- the first administrator. A very funny thing I will tell you. He --

Q: Of na -- of -- of NASA.

A: Of NASA, oh -- NASA. He was a very ki -- a -- he was primarily a --

End of Tape Two, Side B

Beginning Tape Three, Side A

Q: -- of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Isaac Nehama. This is tape number three, side A. We were talking about Kennedy's America space program, and James Webb.

A: Right, James Webb, who was the first and really strongest NASA administrator. But there -- there's a vignette about Webb which I think that you'll find amusing. Around 1954, he was interviewed by the New York Times, and there were many questions, and one of the questions he was asked was phrased as follows, he said -- he was -- he was told, "Mr. Webb, it's been said that the Russian space program is a very methodical program, you know, because they had started with a manned thing, then you send one individual, then a woman, then two. How would you characterize the American program?" He said, "Our program is just as methodical, if not more so than the Russian. Every step we take depends on the next." And that's Mr. Webb, all right?

Q: Yeah, that was fun. Now, you formed your own company at -- in what year?

A: All right. It was 1968. My revered, late, former boss Dr. Lovell, a prominent man, inventor with 300 patents to his name, prolific individual, and extremely wonderful. He told me one day that his friend was looking to fund a starting company, was I -- was I interested? And the long and the short was that we made a deal, and essentially, I really didn't even know what, specifically we were going to do other than to really get into the area of computers, and -- and software, but not concrete ideas. But very quickly after our formation, a couple of fortuitous events occur. The first one was that my former boss at the company that I worked, part of the Bell system that was doing

the work on the Apollo program, the company was called Bellcom, and it was, of course, situated in Washington, that's what brought us from California here. He also had, later on, a year after I left, had moved on to other things, had become chief executive of another company. And he called me on the phone one day, and he said that one of the -- the subsidiaries, who were doing work in -- around the country, they were -- in fact they had almost a virtual monopoly of race track systems. That is to say those systems where they display the odds, and also people go into the windows and bet. But that company, the subsidiary, had started an attempt to computerize their totes, as they were called, it's also the same name in England, from tote boards. And we -- we -- could we go and -- and see about their plans? So we thought that it was going to be a brief engagement of about a couple of months to look over their plans. It turned out to be a six or seven year affair, because when we reviewed their plans, and -- and -- and we are -- we told them not only what was done wrong, but how to do it right, they said, "Well, why don't you do it for us?" And the long and the short is, and what made my company was the horses. We -- we build the first computerized systems in the world, and it was really yeah -- to some extent a technological innovation because we used mini-computers, which were just beginning to come into -- into play, primarily as laboratory instruments. No -- no such animal had ever been used in a very, not only real life situation, but betting is a very, very technologically demanding situation, because in the half hour period between races, where all the betting's taking place, the number of transactions is very, very high. And so the system had to, you know, keep up with the flow thing.

Q: Now when you said mini-computers, would -- I mean, how small would they be?

A: Well, a -- a mini-computer, the type that we used, would be about the size of a -- let's say an audio tape, no not -- not that small, but one of the units that you see on my shelf, possibly, let's say 20 inches wide, maybe 20 inches high, and about the same depth. But as I said, they had very limited memory, and they were used only, principally at the time, tentatively as laboratory instruments to collect data on experiments and things like this.

Q: And what did -- what was your company called?

A: It was called International Computing Company. My f -- boss, the man who eventually engaged me asked me why that name. I said, "Well, it would be too ambitious to call it intergalactic, so I -- I chose International Computing Company."

Q: Yeah. And then it was really venture capital behind you initially?

A: Well, the venture capital was sink -- only one source, this individual, a-and that's all the funding that we got. There is no question that like any young company, young companies like young humans are vulnerable, they are not fragile. But not anything that we did, but the circumstances within a year after w-we got formed, things were a bit dicey, and we almost came, practically to disbanding the company, but we -- we stayed and -- and the engagement with that company to do the -- the --

Q: The horses.

A: The horses, gave us enough staying power. Also our -- actually our first contract that we won two months after our formation, was to win a -- a program funded by the nat -- National Institutes of Health, to try to see whether computers could be used in

assisting the collection and dissemination of blood in blood banks. And we were allied in this particular contract with the -- the blood bank in Milwaukee, in Wisconsin. And it lasted for two years, and we were able to prove that indeed, because it's the -- a problem of s -- not -- o-of -- of -- of inventory, because as you know, blood has a short lifetime of three weeks. So, it had -- computers were -- what we were able to do, in a real life situation, because the Milwaukee blood center supplied about 23 hospitals in the greater Milwaukee area -- the secret is the ability of the Milwaukee blood center -- all information if a blood unit is wanted, of a particular type in one hospital, and the computer knew it was in another hospital is to transport it, sometimes even with a taxicab. By contrast, the Red Cross, who was the -- and still is the biggest collector of blood -- privately I think it's a national disgrace, because the Red Cross doesn't, once it collects a unit of blood, if it then ships it to a hospital, it's responsibilities end there. Now the unit may eventually age, and then be thrown down the drain, but in -- in Milwaukee we -- we did not allow that, because we were able to, if something was needed, then we could -- had enough authority because the Milwaukee blood center still owned the blood unit.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: But the long and the short of ICC was that after the horses, then we got involved in satellite communications. And I can tell you -- perhaps you know enough about computers to know that computers really don't care whether you're dealing with blood, or -- or horses. It's information that you are -- are -- are exchanging, so very -- when we got into satellite communications, we bodily lifted elements of software from

the racetrack systems into satellite communications. And you tell that to people who don't understand, they say, "Well, how can that be?" Well, [indecipherable] understand.

Q: Yeah, the horses paid for your knowledge that could be applied to other things.

A: Right, and made -- made -- made the company. And -- and by -- by ni -- ni -- 1987, and that was about 11 or 12 years after our formation, we had reached a force of about a hundred to 120 people. And then we became -- we were courted by a number of big corporations. Eventually a company called Contel, Continental Telephone, cause it was the third largest telephone company in the United States, bought us. And in a sense this was [indecipherable] completing the circle for me. I started my career in a -- in a telephone company, and eventually gets bought out by another telephone company.

Q: Meanwhile, let's go back to your family life.

A: Sure.

Q: What was happening to you personally during this time, and also will --

A: May I intervene for a moment to tell you about something else? Since you are following a chronological thing. You did not ask me -- it did not occur to me to tell you about some of my activities as a student in Illinois, which really are something I treasure. Let me tell you --

Q: Yes.

A: -- very briefly, all right? And then we can move to -- I got involved in -- in -- in an -- in an activity which was a -- a extramural, it had to do with studies. It was an

activity of students who run the concerts. The university had a season of concerts, orchestras and soloists. And the students arranged for everything. I mean, there was a faculty committee that they got involved in the transactions, who to invite, and the contracts, and things like this, but the students then did everything else. Issuing the tickets, programs. And then when the concert took place, of -- ma -- and my job became of going to the train station and getting the visiting artist, taking them to their hotel, and then bringing them to the concert hall, and then afterwards for -- for dinner. And it was a very rewarding thing, because I met people like Igor Stravinsky. I was dispatched by the university to Chicago. He had come from New York with his wife, and he didn't want to take the train from Chicago to Champagne, so the president of the university sent his limousine, so I went to get Igor down, and -- and I will tell you a -- a -- a little vignette, if you are interested. Shall I tell you?

