

**INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE EHRLICH**

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**Transcending Trauma Project  
Council for Relationships  
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## INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE EHRLICH

**INT:** Today is the 28th of September, 1996, and I'm interviewing George Ehrlich, who is a survivor. So George, tell us about yourself.

**GEORGE:** Well, George Ehrlich. Born July 18th, 1928, in Vienna, Austria. Came to the United States in June 1938, about four months after the Germans marched into Austria. That makes it sound as if they-as if they occupied it, which is a fiction that the Austrians would like you to believe. In reality, they were welcomed by the German-speaking populace of Austria the day before there was to be a plebiscite to decide whether Austria would remain independent or join Hitler's Germany. That was March 12th, 1938, when the Germans came in.

**INT:** But tell me a little about when you were born, where you were born, your parents, your family.

**GEORGE:** Well, I remember it specifically because March 13th was to be my brother's birthday. It was to be his sixth birthday and we were going to have a birthday party, and since he didn't have any friends yet because he was too small, my friends were to be invited, that is, mostly my classmates from grammar school to the event. It was probably only a couple, two Jewish girls and one or two Gentile boys who would have come, because the rest turned out to come from Nazi families or those people who had been passive Nazis and who showed up with their badges and their arm bands to welcome the German occupation, and of course the children were no longer allowed to have anything to do with me, even though they'd been my good friends seemingly up to that point.

We lived in a little town called Baden, which is about twenty kilometers or twenty-five kilometers southwest of Vienna, in the Vienna woods. Charming little town. We lived on the Theater Place, which was adjacent to the entrance of the Kurpark.

**INT:** To the?

**GEORGE:** Kurpark, which is the park for strolling for the people who came to take the sulfur waters in Baden. It was a sulfur spa, a famous one, and the emperor had a summer home there, which still exists, by the way. Of course there are no emperors but the place is still there. It's a charming little town, population at that time was about 24,000. Hasn't gotten much larger since, except now it has some apartment houses, but then it did not. We lived, as I said, on the Theater Square, right opposite the theater, opposite also this grammar school I attended, which was in another portion of the square, and on the other side of the grammar school was the big Catholic church in town, on its own square, and the street that went by our house was never frequented by cars in those days because there weren't many cars in Austria. An occasional car. My father had had a car until 1934, when he lost his license because he hit a woman on the street who stepped in front of the car and it was like the laws of Saudi Arabia. She wouldn't have been hit if there hadn't been a car, even though she was at fault, so they took away his license, and then there were no cars in town. He had the only car that I know about, and so one could easily stroll on the street because there was never any traffic.

**INT:** What did your father do?

**GEORGE:** My father was a physician. He was an ear, nose and throat specialist. His office was adjacent to the apartment. We lived in this urban block which was where we had a large apartment and then his office also. All entered through a doorway into a central courtyard, and there was a dermatologist who occupied the other part of the second floor, or first as they call it in Europe. Downstairs there was a vegetable store, a photographer, who used to give me negative papers so I could make shadow images by holding my hand up and let the sun discolor the rest of it, except the part that I had covered, which used to be...and he had a huge tortoise. One of those tortoises from--the superintendent had a tortoise which used to walk around in the yard. I remember that. And the superintendent was also the leader of the town band which marched with all the funerals down our street, so that I used to sit in the window sometimes to watch them march by, playing marches, very sad marches on the way to the cemetery and happy marches on the way back. And he would stand in front of it as a drum major, with his large stick and his uniform, and just do the beat for the band. So where we lived was fairly idyllic, because the Kurpark is famous for its beauty.

**INT:** When you say the Kurpark, how do you spell it?

**GEORGE:** K-U-R. But Kur is -the English word "cure" is similar, but it's a park for-but it really comes from health. It's a health park. You know, the entrance to the park was relatively flat. There were an awful lot of people, sanitoriums and so on around, and there were an awful lot of old people for whom this meant strolling. And they had a big gazebo with a band playing in the afternoons for all these people, and there was the sulfur baths, as I said, and even a casino, and floral clocks and so forth. But as you started walking up these graded paths, you went through flower gardens and various other gazebos dedicated to Beethoven or to other notables who had lived there, and Beethoven lived in the town quite frequently, and then you went up into the woods, to the Vienna woods, and rocky escarpment and there was even a museum, the town museum, that was up in the woods, and there was a marvelous place behind some meadows way up in the woods, the Rudolfshof, named after-

**INT:** You have to spell it for the transcriber.

**GEORGE:** R-U-D-O-L-F-S-H-O-F. Rudolfshof, named after one of the Hapsburg emperors, Rudolph the Second. And Rudolfshof, the son of the owners or - they weren't owners, I found out subsequently. They leased the place from the community, and the son of the people who leased it and ran a restaurant there, was a friend of mine and a classmate, and I often spent nights up there with him.

**INT:** So let me have a little bit of the flavor of the-

**GEORGE:** This was a bucolic and rural place.

**INT:** Did your parents-they didn't come from Baden?

**GEORGE:** No. My parents came from Vienna. They were both born in Vienna, and they came out - my father went out to Baden to practice. Baden was the capital of the county, the county seat, if you will. My father's uncle was the head of - he was a Social Democrat. He was one of the heads of the Social Democratic Party. He was a Member of Parliament, a senator, and he was

in the cabinet. They had - we don't have such a position in our-we don't have a secretary of white collar workers. We have a Secretary of Labor. But he was the secretary of white collar workers.

**INT:** Would you say your father was successful?

**GEORGE:** Yes. My father was successful. My father had been an orphan. He had been orphaned at the age of ten. When he was nine his mother died of tuberculosis, and when he was ten his father died of cancer of the esophagus; so my father was orphaned. He had a younger brother and a younger sister. The older sister had died at fourteen a year previously, and my father's mother was the sister of the Member of Parliament. When both parents had died, the children, instead of being taken up by relatives - after all, the mother had a brother who was a meat wholesaler, who was a very elegant man and extremely rich; and then there was the Uncle Karl after whom my son Charles in named, who was the Minister; and then there was another sister of my grandmother's who was relatively poor and had lost her first husband and now was on her second marriage.

And the boys were put into an orphan asylum, and the girl was taken up by one of the relatives, and they weren't put into the same. Each boy was put into a different orphan asylum, and the Jewish orphan asylum my father was in, the man who ran it, wanted to send the kids out to work as soon as possible, so he didn't want them to go to higher education. When they finished grammar school he wanted them out working to help support the place, because he didn't want to have to keep laying out money while they weren't working and going to school. But my father studied under the blankets with a flashlight in order to prepare himself for the examinations for the gymnasium, and occasionally one of the other boys would tell on him. In fact, the one that told on him and got him punished most often is a man who became my father's best enemy. They remained friends and enemies for life, and they both came to the United States at the same time, and it turned out that that man's son and my brother were classmates at Harvard and roommates when they first went up there; but that's another story. Anyway, my father got into the gymnasium, qualified. Supported himself by tutoring in the summer in southern Tyrol and Merano, the city of Merano, and later on was taken out of this-

**INT:** M-E-R-A-N-O?

**GEORGE:** Yes. M-E-R-A-N-O. And what is now the Alto Adige. And then when he-it's a rather pleasant place.

**INT:** I've been to Merano.

**GEORGE:** Good. And when he finally came back and finished gymnasium he went to medical school. He went to university. By then he lived with this poor aunt, not with the rich relatives or the successful relatives but the poor one, and he lived in the one bedroom apartment.

**INT:** How did that happen?

**GEORGE:** I don't know how it happened. That's the way it happened.

**INT:** No, I mean I'm wondering if he asked or whether she asked for him.

**GEORGE:** I don't know. I have no idea. She took him in. The others did not, and the rich uncle didn't have any children and his wife was very elegant. She was a little like you, Nina, but really, I met her once, and you remind me of her. She was a very elegant woman and she came out to take the baths in Baden and that's when I met her. She was wearing a beautiful suit with a fur and I can still remember her, meeting her on the town square and being introduced to Tante Ludmilla. But anyway, so my father went to medical school and finished the university, of course, and then got a prestigious position with the help of his uncle, with Professor Von Neumann.

**INT:** Spell it for the transcriber.

**GEORGE:** Von, of course, if V-O-N. Neumann is N-E-U-M-A-N-N, who was well known enough as an ear, nose and throat doctor, that he took care of the Prince of Wales, later to become temporarily King of England, as you know, Edward the Eighth. He was also doctor to all kinds of barons and counts and so forth, and it was a very prestigious position to be an assistant to him, and my father became assistant to him and then was being promoted to docent, D-O-C-E-N-T, which is what we would call Associate Professor. There was a rule in those days, though, that unless you were a chief, you were not allowed to be married. My father was quite athletic as a youngster and he went to swim in the Danube and he-and he met a young woman while he was going to swim and they started talking, and she had swum downriver for a few miles and so he offered to go up and get her clothes, so he didn't get to swim.

He went up to get her clothes and he brought them back and made a date with her, and the date was to meet-I don't know if it was the next night but some nights later, to meet at some street corner in town at a given time, and he showed up. He was a very punctual man. He showed up and she didn't show, and he waited for-he waited and she didn't show. That was my mother. She lost track of time as she sometimes does and realized that she was late and he probably wasn't waiting-went to the movies with her cousins, and when they came out of the movies she went by that corner and he was still waiting. It was hours later, and despite that, they got married, over the opposition of Uncle Karl. You see, my father's family - it's the Picks. Like Karl Pick, Theodore Pick, Marie Picks, and so on, and Rosa Pick Ehrlich - all these siblings came from a town called Peczke, which is in Moravia, which today is part of the Czech Republic and was then part of the Austrian German empire. The Ehrlichs came from Tabor, near Prague. This is also Austria. There was a very strange story here.

My grandfather, my father's father, was born in Tabor. He must have been a fairly intelligent and educated man. At any rate, he went to England and he worked in England for years. He was the representative for Singer sewing machines in England, and later in his years-he was born in 1848 - and in 1894 he decided it was time to get married and he went to Vienna to find a wife. And he married my grandmother Rosa Pick, and he died in 1910 as I said, at the age of-

**INT:** This is the maternal side.

**GEORGE:** No, this is the paternal side-my father's parents.

**INT:** Your father's-

**GEORGE:** My father's father.

**INT:** Okay. So this is the history of your father's parents, who then died when he was ten. Okay.

**GEORGE:** Now, my father's father died at the age of sixty-two, in 1910, when my father was ten. My father's mother was much, much younger, and my father's father was the product of a third marriage of my great-grandfather, who had buried two wives. My great-grandfather was born in 1776, and by the time he was seventy-two, my grandfather was born, from his third marriage. I don't know that my grandfather had any siblings from that marriage, but he had siblings from previous marriages, some of whom were already grandfathers by then, by the time he was born, and had migrated to the United States. So I don't know any of my relatives from that family because they were all older than my grandfather, and my grandfather himself died before my father was old enough to have met any of these people, and most of whom were in the United States with the name Ehrlich. But I don't know where they went or what happened to them, and my father doesn't know.

**INT:** So you never traced them?

**GEORGE:** No, I haven't. There must be some Ehrlich families in the United States that I'm related to. There were none left in-there was a half brother of my great-grandfather's who my father did know-of my grandfather's, who my father did know, and I know that my grandfather was a second cousin of Paul Ehrlich, who won the Nobel Prize in 1908.

**INT:** For?

**GEORGE:** For medicine.

**INT:** For medicine. So you have an illustrious family.

**GEORGE:** The man who discovered the first cure for syphilis and was the father of all chemotherapy, all treatment of infection and of immunology and so on. But he did not get the Nobel Prize for syphilis. In fact, he almost-he lost his position on the university faculty for finding the cure for syphilis, because people said this is going to encourage people to sin. The cure, the same thing would happen with penicillin some years later, which was discovered by one of his pupils, Alexander Fleming. Anyway, to make a longer story long, my father didn't really know his father except for the Pick side, because they were younger and really staying still in Vienna. The Ehrlich side disappeared. When my grandfather came back to Vienna, he no longer represented Singer. He went to become the manager of a restaurant for his cousin, I guess, or uncle, who owned the restaurant, another one that the Czech-a different name. I think it was Polaček. I'm not sure. I don't know anything about this. My mother doesn't know much about it, either. And my mother was born in 1905, my father in 1900. My father died in 1977, so he's not here to ask, and my mother doesn't really talk much about this. In fact she doesn't want to talk much about Austria, because she feels that if she said anything nice about Austria, people might get the impression that the Jews didn't suffer.

**INT:** Is your mother still-

**GEORGE:** My mother's living on the East Side of New York. She has her own apartment. She's totally independent at ninety-two.

**INT:** Do you think she would be willing to be interviewed?

**GEORGE:** I don't know because I told you she that doesn't like to talk about this era because- she doesn't want to even visit Austria.

**INT:** Well, she would have a choice about what she chooses...

**GEORGE:** I understand.

**INT:** ...to speak about and what she-

**GEORGE:** Anyway, let's get back to me.

**INT:** All right.

**GEORGE:** To my family.

**INT:** All right. So getting back to you.

**GEORGE:** Anyway, so this is the family background. So when my father-when I was born, in 1928, my father could no longer hide the fact that he was had been married for two years and so he had to leave the university.

**INT:** He was married secretly?

**GEORGE:** Yes. So he had to leave the university. Also he wasn't earning enough, although my grandfather, my mother's father, had enough money to help support them and partly did. My mother's father was born in what is today Romania or-yeah, probably Romania or Russia, G-d knows what. It was then Austria-Hungary, and my mother's mother was born in what is today Galicia in Poland, but also was Austria in those days, and my Uncle Karl fought very hard to prevent my father from marrying into a family of Polish-Russian Jews, even though they were Austrians. Eastern Jews were regarded as low-class people, even though my grandfather's reputation was excellent.

**INT:** What did he do, your grandfather?

**GEORGE:** He was a butter and eggs wholesaler. He had a place in the market, in the big market in Vienna. He made considerable money. They lived in Grinzing, which is the villa section of Vienna, right behind the house that Schubert had lived in, the Schubert house. My mother went to private school. They had this beautiful villa and she went to private school, and then when she left the house they moved into a villa in the second district of Vienna, which is downtown, but this was a beautiful villa with what must have been two or three acres of grounds right near the

Prater, the amusement park of Vienna and near the Jewish section. But this was a real villa with coachmen and a coach house and so forth, carriage house, and I remember the place even though my grandparents left it when I was two years old, because I used to spend some time living there, you know, spend nights there.

**INT:** Where did they go?

**GEORGE:** They moved into an apartment house that my grandfather bought downtown in Vienna, which was a whole city block, and he took an apartment there to live, and they sold this beautiful villa, but they always lived very comfortably, and then my grandfather lost a fortune in World War I when he was drafted, and of course the Austrian money collapsed. He made another fortune. In 1929 when the crash came he lost it again and he made it back, and then he lost it again, because Hitler-

**INT:** Only then butter and eggs?

**GEORGE:** Yeah, always in butter and eggs. It's amazing. He was a sergeant in the Austrian Army in the Italian Front. He was a very short man, about five foot one or two. Very-he was very blond. His family called him "the goy" because he had blue eyes and blond hair and because he was very successful and his siblings used to take advantage of him. Everyone took advantage of him. They said, "Let the goy pay," because he had money and he was successful, but he had a good reputation. But my snobby father's family wouldn't have anything to do with people from that part of Austria-Hungary, as they had unsavory reputation and even in Baden I know-this is very interesting because I had this privileged childhood, you know, and it was planned to send me to private school and then to England for university.

