

**INTERVIEW WITH SAL FINKELSTEIN**

**OCTOBER 13, 1994**

**Transcending Trauma Project  
Council for Relationships  
4025 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19104**

## INTERVIEW WITH SAL FINKELSTEIN

**INTERVIEWER:** [This is an interview] with Sal Finkelstein. The first thing I usually ask is your name. What's your whole name, Sal?

**SAL FINKELSTEIN:** I have to tell you that when you join the army, they say, born, and if so, why, and where. I thought you'd ask if I was and I would tell you where.

**INT:** That's the third question. (laughs) You can give that answer first if you want.

**SAL:** My actual name is Avshalom. I was the fourth son of a large family, and there were not any dead relatives at that time, G-d bless, so after naming my older brother after some uncle, and my other brother after some grandfather, I was left to be named by a Biblical name, and father and mother together picked the name of Avshalom.

**INT:** Is that like Absalom?

**SAL:** Absalom. In Hebrew it's Avshalom. It's the oldest son of King David. The one who hung himself by his hair. That's why I keep my hair. I make sure that my hair is not...so my name is Avshalom Finkelstein.

**INT:** They didn't give you a middle name. Did they give middle names in those days?

**SAL:** They did, but I don't have a middle name. And when I came to the States, I decided to shorten it to something that was more pronounceable and easier. So I shortened it to Sal. S-a-l, not S-a-u-l. Many people think it's Italian. I say, "Yes, my grandfather was Italian and that settles the matter immediately. My name is "Salvatore Finkelstein."

**INT:** (Laughs) That's what's wonderful about these United States. People could have a name like Salvatore Finkelstein.

**SAL:** The greatness of this country is that those things are possible. There are many mixed marriages, many Jewish and Italian marriages. And my father had a more successful marriage. The non-successful marriages are [unclear]. When a Jew marries a WASP. You know, the White Anglo Saxon Protestant. They are rigid; they are cold. Italians are like Jews. They're warm, loud, sentimental and emotional. So Jewish people and Italian people live well together.

**INT:** And can I ask you your age?

**SAL:** Did you hear enough, because I am speaking soft. (pause)

**INT:** Okay. The next question I want to ask you if I could, is what's your age?

**SAL:** Was it clear enough?

**INT:** Yes. Can you tell me how old you are?

**SAL:** Unlike women, I have no secrets about my age. I was born in 1925, so I turned 69. Every Rosh Hashana is my birthday. So I'm now working on my seventieth year. Some people say I'm 69, and I say I'm 70, because I turned 69.

**INT:** But when do they make you the birthday party?

**SAL:** They didn't. They wait till...

**INT:** Oh, all right.

**SAL:** In '95 I'll be finishing my 75th.

**INT:** Live and be well.

**SAL:** Basically I'm 69 years old.

**INT:** Tell me where were you born.

**SAL:** In Poland, in central Poland. It's amazing. People don't think about it. I sometimes, very seldom, sometimes think about it, unless you're a professional historian, you may think about it, but there were something like 1,500 or 2,000 Jewish settlements in Poland. From large, like Warsaw was hundreds of thousands [of people] to the town where my wife was, and where I was, a little bit later, to small villages, to small "shtetlach," [villages] or larger shtetlach. I was born in a little town called Pulawy, which is just about 40, 50 miles south of Warsaw; on the main river of Poland.

**INT:** How do you spell the name of that town? Do you remember?

**SAL:** You can see it on a map of Poland. It's P-u-l-a-w-y. Pulawy. It was a fairly large town in Poland. I think it was something like ten or twenty thousand people. For Poland it was a large town. It had a military garrison. And it was Poles of generations prior to mine, to the time when Poland was divided between Austria, Russia, and Germany. They used to pride themselves, in the Polish aristocracy.

**INT:** (laughs) Isn't that a contradiction in terms?

**SAL:** It is. But there are, the Polish Polosky, and Kazimirsky, and some other, Baron this and Baron that, and we lived in a town near Kazimirsky, which was -- Pulawy and Kazimirsky were next to each other. Kazate was one of those Polish aristocracies where there were great baronies. Anyway, I was born in Pulawy, in 1925, on the second day of Rosh Hashana, of whatever that date was.

**INT:** They celebrated two days of Rosh Hashana then?

**SAL:** Oh, yeah.

**INT:** It's only in Israel, that I think they only celebrate one.

**SAL:** Rosh Hashana is celebrated two days everywhere except Israel.

**INT:** Now, I know you're married.

**SAL:** And then I moved from, when I was a child, of about four, maybe less, my family moved to the town in which I lived in Poland all my life, until the war. I am married. I am very happily married.

**INT:** And how many years are you married?

**SAL:** I always say 47; she always says 46. I think she's more right than I am. We got married in 1947, in Stuttgart, Germany. That's, what, 47 years ago. In November 18, '47. Almost to the day, on November 18, 1948 we came to the States, for our first anniversary. And our first son was born in New York at Beth Israel on 2nd and 18th, I think it is. I think he was born in March.

**INT:** And that son's name is...

**SAL:** He was named after my father. His name is Yaakov Noah - Jacob Noah Finkelstein. My number two son, my second son, Joey, is named after my wife's father and grandfather. We wanted to make sure that we named after the grandfather, but he didn't want to miss the father, so his name is Joseph Simon; Joseph after her father, and Simon after her grandfather.

**INT:** Tell me about your education.

**SAL:** None. I claim that I can't count at night because I went to day school, or I can't count at night because I went to night school. My education finished with second year of high school, because the war broke out. I went, like all other nice Jewish boys, I went to cheder for a few years, and then I went to a private higher education school in Radom.

**INT:** Was that open to everybody, or just to...

**SAL:** To those who paid money.

**INT:** Oh, okay, that's what the private means. It means you paid for the education.

**SAL:** Public school was open to everybody. The Polish government paid for public school. But higher education, for high school was limited only to those who paid.

**INT:** So you went to, did you go to the public school until high school, and then you went...

**SAL:** Something like that. In comparison to America, I would have been - the war broke out when I was fourteen, so I was, I think, in ninth or tenth grade; finished tenth grade when the war broke out. I had another two years of high school to go until I would get what they called a Matura. Something like that, not quite. See, our war broke out in 1939, on September 3, 1939. America doesn't speak of World War II until about December '41. By December '41 it was a long gone business. My war was already over two years old. We already lost a large contingent of Jews by the time the Americans entered the war, because that's how it started.

**INT:** Now till what grade did your wife go to school?

**SAL:** I don't know. You'll ask her. I think she went to public school, and then she had private education at home during two years of war.

**INT:** Was that because she couldn't have gone to school.

**SAL:** No, the schools were closed. The Germans closed schools. But she lived in a town which was left undisturbed for a lot longer than we were. She lived in what they called the Anschluss territory, the territory that was annexed to Germany. And it was in the German borders, they acted differently than they acted in the [unclear reference to interviewer's family]. Your relatives in Prague suffered even before us, because they were grabbed by Hitler in '38, and by '39 he already made all kinds of problems for the Czech Jews.

**INT:** Well, my family, most of the people closest to me were long gone. Although my mother did have relatives who ended up in Canada. And everything else...

**SAL:** There isn't a Jew in America that does not have his background in Europe.

**INT:** Sure. It's just a matter of **when** you came.

**SAL:** Yeah. You'll see some of them who think of themselves as full-blooded Americans who came with Columbus, but even Columbus came from Europe.

**INT:** Yeah, I know.

**SAL:** And most of them came either from Spain or Germany; a hundred years ago or ten years ago. After five years of becoming citizens, we are equal in the eyes of the law. They are not any better Americans, or different Americans than I am, or any different Jews than I am. They might be wealthier, better educated, have more titles, but when you come to heaven, they don't ask you about titles. Did you ever read the book by Peretz about "Bontshe Schweig"?

**INT:** No, but of course I know of Peretz.

**SAL:** About the poor man who comes up to heaven? And G-d tries to justify why he should be admitted to Paradise. And he doesn't have any good advocates. And the advocates keep on asking him questions, and the whole court of G-d is sitting and listening and trembling, because G-d himself gets involved in it, and he wants to help. And Bontshe Schweig says nothing, and finally G-d (?) says, "Name any reward you want for all the good things that you did." He said, "I would like to have a roll with butter." Because all his life, he didn't have a roll with butter. It's a very famous story.

**INT:** Well, now I'll remember it. Now tell me about the work that you did all your life. Your employment. How did you make a living?

**SAL:** Well, that's not a simple answer, but I'll try to answer you the best I can. Of course before the war, I was a child. My parents while not rich, they were what they call [unclear], good white middle-class Jewish family. And we all went to school. When the war broke out, and during the war, we all worked in forced labor camps, and concentration camps, but that doesn't count. We came, we lived for two years, '45, '46, '47, for two years, we lived in a displaced camp in Stuttgart, and what we did, I assisted my mother and brother in the black market, to trade. We were all involved in buying and selling.

**INT:** Yeah, we'll get into all of that stuff later.

**SAL:** That's something, too. Because almost everybody did it, since that was normal. I came to the States in 1948, and I tried two or three jobs, none of them lasted too long. Maybe we didn't give it enough time. Basically it was fate. It was meant for me not to do this. I was a Fuller Brush man.

**INT:** Oh, my gosh, really?

**SAL:** I was a very successful Fuller Brush man. I worked for a furrier. I worked as a shipping clerk for a clothing factory. They are numerous, but that didn't last long. Anyway, within a year and half we lived to Vineland, New Jersey, to become chicken farmers.

**INT:** Oh, my.

**SAL:** And we ran an unsuccessful chicken farm, my brother and I. We were successful at first. We were farming from 1951 to 1961, 1962. We were farmers, chicken farmers. Producing chicken and eggs.

**INT:** Did you ever see a chicken in Poland?

**SAL:** No. I ate them.

**INT:** You ate them, but that was your only relationship with chickens and eggs.

**SAL:** That's no big deal. We learned, we had some assistance. Basically, we came to Vineland because some of our friends lived already in Vineland, and they were already in farming. We came here because I was classified A, for the draft. And the Korean War broke out. And I didn't have an A yet, but my mother was very reluctant to let her sons go to the army, and go fight for a "meshuggene" [nutty/crazy] country like America. We just came. So we were told by some acquaintance of ours, that if you become a farmer, you're automatically exempt from serving. So we became farmers. And we farmed from 1951 till 1962. And in that period of time, by evolution, we started to market our own product - eggs, and I developed a marketing organization. And I stopped farming, and I started to buy eggs, with friends of mine, and non-friends of mine, and marketing it. And so in 1961 till about, 1972, I was selling eggs.

**INT:** That was smart. So you left the chickens, let somebody else worry about the chickens. You just dealt with the eggs. Didn't have to feed the eggs, you just had to sell the eggs.

**MRS. FINKELSTEIN:** [Sal's wife Goldie was nearby during the interview and would add comments from time to time.] I went once into the chicken coop and I had red nail polish, and the chickens started to peck my toes. I never went in again!

**SAL:** Well you helped me pick the eggs in the coop itself. Yes, I left the production to others, we sold our chickens, and a few years later we sold the property, too, and each of us, my brother and I, and my sister eventually, moved down to this portion of town, to a residential area. But we were marketing eggs - after ten years of being a farmer - we were marketing farm products.

And then in 1972 due to some family problems, I had a disagreement with my brother, about how to run the business, where to run the business. I left the business, and I started another business. And from 1972 till about last year, I was in the packaging business, paraffin wax. And craft, do-it-yourself packages. At one time I produced about 50,000 do-it-yourself kits to make candles. Ten thousand do-it-yourself kits.

**INT:** That was popular at a time where everybody was doing-it-yourself.

**SAL:** That's right. That's why I got into it. I produced about, sold about 10,000 kits. Do-it-yourself cheese. You make cheese at home. I gave them a press, how to press the whey, and tablets, how to produce whey. I also produced a little kit how to bake bread. But that didn't go.

**INT:** You were too early. Now they have a bread machine.

**SAL:** That's right. You see, we only last week talked about Noah. In his time, everything if it comes in its right time, then it succeeds. Noah was considered to be a

good man, but only in his barbaric times. In the times of Abraham, in the more civilized times, when Jews became Jews, Noah would have been considered a big "shlub", barbarian or "balagoola", like everybody else. So everything in time. Bread machine was popular. It's not popular anymore. The bread machine was very popular in the middle eighties - 1980, '85, '86, '87. They sold a lot of bread machines. Young people who stopped doing LSD...

**INT:** Started B-R-E-A-D.

**SAL:** Started to be, live on organic food and baked their own bread. They still sell some, but not as much. Now the same people who make the... Are now making pasta machines -- the same basis. And they push this on television, and you can make your own pasta.

**INT:** So you, but you're not in business right now for yourself.

**SAL:** No. Well, things have a habit of working their way out the way they did. I was in business, and this business slowly got...slower and slower, and so I am semi-retired. I still go to the business for an hour or two a day and fool around there and pay my bills.

**INT:** That's fine.

**SAL:** It keeps you busy.

**INT:** Yes. Well, my father worked till he was eighty.

**SAL:** I fully intend to do the same.

**INT:** (laughs) Now did your wife work at all? She was a homemaker?

**SAL:** Only to help me. She did nothing. She was once two weeks to help somebody in a store before Christmas. She worked a **lot** in raising a family.

**INT:** Oh yes. I know what's involved in that.

**SAL:** She was very successful. She had a full-time job and did a very commendable job with it.

**INT:** That's what leads into the next question, which has to do with your children, their ages, their marital status, and your grandchildren. You mentioned that you have three children.

**SAL:** Grandchildren are not married.

**INT:** (laughs) Well not yet, all right. So you mentioned your oldest son, who you said is Jacob. And how old is he now?



**SAL:** Well Jacob was born in 1949. So he's now 44 years old, almost 45. And Jack was born in March, 18, then four years later, in '53, or '54, Joseph was born in February '53, and then I think it's four years later, my daughter was born, my baby.

**INT:** And what's her name?

**SAL:** Eve. Eve is now a paralegal in the same law office that Joey's a partner. Eve is now getting married. She was also not married and she's older than your daughter. But she's now getting married.

**INT:** So how old is she now?

**SAL:** She's now 37 or 38. Eve has also got a lovely voice, and she works weekends as a singer with those Bar Mitzvah bands, and wedding bands. Eve is a Bohemian.

**INT:** Now what does Jack do for a living?

**SAL:** Jack is a research scientist, a full-time professor at medical school in Rochester, New York. I'm very proud of Jack. He's got national, international recognition for his research. He travels around the world delivering speeches and lectures. He's a very nice young man.

**INT:** Now is he married?

**SAL:** Jack is married, and Jack has two children.

**INT:** And how old are his children?

**SAL:** Eleven and five. And Joseph's got three children, as you know. The big one and the little girl and the little boy.

**INT:** And their names, give me their first names.

**SAL:** Well Jack's children are David and Ilana, and Joey's children, the oldest son is named after my father, Jacob Noah Finkelstein. No, no. The oldest one is **Adam**.

**INT:** It's **your** son Jacob who's named after your father.

**SAL:** His oldest son is named after my oldest brother. He's named after my grandfather and after my oldest brother, Abram Moshe. And my granddaughter Julie. She's Zahava something. And then there's the youngest one who's Seth Aaron, he's named after my other brother, and has the name of Seth. So that's my five grandchildren. Seth is the youngest. This little devil.

**INT:** Oh, I saw him at synagogue. I saw him. I guess I got everybody. I think you've probably told me enough about your children. Is there anything else you want to tell me about your children?

**SAL:** They're adorable. They're very, very good children. They give me so much "nachas" [happiness/joy] and pride. They say in Jewish, do you speak any Jewish?

**INT:** I understand more than I...I know more Hebrew.

**SAL:** It's an old expression, older than the Jewish language. They say, "[Yiddish]" Everybody doesn't get everything. Well, of the good things in life, G-d gave me the best. He gave me a marvelous wife and marvelous children. I'm really proud of them. And they're good kids. They're not kids anymore.

**INT:** Well, they're always your kids.

**SAL:** They're good, they're educated, better than myself, who never had a chance, and they're doing the most with their lives. And they all participate in Jewish life. My older son is vice president of his synagogue, in Rochester. Joey is very involved. It makes me proud that my children do not neglect. Because I think most of it, for us survivors, was the continuity, that somebody will stay Jewish. Life was not worth living unless you live it Jewish. I don't know why. It's a silly thing.

**INT:** Now how involved are you, Jewishly?

**SAL:** Right now, I'm not involved anymore. I'm too old.

**INT:** Yeah, but do you go to synagogue?

**SAL:** Oh, yeah, I go every Saturday to synagogue. I quite often have the Maftir, I daven before the amud, that's no big deal, because every boy who went to cheder knows it. But at one time, I was on the board on our synagogue. I was active at one time in United Jewish Appeal -- whatever Jewish affairs...And I was...I think, I give myself credit, which maybe I shouldn't, I was the force behind establishing a Young Judea in Vineland, and it was very successful. My kids went there. And now I see as a result that **his** kids go. And I see others, second and third generation. So as I told you, I'm very chauvinistic about being Jewish. But I don't carry it on my sleeve. I don't have a mezuzah hanging here. But I don't have to. But neither do I deny it. As a matter of fact, I'll tell you how proud I am about being Jewish. And I'm very happy that my kids and grandkids. Adam is now active in the synagogue in Young Judea. Julie learned how to daven. She goes to Solomon Schechter, and that was very nice. The little one is doing fine. The two kids in Rochester are going to...

**INT:** So you feel really that you have transmitted this love of Judaism, you transmitted to your sons, and they've transmitted it to their children.

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

**INT:** It looks that way.

**SAL:** Yeah. I don't know whether I transmitted it. I don't know if it came by osmosis or it came natural. Or G-d came in one day.

**INT:** You might as well take credit for it. (laughs)

**SAL:** I only know that it's there. And I hope that it's going to continue down the line, regardless of how it came about. I believe -- and I guess your psychologists will dissect and will agree with me -- children are an impressionable lot. And they might not, obviously to you see and hear, but they do. So we practiced our Judaism in the home, and the kids saw it. And of course it...

**INT:** I know what you mean. Have you been involved in any Holocaust related activities over the years?

**SAL:** Well, for years, I was chairman of and originator of our annual Holocaust service in town. As a matter of fact, I think we were the first in the state of New Jersey, if not in the United States, to establish a day for Holocaust services. And we established a format that has been copied and transmitted to the United States. Quite unintentionally. But when we came to Vineland, we became a very homogeneous group of Jewish farmers. I was president of that group for a little while. And in 1951 we established a memorial day, and we established the process of six candles, and each prayer, and each individual to come forth, each one representing something else, and we established, sort of a ritual, that carried on, to this day, it's 1951, 1994.

In Vineland and in New York, or in Connecticut you come, and you go to a memorial service, and that's the beginning of the practice -- six candles, six children coming in, six adults coming in, and each one you designate one candle for each of the million children. And of course, in the early days we had some pictures shown, we had some speakers, national speakers. We were the largest Jewish farmer group in the northern United States, so those professionals who think Jews were very proud of us and showing us off. Look! Here are Jews, Jewish farmers.

**INT:** And they said it couldn't be done!

**SAL:** And we were Jewish, we were celebrating every Jewish holiday. We were talking Jewish, we were davening. So we were an enclave in a sea of assimilated Jews. I mean, American Jews till after World War II, were not much Jewish, except in some spots. As a matter of fact, we contributed more than our share of national leadership. Miles Lehrman was chairman of the Holocaust -- he comes from Vineland. In our services, he was the first president of the organization. But he did not have the memorial service. When I became president we made the service, and he was influenced by our Holocaust

work. On top of it he was extremely capable, so he succeeded. But Vineland, among the communities of the United States, it's been very outstanding in Jewish activities.

**INT:** That's what I was told.

(END TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO)

**INT:** This is side two with Sal Finkelstein. You were saying to me about the...

**SAL:** President of HIAS, he's Ben Leucher, from Vineland. He's the National Holocaust President.

**INT:** How does he spell it?

**SAL:** Hadassah's national vice-president is from Vineland. I mean, we did a lot of...

**INT:** How does Ben spell his last name?

**SAL:** Leucher. [discusses spelling]. The Leucher family are not refugees. Ben Leucher is American born way back. I mean his mother was studying law in 1905 in Philadelphia. She was the first Jewish lawyer in the world. And his father was publisher and owner of the local paper. But Ben Leucher, after we came to the States, became very emotionally involved with the survivors, and he's very capable, he became the first, on the national Board of Bonds, National Board of Jewish Federation, and then he became President of HIAS, which he still holds to this day. And this is out of Vineland, not out of Biloxie.

**INT:** No. I'm impressed. All right, let's go now to your family of origin. And tell me where were your parents born.

**SAL:** I'll answer you like Jews does - a question with a question. I don't remember how far. However, I'll answer you directly to that question. My daughter-in-law in Rochester has attempted and is, has some sort of success in establishing a tree.

**INT:** A family tree.

**SAL:** A family tree. So she has not only my parents, but my parents' parents, the cousins, and whatever. We have some cousins in Israel. They come from the same tree.

**INT:** (laughs) Tree.

**SAL:** Family. From the same family tree. We spread it out.

**INT:** So you were telling me your daughter-in-law in Rochester...

**SAL:** She's attempted to make a family tree. My parents were both born in Poland. My mother was born in Pulawy, the town where I was born. My father was born in a little village next to it, called Wonwornitze, which is amazing; another little town. I couldn't even spell it. I could, but it's immaterial. And as it was the practice in those days, my mother and father, it was an arranged marriage. They had, the family joke is that my mother was one of the youngest daughters. There was two younger ones, but my mother was the younger daughter, and her oldest brother, also from an arranged marriage, has married a girl from Wonwornitze. And at that wedding, my mother, who was the sister of the groom, met my father, who was the brother of the bride. And the "machatunim" [in-laws] said, "This is a couple," and as soon as they grew up, they got married. There was no question about it.

**INT:** Had they met at the wedding?

**SAL:** Yes. They were children. They were children at that time. My mother might have been maybe seven or eight, and my father was seven or eight.

**INT:** Did they see one another again before they got married?

**SAL:** I don't know, but it was told at that wedding that they were going to get married.

**INT:** That was it. They made the "shidduch" [match]. And that was it.

**SAL:** And they were married.

**INT:** Oh, isn't that interesting.

**SAL:** So that we were doubly related. Brother and sister marrying brother and sister. So that my grandfather was my double grandfather. Grandfather Ben Zion was grandfather from this side and from this side. And so was grandfather Moshe, who was both from Mother's side and from the other.

**INT:** Okay. So you were telling me -- this asks about geographic relocations prior to the war. Did anybody move around from there, or did you stay?