Q: Yeah, oh do, yeah.

A: Oh, all right. Well we're -- it was February, and I picked him up from the [indecipherable] station, and we are getting in the limousine, we are driving, we are talking in French, primarily. He was not that comfortable in English. At some point, about an hour -- it's about a three hour drive, he was telling me that he had been suffering from stomach problems, and his wife Vera, a magnificent Russian grand dame, was from time to time su -- supporting him, he said, "Yeah, yeah, oh she's been very, very sick at times." But at some point he said, "Look, I -- I'm -- I'm feeling some pains now, would you ask the driver to stop at the next gas station, because I have a thermos bottle with milk in my valise, and I need to," -- of course, of course. So we

stopped, and we opened the trunk, and -- and -- and opened the valise, the driver and I were on the side, and we saw Stravinsky opening the thermos, pouring something, and drinking. And after awhile he says, “Everything is fine.” And we got into the car, and there was an unmistakable strong smell of Scotch whiskey. So, when about an hour later he said he had pains again, we understood. This way I met, you know, people like Stravinsky, and Stern, and -- and Metropolus, and Zell. Because I would go pick them up, and then we would always ask them, and in many cases they all did that. The only reward that we students had, about eight, 10 of us, for all the work was to be -- to have dinner after the concert with the visiting artist. That was, you know --

Q: And -- and you enjoyed the concerts.

A: Of course, and we enjoyed the concerts.

Q: Yeah. You know, you played the violin as a child. Has music always --

A: I -- I started the violin.

Q: Ah. I just wondered what role music had played in your life.

A: Oh, an extremely import -- I -- I -- it’s -- it’s a passion. I don’t play any instruments, but you -- you -- I think you asked me the questions, what I -- I do for pleasure. We can get into that, but music is one of them.

Q: Yeah, and was that something that was -- meant a great deal to your parents, and their parents before them?

A: Well, my father used to play the mandolin, and he at times would play, but mostly th-this work -- what, in Ladino and Sephardic culture, are called canteegass, from the Spanish word, which are -- believe ballads, although there are differences. Ballads tell

a story, canteegass mostly are usually about a love affair, or -- or one thing like that. But it wasn't that they were s-so musically. We didn't have -- we had a -- a radio, but it wasn't a musical thing, but in the whole process of -- of being well rounded, then I was sent to the conservatory in Athens, and I took classes in the violin, until '41 when also again because of the occupation, the conservatory closed.

Q: Now, I'm glad that you -- we went back to the story --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- about Urbana Champagne --

A: Right.

Q: -- and -- and -- and music, but were there other things going on in those campus years which were important, and tie in in some way with your -- your background? I -- I was wondering what was happening politically in the country then, and would there be much involvement at the university?

A: The only thing that I recall distinctly -- and it didn't touch me personally, but in fact the director of the school of music, Dr. Kyper -- in fact, the summer of graduation, I returned to Champagne to retrieve a couple of personal belongings, and on the return -- he was there, it was July, so I was -- it was a little strange to see Dr. Kyper in the train. We sat together in the observation lounge, and he proceeded ga -- I -- I could see that he was very troubled, and I felt both honored, and in the same time, it's a bit uncomfortable, because Dr. Kyper unloaded, or -- or told me, or related to me, the reason he has come back. And this it was simply that because of the McCarthy era, perhaps he had connections with leftist groups in the United States, I don't know. But

essentially he had been sort of recalled from vacation by the president of the university, and told that there were such suspicions, or accusations, whatever. The [indecipherable] fact was that he was dismissed from the di -- the directorship of the school of music, but remained as a professor. And he was a -- a -- a first kind of personal contact with a political atmosphere at that time. This is the main thing. I mean, after I went in the army and so forth, well then I -- I was always politically interested, I -- because I remember, my first recollections as a -- as a boy, because my -- both my parents were extremely interested in political things and we used to discuss it, but my first political awareness was the Spanish civil war.

Q: Mm-hm. No, I -- I would have expected that because of your background, you'd have a particular sensitivity to the McCarthy era. Just -- really just you'd experience the pre -- well, you know, you'd experienced the Holocaust, and so you understood that.

A: Sure, sure. Well, not only the Holocaust, but -- but even the [indecipherable] all of these things, and the reading, and all the thinking, and it was a kind of a strange thing to be living those days in the United States, who -- f-for us in the liberation -- the United States and it's history was something so unique, so superior to anything else, that at the beginning, you know, I found it really hard to reconcile how in the same place that -- that -- where there was so much freedom of expression, everything else, there was also something like this. Except that a little bit of understanding of what had happened in the 30's in central Europe, in Germany, then s -- I began to -- to realize

that there wa -- there was no monopoly, and it could happen anywhere, and it had begun to even infest the United States.

Q: Yes, and I would think to see -- to have that insight that -- perhaps to appreciate the danger it posed before many Americans would.

A: Sure, of course, of course.

Q: You had referred to your -- to y -- to your wife, Paulette in the -- as we spoke about your -- your corporate years, so let's -- le-let's return now to that part of your family life, and tell me how you met.

A: All right. All right. Well, we go back, remember I was divorced in '57, and -- and again, this is another period that harks back when you were asking me, when I first came to the United States, did I feel lonely, or -- or nostalgic, which I hadn't, but again in this stressful period, I had lots of friends, but really not relatives near me, that is to say people who, regardless of what you do, will always be on your side. So I had nowhere to turn, and I -- I had to -- to cope with the situation. In any case, the following summer, and coincidentally because Sam was getting married, then I decided that I needed a -- a change of scene. In fact at one point I -- I thought that perhaps I would go and -- and -- and live in Europe. And in fact I went to Paris first. And I had been given names of a number of companies, including IBM, and believe me, it took just one interview to completely settle the issue for me, that the only place for me was the United States. So I then enjoyed my -- my vacation, and I didn't think of ever st-staying in Europe.

Q: Yeah, let me -- let me ask two things. Going back, what were the main stresses at that time, in 1957, which you mentioned before, but also -- and then -- then I'm eager to know what it was about that IBM interview.

A: All right. The stresses were strictly personal, the personal stresses of the divorce, of -- of -- of all it's -- it's a-aftermath, and then finding myself alone, and -- and a little bit lost, and -- and wounded, the way that things had -- had happened. And I -- I imagine it's either romantic or -- or -- or -- or whatever you want to call it, to s -- to -- to -- to s -- really think that a change of scenery is what you need. So that's why then I said, "Oh, well, all right, let me look into the possibility of working overseas. So I contacted a number of people. When I went to i -- to IBM offices, well they said, "Yeah, but you see we cannot hire you here, as an American, because that has all kinds of other ramifications. We have to pay you extra salary, allow you return every year for vacation, and so forth and so on. So that's a totally different kettle of fish, you gotta be hired by IBM there and sent to Paris. But if to hire you here, you have to be hired as a local." And that meant a totally different situation. The moment I heard that, I -- I -- I realized i-it wasn't going to be for me and I'm glad it -- that it occurred very quickly, because then I could enjoy the remaining two months. Because I went to Spain first, went to Greece for Sam's wedding. This is where I met Paulette, I mean the first time. I mean she was in the receiving line. Then two days later, I got a call from her sister, whom I knew vaguely. I had met her vaguely. Her sister was having a few people for dinner, would I like to come? Sure. So I'm walking, and -- and I'm reaching the -- the -- the block where her sister lived, and at the door is a young lady.