And so I lived and only played with children of similarly situated, upper-middle class, upper-class children, including some nobility, and that's the only kind of people that we mixed with. I know that there were some Jews in town who had beards and wore caftans and said prayers and all the rest, which I was never allowed to have anything to do with and my parents didn't have anything to do with, of course. And an ironic state, when I was at Harvard I met a religious girl and I took her out once or a couple of times on a date and she told me on her second date, she said, you know, the irony is that I would never have a chance to meet you much less go out with you because I come from Baden, and my parents were Eastern European Jews. When I told them [my parents] who I was dating and that you come from Baden, they said that not in a million years was I even allowed to talk to her, much less go out with her.

**INT:** So your parents kept you isolated from the Jewish community?

**GEORGE:** No, we were members of the Temple.

**INT:** You were.

**GEORGE:** And by law, I had to go to Hebrew school in the Temple. You see, the schools in Austria are highly Catholic, and so every day there's religious instruction, during which the Jews and Protestants were excused, so we had half an hour free every morning. We had to make it up in the afternoon. The Protestants are going to the Protestant lessons and we had to go to Jewish



lessons. It was by law. So I went to the Temple every day to have my Hebrew school, and it was very severe. The Rabbi Carlebach, by the way, a German rabbi, his son became-Shlomo Carlebach became a very famous Jewish singer in the United States. He recently died, but the Carlebach family was quite well known. So this rabbi who had escaped from Germany, thinking he was safe, came to Baden to be the rabbi for the Temple, which was hidden away in a big courtyard on a side street downtown. When I say downtown-there's no building higher than two or three stories in the whole town, but I remember the Temple and I remember not liking Hebrew school. But it was...

**INT:** Your parents belonged to the Temple?

**GEORGE:** Yes, and my father did go in those days. They were never religious. My father was an atheist, I think, and he certainly convinced my- (Telephone interruption) So we didn't keep kosher. I know that for a fact, because my father liked ham and- (Interruption. Tape shuts) So it was-we didn't keep kosher. We did keep the holidays. That I remember. And I remember having to go to synagogue on the holidays with my parents, so it was one of those emancipated Jewish homes, if you will. I don't think my father-my father was a Zionist, so he did believe in the Jewish community, Jewish culture. My mother is a very strong believer in Jewish culture.

**INT:** Well, her family came from Eastern-

**GEORGE:** Yeah, but my grandfather and my grandmother were-I think they probably kept kosher but they were not what you would picture as Eastern European Jews. They were fairly well assimilated and they didn't-what shall I say-by German standards look Jewish. And my grandmother was a handsome woman and my grandfather was a very handsome short man, and as I said, blond and blue-eyed, and I have a feeling that he was the by blow (?) of some of the Swedes or Norwegians that were the kings of Poland and brought with them their entourages. His name was Elling, E-L-L-I-N-G, and I know that Count von Elling was the right hand of-was the adjutant to Jean Batiste Bernadotte, who became King Karl the Sixteenth or something like that, Gustav, of Sweden, when he was adopted by the last of the Barsof family. And he sent Count von Elling to take care of his wife Desideria, Desiree as she was known in France and then Desideria when she became Queen of Sweden. So the Elling name is a Swedish-a name of Swedish nobility, and it may well be that that's where it came from, because it wasn't changed. That was their name. It was not a Polish or a Russian or Romanian name, and there are no German Ellings so...

**INT:** So what kind of education did your mother have?

**GEORGE:** My grandmother was a Feldshuh, like Tova Feldshuh. That's the same family, yes.

**INT:** You're related to Tova Feldshuh?

**GEORGE:** Yes. All Feldshuhs are related, and so grandmother Rosa Feldshuh-Elling-both my grandmothers were Rosas, and I knew-obviously I knew my mother's family. I had never met my-they died long before me, my father's, but my mother's family, and it was large and widespread. My mother had lots of first cousins because there were lots of siblings. There were I think at least-my grandmother had at least two, maybe three, brothers and several sisters, and all

of these had children. My grandfather had a brother and a sister. The sister lived somewhere in the east and was exterminated by the Germans. The brother died also at some earlier age but had a son, Simon, who provided the goods for tailors, with clothes and wools and so on, and looked very much like my grandfather. He, in fact, he only died recently, and he looked exactly like my grandfather with the same moustache, the same blond hair, the same blue eyes. Uncle Simon, unfortunately - he and his wife, his beautiful wife Stella - never had children, and there was a sister who also never had children. So there's really very little of my family left.

**INT:** Can you tell me a little bit about the relationships? Let's see. So there's your mother and father and you, and your brother who was born four years later?

**GEORGE:** Yes, 1932.

**INT:** So what were the relationships like in your family? What kind of relationship did your mother and father have?

**GEORGE:** They had a very good relationship. My mother, sort of like Gail [his wife], ran everything. My father ran his practice. My mother took care of everything. She even saw that his practice worked properly. She welcomed people and so on. She was the social person. My father liked-

**INT:** Did she work in his office as well?

**GEORGE:** Yeah, she helped him. We had servants, live-in servants in Baden, but we had a maid and a cook, and I had a governess who was English, a nanny who was English, and also spoke French, so that I spoke English from the earliest days and when my brother was-had us speak French from the earliest days and I used to sit in and listen to his French lessons, so really I was trilingual by the time we came to the States.

**INT:** So you were tutored at home, or you went to school?

**GEORGE:** Of course I went to school, but we were also tutored at home by the nanny especially up to the time we went to school. There's no such thing as kindergarten.

**INT:** And would you describe your relationship with your mother and your relationship with-

**GEORGE:** Very close. Loving. Very loving.

**INT:** And with your father?

**GEORGE:** I always-I didn't see my father enough because he'd go off to the hospital and I'd stand in the window and look to see-to watch him come down the street, and he often brought a bag of salt sticks. To this day I still like salt sticks. (End of tape 1, side 1)

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...simply to the fact that his office was there but I picked up every infectious disease including diphtheria, which they had to hide from the community because otherwise nobody would have come to my father. Diphtheria's a highly contagious disease, and I was in bed for three weeks and everything, my sheets, my clothes, my books, everything I touched, toys, everything I touched were contaminated with diphtheria. It was burned afterwards, and I had frequent ear infections and a mastoidectomy in Vienna that was done. They thought I had died because doctors came out of-somebody came out of the operating room and said that I had died on the operating table. I had a sinus thrombosis but I didn't die and I stayed in the hospital in the best private room in Vienna and pretty much-and when I was discharged home because Father was a doctor, they discharged me early, Mother had a wonderful-the cook made a wonderful goose dinner to welcome me home. There was a lot of fat in goose as you know and I got horrible gastroenteritis and they thought that I'd had a complication of the surgery so I got back into the hospital, but I recovered from that, too. Anyway, so there was a close relationship, but because of my many sicknesses I had -I was-how should I say it- pampered a little more. Also I was the first-born grandchild, and I was the first-born child.

**INT:** So your relationship with your mother's parents, your relationship with your-

**GEORGE:** Close.

**INT:** Very close.

**GEORGE:** Very close and very loving. And then what happened was that when I was two years old my grandmother developed breast cancer, and for the next six years she had cancer. She went through horrible treatments including snake venom and other things that were given to her to try to stop the cancer. They didn't have much they could do in those days. I still remember sitting in her-they put her in this convalescent hospital in Baden and I used to go see her there and was very close to her. But my mother paid attention to my grandmother and never paid attention to my brother after he was born, for the first four years of his life, cause she was more concerned with the mother she was about to lose than she was with my brother. So my brother really had a deprived childhood in that respect. He never developed the self-confidence he should have. Now second children often don't, but he in particular didn't. It doesn't mean that he didn't succeed. I mean he did go to Harvard. He played varsity baseball and so forth, but he never-he's a very shy-not shy, but he's a very modest person, and he never wanted to-he never tried to make much of himself.

**INT:** What was your father's role with the children, I mean other than bringing you salt sticks?

**GEORGE:** Nothing.

**INT:** Nothing. Never threw the ball with you, or did he play with you?

**GEORGE:** Oh, no. Things like that weren't done. I'll tell you what his role was. On weekends, we would all hike together with my father. We'd put on our leather pants, all of us, and we would walk through the Vienna woods, through the Kurpark [spa park] and beyond, to some other town maybe some miles away and then take the train back, or we would take the bus or something out to some town where we would walk, see other parts of the Vienna woods and take

a train back, and we would eat together. He would buy a soda pop and we would eat together in some restaurant on the terrace; things like that.

**INT:** So your memories of those days were-

**GEORGE:** Happy. Very happy. And my grandfather would come out to visit after my grandmother died, and he would buy me balloons and I would walk in the park and the balloons would get pricked by the needles and I would cry and he would go back to the beginning of the park to buy me another balloon and bring it, and that would break, and that's how it went.

**INT:** Did you have any special relationships with any friends at that time?

**GEORGE:** Yes. I had this friend, who lived at the Rudolfshof, and I had another friend, his father was a painter, a landscape painter who did landscape for a living, special landscapes of Baden, and that's the one that turned out to be a closet Nazi and wouldn't let his son play with me anymore. After that there was also Annie Lackenbacher, a girl whose father, Dr. Lackenbacher, lived down the block from us, between us and the Kurpark, and they had the Sukkah in their backyard of their apartment house, and that's where we would go at Sukkos every day to eat, under the-

**INT:** Arbor.

**GEORGE:** Under the arbor, that's right. And then there was Marianne Loewy, who by the way moved to the Main Line, became a Quaker. Her husband, also Jewish, became a Quaker, and her husband's sister is married to the man-to a Rosenblatt, that fellow who was the English horn of the orchestra that just retired last year. (Tape shuts) What else I was going to tell you?

**INT:** Your friends.

**GEORGE:** Marianne Loewy. Her father, very elderly, was an engineer and a very distant sort of person, and, you know, very scholarly. I still remember he was quite old, and the mother was a very ugly woman. Marianne isn't particularly good looking but she was my best friend and he was-

**INT:** What made her your best friend?

**GEORGE:** Huh?

**INT:** What made her your best friend?

**GEORGE:** Because it was-well, she and Mundi Groebner, from the neighborhood, were my best friends, I guess. What made her my best friend? We shared a lot of interests as children. She was just fun to be with, and Marianne-I still remember that very well, that Marianne was-her mother spoke at least eight, maybe nine, languages and her mother at age eighty-five at a retirement home outside of Philadelphia learned Chinese and Japanese to add to her language skills, so this was-

**INT:** So education was much admired in your family?

**GEORGE:** Very much so. I had piano lessons from a Dr. Kurzweil, K-U-R-Z-W-E-I-L, who escaped to New Zealand after the Anschluss. Dr. Kurzweil had studied with Bartok, so I had exposure to-my mother had studied music in her private school with Anton von Weber. That was her music teacher, which meant that she was a-from Weber and Schoenberg, after all, started the whole new movement, atonal music, so my mother was exposed to all kinds of music and my father was a great opera lover and music lover. My mother's brother, who was an engineer, also loved music, and my mother loved music, so that accounts for ourselves often exposed to music from childhood on. Classical music was a forte in the family and the Loewis-so I had piano lessons but I was not very gifted, but Dr. Kurzweil was more of a theorist than a teacher anyway. And I would have to sit with my back to the piano and she would play something and I would have to write down what she was playing, to train my ears. I would have to write down the whole thing.

**INT:** How were all these decisions made as to what kinds of lessons you should take?

**GEORGE:** I don't know. My mother made them, I think.

**INT:** Your mother. You see, your mother-

**GEORGE:** My mother's a very strong woman. She's the one who saved our lives.

**INT:** And I want to hear about that shortly, but tell me, how did your parents manage conflict, how did they problem-solve?

**GEORGE:** I don't know. My father yelled a lot.

**INT:** Your father yelled.

**GEORGE:** Oh, yes. If he stubbed his toe, he yelled at inanimate objects. He was constantly-I remember, he was irascible. Reminds me of Gail. (Laughter) I think I married my father. I shouldn't be saying that but, yeah, very irascible, easily angered and easily-was angered by events in politics and took a lot of interest in-

**INT:** How about with you? Did he ever get angry with you?

**GEORGE:** No.

**INT:** Never?

**GEORGE:** Only once, when I pushed my brother-when I tried to push my brother out the window with the windows closed, and if there hadn't been a double window my brother would have gone out to the street, cause I was angry as hell at my brother. My brother was two at the time and I was six, and I tried to kill him, and I got him through the first window by smashing it

and then I locked myself in the bathroom and they went out after I wouldn't come out and they banged at the door and then took him out for a walk in the park.

**INT:** Do you remember why you were so angry?

**GEORGE:** No. And they took him out for a walk in the park. Maybe he was three and I was seven, whatever. They took him out for a walk in the park and a thunderstorm came and they were drenched and I thought they were punished for being-for wanting to punish me for wanting to get rid of my brother. That I do remember. My relationship with my brother-I resented him from the time he was born.

**INT:** Well, he unseated you.

**GEORGE:** I resented him, which is unfair to him because he really didn't have any of the privileges I had. I was the fair-haired boy, and by the way I was blond till I was ten, so I was the fair-haired boy and he was just sort of the dark little ugly duckling that came along and... But there it was. I resented him for taking some of the attention away from me, I'm sure. And of course the fact that I was sickly and he never was meant that I got a lot more attention than he did anyway.

**INT:** How were losses or difficulties or anything that didn't go right in your family, how were they handled?

**GEORGE:** Nothing ever went wrong.

**INT:** Nothing went wrong. It was a charmed kind of a-

**GEORGE:** Well, there were things that went wrong, my mother told me. I mean, they had saved a lot of money that was given to them by-that my father had earned and that had been given to them by my grandfather, and they saved a lot of money. They were going to buy a villa in the Helenenthal. The Helenenthal is a valley between two ruined robber baron castles on the tops of the hills. It was a beautiful valley with a river running through it, the Schwechat, S-C-H-W-E-C-H-A-T, the Schwechat, which runs to the-the Vienna Airport is called the Schwechat Airport. So it runs all the way to the Danube, and at the end of this valley is Heiligenkreuz which is adjacent to where the Archduke Rudolf committed suicide. My father treated all the bishops and all the monks and all the monasteries and so on. He had this big Catholic religious patient group, so they knew of him. He was going to buy out there. That's where Franz Werfel lived, you know, who wrote the Song of Bernadette. Werfel. He was married to Mahler's widow.

**INT:** I didn't know that.

**GEORGE:** Yeah. Mahler wrote the [unclear word]. He married Mahler's widow and when he died she married Gropius. She divorced him and married Werfel, who was a round little Jew and my parents knew him, and the other person who lived out there where they were going to buy was Jaromir Weinberger, W-E-I-N-B-E-R-G-E-R, who wrote, you know the opera Schwanda [name of opera]. I'm not going to spell it but Schwanda, S-C-H-W-A-N-D-A, dum, da, da, dum

(starts humming opera). That's the only piece of Weinberger's that's played a lot still at pops concerts, but there's a whole opera and he wrote quite a bit of music.

Anyway, that's where they wanted to build and that's when my uncle, my mother's brother Alfred, got into trouble in Berlin because he had a Christian mistress and she was apparently under age or something. Anyway, they had imprisoned him for Rassenschande, shaming the race, because he was Jewish and she was Christian and the Nazis were in power and my mother went to bail him out and took all the money that they had saved and bailed him out and then my mother came back to Austria and she did this plan. It was winter. She went to provincial governor on the boarder between Austria and Germany and she said to the governor-and she asked to see the provincial governor because she wanted to confess to murder, and so she-but she would only confess to him so she was ushered in to see the provincial governor, and when she got inside he said, now whom did you murder? She said, you, if you don't-if you send my brother back to Germany when he comes across the border, and so he promised to-he was taken by this ruse.