**SAL:** No, I told you that I moved from Pulawy to Radom.

**INT:** What was the name of the town that you moved to?

**SAL:** Radom. R-a-d-o-m.

**INT:** Oh, that I've seen on the map.

**SAL:** Yes. Radom in comparison to Pulawy was a very large city. A city of 150,000 of which 30 or 35,000 were Jews. It was a very thriving Jewish...

**INT:** Why did you move there?

**SAL:** Well, because Mother and Father needed better economic conditions. Pulawy was small, mother already had four children. I was about to be born.

**INT:** Was there anything to stop people from moving around in those days? You could move from one place to another?

**SAL:** No, no. In that respect, all you had to need is money. You needed to have money for transportation, money to rent an apartment. But my mother in the early days was a very successful businesswoman, and my father, after he got married and he stopped going to the yeshiva, because before he was married he was in the yeshiva was quite active and he made a very good living. He was a travelling salesman. A voyageur.

**INT:** What is that word?

**SAL:** It's a French word for a travelling salesman. A voyageur.

**INT:** V-o-y...

**SAL:** I don't know how to spell it. You'll have to look it up. It's a French expression. Voyageur.

**INT:** Well it comes from voyage, or to travel, so he was a traveller.

**SAL:** Voyageur. Voyage...

**INT:** Yeah, okay. We won't worry about that.

**SAL:** So we lived in Radom till the war broke out.

**INT:** Now who was in your family? You had your mother and your...

[Interruption]

**INT:** Coming back I guess...like a...

**MRS. F:** I think you can write a book.

**SAL:** Like a bad check. A bad check and a good wife always come back. (laughter)

**MRS. F.** When you come back you get bits and pieces from me, too.

**INT:** That's fine. Now tell me about who was in your family. We know your mother and your father. Did any of your grandparents live with you?

**SAL:** No. They lived, but not with us. My grandparents stayed in Polawy, and...

**INT:** Oh, so they stayed when you folks moved.

**SAL:** When our family moved to Radom, they stayed where they were.

**INT:** How many miles away was it?

**SAL:** About 25, 30 miles.

**INT:** And how did you get back and forth from place to place?

**SAL:** There were buses. No automobiles, but there were buses. And of course, horses. But we used to take buses. See, you can't, when you speak about Polish Jewry, you can't talk about family and encompass it all. Because the family was enormous. I mean, my mother had six - three or four brothers and sisters. My father had three or four brothers and sisters, and they lived all over Poland. I had uncles there and uncles there. And of course cousins. And those cousins had cousins. And we were all very large families. So my grandparents were both alive. Also my father's father died when I was a little child. I have no memory of it at all. And my father's mother died a little later, and I have no memory of her at all. Except I've seen pictures of her, and I remember vaguely. My mother's parents I used to go in the summer to visit them, to make sure that I see them, so I remember Grandmother and Grandfather somewhat.

**INT:** That was going to Pulawy.

**SAL:** Yes. I went to Pulawy and stayed with them. And Grandfather was very upset that I would not wear a yarmulke, because in Radom we got to be a little bit more...so I had to wear a yarmulke, and a "tallis katan." You know what a tallis katan is?

**INT:** Yes, it's the thing that goes over your head with the hole.  
And with the tzis-tzis.

**SAL:** Under the shirt. The tzis-tzis. I had to wear a tallis katan when I was there. And a yarmulke. And of course pray. Everybody prayed. Praying was no problem. My Grandma always gave me a little bit of breakfast before Grandpa saw me, because you're not supposed to eat before you daven. But that's grandmothers -- all over the same. And it's a little hard to limit the family. But in my immediate family, other than my grandparents in Pulawy, and uncles, we were five children; four sons and a daughter. Two of the sons and my father perished during World War II.

My sister and my brothers and my mother survived the war. My sister and my mother were together. And my brother and I were together during the war. So we were together with my father. And my father died in the...early days of liberation. He was liberated and died. I don't even know where and when, because we were separated about three weeks before, and he died of malnutrition - like most of them. See, the last six months of

the war were almost the costliest. Not quite, because in early forties, they were gassing us, at the rate of maybe three to six thousand a day. But the last days, they stopped gassing, but the war was not war. They literally starved us to death or clubbed us to death. So I lost my father that way. So my immediate family, I lost a father and two brothers.

**INT:** Okay, tell me the list of your original family. Who was, what was the name of the, who was the first child?

**SAL:** Oh, you're interested in names, too.

**INT:** Yeah, why not?

**SAL:** Well, as I told you my grandson, my oldest grandson, my oldest brother was Abraham. My second brother was Aaron, my sister was Chana, my brother Joe, and myself.

**INT:** Oh, so you were the youngest.

**SAL:** I am the baby. I am what they call the Muzhik, Muzhikal. That's a Jewish expression. Muzhik. The youngest.

**INT:** And what was your family business, and describe it a little bit. You told me they were middle class, what we would consider middle class. And how did they make a living?

**SAL:** I told you my father was a voyageur.

**INT:** Oh, that's right. I'm sorry.

**SAL:** On top of it, my father was a very, very, inventive person. And he in the later years, or the early years before the war has fooled around - never having any formal education - has fooled around with a formula, a chemical formula, produced, what's now no problem, but in those days it was a big deal, he produced a casein glue, just like Borden does now? And we were long before Borden, we produced casein glue.

**INT:** What's that word? (discussion of spelling)

**SAL:** It's made out of cheese. And to this day, it's being sold in the United States. But we were the first ones in Poland. And my father developed that formula. Or copied that formula. Or what he thought it could be. And then before the war, just before the war, we were beginning to become sort of small manufacturers of this casein glue. As a matter of fact, during the early days of ghetto, occupation, we produced that glue. That gave us a permit to go out of the ghetto to work, because the factory was outside the ghetto walls, and the economy needed this, so the Germans gave us permission to go and make that casein glue. But basically, my father was a voyageur, made a very good living.



Travelled all over Poland by train, selling whatever he was selling. He was selling basically chocolate. He was a broker of record and salesman of record for the two largest chocolate factories in Poland. And then we started to make this casein glue.

**INT:** Was he accepted, did people know he was a Jew? In business?

**SAL:** Oh, yeah. In Poland, there was no such thing as hiding that you are a Jew -- the Poles reminded us. There was no question about it.

**INT:** And did he deal with non-Jews in his business?

**SAL:** Oh, yes. Well, the Poles, not only Poles, all non-Jews love to deal with Jewish people as long as they give them some benefits. In America, Jews have a...name for being the best salesmen, or the best businessmen, which is not necessarily true. But it's a remarkable thing. You'll find if they want something good done in business, they will always try to find a Jewish source. As a matter of fact, I tell this story, it's a joke, but it's not a joke. It happened to me.

While I was starting to market eggs, commercially to bakeries, and I went to eastern Pennsylvania to a bakery, because I covered a lot of territory. And I went to this Dutchman. Accidently, his son was one of the army personnel who liberated me from my camp. But Ezra said, he called up another guy, he said, "I have here Sal Finkelstein, a salesman selling some egg products. I'm going to buy from him. I think you ought to hire him, because your company will never go anyplace until you have a good Jewish salesman on your staff."

**INT:** Oh, my! And that worked?

**SAL:** I didn't need it; I wouldn't take it. I was self-employed; I was supporting myself. I worked with my brother; we were in business by ourselves. So that's, we made a good living. We weren't wealthy, but we were good middle class.

**INT:** [Returning the conversation to life in Poland before the War.] Well, you were comfortable enough to be able to go to private school.

**SAL:** Yes, five of us, not just one. And we did well. And the war broke out, and of course, it became a great equalization. Everybody became poor; everybody became the same. Everybody wound up in camp.

**INT:** Now your family, they were religious? How religious was your family?

**SAL:** Well, they were very religious to begin with, because grandfathers on both sides were very religious. And my father was a yeshiva bocher. He studied in the yeshiva. But after we lived to Radom out of Pulawy, we were very Jewish, and observant, but not religious. We didn't wear the long clothes, and as I told you, I sometimes went without a hat.

**INT:** And without the...

**SAL:** Tallis katan. But...

**MRS. F:** Did you wear that? The tallis katan?

**SAL:** When I went to visit Grandfather, I had to put it on.

**MRS. F:** When I went to visit my grandfather, I had to wear long sleeves.

**SAL:** So, but the degree of being Jewish in Poland, as to here, there is no scale to compare it.

**MRS. F:** In Europe, it wasn't like you were kosher at home, you eat outside not kosher. You were either kosher, or not kosher. And the Jews who were not kosher were very looked down upon.

**SAL:** There were very few not in a kosher house. This is something you didn't think of. It wasn't just there. And there were very few people who did not observe...

**MRS. F:** It's not like here, you didn't make your religion to your convenience.

**SAL:** That was the life. You had to be, you were kosher, you ate kosher, you had kosher, you went to daven [to pray], if you didn't go every day...

**MRS. F:** Didn't your father daven every day?

**SAL:** There was, I would say, 95% of the Jews in Poland, but maybe 90, the Sabbath was Sabbath. Everybody went to synagogue.

**MRS. F:** But they didn't go to synagogue every day, but...

**SAL:** Or putting on tallis and tefillin. There was no question that you had to. As long as you were thirteen and you got up in the morning, you put on tallis and tefillin.

**MRS. F:** Did you do that, too?

**SAL:** Of course. There was no question that you had to. You were born Jewish, you were Jewish, you become Bar Mitzvah, you got up in the morning, your brothers put on tefillin; you put on tefillin. Your father put on tefillin; you put on tefillin. And you said the Shema, and you didn't have to say the whole prayer.

**INT:** Now since you were the youngest, your brothers and your sister were older, so were they already working and out of school?

**SAL:** No, my oldest brother, he just finished college, or university in Cracow, he was already a college graduate. My other brother was accepted to college, and my sister and my other brother were still in high school, but just about to graduate. And my oldest brother came back as a university graduate, and he got bit by a bug. He wanted to be a chalutz. You know what a chalutz is?

**INT:** Yeah. A pioneer in Israel, Palestine.

**SAL:** He went for training to become a locksmith or a mechanic. It didn't last long, because of the Poles, and plus the war broke out. And my middle brother, my second brother, who was a mathematical genius, and a very bright man, was studying accounting, he was almost an accountant.

**INT:** Okay, so everybody was really just on the edge of becoming what they would have been in their adult lives.

**SAL:** We would have had Professor Finkelstein, Professor Finkelstein, Professor Finkelstein.

**INT:** Oh, my.

**SAL:** You know Elie Wiesel? You know of him.

**INT:** Of course.

**SAL:** Many people tell me, there were at least 100,000 Elie Wiesels among us. They were as bright and as intelligent and as vocal. My oldest brother at the age of eighteen was fluent in five languages other than Polish and Yiddish and Hebrew, he was fluent in Russian, fluent in French, fluent in English. He was writing occasionally dispatches for the London Times in English. And it was no great deal, because his boyfriends were also about that much. To speak three or four languages in Poland was almost nothing. He spoke eight.

**INT:** Was that because there was so much...

**SAL:** He was bright. He was learning. He picked up a book and he read. And if he didn't know, so he went to somebody and asked him.

**MRS. F:** Well, I had Latin in Europe.

**SAL:** Of course, I took Latin.

**MRS. F.:** I did, too.

**SAL:** I still stay some silly things in Latin.

**INT:** Now tell me, we're going to go on to family relationships. And this is your family of origin, not your current family. And you told me that your grandparents, where was the double relationship?

**SAL:** Not in the grandparents, my parents. My father's sister married my mother's brother.

**INT:** Okay. But you don't remember too much about your father's parents. It's more your mother's parents.

**SAL:** I remember more about mother's parents.

**INT:** How did they get along with one another? What was it like when you were there together with them?

**SAL:** What do you mean, did they get along? There was no question they got along. Grandmother worked and Grandfather was davening, and they were happily ever after. I mean, there was no question of it.

**INT:** So he didn't make a living at all?

**SAL:** He...occasionally did.

**MRS. F:** He was a scholar.

**SAL:** No, no, he was not a scholar. He was a very pious Jew. His business, as best as I remember, was during the summer buying produce from farmers. He bought what they called, typically Polish thing, a "pachciasz." He bought -- let's say a farmer had a stand of strawberries. Two acres of strawberries. He would buy the...

**INT:** He was a jobber.

**SAL:** Yeah, he would buy these two acres on the vine, and pick them and sell them. He would buy a fruit forest. He would come to the farmer and buy all the apples, all the pears, and he was picking them, packaging them, and sending them to Warsaw. Every summer.

**INT:** What's that word again?

**SAL:** Pachciasz.

**INT:** How did you spell that? It's called pachciasz.

**MRS. F:** This is a Polish word; it's not a Jewish word.

**INT:** Yeah, but that's how you would pronounce it. Okay. He was a jobber, he was a middleman. But how would they, tell me, in their relationship to one another, how did they get along with each other? What did you remember?

**MRS. F:** Everybody got along.

**SAL:** There was no question of...

**MRS. F:** There were no psychiatrists.

**SAL:** They were an arranged marriage, too. They were happy with each other. They had a bunch of kids, and a bunch of grandchildren, and they loved them to death, and they were very nice.

**INT:** So if there was a disagreement between them, how did they settle it?

**SAL:** There were no disagreements. There were no disagreements among Jewish people.

**MRS. F:** Don't say that, Sal.

**SAL:** There were no disagreements among religious people, because if you had a problem, you went to the rebbe. The rebbe answered the problems. There wasn't such a thing as disagreement. In Poland, I don't remember, I was a child, or young. Family problems were very unique. There was a very occasional problem of a divorce, or not getting along, and then if they had a problem, first of all, families lived together. The family got together, they said, "Yankel you do this, Chana, you do this," and you listened. And if you didn't, then you went to the rebbe. And the rebbe just said it.

**INT:** So the first court was the immediate family, and if it couldn't be resolved there, they went to the rebbe.

**SAL:** But those instances were so infrequent that you could fish for a thousand years and catch one fish, that there were family problems.

**INT:** So it was peaceful.

**SAL:** The Bible had an answer for everything.

**MRS. F:** You could say that that time was like that, too.

**SAL:** The Bible has an answer for everything. So the learned Jews looked to the Bible. It told them, "Don't do this," they didn't.

**INT:** You said you had a nice relationship with your grandmother and your grandfather.

**SAL:** Yes, we always had. We loved them; they loved us. I had a great time there. You know, for a young boy to get away from home.

**MRS. F:** How often did you visit them?

**SAL:** Every summer for two or three or four summers before the war, that I remember, for a week or a few days.

**MRS. F:** You stayed with them.

**SAL:** Yes. I think I was the youngest grandchild until Aunt Sarah got married. She had two little daughters.

**INT:** Did your grandfather talk to you at all about what he was studying?

**SAL:** He scolded me for not getting up in the morning to daven.

**INT:** But that was the kind of relationship? Did he ever take time and talk to you about anything?

**SAL:** He asked me what I know about the Sedrah from the week, whether I davened, what I know about this. Because that's what would interest an old Jewish Hasid. From his grandson, he wants to know if he's learning.

**MRS. F:** Oh, you know, he wasn't that old. He must have been younger than you [are now].

**SAL:** Well, he was my grandfather.

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

**SAL:** Grandmother, she was just happy to have me there. Snuck in a piece of chocolate, or candy. Go play. All grandmothers are the same. You a grandmother, not yet.

**INT:** No, not yet. Not yet.

**SAL:** This grandmother [referring to his wife, Goldie], we travel, she says, "We have to stop." I said, "Why?" "I forgot to take candy for Seth." We have to stop.

**INT:** That's for your grandson.

**SAL:** Yeah. So that's grandmothers.

**INT:** What was the relationship like between your parents? How did they get along? How did they deal with problems, or how did they treat one another? What do you remember?

**SAL:** Do you remember what I told you that I believe what children absorb and live by...I had a very happy marriage. Apparently I saw this in my house. I've never seen anything wrong, plus my mother was a very domineering person.

**INT:** Domineering? She was very strong.

**MRS. F:** And your wife is not. (laughs)

**SAL:** And very bright. So there was no problems. My father listened, and mother said, and everybody was happy. In our house is the same.

**MRS. F:** (Laughs).

**SAL:** My wife is always right. (laughter)

**MRS. F:** Don't you believe it.

**SAL:** Mina, it's the truth. My wife is always right.

**MRS. F:** That's besides the point!

**INT:** So what was your mother's domain? She took care of the kitchen?

**SAL:** House. House.

**INT:** And the children.

**MRS. F:** She was a businesswoman, too.

**SAL:** No, before the war.

**INT:** She took care of the house and the children.

**SAL:** Yeah, she had five children.

**MRS. F:** She was a businesswoman after the war. If she would have been born in the United States, she would have been another John D. Rockefeller. Very bright, very good business acumen. Extremely. When she passed away, she was eighty some years old; she still played poker, she remembered everything better than anybody else. She was amazing!

**INT:** So your mother took care of the family, the children...

**SAL:** And the finances.

**INT:** And the finances. Well, your father must have been away a lot. He was travelling.

**SAL:** Yes, and he gave her the money, and she took care of it.

**INT:** Okay. So they really didn't get into arguments because it was clearly delineated who was responsible for what.

**SAL:** I imagine. Best of my recollection. I don't remember an argument between my mother and father. Maybe one.

**MRS. F:** He wouldn't have won the argument (laughs) the way your mother was!

**SAL:** Every Saturday afternoon my uncle used to come and they used to sit and play chess. And sometimes she would complain that they played too long, that it's time to go out, and they're still playing chess. But I don't remember any arguments, no.

**INT:** How did you and your brothers and sister get along together?

**SAL:** We got along fine. We got along very well.

**INT:** What was it like? Did you help one another, or did you teach one another? What was it like?

**SAL:** We had a very happy family, the five of us. At the table, we sat there and we sang Hebrew, Zionist songs and Hebrew songs. And taking care of each other, watching each other. Of course, I have the least memory, because I was the youngest, but we had a very happy family life. I don't want to go into all the particulars, because they're not important. But my oldest brother was always fraternally careful, protective of his younger brothers, and my sister was the apple of the eye of my father's. Of course she was the only daughter, and...my uncle adored me. He used to come and play with me because he had two daughters. He didn't have a son, so I was his...

**INT:** From your extended family, who was closest to your family?

**SAL:** My mother's youngest brother, who lived in the same town. That's the only family there was.

**INT:** Everybody else was spread out in other towns?

**SAL:** Other towns, other communities.

**INT:** This was when you were in...

**SAL:** In Radom.

**INT:** Radom. And the grandparents were back in Pulawy.



**SAL:** Right.

**INT:** Okay. And your brothers and sisters, it sounds like they all got along.

**SAL:** Oh, yes, again, that's what my kids see and saw in the house.

**INT:** What friends do you remember from when you were a child? What kind of special relationships, or who can you remember back to?

**SAL:** That's a little tough to remember. I remember some of my high school buddies; some of them more vivid, and some less. It's a kaleidoscope that is veiled. I see them, and I don't see them. I know them, but I don't know them. I do meet some of them, occasionally. We have a friend who lives now in Miami, who went to the same school with us. A grade higher, he went with my sister. But we, others have, that went to school with us. I know that they're here, but I don't see them.

**INT:** Were your strongest relationships with your brothers and your sister rather than with your friends?

**SAL:** It's hard for me to recall.

**MRS. F:** I think after the war, actually he takes it for granted. But after the war, you didn't, you know?

**SAL:** We belonged all to a young Zionist group. Every free afternoon we would go there and sing and march all the Hebrew songs. All these things...

(END TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE IS BLANK. GO ON TO TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO)

**INT:** This is tape number two, side two, of the interview with Sal Finkelstein. Your wife was just saying, in talking about what a wonderful childhood, and by living in such a loving and supportive environment, it was really what enabled her to survive.

**SAL:** Who knows?

**MRS. F:** I definitely know. Absolutely.

**SAL:** I cannot credit. I personally credit G-d with my survival. People believe in it or not. I think that it's G-d.

**INT:** We'll get to that part.

**SAL:** But why I survived and how, it's a little hard to pinpoint.

**INT:** I'm sure of that. Because it's so illogical, everything. So now you told me, you think you really answered this. We were talking about strategies for problem solving and decision making. Who in your family, you'd say...your mom?

**SAL:** There were no problems.

**INT:** Your mother made the decisions.

**SAL:** Relatives got together. And if you didn't, you went to the rebbe. And the rebbe he always was right.

**INT:** (laughs) If I were to ask you, what is the very earliest thing you remember from your childhood, is there something that comes to mind that's your earliest memory?

**SAL:** You know, it's an amazing thing, I have one memory that lasted I guess, for most of my life. We went to the summer out in the country.

**INT:** That's Pulawy.

**SAL:** Not Pulawy, a little town, a little village. We went, the mother and the father, a building, just like...

**MRS. F:** Bungalow.

**SAL:** They rented like people go rent a bungalow in the Catskills and stay there for the summer? Well, we did it too, because school was out. And it was before the war. I don't remember. But I fell asleep outside, and when I woke up the full moon was red, and was shining on me.

**INT:** It was red?

**SAL:** A red moon.

**INT:** Why was it a red moon?

**SAL:** Well, at least that's what I remember. And they said the war is coming. And I was so scared. I still am sometimes scared of a big red moon, because I think something bloody is going to happen. It's a superstition in the Polish peasantry.

**MRS. F:** [unclear]

**SAL:** The superstition in the Polish peasantry, it could have been. But that's the earliest memory as a child I remember. Other than that, I have only happy memories. I remember my brother teaching me how to ride a bike, how I went to school. How we marched, how we played. And I never remember, I only remember one time my brother

beating my oldest, not my oldest, my other brother, and he beat him for, he came back from school or something, and he said something disrespectful to the teacher. And my father beat him.

**INT:** Oh, your father did it?

**SAL:** My father...

**INT:** Beat your brother.

**SAL:** Beat my brother. "How dare you be disrespectful to a teacher!"

**MRS. F:** Beat him. He slapped him, probably.

**SAL:** Well, he beat him.

**INT:** He beat him. Okay. (laughs)

**SAL:** Didn't hurt him.

**MRS. F:** It hurt your father more than it hurt him.

**SAL:** I'm sure. But I don't even, even that is very vague. I do remember we had a **very** happy life.

**INT:** So you remember your father hitting your brother because it was unusual rather than a usual thing.

**SAL:** Of course, it stood out in my memory. Because we never saw that.

**INT:** How did you feel when you saw that happen?

**SAL:** I don't know. I think I didn't want to see it. Because after all, he was my brother, my older brother. I loved him. I didn't understand the reason why my father would beat him. But I guess there was a reason.

**INT:** Do you remember any dreams or any nightmares or anything from when you were a child?

**SAL:** No. My nightmares started later.

**INT:** (laughs) Later. But you had good reasons for them, huh.

**MRS. F:** I had some that I still remember.

**SAL:** As a child?

**MRS. F:** Yeah. And one dream I remember vividly, now that you mention it.

**INT:** Well, maybe you'll give me a chance, and you'll tell me. Were there any family losses or deaths before the war? You said your grandfather, your grandfather and your grandmother...