Well, we're both waiting for the door to open, we go, we get into the elevator, and we both realized that we stopped in the same door, and we ring the bell, and of course, it opens up, Yola, her sister, opened the door. They embraced. I thought there was -- she was just another invitee, I had no idea of the relationship. And like an idiot, it was during, really, dinner when a conversation is going between them like Yola is asking Paulette, how are the folks? I mean the parents. Fine. And then I said, naively, "Are you related?" They said, "We are sisters." Well, so that was our first meeting. Then the following day, or I di -- two days later, I forget, she called, and now she tells me that this was a daring thing on her part, to tell me that she had tickets to a concert with Isaac Stern, would I like to go? I said, "Of course." I had dinner with Isaac Stern during my years -- in fact, we went to the concert and after the concert I went backstage, and we had a little reunion with Stern. He remembered me because we had dinner together with his accompanist Zagin. And so we started going together, and within about a week, I proposed to her.

Q: Now, t-tell me Paulette's last name --

A: Right.

Q: -- and also her home would have been very close to the area where you were in the mountains -- in the Pindus mountains?

A: No, no, no, let me -- her maiden name is Moudzoukos. Her family hail from a city called Volos, which although is in Thessaly, it's at least 200 miles from the area where I was. Volos is on the eastern part of Greece, and it's a port, because it's on the Aegean Sea. Her family were prominent. Her father and -- and his brother, and the

family had a large factory, textile manufacturers. In fact, I remember when I used to go, at times, to my father's office some summers to help -- to b -- so to pass the time, and I remember photographs of the Moudzoukos factory, I can still see it's outlines. The name was very familiar. In any case -- and they also, from Volos, they were Romaniots, also, they were not Sephardim in -- in the sense that we -- I explained earlier. She has a sister who's still alive, and in -- older, Yola, lives in Athens. She has a son, and he's married, has a son, and expecting another one. I met her -- I mean, we were engaged, then -- then a-arrangements were made for Paulette to join me, because she couldn't come to United States. We had to be married outside of the United States, and then I would then invite her to come as an American citizen. But we had to be married outside of the continental United States. She stayed with friends in Montreal for about two or three months. I would go from time to time to be with her, and also because my divorce was in Mexico, and it was not recognized in Quebec, in the province, because they only recognize religious marriages, and religious annulments or divorces, we were married in Toronto. We knew no one. We went to the registry, and they said, "Do you ha -- do you have any witnesses?" As it happened, there were another couple behind us, also strangers in Toronto, and we became each other wis -- each other's witnesses, and that's -- we were married then in -- in -- in June of '58.

Q: And how old were you then?

A: Well, I was 32.

Q: [indecipherable] yeah.

A: Right. And she came about two months later.

Q: Now, as an observ -- as an outsider it would seem to me that this wa -- this marriage had lots of qualities that would make it a success, of -- her sort of coming from -- from Greece, being Jewish and so on. Do you remember having any thoughts about what you -- what -- what qualities you wanted in a wife, or shared background? Was it important that she shared your faith, and things of that kind? Or did it just happen?

A: I think it just happened, but really in -- in -- in -- in my own personal case, you -- you have t -- to also take into account that even at the time I went in Greece, I was still living possibly in the tail end, fortunately, of my experience, the first marriage, which had ended so -- so badly. Really, I think that -- it's one of the questions that I think I saw in your notes, about religion. There is a woman named Jane Gerber, you know her work. I -- I -- she invited me to give lectures in -- in Baltimore in July, which I will do. But I just heard a lecture of hers because of the -- of a thing in the National Cathedral where they have some artifacts that came from Spain that -- of the Sephardim Jews there. Wonderful lecture she gave. And a magnificent phrase of hers, I think it was in response to a question, and -- and her phrase was, the relative relaxed attitude of the Sephardim towards religion. And this is as best I can also describe both my religious upbringing, which was not very strict. I mean, we were observant of all the major holiday -- Jewish holidays. Dietary laws are really almost impossible to apply in Athens, because there were 3000 Jews in a city of a million. There -- y-y -- there wasn't a place to -- to go buy kosher meat and things like this. But in the high holidays, then special arrangements were made for s -- special slaughterers to come,

and to provide. So there were no -- there was -- when I -- there were never crustaceans in our house, or things like that. But the observances there, we were -- my job for example, every Friday from the age of five or six, because the synagogue was only about a block away from my house, was to carry the oil donation to the synagogue, because the Sephardim didn't burn candles. All the -- the lights were olive oil with wicks in there. And go to the synagogue on Sabbath, and of course, all the major holidays. And the -- the -- the prepara --

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 Isaac Nehama. This is tape number three, side B.

A: Continue in that vein, so -- from a totally different thing, there is a -- a Greek saying that it's better to -- to wear old shoes from your country, even if they are -- have been repaired. But again, I didn't got there to -- to -- to find a -- a wife, it just -- it just happened.

Q: Yes.

A: And, of course I'm -- I'm -- I'm glad that there was some commonality, first in another language, to some shared experience. Paulette was too young, she was -- she was only 33, and at the time of the hiding, she was barely nine or 10 years old. So she doesn't have as vivid memories of -- I mean, she has vivid memories of the hiding, but I mean nothing compared to going to the mountains. And also, very fortunately, none of her relatives perished in -- in the Holocaust.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: One of her uncles also happened to be a Spanish citizen. He was taken to camp, but he survived.

Q: Yes. Now, does she remember being in hiding, though, her -- her family?

A: Oh, absolutely, oh yes. Not only that, but she was able a few years ago, I think four or five years ago, to re-establish contact with the daughters of the family that hid them. And in fact one of them was visiting a sister in the United States, and then came and stayed with us for -- for a week. So she has maintained this thing, and she has extremely strong recollections, because also, there -- there came a time when in maybe not the first, but the second house where they were hiding, somebody already told them, there're already suspicions that you me -- may be Jews, and that was a signal to -- for them to immediately leave and go someplace else.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: See, she remembers all of that.

Q: Yes. Tell me about your children.

A: All right. Well, we have three daughters. Sarah was born in New Jersey, because at that time I was working at Bell Laboratories in New Jersey, and when Sarah was a year old, that's when I left, or we left, and we went to California, because of my engagement at the Rand Corporation. Then when we return, Maya, the second one, was born in '63, three years after Sarah. And in '66, Nicole was born, and she was born here. I think I s -- a little bit helped deliver her a little bit, because it occurred very, very fast. It was a Saturday morning, and Paulette said that the time had come.