**INT:** What year was this?

**GEORGE:** This was 1936, I think, or '35, and he was taken by this ruse, and in the middle of winter, during a blizzard, my Uncle Alfred took his skis and skied across the border because the border guards wouldn't venture out and didn't expect any idiot to be out in a blizzard, and he skied across the border to Austria into the area of this provincial governor, who then did not send him back. But they of course lost the-they lost the bail, forfeited the bail, and so my parents were penniless.

**INT:** But your mother-she was a very take-charge person.

**GEORGE:** Yeah.

**INT:** And if there was as a problem-

**GEORGE:** She took care of it.

**INT:** Figured out what to do and she did it.

**GEORGE:** Yes. She was a real problem solver.

**INT:** And your father? How did he-did he figure in to any of this?

**GEORGE:** No, because my father's always resigned to things and there's nothing can be done, nothing can be done.

**INT:** For a doctor, he says nothing can be done?

**GEORGE:** Well, as a doctor he was superb. He was incredible as a doctor. My mother's apartment is full of trophies given to him by grateful patients, great vases, things like that and all of them said, the Satin Hands. They called him Samthände, Satin Hand.

**INT:** So he gave all of himself to his work?

**GEORGE:** That's right. And he played cards. He loved to play cards. Tarok, T-A-R-O-K, is the way they spelled it. T-A-R-O-T is how we spell it. Tarot. It's a Hungarian card game. It was very popular, and he would play this all the time. They didn't play bridge in those days. Later he became a good bridge player in the States but not there.

**INT:** Did you experience any anti-Semitism before-

**GEORGE:** None.

**INT:** Before Hitler.

**GEORGE:** None. None. Not one bit.

**INT:** Nothing.

**GEORGE:** Not one bit.

**INT:** So you were integrated into the community-

**GEORGE:** Yes. And we were the community leaders, and as I said, my father knew the barons and he knew the bishops and they used to send over cases of wine. My father did not drink wine in those days. My mother didn't drink wine, so we used to give the wine away which is a pity. But we had all these wine growers that used to bring them wine. Baron Von Dobelhof was a cousin of the emperor. His pond was where we used to go skating all the time as a child, and the Baron and-I mean the place was-if full of nobility and full of these people and that's the circle my father moved in, including well-to-do Jews, and they were well accepted, so there was no anti-Semitism, no overt anti-Semitism. However, if you walked through the Kurpark, there were all those little creches, you know, these little things that showed crucified Jesus or Jesus carrying his cross and so forth, and Jews were mocking him and laughing at him and there were signs saying the Jews mock Jesus and so on, so there was all that.

**INT:** But you didn't personally experience?

**GEORGE:** It had nothing-no influence on me at all in those days. And then after the Anschluss it was a whole different story.

**INT:** But tell me about the winds of war. When Hitler came into power in 1933 and there began...what was that experience for your parents?

**GEORGE:** Nothing. Nothing at all except my mother's contact with the Germans to rescue her brother. As far as I know-I was too young really to know much, but in 1934 we were vacationing



in Viareggio on the Italian Riviera. Every summer my mother used to take me and then when Paul was born used to take the kids with her to Italy or up to Semmering or somewhere in the mountains. We would go for about six weeks or two months, and then she would come home and go away with my father for a month.

**INT:** For a month?

**GEORGE:** Yeah. They would take a month vacation somewhere and I don't know where they went, to Italy or somewhere, but she would first vacation with us for two months or six weeks, whatever. That year particularly we were in Reggio, which was on the Mediterranean, of course, near Livorno, and in those days that was a very nice seaside resort. I still remember it. Yes, Paul was born already. He was two years old and I used to take him in the sidecar of my bicycle and I would bicycle him around. Signor Pucci, who was our landlord-we had a house, again with a turtle [tutor?] and with a maid. Signor Pucci was the brother of one of my grandmother's maids, and my grandmother's maid was a very nice Italian woman apparently, and put my mother in touch with him, so we rented a villa from him and lived in Viareggio. In the middle of the summer the Austrian chancellor, Dollfuss, was assassinated by Nazis and Mussolini mobilized.

**INT:** What year was this?

**GEORGE:** 1934. And Mussolini mobilized because I remember we couldn't go swimming for several days because the navy, the Italian Navy, sat in the harbor of Livorno all the way up to Viareggio and so the water was full of sharks which were drawn by the stuff thrown overboard from the ships, and so we couldn't go in the water. Mussolini, having mobilized, asked England and France to join him to put down Hitler, to get rid of him. He said Hitler's a menace. We have to get rid of him. And I was old enough at the time, six years old, I remember this very well, because this was talked about all the time, and England and France turned him down. He said, you know, first he went into the Saar, now he's got Dollfuss assassinated, you got to get rid of him. They wouldn't help him. It's one of the reasons that Mussolini later joined with Hitler, because of his experience with England and France that they were feckless, that they just had no gumption, wouldn't enforce the treaties, so he decided that Hitler was the stronger and went with him. Mussolini was not-I'm sure Mussolini was a bad man, Fascist, but he also was good to Jews. He rescued several relatives of mine by giving them Italian passports and insisting they were Italian Catholics.

**INT:** Mussolini himself did this?

**GEORGE:** Yes. These relatives, the man and in one instance was a coach of the Trieste soccer team and so Mussolini rescued them. But I remember the Fascists and I remember that there was turmoil and when we went back to Austria, the Austrians were still on the border and just questioned whether or not there was going to be war.

**INT:** Right. So do you remember your parents discussing this?

**GEORGE:** Yes. No. Because then my mother and father went on vacation so I don't remember what they discussed about this, except my father said that this was the end of the Nazis because they'd been put down, but Austria was a dictatorship of its own under Dollfuss. His successor,

Schuschnigg, later at Washington University in St. Louis, was a chancellor, was much weaker man. He was not strong. He's the man who ultimately was toppled when Hitler came in. Kurt von Schuschnigg, and my father didn't care for Schuschnigg either.

**INT:** Spell that.

**GEORGE:** Schuschnig? S-C-H-U-G-. No. S-C-H-U-S-C-H-N-I-G. Maybe double g at the end, I don't know. Kurt von Schuschnig anyway, and he was the chancellor of Austria then. There was also a president but he's a figurehead. My father, of course, they did talk politics because his uncle was in the cabinet and also a senator, so politics was frequently talked about in the house. I know that. But not in front of me, or maybe I just wasn't paying attention.

**INT:** So there was no sense of fear or no sense of concern?

**GEORGE:** No. Not at all. I do know that I wanted to join the-there was a group of kids that as you grew old enough in school you were allowed to join these kids and wear the uniforms, and this was run by a Prince in Austria-that's Fürst. F-U-R-S-T. That's English; it's translated "prince," but it's a prince not of royal blood. Fürst Rudiger von Staremburg ran this outfit that nurtured sort of Fascistic kind of kids to turn into-

**INT:** And you wanted to join this?

**GEORGE:** I wanted to join it, yeah, because they wore these beautiful uniforms and what happened was that I wasn't allowed to and I was very sad that I wasn't allowed to but I wasn't allowed to because it was anti-Semitic and I couldn't have, but I didn't know that. But my parents did, so they wouldn't let me join. There were no Boy Scouts in those days.

**INT:** So they didn't talk to you about why-

**GEORGE:** No. Well maybe they did, but I don't remember it. So let me go on because this is very-I think this says it the best. As I said, besides the illnesses I had a very nice childhood and I remember being sent to camp once out in the mountains but it was-and after my mastoidectomy we went to Grado, G-R-A-D-O, in the vicinity of Trieste near Venice. It was an island, in the Adriatic, and I remember that very well, recovering there after the mastoidectomy, so even with the illnesses, I only remember a childhood of being very happy and I remember the happiness of playing Crusaders or whatever else we used to play in the Kurpark. We had wonderful trees. We had wonderful lawns. We had-we had wooden swords. We had all kinds of things. It was just great fun, and Marianne took a part in that, so did Luthar Bilko and Mundi Gröbner, of course, and Annie Lackenbacher never took part in those things. Then a German family named Kohn, K-O-H-N, moved in, also up in the villa district of Baden, and they had a pool, and I remember all of us kids being taken up to the pool and because they were Germans and the Germans had this idea that the more exposure to sun the better. All the children had to take off all their clothes and we were totally naked in the pool. That was Marianne and Annie and the Kohn girl whose name I don't remember.

**INT:** At what age was this?

**GEORGE:** It must have been six or seven, and some boys, but only Jews, I think. Only the Jewish kids, and so we used to do this. I remember the Kohn pool, that's it. They were rich German Jews who had just come from Germany.

**INT:** So as things began-

**GEORGE:** But I was totally unaware of the difference in the sexes. Totally. I mean, as Freud says, kids don't notice and I didn't notice.

**INT:** But as-your saying that no matter what was happening in Germany, even-

**GEORGE:** No, I lived this placid life and I don't remember any agitation in the household.

**INT:** And no discussion about it.

**GEORGE:** Well, there may have been but not in front of me.

**INT:** So when was the first time that you remember-

**GEORGE:** March 11, 1938.

**INT:** Right before your brother's birthday.

**GEORGE:** Just the day before the Anschluss. I remember that there was talk about the plebiscite coming up. That's all I remember about it, and then all of a sudden there were the Germans and they came in in their black shirts and their brown shirts and all kinds of people came out of the closet in Baden in uniforms that they already had, and Germany triumphed. I remember going to see Goering come to the town in an open car in his white Field Marshall's uniform, holding a golden scepter and smiling at the people and everyone wearing swastikas, and my nanny took me to see him and everybody yelling, "Heil Hitler, Heil Hitler" and I remember I didn't have a swastika to wear and she said, shush, you can't have one, and I remember saying, Heil Hitler, and she said, no, you mustn't say that. She was not Jewish, by the way. You mustn't say that.

I subsequently learned from my mother what she did on Monday. The 13th was a Sunday. On Monday she was at the American Embassy with our passports, to turn them in and insist they put them in their safe. She had also already wired to a pupil of my father's who was a professor in Jersey City, teaching in New York Medical College. She had wired him asking for a visa. She did not know that his house had burned down the day before, killing his daughter, and so he didn't respond immediately, and she had also wired to a cousin of my grandmother who had adored my grandmother, wanted to marry her. She wouldn't marry him, and so he had emigrated to United States where he got married and lived in West Orange, so she had sent him a telegram and he sent a telegram immediately with a visa.

But that hadn't come yet and she went to the American Embassy and insisted that they take the passport and they said they had no authority to do so and she insisted and insisted until they put it in the safe, and then she left and of course the next day the Jewish passports were collected but

ours were already in the safe. On her way back, Hitler came into town and everybody stood there wearing swastikas, and she, of course, did not have one. A Jew couldn't-not only couldn't wear one but would have been punished and immediately put into jail, so a ruffian wearing a swastika looked at her and he said, "you're not wearing a swastika. Are you Jewish?" And she said to him in the best Viennese dialogue that she managed very well, she said, "are you out of your mind? Do I look Jewish to you? Are you trying to insult me?" And the man said, "oh, I beg your pardon. I beg your pardon. I'm terribly sorry," and he backed off. She said she had nothing to lose.

**INT:** So she looked Aryan.

**GEORGE:** Yeah, and she had nothing to lose by-by confronting him, because if she admitted it, G-d knows what-

**INT:** So the best defense is an good offense.

**GEORGE:** Yes. So she got home and we couldn't get a visa because Uncle Karl was in the cabinet, and because of his political connections my father was therefore not going to be given a visa to emigrate. We got the visa to come into the United States but not to leave Austria, and my mother found a venal member of the German forces whom she bribed and he gave us visas. He promised to get visas and he did get the visas ultimately, but these were bribed and he made a living on this, by doing this, without us. When he was discovered some months later-when he was discovered to do this and arrested, it came to the ears of my mother and what she had done in the meantime-this is a complicated story. You want to get it all? Yes. Okay. What she had done was not only bribed him to get the exit visas but she had managed to get tickets on the Normandie-that's why the Normandie upstairs [George has a Normandie collection]-in June, June 6th sailing. She had also managed-but that was her backtrack. To leave you also had to show that you had paid your taxes on so on etcetera. What Mother did was to go to the-first she went to the travel bureau.

**INT:** Did you know this as it was happening?

**GEORGE:** No.

**INT:** No. This was related to you later. So the children were very insulated in your family.

**GEORGE:** Yes, and especially this sort of thing because we could spill this after all. Nobody should know these things so we were kept from this information, but she went to the travel bureau and it already closed and she found out the guy was arrested. (End of tape 1, side 2) And because my mother was my father's wife, the woman opened the office again and let her in and arranged the Normandie tickets and arranged tickets-and arranged with Swissair, by telephoning Switzerland, to fly in a twenty-nine seater plane. Normally they flew a twenty-three seater, but that was completely booked on the way out of Vienna, so they flew in a twenty-nine seater plane. My mother paid for all the empty seats on the way in and so that we could get out, and she bought this ticket for the four of us.

In addition, my mother went to the railroad station and very ostentatiously bought four tickets to Italy on a reserved train that day, for that day. That when everybody knew about the travel bureau nobody did. My mother then went to the mayor's office to get the mayor to sign that my father had paid the taxes, and when she got to the mayor's office the mayor was just getting into his car, into his touring car, because there was a dinner being given by Hitler for important politicians, and he was off to dinner with Hitler, and when he saw my mother he got out of the car and when she told him what she wanted he went back inside-everybody had already gone-opened up his office at City Hall and he got out all the papers and he said Hitler can wait and he did this for her, and so did the district-the county leader did the same thing. That was Kollmann.

**INT:** Why do you think all of these people did all this?

**GEORGE:** Because my father was so respected and I'll tell you something else. The day that we had a Kristallnacht of our own in Baden, when the Nazis were going to trash all the Jewish shops and they all had signs on them saying Jewish shop, Jewish shop, this man came. He had been a citizen of Baden, turned out to be a top Nazi. He came in his uniform and with a swastika. He was unknown to my parents. He had never been a patient and he was not anybody they knew, and this man came in the morning and said today is a very dangerous day for Jews. I am going to sit in your waiting room and if the ruffians come in I am going to send them away, and he sat in the waiting room until six o'clock at night when the whole thing was over, said goodbye and left. Never saw him again. So he came to protect my father.

Now, my teacher in school whom I had had from first grade on, because you moved-the teacher moved with you - his name was Huber, H-U-B-E-R. And my teacher was a wonderful teacher and a kindly man. I visited him back in the early sixties, I guess 1960. He was an old poor man. Lived in a one-room apartment with his wife without a bathroom, because he had had to be de-Nazified because he had to join the Party. After the war he couldn't be employed, but he came to my parents and said "I cannot guarantee George's safety. Don't send him to school anymore." But every day after school he came to our house and tutored me, so I would stay up with my lessons; every single day.

And so, you see, that's what my mother would not tell you because she doesn't want people to know there are good Gentiles, and these good Gentiles may well not have been good to the Polish Jews that were in the town, these Eastern Jews. These good Gentiles may well have taken part in all the extermination programs. G-d knows what they did, but they were good to us, and you know, most Nazis had their Jews that they protected, but they couldn't protect them against other Nazis, but we had all this protection.

Now what happened. My mother ordered a "fiaker." You know what fiaker is? It's F-I-A-K-E-R. It's a horse-drawn cab. She ordered a fiaker. We all dressed to go on a picnic. She had picnic baskets and off we went in the fiaker into the Vienna woods. A short time later, after we were gone, the Gestapo came and surrounded the house and settled down for us to come back because they knew we had gone on a fiaker, but they also knew about our tickets to Italy so they stationed guards at the station to apprehend us should we try to escape. What they didn't know about was the Swissair was on the same day and they didn't-the fiaker took us to some place in the woods where there was a cab waiting, a taxi. The taxi took us to another town where there another taxi

waiting. That took us to the airport. We were searched, got on the plane with our forged-with our bribed visa, etcetera, etcetera, and flew off to Zurich and we arrived in Zurich safe and sound with our picnic baskets and had a picnic at the lakefront and then went off to Paris and we came to the States on the Normandie, and that's how we escaped.