**SAL:** The natural death of somebody dying. The only thing I remember is my father's father death. My father was sitting shiva in our house. And I vaguely remember that, but he was sitting shiva after his father died.

**INT:** So that you remember.

**MRS. F:** I remember one thing when my grandmother died, maybe a year before the war. This was the first time I saw my mother cry. I **never** saw my mother cry.

**SAL:** She was sitting shiva, too.

**MRS. F:** I remember that.

**INT:** How affectionate -- I know these are silly questions, some of them -- but how affectionate was your family with one another?

**SAL:** There is no scale one to ten. If there was such a scale, I would say they were all tens.

**INT:** So they were loving, and did they hug and kiss a lot?

**SAL:** Yeah. Yeah.

**INT:** Okay, so have you treated your children that way?

**MRS. F:** Oh, yes. He's such a hugger.

**INT:** Because I ask you that...

**SAL:** I hug her and she transfers it.

**INT:** I ask you that, because you told me how you learn from your families.

**MRS. F:** We hugged a lot.

**INT:** Okay. All right. So I guess the next, was there much expression of emotion in your family?

**SAL:** I don't recall. It was so natural. You don't think about it. You're there, you go to school, you come in the morning. You follow your brother or your sister to school, because you go to the same school. You come back, you do your homework. You go play. And of course your older brother is protecting you.

**INT:** Well, was there, if your family had -- this is a philosophy. We use the word, what's the philosophy of life. Was there something that was kind of a theme that ran through your family?

**SAL:** Zionism. My father was a great Zionist. We all believed in Zionism. That was the thing we talked about at our table. The thing we did Friday night at dinner, singing Zionist songs, reading Zionist literature.

**INT:** Where did that come from?

**SAL:** I guess we all wanted to go back to Israel, Jerusalem. Yerushalayim shel Zahav [Jerusalem of Gold]. "Im eshkech Yerushalayim tishkach yemini."

**INT:** "If I forget Jerusalem..."

**SAL:** My grandfather's greatest wish was to go and be buried in Jerusalem.

**INT:** But you don't know where that love of Jerusalem or Israel came from. It was just something in your family.

**SAL:** From prayers. You pray it. Don't you pray every morning: "Tolichenu komemiyu l'artzenu." You should return us upright to our land. And you say "ahavas Olam."

**INT:** But not everybody felt it that strongly. It was something unique in your family?

**SAL:** I don't know, they did. I don't know. I did only because everybody in the house [did]. My oldest brothers, and my sister, my other brother and my father and my mother. (phone interruption)

**INT:** So you say that Zionism was very strong. That was in your house. Were there any sayings that your parents had, or that your mother had, that kind of gave you an idea of what their attitude was toward life?

**SAL:** Nobody philosophized about life.

**INT:** Really?

**SAL:** You lived it.

**INT:** Nobody talked about it?

**SAL:** Life is there to be lived. You live it. The father was there to provide means, mother was there to make us educated and grow up and be nice, respectful to elders, respectful to community. And of course, we always dreamed about Israel. See, Poland was a very strange country to live in.

**INT:** Strange?

**SAL:** There were a lot of us, a lot of Jews in Poland, many of us well off, many poor -- there was a lot of poverty among Polish Jewry. But we were always hated by the Polaks! You never were absolutely sure that that's where you are. That that's what your home will be. There was no...

**INT:** You were insecure.

**SAL:** The insecurity was never the feeling. Like in the United States, you're here. I mean, other than the few blacks who always have something to pick with us. We're here. We're just as good as the other guy, if not better. Nobody tells us to move, or not to move. To pray or not to pray. Hopefully it will stay that way. But in Poland, as good as you were, you were still a stranger in a strange land. So that's why you always talked about Israel and independence. At least, in my day. You see, these things did not happen until Dreyfuss's affair, and Herzl's writing the book, and getting this movement. And the history of Jews, there were always some false Messiahs, who go back, and never succeeded. And then the Zionist movement started in the 1870s. And it grew and grew.

**INT:** But see you answered my question, because I asked you why Zionism. And you're saying to me because Jews in Poland never felt that they were going to be there forever.

**SAL:** But there was no discussion of it. There was no formal or informal sitting down and say, "Children, remember this, and remember that." By innuendo, by seeing your Polish neighbor behaving with you, and the Jewish community growing within itself, and you know, there was a time when Zionism was prohibited by rabbis. There were some Hasidic rabbis, there are still some **now**.

**INT:** So in terms of the philosophy, though, you really told me that too. And that is that you respect your parents and your elders. These are all the usual...

**SAL:** It was so natural that you didn't even have to think about it. And again, it sounds funny, and I'm **very** far from being religious, but it's there in the Book. The Book tells you, "Love thy- honor thy father and mother." If you want to live long and respectfully, honor thy father and mother. Because your children eventually run. And then they tell you, Thou shall not do this, and thou shall not do this. See, we have it laid out on a silver platter. All you have to do is open it up, and you know that this is what you're supposed to do. You're not supposed to be envious, you're not supposed to gossip or speak ill of somebody else. You're not supposed to do this and that. And all these things that you're not supposed to do are only things that are ethical in life. If you want to have a nice life, that's how you behave. That's how your neighbor behaves.

**INT:** So it's based, really, on the Bible.

**SAL:** Yes. To have a good life, all you have to do is be a good person. Ask Rabbi Akiva. And he says, "Vehavta l'reacah hakemocha." Love thy neighbor as thyself. That's the essence of Judaism. You don't have to go into a big shpiel [story]. Be a "mentsch" [a person of integrity and honor], so the other will be a mentsch.

**INT:** So it was really your Judaism that formed the basis of your life.

**SAL:** Basically. Did it for 3,000 years.

**INT:** Hey, it works! (laughs) It's gotten us this far.

**SAL:** Hopefully it will get us another 3,000 years!

**INT:** Hopefully, yeah. Okay. Tell me, well, what was a typical day for you like before the war started?

**SAL:** Before the war? I got up in the morning. Walked to school. School was six full hours, and there was no buses or trolleys. So you walked. You walked a mile or two, whatever it took, summer and winter. You came home, you had lunch. We always had dinner, supper at lunchtime in Europe.

**INT:** Yes. That was the main meal.

**SAL:** And then you sit down and do the homework. And there was no question that you have to do your homework. There was no computer doing it for you. And no television to take you away from it.

**INT:** Yes, to distract you.

**SAL:** And then after you finished, you went down on the outside, on the street and played with your friends. Or in my case, since I was already living in a more enlightened neighborhood, we used to go to the club, to Tel Yehuda, or Akiba.

**INT:** What kind of a building did you live in?

**SAL:** We lived in a big building.

**INT:** So it was an apartment building?

**SAL:** We lived in an apartment building. In Radom we lived in an apartment building. There were two courtyards, large building. That's where you played.

**INT:** So how many stories? You didn't have elevators, of course, so you had to run up and down the stairs.

**SAL:** Of course not. Of course not. Four floors.

**INT:** Four floors? What floor did you live on?

**SAL:** We lived on the third floor. It was fun going up and down the stairs. Because when you're young, stairs don't mean anything to you. You don't even realize it.

**INT:** And your whole family? It must have been a large apartment.

**SAL:** Oh, it was a very large apartment. Very large. Not only our, I mean, there were about 100 tenants in that apartment. It was a very large apartment.

**INT:** Were they all Jews?

**SAL:** Mostly. There might have been a few not. But mostly Jews congregate with Jews. And in my case, after I did my homework, I followed my brothers or my sister and went to the clubhouse of the Jewish organization. And that's where you spent some time with your friends.

**INT:** So that's where you socialized.

**SAL:** I was an assistant librarian in our high school. So I read a lot. Many of the books I read I never understood, but I read them. And reread them.

**INT:** Did you understand them later, when you were older? You understood what you had read?

**SAL:** Yeah, yeah. Some of it stuck. Some of it didn't.

**INT:** So you did a lot of reading. When did you go to "cheder" [religious school]?

**SAL:** When I was younger.

**INT:** Okay, so you went to cheder and that was it.

**SAL:** In cheder, I was five. Five till about ten or nine. Four years I went to cheder. Then I went...

**INT:** Okay, that's when your regular education began.

**SAL:** Then I went to school. Cheder was not just cheder; they taught us a lot of things, including secular subjects. And our high school, they not only taught us secular, but it was a Jewish secular high school. So they taught us Hebrew, and Tanach, and Mishneh.



It was strictly Jewish. We couldn't help being Jewish. We lived in a Jewish neighborhood, spoke Jewish, and went to a Jewish school.

**INT:** So even if you didn't, if you were Jewish and you didn't want to be, everybody defined you as Jewish, so you were Jewish.

**SAL:** Yes.

**INT:** Yes, okay. Now this question about your philosophy of life or approach to life, or how you looked at the world, I don't know how you could tell me that about an eleven year old. But you've told me what it was like to be in Poland. What did you think was going on in the rest of the world?

**SAL:** Who cared? Who knew? I had older brothers. They were concerned. Who was thinking, eleven years old? All I was thinking is playing ball and singing Hebrew songs. I knew there was a Hitler. I listened to him on the radio and I got scared. I heard about the invasion here, and invasion there, but I couldn't visualize it. I couldn't think about it. As a matter of fact, when the Germans came, even when the Germans came, the first day two or three, I didn't expect anything different. Until it happened. Monsters, and the Ukrainians.

**INT:** You say your brothers, had a feeling that something was going on?

**SAL:** They were upset about it. My father was upset. Because my mother remembered World War I. And there was a fear of war. And especially with the Germans and the Russians. We didn't trust the Russians; we didn't trust the Germans.

**INT:** Okay, so this question has to do with the expectations for your future before the war. Were they the same or different from your family expectations? What did you think you were going to grow up and be? Did you have any idea? Did you think about what your life would be like as you grew up?

**SAL:** My parents were having thoughts.

**INT:** Oh, yeah? What did they want you to be?

**SAL:** What do Jewish mothers want? This one will be a lawyer; this one will be a doctor. I don't remember. I don't remember. I know I was the youngest.

**INT:** Did they point out something about you that was smart, that you would be something?

**SAL:** There was no dumb kids.

**INT:** (Laughs)

**SAL:** There were no dumb kids. All of our kids were smart. I wasn't any smarter than my brother. My brother wasn't any smarter than my sister. We were all bright. The oldest one was the brightest. But...we followed them in the same high school. And the teachers, it was such a pleasure. When I came to the class, the homeroom teacher says to me, "Sal, you have big shoes to fill. Because Abraham was in my class, and Aaron was in my class."

**INT:** Yeah. It was a hard act to follow.

**SAL:** And then she said, "But you're doing well. You're filling the shoes." But there were no dumb kids. When I talk to my grandchildren, I say, they're all smart. I joke and I say to Joseph, "They're great from top to bottom." No matter where you start, you come out the same!

**INT:** Did you have any personal experiences with anti-Semitism before the war?

**SAL:** Continuously.

**INT:** What would be a typical experience for you?

**SAL:** Well, when we went to school, the Polish boys would call us names or throw stones at us. That's as far as I got. Others, I don't remember. But before the war, as Hitler grew stronger, the Polish anti-Semites grew louder and stronger, and they started to break windows in Jewish stores.

**INT:** You remember that?

**SAL:** Yes. I remember I went- there was a demonstration, a very big public demonstration. And we went to the plaza, trying to be patriotic, and the Poles, said, "You Jew, you go home, it's not your problem." Even in their patriotism, they wouldn't allow Jews. Some, I'm generalizing too much. But anti-Semitism in Poland was visible and touchable, and as the events of the late thirties [unfolded] it became stronger and stronger. As Hitler grew in power after the Kristallnacht, and after he got elected and after he conquered Czechoslovakia, the Anschluss in Austria, we knew the war was inevitable, and the anti-Semites in Poland grew louder and stronger.

**INT:** Was there a time when you remember knowing that you weren't going to live your life in Poland?

**SAL:** No.

**INT:** No.

**SAL:** You just didn't think of it. But I know this. That after World War II, when we came back from concentration camp, my mother said to me, "We're not going to stay in this "farshtunken" land." In this cursed land. We're not going to stay in this cursed land.

It's full of Jewish blood. And we're not going to stay in Germany either, because there's another cursed territory. We stayed there temporarily until we could leave.

**INT:** But you knew it wasn't the place to live.

**SAL:** That's not a place for Jews to be.

**INT:** So I guess the last question I wanted to ask you today, was about a personal faith system. But I think we talked about that, when you talked...

**SAL:** If you want to go till 4:00, you still got eleven minutes.

**INT:** (Laughs)

**SAL:** If you want to cut it short, it's all right with me, too. I can tell you this. I am not a profound philosopher. I am not any different than tens and tens and tens of thousands of Jews of my age who survived or didn't survive. The philosophy of life then as a child, I had none. I just lived happily in my environment of Jewishness. And if you talk to my wife, she lived in a very Jewish home. Her grandfather was a whatever -- very religious. Her father was very observant; uncles, aunts and so forth, same as me. By osmosis, we absorbed Jewishness. There was no question of learning it, or trying to be anything. In the early beginning of the war, during the war, and afterward, we got very conscious of how cursed it is to be a Jew in a strange land. How bad it is. How you're being held in disregard of any human value because you're Jewish. And that- and then we told them, regardless of what you think, I am not. I am as good as you are, maybe better. And so we survived.

**INT:** But being Jewish was a very positive, that was your way of life.

**SAL:** There was no question. I have to tell you this. I read it in "Reader's Digest;" no, I didn't read it in "Reader's Digest," I should **send** it to "Reader's Digest." It's too chauvinistic. In Geneva in 1964 to '65, there was a conference of nuclear physicists in the whole world. And at 3:00 in the afternoon, the vice chairman asked the chairman to excuse him, and he says, "Where are you going?" He says, "It's my yahrzeit, I have to go to minyan." So the chairman says: "Wait two minutes, and we'll get the two goyim out. We'll have the minyan here." (laughter) The top scientists in the world were Jews. It's not true, but it demonstrates something. The great Russian physicists, most of them, were either Jewish or of Jewish origin. The great American physicists, including Fermier has a little bit of Jewishness in him. Of course, without Einstein, where would they be? Or without Oppenheimer. Later they could throw stones at Oppenheimer. That's life. So that it's nice to be Jewish. It really is. For those who don't think so, let them. It's a free country.

**INT:** (Laughs)

(END TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE)

**INT:** It's October 20, and this is tape number three, side one, of Sal Finkelstein.

Let me ask you, after I left last time, and you had a chance to think over all the things that we talked about, was there something that came to mind, or a feeling you had of something that...

**SAL:** I did not give it a second thought.

**INT:** Really.

**SAL:** I washed my hands of it, because normally, and rightfully, too, you don't dwell on things, because if you dwell, you begin to- they usually change from the original. If you think of something, and you say it, and then you rethink it, you inevitably change it, because that's the nature of [rethinking]; you embellish it or diminish it. I didn't want to do any. So I just stopped. Put it away in a closet, and locked it till now. Now I open up the closet, you want to ask me something else, I will tell you. I did not. Except that I did enjoy talking to you. You were very easy to talk to about things that we talked about. Normally it would not be so easy, but it was.

**INT:** Well, thank you.

**SAL:** Well, you had a lot of tact in asking questions. People can be very tactless, especially when it comes to survival, and survivors, and the past.

**INT:** Well, listening to the tape, I realized that there was an area that we kind of glossed over a little bit. We had been talking about your family of origin, your grandparents, your parents, and your sister and your brothers, and we didn't flesh them out enough so that somebody listening to this tape or reading the transcript would have a good picture of who these individuals were. And sometimes it helps to take each person and just write, or say three words that describe that person. So I beg your indulgence, if we could do it. Just...

**SAL:** You would have to be an artist, and have a pen and make sketches to flesh them out. But you don't mean physically flesh them out.

**INT:** No, how about your grandfather. Give me three words that describe him.

**SAL:** My father's father I don't remember at all. My mother's father: He was tiny. He was thin. He was maybe five foot. He maybe weighed ninety pounds, maybe 100. Maybe. And he was strong like an ox. To flesh him out, I do have to tell you one particular thing I always remember about my grandfather. My grandfather, like any other Jew of that era, he was very pious. And he believed that whatever happens, happens because G-d wanted it that way. There was no questioning, like Job questioned G-d, or

Daniel questioned G-d. He didn't question it. G-d wants it, so that's the way it is. No matter what it was.

And during World War I, it was the end of World War I, in Poland, there were Ukrainians, Ukrainian soldiers that came rioting into Poland. The Chmielnitskis. It's in the history books. He was one of the Ukrainian generals who was fighting the Bolsheviks, and he was fighting the Poles. Who knows who he owed allegiance to. But that's what they called themselves. Chmielnitskis. The general was Chmielnitski. And the soldiers were Chmielnitskis. And they came to our town, and they burnt my grandfather's beard on his face. And all his life he had burn scars. Another meager beard grew. And he had burn scars. And he said: "It's right, it couldn't have been any different, because if G-d meant it any different, he would have not have ever sent Chmielnitski to Pulawy. And he would not have picked on him to burn, because others were." Again, I don't think it was unique, but he had that unquestionable faith, that whatever happens, G-d wants it to happen. And that's why it happens.

**INT:** Even bad things?

**SAL:** Even bad things. Because he thought bad things are a test of your true belief. Don't you remember, that that's what G-d did with Job? He tested him over and over to see whether he'll stay faithful. And he did. And he did the same with Daniel. He threw him into the fish, to see whether he will curse G-d. But he didn't; he still believed in G-d. Even though he was upset with G-d, he still believed in him. That's a typically Jewish, Orthodox Jewish approach.

As you remember I told you about the story about silver and gold and money, as you get more educated, as you get more into the twentieth century, or "haskalah [enlightenment], or assimilation, no matter how deep your faith is, you begin to look at it a little differently. And of course, that's the whole story of the Holocaust. Is it G-d who wanted it, or was it something despite G-d. Or was G-d asleep at the wheel for a while, or was he really doing it because he was angry at the Jews for not fulfilling his Mitzvot [commandments]? Or was he trying to tell them that there is a rainbow at the end of the storm; that storms are inevitable in human history.

**INT:** What do you think your grandfather would have said?

**SAL:** Oh, my grandfather would definitely have said that G-d wanted it that way. That he wanted to eliminate all the disbelievers, and all the unfaithful, and that some faithful and believers died with them. It was just the price we had to pay for it. My grandfather would never question it.

**INT:** Would your father look at things that way?

**SAL:** I imagine my father did not question it too much. He was very mad at G-d, and very mad at the Germans to be G-d's messengers. He said if G-d should send a messenger, he could have picked better people than the Germans, and better things. But I

don't know when and how my grandfather died. I know that he was taken into camp very early in World War II. Because this was when they started the first elimination of Jews, was in the neighborhood where my grandfather lived. Near Lublin, in that neighborhood. And we were safe till quite a bit later. But I know that...

**INT:** Did you know that your grandfather had been taken?

**SAL:** Yes. At that point we didn't believe in gas chambers. As a matter of fact, when we were in one of the labor camps in the early stages of our...work, a girl came who escaped and she came and she told the stories of gas chambers and killings. And everybody said she's crazy. How could human beings do that? How could they take people and get them into a truck, lock the truck, and fill it with carbon monoxide? And then gas them and then burn them? It just does not happen to human beings. Human beings are supposed to live and die in a normal order. If they get sick, they die a little sooner; if they're not sick, they'll live till time passes. Jews being what they are, murder is one of the worst crimes there is. As a matter of fact, it's the first commandment after they say you should honor Sabbath.

**INT:** That's probably the first one of the "thou shalt nots."

**SAL:** Yeah. Thou shall not kill, thou shall not steal, thou shall not covet. Human life is very precious in Jewish religion. Therefore, suicides are very frowned upon. Even donating of organs when you're dead is frowned upon, because it desecrates the body that is built in G-d's image - "B'tsalmo." That's what it says in Bereshis [first book of the Bible]. G-d built men. Well, G-d contradicts himself there a little bit, or the Torah contradicts itself. Because first He said He made him from dust, and then He said He made him from His image. If dust - if G-d is dust - there is no image to dust. And G-d is not dust, G-d is omnipotent, He is everything. But we accept it with a grain of salt, and say He created him. We know by Darwin that he took a long time to create him. But He created him.

So. Now you want to flesh out my grandfather. My grandmother was a typical Jewish grandma. Round and chubby, and with a sheitel [wig]. Always had that. And always smiling. And always being grateful, and raising a lot of children, and having a lot of grandchildren. She had a house and a heart that could accomplish everybody. And that's what a grandmother is supposed to be.

**INT:** Did she have a favorite saying that she used to...

**SAL:** I don't remember. This I don't remember. I only remember she had a very nice round face with little jowls and smiling eyes. She must have been a beautiful woman, because when I knew her she was still a beautiful woman. She was then quite old.

**INT:** But she was a very loving personality.

**SAL:** Yes, she was. (phone interruption)

**INT:** Now tell me about your father. Give me three words for your father.

**SAL:** Akiva was asked what's the essence of Judaism, and he said, "Thou shall love thy neighbor." Hillel took the man and threw him out by his neck. Because he said, "Lo al regel echad." You cannot explain Judaism on one leg. I cannot describe my father in three words. It's impossible. He was the kindest, nicest man alive. Every father is. He was very smart, very bright. A very loving father. A very loving husband. A very ingenious person. He was just great. And he didn't live long enough. He died when he was 43 years old. Because either G-d or Hitler or both of them together conspired to kill him that early. Had he lived, and worked, he would have been as big as any man in this world. He could achieve anything, for whatever he aspired. I don't think he aspired to be President of the United States, or president of Poland, but whatever he wanted to do, he did, and he did it well, and he was always successful at it.

**INT:** Can you think of three words for your mother that describe her? Adjectives?

**SAL:** How do you describe a Jewish mother? There is- no dictionary has anything in it to describe a Jewish mother. A Jewish mother is there. It's a mother. She's there from the day you get born to the day she dies; she's there. My mother was an extremely bright businesswoman. She could outsmart and outsell and outbuy any businessman in the world. She was a very caring mother, of course. Unfortunately, she was widowed early. She was widowed early. And she remarried after the war only because she didn't want to be...burden to any of her children. So she remarried and lived with a man. And as a matter of fact they lived in Toronto, Canada. We were all in the States. She came very often to visit and stayed with us. But her major worry was her children, they shouldn't worry about her, they shouldn't have problems with her. She was as great as any Jewish mother can be. Just like your mother, wasn't she great?

**INT:** Yeah. Start with your oldest brother.

**SAL:** My oldest brother, he was eight years my senior, I think, because my mother had a child every year and a half, every two years. Well, that was the practice in Europe.