We notified the doctor, he said, “All ri -- okay, I’ll meet you down -- down there.” I was going to drive her, initially. But I had made arrangements with neighbors to take care of the two other children, but the pains are coming very, very fast. And so I call the ambulance, but even then, she says, “The baby’s coming out.” And she lied on the bed, in fact I can see the head coming out. And out of the window I see our neighbor, a psychiatrist who is walking his dog, so I ran out, and -- and -- and I told him that -- that Paulette is having a baby, he dro-dropped the dog, and he came and deliver the baby. We wrapped it in a -- in a blanket. He asked from something to cut the umbilical cord, and I go -- I got it, and brought the -- the poultry shears from the -- from the kitchen. And when we -- we were there, I mean Paulette, as if nothing had happened, her cheeks were a rosy color. I was -- I bel next in pallor holding the baby in this -- this dirty towel that we had wrapped it around. But the palest of all was Dr. Hoffman, because he hadn’t done anything like this since --

Q: Medical school.

A: Medical school, yeah that’s right.

Q: Yeah. Now, what are the names of your three daughters, Sarah --

A: Sarah, the eldest, Maya, and Nicole is the -- the -- the -- the youngest.

Q: Delivered at home.

A: Delivered at home. She is an attorney, Nicole, in Chicago. She has three sons now. And Maya has two sons. So we have, of the three daughters, five grandsons.

Q: Yeah, that must be wonderful.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Well [indecipherable]. So you've been surrounded by women.

A: Right.

Q: For a long time.

A: For a long time, and now I -- I -- I must say that I was really hoping for a -- a granddaughter. But it's ma -- fine.

Q: Just so you have to [indecipherable]

A: Right, yeah.

Q: How did both you and Paulette decide to raise the girls? I'm thinking of bringing them up to -- I mean, did you attend -- did they attend synagogue, did they have Bat Mitzvahs?

A: No.

Q: Did you share openly your experiences?

A: No, the -- we -- I -- look, i -- living in aside what I referred to earlier, Gerber's phrase of the relaxed atmosphere, but I mean both at university, and -- and -- and when I began to mature a little bit more, I am not religious. But some of the things we retained which were dear to me, primarily because it brought memories of the family and it's tradition. So we always had the lighting of candles in Hanukkah, and the high holidays we -- we used to go to the synagogue. But I did not insist on their going to Sunday school, or -- or -- or this or the other. It's -- it's turned out that of the three, entirely spontaneously, Nicole is the one who is super Jewish than all the other -- all -- all the -- the daughters. I think really if I think now in retrospect, I think the division of labor in the upbringing was -- Paulette was much more -- her family more structured

from a social standpoint. I mean, in my house, for instance, we never celebrated birthdays. It was unknown. I don't even know my father's birthday, my mother's birthday. The only reason I know my birthday, and my brother's is because I -- we have records from -- birth certificates. But in those days, they did -- they did -- but so from the social upbringing, this was sort of Paulette's area. In my case, I think that I co -- I continue to try to inculcate the same things that I received from my parents, you know, the tremendous reverence for -- for education and -- and -- and learning. Plus I think something else, one other thing, it was -- this -- how can I phrase it? The -- the -- the a -- assuming of personal responsibility. I remember that in the case of all three girls, when they were ready to now leave home and go to school -- to university, Maya -- Sarah going to Boston, Maya in Michigan, and Nicole in Wisconsin, I took them all for a -- a long ride and lunch. And first of all, I told them about the fact that I had been married once before. And a -- a typically -- although they didn't tell each other, because I asked them not to, they all -- always asked the same question, what was her name? And did by any chance have a sibling that they didn't know? [indecipherable] not -- no -- no such thing. And then I told them that as they are ready now to go and -- and live their own lives, I told them that a part of the Hippocratic oath a doctors take, one part which I -- I -- I think it's very important, is above all do no harm.

Q: Yes.

A: So I s -- I used to say to them, "Look, you may encounter all kinds of situations, all kinds of people. If you are asked to try something, whether it's drugs, or si -- do the following. If you have any doubt about the possibility of doing harm, then don't. But

whatever it is that you do, take personal responsibility for that. Now, it will always be a -- a -- I mean, we will always be with you, no matter what happens," but I tried in a number of little things that they used to do when -- when they were growing up. For instance, how they would divide a labor, chores, how they would do. It was always this aspect that -- and -- and although this got formalized really, after the war in France, with existentialism, and when it was finally given a kind of official thing, that namely life is nothing but a -- a set of choices, and even not doing something is itself a choice. But even before I had read Sartre, and -- and -- and -- and the periodicals that I used to get from my cousin, from Paris [indecipherable] moderne, I always felt, and I think primarily the war years, because when I got to the mountains, then I knew that is -- is nothing -- I had no place else to go f -- to assume responsibility for whatever I did. So that became something that's -- I sort of learned on the job, as it were, in the mountains. And I thought that it would be a very important and useful thing to -- to tell them.

Q: Yeah, and had -- had they been growing up in a -- in a strictly observant household, their guidance would have come from the sort of roles of their faith, I guess.

A: Probably. Yes, probably, right.

Q: So it's -- it's --

A: [indecipherable] the ethical portion of the --

Q: Yes.

A: -- of the faith, yes. You know, it's -- what I would say, either by recounting personal examples or events in my life, the -- they were not meant really to be mini

lessons in ethics, but simply that -- that I -- I trusted them enough -- I had differences with Paulette, really sometimes really severe ones. Paulette would sometimes accuse me that I was too easy, that I -- she -- she -- she believed, and she still does that Sarah experimented with pot when she was in high school. I tried to tell her that -- that all I tried to do, and all I think a -- a parent can do, is to make sure that the core of the person is solid. Since I could not be on top of them in every place they went, I could only concentrated in one pronouncement, do whatever you want, but be responsible for it. Fortunately they have all turn out to be magnificent persons.

Q: Yes.

A: Very different in many, many respects, but all of them quite good --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- and solid.

Q: I wondered if there's any -- wh-when we referred to Jane Gerber earlier, and I was reading something that spoke about this Sephardim psyche, which I -- I jotted down, but I wonder if there is -- I wonder if you think there are any built in differences of attitudes that Sephardim might have, because they really have wandered so widely, through centuries of history, and -- and faced all sorts of upheavals, and -- I don't know if there are people that are more resilient, less trusting, I have -- I -- I just wonder if there -- if anything comes to mind that's worth discussing here. And -- and if you --

A: Well -- well, it may be, but I think that it again depended on individual households. What I can say that comes a little close to -- to -- to what you're alluding to, was my

mother telling me about some -- for example, because her maiden name was Colonomos, which, as you probably know -- who knows if there is any connection, but one of the most famous rabbis of all time, not s-so much Sephardim, a [indecipherable] Ashkenazis Germany was a Colonomos. And as you know the name means -- it has some variance. The -- the basic variant is Colonimos, which in Greek means, of good name. And it's Hebrew equivalent is yom -- what's the name? Not -- yom -- yom -- Yomkesh. So, th-there -- people who are called like that. Now, why was she doing that? Apparently there must have been a kind of tradition that was primarily oral -- again, through the ballads, and through the songs, that hark back to Spain. After all, of the five synagogues, major synagogues in Monasteer, before the catastrophe, one was Kal Aragon, the synagogue of -- from Aragon, the other was Kal Portugas. So there was really in -- in the stories that they would say, and even sometimes I -- you know, I -- yo-you -- if I chance to read a -- a play of Calderone's, and you see phrases which are not longer existing in -- in modern Spanish, and I can hear my grandmother pronounce it. Some of that was there, but it was not something that was cultivated so much, except simply in the oral tradition about how things were at home, how they dressed for holidays, how they ate. So I don't know if it is really what you -- you refer to as psyche. In Salonika, because of a stronger movement, and the fact that -- that -- that there was a lot more contact with other countries because of commerce, and in inismeer in Istanbul, there was much more of an intellectual fermented than there was in the monastileese. There is a mystique about monastileese that to this day I don't know why it's there. In fact, a week or so ago, we went to an annual meeting on

monastileese, which is a group of 60 people in -- in -- in -- in New York, that it's a bureel society, they simply are descendants of a first congregation of monastileese ever established in New York. It doesn't exist any more. It's called the Congregation of Peace and Brotherhood. But they continue --

Q: Their sort of proud tradition.