**INT:** Do you remember how you dressed for that trip?

**GEORGE:** Yes, dressed for-we dressed as for a picnic. Leather pants-short leather pants and things like that. However, this was June, I remember. I don't know how they got the luggage. I don't know if the luggage went with us on the picnic or how we got it, because we did have luggage and my mother managed to smuggle out some jewelry to live on and a patient of my father's, the wine grower in-the wine grower came and bought their bedroom furniture for what they had paid for it so they'd have money. In fact, his son showed-when we visited, Gail and I visited there, his son showed me proudly that they still had all that furniture, but he didn't have to do that. It could have been stolen, so people did things like that, and in fact, all our furniture was sent after us, although our paintings and piano were stolen. We had a Büsendorfer and those were stolen and so on, but the other stuff all came in a huge box. It came to Newark, New Jersey some months later, and-because things weren't completely tight in those days. And what happened was that my-well, we got out and there was help from well-intentioned Gentiles obviously to help do it, but my mother arranged everything, and she arranged all the-

**INT:** Were there other Jews in Baden that did the same thing?

**GEORGE:** Well, there were other Jews who got out. I don't know what happened to the Kohns. I know Karlebach got out, the Rabbi and his sons. I know that the Lackenbachers got out to England. I know that the Loewis got out to Upper Darby or wherever the heck it is they wound up, and on the Main Line. And I don't know of any other Jews. There had to be some others-the Eastern Jews got out, after went to Boston since I met their daughter when I was at Harvard. But there's not much more. And then my mother rescued a hundred and twenty members of her family.

**INT:** How did she do that?

**GEORGE:** Because everything my father earned went into paying for visas and getting people to write visas and so on.

**INT:** Everything your father earned where?

**GEORGE:** In the States when he practiced. He took the test and passed and practiced in Newark, New Jersey and all spare money went into giving assurances. See, people would issue visas but they didn't want to take financial responsibility, so my parents put up the money for that. So she rescued a hundred and twenty-she rescued my grandfather, widowed by then. My grandmother died in '36. My grandfather she brought into Cuba and then to the States. I remember being at summer camp and there they brought my grandfather out just to see me, the first I had seen him in years. This must have been 1940. The irony is that here in the States I met anti-Semitism from Catholic kids in Newark.

**INT:** So you had an experience.

**GEORGE:** They used to beat me up on my way home from school every day, because there was a parochial school nearby. They used to beat me up. And I met anti-Semitism from Jews who- because American Jews kept saying they must have done something wrong if they had to flee, cause nobody accepted that Nazism was bad on Jews, and I remember many American Jews claim that there must have been something wrong with us. We must have done something wrong if we had to flee and come to the United States, and-

**INT:** Has your mother since told you about what it was like for her to do all of this? Was there any thought about parting and leaving her family?

**GEORGE:** No, she just did what had to be done.

**INT:** Very pragmatic.

**GEORGE:** As she saw it, yes. And she-and my principal, who was a Jewish principal, was terribly anti-refugee, and I wound up being an enemy alien after America went to war because I was still a German-an Austrian citizen and Austria was part of Germany, recognized by the U.S. as part of Germany, so I was an enemy alien despite all that, and Jewish kids used to-

**INT:** What was that like for you?

**GEORGE:** And I spoke King's English to boot, which made everybody detest me and knew more and was well advanced-I was skipped considerably as a kid because the education system was so much better. What was it like? It was-here I was an isolated child.

**INT:** And what were your feelings about that?

**GEORGE:** Very resentful. I became somewhat-well, I just read a lot. I used to go to the library every day and bring home three or four books and take them back the next day and get three or four more and so on.

**INT:** Do you remember having any of this discussion with your mother or with your father?

**GEORGE:** No, not really. They were busy. My father was busy practicing and my mother was busy rescuing. My mother became the chairman of New Jersey "I am an American Day." Governor-what was his name? Meyner, appointed her to that. My mother was the chairman of the auxiliary of my father's hospital, Ladies Auxiliary. There's that funny story where the head nurse's name was Mrs. Smith and my mother can't say Mrs. Smith because it's not something that Austrians can say and she used to say Mis-sus Smith to get it out, and she used to say, oh, why can't you have an easy name like Hrdlcka. (Laughter) That's what you're used to. Anyway, that's spelled H-R-D-L-C-K-A. It's a Czech name. Czech-Austrian name. Anyway.

**INT:** Where was your faith during this time?

**GEORGE:** My what?

**INT:** Faith? Was there any talk of faith in G-d or-

**GEORGE:** No. I went to Hebrew school here so I could be bar mitzvah. My-our rabbi was at Temple B'nai Abraham in Newark, was Dr. Prinz, P-R-I-N-Z, Joachim Prinz, who was a German Rabbi, very well known, had written books, but he was not very religious and I was definitely not religious and I quit with religion as soon as I was bar mitzvah because as my mother said, there clearly is no G-d. It's true that there's no G-d. Any rational person would not believe in a G-d who would permit these things to happen and to pray to a G-d who's just a big old man sitting up there and think that he pays attention to whether you pray or not and so on is ridiculous, so that's it.

**INT:** And your father?

**GEORGE:** My father totally turned away from religion. We still have the Seders. We did the cultural things, but that's all. (Tape shuts)

**INT:** All right. So this is George Ehrlich and we are one day later on September the 30th and continuing.

**GEORGE:** Actually it's the 29th.

**INT:** Oh, tomorrow's the 30th. Today is the 29th. Yes. You're correct. We were finished talking about your beliefs in your family and then we were going to get into how you left and came to this country.

**GEORGE:** Well we did go into some of that, as far as how we escaped from Austria. Let me backtrack for a moment and tell you a little about-you asked a question yesterday about whether I had some quality time with my father and I told you that he was very busy during the week and that I didn't see him very much. That I didn't see him very much during the week but always he would spend the weekends with me or with us and we would hike, as I told you. We would go for walk in the countryside, walks in the park.

**INT:** Picnics.

**GEORGE:** We would go to Vienna. We would do things like-yes, we would also do that. Well, picnics didn't exist as such over in Austria, but you went to an inn or something and you had repast and you stopped and had a soda pop someplace called kracherl in German, K-R-A-C-H-E-R-L, which means pop, and it's, you know, it's the sound. And then-so I remember that very well, going all these nice walks with him, and he would sing his student songs. He would sing the various songs, not just "gaudeamus igitur" but all the funny songs that he learned as a student and I can remember him very jolly and singing these things as we walked along. And we continued this when we came to the States incidentally, because he would always, on weekends and on his days off on Wednesdays, if I wasn't in school we would go to the seashore. We'd drive down to Belmar, Bradley Beach, Asbury Park, Deal, Elberon, whatever, and we were living in Newark, or we would drive up to the-to Lake Kittatinny or-Lake Hopatcong, I mean,



I'm sorry, Lake Hopatcong. He bought a house on Lake Hopatcong in later years and we would spend a lot of time at that house, so he did spend a lot of time with us, but he loved to play cards and he loved to-and he was very erudite. He would often cite things or quote to me in Latin or in Greek and expect me to understand it as I grew older. He would expect me to know what he was quoting and why it was appropriate.

**INT:** George, I am remembering that you did say that after we had turned the tape off and actually we were coming back here yesterday, that you did have some memories of some anti-Semitism.

**GEORGE:** Yes. I remember, obviously nothing personal befell me in Austria before we left or my brother other than that we were shunned and that we could not participate in things that I didn't understand. I do remember, because of the location of our apartment that I told you about and it being on the square in front of the theater, that that was a rallying point for the various S.A., the brown shirts, and also for the black shirts, and that I saw these people and they would often come through with tanks and army unit. Since I had lived in a militaristic country, to see these people goose step and be in such perfect rhythm was something that was very appealing to a child. You know, it wasn't threatening. It was appealing. And I couldn't really understand why it wasn't part of my life. It was something to emulate and it was clear that if you had to have a role model it was going to be somebody like this who was tall and blond and-or whatever, but you know, tall and uniformed and the uniforms, as you know, were designed for drama. They weren't just designed for dress of uniformity.

The German uniforms were deliberately designed to be dramatic, so that when you saw these people march, especially with their large banners that were red with the white circle and the black swastika within it, that clearly-all of that was positive and then when they-when I saw them harassing the Eastern Jews with their beards because they could identify those on the streets, you see. They weren't Austrians. These were Germans who marched through, and a Jew was clearly identifiable if he fit the stereotype. If he was an Eastern Jew with the hooked nose and the beard and the "peyes" [sidelocks] and the hat and so forth, and I remember them harassing them on the streets. I remember them knocking old men down. I remember one time when they painted something on the sidewalk and they took a group of these Eastern Jews and made them clean the sidewalk by licking it with their tongues, and they were bleeding. Their tongues were raw because they were licking it off the sidewalk and they were bleeding, and I was watching from the window because this was all happening on this main square in the city.

**INT:** Do you remember your feelings, your thoughts?

**GEORGE:** Yeah. Obviously it was gruesome, but it was obviously-I was not identifying with the Jews. I was identifying with the Nazis, because the Nazis were the superiors and the ones that were positive.

**INT:** And there was no conversation with your parents about this?

**GEORGE:** I don't remember it. All I remember are my father being fatalistic, first that they weren't going to come in, that there was going to be a no-vote and they weren't going to be

allowed in, and then after they came in, he didn't know what to do about it, but my mother took care of all that. My father, towards his later years, and I think he showed traces early, he was self-sufficient. Obviously he had made himself a doctor despite all the opposition, despite his orphanage and everything else, but my father complained often. He grouched a bit and he would be angry but he wouldn't do much about the anger. He would grouse at people-about people whom he disapproved of or he thought were trying to use him or to do him some harm and so on, and my mother was very Pollyanna. Used to say, oh, it's not that bad or whatever, but my mother's the one who fixed things, so I don't remember, but it wouldn't have been in front of us. It wouldn't have been in front of the children. At that time, they were protective. Later on when I grew older, I was part of their discussion.

**INT:** Like what age?

**GEORGE:** Oh, in my teens in the States, but not when I was a child in Austria did I-I don't remember any of that. And I don't remember any of it because I was destined, as you know, before the Anschluss, I was destined for a private preparatory school and those were rather regimented and uniformed and so on, so to me all these uniformed people were only the culmination of what was already supposed to be my fate anyway. I knew I was going to go to one of those schools once I finished with grammar school, which is only four years in Austria as you know. Then you spend eight years in gymnasium, and the gymnasium I was going to go to was going to be a private one, either nearby-there was a very good one, a uniform one between Baden and Vienna, or being sent to England, to Eton or a place like that.

**INT:** So it feels as though, from what you're saying, that there wasn't a lot of discussion with the children about what was happening in the country.

**GEORGE:** No.

**INT:** Or fear for Jews or what your mother needed to do.

**GEORGE:** No. In fact I didn't know what she was doing and what she needed to do, and there was more discussion, I think, but I was only six years old, after Dollfuss was assassinated and when we came back to Vienna. The Nazis had been repelled there, because the Austrians clearly continued their government and the Nazis were captured and tried for murder, the assassins, and that was put down. That was when Mussolini mobilized. So I remember discussions there, but that was because I was part of it, because I had seen some of it and so it was explained to me what was going on. But I don't remember much more about any discussions after-during the Anschluss. I think that it was probably deliberately kept from us so that we wouldn't, Paul and I wouldn't tell anybody what was going on, since my mother was doing all this plotting and it was-even if we did go out into the park and things like that-

**INT:** Do you remember any Jews, I mean other than what-the Eastern European ones that you saw being somewhat removed from-there was anybody amongst the friends of the family or people you knew or relatives-

**GEORGE:** No. They made plans to leave. That I know. They made plans to leave.

**INT:** But you didn't know they were doing it?

**GEORGE:** Yes I knew that they were making plans to leave and I knew we were making plans to leave.

**INT:** You did know that?

**GEORGE:** Yes. I knew that we were making some plans to leave because things were being sold, things were disappearing, things were being packed, so I was aware of it, but I don't remember very much about any large discussions as to what was going on.

**INT:** So you were aware of it but you were aware of-

**GEORGE:** No. I do remember this, but I don't know when I learned-yeah, I knew this. When I was-remember, all this took place when I was about nine. A couple of years before-my father had a cousin named Pollack, and Fritz Pollack lived in Vienna. He was a very rich and very successful engineer. He had lived in a villa outside of Vienna with his wife and two sons, and we occasionally went to visit them and we would play with the boys, and I remember a couple of years before the Anschluss we were taken to say goodbye to them because they were emigrating because he didn't want to live in Austria anymore. He felt it was an anti-Semitic country, and I remember that being discussed, that this was not a good place for Jews. And he went to Palestine.

**INT:** And what year?

**GEORGE:** Probably 1936. And he went to Palestine. He saw what was happening in Germany, decided that all German-speaking countries were the same. I remember that, that I remember my father saying it wouldn't happen in Austria and he said, "I'm not staying here. It's not good for the boys. Something was said to them about them being Jewish at school and I'm not exposing them." Now they were exactly the same age as I and my brother, so they went off to Palestine. The younger son is in Israel, a diplomat, and changed his name to Padon, P-A-D-O-N I believe it is. Gabriel Padon. His name was George Pollack. He was also George because all of the Jews there were very Anglophilic, and so I was named after-I was named after an English king, George the Fifth, who was king at the time I was born, and so was George Pollack. And the older one, Robert, retained the name Pollack and moved to Los Angeles where he currently lives.

The parents lived in Israel in Tel Aviv and I think they're both dead now, but the father died sooner. But he refused to live in a Christian country, if there was a place that Jews were going to be the majority, and he made that move. He gave up everything. Took what he could obviously, but I mean he gave up his job and his business and his villa and moved in advance of the...and I remember my father not thinking that this was going to happen, because my father was quite sanguine over the fact this could never happen in Austria. My father had turned from social democrat to being somewhat monarchical. I remember him always saying that none of this would be happening if the Empire hadn't been broken up, and so at this point he felt it was wrong to have broken up the Empire, that the emperor should still exist.

Strangely enough, Uncle Karl came to prominence because during World War I - and this is in a book about him, a biography of him that I read. I don't know how apocryphal it is but it's certainly folklore in Austria where anybody who knows about him, for instance the Austrian government gives an annual medal to the white collar worker that is chosen as the best in the country and it's called the Karl Pick Medal currently. So in retrospect they're honoring him. They also named a large housing project for workers, on the other side of the Danube of Vienna, the Karl Pick Hof. But he was called to the Emperor and the Emperor said, "I expect your help with the war effort," Herr von Pick. And by calling him Herr von Pick that immediately made him a baron, you see, so he ennobled him at that point, expecting him to accept that and rally his Social Democratic forces behind the emperor.

Pick is alleged to have said, "unfortunately I don't believe in the monarchy Herr Hapsburg," which is "lese majeste," as you know. Clearly you cannot address the Emperor as "Herr Hapsburg," - that was emperor Franz Joseph. So Pick wound up in jail temporarily, although not by Franz Joseph's order, because Franz Joseph was a very benign monarch and very friendly to Jews. He was a very humble and comfortable man. He liked nothing better than to speak in Viennese dialect and he liked Jews, but the nobility around him didn't and as my father always told me that they were very effete and he knew them very well because he took care of so many of them.