**INT:** Was this Joseph?

**SAL:** No, it was Abraham. Abraham, I remember him as idealistic eyes, because when I was little child he was already a grownup. So he was tall. I don't know how tall he was, but to a child he was tall. He was gorgeous. He was blonde, with blue eyes. He was...the envy of many mothers who wanted sons, or many girls were having an eye on him. He was of course very bright, very intelligent. He was at that time already in the University of Cracow, which was quite unusual in Poland for Jewish boys to go to university.

**INT:** What kind of personality did he have?

**SAL:** Vivacious, humorous, marvelous. He was a leader in the Zionist youth groups. I told you in the last conversation he spoke a lot of languages fluently. He was unbelievable. I don't have a picture of him. Some of my friends had some pictures of the high school class, but he was not in that picture. I have a picture of my other brother.

**INT:** Who was the next one?

**SAL:** Aaron. I have a picture of him some place.

**INT:** And how much older was he?

**SAL:** Aaron was a year and a half younger than Abraham. He was five and a half, six years older than I. And he was next in line. And he was skinny and dark.

**INT:** Quite a contrast from...

**SAL:** Yes, yes. And he was by far the best math student in the whole school. He was brilliant in chemistry and physics. He was just brilliant. I had a hard time in school catching up to him, because the teachers expected me to be as good as my brothers. And I couldn't. Of course, I was a lot younger.

**INT:** Now, did your sister come next?

**SAL:** My sister came next. My sister is here, she's alive; she survived.

**INT:** And her name is?

**SAL:** Anne.

**INT:** So she must have been about four years older.

**SAL:** She is three and a half years older. And then my brother Joe is about a year and a half older.

**INT:** And Ann...

**SAL:** Was the darling of the family. Of course, she was the only girl.

**INT:** A few words to describe her. Give me a few words.

**SAL:** A doll.

**INT:** A doll?

**SAL:** She's cute, and cuddly, and smart.



**INT:** Did you have any kind of special relationship with her?

**SAL:** No, but I will tell you something about my sister. During the war, in camp, literally I owe her my life -- because I was in a camp. I was accused, falsely of course, but I was accused of stealing gasoline, which I didn't even know what it was. I didn't touch it. I worked as a mechanic in a garage for the SS. There was some gas missing. The guy who stole it, he and another inmate - he was a Polack - and he and another inmate stole it and sold it, and to take away suspicion from them, they said that I did it. And of course there was no question with Germans that you did it. So I was sentenced to be shot.

I was informed of that by one of the guards, and my sister worked in another camp, for the army, not for the SS. And I sent them a note, what's happening, that I've been accused of that, and most probably I'll be dead. And she went and pleaded with the army major in the camp. And he was -- not all the Germans were bad -- and he was good enough and smart enough that he issued a request that he needs **me** personally, me, to come take care of something mechanical because I am a mechanic. And so they came and took me out of the camp. It's literally, within the hour, they came to find me and execute me, and I wasn't there. So they took another man and executed him. So I was saved, by my sister, through my sister's effort.

**INT:** So she was clever and...

**SAL:** Well, she's a devoted sister. And clever, she knew what to do, and how to, she gave him the opening. She says: "He's a mechanic. You got cars." So it worked.

**INT:** And your brother Joseph, were you close because you were close in age?

**SAL:** Yes and no. We were closer, we were the youngest, but we went all the time together in camp. Through the camps we were together.

**INT:** We'll get to that. Let's move into that a little bit. How old were you?

**SAL:** When the war broke out I was just fourteen.

**INT:** When the persecutions began. Not even the war; the very beginning time.

**SAL:** The Polacks?

**INT:** Yes.

**SAL:** From time immemorial. Since I was a little child. I don't remember the day that the Poles were not....

**INT:** When did it become a little more active?

**SAL:** I guess when I started to remember these things, I must have been seven or eight or nine when I first was conscious of the Poles throwing stones at us, chasing us and beating us. But my war started in 1939, and I just turned fourteen when the war broke out.

**INT:** Did you have a Bar Mitzvah before that?

**SAL:** Yes. But my Bar Mitzvah was nothing like Bar Mitzvahs here.

**INT:** Oh, I know that. But how did they manage to have something like that, in spite of what might have been happening?

**SAL:** No, you see, I had a Bar Mitzvah, ...a year before, six months before, eight months before. I had a Bar Mitzvah; I was called up to the Torah.

**INT:** You had your Bar Mitzvah the year before the war. What was your Sedrah [Torah portion]? Do you remember?

**SAL:** I don't remember. It's a long time ago. But it must have been in Devarim, because I was born in Rosh Hashana, so it's the last chapter before Rosh Hashana, some place in Devarim, either "Zos Habrachot," or I don't remember. I'll look it up.

**INT:** But you remember you had your Bar Mitzvah.

**SAL:** Yeah. Which Jewish boy didn't have a Bar Mitzvah? I even remember when I had a tutor, that my mother took it, not because I needed tutoring, but because the man needed to make a living. So we hired an old, very old to me, and very skinny poor Jewish man who came up twice a week to our house. And I think that's the only time that he ate; that mother gave him a cup of tea and something to eat and gave him whatever, she paid him in zlotys for the lessons. So twice a week I had lessons. Of course I could daven, but it's a question the proper trop.

**INT:** So she was a very sensitive person to this man's needs.

**SAL:** Yes. She wasn't that unique. Most Jewish women remember that tzedakah is a big mitzvah. Friday, Thursday, was the day when the so-called "schnorrers" used to come to our house.

**INT:** How would you define a schnorrer?

**SAL:** That's what they were. They were beggars. They had a route, they used to come at special times to special houses and I think in our house it was Thursday. And mother always had prepared for every one of them something to eat and five cents or something. And that was their parnosseh [living]. They were schnorrers. And they knew who's going to give, and who wouldn't. But my mother always had an open door, and always gave. Because she said, the more she gives, the more G-d gives her. She was never

missing it. Some people say, "If I'll give away bread, I won't have." The more she gave, the more G-d gave her, and it's true.

**INT:** What a wonderful philosophy.

**SAL:** As a matter of fact, if you were to run a survey of people who give tzedakah, and ask them to take stock of themselves, to check whether they're missing any money they gave to tzedakah, they'll find out after awhile that they never missed it. That G-d replenished it and sometimes multiplied it.

**INT:** Did you find yourself living the same way?

**SAL:** I'm always giving tzedakah. Now, I'm not such a big tzedakah man, because I don't have too much. I'm on retirement. But in our house, there was never a question. The official tzedakah of UJA. Any time anybody came and requested something... To this day, if I see a man on the street, my wife scolds me, but I will stop. You know, you drive into Philadelphia, and somebody stands there. I always give him a dollar. Because I won't miss it, and I don't know what he'll do with it, but at least I feel I helped him to buy a piece of bread. And even if he buys dope, at least I think he didn't. I think he bought bread, or he's going to buy bread.

**INT:** So you were eight, seven or eight when you really realized-

**SAL:** Began to be conscious of anti-Semitism.

**INT:** And you said the war for you began really in...

**SAL:** September 3, 1939.

**INT:** Why did that date stay in your mind?

**SAL:** Because that's the date Germany invaded Poland.

**INT:** Is that the day that it affected you directly? What was going on in your family, what was happening? How did you hear?

**SAL:** We started, we wanted to escape from our town. We went east, trying to run away from the Germans.

**INT:** Wait, you're telling me the story too fast.

**SAL:** The Germans came from the west. They attacked Poland from the west. They were very rapid and victorious. We thought if we run away to the town where my grandma lives, which was Pulawy, which was on the other side of the River Vistula, that we'll be saved, that the Germans will stop there, and they won't make it. Well, they made

it a lot faster than we thought. They crossed the Vistula before us, and they conquered Poland in a week.

**INT:** So how did the word come to everybody, how did you hear about what was going on? You didn't hear it on the radio, did you?

**SAL:** Of course we had a radio. Not only did we have a radio, but we saw Germans on our street. We had shootings, we had bombings. We had artillery shelling our town. It took us, chasing us off the highway when we were going by horse and wagon going east.

**INT:** How did you get yourselves ready to leave? What kind of preparation?

**SAL:** Panic. You know, the Germans are coming. We were scared. My father bought a horse and wagon, and we loaded it up with whatever we could load it up, and left. It didn't take us long to find out that there is no place to run, and we had to come back, but we ran. For a little while we ran.

**INT:** You had to turn around and come back?

**SAL:** Yes, because the Germans were faster. And they were stronger. They conquered Poland in less than three weeks. Only Warsaw held out another week or so. But all of Poland. And then the Russians came in from the East and occupied some of Poland, and the Germans came from the West, and in three weeks there was no more Poland on the map.

And within four or five months after they came to our town, they made us put on these yellow stars. Jude, Jew, and armbands. And then another three or four months later, they put us in a ghetto. Moved out of the houses where we lived, the homes where we lived. We had to leave everything we had. We were allowed just to take some personal belongings.

**INT:** Well, back up a little bit. So you heard on the radio, and you saw the Germans, and you decided to go to Pulawy.

**SAL:** On September 3, Germany declared war on Poland. On September 4, they were in Lodz, and on September 5 or 6, they were in Radom. It only took them two or three days to come to our town.

**INT:** So you put everything that you could on the horse and wagon, and you started to go away.

**SAL:** By the time we came to Pulawy, the Germans were there, too, already.

**INT:** So you turned around and came back to your home?

**SAL:** Well, we stayed a week or so with Grandma, and then we came home.

**INT:** Now was your grandfather gone by then?

**SAL:** No, no.

**INT:** He was still there.

**SAL:** That persecution started about six or eight months later.

**INT:** Okay. So your grandparents were still okay. But why didn't you stay there with them?

**SAL:** First of all there was no room. Secondly, it was sort of like the eye of the storm which was quiet. The war ended, they conquered, there was nothing visible yet that they might or might not do. The army was there, and there was still freedom of passage, so we went back home, because we had a home. And...

**INT:** So you had no idea of what was coming.

**SAL:** Nobody had any idea what was coming. But it came.

**INT:** So you went back home...

**SAL:** It came with a vengeance.

**INT:** How normal was life when you got back home? What was going on in your family?

**SAL:** It was not normal at all.

**INT:** What did your family members do?

**SAL:** They closed the school. We couldn't go to school. You had to get permits to go to work. You had permits to go out, to come in. Life became very abnormal. And they started to pull men to forced labor. So mother and father had a conference, and some other people, I guess, family members, father and the two older brothers packed up and went east to stay in Russia. And mother and us, we stayed in Germany in the so-called Germany.

**INT:** What was it like when your father and your oldest brothers, your brother Abraham, so Abraham and your father...

**SAL:** And Aaron.

**INT:** And Aaron, they left. What was it like when they left from you? What did they say to you?

**SAL:** Good-bye, I hope to see you soon. England will conquer, England and France will win the war in a month or two or three, and they'll come back and everybody will be happy.

**INT:** Do you think they believed that?

**SAL:** Yes, everybody believed it. Who would think that the Germans would be victorious against the whole world? I mean, at one time France and England were supposed to be the great powers.

**INT:** So...

**SAL:** Everybody thought it would be a period of three months, six months. Eventually England and France will win the war, the Germans will go with their tail between their legs back to Germany, and they'll come back from where they were, and everything will get back to being as it used to be. **Maybe.**

**INT:** Do you think your parents, were your parents frightened; was your mother afraid?

**SAL:** Of course. Which wife wants to see her husband and two sons leave into an uncertain world, and leave her alone with three children in an uncertain world? But that's the way it was. It wasn't just us. There were hundreds of families like us. Thousands of families like us. Thousands, others, packed up the whole family and went east. That's why so many Jews survived in Russia. Because a lot of Polish Jews came to Polish Russia, and then before the war broke out between Russia and Germany, they were sent to Asia, by Stalin. Stalin didn't want them near the border. He considered them to be a bad element. So they sent them to Uzbekistan, to Azerbaijan, to Turkestan. Some people from other...

**INT:** Some people survived because they went to Russia.

**SAL:** Yeah.

**INT:** So then it was your mother and your sister and your brother and you, who were left at home. So what did you do? What was your life like during that time? Can you remember back that far?

**SAL:** Not necessarily. We were in a ghetto. We were given some food.

**INT:** When did they move you to the ghetto? Was that after?

**SAL:** After my father left and the two brothers left. They took us, not just us, but the whole population of the city. They moved us into a ghetto.

**INT:** Was it apartment buildings or something?

**SAL:** Well, they took one street, or two streets. Just for you to imagine, well, there were some bigger buildings there, let's say they took, let's say they took Pine Street...

(END TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE THREE, SIDE TWO)

**SAL:** There was no work to speak of. Most people lived on whatever savings they had and bought stuff off the black market. Some people did commerce, but it was illegal. And most of the time the men were going out to work for the Germans for free. I mean the Germans requested 100, 200, 500 people. You had to go to work, they gave you a soup during the hours of working, and that's all you did. And that's how you survived from day to day. And that was the period, most of the time, that we all lived with the hope, that it's only another day. And another day, and another day, the Germans will lose the war.

**INT:** So that's what kept you going.

**SAL:** Yes, well we were all so sure that it's not going to last. And then, in '41, August '41, Hitler attacked Russia. And now we knew that we are in it for the long run. Cause he conquered Russia, too, and all of a sudden it looked like he's invincible. There's nothing that will stop the Germans ever.

**INT:** But you were in the ghetto at this point.

**SAL:** I was already at labor camp.

**INT:** You were already in the labor camp by then?

**SAL:** Yeah, they took us.

**INT:** I'm sorry. I missed some steps. You were in the ghetto, you were telling me about being in the ghetto and going out to work.

**SAL:** Well, at one time or another they emptied the ghettos, most people went to gas chambers, some of the younger ones went to labor camp.

**INT:** So what happened to your immediate family?

**SAL:** Well, our family, my mother and sister went to one labor camp, my brother and I was in another labor camp. It's immaterial. It's a little village outside of Radom.

**INT:** Oh, so they started, you moved from your home, to the ghetto, to a labor camp.

**SAL:** To a labor camp, which later turned over into a concentration camp.

**INT:** So it's like putting the frog in the hot water, and a little bit of hot water, and...

**SAL:** A little hotter. The Germans were very methodical. They knew how to browbeat, depress people. They gave you always a little bit of hope so you wouldn't revolt, and not enough to live on. Just a lot of hope that it's gonna end.

**INT:** What was a day like in the labor camp, in the first one. What time did you get up in the morning?

**SAL:** In my particular camp, you got up at 6:00 in the morning, because we worked on a farm. And you went out and did whatever farm chores they did. And you worked from light to dark. And then you came home, you got a little bit to eat, and went to sleep. Next morning they woke you up, went to work, worked all day, and you came back and sleep. Except that this was not a harsh camp. Nobody got shot, nobody got killed. We just worked, and were loosely supervised. We weren't that bad off. We wore our own clothes. We still had, we were...we could communicate with each other. At best it was...a soft camp. For lack of another expression. As compared to harsh camps later.

**INT:** So were you with your contemporaries?

**SAL:** Some, some. Some of my friends were with me, from the same town, from the same school, because we were all in the same neighborhood.

**INT:** But your mother and your sister were in another...

**SAL:** In another labor camp.

**INT:** And what were they doing there?

**SAL:** You see, from this labor camp, we all, my mother and sister and brother and I, we were all sent to another labor camp together.

**INT:** How did that happen?

**SAL:** Well, the Germans had their own ways.

**INT:** So you were purposely sent there together?

**SAL:** They just got everybody from that neighborhood and sent them to that camp. And that camp was a munitions plant. We were making powder. You know, powder for shooting?

**INT:** Yeah. Now this must have been the first time in a while that you got to see your mother and your sister.



**SAL:** Yeah, it wasn't that far in between. I mean, the time in between was short. We all wound up in a camp called Pionki. (spells it), which was a camp for making munitions.

**INT:** So how long were you and your mother separated?

**SAL:** Very briefly in the beginning. And then we were together in Pionki. And in Pionki we were a long time. In Pionki, we were almost a year and a half. I think. Yes, almost two years.

**INT:** So how old were you by now? About sixteen?

**SAL:** By then I was sixteen.

**INT:** Were you strong?

**SAL:** I don't remember. Apparently I was, because nothing bothered me. But we worked in that camp. We worked different shifts. I worked mostly night shift. But we came to camp, and we had men's barracks and women's barracks, but you could go in and see your mother and see your sister, wife, if somebody had a wife. So we were together. And we were there until the fall of '43, when the Russian offensive started, and they started to re-conquer parts of Poland. And the Russians started to be successful and started to push the Germans back, after Stalingrad. So then they moved the whole camp in to concentration camp.

**INT:** You say you, they changed, the camp stayed, and they changed the nature of the camp, or they moved you to another place?

**SAL:** No, they moved us to Auschwitz from there. From that Pionki, which was already, Pionki was already a concentration camp, because we already wore uniforms, not so much uniforms, we wore...marked clothes, and we were behind barbed wire.

**INT:** Did you wear your own clothes at Pionki?

**SAL:** For a while. But then they put markings on our clothes. Crosses, or signs, and we were behind barbed wire already.

**INT:** But go back to Pionki for a minute. How did people get along? How was the place set up?

**SAL:** Well, I don't know if you can imagine it. Maybe your imagination's strong. We had army barracks, or barracks in which we lived. And we went out to work, there were divisions. This division, this division, and they used to march us out to work in the morning, and we had to sing songs for them, and come back and work again. And that's what we did. Work, work, work, work, work. I worked in a mixing department. My sister worked in the cotton department. It's called cotton because they used cotton to dip it in alcohol to make...my brother worked in the maintenance department of the camp.

**INT:** Were you still optimistic at that time?

**SAL:** By that point, it didn't matter. It was very hard to be optimistic. At that point it began to look very bleak.

**INT:** What were people starting to say to you?

**SAL:** It began to look very bleak. Well...we would...

**INT:** How did you get word, or how did you know what was going on?

**SAL:** Well, we had Poles that came into camp to work. So they used to give us news, any kind of news that they collected. And the mood of the Germans sometimes told you. And we had some friends who worked for the Germans in the German quarters, and they listened to the German radio, also the German newspapers. So...

**INT:** Do you remember how you felt at that time, or whether you were afraid, or what was going on inside of you?

**SAL:** I don't remember. I don't remember. I don't remember. It was a period of existence outside of myself. I mean, I was there. And so were other hundreds and thousands. We were there. We were a body that got up in the morning and came back in the evening. Without thought, without feelings, without action. We were there. And each day brought us closer to death. We were pretty sure that none of us would survive.

**INT:** You felt that already? That the end would be bad?

**SAL:** Well, Hitler was conquering Russia. He conquered Poland. He conquered France, he conquered Denmark, he conquered Norway. He conquered Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania. Wherever he went, he was successful. So, you know, we just didn't think for a moment that he would be stopped. And then came Stalingrad. And we knew about Stalingrad. The Russians killed a lot of Germans, they stopped them from their advance. And then we had the beginning of hope that maybe, maybe something will happen to Hitler, and the Germans will give up. Because we always thought that the German people as a people are nice. They're the people of Goethe and the people of Heine, and...Mann. They were very civilized people.

**INT:** Cultured. High culture.

**SAL:** Yes. So we thought there is a bad apple. There is a Hitler, and some of his believers. And we thought maybe somebody will kill him and Germany will come to its senses. But each day it got a little less secure because nobody stood up to him. Not for a long while.

**INT:** Did you have any - was there anything, any skills or ways of coping that you felt enabled you to get through that particular time?

**SAL:** Well, some people did. Some people were shoemakers, were given jobs as shoemakers, and that was preference. They got a little bit more food. Some people were tailors, got to do sewing for the Germans. I had no profession. But I told them that I am a mechanic, a “schlosser,” a locksmith, so they got some work as a locksmith.

**INT:** How did you come up with that as a profession?

**SAL:** I just did.

**INT:** It just came to you?

**SAL:** I knew I couldn't be a carpenter. I knew nothing about carpentry. I couldn't be a baker. But being a locksmith, to use a file and a screwdriver or something, everybody knows that. So I said I was a locksmith. My father, during that period of time, when Germany conquered Russia, my father was caught by the Germans in the Russian part. He came back to our town. So then later, in concentration camp, my father and my brother and I were together.

**INT:** So while you were in the camp, still in Poland, that's when you said you were a locksmith and a mechanic.

**SAL:** At that time, when Germany conquered Russia, or the Polish part of Russia, my father was captured. Was caught in the war. And then he came back.

**INT:** So where did you first see your father?

**SAL:** We bribed, my mother bribed a German, an SS man, and he went to that town where my father was, and he brought him back to Radom. So Father was with us in the labor camp that turned to be concentration camp.

**INT:** So did he go with you to Auschwitz from there?

**SAL:** Yes. Yes.

**INT:** What was it like when you saw your father for the first time after all that time?

**SAL:** I don't remember. It was great. Having a father around after a long absence. But it didn't take long and we went to camp.

**INT:** Did you have a chance to talk to him?

**SAL:** No. No. We were there.

**INT:** You just remember seeing him. What did he do when he saw you?

**SAL:** He was very happy to see his children. I think I was his favorite son, because I was the youngest. The youngest baby is always. But...from that labor camp turned into a concentration camp, then we went to Auschwitz. From that time the father was with us till the day after liberation. (pause)

**INT:** The question you're answering in a way, is what specifically happened to you and your family during the war. So you're starting to tell me some of that. Tell me, I guess, I think what people would like to know, rather than just the facts, they'd like to know what it was about you, about you and about your family, what you were thinking, how you acted, and how much of that you can really remember, what your feelings were.

**SAL:** I can't draw you a psychological picture of myself. I just don't recall. Not only I don't recall, I don't think, at least I...we were just there. No thoughts, no hopes. Maybe not so much giving up, but no thoughts of anything else. We were there from today, till tomorrow, till tomorrow, till tomorrow.

**INT:** So you're saying that by putting yourself in that state of mind, you purposely didn't...

**SAL:** Yeah, we didn't feel it so harsh, because you were not there; you were not involved. The older the people were, and the more sensitive they were, and the more they thought, the sooner they died.

**INT:** You saw that?

**SAL:** Oh, yes.

**INT:** So what happened? You looked at that, and you said...

**SAL:** Well, I don't know if I looked at it, but I know that was a fact. We didn't- we just did not give it any thought. We just lived hoping by very far remote thing, that something will happen; that either G-d or Hitler will come first. Hitler will die first, or we will die first.

**INT:** Your parents had that attitude, also?

**SAL:** Yes, I think so. My mother particularly hoped and was very faithful. She said that G-d will not permit for her to lose all of her children and that we will survive. She knew that she lost some of them. She was sure that we will survive. And I guess G-d listened to her, because we survived. I don't know what kind of language she spoke, but apparently He listened to her. She was a bright woman. I told you that.