A: Yeah, so there is, yeah, there is -- if you could see, I mean you go on the web, and you -- Monasteer, when it comes -- [indecipherable] has his own website, the Sephardic four, full of things again about -- Sephardic things, dishes, cooking, traditions, names. I mean, you -- names which were strange names sometimes, very Spanish in many cases. Then strange mixes of Hebrew names, women, Soonho, which in Hebrew is Allegra. And then you see from -- from generation to generation how things we [indecipherable] change. My mater -- paternal grandmother's name was Estraya -- Star, all right? But as is traditional in Jewish fa -- Sephardic families, the eldest daughter, firstborn on the paternal side -- I mean born, takes the name of the paternal mother. And the boy -- that's why I'm named after my grandfather. And -- and -- an-and -- now that's -- [indecipherable] it was through the work that I'd done for the museum that I -- and some other things, that I found that my great-great grandfather, Solomon, was one of the 13 signatories in Monasteer in 1864 for the bringing of the alliance française in Monasteer.

Q: Mm-hm. I would think that these things you found out about your family are wonderful for your daughters --

A: Yes.

Q: -- to -- I mean they've -- they've grown up with --

A: To connect, huh?

Q: -- stable parents, with a shared -- to some degree a shared heritage, and -- and with a great deal of sort of, I would think, economic stability and so on.

A: Right, right.

Q: But it's wonderful that there's gaps, I mean in I -- history over generations, it's [indecipherable]

A: Let me tell you what I regret, however. That there is practically no information about my mother's side. I have a cousin, first cousin, Miriam, who lives in -- in Israel, she -- her -- her -- her mother and my mother were sisters, and she has done a lot of research on the Colonomus family. I finally have decided that it's about time I asked Miriam to make as much of the connection -- the only thing I know about my mother was because she was an extremely bright student, and she went to a French school, and in that meeting just last weekend, I found another woman, whose mother, although in Salonika, also went to an alliance français school, and she also was very bright. Both of them were slated to be sent to Paris for further training, but unfortunately the war intervened. That's -- stopped it. But I remember even when I first came to the United States, landed in New York, and saw my aunt, and I met another friend of hers, not a relative now, but also from Monasteer, and she says, "I remember your mother, she was so clever."

Q: And of course, we would expect such a mother to want her children to excel academically. I mean, that's a -- I think a Jewish stereotype, but --

A: That's a -- that's putting it very mildly, very mildly.

Q: -- but her own abilities would want -- want it.

A: Yes, she was a very driven person, right.

Q: We were speaking about your mother and her abilities and her ambitions for her sons.

A: Well yes, first th -- I mentioned earlier about the obligation to speak French at home. Very frequently she would ask me to all -- give me assignments to read, books, French books. In the beginning children's stories, later on even plays of Racine. And I still remember she's in the kitchen, maybe cooking something, and I would then read passages, or from some of -- of these plays. Now some of them, and I still remember, included situations which really -- now, they were not erotic, but for instance I still remember -- although I knew the -- the word -- it comes from when it was -- it says -- he says elaparlay arsematress. Well, she did not comment. Normally she would have expected me to ask, "Well, that does matress mean?" You know, because matress has at least two meanings in French. One is a teacher, you know, or mistress, but mistress in the sense of hierarchy, and the other is the -- the lover connotation. So she was an avid reader herself, in the little time that she had available running the house, although -- though we had a maid. And she read history, and she -- i-it was a -- a k -- a kind of a -- of a situation where she -- she demanded, you know, excellence, and it was at times sometimes hard to know what her expectations were. My father on the other hand was a lot more encouraging. He had ways of recompense. One of my earliest memories that I have to tell you, I was I think possibly barely -- four -- four and a half, and I had

written from an assignment, you know, half a page. And I showed it to him, and he was incredulous, he says, “You wrote that?” I said, “Yes.” I almost saw a -- a -- a look of disbelief, and he says, “Here, here, takes -- take another piece of paper.” He sat down and he dictated a brand new passage from another book for me, and had me write it. So I finish that, he looked at it, he says, “What a magnificent handwriting. All right, put your things together, we’re going to go now to the patisserie, and have a piece of cake.” So he had this nice thing about, you know, rewards. Wa -- my mother was not really that free with -- with praise. She was always a lot more demanding.

Q: Yeah, but your father was very warm and loving, it sounds like.

A: Yes.

Q: Now, you s -- you’ve said different things in the earlier video interview that m-made me feel there was often tension with your mother, and I’m assuming that you, rather than Sam your brother, would be the one who would c-carry the burden of your mother’s ambitions for you. But I -- I wondered if you’d talk a bit more about that.

A: Well, I don’t know if it’s something, you know, if -- I know even from my own experience with children, that by the time Maya was born, the second, one mellows, and -- and it becomes a different -- because obviously the first child has taught you how to become a parent. And I think that probably from either a character or personality strai -- trait, I’m probably very much like my mother. I too, perfectionist, demanding. Really I -- I cringe sometimes at being praised. I don’t know why. Which I know is a terrible defect, because it’s almost the obverse side of the coin of claming too much. If you always reject praise as -- as if -- you know, you’re asking for people

to -- to continue doing that. So, you know, there were -- there -- there were -- there were tensions at times, and she was, you know, quite severe with me. And it isn't that she neglected the other two, but I think, again, it was a question of mellowing, and -- and not asking as much from them as I did -- she did with me. But on the other hand, especially in the mountains, when I began to reflect about the tensions, and her demands, and things like this. It's -- it's then that I began to realize how much what was, I thought, unfair, then was responsible for getting a certain amount of self discipline, and which in the beginning is a chore, then eventually becomes something that you like, namely to go and find out things. And -- and the joy of discovering coutch sa -- doesn't happen if you don't -- if you don't try. And -- and you know that there are people I -- I know my youngest daughter began -- she had a -- she has perfect pitch, and began to even play tunes in piano when she was barely two, two and a half years old. And -- and later on -- I tell her sometimes, and she -- she rightly says it isn't -- wasn't laziness, she had other things to interest her. So she didn't pursue piano the way, you know, I thought that she -- she would from -- from that kind of promise in the beginning. So similarly, what originally was a -- a compulsion, then I began to appreciate, and how much I owe her for what she eventually was able -- able to give me.

Q: Yes.

A: The love of -- of -- of -- of -- of finding out, and -- and -- and looking at things. Except that she -- she -- she -- she had a sharp edges to doing that.

Q: Yeah, but fortunately you -- your father --

A: Right.