**INT:** They were very [unknown word].

**GEORGE:** Effete. And my mother still rails over the fact that every business had a nobleman, even though the nobility was abolished after World War I. Every business had a nobleman in its Board of Directors who got paid heavily for his name, and she said they were all close to being idiots. She said they were all very stupid people and they were all very prejudiced and she had no time for them.

**INT:** I would like to move ahead.

**GEORGE:** Go ahead. Now we're in the States?

**INT:** We're in the States. You're having all this difficulty-

**GEORGE:** Well I had a difficult adjustment because, as I said, suddenly I was a foreigner which I had not been as a child, correct? I'd been part of the ruling class and now I was a foreigner, and my Judaism was suddenly clearly brought home to me. Before it was just something that I had, like other people were Protestants or Catholics.

**INT:** Did you ever discuss this with your parents?

**GEORGE:** I don't know. I don't remember. I have a real blank for those school years, to be very frank. They were not very happy ones initially and so I just don't remember much about them.

**INT:** So is that something actually that you do when something is not pleasant, just-

**GEORGE:** Suppress? Shove it out.

**INT:** Shove it out.

**GEORGE:** I don't know if I do it as a routine, but I certainly did it for that period of life. And I remember that period of life, I had-all into high school I had only one friend that I remember ever being with, a fellow named Kurt Mayer, who was a German refugee, blond, blue-eyed, who was a perfect picture of an Aryan. But he was Jewish and he was the only son of parents who were very stuffy German Jews who couldn't understand what happened to them, why they had to leave, because they were so Germanic. In fact they were more Germanic than most Germans, and Kurt and I were classmates. Kurt was very popular but not enough so that he had friends. I mean he was popular in school but after school it was Kurt and I who hung out together and I didn't have any other friends that I remember for some years.

**INT:** So how was your relationship with your brother at that time?

**GEORGE:** Pretty good. We went out-we had different interests. Paul was-became much more athletic and I became much more bookish as I told you, and the age difference in those years is very important. Almost four years difference is very big when you're a teen and your kid brother is just a youngster.

**INT:** So what do you remember of your parents? Was it a struggle? Was it-they adjusted fairly well? What's your impression about that?

**GEORGE:** Yeah, my father went right on practicing, but he-as I told you, he grouched a lot. I remember him every evening at dinner-of course he had office hours after dinner so we ate early, and I remember him always complaining over the fact that his competitors, other ENT men which took away a lot of his practice or unethically advertised the fact that-they went out behind his back to say things and he found this out. You know, the referring physicians, "why do you refer to him? He's not an American. He's an alien. He's a refugee. And even after he became a citizen, he wasn't one of us. We grew up here in the States; we're American." Most of these were Jews, incidentally. He was better accepted by the non-Jewish doctors on the various staffs. The Jewish doctors resented him and the Austrian-German refugees were highly resented in that area, at least. I don't know if it's everywhere, by fellow Jews, who were American Jews, and Gail can tell you about- (end of tape 2, side 1)

...find some of these because they were classmates but nobody knew where they were because nobody had cared who they were. Nobody ever befriended them, and I was not befriended by the Jews. I was befriended only by non-Jews in the United States.

**INT:** And did your parents make any religious affiliation?

**GEORGE:** Yes, immediately. They joined Temple B'nai Abraham in Newark, where Rabbi Prinz, a refugee from Germany and a famous man was the rabbi and he was often at our house and I think he came over to eat ham, frankly, because my father had it and he couldn't eat it obviously in his own house. He was a Conservative rabbi. My father did not believe in the Reform movement, even though all my mother's cousins who were here were all Reform Jews

and presidents of their Temple B'nai Jeshurun and so on. But we joined B'nai Abraham and I remember my mother's family are Eastern Jews, so what happened was that I think that's what happened too in Newark. The predominant Jewish community were Eastern Jews. They came from places like Poland or Russia originally. That is their ancestors, and they resented Austrian and German Jews just as-because here in the United States the Austrian-German clique in New York, our crowd, had never accepted them. They had built Temple Emmanuel and they didn't accept them into Temple Emmanuel, so they had to get their own. So there were two levels of Judaism even here, and I'm sorry that this sort of European Jewish dichotomy exists. There weren't many Sephardim, but all these other-Picks are probably Sephardic, because all Picks, according to the Jewish dictionary, got their name because they came from Picardy, so that would make them Sephardim.

**INT:** So what were the values while you were growing up here? Do you recall? I mean, like the education? It sounds like that-

**GEORGE:** Education was extremely important. Studies. And studies are-Eurocentric studies based on Europe. That was most important.

**INT:** Did your parents have hopes for you or dreams or did they talk to you about it?

**GEORGE:** Yes, my father expected me to become a doctor. I knew that from childhood on, and I think I became a doctor because he expected it. I think left to my own devices I probably would not have, but I became a doctor because it was obviously expected that that's the direction I would go. But he discouraged me from ENT [ear, nose and throat). As I told you, he was quite a pessimist and he was quite sure that ENT was going to fail, that new discoveries of penicillin were going to make it obsolete and so there was going to be no work for ENT men at all and so he wouldn't encourage that.

**INT:** So as the war was over and you began to hear about what had actually happened-

**GEORGE:** Well we knew sooner.

**INT:** You knew sooner.

**GEORGE:** We knew sooner because as I told you, one of my mother's cousins was one of the first to be killed by the Nazis in being transported to a concentration camp, at that time Dachau, and he was beaten to death on the train and my mother knew that-well I guess shortly after we arrived. There was some kind of a system where she got lots of information from Europe. She brought out, I told you, a hundred and twenty relatives approximately. She was very active in the movement to bring people out and kept making it a point to talk to politicians and others and to emphasize to them how important it was to rescue the Jews because they were in danger of life and limb.

**INT:** So once you got to this country and that began happening, you became more aware, or was it stories that you heard later?

**GEORGE:** I can't tell you now when I did but it was openly discussed. I know that my mother worked full time at trying to rescue Jews and of course she helped my father, but any spare moment and all the money my father earned that wasn't needed to live on went towards helping to rescue Jews. And yes, the other thing is my father subscribed to a newspaper called Aufbau, A-U-F-B-A-U. Aufbau was a newspaper started for refugees like him from Germany and Austria and so on. It's a German language newspaper and I read it every week. It came once a week. So I was totally aware, constantly, what was going on because Aufbau revealed all this all the way through.

**INT:** So what was the feeling or the discussion in your house about what was happening?

**GEORGE:** My father and mother could not understand why the U.S. wasn't doing more to help Jews, but they were sure it was because there was anti-Semitism everywhere, not just in Germany, even if they were the most extreme case. And at that time my Uncle Alfred whom my mother had rescued from Germany, if you remember, at the expense of all her savings, my Uncle Alfred had also come to the States. My parents had brought him here. And he met a young woman named Marianne Medina whose parents had been-they were Turkish Jews and her parents had lived in Austria, I guess, and had been captured by the Germans and trying to escape through France. She made it across the border and they didn't, and they were captured by the Germans and sent to Auschwitz and killed.

This woman was quite a few years my uncle's junior, more than twenty years his junior, but he married her during the war, and I remember-so I knew that story. And I know also the interesting thing that when I was a child, I knew a lot about the Spanish Civil War, partly because the many weeks I convalesced from my mastoidectomy in '36, the Spanish Civil War was on. And I was reading in the papers every day about the atrocities that took place and so on. And my mother had a cousin whom she also later rescued who served in the Loyalist forces as a volunteer. He was a physician and he escaped to Northern Africa where the French imprisoned him.

But when Northern Africa was liberated, she managed to get him back to the United States instead of having him sent wherever it was they were going to send him; and he was probably a Communist. He ultimately wound up committing suicide after some years of practice here in the United States, but I remember that there was a good deal of talk about him and about the Spanish Civil War. Of course, like all people, like most Jews, I was anti Franco because he was painted that way, but what was odd was that Marianne Medina was saved because Franco would not return any Jews that escaped across the Pyrenees, he would not return to Hitler. Hitler demanded them back and I knew that, but I also knew that not one Jew was ever sent back to-was ever delivered up to Hitler once they got into Spain. So, you know, this is a paradox.

**INT:** Right. Do you remember any discussion in your family about why your family was able to be saved. What did it mean? Was there any-

**GEORGE:** No. From a philosophic standpoint? No. We're all pragmatic, totally pragmatic.

**INT:** I mean I'm wondering if your mother felt that because she had been able to save your family that she was saved for a reason so that she could save others?

**GEORGE:** No. No.

**INT:** None of that.

**GEORGE:** She did not feel there was a reason. In fact, she felt that there was no reason for religion. That religion was something that clearly-

**INT:** They were just persecuted people but-

**GEORGE:** That religion had no place anymore because religion is placed on G-d and there clearly cannot be a G-d when all these things were going on and all the just people-my mother still to this day says things like that. The Jews never committed massacres. The Jews never did these things. That's only the Christians did this and the Moslems.

**INT:** And yet they identify themselves with the Jewish community and the synagogue.

**GEORGE:** Yes. From a cultural standpoint. See, we're all cultural Jews.

**INT:** Okay.

**GEORGE:** We're not religious Jews. We don't-none of us-none of us keeps any holidays except Pesach as a family holiday and Chanukah as a family holiday. Other than that, pay no attention, because they're meaningless because there's no G-d, and the idea is to live a moral life if you can, but only for the sake of living a moral life, not for the sake of-

**INT:** So is your belief system exactly as your mother's, the same?

**GEORGE:** Probably more extreme because I do belong to a Temple just to keep it alive, as you know, but I think that we have to sustain these centers of Jewish learning, but other than that, I have no-I never go. I have no place for it in my life.

**INT:** So you then went on to Harvard immediately after high school?

**GEORGE:** Yeah. I went to a Jewish high school. I say Jewish high school. Weequahic High.

**INT:** How do you spell that?

**GEORGE:** W-E-E-Q-U-A-H-I-C. That's our cheer too. Weequahic High was founded in 1936 in the south of Newark, in an area that was sort of middle and upper-middle class; lower middle class and upper middle class. Phillip Roth lived there. He was the younger brother of one of my classmates, Sandy Roth, and my brother Paul knew him better than I did. He was just a snotty little kid when I used to visit Roth. This was later, after I had more friends than just Kurt Mayer, but initially it was just Kurt Mayer but then I had other friends and other people I liked and this was predominately Jewish section of town. Most of our teachers were Jewish. To teach at



Weequahic you had to have a Masters. It was a public high school. To teach there you have a Masters. To be a department head, you had to have a Ph.D. It was quite a-it wasn't a magnet school. It was not a magnet school, but it dealt with a very cultured community so the result is that it was-it attracted teachers who were very good and for example-

**INT:** And this was in Newark?

**GEORGE:** Yes, in Newark. And it was featured in "Portnoy's Complaint." It was featured in "Goodbye Columbus." Funny thing is that by the time I graduated in 1945 it had-the school, in its nine year history, had never won a football game but was annually in the basketball championship because in those days Jews were the basketball players, not blacks. We had a few blacks in the school scattered here and there.

**INT:** Did you have to take an exam to get into the school?

**GEORGE:** No. No. It wasn't a magnet school. It was just-you were assigned because it was the neighborhood school.

**INT:** Okay. So you went on and you were accepted immediately to Harvard?

**GEORGE:** I was accepted immediately to Harvard. I applied to three schools. I applied to Harvard, Swarthmore and Penn, for no particular reason. I know growing up that I was so in love with uniforms that I thought I wanted to go to Navy, but I didn't know how to do that. I was discouraged by the guidance counselor such as he was because you needed a Congressional appointment and he didn't think I'd get one because I wasn't even a citizen until '44. You know, it took six years. Then the second thing was-and I kept getting skipped. I was only sixteen in 1945 when I graduated. I took extra classes. I took extra Latin. I took a course in German with Dr. Triess and that was one of the most memorable courses I ever took. Dr. Ellis, who was my math teacher, also was this fantastic and I had trig with him and other courses and I was always A+ in math because math came extremely easily to me, but Dr. Triess' German course was practically a course in philology. I still remember-I can quote to you almost all the Shakespeare speeches in German. Now I learned about how to tell which language is old and which language it's related to; how to tell it on cognates and other different things. Dr. Triess, who was a German man, not a Jew, actually was-and he was a very tough teacher, but he was inspiring and it's because of him that I ultimately majored in social anthropology because I was interested in the things that he had taught us and we didn't have anthropology at high school in those days.

**INT:** So you majored in social anthropology at Harvard?

**GEORGE:** Yeah.

**INT:** And then you could go to medical school without-

**GEORGE:** Well, I took my pre-med courses.

**INT:** I see.

**GEORGE:** Which I wasn't very interested in. I had very little interest in science, except organic chemistry, because Dr. Feiser, who taught that course, is the man who invented napalm and is reviled by some people for doing so, but he was a brilliant teacher and he made chemistry interesting. Everything else in biology except genetics, in science except genetics, I found dull and wasting my time, was actually a waste of time.

**INT:** And you went to medical school there as well?

**GEORGE:** No, I went to Chicago.

**INT:** You went to Chicago. Was it called Pritzker then?

**GEORGE:** No, this is not university. I went to Chicago Medical School, which also was predominately Jewish at that time. Weequahic was a good sort of a high school. I mean it was very advanced. It was the only school in Newark that taught the kinds of subjects it did. It was the only school in Newark that had any hope of getting kids into good schools, and all of us who were at the top of the class had expectations of getting into the best schools, but it had only had two people admitted into-one or two people admitted into Harvard since its founding. I applied to Harvard and I don't remember why I did. I mean, I didn't know much about it. In fact in school we sang Yale songs in assembly when they showed these old lantern slides, those yellowish lantern slides with things printed on them that turned red after a time. It started off black.

And we sang Yale songs and Maine songs and other things like that. We never sang a Harvard football song. I knew nothing much about Harvard but I knew its name. Swarthmore was what interested me. I thought that was going to be a great school, and Penn, but Penn turned me down. Swarthmore-I remember going into New York to be interviewed by the Dean. Those days were different from today. I used to go by myself into New York to see plays, Shakespeare or other things, even operas for the matinees. I would go in on the, what was then called the Hudson Tube and today is PATH. I would even sometimes walk down to the train station which was about four, five miles to save the five cent bus fare, but there was a bus that went down and I would go into New York and do this. Once I went into New York and I was interviewed by the Dean of Swarthmore, Dean of Admissions I suppose he must have been, but maybe just Dean, and he was a very nice, kindly middle-aged man and we had a wonderful conversation and I went back and the next thing I knew, a few days later, I got a letter accepting me and offering me a scholarship which would have been very helpful to my father.

And then came the Harvard admission and I remember-of course I was very, very innocent and very young and very immature and I remember writing a letter to the dean of Swarthmore saying I decided to go to Harvard because it was better known but I thanked him for his offer of a scholarship and he was gentleman enough to write me a letter back and say, "well Harvard's a very good school and I wish you luck." But I wouldn't do such things today but clearly that was a very naive and very, how shall I say, immature thing to do, but he took it in that spirit. I never understood the Penn thing but for whatever reason I'm just as happy, and I went to Harvard which I loved from the very moment I arrived there.

I think that's when I became an American. I arrived at Harvard with a classmate named Henry Warner who was also sixteen. He had been admitted to M.I.T. and the two of us went on the train to Boston and I remember having a big steamer trunk and I lugged this steamer trunk to the subway because we were told you could get there by subway and we took-I guess we took a taxi to M.I.T. that Henry paid for and we installed him in his room, and then I took a subway from M.I.T. to Harvard and I remember coming up from the subway with this steamer trunk and trying to find my way and I felt totally lost and I was directed to my dormitory. The yard dorms, which the freshman always live in, were at that time occupied by the Navy contingent because it was still wartime, so the Navy had the yard dorms and I was directed to one of the houses, Gore Hall, which was part of Winthrop House. I remember going down there and depositing this trunk in the room.