**INT:** So that was her feeling?

**SAL:** Yeah. My mother was definitely full of hope all the time. She would never give up, no matter what.

**INT:** How do you think that optimism or that faith, how do you think that helped her to survive?

**SAL:** I imagine that was it. She carried it because she said she must survive, and not only will she survive, but she'll find the rest of her family alive some place. She'll turn around and she'll find them. That was her hope. She was a very strong-willed woman, my mother was.

**INT:** So it was her faith that strengthened her will?

**SAL:** I imagine so. Yes. I have a picture of my mother some place. (pause)

**INT:** Okay. You told me before about your grandfather. Now, where was he in relation to where you were at this time? Was he gone by then, or...

**SAL:** Yes. He was gone a long time. Because as I told you, the first persecution started in that neighborhood where he lived, in and around Lublin and that neighborhood. And the first "Umsiedlung", the first, I don't know what the English expression is, the first time when they start sending people away, the first liquidation started then.

**INT:** What happened to your grandmother then?

**SAL:** They went together. Grandmother and Grandfather, and an aunt and uncle and so on. And cousins. And a lot of cousins. Another uncle. They're all gone. All at the same time. A lot of family. A lot of family. Because most of my family comes from that neighborhood. That was the first place where they started to persecute and kill people.

**INT:** How did you find out about what happened?

**SAL:** People came, some people escaped, some people bought themselves out, some Germans let them go, and they came to Radom, and they told us. And Poles that we knew came and told us about it. So that was it.

**INT:** But did you know specifically what had happened to your family?

**SAL:** No. Well, I didn't. Maybe my parents knew specifically. All I knew is that the persecution started there, and by that time they were gone. There's nothing specific or exact.

**INT:** I have a picture here of...

**MRS. F:** This is what she looked like in Germany. That's him, that's me.

**INT:** Oh, my goodness, look at that!

**MRS. F:** That's me in 1939, right before the war. You want me to find a recent picture? That's me.

**INT:** You know, I'll take time. I'll look at all those pictures. I'd love to do that.

Tell me, when you moved to Auschwitz, how was it all accomplished? What went on?

**SAL:** One night, the guards woke us all up and pushed us into wagons, and three days later they pushed us out of the wagons and we were in Auschwitz. We were paraded, got tattooed, and put into buildings, deloused, hair cut, clothes taken away, put into uniforms with...(phone interruption)

I'll nap soon; I'm tired now.

**INT:** When you were approaching the camp, do you remember what you saw and what you thought about? What was it like for you?

**SAL:** Again, there is no simple yes or no answer. There is none to any of these questions. I'm trying to simplify them.

**INT:** Well, don't worry. There's plenty of tape.

**SAL:** It's not just the tape. It's the amount of words I got stored in me; I can't use them all up in one time. When we were in Pionki and we heard the Russian artillery from the distance, we sort of got a shot of adrenalin. We are going to be freed pretty soon. We saw the Germans being nervous. They knew they were losing the war already. But they were -- I don't know what's the expression -- they were cunning enough, or cruel enough, not to let us enjoy liberty. They moved us. They used precious railroad time and wagons, not to move their army, but to move us. They were more worried about killing Jews than saving Germans. That's what the Nazi SS was.

Anyway, there was some talk among the younger people to run away into the woods and hide until the Germans were gone. But we had a problem in Poland, which was common knowledge; that there were some Poles in the woods who also killed Jews. So running away into the woods was not such a simple affair, and we had no weapon, we had no monies. And finally, we were in the wagons. There was nothing we could do about it. They loaded us, we came.

And the only thing we were not quite so sure of, we were worried, is whether we were going to be gassed and finished, or we're going to go to work. It's a question, we were going to, so the uncertainty whether we were going to be gassed or not was there, but there was very little we could do about it.

**INT:** So when you were travelling, in transit, people were talking about what might happen?

**SAL:** Well, most people were beginning to resign themselves of being their last minutes. We are going to Auschwitz, we're sure not going to survive.

**INT:** Now was your family there with you?

**SAL:** Yes, we were all together.

**INT:** So you were all together in that wagon.

**SAL:** With a hundred other people, jammed like cattle. No water, no food. Well, we made it to Auschwitz. They unloaded us. They marched us, they separated the women from the men and they marched us.

**INT:** So you saw your mother and your sister go.

**SAL:** Yes. That was the last time I saw them until after the liberation. When we came to Auschwitz, we got on the platform...

**INT:** Did you have a chance to say anything to one another?

**SAL:** No, it was so quick, they were chasing you. "Jude, raus, Jude raus, raus, raus, raus!" Dogs, and beating and screaming, and we were out. And then they said, women here, men here, and before I knew it we were separated and walked off. And...

**INT:** So you were now with your father...

**SAL:** I was with my father and my brother and a lot of other men, and the women were separate. And they were screaming and crying good-bye, good-bye, and that was it.

**INT:** So it was Joe and Aaron and...

**SAL:** No, no. My other brothers were already lost. My other brothers died in 1943 when Germany occupied the Russian territory. My brothers were there. My brothers never came back.

**INT:** Oh, only your father came back.

**SAL:** Yeah. My two brothers died there. They died.

**INT:** Did they die after your father left?

**SAL:** They died before, but he didn't know where they were because they went to a small village outside of Lemberg, and that's where they were caught. And they were killed either by the Germans or by the Ukrainians. We really don't know.

**INT:** So you never saw your brothers. Once they left, when your mother sent your father and your two brothers off, that was...

**SAL:** I never saw my brothers again. Never. But in Auschwitz, I was with my father, and my brother Joe and myself. And mother and sister went with the women. And we were tattooed, and deloused, and given camp clothes. And we were told, there was a man in there who was an officer, no, he was an accountant, but he was now the secretary of the camp. A refugee, another refugee, an inmate. He happens to be a friend of my father's. He used to work with my father. He used to be an accountant in Radom.

**INT:** He was a Jew.

**SAL:** He was a Jew. He came there a lot earlier and they made him, because he was an accountant, he was good with figures, so they made him to be the "schreiber," as they called them. So he came, when we came, and he came to tell us that this transport, as they called it, is not designed to go to the gas chambers, that we are going to go to work someplace. He spoke to my father, he spoke to some other friends from town. His name was Eiger. Shai Eiger. I remember him like today.

**INT:** What is it about him that you remember so vividly?

**SAL:** I remembered he came, he was dressed in inmate clothes, but fitted, made by a tailor. He was clean and shaven. And fat, and here we were all dirty. But he came to assure us that he knows for a fact that we're going not, there will be a selection, some of the weak ones will not remain, but the rest of us will go to work. And they sent us to blocks. You know, inside the barracks.

**INT:** Were you still with your father and brother at that point?

**SAL:** From that moment on we were together all the time. We went to this barracks, and we slept on the perches, the three step perches.

**INT:** What was your relationship with your father and brother at that time?

**SAL:** Father and sons.

**INT:** Did he treat you as your father?

**SAL:** Of course, he tried to; he protected us and cared us, and watched us.

**INT:** How did he protect you?

**SAL:** Well, whatever was there to be done he was there with us; he watched us. My brother had an accident in the labor camp, where he had broken his ankle. So we had it taped up. And when we came for the selection we were afraid that they will take him away because he was sick. But luckily for us, they told him to drop his pants, and he



dropped his pants, and it covered up the bandage, so they didn't see it, so he passed inspection. And we all went past him. We were allowed to go.

**INT:** And how old were you?

**SAL:** Well, this was in '43, which means that I was already 18 years old.

**INT:** And your father must have been, what, about 40 at that point?

**SAL:** 41.

**INT:** 41? Because you say he died when he was 43.

**SAL:** Yeah. Two years later he died. My father died in '45, May, '45. So...

**INT:** That's how your brother was saved.

**SAL:** Yes, coincidence. But we did not know what happened to the women, but we went back to the barracks, and a day or two later, they put us on another wagon and moved us down to concentration camp where we worked. In Wien-Moodling. A little suburb of Vienna.

**INT:** How far was that from Auschwitz?

**SAL:** Three days' journey. It was in Austria. And we went to work in Austria.

**INT:** You were still with your father and brother?

**SAL:** Yes, we were all together. We worked in different shifts, but we were together. We worked, in Wien-Moodling we worked underground in a mine, a chalk mine, and we were building B-2s. You know the rockets where they are shooting to England? We were building B-2s. The Germans built these rockets. That's what we were building. Since I was a schlosser, my brother was something or other, so that's what we did.

**INT:** So your skills enabled you...

**SAL:** I had no skills.

**INT:** Whatever skills you said you had.

**SAL:** Everybody else was same thing. All of us went to that camp, and we worked, that was a twelve-hour shift from 6:00 in the morning till 6:00 in the night, or 6:00 at night to 6:00 in the morning, and we were fed once a day. And it was a very deep mine, and we had to walk down, I don't know how many, maybe eight or nine stories down, and eight or nine stories up.

**INT:** Nobody was mining anything, that's just where they worked.

**SAL:** It was just caves there, mining caves. We were working there.

**INT:** How did you work? In teams, or...

**SAL:** No, whatever, they assigned you a job, you did it, whatever it is. I worked, supposedly, I was installing the guidance system; it never worked properly. I never knew how to do it, and it never worked properly. And my brother was supposed to be the inspector on the other end. To test it, whether it's good.

**INT:** Did people talk to one another when they worked?

**SAL:** No. I don't know. We just walked down together, then everyone went to his little assigned stools, and did whatever he did, then after twelve hours we walked up together and went to camp to sleep and then got something to eat. And we saw, in Vienna, we knew the end is there, because if we walked up in the morning, we would see American planes flying over Vienna, slow, and secure; no anti-aircraft flack, and we knew that they're crumbling, but we still were in bad shape.

I remember when the Russians -- before we went to Wien Moodling -- the Russians started the offensive in January 1944, while we were still in Auschwitz. So they moved us out. So walking, we went as far as the city of Gleiwitz, and we were in a...building, in a barn. We were in a barn as far as from here to the light on Landis Avenue.

**INT:** How many blocks is that?

**SAL:** Three, four, five blocks. 500 yards.

**INT:** So a couple of football fields, at least.

**SAL:** And the Russians were there. We saw them, we see them shooting, and they wouldn't leave us. They put us with them, kept evacuating us. Kept evacuating us.

**INT:** So you're saying had the Germans left you there, the Russians...

**SAL:** We would have been liberated in January of '44, because that's when the Russian offensive started. This way I had another year and a half.

**INT:** Did you realize that that's what was going on?

**SAL:** Well, we saw the Russians. We saw their artillery. We saw the German Red Cross running from there with stretchers and carrying wounded Germans. And yet the SS would not leave us alone. Still dragged us with them.

**INT:** How did people react to that?

**SAL:** Oh, it was [unclear]. Two guys tried to escape, they shot them and killed them.

(END TAPE THREE, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE FOUR, SIDE ONE)

**INT:** With Sal Finkelstein.

**SAL:** So we saw the flash of artillery and rifle fire. And they wouldn't let us be. So they evacuated us, and that's how we got to Wien-Moodling.

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

**SAL:** (spells it). Wien-Moodling. And from there they evacuated us back to Mauthausen. And that's where I was liberated, in Mauthausen. Mauthausen is a camp in Austria just outside of Linz. And I was liberated in Mauthausen on May 5, 1945. And there is a whole story behind this, which I'll tell you next week, because I'm too tired to talk now.

**INT:** (laughs)

**SAL:** I can continue for a few more minutes. When we came to Wien Moodling...

**INT:** Is it hard for you to talk about all this?

**SAL:** Sometimes. When we came back to Mauthausen, we walked about three weeks, walked continuously from Vienna to Linz. It was in the winter, of February, 1945.

**INT:** What were you wearing?

**SAL:** Nothing. We had no clothes. And we slept on the snow, and we walked with wooden shoes, and the holes in the shoes, and no clothes, and no food. And a lot of people died on that trip. A lot of people. I don't...

**INT:** Did people help each other?

**SAL:** Yes. Well, it's hard. Did you see that movie, Dr. Zhivago?

**INT:** My husband's favorite.

**SAL:** Well, I don't mean it as a film. But you remember the scene of the winter with people walking with ice over their beard? That's how we were; a bedraggled group, walking, walking in slush and the snow. Sleeping on the snow. Not having nothing to eat. They threw us occasionally a potato or a piece of bread. I don't recall how many,

but many of us died on this trip. They never made it. I did not see them actually die, but the next morning when we woke up, there were fewer of us walking. But we made it.

**INT:** But your father and your brother...

**SAL:** My father and my brother and me. We came into Mauthausen. We came at the gate of Mauthausen, they made us stay in line like soldiers, and they went looking, and then an officer of the SS came over and picked my brother and I. He said, "You come with me. I'll give you a job, you'll have plenty of food and warm housing." And I said to him in German, "I want my father to come with us." And he said, "No." I said, "In that case we're not going." So he said, "You stupid Jew. You don't want to go eat? Go to hell." And he picked two other guys. It turned out that the two other guys went to work in the crematorium. And at the day of liberation the Germans came and shot them. And cremated them, so there would be no witnesses. So my brother and I were saved by coincidence. But that's only half of the miracle.

As we walked into the camp, they stripped us naked, and kept us outside, and sprayed cold water on us, to wash us, and then they let us run naked to the block. We made it. But in between somebody asked me something, an inmate, a German inmate asked me something, and I arrogantly answered him, and he hit me with a baton, and he split my head. Which, I still have a little scar. Not important. Well, I survived that, too. While we were running naked to the camp, I saw- the miracle of camps was that people all were wearing the same clothes. But those who were longer there, in the administration, they wore fitted clothes, and they had hats on their head; rather than caps. And each one had a visor. Now if you had a hat with a visor, you were an old timer. You were treated differently. So I don't remember if it was three days, or four days, or five days, when we were in the block which was...quarantined. They kept us in quarantine, so we wouldn't bring in any disease. They called it the quarantine block. Well, I jumped out of the quarantine block, pushed myself out. And they were a little lax in surveillance, and I went under the main camp. And I went through a camp of old timers, and I stole two hats with visors. I came back to my camp, and I gave one to my brother, and one to me. And then all of the sudden, we had the liberty of the camp. Because we had visors.

And then...

**INT:** Go back. You were talking about refusing to leave your father, and you said something about luck. But why do you attribute that to luck? You could have said... You could have left your father.

**SAL:** Yeah, but we wouldn't.

**INT:** Why?

**SAL:** You don't leave a father if you don't have to, if you can help it. We left Father later, and to this day I regret that I did. I don't know if I could help him, but there was a point where we left, and I'll tell you about it later.

So I stole these hats with the visors, and I became a prominent. I could walk in and out of the camp. I could walk freely in the camp, and I could steal bread here. I didn't have to steal it because...I took Latin in school. So I went into a camp, there were, in Mauthausen, there was a whole block of Spaniards who worked...

**INT:** Spaniards?

**SAL:** Spaniards, who fought the civil war against Franco. They were interned in here. So I picked up from Spaniards and Italians. Italians who fought in Spain against Franco, or who were against Mussolini, they were in this camp. So because I knew a little bit of Latin, it became easier for me to understand them a little bit, and I learned a little Spanish and a little Italian. So they took me in as a "bubah." I was a bubah -- a boy. I was cleaning the latrines. They took me in as a boy, to clean their...so now I had an official position. I was a latrine cleaner, for all the "prominents." So I had food.

**INT:** Prominents?

**SAL:** Yeah, the prominent prisoners.

**INT:** Okay. So you got the food and then did you bring it back?

**SAL:** Yeah. I brought back to my father all of a sudden had plenty of food, my brother had food, some of my friends, because I had food and food and food. Where everybody was starving, I could always bring back a loaf of bread or a bucketful of soup. So I was a prominent. And my brother was a prominent, because he had a hat with a visor.

**INT:** Nobody stopped you?

**SAL:** No. They didn't care. The Jews had a yellow, and I noticed that the prisoners, that were treated different. They were either, green was a criminal, or red was politics. So I made myself two red squares. So now we were political prisoners. We were not Jews. And I had more privileges. A political prisoner, with a visor.

**INT:** You were a pretty sharp guy.

**SAL:** Well, it was just automatic; you want to live. You wanted to live.

**INT:** But why didn't some other people do this? Why did you do it, and other people didn't do it? You're pointing up at G-d.

**SAL:** I guess so. Anyway, I was a prominent, with a red triangle, and a visor, and I had the run of the camp. And I became very friendly with a Czech who was also a political prisoner. He knew I was Jewish, but he made believe that he didn't. And we got friendly. He lived in the same block where the Spaniards lived, so he got to know me. And he knew that I am under false pretenses, but he was glad he could help me.

**INT:** Was he glad that you could put one over on the Germans?

**SAL:** Well, whatever. I don't know whether it was for him a sport, or he was just genuinely a good human being, he wanted to help. So I was very friendly with him. But it couldn't go on forever. So eventually as they were going down the list, they...I have to back up.

At that point there were a lot of Jews that were brought in, the last Jews that ever were brought into camp, from Hungary. And they were brought, and not into the main camp. But in the camp, Mauthausen was high up on a hill. They were down in the valley. And they lived separate there. They just came from their homes, with their clothes, with their jewelry, their wives and children, and cosmetics, and all that. And they were in camp. I was a very sharp fellow. I went down to that camp, since I was a VIP, I had the freedom. And I started to be a businessman. I took their watches, and the diamonds, and the jewelry, and I was selling it to the old inmates in camp, who in turn were selling it to the Germans.

**INT:** Well, where did the old inmates get the money to buy it?

**SAL:** We didn't need money. We traded for bread, for butter, for sugar, for soup. That's all we got.

**INT:** Oh, so the people who had just come, did they have food?

**SAL:** No.

**INT:** They had the jewels and the stuff, but...

**SAL:** They weren't fed.

**INT:** So you took their jewels and...

**SAL:** The guy gave me two watches, I went up and I gave them to the "Blockeltester," and he gave me four loaves of bread and a pound of butter. I took this down, and I gave the guy three loaves of bread, and half of the butter, and I had a loaf of bread and butter. So I started to be a businessman.

**INT:** You were a middleman then, already.

**SAL:** Yes. And that was going on for about a month. I was going down. Once...

**INT:** Now the people, let's track the two watches. When you gave them to the prominent, who traded...

**SAL:** They were selling them to the Germans, to the German guards, or keeping them for themselves. You know, inmates...

**INT:** And they got something in exchange.

**SAL:** Soup, clothes, whatever. They had a world of their own. We were downtrodden Jews. They were the long time inmates. They had known everybody. Maybe they were giving it to the SS officers who brought them other food or clothes. I remember one day, it was an amazing thing. Then they said, all the Jews from camp, in Mauthausen, those from the top, had to go live with the guys downstairs.

**INT:** These are the people who had just gotten there?

**SAL:** Yes.

**INT:** Oh, okay.

**SAL:** Well, I didn't, because I was a VIP. My brother didn't. But my father did. And so we tried to hide him in camp. We couldn't. Finally, the schreiber says, "Well, I'll let you know if anything happens. Keep him there." So we used to bring him food every day. There was a chronological in between. I'll tell you this. I have to step back.

In between being the prominent, the Germans with their accuracy found out that two prisoners in that block are not working. It was me and my brother. So they finally caught up with us, and to punish us, they put my brother and I into a different commando. We were the ones who buried the people in mass graves. We were to strip them of their clothes, take out their golden teeth, and put them in.

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

**SAL:** It wasn't. It's not imagine. You can't imagine it.

**INT:** How did you get yourself to do that?

**SAL:** What? You don't. You shut your eyes, you shut your mind, you shut your nose, and you do it. When we went down there, and we were there a day and a half, and my brother got violently sick. He got typhoid. So he couldn't go to work. I had to hide him. So I hid him in the camp. It was all right for a few days time.

**INT:** But you were in another camp already. You were in another location, weren't you, because you had to move?

**SAL:** They were all in the same plaza, except separate buildings. Backing up before that, an incident I have to tell you. We went down one day from the main camp to the Jewish camp, and we carried a whole kettle of soup that the cook gave me for a watch. And as we were carrying it and coming down to the camp, the SS camp commander is in

the Jewish camp, he came, he saw me and my brother carrying this. And he start to beat the living hell out of me. "You Jew freund." I was a Pole. A VIP. So he didn't think I'm Jewish. But he started to beat me that I am bringing food to the Jews. Unauthorized food to the Jews. He beat the hell out of me. And I run away. I left the kettle with the soup, and I run away. And somehow they didn't care. But that was an incident, I was called a friend of the Jews being a Pole.

Okay, I'll go back. It was...

**INT:** Your brother had typhus.

**SAL:** Let's start before we went to start doing the digging. Then it came an order that they liquidated the Jewish camp. And my brother and I were up in the goyish camp, and they made a "Blocksperrung," they closed up the block, nobody could go in and out, and they evacuated all the Jews from the Jewish camp, including my father. We couldn't go down there. It was a matter of two or three hours. We were there before and talked to him. We went up to the camp to do something, and all of a sudden, we couldn't go down anymore, because they were gone. They were cordoned off and we couldn't go down. So that was about two weeks before the liberation.

So we went back to the camp. And we went back to the same block where we stayed before, and that's where we went to work in that...(phone interruption)

**INT:** You said before that you regretted not being able to save your father.

**SAL:** There was nothing I could do about it. All of a sudden, we were in camp. It was a matter of a decision of minutes. We walked up not quite knowing what was going to happen, and all of a sudden it was closed, and we couldn't go out, and we couldn't go in. So that was the last I saw my father. Two hours before they made the Blocksperrung, there were rumors that the camp might be evacuated. And my father said to me and my brother: "Go up and get some food and if you can, save yourselves. I don't want to lose my whole family." And I said, "Father, we're not going, we'll just go up, get whatever we can get, and come back." And he says, "Fine." But we could never get back.

**INT:** Did he have a premonition?

**SAL:** I have no idea. He was just, a regret I carry for the last 45 years, that I could not protect my father, or not be with him for the last minute. As a matter of fact, my brother is the same. The fact is that my father did survive till the liberation, but he died of malnutrition right after the liberation. Now I don't know if our presence would have helped him or not, but that's what...

**INT:** You were bringing him food up till them, so he didn't have food.

**SAL:** Well, maybe, I have no idea. But that's one of these regrets.



Now what happened, we stayed in camp, and we didn't go down anymore to the Jewish camp, because there was no Jewish camp. And we had to do something, because otherwise we would stick out like sore thumbs.

**INT:** You still had your...no red patch and no visor?

**SAL:** I had to hide. The schreiber told me to hide. So we went to work in that mass grave. But we worked only a day and a half, because my brother got very sick. So I put him away in the block. And the Blockeltester was a friend, a German, and he marked him as sick. At that time he already knew that was the end of it. And so the Red Cross, the Swiss Red Cross for the first time in history of camp was given permission to send in CARE packages to Mauthausen. So when they were bringing them in, I was in the crowd, and I was one of those men, we ripped them apart, and I stole some chocolate, and I stole some raisins, and I think it was a...poundcake. Who remembers? And I brought it to my brother. He couldn't even eat it, but he had a little bit of better food, in the day or two or three. And then I got sick. I got typhoid, too. But I had it not bad.