Q: -- you know, you had the -- the balance, I guess.

A: Yeah.

Q: But her relationship with Samuel might have been different. Of course, you can never be in his shoes, but --

A: Right. And because a-again, see, the 40's was s-so different, and by the time that I think Sam also came of age to really start to doing more serious studies, going into the gimnasium, the high school, the war had intervened, and -- and that changed things considerably. And I -- I -- and it -- I don't even by -- that -- tho -- the p -- the -- the occurrence of the war mellowed her. It was merely that -- that already other things became very important, and by that time already, I had then hit my stride, and it was not necessary any more to be pushing. And she already could see, she had evidence that I had now taken --

Q: Yes. We know that as a child you, I think were artistic, but you also built a lot of things. I was thinking, I think you made puppets, and --

A: Shadow puppets.

Q: -- were d -- yes -- were d -- were inventive and able in that area. Have you continued to -- well, what are the things that you've enjoyed doing in your free time?

A: Well, first of all, it isn't only from childhood, but I think again a partly a question of personality, character --

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 Isaac Nehama. This is tape number four, side A. We'll go back to the things you were doing for pleasure.

A: Right. Well, again, you know, it's amazing how inconsequential events remain. I ha -- was about six or seven years old, or maybe eight, and I had become a boy scout, or -- or a cub scout, whatever it is. And part of -- of the thing was to get a uniform, but also a staff. You know, the kind of a thing that you have to then use when you climb mountains and so on. Well, when the time came for me to -- to -- to get the staff, you d -- you couldn't go to a store and buy it, but next door, or two doors down from my house was a -- a lumberyard. I -- I went and -- and -- and bought a -- a long, square pole, but now it has to be made into a cylinder. Well, it happened then again that another two doors down was, in the basement, a -- a -- a man who used to make chairs, and he had a wooden lathe what he would turn, as the phrase goes, you know, the -- the -- the legs. And so I t -- I brought the -- that square piece of wood, and he made me wait, and was sit down, and he put it on the lathe. And then he began to explain to me while he's turning the wood, how this essentially amorphous piece of wood, just a square, long, piece of wood, with his cutter, he would be able to transform it and give it shape. So it -- it was like seeing something be revealed under the hands of a -- of a craftsman in front of my eyes. So then the idea of making things with the hands, is a compliment to the -- the other side of pleasure and discovery, which in -- in -- in mathematics does not require proo -- evidence to the physical world. If you solve a

proposition in mathematics, you know when you've solved it. You don't need somebody to come and say yes, that's right, you know it. Unlike physics, or -- or science where you may have an idea but then it needs to be corroborated by physical observation, experiment. Which is then half wasted because it requires both intellect and observation, to then making things, which is entirely by hands, although it requires also some training, which obviously involves the brain. So I -- from those early things then, I wanted to build things. And so when we went to California for the first time, I bought a saw, a table saw, and drills, and began to work with wood because I remember how this craftsman was able to transform -- which is almost the equivalent of the Michelangelo statement that he does not make statues, he just removes the amount of marble, and just reveals what's already there.

Q: What about -- well --

A: All right, so -- so -- so -- wha -- you asked me what I like to do for pleasure, and part of it was, when I was at Bell Laboratories for example, then I belonged to a Bridge playing club, and i -- some of us at lunch hour, instead of going to the cafeteria to have lunch, would have a sandwich, take it with us, and go to the recreation room, and -- and play Bridge until the -- and so very quickly, and especially in Bridge as well as in chess, you have to have good tutors, especially wish have -- to have very good partners. I was able to gain 1800 master points, because we were starting to -- playing in tournaments. At the Rand Corporation, I got involved -- a very favory game, is -- it was -- it's called Krikspiel, which is the German for war game, Krikspiel. This is a -- a -- a game with the following. It's essentially chess, and instead of a single board, there

are two boards, with a wall in between the two players. So both boards are set independently, and each player does not see what the other's board contains. And the moves start. There is an observer, who sees both boards, and whose role is only to say whether a move that you may attempt is permissible or not. Permissible in the sense if there's an opponent piece, you cannot move, let's say, a square ahead, all right? And his other role is to say whether you have captured a piece. That's the only thing he's permitted to say. And the whole notion is that you fight a war when you really don't know the deployment of the opponent forces. Now, as you proceed with the game, and pieces start getting a -- to be eliminated through capture, and the -- the board thins out, you begin to have a pretty good idea what it is. So these are the things which are intellectual games that -- that -- that attracted me. But inc -- we moved to California, I bought a saw, and I started make -- making things. Making things out of wood, then when we came here I made the table which I showed you upstairs. I made some other pieces. But now I don't do these things any more, now it -- it's -- a new toy has come into my life, and that's th-the -- the computer, and making web sites, and things like this. The other passion is music. I'm a -- a musician monqué as they say in French. If I had another life, this is what I would have liked to do.

Q: And tell me more about the kind of music that you feel you most enjoy.

A: Well, I have always thought that my eldest sa -- daughter Sarah really was born about three or 400 years too late. Her li -- preferences, and the things that she likes in [indecipherable] are more suited to the Renaissance days of Italy, at least as I picture them. Similarly, my tastes in music are really frozen, as it were, between the 17th and

the beginning of the 20th century. So I only listen to classical music. And although I studied the violin, it is a terrible instrument. It's a punishing instrument because it's very, very hard, even for experienced violinists to -- to make a good sound come out of that instrument. And although I never took piano lessons, the piano attracts me a great deal. Occasionally -- I have a keyboard, if I hear a melody, or a part of an opera and I want to reconstruct it, and I -- I can go back to the keyboard and try to -- to -- to play.

Q: Course you can do wonderful things with musical composition on the computer now, too.

A: Yes, but -- right, but I think -- and I'm sure that some of that can be very creative, but I don't have the training to -- to do that. So at times I try to play with programs that -- in the computer that do that, but I co -- quickly see that -- that -- that -- that this is purely mechanical.

Q: Right. I know that you'll be going to Macedonia some time later this year, has tru --

A: [indecipherable]

Q: -- has travel been an important part of your life?

A: Yes, I -- I have not travel -- after my retirement in '91 -- in '90, sorry, even -- I did not agonize very much about what I was going to do, I know many people who are approaching that age, or -- or time, they say oh, what am I going to do afterwards? Well, I thought for a little while, but then I said all right, I'll try to do whatever interests me, and -- and if I begin to climb walls in the -- I'll -- I'll think of [indecipherable] then. All right. First of all, I was asked by my former boss to consult for another year for the company, because there was still a piece of work that I had

started, that was unfinished, and he was not planning to replace my position. So I did that for a year. Then, coincidentally a friend of mine, a Greek who was working for the European community, asked me and told me that they needed consultants for work which was being funded by the European community, but which dealt with telecommunications, and it's future in Greece. I mean the telecommunication system. So for four years, I traveled. I was practically on the plane every other month, through Europe, throughout Europe. I -- I'm no -- I'm talking about the east, but primarily the western part of Europe, and Greece, doing this consulting work. Then a year after that, a big project that I started had come to a reasonable stopping point, and we had had the Irish telecommunications company, that which led me to go to Ireland a number of times, which I -- both Paulette and I love. Then we went to Israel. I have lots of relatives there, who had migrated -- some of them migrated in the early 30's from Salonika to Israel. So there's a -- a lot of progeny that's -- that's now in -- in the tents. Plus also some cousins, among them Miriam, her last name is Kalahora, who was one of about an estimated 1500 Jews who were able to escape from Greece via boat to Turkey, and then go from Turkey, through Syria, and Lebanon, eventually to Palestine. Now some of them, and her sister, either -- I mean, drowned, that's for sure. What is not known is whether they were drowned by the boatman to take their money and -- and essentially kill them. Some of them were captured by the Germans, by some patrol boats. Some were also denounced. But one of them made it. But 1500 made it to -- to Turkey, to Palestine.