There are suites, as you know, and depositing it in the suite and walking out and looking around and feeling terribly strange and just wandering, and I wandered across the Lars Anderson Bridge and wound up in Harvard Stadium, and here was the stadium and it was empty, of course, this being the end of June because I started in the summer. This is wartime, so they had year-round classes, and I walked into this stadium which was totally empty and I looked around at all these rows and rows and rows of benches of seats in the stadium and suddenly I felt that they were populated by all of the Harvards of the past and they were sitting there cheering, and I said, well, I'm part of this. That was it. Then I became an American. I became a Harvard. I became-I was adjusted.

**INT:** So is that a kind of a coping skill that you use for yourself, to imagine yourself-

**GEORGE:** It wasn't imagination. This was an epiphany. This was just, you know, just a realization come together that this was also mine now. I had a right to be here. I'm here and I'm part of this, therefore I am it.

**INT:** But it takes a strong ego and a good self-esteem and self-worth to have that immediate sense of belonging.

**GEORGE:** Yeah, but I didn't have it before. I didn't have it at Weequahic. I didn't have it at Avon Grammar School. I didn't have it at P.S. whatever-it-is in the Bronx where I went briefly in between Larchmont and Newark.

**INT:** Did you know anybody who had-did you know any names of people who had gone to Harvard?

**GEORGE:** Not one person.

**INT:** Not one.

**GEORGE:** I didn't know anything about Harvard other than the fact that it was-

**INT:** A good school.

**GEORGE:** It was reputed to be the top. For my parents, of course, who were totally useless in this regard because they knew nothing about any schools. They didn't understand American university system. In Europe you went to school, to university. When you graduated you went to the university in your home city. You didn't go off someplace. You didn't live in dormitories. You commuted to your university. So, you know, since we weren't here, we were in Newark, my father expected me to go to the whatever there was in Newark, Rutgers Newark or whatever it was called. Yeah, Rutgers Newark. That's where Kurt Mayer went, but I didn't. Kurt Mayer was bright too but he didn't-he went to Rutgers Newark and my father expected, since we lived in Newark, that's where I'd go. I chose not to.

**INT:** While you were at Harvard, did you meet other people like yourself who had emigrated? Was there any more awareness at that time?

**GEORGE:** Joachim Wohlwill did, but he didn't count in my life.

**INT:** What was that?

**GEORGE:** I mean I met him, I knew him, but he wasn't important to me. The people-

**INT:** What was important?

**GEORGE:** To me? I don't know. The people-the people I got along with, they were from all walks. You know, I always said that Harvard took the socially maladroit and mixed them in with a large number of people who came from secure circumstances, and brought them into that circumstance. I mean this is the whole idea of affirmative action; that it was based on the belief that if you take blacks from the inner city who are not exposed to anything, you know, to culture or to even a home life, and you mix them in but in small numbers amongst people who have all this, they will take on the coloration of their surroundings and it will advance them. It was not anticipated that they will become the majority because they can't give anything to each other. And that was the situation at Harvard.

There were a few of us who were not preppies, and of course it came right after the war then, so there were some veterans who were returning who were considerably older. But the majority of people that I hung around with were not the older veterans, who by and large had tasted life and didn't have much time for us younger ones. It was the ones that had not seen service and who came from disparate backgrounds and from all over the country and so for example, I didn't join Hillel. I didn't find Hillel interesting. But I did join the Canterbury Club, which is the Episcopal club, because one of my roommates was the son of an Episcopal bishop. And I used to go up on Sunday nights with him to the Canterbury Club, because the Canterbury Club served the best food on Sunday nights and the houses did not serve very good food on Sunday nights. And so I became a member-or a regular there, and most of the girls I met, for instance, were Episcopalian who were part of that club. But then when I went up to date them, I also met their Jewish friends and I got some Jewish girlfriends amongst them.

**INT:** Was that important to you or not?

**GEORGE:** No.

**INT:** And to your parents?

**GEORGE:** Well, I wasn't getting married at sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, so it was totally unimportant as to whom I-

**INT:** Dated.

**GEORGE:** Dated or hung out with. The only thing-I always knew I wasn't going to marry a Gentile but-

**INT:** How did you know that?

**GEORGE:** Well, because I just wasn't going to.

**INT:** I mean was that discussed in your family? Was it an important value?

**GEORGE:** We're Jews. Yeah, we're Jews so you don't do that. My parents also-did not look kindly on mixed marriages and used to speak disparagingly of all their Hungarian friends who pretended to be Christians or even converted and changed their names to something like Gereben, changed their names to Gerards and so forth, and my parents would talk about this at home. These were friends of theirs but they knew they were Jews and they were Jews but they were pretending to be Christians, and my parents thought that that's typically Hungarian. My mother had a cousin who was married to a Hungarian who always used to say to me, even when a Hungarian is telling you the truth he's lying, and that's the one that was rescued by Mussolini. I liked him. He was very witty. My father had another refugee friend, a dermatologist named Hitschmann. I liked him too. He was jolly and we were befriended. My mother didn't like either of them and she still rails at both of them and she still to this day tells me that when I speak nicely of them or say that I miss them she says, "how can you? They're terrible people!"

**INT:** So that kind of leads me to the next sort of question that I was going to ask. Your mother obviously had a sense of who you can trust and who you can't trust and what you needed to do to protect yourself. Did you incorporate any of that or integrate that into your-

**GEORGE:** No.

**INT:** But what I was trying to get at before had to do with the level of trust of people, and you were talking about these relatives that you missed, and your mother said how could you miss them when they were evil people.

**GEORGE:** They're users and so on, yeah.

**INT:** Users and all of that. So your mother had certain values. She had a trust of some people and not of others. Did any of that rub off or not? Did you trust everyone because you had come from Austria and had had the experience of German...did you have any feelings about Germans?

**GEORGE:** On the whole, I take people as they come and I really don't judge. I have German friends. I'm on boards in Germany and my mother cannot understand how I can go to Germany and deal with them when they are Germans. And I say, "They were not alive or they were only children at the time of the war," and my mother said, "Children killed other children. Children were anti-Semitic." "They're the children." I said, "I cannot condemn everybody. If I'm going to condemn all anti-Semites there's nobody I can talk to, including Jews, so I'm going to deal with people as I find them and that's it and that's what I do."

**INT:** So did you experience any anti-Semitism when you were at Harvard or when you were in medical school, in that world outside of your home?

**GEORGE:** At Harvard, as I told you, I had this Episcopalian...it's funny. The bishop's son never got invited to the deb parties and I got invited to all of them, so I used to have to wear his tails. I used to borrow his white tie and tails because he was in the Glee Club. He had those things, and I would wear those to the various deb parties. Maybe through Canterbury Club they got my name but it was always deb parties I was invited to and deb marriages and so for the people I didn't even know. I was-but I also had a lot of Jewish friends and I did go to Hillel ultimately. I stopped going to the Episcopal Club after the first year or so.

**INT:** What made you decide to do that?

**GEORGE:** Hillel had the more interesting philosophic discussions on their programs. I don't remember any particular reason for doing it. I always identified with Judaism rather than with Episcopalians. I didn't expect to become an Episcopalian. I didn't want Christianity. I can't really understand the rational basis of Christianity because I can't understand the divinity of Christ so since that is absurd to me I can't understand the rest of the religion But basically, my experience at Harvard was-I was considered by some of the professors...I remember one professor, Dr. Bok, an astronomer, telling a friend of mine that he should become as polished and urbane as I am. He should take me as a role model because-for whatever reason, but I wasn't. I was ingenuous. I was ingenuous enough to tell Stravinsky that I thought that Disney did a better job with the Rite of Spring than [Sergei] Diaghilev did and Stravinsky did not take it amiss.

**INT:** When did you meet Stravinsky? How did you meet him?

**GEORGE:** Igor Stravinsky? Back in '46 or '7.

**INT:** When you were at?

**GEORGE:** At Harvard. And he came to conduct. And I met the whole D'oyly Carte Opera Company and became a Gilbert and Sullivan friend, introduced by my friend Norman Poser initially. No, Norman, yeah. Norman took me to-convincing me to go to a Gilbert and Sullivan. It was Pinafore, I think, but our housemaster, Dr. Hoadley, invited the Gilbert and Sullivan troupe to the house. Since they were English and they didn't have much money after the war, the stars didn't come, but all the chorus came and so the chorus sang for us after dinner. But we had dinner with them, and I being on the house committee, because Mr. Hoadley appointed me since I was willing to talk to people that I didn't know.

So he got to know me and he appointed me before there were elections as such. When the elections came I didn't get elected, but I was appointed, and so I met-I was invited to dinner and sherry at his house with the- (end of tape 2, side 2) ...number of friends-someone I knew in freshman year named Cornelius Ryan and I remember him telling a rather nasty joke in which-a joke in which the butt of the joke was the Jews. I'm not going to repeat it because it's not a clean joke but it was a nasty joke, and I remember feeling terrible that he told this. It was clear that he must not have known that I was Jewish and I remember telling him I was Jewish and he never spoke to me again. Whether he did not because he was embarrassed or because he wouldn't mingle with Jews I don't know, but howsoever, I remember Conny Ryan never again spoke to me or I to him. And there were a couple of others who were older, who were veterans, who got drunk and said anti-Semitic things.

**INT:** And how did that affect you? What did you think about it?

**GEORGE:** Well, of course I was offended. I was offended.

**INT:** Did it affect your relationship with them? Whether they spoke to you or not?

**GEORGE:** Yes, I avoided them.

**INT:** You avoided them.

**GEORGE:** I disliked them. I found-and since they were mostly Irish and red-faced and drunk, it built the stereotype in me that this is the kind of people you have to expect this of.

**INT:** And talk a little.

**GEORGE:** Now, it's interesting. The Boston Brahmins, on the other hand, accepted me fully to this day, invited me to their homes, invited me for weekends, for duck shooting or trap shooting. It used to kill my shoulder (laughs). I couldn't understand what was so much fun about a sport that left your shoulders sore. Still, clearly if they invite you to their houses and their homes they're not anti-Semitic, because even social anti-Semites who might be friendly with you in the daytime at work won't invite you into their homes. We have such people here amongst our neighbors here who we're very friendly with but who wouldn't dream of letting us past the front door. The-

**INT:** And how do you feel or what do you think about that?

**GEORGE:** Nothing. It's perfectly-that's their prerogative. I'm perfectly friendly with them. They're good neighbors. I don't-if that's what they want, fine.

**INT:** And would you invite them here?

**GEORGE:** We did. We've had them here. We greet them. We're not enemies. If one of them feels like that, that's-you know, I don't care.

**INT:** But is that an assumption that you make that that's why they haven't invited you?

**GEORGE:** Well, it's an assumption that Gail and I make, yes. Anyway, the fact is that my friends and my-the people I knew were quite disparate. I'm on my permanent class committee of my Harvard class, so I know more people in my class now than I ever did. I've been elected every five years to a term so clearly I figure in my class. In medical school I became president of my fraternity, which was a Jewish fraternity, but I had friends of all persuasions, as I generally have.

**INT:** Have you ever confronted anyone on this?

**GEORGE:** On anti-Semitism? Yes, I have. When it has been-as I did this man who, this young man who told a dirty joke about Jews.

**INT:** What did you say to him?

**GEORGE:** I told him, you understand that I'm Jewish and that I resent what you just said; that I resent your telling a joke like that. I don't think that's very funny.

**INT:** And what happened then?

**GEORGE:** As I said, he sputtered a little bit but we never had anything more to do with each other in that particular case. But in other cases, when I was in the navy, I remember it was-in the navy it was a whole different story. Almost everybody I was with was Gentile, from various parts of the country, some of whom from patrician backgrounds. The officers were similarly patrician, from the south. Definitely prejudiced but not against me, and we had open discussions. I ran the minyans on the ship for the Jewish sailors on Yom Kippur or Rosh Hashana if we were at sea because I was the senior Jewish officer, but since we never had enough to get ten people I used to get Father Flatley to join us too. I figured that since he worships a Jew he's good enough to be part of the minyan, and he used to join us, and he and I would discuss theology, Christian theology, often on deck. I would discuss Judaism and the relationships with others very openly.

**INT:** Was this a responsibility that you had to provide services?

**GEORGE:** No. This was something I chose to do.

**INT:** You chose to do, but that's not something that you do now, which is to celebrate the holidays.

**GEORGE:** No.

**INT:** Why did you chose to do it then, do you know?

**GEORGE:** Because those kids needed something. Those young sailors needed the cohesion, and I felt that often they were subjects of anti-Semitism amongst other sailors. Remember, that's a different class from the officer class.



**INT:** What made you decide to join the navy?

**GEORGE:** I had always wanted the navy. The navy is an elite service. I always sought elitism, from childhood on.

**INT:** Yes. Why do you think that was?

**GEORGE:** The first clothes I was given by my parents was, that I recall, was a blue coat with gold buttons. From childhood on that was the idea, that the navy is always the elite service. I was brought up to be part of the elite, from childhood on, and I felt that that's where I belong.

**INT:** So that was the life that your parents lived in Baden and you continued that. They made that sort of life in Newark as well?

**GEORGE:** No, not really, but I did.

**INT:** How about your brother?

**GEORGE:** My brother's all different. My brother's a very diffident kind of person. He's only now beginning - now that he's sixty-four years old - he's beginning finally to get some self-esteem. I mean he could have gone so far. He was head of ABC Radio News and they offered him all kinds of promotions and he turned them down. He lives in a shabby apartment in New York. Has lived in a shabby rental apartment all his life. That's all he wants. Now he's separated from his wife but she wanted-she found them an apartment they could have bought for a song and it was three times the size and beautiful in location, overlooking the Hudson River and so on, and he never would do that. He never bought clothes for himself. He's just a diffident sort of person, and I remember the outburst he made. He was-well, let's see. I was about to go to college so I was sixteen and he must have been then twelve years old. Maybe he was already thirteen. At any rate, two things I remember that year. One was his outburst where he said in German-I've always been the little mouse in the house. (George says the words in German) That was his identification.

**INT:** So you were the big child and he was-

**GEORGE:** Yeah, he was nothing. He was just-and a mouse is after all not just little, it's vermin; it's something you don't want in a house, so he felt not wanted. That was one. The second thing is-the second thing I remember is when I came back from baseball practice. I was the baseball manager. That's not the same as the coach, you know, but I was the manager. I had the equipment and so forth. I've got a baseball letter required and-the year we were the city champions, and so I remember bicycling home from practice after the coach dropped me off somewhere and I would bicycle the rest of the way. And I came home and my brother Paul came running in the room and he said President Roosevelt is dead and I smacked him. I said, that will teach you to tell lies. Horrible lies. That's disgusting. But it turned out to be true. But it was unbelievable. All my life there had been a President Roosevelt after all, so it was unbelievable that President Roosevelt would suddenly be dead, and but it also suggested I didn't believe anything my brother said or I would not have treated him that way.

The other big fight I remember was he wanted to listen to the New York Giants and I wanted to listen to New York Philharmonic on the one radio we had on a Sunday afternoon, December 7, 1941, and I remember that he won out for one reason or another. He turned on the Giants and that was interrupted to tell us about the bombing of Pearl Harbor. We had fought before that as to which was going to be on the radio, which we were going to listen to, and I don't remember why he won out to listen to the Giants. So our relations were fraternal but we were in competition and he was always the one who had really had got the lesser share. My father had-this is the saddest thing of all. When my father was dying at St. Barnabas Hospital, my brother came out from New York and sat with him day in, day out, day in, day out, and I hardly ever came up from Philadelphia to see him. And what happened was that my father, on Saturday evening-my father died Sunday.