And then came May 5, 1945, the day we were liberated. The day we were liberated, the Germans made a Blocksperrung again, so they closed everybody up. And they went after the two Jewish boys in the crematorium. And they killed them. And they went looking for me and my brother and two other guys to kill us as witnesses. But the Czech, the schreiber, heard that they're coming and for what, so he came running to us, and he said for us to hide.

**INT:** He saved your life, then.

**SAL:** Yes. I took my brother, who could barely walk, and we went into the dispensary, and we opened up the door. The doctor in the dispensary was a Pole that we knew. And there were some bodies, dead bodies in the dispensary. So I put my brother and myself between the dead bodies and closed the door and stayed there. And three hours later, the siren blew, and the Germans were gone. And we were out. And we lived. That's it.

**INT:** That's remarkable.

**SAL:** No, it's Him. It's remarkable, but it's Him.

**INT:** It's remarkable, and yet, you know, on the one hand, you point up to G-d and you say it was G-d that saved you.

**SAL:** It couldn't have been my wisdom. It couldn't have been my wisdom. Where but G-d would put the Czech in my path? A man I've never known in my life.

**INT:** You don't think it was something about you over those, while you were in camp, that you saw opportunity?

**SAL:** I doubt it. I doubt it. It could be that that was a helping factor. But I got five more minutes, I'll tell you something more remarkable.

We were liberated May 5, 1945. The Americans came. The first thing they did is they locked up the camp, because everybody was sick. They didn't want the typhoid to spread. The doctor in the dispensary says: "I can't keep you here, you're going to die. You're sick. You got typhoid. You got to go down to the hospital." The hospital was downstairs in another valley. In these trading periods - that we traded with the Jews - we saved up two gold coins, my brother had them sewn in his hat. So he said to the doctor, "We are going down to the hospital. I don't know if we'll live or die. Here are the two coins. Here is our name." He gave my brother his name, a Polish name. He was a doctor. He said, "When we are liberated. I'm going to go back to Poland. I live in this town. If you make it, come to see me, and I'll give you the coins."

Then he called in a guy and he said, "Take these two Jewish boys, the Jewish brothers, the Finkelstein bruder, take them down to the hospital." And he gave them a note. So he took us, opened the gate, and we went about half way down the gate. I sat down. I had to drag my brother, because he couldn't walk that well. And I said to the guy: "I'm not going down to the camp, because in the camp they'll kill us. Even though we've been liberated, we're Jews, and the camp was all non-Jews, and we were very sick." And he says to him, "No, they will not kill us. I'm not a Pole. I'm a Jew. I was hiding out all the time. I'm Jewish. I came here from the Polish resistance during the Polish uprising from Warsaw." Nobody in the whole world knew that he was Jewish, except that moment when he told us. And he says, "I'll make sure that you'll be taken care of." And he took us down to the camp, he found the chief doctor, and he says, "Doctor," and he gave him the name of the American major. He says: "These are relatives of this American major. You take care of these two Jewish boys." We were the only ones in the typhoid quarantine that had bed for two. Everybody slept on the floor on straw mattresses. We were the only ones who got penicillin every morning, my brother and I. That's how we survived.

**INT:** But now your brother was older than you. But it sounds as though you were really...

**SAL:** He was sicker. He was sicker. Most of the time...

**INT:** All during the times, who was...?

**SAL:** No, all through the time, he was the brain in the family, he was fine. But only when he got sick did I have to take care of him.

**INT:** So who had all these ideas?

**SAL:** I don't know whose the ideas were. Whether they were mine, or his. But the fact is, I think the red sticker was his idea. The hats were my idea. It was not a...It wasn't a question of credit. It was natural for the two of us to work together. But the amazing fact

is, he took us down, he introduced us to the doctor, the doctor was under strict orders to take individual care of us. Where hundreds of people died after liberation of malnutrition and typhoid, we were taken care of, and we didn't. And my brother went back to Poland, and went up to see the doctor, and the doctor gave him the two golden coins. After the war.

**INT:** That's remarkable.

**SAL:** Yes.

**INT:** So you think it was - you attribute this to G-d?

**SAL:** What else?

**INT:** Why should G-d have saved you and not others?

**SAL:** So I could have Joseph, so Joseph could become an attorney in Philadelphia, and be helpful in a synagogue. And meet you, so I can tell you the story. There is a purpose in everything that happens. There is a consequence. You see, I might have not told anybody that story, and I didn't, except you now. And this might somewhere wind itself up on some shelves and 2,000 years from now somebody will listen to it and say, "Remarkable," but that's what happened to one Avshalom Finkelstein.

**INT:** Do you want your children to be able to read that story?

**SAL:** Well my children eventually will learn all of this. See, my children, I think, will be strong enough emotionally to take it a little later. Right now I would not want them to be faced with that, because it's not an easy thing to do. Not for me, not for them, not for anybody. Not even for you, and you're just listening. And you're going to transcribe it, or whoever it is.

Now, the remarkable thing of my life is all these coincidences. I have to back up. One more coincidence. This one I told my children. Just before the Russian offensive in 1944, when I was in one of those forced labor camps and concentration camps, I worked as a mechanic, and there was an overhead crane, and in that overhead crane worked a nice Polish girl. And I spoke a perfect Polish. So I started to flirt with her. You know, 40 feet distance. And I told her that I need some food, if she could help me. And she said she can't, but it was a common practice. So I stole linen from the camp. And I sent it up to her with the crane. She sold it outside, and for that money, she brought me bread.

Luck would have it that one time I stole personal sheets of our SS officer. And the guy who bought them, the Polack, was caught. And he said he bought it from Maria. Maria said, I just helped him to buy bread. Now, that's one of the things that unmistakably is G-d's hand.

I was at work, and two SS soldiers come and pick me out of the camp, take me down to the guardhouse. And the commander, and I remember him, a short fat fellow, spoke to me in German, I spoke a perfect German, so I spoke to him back, and he says: "You number so and so," I wasn't a name I was a number. "Did you steal?" I said no. He said, "What do you mean, no? I have proof." I said, "I took them not as a stealing. I took them as a means of saving my life, because I was hungry. And I gave them to the girl for nothing but bread." And he looks at me and he says, "I give you two choices. You can be hung or shot, what do you pick?" And I told him very fresh, "If I had my druthers, I'd have none."

And while I talk to him, the telephone rings in the next room. And his assistant answers the phone. And comes in, white like a sheet, and whispers something to the commander. And the commander looks at me and says: "Alright, go back to camp. I'll take care of you very shortly." And I go back to camp, and there is a Blockasperrung. Any time there was a Blocksperrung it was before an execution. We had some executions; they hung some people, they shot some people. So I told my father and my brother that this is my end. The bell for the execution. I'm going to be executed, and I told them why. And my father in desperation starts to look where he can hide me, in the attic, under the...and I resigned myself that that's it, and they didn't. My father and brother still tried to figure a way how to get me out of it. And as we sit there they bring the people back from work. That was standard. Any time there was an execution, everybody had to be present and watching. So I don't vividly remember whether I said good-bye to him or not, but I was ready to die.

"Everybody out." We go out, and nobody calls my name. All of a sudden, they start coming out of the storage room, and handing everybody two loaves of bread and a blanket. They're evacuating the camp. The Russians started the offensive. They were within three miles of our camp.

**INT:** That was the message that the fellow got; that the Russians were coming.

**SAL:** The guard came to the officer, the Russians were three miles from the camp, they'd better evacuate. So here I am. I got lost in the evacuation. Never got shot or hung. Can you believe that? They could have shot me and hung me later, but they didn't. I run away from them. But that's true.

**INT:** That's remarkable, isn't it?

**SAL:** That is remarkable. That is more remarkable than anything else. Because exactly to the moment, he was ready to sentence me, and that's when the Russian offensive started.

**INT:** I can see why you attribute a lot to luck and to G-d.

**SAL:** There is a G-d there someplace, and he knows what he's doing.

**INT:** But why do you think G-d spared you and not other people?

**SAL:** You know, when somebody dies in the Jewish religion, you say, "Baruch dayan emes." Blessed be the will of G-d. Who am I to question? What can I say, why? That's His decision. That's His way. You don't question His reason. I can't question it.

(END TAPE FOUR, SIDE ONE. GO ON TO TAPE FIVE, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE FIVE, SIDE ONE)

**INT:** An interview with Sal Finkelstein. And you're sure you spell it S-a-l.

**SAL:** For all the things that might sound corny, there is one of the most famous, Bialik, Chaim Nachman Bialik's poems. Chaim Nachman Bialik wrote a lot of them, and most of it in Hebrew. He wrote some in Yiddish, but most in Hebrew. And there are many of them that are famous. But one that has influenced **millions** of Jews in Russia and in Poland, and it's always been brought out as one of the prime examples of unique Jewishness. It's called "Hamatmid." And it means, "the perseverer." And it starts in Hebrew and in Yiddish, "Nafshecha ladaat al mimenu." If your soul would like to know where all the strengths come, the strengths to go through pogroms, and the strength to revive, and the strength to bring up new generations, and then in the typical way of Bialik, he says, "El beit hamidrash."

Go and take a look in the synagogue, and take a look at the young student, the yeshiva bocher, who sits there by candlelight, whose eyes already tired and red -- because at that time there was no electricity. Sitting there and learning. This is the Makor. This is where it comes from. In Yiddish, "Nafshecha ledaat. If you want to know why, this is where you look. El beit hamidrash." Now, you said that the object of this is to find out why. All they have to do is read Bialik's poem, and Bialik will tell them what's inside. They don't have to worry about asking me.

**INT:** So how do you interpret what Bialik says? What does it mean to you in your life?

**SAL:** I'm just telling you what the poem says. And this poem, art usually reflects life. In his perception and in his artistic poem, he has told us -- and in not so many ways hinted -- that all these strengths, all these things that you act by or don't, whether it's genetic or not, conscious or subconscious, it does come from the true belief of being Jewish. He says, Jewishness has been bred into me from my grandfather, and great-grandfather, and his great-grandfather. I mean, we Jews have gone back a long way. And ever since "churban bayit sheni," ever since we were dispersed from Jerusalem, the wise men of Judaism found a way of perpetuating it in us by continuously teaching us the same story all over. I mean, you read the Chumash, for the last 2,000 years, 3,000 years, there wasn't a line changed. I mean, the way they read it 3,000 years ago, we read it now.

**INT:** But every Jew is not the same.

**SAL:** Yeah, but they all come from the same. Now, we have Jews now who are not part of our, but their grandparents, their great-grandparents, Jews who [unclear] every American Jew has come from some place, and most of them from Russia or from Germany, or from wherever they came. But those Jews who came from Russia or Germany, came from someplace before, and that someplace before, of course they came from Israel, or Palestine. And were dispersed after the destruction of the Temple. And they went to North Africa, and they went to Spain, and they went to France, and they were chosen, they went to live in Spain, and there was the golden era of Jewish life. And they were sent away from there. So you find me anybody who is Jewish in America, who is not the same, it's not because he's not Jewish. He just turned away from it. Maybe not him, maybe his father, maybe his grandfather, his great-grandfather. But somewhere down the line, he's the same Jew as my great-grandfather was. They all came from some location.

**INT:** But with **you** there was the direct tie, the direct connection.

**SAL:** In our house, Yiddishkeit, Jewishness, was as natural as breathing. I mean, and it wasn't just in our house. But in my house -- and I guess my wife's house and other houses -- you came home Friday night, and the whole family sat at the table. And we all sang Hebrew songs. And sang the religious songs -- zemiros as they call it. And we all bentsched [chanted the grace after meals]. There was no question that after the meal you bentsched, and you talked about Israel and about Zionism. We were very Zionist. My father and my older brothers. So I just, by ...what is it called?

**INT:** Osmosis.

**SAL:** By osmosis. By simple osmosis, it just permeated into me. Without me even thinking that it can be any different.

**INT:** That's such a strong part of you.

**SAL:** Well, of course it is. Ever since I was a child, we thought, ever since I could think or talk, my parents and my grandparents, or my older brothers and sister, we talked about Israel, and about revitalizing, a reborn Jewish people. So it stayed with me. Now I tried, because the interruption of World War II was terrible, but I tried to do the same for my children. When I came to Vineland, I was here a couple years only, maybe more. I was approached by a couple of old timers, to join the Zionist Organization of America, the ZOA, and I was a ZOA before the war. My father was, so it was natural for me, too. And the first thing they did is they said, "We'll make you the president of our chapter." There were eight members. I said, "Please."

"Well, you know more about it than we do." I said: "Fine. But I need something from you. If I have to accept it, I need from you a commitment." And they said, "What is it?" "I want to get our kids involved." And I started a Young Judea club in Vineland. And because I started it, I ran it for about five years, I got some money from them, and I hired an instructor, we had volunteers. Then later it started to get a little more successful. I got

the Hadassah chapter involved. And the Hadassah chapter, once you get them involved, they take over. And I was very happy that it took off, because there was a large group and a lot of interest. And for a number of years our Young Judea has been a bright star on our community. My boys, all of my kids, went to Young Judea, my oldest, my middle one. To this day I pride myself in credit that two or three very successful Jewish marriages came from our kids going to Young Judea, and meeting somebody in Young Judea and marrying them. And with great nachas I see my grandson is now in Young Judea in Philadelphia. And hopefully his son will be in a Young Judea, wherever he'll be.

**INT:** Are you telling me that because you felt a part of something so much greater than yourself, and such a history, that you were just more than a poor sucker who was caught in a terrible situation? Did you have that greater sense of yourself?

**SAL:** I don't know whether I would analyze it that way, because the realization has to be there. Once we were caught in this terrible process, there was very little time for thought. There was very little time for doing anything but living and surviving. But because of this, what's called, for any sakes, let's call it Zionism, all those Zionist feelings that I had, I felt sort of insulated of many of these things. You understand what I'm saying?

**INT:** No.

**SAL:** They didn't stick to me. I was Teflon. Because I knew, or at least I thought I knew, I hoped, and anybody else hoped, that this is temporary, and we are going to go to Israel, we're going to rebuild a Jewish nation, we're going to do it.

**INT:** So you had a sense of the future, and what your future might have been.

**SAL:** Sort of. Not that I stopped thinking. I'll tell you this. Even in ghetto in 1940, in early '41, in the ghetto we organized a Zionist group. We had evenings together where going out meant to get shot. We got together a bunch of youngsters, my age, a year younger, a year older, and we got together, and we talked about Israel, we talked about Zionism, we taught and sung Hebrew songs. By sheer coincidence, we had a man who was on his vacation from Israel in our town. Got caught, could never go back. So he came. He was an elderly man, and he told us about Israel. So for a little while, there was a little underground movement in Poland of Zionism, led mostly by the Hashomer Hatzair, and we had people coming to visit us. They went from Cracow to Radom and our ghetto.

**INT:** So you had a connection that really was well outside of the small place in which you lived. You had a sense of internationalism.

**SAL:** We sort of were very connected with a larger movement. But even then it wasn't a conscious thing. But my recollection, I remembered. We had this guy coming and talking to us. And we sang songs and we wrote letters. And we published sort of an internal diary between ourselves, what happened. And unfortunately, many of those died

in the very first [unclear]. If I sit and look at their pictures, if I were a painter, I could paint it, but I can't.

**INT:** It's hard to paint it with words, isn't it?

**SAL:** Well, it's a lot harder. But we were in that little piece of green land, a little backyard of a garden. We called ourselves, as a matter of fact, "Gan."

**INT:** Gan, for garden.

**SAL:** And we sat there, we were twenty of us, or thirty of us, and we pretended that the war doesn't exist. Because we knew that fifty feet from there there were Nazis, but we sat there and sang Hebrew songs, and burned an outside fire, and dreamed of Jerusalem. Do you know that...oath the Jews took in Babylon, "Im eshkachech Yerushalayim..."

**INT:** Yes. If I forget Jerusalem. May my right hand forget its cunning.

**SAL:** We sat and sang that, over and over and over. (sings) I don't know how much difference it makes. But that's how it was.

**INT:** But that's an answer to me that really makes sense. I can understand it.

**SAL:** But it's not a conscious answer. It's not something that I, at that point, thought about it. And had you not asked me, I would have never thought about it.

**INT:** You know why these questions come to mind? As I was listening to the tapes from last time, I thought, well, what's unique about this man, and I was thinking in a situation where...

**SAL:** I don't know whether the tape should reflect what's unique about this man. That he's got a very lovely wife.

**INT:** (laughs) We'll get to her!

**SAL:** Men grow proportionately, with their spouses. Now, success is measured by thousands of yards of different yards. It applies differently. Some is material, some is not material. Some is good, some is bad. But they all will tell you jokingly or not jokingly, that behind every successful man, there is jokingly a nagging woman, or a supporting woman. Behind any successful Jewish household, is a wife. She's not here, so I can tell you. She is a marvelous wife, a marvelous mother. And she is also to me, for me especially, she was a gift from G-d. Because were it not the war, we would have never met. In comparison to America. She would have lived in Chicago, and I would have lived in Dallas, and I would have finished school in Dallas, and she would marry somebody in Chicago. And maybe we would meet someplace on a vacation, and say hello to each other. And maybe not even. But war had...she lost everybody, and found herself up in a displaced person camp, adopted by a family. Not legally adopted,



but...she, they knew her parents. And that I came there to live. A matter, which is a funny story but I'm not going into it, and a few years later we got married. And she was supposed to go away with some of her friends to Israel. And her adopted parents would not let her go, because I proposed to her. She says, "You marry him, he's a nice man. You go with him. You don't hope that something else will happen." Because they wanted to see her settled.

**INT:** Now you know of course, since you said the funny story, but you won't tell it, that somebody's going to wonder what the story was.

**SAL:** I always tell them it's a pick-up. My wife was a pick-up. And she was a pick-up. But she was not a pick-up in a bar or anyplace else. I was travelling on the railroad, in the very early days after World War II stopped. And of course, everything was bombed out. And I was there, and I was dressed like a German, in leather clothes -- green suit, hat, Tyrolean hat. And she was with her girlfriend, and they couldn't get on the train, so I picked her up and threw her through the window to the train. And six months later I met her, and we got...so that's the story from a pick-up. She was literally a pick-up. And then when she saw me on the streets of the camp, she turned away, she wouldn't even want to talk to me.

**INT:** Well, because you saw a view of her that she wouldn't have wanted you to see first, huh?

**SAL:** No. At first she thought I was German. But later she found out I'm not. But still, she wouldn't want to talk to me. So that's a funny story. But that's basically where it comes from. Now we tried very consciously to act in front of our children like I saw my father and mother act, and like she saw her father and mother act. And I think that we were lucky that our children, by osmosis, by appearances, by influence, have turned out the way they are. They are very nice. Both of my sons are very Jewishly active. My daughter's got a very soft Jewish heart.

**INT:** Well where I was going with that question was that I sensed that what was unique, when I say unique, that you were unique, that you were in a situation where most people felt very powerless to do anything, to change their lives or to help themselves. And yet, there were so many things you did. Where you took risks, and you acted, rather than just being acted upon and taking whatever came your way. And that's what struck me from listening and thinking about our conversation. What do you think about that?

**SAL:** The tape, cannot show that I raise my hand? I don't know. I guess I would have to go to a psychologist and discuss with him what and why. But I basically will go back to my opening remark. I think that Bialik's expression of the *beit hamisdrash*, turning to Judaism as I saw it, from my grandparents and my parents, and my uncles and cousins, and the "Havivah tzion", the love of Zion, and the love of Israel, that sort of made more sense to me than anything else. And I sort of thought that this is natural, and that's why I have to act as I act, in order to be Jewish.

**INT:** So was it a way to stay, was it your way of trying to stay alive, in order to get out of the situation and to do what you wanted to do?

**SAL:** I couldn't frankly tell you yes or no, because as I repeatedly told you, we did not have time to sit down and think. The Germans were excellent in dehumanizing people. If you had any human emotions, if you had any love, if you had any sympathy, you just did not have time to express it.

**INT:** Sure.

**SAL:** And I was young, I was only fifteen years old. From fifteen years old, sixteen years old then, is not the fifteen or sixteen year old in these days. Nowadays sixteen year olds are almost grown up. Twelve-year-old girls have children. But I don't know. It might be, but it was not a conscious thing in my head.

**INT:** But looking back on it, looking back as an older person looking back at the younger person, what would you say about that person?

**SAL:** I don't know. I still think that it's faith. I'm a great believer in faith. Maybe my reactions were not just influenced by faith.

**INT:** The next section here deals with liberation. I think you described how you ended up in the hospital and you had given your coins to the Polish doctor.

**SAL:** That is unique! To find among the masses a Jew who was covered it up with being a Pole, so he was among the Polacks. Him knowing the doctor, and the doctor being very nice to us to take care of us for our health, and returning the monies to us after that.

**INT:** That's remarkable.

**SAL:** That is unique. Because we were flies on the wall. Who would remember, who knew that we will survive, and if we do, that we'll ever come back? He came home to Poland, and he put it in a safe, with an envelope, with our name, so that wherever we show up he would give it back to us.

**INT:** Did he do that because he was a Jew?

**SAL:** No, no, the doctor was not Jewish.

**INT:** The doctor who took the coins, was not Jewish?

**SAL:** Yeah, he was not Jewish; he was a Polack. The guy who took us to the doctor was a friend of his. He was Jewish.

**INT:** But that must have seemed remarkable, to think that a Pole should have acted in that way.

**SAL:** It's still remarkable, yes. My brother would remember the name. I don't remember.

**INT:** It really went contrary to every experience you had with Poles.

**SAL:** It was an amazing contradiction. Liberation in itself is a funny thing. You will hear from a thousand different people a thousand different versions of liberation. I was liberated in a camp. I was in Mauthausen. It was May 5. I was sick by then. My brother was very sick. I was sick. And a day before, or the morning before, all of a sudden, the guards were gone. And as I told you last time, when they came and picked these two other boys and killed them and burned them. Within an hour, there was no trace of any German. And two hours later, the gates opened, and here drove in an American tank, with American soldiers, and we were liberated. And the first thing the Americans did after they liberated it; they locked up the camp with barbed wire and fences, because of the epidemic of typhoid. Of course, they started to give us more food, and medicine, and cleaning. But we were liberated, and we were not liberated. Of course, those who were healthy, and there were many healthy prisoners, other than us, and most of them were not Jews. There were Spaniards and Frenchmen. They organized right away a camp militia, and they started to distribute clothes, and start making arrangements to go home.

**INT:** What did you think when you saw the American tank?

**SAL:** Well, I was too weak to do anything. But I do remember that they took that officer, and threw him in the air, and they almost killed him from the hurrahs, from happiness. From happiness, they just tossed him in the air, and clapping him, and being happy with him. His wasn't the only tank. It was one tank, and then came another, and then a third and a fourth. But it was 11:00 in the morning, on a bright sunny morning on May 5, 1945. I was liberated.