Q: Now, do you f -- do you follow -- d -- do you have any comments on what's happening in Israel now, and do you -- I -- I -- I'm -- I wondered to what extent you're more politically aware than many a -- sort of homegrown Americans may be, not just regarding Israel, but be interested to know your thoughts.

A: All right, well, first of all, I -- I -- I think I'm -- I -- I read avidly about current affairs, both in the press, and -- and in -- in magazines. I think about that, I talk to people. What -- what has troubled me about Israel, I could not really understand even a woman as -- as bright, and as capable as the former prime minister, what -- her -- what was her name?

Q: Golda Maier?

A: Golda Maier, who at one point was asked about the Palestinians and says, "Who are they?" And I really have not been able to understand the -- the mentality of some people, both in Israel, and I think sometimes more of it among some of the leadership of the Jewish community in the United States to -- to almost ignore the existence of -- of a group of people, namely the Palestinians. M-My own preference would have been the kind of a thing that as we know from events, things came almost close to being done, except at -- at the last moment, at the altar, one or the other di-didn't -- didn't -- didn't make it happen. I think personally both -- I think that's historical invisibility. The end of it if it -- it will take place, it -- it would be along the lines of what Rabin and -- was attempting to do, or -- or Barak. But I -- I -- I -- I talk to my relatives, and I -- I find them on both sides of the issue, and I -- I hesitate -- although I do not hesitate to criticize the government, or -- or individuals in -- in the -- in the Israeli government,

because sometimes I feel that they lack statesmanship, and -- and savvy. But then I also realize that -- that since -- there's a Greek saying that if -- if you are not in the -- in the dancing floor, don't attempt to teach those what -- what are the -- the right steps, and because I'm not there, I -- I -- I -- I can voice certain observations and certain views, but not t-to the point of -- of -- of being adamant about it, because I don't live there.

Q: How much time have you spent at the Holocaust Museum? I know of your work there, but what -- ho -- what part --

A: Well --

Q: -- how much of your life has that work taken up, and -- and what are your thoughts about it?

A: All right. Well, the -- my things with the Holocaust Museum took really -- it took place in two different times, and for two different reasons, and two different periods. One was about five or eight years ago, when I was even trying to ascertain the date of my mother's death. Now, I would ask Sam, when did you get to Auschwitz? Well, of course, I mean, I think it was -- you know, either -- either between the 17th, and the 20th of August. All right. "Well," I said, "I need to find out." Well, I went, and I started looking at the archives, and I found what's called -- I think I v -- we would -- we talked about that --

Q: We ju -- we just mentioned it, yes.

A: Yes. The Danuta Chronicles, which were the -- a kind of -- of almost diary officially that it was kept by a Czech inmate called Danuta --

Q: Yes.

A: -- and eventually it was published, and they are known as the Danuta Chronicles. Well, you look at entries day by day as they -- they are there. Sometimes they are from the sublime or the horrible, to the terribly mundane. For instance, okay, today 15,000 arrived and were taken to the crematoria. And then this individual was punished with 10 lashes because he stole a piece of bread. I mean, these are the kinds of extremes of entries. Well, all right. Since I knew the approximate period, then I find an entry for 16 August of ’44, where he says, “1600 or 2000 Rhodesian Jews come.” Then he says how -- so many males, so many females. Not of the total, but so many females were given numbers, and he has the range of the numbers, and the females were given the following numbers. And I knew from Sam’s number on his arm fits exactly in the range that he’s -- he cited there. So I know now that the date of the arrival, and when I asked Sam at what time of the day they arrived, he said, “Very early, dawn.” And that makes me conclude that either they -- they were executed or -- or gassed the same day, because they didn’t keep them around, or at the latest, the following day. So that was the first thing. So I -- I did a little bit more of this personal kind of a thing. What drove me then to the later engagement, which would -- then became intense, was a similar thing. I always -- I -- although I knew the fate of my relatives in Macedonia, in mon -- in Monasteer, but especially in s -- in s -- the Serbian Jews, in Serbia, very few ever reached the concentration camps. And now not that much had been written, so I was beginning to get really curious, so I began to -- to read some sources. Now I know the Germans shot most of the Serbian Jews and buried them, or used mobile gas vans. It

was before the killing factories began to operate. Well, then I found in a book that the Bulgarians who occupied Macedonia and Phrase, among other things, and -- and this book which is called, “A Town called Monasteer,” makes the following assertion. That in the archives of Yad Vashem, there is a unique -- a -- o -- a -- an item unique to the Holocaust. But emphatically I’ve concluded there is nothing unique about the Holocaust, everything is unique about the Holocaust. And so I contacted Yad Vashem, eventually I got the microfilm, it came. But then, while I’m waiting for that, I thought I would to go the archives, and I asked Sharon there innocently, do you have anything from Monasteer? Yes, we have 1400 photographs. Well, here is two huge books, but you couldn’t -- th-they were just only photographs with numbers, no identification. But together there was two rolls of 35 millimeter microfilm, so you take the books to the library, put the -- thread the thing in the reader, and every frame has the same number as the photograph, and written in handwritten Cyrillic was the identity and address of these persons. Well, very quickly, the first day, I advance the microfilm to my relatives. Now though, since it’s Cyrillic the first letter is k, then comes n, and at the end is f. There’s Colonomos from my mother’s brother, I found my aunt. My uncle Salamone Hamma, my father’s brother, and my father’s sister, Oro, who had married a man named Franco. Well, I took copies of it, I -- I came home. I was a bit moved by this discovery. Okay, marvelous things over the weekend, and then the following Monday I called the archives, and it was Sharon, she says, “Well, Mr. Nehama, you know, we wanted to call you, but I was hesitating, and,” -- I said, “Look, let me tell you why I’m calling. Since I was able to read about my [indecipherable] perhaps

maybe I can help." She said, "That's what we were going to ask you too, if you would be willing to." And that's what got me started, and -- and that -- that initial piece of work took almost a year, because now, for the first six months, I would go the museum carrying my portable computer, and get the books, get the microfilm, sit in front of a reader, and as I read -- and some of these things are sometimes unreadable, I would then transfer them to the computer. Then one day it dawned on me that instead of trudging and getting all these things to the museum, maybe I would rent a microfilm reader, and bring it here to my house, and I don't have to -- to travel. But immediately then I thought, there is a button on the microfilm reader, and if you press it, it gives you a copy out of the printer. Well, that means that the stupid thing goes out digitally so that the printer can print it. If it goes out to the printer, it can sure go to a CD. So I took the -- the microfilm, and I paid a co -- a company, and they transferred onto -- on one -- on a CD, so I did the remaining other four or five months at home. Then after that was finished, the -- the archives, the photo archives, I did the same thing with the Yad Vashem register, which is even more difficult, because, you know, even if you magnify, it begins to get distorted, but I can show you later, you can even see that different clerks were writing, because you can see that the handwriting is changing over time. And it -- it was a-another almost eight or nine months of very eye breaking e-e-effort to -- to do the Yad Vashem thing. But it was --

Q: But it was also very rewarding.