On Saturday, Sadat spoke to the Israeli Knesset and my father lived to see that. My father was a Zionist, and he was extremely happy about it, and my brother was with him and before my brother left, my father said that he wanted a radio in his room, which he didn't have. He had a TV, I think, and my brother said he would bring him one the next day and my father started to sing a song from a musical that he had seen when he was young and he said that the song was [German words], the favorite son of the Maharajah, and he sang that song and he said, "so that's very appropriate George," he said to my brother. "It's very appropriate, George, and I want you to-I want you to know that." And it wasn't I who was there. And then the next day when my brother came back with the radio they wouldn't let him in the room and when he went to inquire he found that my father had died during the night. So the last thing that my father said to anybody of the family was that I was his favorite son. You know, that's tough.

**INT:** That's very painful.

**GEORGE:** And it's very painful for me and it must have been very painful for my brother, who always felt that no one really wanted him or cared for him and he married Gentile, he married a woman who's older than I am, even though he's four years younger, whom he had met when he was stationed at Dachau, of all the irony. He was in the army and he was stationed at Dachau in the officer's club, the Nazi officer's club, what had been the Nazi officer's club, and he was stationed there. He met her. She was the librarian for the base, and some years later, after dating a whole number of Jewish girls that turned up for him in New York, he wound up marrying her anyway, despite my mother asked me to dissuade him. And I tried my best, but it didn't work; and he married her. The marriage was reasonably happy but they never had any children and they adopted a child who's very nice but Gail can't stand, I think, just out of jealousy, but anyways, a lovely boy and he graduated from Columbia. He was all-city football. He graduated from Columbia. He's now in business school in Texas and he's gotten a terrific job offer from Ford so-and he's married. Gail doesn't like his wife either. She's Gentile, and whatsoever. But it doesn't matter. Gail's not too fond of my family, I guess, in general.

**INT:** Why is that?

**GEORGE:** (sighs) I don't really know why. Partially it's because I think because she cannot adapt to my mother's fawning and-

**INT:** Meddling?

**GEORGE:** Meddling and fawning, and so she decided the best thing to do is just keep her out of our lives, out of her life anyway.

**INT:** But you've maintained the relationship?

**GEORGE:** Yes. And she goes with me to important events and she'll occasionally take her out but she-it's an uncomfortable thing. Very uncomfortable. As you see, Mother never comes here because she used to come with Father when we were in the other house, but that was painful. She would always interfere. She would always tell us to do things this way and she would tell Gail to do things this way or that way. She would always-on every single thing she would interfere with Gail.

**INT:** But do you think that she would be willing to be interviewed?

**GEORGE:** Who? My mother? Maybe. Yeah.

**INT:** And how about your brother?

**GEORGE:** Oh, sure. Paul is now the head of radio news for Bloomberg. You know the Bloomberg Broadcasting? Well, that's the third big network of broadcasting. The PBS carries Bloomberg News and Bloomberg has many other things. Paul identifies with Bloomberg, interestingly enough, but it's given him tremendous confidence.

**INT:** Could you give me your mother's name?

**GEORGE:** Irene.

**INT:** Irene Ehrlich. And her phone number?

**GEORGE:** (deleted)

**INT:** Where does she live in New York?

**GEORGE:** (deleted).

**INT:** And your brother is Paul?

**GEORGE:** Um-hm. I can't give you an address. He moved out and he sublets.

**INT:** Do you have a phone number?

**GEORGE:** For him? Only an office number,

**INT:** What would that be?

**GEORGE:** I don't have it by heart.

**INT:** Okay.

**GEORGE:** He's not homeless but, you know, he loves his work and he's a nomad as far as his living is concerned, because his wife has the apartment. She would take him back and I don't know what he's planning to do. I can't figure him out. My brother is a liberal and I'm not so I am-I do have some liberal tendencies, but I tend to be conservative in many matters where he's not.

**INT:** George, if you could philosophically look back over your memories, sort of a retrospective strategy for how you coped with all that you lived through and been through, your experiences, and how you adapted, survived, from all of this. What would you say your strategies would be?

**GEORGE:** First of all, that every problem has a solution. The solution isn't necessarily one you like. The answer isn't necessarily something you like, but you have to-but there is a solution and you have to deal with the solution. You have to deal with the reality. You cannot deal with a fiction.

**INT:** How do you think you came to this?

**GEORGE:** (pause) I don't know. Just a very influential thing was a poem by Robert Frost, The Road Not Taken. You know the poem. And I've always felt that you never know how it would have turned out if you'd gone the other way, so you have to deal with the way you took instead of saying I should have taken the other way, because that way leads you nowhere. You can't go back, so deal with what you have and make the best of it, or, if you don't think that you can do anything with it, find something else. And that's been my strategy always. It's one of the reasons that I've changed careers twice, because I've decided that there's a better one by taking a different road, but I just feel there's always an answer. You can deal with everything if you just look at it and say, you know, "I'm not going to let it defeat me. I have to-I have to make something of it. I have to make it be the best it can be, even if I don't like this solution. I've got to do-since this is the solution, I have to deal with it as it is and make it succeed."

**INT:** So, to leave this line of thinking a little bit, to go back, because I never got all your current information. How old you were when you got married. I know you married a little bit later, when was that?

**GEORGE:** The first marriage was to an actress in New York where we eloped and-

**INT:** She was or was not Jewish?

**GEORGE:** She was Jewish. She was an actress. Her parents were from Chicago, and I married her at Temple Emmanuel in the rabbi's study, with my brother and sister-in-law as best man and matron of honor and that's all that were there.

**INT:** Your parents were not there?

**GEORGE:** No. I'll tell you this much. If you want to manipulate me, manipulate my guilt.

**INT:** Why do you think that is?

**GEORGE:** I think that this is one of the Holocaust survivor's syndromes. We feel guilty for surviving.

**INT:** Is this what Charles alluded to when he told me that he knows that you've had some emotional-I don't think he used the word "problems" but that was sort of the indication.

**GEORGE:** Well, I went into analysis.

**INT:** Yes, he said that-

**GEORGE:** I don't know if he knows about that.

**INT:** Yes, I think he does. He said that-

**GEORGE:** And it's because of analysis that I was able to marry Gail.

**INT:** How did all that work?

**GEORGE:** Well, Gail had two children. She was divorced.

**INT:** No, but you're saying you have survivor guilt. How did that come about? Where does this-

**GEORGE:** Oh, I don't know. The fact is that my mother nursed me through all these terrible illnesses I had. I felt beholden. My mother rescued us and I knew that. She saved our lives. I felt beholden. I owed them. I owed her, and I owed my father whom I loved dearly but who didn't express his emotions, at least his-he was too introverted at times. I used to try to talk to him and he would not really want to talk about what I wanted to talk about, but I wanted to complain about things and I just-I wanted to spare him. As I told you, I took a different road, that's all, and decided to make the best of it. So then I married Nina. I realized that was a terrible mistake and that lasted only about two years. There were other reasons but...and I got divorced from Nina and I chose to take a job in Philadelphia and I came down here and ultimately I met Gail.

Before that, I had met a girl in-I was down in Chile and a cousin of my mother's lived in Chile and she introduced me to a young woman who was related to Marianne Loewy's husband. Remember Marianne Loewy? Okay. Marianne Loewy's husband is from a German-Jewish family and so is this girl who was his first cousin and she lived in Chile. And I met her and she was the most polite and respectful person I've ever met in my entire life, so ladylike, and I thought this is absolutely wonderful. And then she came up to visit her cousins and we spent a couple of weeks together, and I was sure I was going to marry her. And then I ran into Gail by accident. You know how we met? That whole story about the phones melting together. And once I met Gail everything else was driven out of my mind. That was it, and I never paid any more attention to anything or anyone else.

**INT:** So your first marriage you were how old?

**GEORGE:** I married in 1960 so I was thirty-two.

**INT:** So you waited a while to get married.

**GEORGE:** Oh yeah, because I had those three engagements.

**INT:** So were you already in analysis when you met Gail or-

**GEORGE:** Yes.

**INT:** I see. And you were at that time dealing with survivor issues?

**GEORGE:** Survivor issues and some of the things I've told you, and I was dealing with a number of issues, issues of adjustment and so on.

**INT:** Right.

**GEORGE:** Dealing also with the issues that I have this amnesia for the last few years of grammar school and junior high. I know where I was. I mean, you know, physically I know but I have no real recollection.

**INT:** The orientation, though, for you, having come to this country without any preparation. I mean-

**GEORGE:** Well, I expected them playing cowboys and Indians in the streets.

**INT:** But also it had to be a tremendous culture shock.

**GEORGE:** It was.

**INT:** ...for you, and your way of dealing with it maybe at the time was to shut a lot of it out and then in-

**GEORGE:** Well, I lived also-I lived in my books, in my readings. I was a voracious reader from the time I was six. I read the Iliad and Odyssey when I was six and all the German sagas and so on. I loved mythology.

**INT:** So your defense against anxiety was to run to cognitive things.

**GEORGE:** Yeah. Anyway, and then everything sort of worked out.

**INT:** Were there other Holocaust issues that you remember dealing with that you could share?

**GEORGE:** No, but you know the anti-Semitism-the funny thing is the only place I've ever met anti-Semitism was in the United States, at school. Not so much at Harvard except by a few individuals, but at school and social anti-Semitism in that there were certain people I used to

hang out with were invited into certain clubs and I was not, which I accepted but I felt-I felt-I knew the reason.

**INT:** It's a curious question and I don't know if it's one that you've ever thought about or not but it sort of came to me that this elitism, the life that your parents lived in Baden and your choosing that kind of life for yourself as well actually having lived that life in Baden was very helpful for your family to escape.

**GEORGE:** Yes. Yeah, because of their status.

**INT:** Exactly. And I'm wondering if that is as-is there any thought in your conscious-

**GEORGE:** Maybe not. No, not consciously, but clearly it must have made an impression that if you have proper influence, if you have the proper connections, certain things will open to you that may not be open to everybody else. It's an interesting thing because no one's ever mentioned it to me and I haven't really thought about that, but now that you mentioned it, it makes a lot of sense, and it may be one of the things.

**INT:** Well, it saved your life.

**GEORGE:** Yeah, it saved my life and-but it also, I think-you know, I probably have met more of the people whose names are household words than anybody else I know who's not from, let's say, from an elite family like the Kennedys or something that's mixed up in that. Because I've met world leaders and so forth and I've been appointed to national positions as you probably know, in the United States and internationally, and I currently hold very prestigious international positions so I'm really very comfortable. It's funny. We walked to the- (end of tape 3, side 1)

...to other exhibits that were there at the time and she (his mother) always goes in through the bottom so she doesn't have to go up the stairs. She goes in through the bottom entrance. She's still a very fast woman but I don't blame her for not wanting to go through the main door but go in the side door downstairs, so we walked in and we were never challenged. We just walked in and went to the various exhibits. Now she's always saying that she doesn't have to pay or she doesn't have to stand on line because she's a senior citizen and she's very old and therefore people have to make way for her and so it's her due.

She doesn't have to do any of those things. But when we walked in and so forth, she looked at me with amazement and she said, "people must recognize how important you are because nobody was allowed into the museum without one of those little badges you get or without stopping at the desk or so forth. But everyone's treating me with such respect, they must think that you belong here and are more important than anybody else because-and it's the way you carry yourself, I am sure," she said. And that's because you mingle with the heads of state around the world and you're so comfortable in that environment and people can notice it. But whether this is again-I mean, you know, this is hyperbole that my mother uses. Nonetheless, it happened. So I am comfortable in-and more comfortable in a somewhat-oh, how shall I put it-in the higher environment than in the "haimishe" [homey, comfortable] lower environment of sorts.

**INT:** It was a part of your upbringing.

**GEORGE:** But you know what? It's also partly because of depersonalizing. As you know, in the upper classes of England, they talk in quotations - the ones that went to Oxford and Cambridge. They throw quotes at each other because they all read the same books so they can talk in quotations, but that's using someone else's words. That means it's not your own words, which means you don't have to commit yourself. And the lower classes are much more sentimental and much more involved with each other. The upper classes keep their aloofness by their riddle conversation and I think this is another kind of a coping mechanism. It avoids people getting too close. If they don't get that close they can't hurt you. So there are some of these things that I think that probably do come from the early experiences. But I don't know that the early experiences of being sickly and sickly with serious illnesses where you might die, whether that wasn't almost as or even as influential as later Nazism. Because the Nazis were handled with such aplomb by my mother; and because I never got to feel it directly because the teacher came to me every day, so the teacher continued. I couldn't go to school but what did that matter? I still had my lessons.

**INT:** But the medical or physical part you only have so much control over, and do you think that had an influence on your becoming a physician or just because your father was-

**GEORGE:** No, not at all, my father. Would I not have followed in his footsteps as a physician, what would I have become? I'm not sure but I doubt very much that I would have gone into medicine. I'm very good at it but as you can see, I haven't practiced, even as part of my department, since 1983, so it's been a long time that I've not done it except on a administrative or senior level.

**INT:** So George, I need to get some statistics.

**GEORGE:** Go ahead.

**INT:** Number one, your address. Where you live in Philadelphia.

**GEORGE:** (deleted)

**INT:** And-

**GEORGE:** And of course here. This is what I consider my home incidentally. Loveladies [New Jersey]. That's my home. The other one is an apartment that I maintain in the city chiefly for Gail's sake. If I didn't have to go back to Philadelphia I wouldn't mind.

**INT:** Okay. And if you would give us the long list of positions that you hold or where you became a physician and you practiced-you practiced rheumatology. Where did you practice? At Einstein?

**GEORGE:** Well first I was at the Hospital for Special Surgery.



**INT:** New York.

**GEORGE:** The New York Hospital Cornell Medical Center where I was a consultant to the Rockefeller Institute as it was then known before the university and Memorial Hospital. That was a big complex and I was there for some years when I was recruited to come down here by a search committee, to come to Albert Einstein Medical Center, Moss Rehabilitation Hospital in Temple University, where I was a professor of medicine, professor of rehabilitation medicine. Developed the largest and most diverse arthritis center in the entire country, one that was emulated and looked at elsewhere and I used to go to other universities and other places to help them develop something similar. Nobody ever, ever, then or now, had quite as varied a program as I had. I mean it's still the paragon, and this program was developed at Moss really basically with tremendous assistance from those people there. It was-I used to have international visitors all the time to come and see it. It was a terrific program, and then they started cutting away the funds, because Einstein said, "well, what do we care that people come from Spain and Turkey? This is North Philadelphia. We're concerned in building it here."

Moss, which had a greater outreach, still couldn't come up with the funds all by itself and they cut off my funds and the trustees were still much more willing to support other programs than support this so when I saw that I moved to Hahnemann. They recruited me - Billy [William] Likoff, but although I had a written contract, they reneged on every single aspect of it. I brought lots of money but they wasted it and I stayed only two years and I decided to get out. I was offered several professorships, but I decided to get out of academic medicine and I was offered a position in the industry. Became vice president of Ciba-Geigy, of research and development and then became international head of medical affairs for Ciba-Geigy in Boswell. As you know, we moved over there. Gail wasn't very happy there and frankly that's-

**INT:** You were there for a couple of years?

**GEORGE:** Yes, and that's where I found the most anti-Semitism. The Swiss, because they weren't in the war and they hadn't lost the war, were more Nazi or were more Germanic than the Germans and being in Switzerland felt like being back in Nazi Germany. Gail can testify that I said-that I felt as if I had escaped from Nazi Germany, why did I have to return? It was like working in Gestapo headquarters. It was horrible, and that was one of the things. It took me a long time to adjust to it because of the way they were constructed.