**INT:** Now, when you were healthy enough from the hospital, you and your brother...

**SAL:** That was three months later. For me it was three months later.

**INT:** So you were hospitalized for three months? Your brother was with you?

**SAL:** My brother was hospitalized for less. Because after we both recovered from typhoid, I developed pleurisy. And I was a very sick boy with my pleurisy. My brother was already well, so he didn't stay in the hospital. So he went back to Poland to see if anybody survived. And I stayed in the hospital. Then when he came to Poland and he found my mother and sister, and he stayed with them for a little while, not long. He came back to pick me up. By that time I was already discharged from the hospital. I licked the pleurisy and came home.

And again, as amazing as it sounds, it sounds amazing, it sounds corny, it sounds silly, but it's the truth. There was a Jewish doctor in the American army. From Detroit, I forgot his name. Short little fat fellow. And the moment that he discovered I'm there and I'm Jewish, he made it as a routine that every morning he would come in and bring me some wine, because I needed, and some extra food, and watched over me like an angel, to make sure that if there is any chance of recovery, I should recover. Because many, many prisoners died after the liberation from diseases and malnutrition.

I complained to him that all they gave me is clear broth and crackers, and he said thanks for that, because if you eat anything else, you'll die. You build your strength. And I didn't speak any English, and he spoke a little bit of Yiddish. He said, Thank G-d for that, because that will give me strength to recover. And sure enough, a week later I got a piece of white bread. And white bread to me sounded like, tasted like cotton. We never got used to this soft white bread. And they brought me some bread, and then some other stuff. I was, actually I was not freed from the hospital till October of that year. Almost October, past Rosh Hashana.

**INT:** So what arrangements did you have with your brother to reconnect with him?

**SAL:** Well he came back; he knew where I was. He went to Poland, and he came back to the same camp.

**INT:** Now where were your mother and sister staying in Poland?

**SAL:** First they went to our hometown where we lived, and stayed there for not too long, and then they moved to another town, to Lodz, a large city. And that's where I came to. When I came home from camp, I came to Lodz. My brother knew where I was, he came back, I was in Linz. Actually in Busen, just outside of Linz, in the camp. After I recovered, he came back, we stayed two, three days and packed up and went back to camp.

**INT:** How could your mother and sister come back, when the people had been so hostile before?

**SAL:** Well, at first they didn't know it. They went there also looking for family. And then when they came to the city we lived in, they found out that nobody's there. So they went back to Lodz and waited there, because they didn't want to stay in Radom. It was very painful to stay.

**INT:** Well, of course.

**SAL:** So that's why. And we stayed in Lodz, I think I was in Lodz maybe three weeks, that's all, and we turned around and we went back to Germany, in order to go...

**INT:** How could you afford to do all this traveling?

**SAL:** It didn't cost us anything. Refugees just got on the train. We didn't buy no tickets, or anything. We went through borders. Poland, to Czechoslovakia, from Czechoslovakia to Germany. But at that time, right after the war, DP's as they called them, displaced persons, they had free rides on everywhere. Nobody questioned it. But we stayed in Lodz, I think, three weeks, and got onto the train and went to Czechoslovakia. We got to Czechoslovakia, we lived in this transient hotel that the Joint Committee had set up. We stayed in that hotel for I don't know -- for months. And my brother developed scarlet fever.

**INT:** Oh. You all must have been so...vulnerable.

**SAL:** So he was taken to the hospital, and he was put into quarantine. And my mother and sister, they went to Germany. And I stayed behind to stay with my brother until **he** recovered.

**INT:** Why was the goal Germany? Why did you want to go to Germany?

**SAL:** Because a lot of camps were in Germany. Displaced person camps, and from there, supposedly, we all would be going to Israel pretty soon.

**INT:** Oh, so that was the...

**SAL:** That was before Truman.

**INT:** Departure point.

**SAL:** Yeah. Everybody, almost everybody, most of the people went back to the displaced persons camps in Germany. See, some of them never left. We left, but some of them never left. There were large displaced camps in Germany, and from there it was supposed to be easy, later, to go to Israel. That's where we were supposed to go.

**INT:** Now who had to tell...was it your brother who told your mother that your father hadn't survived?

**SAL:** Yes. No, first he told her that he thinks he survived and he's going to find him. When we came back we had to tell her, he's not alive. So we went to Germany and lived in one town first, and then we moved to a camp in Stuttgart, where most of the survivors from Radom congregated. So it was almost like having Radom.

**INT:** Did you find people there that you had known before?

**SAL:** Oh, yeah. Eight out of ten people who lived in Stuttgart were from Radom in that displaced persons camp. There were others. My wife, and some others. But most of the people were from Radom or the little towns surrounding Radom. It was sort of like a call from the wild. Everybody who was from Radom, or near Radom congregated in

Stuttgart. Other places, people from Lodz, most of them went to live near Frankfurt-am-Main.

**INT:** But that's really interesting, because I bet a lot of matches were made, as people joined up with people who were from the same place.

**SAL:** Oh, yes, a lot of women married a lot of men. They had husbands, they had wives, they knew they died, and they married, because they started establishing new lives. A lot of them knew each other or knew of each other right after the war.

**INT:** Now, with all the deaths, your brothers died, and your father, how did your family deal with the losses? How did they mourn, or did you have a chance to mourn the loss of these people?

**SAL:** To this day we mourn them. This is a very touchy subject. Most of the survivors blame themselves for surviving.

**INT:** Do you feel that way?

**SAL:** Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Yes. Why not my father, why not my brothers? Why not my grandfather or grandmother or uncles or cousins? They were great people, they were as good as I, if not better. Most of them were better than I. And they already had...they were grown, they were mature, they were full of wisdom and education. But ...the will of living and the nature of it is once you survived, you lived. So you lived. So you try to build, and get better and better and better. And build your life, rebuild whatever you could. Of course then my sister and my brother, they got married and started building families. I was the last one to marry, but I was also the youngest. And the idea was to marry, establish a life, and have children, and possibly go to Israel. Then this going to Israel turned out to be a nightmare, because England put out the White Paper and wouldn't let anybody in.

Meanwhile my sister's husband found an uncle in New York, and the uncle insisted that he's the only surviving nephew, that he should come and live in the United States. So my brother-in-law and sister came to the United States, and my mother, having only one daughter, wanted to be near her, so we turned around and we went to the United States, it was my sister who got papers from her uncle for us, and for my mother, and we all came here to the United States in '48.

**INT:** So how much time elapsed from the time that you were in Germany till the time that you came to the United States?

**SAL:** Well, I was liberated in '45. I was back in Germany at the end of '45, the beginning of '46. And by '48 we were in the States. We came to the States in 1948.

**INT:** Okay, so you spent several years in Germany.

**SAL:** Approximately two years. Almost two and a half years.

**INT:** What did you do then?

**SAL:** Nothing.

**INT:** Nothing?

**SAL:** Well, nothing, is...we lived in a displaced persons' camp, so we were well supplied with food and clothing. Not luxurious, but they had. I...(laughs) I guess it was traditional. I helped, I was in the...

(END TAPE FIVE, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE FIVE, SIDE TWO)

LONG PAUSE - ABOUT A MINUTE.

**INT:** And you were instrumental...

**SAL:** You see I was, we were all going to Israel, so I took a very strong course in learning Hebrew. I knew how to daven, and I knew a little bit of Hebrew, but I didn't know enough to matter. But there was a gentleman there of my father's friend, Rosenberg, and he taught me Hebrew on a crash course, and I learned it very quickly. In my younger days I was very capable of learning languages. So, when we established a school, I was a Hebrew teacher. My wife was one of my pupils. And there were a bunch of youngsters that age, younger than me, or the same age, but I taught them Hebrew. And I also then started a group for Zionist Youth. In Germany, we had, we called it "Yehud."

**INT:** Yehud?

**SAL:** Yechud. That's called one, united. Yechud.

**INT:** Echad.

**SAL:** Echad means one. Yechud means united.

**INT:** Yes, okay.

**SAL:** And there was some elderly people, the grown-ups, the Mapai and the ZOA, like all Jews, they had fifty...

**INT:** So you were still focusing on going to Israel, and then somehow, you had to change your thinking...

**SAL:** Well, I have not changed my thinking. I reluctantly agreed to go with my mother and brother, because my mother would not leave her daughter, and my mother would not leave us, so the decision was made by G-d and Mother, that we are all going to the United States. So we came to the United States.

**INT:** Oh. This may sound strange, but did you ever, was there ever a time when you questioned whether you wanted to go on living?

**SAL:** No.

**INT:** That never...

**SAL:** I didn't particularly care if I die. I mean, if it happens, I die, I die.

**INT:** Yeah, because you said at one time, when you got the choice, shooting, hanging, shooting, hanging, you said personally, I'd rather have neither, but then when you thought that it was going to be your time, you said you were ready. So what made you ready?

**SAL:** Because at that point, there was...there are things you can do about, and things you can't. If they decided to hang me, so they hang me. They shoot me. There's nothing...I couldn't escape, I couldn't run, I couldn't change my skin.

**INT:** So you were resigned to it.

**SAL:** Yeah. It was sort of like an acceptance. And apparently I was supposed to create some more mischief in this world, and G-d said, "Hey, Russians, you move!" You know, just to save me, G-d took 2,000,000 Russian soldiers and gave an order to start the offensive. I mean, that's a lot of argument.

**INT:** That's powerful! (laughs)

**SAL:** As a matter of fact, we, all of our survivors have made a joke of it for many years. When we met each other, they said, "You know, for you, 110 nations fought so you could be freed." It was always a serious joke to the characters among us. (Yiddish) 110 nations fought Hitler, well, it wasn't 110, but we said 110 -- fought Hitler for you to survive. And of course, all of the power of the United States was behind this one minute of May 5, 1945, for me to be freed! Can you imagine, all the tanks that Chrysler made, and all the airplanes that Boeing built were built for that purpose, to free me. Because...

**INT:** Just Avshalom Finkelstein.

**SAL:** If I didn't, weren't free, then the world wouldn't exist. At least, my world wouldn't exist, because I wouldn't be here. So I take credit for that.



**INT:** It's a bittersweet joke. This is, one of the questions has to with your faith in G-d before and during and after. From what you've told me, I don't think your faith in G-d has...

**SAL:** Has never changed. Has never diminished. Another poem from Bialik. It's called Ir Haharega, after the pogrom in Kishinev. And he says, "Heaven, if there is to you a road, a highway, and there is a G-d in there, I haven't found it." (Hebrew) Heavens, if there is a G-d, and there is a road to this G-d, I haven't found it yet. But he says, "I haven't found it yet. He does not say, "I haven't found it." (Hebrew) And I didn't find Him yet. So I was always looking for that road. And I had some friends who are Lubavitcher. And I respect them. I respect everyone -- Jewish or non-Jewish. Also, I have a little less tolerance for non-Jews than for Jews. But the Lubavitcher, as Orthodox as they are, they're sort of more humane than the Satmar.

And this Lubavitcher, he told me: "You should put on tefillin every day, even twice a day." And I said to him, "Lazar, why should I put tefillin every day? And why should I put tefillin twice a day sometimes, or three times a day?" Because my grandfather used to put tallis and tefillin every day, and on Purim, he used to put on two. There was a small sect in Poland of Hasidim who put on two sets of tefillin, one on the right hand and one on the left hand, on Purim, because we were freed. Anyway, he says, putting on tefillin is a simple matter. Every time you put on tefillin you put a step in the rung of the ladder leading to heaven. And since you don't know how many rungs you need to go to heaven, so the more rungs you put in, the chances of going to heaven are better. Very logical explanation.

**INT:** Yes. Well, let's turn to this section on marriage, children, family. Tell me a little bit more about how you met your wife, Goldie.

**SAL:** That's it. I met her. Veni, Vini, Vici. I saw her, I liked, and I...

**INT:** Ah! Well, when you saw her, did you ask somebody who she was?

**SAL:** No, I was very surprised to meet her later on. See, once I saw her on the train, then I lost sight of her.

**INT:** She's beautiful now. She must have been gorgeous.

**SAL:** Oh, she was a...stopper on the street. I didn't know who she was. But I don't know whether it was a couple of months later, I saw her walking down the street of our camp. And I found out she was in our camp, and what her name was, and where she stays, and she was working then for the camp administration as an assistant to a dentist.

**INT:** Her name wasn't Goldie, though?

**SAL:** Yeah, her name was Goldie. Goldie Cukier, pronounced Tsuker.

**INT:** Tsuker?

**SAL:** Yeah. Tsuker, tusker -- which is sugar. She was sweet like sugar. So that's what it was. Then she became one of my pupils in the Hebrew class, and we belonged to the same group of contemporaries in that youth organization in the school, and we got to go out together, and I proposed, and she wouldn't say yes or no. So I went to her parents. And her parents said yes. She was very bashful. She was very young. She was...when I met her she was 16. And we married she was 17 years old; 17 years and two months. But it was a very happy and lucky choice.

**INT:** Did you have any misgivings about getting married? Were you worried about getting married?

**SAL:** No. I asked my mother what are we going to do if she gets pregnant and we were still in Germany. And Mother said, "Don't worry. G-d gives a baby; he gives for the baby. He always provides for a child, so don't worry about it."

**INT:** So that was your only concern, what would happen if you had a child?

**SAL:** Yeah, well, at that time we had very little worries. We were in camp. We did a little what they called black marketing, and we made money. At that time money meant very little. And as a matter of fact it meant very little for a long time with me, because I found out what materialism brings you. Nothing. Many of our friends, including some of my family, they hoarded money and bought diamonds and gold and hid it and when the Germans came, it was never recovered. Either the Germans took it or the Poles took it. If they had homes, they disappeared. Somebody just appropriated them. So material things, in the early stages of my marriage meant nothing, because I know that they're meaningless. They're still meaningless. I mean, Uncle Marcus used to say, "You only need a dollar more in your pocket than you need to spend." If you need five dollars to spend, if you have six, you're a rich man, because you've got more than you need. So you don't need a lot of money. If you...the Hebrews have an expression. You must have heard it. It's from Pirkei Avot. "Eyzeh hu he'ashir?" Who is rich? "Hasameach bechelko." The man who is happy with his lot. It does not mean...

**INT:** I've had many times to quote that!

**SAL:** Not that it means he doesn't have to do anything, but whatever he achieves, he's happy; that's a richness. And I think I told you this already. How rich I was. With this older gentleman that I used to come and talk to, who told me that my wife is two million, and America is two million, being young is two million, and having three children. He said, "Before you turn around, you've got ten million dollars, and you don't even have to have no money yet. You already have ten million dollars."

**INT:** Oh. So I see what your values were.

**SAL:** Now it's a little reversed. America, being in America is only worth half a million, but my wife is worth about ten million. So it balances out.

**INT:** So how would you describe your marriage over the years?

**SAL:** A very happy life; a very happy marriage. Really. And that's mostly due to her, because she's a good wife. A very good wife, and a very good mother. And I would have no problems. I wish my kids would have it. And they do. Have as happy a marriage as I did. I guess, again by osmosis, they learned or saw and they are doing fine. But my three children have never given me any trouble. Not the slightest bit of trouble ever. My daughter gave us a little bit of worry. She got sick when she was in college. But other than that, none of them were turned on by these crazy things. None of them were ever into extremes of drugs, or drinks, or running around, or being left or right. Very solid, nice kids.

**INT:** Now you said you kind of patterned, you remembered what your parents had done in raising you, and so you...

**SAL:** Well, I lived a very...well, a very simple life. But there were no arguments, no fights among us. Ever. The children would never witness any harsh words between husband and wife. They always saw us caring for each other, and touching and hugging. And so they learned.

**INT:** They saw affection. That's interesting, because I remember when I asked you about your father and your mother and your grandmother and grandfather, how they settled their disagreements. And I guess I would ask you the same thing, how you and Goldie handled any disagreements.

**SAL:** That's how she handled it.

**INT:** How?

**SAL:** No disagreements. We always worked it out.

**INT:** Well, some people...

**SAL:** Very seldom. Sometimes she got a little cross, so she wouldn't speak to me for five minutes or ten minutes. I would come apologize, or she would come apologize. We tried. We tried to the best of our knowledge not to create problems. Of course, we had some ups and downs. I had tough times economically. We had to buckle down, so she did. We had it a little better. Now she tells me, now that I'm retired, we have to start trimming a lot of things. She said, "Do you want to sell the house and move into a cabin, I'll move in a cabin. You want to move to Florida? Anything you want, just don't worry yourself about it, because it isn't worth it." Sometimes I joke and say we'll buy a trailer, you know, one of those mobile cars, and drive around. If she wants it, fine.

**INT:** Go from child to child and visit. (laughs)

**SAL:** I told her once, we have enough friends if we go once a month to some friend for dinner, we will save a lot of money. We don't even have to do anything. You know, if you go once a month to a friend for dinner, you don't have to reciprocate so often.

**INT:** How did you and Goldie make your decisions, during the years of your marriage?

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

**INT:** How did you decide to buy this house?

**SAL:** She nagged me. She wanted a house. She wanted...

**INT:** So you were living in an apartment?

**SAL:** No, no, no. We lived on a farm. Which is way back in the woods.

**INT:** With the chickens.

**SAL:** Yes. And then we stopped chickening, we stopped farming, and she says she wants to move out, it's not good for the children; it's not good for her.

**INT:** So you had all three children at that point on the farm.

**SAL:** And my sister moved out and my brother moved out -- or were about to move out. So I didn't want to, but I finally agreed. I was afraid I wouldn't be able to pay it off. But somehow G-d gave me; we managed. We came and we bought this house. She remodeled it; it was completely different than what you see. It was old, early American, dark and dingy. She changed it into a very livable nice home. And we bought it, 22 years ago. In 1972 we moved here.

**INT:** So you were concerned that you wouldn't be able to sustain, the payments?

**SAL:** Of course. I was never a millionaire. I still am not. I have just enough money to pay what I have. Just like Uncle Marcus. I got a dollar. And thanks G-d. (knocks wood) for the next 50, 60 years, I'll manage. And if it won't be 50, 60, I'll take 20 or 30, whatever. You know, between Uncle Sam and social security, and a little bit of savings that I still have, we'll survive. Plus I have friends. I'll go to dinner.

**INT:** Considering what had happened to you in your lifetime, were you worried about having children? How did it feel to you to have children?

**SAL:** Well, first of all, I never thought consciously of having or not having children. We were married, we went to bed, we had sex, and a child comes.

**INT:** (Laughs) That's how I got a few, too.

**SAL:** Who was thinking about it?

**INT:** So you didn't consciously decide to have children. It just happened.

**SAL:** Yeah. I didn't consciously decide to have them, and I didn't consciously decide **not** to have them. And by the time we had our third child, it was enough.

**INT:** Okay.

**SAL:** Today's young people have schedules and plans. They don't do this until they do this. And then it becomes too late, and they don't even know why and when.

**INT:** Now, how did you - at which point did your children find out about your past life -  
- your past lives, you and your wife?

**SAL:** I don't quite know. We never talked about it in the house. For a long time the children were not aware that we were...

**INT:** Did they know, or was it just that you had talked about it?

**SAL:** They just didn't connect with it. They were normal American kids, getting up in the morning, going to school.

**INT:** What language did you speak at home?

**SAL:** We spoke English. To each other we spoke in Yiddish or Polish; Yiddish, mostly. And to them...

**INT:** Well, did all their friends have parents who spoke Yiddish?

**SAL:** Yeah, most of them.

**INT:** So there was no way that they would know anything...

**SAL:** They did not feel any different. I don't know exactly when, but when they got a little older, they found out that their parents have it a little different, they are newcomers, and they speak a little different than the others. And most of us were farmers at that time. And other children's parents, the non-Jewish parents, were not all farmers, you know, when they went to public school. But I think that they knew that we are a little different, because we always spoke about coming from Europe and this and that. But they were really aware of camp, I have no idea when. I think it was quite a while. It was quite a while. I think my oldest one, Evie wasn't born yet when Joey and Jackie knew about being in camp. But it didn't matter to them. I mean, they didn't feel deprived of anything. They knew that they...

**INT:** Well, what did they think about it?

**SAL:** They knew they didn't have grandparents or many uncles because of the war.

**INT:** But your experience was - your life had been so different from the lives of some of the other...

**SAL:** I didn't carry it over into life here. We did not carry it over. We led as normal a life as we possibly could, for them to grow a normal life, and they all went to school. Also, the two boys went to yeshiva in the beginning, and they both learned a lot of "Yiddishkeit" [Jewish way of life], which stayed with them for the rest of their life. They both know how to read Hebrew and daven. All that stuff.

**INT:** I guess I asked the question because I recall when I was nine years old and I went to a Talmud Torah, that's when I first heard about the Holocaust. And hearing about it made such a change in **my** life. I didn't know people who were directly affected, so I would think that if your own parents were involved, that you would have, perhaps a different feeling about it than if you just heard about it as having happened to other people.

**SAL:** I don't know. I never questioned my children. I don't know whether it affected them or not. I know that we tried to make them as normal and think as normal as possible, with the awareness that they don't have grandparents, and with the awareness that their parents have gone through a terrible thing. But that's over with and, "zachor," remember, and never again. That's what our children were taught, I guess; never to let the Holocaust happen again. Hopefully never let the Holocaust happen.

**INT:** But they were aware of your feelings about that?

**SAL:** I would imagine so.

**INT:** Did they ask you what had happened, or ask you stories, about stories?

**SAL:** No. We didn't ask, and we didn't volunteer. It took a long, long time for us to talk to them about the Holocaust. It took a good fifteen, twenty years, before we were free enough to talk to them. While we talked among ourselves about it, we would not talk to them. I think my number one son went already to high school or almost to college before we sat down and talked to him about it. We told him why his name is what it is. And how he's named after who he is. But we did not make an issue of us being in camp. And they are pretty normal kids.

**INT:** I can certainly understand your reluctance to talk about it.

**SAL:** Well, we didn't want, quite consciously, we didn't want to put a terrible scar on their psyche. I mean, this is a heavy piece of baggage. Even for non-Jews, it's a heavy

piece of baggage. Even for a Catholic, when you told them how guilty they were in assisting and helping by their reluctance to speak up, and sometimes actively helping. So it's a blot on humanity that historians will have a hard time explaining a thousand years from now. How could a people do it? Also, people can be pretty inhumane. China starved out millions of people almost consciously. And there are people starving now. I don't know whether it's conscious or not. But down in Southern Asia and Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, millions of people still starving, and nobody's helping them. We don't even know that they're there.