A: Very rewarding.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yes.

Q: What -- what are the other things that you want to do in the remaining time you have? I mean not -- are there other interests that you have not yet pursued?

A: Well, let me give you an example, all right? A few years ago, the -- after my first grandson was -- was born, Ian, then I said, all right, there will come a time where, like everyone will -- will ask, wh-what is relativity about? So -- so I put together a little handmade illustration like a film, that explains, I thought -- explains relativity -- special relativity, not general relativity to a child. The truth is that it requires a little bit more sophistication, although children grasp things much more quickly, because they don't carry terrible baggage that they have to discard first. But there are certain aspects of special relativity that one has to be able to at least make a leap of [indecipherable] because one thing to which special relativity is key, namely the velocity of light, we cannot experience it. You can only think about it, and the -- in fact there have been books that tell you, supposing the velocity of light was not what it is. Suppose it was on -- an every day kind of speed, like you drive you car -- say speed of light was 30 miles per hour. What would happen? You -- you go out in the street, and -- and you see a person in a bicycle, and as he moves, you would see him squashed, because it's one of the lengths in -- in -- in a -- in a direction of travel shrink because that's one of the aspects of -- of special relativity. But because you can't make -- you know, but -- so you have to be able to imagine this thing, and then -- but I made this film, so I'm waiting for a time when my grandsons would begin to ask questions about the relativity, or about mathematics, and either I will make films for them, or -- or tell

them, or tell them other stories. Because I remember from childhood I would be fascinated I had certain heroes. Ulysses was one of them, or Odysseus. Or -- or Hercules, or Eracles. Then later on, in the be -- when I started -- another hero was Alexander the Great. Now in subsequent reading now, I have concluded he was a thug in many respects. That's the kind of thing that I would like to do.

Q: Yeah. So it sounds to me as if you -- there may be a market for those ideas.

A: Right, sure.

Q: I was thinking, I think Einstein said he asked the questions only a child would ask, and that ties in with something you said earlier about working in fields where you are free of the sort of strictures sometimes placed by --

A: Yes.

Q: -- certain workplaces, and so on.

A: Yes. Well, you see, Einstein said that imagination is much, much more important than even very sharp intelligence.

Q: Yes. You know, often in these interviews -- and -- and this is why I think of this question, about your sort of resilience, and your psychic state, but ha -- have you felt that you ever needed to have psychiatric counseling? I -- I'm -- y-you know, I wondered if the -- I know your brother Sam would have seen and experienced far more horrifying things, but I wonder if you felt some degree of trauma from the losses in your family, and that -- that -- that has at times been difficult to bear.

A: Look, I -- I have felt, or I have thought about the Holocaust and what happened to my mother, brothers, the other relatives, and I am absolutely certain that he has

colored part of my outlook to life, to other people. But can I make a connection, can I -- was there -- was there a time when I had personal difficulties? I mentioned to you the divorce. But I -- I didn't find that -- that a, even if there was a connection, that I would be able to -- to -- to get relief, to -- tying it to God. So it's one of the unanswered things. I have been m-more impressed by the works of all of the writers of the Holocaust, there've been quite a few. But the one that -- that I admire most is Primo Levi. Number one may be because he was both a -- a scientist and a chemist, as well as a extremely sensitive individual, let alone a -- a wonderful writer. And you know, although most people now conclude that he committed suicide, rather than dying because of an accident falling down -- downstairs, I have not ever found it ne -- essential, or at least that I could even remotely hypothesize that this particular personal problem is tied -- and as far as looking for help, maybe it could be resolved, but it would not be cause of that, not because of the Holocaust.

Q: Right, yeah.

A: I think -- when we were talking, and you were asking me about the recent work that I had done, which I call the trassiteration and translation project with the archives of the -- in the Holocaust Museum, it was --

End of Tape Four, Side A

Beginning Tape Four, Side B

A: You don't --

Q: Oh, let me ch -- let me see.

A: You need -- you need a [indecipherable]

Q: Yeah. This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Isaac Nehama. This is tape number four, side B.

A: We were talking about one aspect -- not that one aspect, but I think you used the word, and I almost at the same time, that the work that I was doing was very rewarding, and I-I -- I think it's very rewarding. But there were also some byproducts, if I can call them, which really would last a lot longer, because in the process I came into contact with individuals of similar interests. There's a matter of me corresponding with -- his name is Moses Hasson, he lives in Santiago, Chile, because the people from Monasteer were early settlers in 1916 in a small town called Temooko, in the lake district in Chile. And -- and was one of the oldest Sephardic as well as monastilee communities in South America. Then I -- I met -- and I have not met yet in person, a man who wrote a book about Monasteer, his name is Mark Cohen, he lives in San Francisco area. And it was through Mark's researchers that I found, and I fe -- I have copies now of reasons the s -- s -- the declaration of 16 prominent Mo-Monasteer Jews, among them my great-grandfather Solomon, to establish the alliance française in -- in Monasteer. Then in 1924, my grandfather, Isaac, whose name I bear, was the president of the Monasteer communit -- the Jewish community of Monasteer, and we have a facsimile of his letter from Yale, in Yale, where's he's addressing the illion israllitany versell in Paris, thanking them for the donations of clothing and money to the Jews of Monasteer who had been severely -- suffered through fierce bombardment during the first World War, to almost the total destruction of Jewish homes. Then -- then my uncle Solomon was the secretary of the Joint Distribution Committee in

Monasteer, thanking the Jews of America for a shipment of clothing. All of that, in addition to being gratifying that -- that I -- I -- I have some lineage of people who gave something to the community, which reminded me of a thing my father would tell me when I was growing up, that human beings, in their infancy, for self preservation are very selfish. They don't think about anybody else. Then they go to school, they meet other people, so they begin to share. When they have a family, they begin to give to others. But some people stop there. Now, very few people begin to give to a larger circle, namely their immediate community. Still fewer give to even larger circle, the country to which they belong. And finally, extremely few, maybe one in million, give to the entire world. So the idea of -- of giving back harks back -- and I don't know whether my father was saying it because of the -- the -- the -- the -- the -- the history that he knew of the environment of his own ancestors in community affairs. So I'm glad that -- that -- that to some extent -- and I also believe that there is a kind of a ledger that somebody keeps, and so I -- I like to make the books balance. So that's the kind of -- of reward that the work is -- that I've done represents, and then finally that I may be able, both through the video recording, as well as the audio recording, it's -- it's -- sort of relieves me from something else that my children have been asking me insistently to do, to write my memoirs. So at least I -- if -- if I only write certain other parts, and I don't write others, as least there will still be part of the record that they can refer to, if they choose to, after I'm gone. So --

Q: This concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Isaac Nehama.

End of Tape Four, Side B

Conclusion of Interview