**INT:** How did it affect you?

**GEORGE:** It wasn't that they were overtly anti-Semitic, it was that they were so Germanic in their thinking. I felt so uncomfortable, so uncomfortable, that it was like being thrown back, and I didn't want to relive it and this time I was an adult and I knew it was happening and I couldn't stand it, and that's why we came back and that was that. But then I found-I made myself a consultant. I developed this consultant group and I've been enormously successful. And currently I-

**INT:** And you consult in exactly what?

**GEORGE:** Pharmaceutical companies on various issues, drug development, product liability and so on. I also-I am currently the U.S. representative for the expert advisory panel of chronic degenerative diseases at the World Health Organization. It's a four-year term that I was appointed to by the director general, with the approval of the Department of Health and Human Services of the State Department in the United States, so I represent the U.S. there. I am the head or chairman of the Arthritis Advisory Committee of the Food and Drug Administration. I sit on boards of companies. I head five or six scientific advisory boards or committees for companies. I head the scientific advisory board for a tri-nation project called the Hochrheininstitut, which is based in Germany, Switzerland and France and all three countries participate and I'm the chairman. My adjutants, my vice-chairmen and so forth, are Swiss, German and French, but I head the whole thing and I fly over there for that, so I have all these things that I'm doing which I enjoy and incidentally, they all put to use the social anthropology that I studied at Harvard.

**INT:** So life comes together.

**GEORGE:** Yes.

**INT:** Now, so tell me, so you married Gail after working through some issues with your mother and-which we covered very briefly, just in a sentence, and then you had Charles.

**GEORGE:** Yes.

**INT:** And-

**GEORGE:** My mother loves Charles. Absolutely.

**INT:** I can imagine. And Gail had two children and were how old when you married?

**Gail joins the conversation briefly.**

**GAIL:** Six and three or so.

**GEORGE:** Six and three.

**GAIL:** I gave them away.

**GEORGE:** I took them over.

**GAIL:** Yeah, they're gone.

**GEORGE:** In part I married Gail because of the children. I thought that any woman who had children like this would be a great mother for mine, but I took them on as my own. I don't really discriminate.

**INT:** Well, I know from what Charles told me that the children are very close amongst themselves.

**GEORGE:** Oh yeah. That's a wonderful thing. I credit Gail for achieving that. There's no rivalry, no jealousy amongst them. They're just so close it's wonderful.

**INT:** So I need to ask a couple of questions about the Holocaust. What do you think the importance of the Holocaust was, the affect of it regarding changes in Europe, Israel and so on?

**GEORGE:** Well, it helped create Israel. It justified Israel. The world felt sufficiently guilty for a brief period of time to permit Israel to be formed and now, of course, they're dumping on it again, but they always see Israel in a bad light, but for a time they felt guilty towards Jews because they did nothing to rescue them.

**INT:** Do you think that that was the purpose of the Holocaust?

**GEORGE:** What, to kill Jews, to destroy Jews?

**INT:** No. That it happened, if one explained it spiritually, to-

**GEORGE:** No, that's not the purpose of the Holocaust. I don't believe there's such a thing as it.

**INT:** Okay.

**GEORGE:** I'm a teleologist, to be sure, but I don't think that this had anything to do with this. You know, I have a Popperian philosophy but I don't think it applies here. I think that this is entirely different and that the Holocaust had no purpose other than to dramatize once again that when there's a problem, the Jews are blamed.

**INT:** Okay. And do you go out of your way to look at the films or to study the Holocaust?

**GEORGE:** Yes. I read books on it. I read most things that I can find about it. I find I have trouble watching films. They're too painful. I thought I couldn't-when I started to see Schindler's List I thought I'd have to leave. The first few minutes-it was too much for me.

**GAIL:** I was prepared to leave.

**GEORGE:** But then I was able to see it through. It was somewhat upbeat in part, but then, you see, it's reminiscent of the fact that there were Jews who were saved by Nazis because they were their personal Jews, but all Nazis hated Jews. But then as I said, "all non-Jews hate Jews and many Jews hate Jews." This constant division between the Eastern European Jews and the Germanic Jews and the Sephardics also into three different parts, that exists too, so there's a tremendous amount of Jewish anti-Semitism. Of course they don't kill each other. They just keep each other out of their clubs or whatever, or out of their neighborhoods or look down on them, but there is that division amongst Jews, but when it comes to non-Jews it can become critical and when it comes to a critical mass, it leads to death. That's why I have no truck for Louis Farrakhan and others. As far as I'm concerned, they're messengers of death for Jews and if it's going to be a choice, I want it to be they and not we.

**INT:** What do you-what's your thought about the impact of the Holocaust on your children?

**GEORGE:** I don't know that it has any impact, any real impact on Steven or Rebecca, especially Rebecca. I don't think it has any impact. I'm not even sure she's at all knowledgeable about it or really much cares. She's-Rebecca concentrates on music and some other things. Rebecca's a terrific, wonderful person, but I don't think this is something that's of any interest to her.

**GAIL:** I don't think she thinks about it. I agree.

**GEORGE:** Not at all. Steven probably thinks about it. It's-I don't know exactly what Steven makes of it or not makes of it. On Charles-Charles knows about it and Charles is-he wrote about it even. At Harvard he wrote papers on it. Charles is very involved in it because Charles identifies with the fact that in a sense he's a Holocaust survivor because we were there for the beginning of it.

**INT:** And what do you see as the impact of the Holocaust on the future? I mean do you have any fears?

**GEORGE:** Yes, I think that's there's overkill. I don't think we should have a Holocaust Museum in the United States, for instance, in Washington, because for one thing, non-Jews will start pointing to it and saying, "see this special attention. They're a tiny minority in the United States and the Holocaust didn't even occur here and look at that. They've got a museum in Washington and here we are. We represent ten percent of the population or whatever and there's nothing done for us down there. And it will help create a greater division and it will make Jews..." I'm not one of those that says the Jews should constantly, like my mother constantly says, "don't say anything because it will make it bad for the Jews if you say something. Just stay out of the limelight." No. I don't believe that, but I don't think that this is the appropriate thing for us to have in Washington, a Holocaust Museum. I do think we should have Jewish museums in the United States. I think the one we have in Philadelphia is good. I think the others are, but why commemorate the Holocaust in Washington? Washington did nothing to stop the Holocaust. Roosevelt even sent back the Exodus. Roosevelt sent-not the Exodus, the one that was then "The Ship of Fools", what was it called? It was the, you know, the ship that was sent back and all of them wound up in Auschwitz?

**GAIL:** The Independence?

**GEORGE:** No, Gail. Anyway, sent back the St. Louis. He sent that one back to Europe to certain death. He sent...the U.S. Senate prevented the Jews from being rescued. My grandfather-my mother managed to get him to Cuba and then finally after great effort and only because she knew the Governor Meyner and others at the time, was she able to get him into the United States. They were kept out, so why should we memorialize the Holocaust here when we contributed to it? It was a European phenomenon. I think there should be a Holocaust museum in Germany to remind them. I think the Swiss should be reminded of the Holocaust because they contributed to it.

**INT:** Do you think it could happen in this country?

**GEORGE:** Oh yeah. A few more blacks and we're going to have a Holocaust, because as long as they follow people like Farrakhan, it will happen. If they follow some of the decent ones it won't, but they're not the leaders. Apparently their leaders seem to be the ones that promote anti-Semitism, so yes, it can happen. Not in the same form, but it will happen.

**INT:** Is there anything that you are taking part in in a community way that you can do to prevent that from happening?

**GEORGE:** I don't think so. You know, my mother goes around and tells practically everybody who's non-Jewish, she constantly says, "do you have diphtheria? Did your children die of smallpox and so forth? Are your children dying of polio? No, it's because of Jews that all these diseases came under control. If it weren't for Jews, all goyim would be dead of diseases and you're so ungrateful." You know, my mother's become very hostile now in that respect, but she's right in a sense. No, I don't do anything. Do I?

**GAIL:** No.

**GEORGE:** I don't think so.

**GAIL:** Oh, yes you do.

**GEORGE:** What?

**GAIL:** You write letters to the editor all the time.

**GEORGE:** Oh, that's right. I write letters to the editor constantly.

**GAIL:** Constantly. He writes commentary.

**GEORGE:** Some of them get published.

**GAIL:** Commentary in the New York Times.

**GEORGE:** I've had quite a few published actually. The New York Times, The [Philadelphia] Inquirer.

**INT:** On what topics?

**GAIL:** Yes, you do, constantly, on the Holocaust.

**GEORGE:** On the Holocaust or on Israel - especially on Zionism. And commentary. Yeah, on Israel.

**INT:** With what slant?

**GEORGE:** The slant that I defend the Israelis against accusations that they're bad to the Arabs and that they're at fault and so forth.

**GAIL:** Also anti-Farrakhan, right?

**GEORGE:** Right. Anti-Farrakhan letters. I write letters correcting the perceptions of the Holocaust, the perceptions of the fate of the Jewish community in Europe and so on.

**GAIL:** Constantly.

**GEORGE:** Constantly. You're right. But that's part of my activism. I'm an activist about a lot of things. When I find something that I don't agree with I let people know that I don't.

**INT:** George, are there any secrets in your family regarding the Holocaust that-

**GEORGE:** Secrets?

**INT:** Secrets that you may know of that you may not have shared.

**GEORGE:** What do you mean secrets? Like what?

**INT:** I don't know.

**GEORGE:** Other than what I've told you.

**INT:** Well, in some families there are-

**GEORGE:** We have our secrets, that my father's sister died in Auschwitz because my father's brother, to whom my father and mother or my mother sent money to rescue the sister - actually, there were two. There was an uncle that she sent money to who went to Brazil with the money and didn't bother rescuing his niece, and there was my father's brother and wife and children whom she rescued to England and had sent them money. They took the money with them instead of giving it to Poldi and Poldi was left without any funds. She could have bought her way free still. She was in Czechoslovakia but by the time my mother realized that all the people she had sent money to to rescue her had not given her the money, she was deported to Auschwitz and killed.

**INT:** Poldi?

**GEORGE:** Leopoldine, my father's sister.

**INT:** I see.

**GEORGE:** They wanted to rescue her and she was abandoned by my father's brother and by my father's-and my mother's uncle, so there were-

**INT:** And those secrets are not talked about or they are or-

**GEORGE:** They're not talked about. I mean there's no reason. First of all, my father's brother and his wife are both dead and so...my father would not speak to his brother at all, the entire time. Like this brother and sister-in-law came here, he would have nothing to do with them. He wouldn't-I did occasionally but he would have nothing to do with them whatsoever, because he considered them guilty of killing their sister.

**INT:** Your parents had very strong values.

**GEORGE:** Very strong.

**GAIL:** Not only did they have them, they talked about them all the time.

**INT:** And what is your attitude toward sharing your experiences with your children? Have you protected them like you were protected early on in your life?

**GEORGE:** No. I talk with Charles about it.

**GAIL:** Steven and Rebecca too. They were never-

**GEORGE:** Not Rebecca. I don't think I ever told Rebecca about it because this was never an interest. Steven occasionally. Charles definitely.

**INT:** Because of his questioning or because you wanted him to know?

**GEORGE:** I wanted him to know.

**INT:** Is there anything that was never or only recently talked about?

**GEORGE:** No. There was-what did I recently find out, Gail?

**GAIL:** I don't remember. You told me something that your mother told you.

**GEORGE:** There was something that my mother recently told me that astonished me because I never knew it. Some of it probably had to do with the righteous Gentiles who helped my parents, which my mother doesn't want anybody to know because she doesn't want anybody to think that there were decent Gentiles. So that's why she won't-she may not talk to you because she doesn't want to tell this part of the story. She won't even tell it to Charles. She doesn't want anybody to remember that there might have been some Gentiles who were decent, but there were other things that she told me recently that I didn't know, but I don't remember what they were.

**GAIL:** I don't either and you told them to me.

**INT:** Well, if you think of them you can give them to Gail and Gail could relate them if you're out of the country or something.

**GAIL:** You mean when he's out of the country.

**INT:** When. You talked about the saddest time, which was when your father thought that he was talking to you.

**GEORGE:** Yeah, the last words.

**INT:** The last words.

**GEORGE:** When he told my brother that he was the favorite son of the Maharaja, George, just before he died.

**INT:** And how sad that made you feel for your brother.

**GEORGE:** Yes.

**INT:** What was the happiest time in your life?

**GEORGE:** (pause) I think it was meeting Gail. It's not because she's sitting here, I mean really. I think that-

**INT:** Talk about that a little bit if you could. I mean-

**GEORGE:** No, I'd rather not.

**INT:** You'd rather not.

**GEORGE:** But I did tell you before that when I met Gail everything else went out-everything else disappeared from my life. That was it.

**INT:** Could you talk about if Gail hadn't walked in?

**GAIL:** I'll be glad to leave.

**GEORGE:** No, I'd rather not. It's just that it meant-it was a sea-change in my life.

**INT:** A?

**GEORGE:** Sea. S-E-A. Sea-change.

**INT:** I know that you collect things on the Normandie. Can you talk a little bit about that?

**GEORGE:** No, just because the Normandie was the mode of leaving a continent where all these things had taken place and where the worst was to happen, and it was the bridge to a new world where I could make a new life.

**GAIL:** He never collected things on the Normandie. Steven started collecting-

**GEORGE:** No, he did not. The first collection was we were in a store somewhere and saw a fabric. I had a hatband that I still had from the Normandie, but that was put away somewhere. I



found a fabric that showed the Normandie. Shortly thereafter I was in the store and they had a poster.

**GAIL:** Nuh-uh.

**GEORGE:** Yes it was. And the third thing was that Gail and I were bicycling. We found ourselves up in Barnegat Light and there was an antique store there.

**GAIL:** Years ago. Remember that?

**GEORGE:** Years ago. And as we went by, sitting in front was a scale model of the Normandie and I did a double take and went back and bought it, and that started the collection and then Steven started sending us things. The rest of the things come from Steven.

**GAIL:** Everything. Most of the things.

**INT:** So how many pieces of memorabilia do you have?

**GEORGE:** Never know. Haven't counted them.

**GAIL:** But what's interesting is, you know, and I just realized this for the first time, that George says "no," he doesn't know how much Steven was affected by this.

**GEORGE:** He must have been because he sent-

**GAIL:** He must have been because-

**GEORGE:** He and Debby send me all these Normandie things. When they find a postcard of the Normandie, for instance, or a menu from the Normandie or something. They're constantly looking for memorabilia of the Normandie and they sent it as gifts.

**INT:** Do you think that Rebecca or Steven if they're in Philadelphia would be willing to be interviewed as well?

**GAIL:** Well, probably.

**GEORGE:** Yeah, probably would.

**GAIL:** They would have no reason not to be, you know.

**INT:** George, could you kind of to pull this together, give me some feedback on what this experience was like for you. Was there anything you hadn't talked about before or anything that came to mind?

**GEORGE:** No, but I hadn't talked about it in such detail even during analysis because I focused on a lot of other things, so this-since we were focusing just on this and on the relationship this had to my family and to my growing up, it sort of tied it together rather in a sort of a package.

**INT:** And that was comfortable, not comfortable? Any insights? Any-

**GEORGE:** Only the insight you just gave me, suggested, which is an interesting one I haven't thought about.

**INT:** Okay. I thank you very much. You'll get a copy of this.

**GEORGE:** Okay. Thank you. (End of tape)