And yet when you talk about control of population, who's going to scream from the Catholic Church, from the Jewish rabbis, the blacks in America. The moment you talk birth control, they're talking about genocide of black Americans; because their strength is in their numbers. We don't want them to have a lot of black bastards. And we have a lot of black bastards. Most of them, what is it, I don't know the percentages, but so many black children are born out of wedlock that it's not even funny. It's more common to see a black child without a married father than with a married father. It's not unusual for one mother to have five, six men, and have five six, children. Each one another man. And yet, those kids have no chance in life to begin with. They'll have malnutrition when they're young, they'll never have much future, because the mother is poor. Where is she going to get it? No matter what the state does, it cannot catch up with the volume of poverty.

**INT:** When you did sit your eldest son down and talk to him, do you remember what he said?

**SAL:** No, I think for a while they were very, very subdued. They had a hard time digesting it. You know, take a sane American kid, and tell him about that.

**INT:** That's why I'm asking, because I'm just thinking about my children, and what it would be like.

**SAL:** It's not so easy. They got to accept it because they sort of, I think they sort of felt that they will be helpful in rebuilding the Jewish national spirit, and the Jewish physical presence. Because the only defeat, the only victory Hitler will have is if we accept defeat and don't do anything about rebuilding our nation. We did, and not enough, but we rebuilt some.

**INT:** And they accepted it as a positive challenge.

**SAL:** You know what the word "nachas" means? [Happiness and pride] You take children of the so-called refugees, the so-called refugees, the new Americans, those who came, the Holocaust survivors. You and I can only speak about our town, but I know in New York, too, some of my friends - out of these ashes - eight out of ten children are professionals, and high in their profession. I mean, if he's a psychiatrist, he's among the top psychiatrists. If he's a surgeon, he's among the top surgeons. If he's a lawyer, he's a top lawyer. If he's an accountant, he's a top accountant. And many of them are

professionals. Many. Now my cousin, we just spoke about her this morning. She has two children, a son and a daughter. The son is a cardiologist; very respected cardiologist in Northern New Jersey. The daughter is an attorney working for some financial company as an analyst; and very respected among the top brass. A young daughter. Parents are my cousins. She was in camp together with my sister. I was in camp together with her husband.

My...other relatives that I have -- other than my brother and my sister -- most of the children are professionals. My brother has three daughters. They all finished college. But they didn't pursue for a career, because as girls, one married a doctor, one married an insurance executive, and a third one married a young boy, just got married. He'll do all right, too. But most of the families that I know, [unclear name] got three children. Two are lawyers, one is a doctor. I could pick...

**INT:** So they're very high achievers.

**SAL:** And if they didn't, they went in business, they became very good businessmen.

**INT:** Why? Why are they such high achievers?

**SAL:** Because they wanted to help their parents. They wanted to show their parents. Their parents gave them a lot of love and attention, and they wanted to repay their parents, so they did not snag[?] down. They wanted their parents' approval. They wanted to make life better for their parents. And by themselves, if they grow, the nachas that a parent gets. Out of the millions that I have, is the nachas that I have from my children.

**INT:** Do you feel that your children felt the same way?

**SAL:** I'm sure they did. They still are my children, their success was always my success. The very first thing they achieved was to call mother and father; that they did this and they did this. And most of the credit they would give to their mother.

**INT:** Did they just think that that was expected of them?

**SAL:** Even if it wasn't expected, they were going to give this as a gift to their parents. Also it was expected. How could a Jewish child be stupid? I mean, it doesn't work that way.

**INT:** Well, there are some stupid Jewish children! (laughs)

**SAL:** But basically, you don't expect it. If you're Jewish, you're expected to be smart. And most of the time you are. We have stupid Jews. We're not all that great. But we're greater, you know, in comparison.

**INT:** But you feel that your children wanted very much to achieve...



**SAL:** Yes, they wanted to achieve so that their parents would be happy with what they are. More so for their parent than for themselves.

**INT:** What did they think it would give you?

**SAL:** Nachas. What else is there? Nachas.

**INT:** Would it make up in any way for what you couldn't have done with your lives?

**SAL:** I don't know. But to this day if I feel blue, I'll get the car and go visit my son. Watch those three children. Not even talk to him. That's my territory. I see those three "mamzerim." [word used humorously] I call them. And of course, they've grown up now, and see how bright they are, how nice they are. I get recharged. It's, you know, I think it was Socrates who said that life itself is enough, that you don't need to have explanations for it. Life is for living. You don't have to have any reasons, conscious reasons. You don't have to explain. You just live. Live for as long as you can.

You go many times to a funeral, and the rabbi will tell you that the span between being born and death is just a brief interval that G-d gives you as a gift. And you accept, thank Him for the time that he gave you, or for your parents or your children. But we're all destined to die the moment we get born. I mean, nobody ever got out of it alive. Whoever...

**INT:** And hearses don't have luggage racks.

**SAL:** And nobody ever came back, contrary to some opinions. Nobody comes back. So, if it were conscious, I would say consciously the children wanted to achieve to please their parents. That accidentally helped them, it was accidental. That's how I feel about it. And I'm very proud of my children.

**INT:** Do you think your grandchildren are trying very hard to please their parents?

**SAL:** Well, it's too early. They're too young. From what I can see of them, yes. They're very well brought up. They do exactly as they are told, and as they should. The parents don't ask them to do things that they shouldn't, and they do it, and they do it right, and they do it smart. Bright and intelligent, and I'm sure they'll grow up into nice, nice, people. But of course it's up to the Almighty if they do. I hope they will. So far they give every indication of being, nice, nice people.

(END TAPE FIVE, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE SIX, SIDE ONE)

**INT:** Interview with Sal Finkelstein. When the tape ended, I just started to ask you about your philosophy of child-rearing. And I'm sure that you have one. (laughs) But I'm going to ask about specific things, so that rather than be general, we'll get specific.

**SAL:** What was the name of the German longshoreman in San Francisco, who was a philosopher? I forgot his name.

**INT:** I know who you mean. What about him?

**SAL:** He was a philosopher. I am not. I can't tell you philosophy.

**INT:** Well, you have some. Philosophy is a five dollar word. But you have certain beliefs and attitudes.

**SAL:** Two dollars things.

**INT:** Okay, well, get down to the two dollars. How did you and your wife handle discipline?

**SAL:** Remarkably, we never had to. Once, only once in my life, I smacked one of my sons. And I smacked him because he talked back to his mother. Talked back on something that she told him, and he talked back to her, so I smacked him. And that was it.

**INT:** Where'd you smack him?

**SAL:** On the knee. We were sitting, and I smacked him. He had red marks on his knee, for a day.

**INT:** Which son was this?

**SAL:** It doesn't matter.

**INT:** Okay. (laughs)

**SAL:** But I smacked him so that he would know that you don't be disrespectful to a mother. You can do anything, but a mother you don't talk back to.

**INT:** Okay, so that was physical. But how about if...

**SAL:** I've never needed to. Honestly. My children -- unless my wife did something different than I did -- my children never needed discipline. It was enough to tell them that that was expected of them. That's not what you should do and they wouldn't do it.

**INT:** Oh, okay. That's discipline. But there's a difference between physical discipline and...

**SAL:** They say in Yiddish, "sepasht nicht." You know what's sepasht nicht? "It's not becoming." And we use that sepasht nicht very often. It's unbecoming a Jewish boy or a Jewish girl to act like this. And it's unbecoming because it'll hurt your mother, or it will hurt your father, or it will hurt your family name. You don't do things like that. And they don't.

**INT:** Well, yes, but you did discipline them. Discipline doesn't always mean where you give somebody a patsch on tuchus.

**SAL:** Well, we set certain limits, and they accepted it. Sepasht nicht: "You don't do that."

**INT:** Did they come to a point where they...

**SAL:** Rebelled? No. Sometimes they did. But they wouldn't.

**INT:** Suppose you said, be home by 10:00.

**SAL:** I didn't put those limits. My brother [son?] says he never lost a fight. And I said, Joe how could you not lose a fight? He says, if I couldn't win, I wouldn't start.

**INT:** All right.

**SAL:** You understand? I never told him that he got to be in by 10:00, and then if he come at 11:00 I would yell at him. I would say: "be home early."

**INT:** So you really left a lot of decisions...

**SAL:** Mother would worry if you come late. Don't take the family car because we need it. We didn't have a family car. For years we had one car for three families and we had to budget the time. Budget the space. Money wasn't always available.

**INT:** What's interesting, what you were saying to me, though is that, it's not just what you and your wife expected, but that there was a certain code that Jews followed, because by doing something, it was not the kind of thing that **Jews** do.  
Is that what I heard?

**SAL:** You don't do what "shkutzim" [derogatory term for non-Jews] do. You don't drink beer in public. You don't spit. Whatever, you don't do.

**INT:** So there were certain things that you did, or didn't do because you were Jewish, rather than just because it was in your family.

**SAL:** Our children, they're expected to act like Jewish children act. And Jewish children act like this. And they did.

**INT:** So far everything I'm hearing you say over these weeks is the strong part that being Jewish has played in your life.

**SAL:** It helps. It helps. I mean, I never was a Catholic or a Protestant, so I don't know. Also I might want to try it some day, but... (laughs)

**INT:** How about your attitude towards your children and their schoolwork? Education?

**SAL:** We expected and always got good results. My number one son has a brilliant mind, a photographic memory. But he was a B student. I said Jack - it was too easy for him. He never did any homework. He never did any studying. Whatever he needed, he had an encyclopedic mind. You ask him to this day something and he remembers it. So also he did very well. Went to college, went to a very good college, he went to Pittsburgh, what's the name...

**INT:** Carnegie Mellon?

**SAL:** Carnegie Mellon. Graduated from Carnegie Mellon. Not on top of the class, but pretty high. Got a scholarship from Northwestern, didn't have to pay for his post-graduate studies. They gave him a college check plus a stipend. He met his wife at Carnegie Mellon. They got married, I think the day of graduation. Not the day of graduation, but after they graduated. And they went to Chicago. She went to work, and he went to Northwestern University for his post-graduate studies. And he was doing very well, and he's still doing very well. He's now an outstanding man in his field for research on lungs - preemies, premature children, and lung development. He's a consultant for the atomic energy, he's a consultant for some industries. He flies around the world and delivers speeches. He went to Italy, to Finland, to England, to Israel to deliver papers.

**INT:** So he's certainly among the top, the kids who did well.

**SAL:** Yes. He did very well. In his field he's doing very well. My other son did very well in school. He was valedictorian in one. Valedictorian in the other. He did very well, and of course he's now an attorney in Philadelphia, and he's doing very well.

**INT:** He's with a very large, prestigious firm.

**SAL:** Yes, it's a big prestigious firm, and he's doing very well in his firm. He's a good boy.

**INT:** And what about your daughter?

**SAL:** My daughter, like all daughters, she had to find herself. She went to college, finished, then went to another college and finished. And now she's a paralegal. And she also does a little entertainment. Funny, in "Fiddler on the Roof," they say, "Matchmaker, matchmaker, find me a match." For the girl, you never expect to have to push too much,

because you always thought, that what does she need? But she did very well, she's educated, she's smart. She's not a professional with a degree, but she has a master's in something, two bachelor's degrees and one master's. She's fine.

**INT:** So your expectations of your daughter are different than your expectations of your sons?

**SAL:** Yes. All Jewish fathers, expectations for Jewish daughters are different, are not unique. But the children did very well. And again, I think part of it, as I told you before, part of it was their own intellectual aspirations, and part of it was they wanted their parents to be pleased with their achievement. And they did.

**INT:** And what attitudes did you have, you told me about possessions, about things. Is this an attitude that you passed along to your children about possessions?

**SAL:** I don't know. I don't know. I really couldn't tell you. I don't mix it in my children's...

**INT:** But is it something that you consciously tried to teach your children?

**SAL:** No, no.

**INT:** About things, and how they weren't important?

**SAL:** No. It was a subject that hung in the air, and if they picked it up or don't pick it up. I know that both of my sons are very good husbands and very good housekeepers, and they provide for their family very well, and what they do or what they don't do, I don't ask them. I don't want to know. They're doing fine. My daughter is always on the short end of money. Well, women are like that. She works, and she's got loose fingers. Whatever she makes, she spends. I help her a little. But this is my pleasure.

**INT:** Was it difficult for you, finding out that your daughter had a different set of values, a different way of life from your sons?

**SAL:** You love them just the same. Children are children. Whether they're good or bad, the parents love them the same and treat them the same. I don't treat my daughter any different than I treat my sons. And I don't treat my sons any different than my daughter.

**INT:** How about your attitudes towards having fun?

**SAL:** Oh, I love to have fun and so does my wife. We're not jetsetters, jumping from fun to fun, but in our younger days we used to go out quite often to plays and shows and dancing, and even now we go out.

**INT:** And how did you transmit this to your children?

**SAL:** I think I did well. My kids like to go out and have a good time, too. I told them, there's an old expression. "Tachichim," you know what ... the shrouds where they put you...

**INT:** Oh, the shrouds.

**SAL:** Have no pockets. Tachichim. When they put you in the casket, that's what they wrap you in, a tachich. A sheet. Sheets don't have any pockets. So you can't take it with you. You might as well have a good time. I tell them that they should save for all the days, they should have enough, they shouldn't worry, but they should also not neglect living while they're alive. And they do it.

**INT:** And even though there were times when you had so very, very little...

**SAL:** So we had fun on little.

**INT:** You were able to adjust as you went on?

**SAL:** You have fun, if we, now I would go, let's say now I pay forty dollars a ticket for a show. I used to go for fifty cents to the movies. It's a degree. We used to go and eat hot dogs with sauerkraut. Now we eat filet mignon with mushroom caps, or don't. But we had fun. We went to the movies, we went to the drive-in movies, took the kids with us. We went to movies with friends, and we went out for a cup of coffee, and shared one donut with six of us, because if we didn't have the money, we didn't have the money. But that didn't stop us from having fun. We had quite an active life.

Since most of our friends were contemporaries, also farmers, we used to get together quite often in somebody's house, just drink tea and a cookie, and sing Polish songs, and Yiddish songs, and Russian songs, and reminisce, and tell stories. And our association of farmers, we had once, twice, three times a year; official dances where we hired an orchestra. I don't know whether it's quite accurate, but it's nearly accurate, that I would say, many times when I say this, people look at me. I say: "I really don't have any problems with G-d. He owes me nothing. He gave me everything I wanted. He doesn't owe me. If He gives me more, that's fine." But G-d and I have a very good relationship. He really gave me what I needed, and I'm happy with it. Including fun. It's even fun to talk to Him sometimes? You know, you go to the synagogue.

**INT:** You talk to G-d?

**SAL:** Yeah, when you go to a synagogue, you talk to him. Not with the prayers. Sometimes I say, Hey, Old Man! Why not? Don't you talk to G-d? Most people talk to G-d in the car, when they're by themselves. Our rabbi says that the most holy place that he's visited was the casinos. Because they say: "Oh, my G-d, oh my G-d, oh my G-d!" (laughter)

**INT:** I'm just thinking if I ought to ask you more about talking to G-d. What do you say to G-d?

**SAL:** Only Yonah talked to G-d, Yonah. In the fish he talked to G-d. I pray to G-d.

**INT:** Moses spoke to G-d.

**SAL:** No, G-d spoke to Moses. Moses never initiated a talk to G-d. G-d came to talk to him, and Moses answered.

**INT:** But you talked to G-d.

**SAL:** Well, he doesn't want to call me, so I call him. Maybe His line is busy. He's got a lot of people on that line. You know they just discovered a new galaxy behind the Milky Way. And it's only ten million light years away. And a light year is a million years that a light travels through. Light travels in a year one trillion, 600 million miles. Now this galaxy is ten million miles away from that. So it's, I don't even know if I can write that many zeros. And G-d is over there on the end of it. Can you imagine how busy He is? All that big thing?

**INT:** You told me what your children chose to do as careers. How were decisions made with your children? Children have minds of their own sometimes. How were some the big decisions handled? How did you and your wife and the children deal with decisions?

**SAL:** You see, we were blessed that our children were very sensitive. So they only came to us announcing that they want to do something. And we most of the time consented. Like my son said he wants to go to Carnegie Mellon. He sent away four or five applications. They accepted him. Fine. We didn't have the money. Of course, we didn't have the money, but I said, Jack, go. We went to the bank, signed a note, he got a student loan, I got a separate loan and he made it. My younger son said he doesn't want to go out of state, plus we didn't have the money, so he went to Rutgers for his undergraduate. It still cost us money, but it cost us a little less. And he had no problem going to the University of Pennsylvania, because by that time I had more money, and he got a bigger loan from the government, which he paid off later.

**INT:** But go back further, were there times...

**SAL:** It mostly flew by itself.

**INT:** But there must have been times when they were younger, where other decisions had to be made.

**SAL:** Well, the decisions to send them to yeshiva; they were not consulted. We said: "You're going. You're going. You've got to learn." Then when the yeshiva stopped at a certain level, they had to go to public school, so they went to public school. And it wasn't our decision, it was the city's decision which school they're going to, depending on where

you live. And of course by that time, they started to be of age where they had to learn for their Bar Mitzvah, so we started taking them to Bar Mitzvah lessons. And I started the Young Judea, so there was no question they go to Young Judea.

**INT:** Did you consult? Were there times when you had to talk to one another, and had to consider the child's feelings and your own feelings?

**SAL:** I don't recall. We were usually a very amicable decision-reacher. Mother would say this is what she thinks we should do, or I would say, and we would both agree. And the children would agree. There was no big argument. One argument was when Joseph finished his undergraduate, he wanted to take a year off like all other kids do to "find himself."

**INT:** Okay. So how did the family handle that issue?

**SAL:** I said: "You want to go find yourself, go ahead. But you'll miss that year later." I said: "Why don't you finish school and find yourself **after** you finish school? It'll be a lot easier if you do that." So he was playing that in his mind, and then he came back he said, "Alright. I'll go to school. Then I'll find myself." And when he finished school, he didn't have time to go find himself, because he found himself in school. He found out that he loves law, and he loves to work in it. It was no big argument. With Jack there was no big argument. Eve, she wanted to go far away from home like a lot of children. So she picked up Clark. Her mother said, She wants to go to Clark. I said, I don't have the money. She said, She wants to go to Clark. I said: "Let her go to Clark," so she went to Clark. She came back, she took a job for a year, and then decided she wants to go for a master's. And she went to Temple for another two years. We'll survive, and we did.

**INT:** So in several cases the kids really decided what they wanted to do.

**SAL:** They asked us. It wasn't that, if we insisted, if we said no they wouldn't have minded it. But we found that it was within our reach.

**INT:** But you really knew that if you said no...

**SAL:** They would have accepted it.

**INT:** They would have respected it. That gives parents a certain power, really.

**SAL:** I told you. My children were not rebellious. They never were. They're very nice. I'm very happy with them and they did the right thing. Whether it's genetic or not, who knows? When 2,000 years from now, when everything will be on computer, you push a button, they'll tell you why and where and when. But now you have to guess it.

**INT:** When your children went away to school, or they went away, were you worried about them, or were you fearful about them?



**SAL:** Mother was. Mother was. I wasn't.

**INT:** What was her fear?

**SAL:** Oh, automobile accidents, bad company. You know, mothers are like that. I didn't.

**INT:** Well, you didn't have to worry, because she was worried. Like waking somebody up in the middle of the night and telling the problem and then they're wide-awake, and you go back to sleep.

**SAL:** I wasn't worried too much. I knew that my kids are sensible, and that they'll do fine. Plus, if it happens, it happens. It would happen at home. If it was meant for them to have an accident, if it meant to have bad company, they would have had it at home. Nothing I could do to influence them not to have it. It's just that they steered a clear course. I wasn't worried about it. And I told you, the only problem we had was when my daughter got sick in the hospital once, and we had to go on emergency. But other than that, no problems.

**INT:** So it doesn't sound as though your past life experience made you especially fearful for your children.

**SAL:** No. Not at all. Not at all.

**INT:** How about with your wife? Do you think that that played a part in her fears for the children?

**SAL:** I think she tried to keep it away from them. Her fearfulness and her nightmares were her own. She kept them for herself. Sometimes she shared them with me, but not with the children. I don't think she influenced the children in any way. I really don't think so.

I got to cut it short, I got to take a rest.

**INT:** Okay, there are a few more here, we'll finish this, and then the next part is rebuilding life in America. And we'll save that for the next time.

**SAL:** America, America. Did you see that movie? That was a cute movie.

**INT:** I asked about fears and goals. What goals do you have for your children? Did you have special goals?

**SAL:** No.

**INT:** But you expected them to do well?

**SAL:** I didn't, I just let them flow naturally. Whatever they wanted, they did. And they did have the right goals. They knew my bigger, my older son, from the day he went to school, he said he wants to be a scientist. There was not a question in his mind that he wants to be this or this or that. He wanted to be a doctor, he wanted to be in science, and that's what he is. And he's very good at it, I'm telling you. He was one of the speakers in Finland on a conference -- international conference. They paid for him and his wife to fly down there, stay there a week in a hotel. He went to Israel and delivered a couple of speeches. They invited him because of an interest in his research. And it's a big world, and yet it's small. And it kind of makes you feel very good that out of four and a half billion people, Jack Finkelstein was picked to do this for them.

**INT:** All those countries went to work so Sal Finkelstein could get married and come to America so his son could... (laughs)

**SAL:** 110 nations fought so I could marry Goldie, and combined we have a son like Jack. That's why the world reaps the benefits of it, because otherwise they wouldn't.

**INT:** Well, let me finish with this question: How do you want your children and your grandchildren to think of you, to view you, to look at you?

**SAL:** You know, when you get older you always sit down and reflect, what do people think of me? I don't. I don't give a hoot what they think of me. Anybody. Not even my children. I know that my children love me a lot. They think that I am very smart. I think they're very bright. I know the truth, but I wouldn't tell them.

**INT:** So it's okay that they think you're smart.

**SAL:** They can think whatever they want to. And to the grandchildren, of course, Grandpa's great, because he always brings presents and gives them money.

**INT:** I can't believe it's the presents and the money that the grandchildren love!

**SAL:** Grandchildren love their grandparents initially for the presents they get. Later as they get conscious of their own feeling, I know that my grandchildren love me a lot. I love them a lot. But once my daughter said to somebody that: "My daddy can sell refrigerators to Eskimos." Because I was in sales, so she said I have the gift of gab that I can sell an Eskimo a refrigerator. That's how she thought of me. We have a very good rapport, my kids and I. I talk to them as equals, I don't talk to them down, and they don't talk to me up. They don't hold it against me.

**INT:** So you relate to one another as adults, rather than parent to child. Do you remember when that happened in your lives, where all of a sudden, you said: "Gee, whiz, they're..."

**SAL:** No. But it's amazing to look back and remember these little bundles. I used to diaper them and change their diapers and make formula for them, and they're all of a

sudden grownups with children, and their own ways. But they have to pay their own bills, and support their own income tax. It's amazing sometimes. When did that happen? When did they grow older? According to that song.

**INT:** All right, well, that will be enough for today, then.

**SAL:** Yes, I am kind of tired.

(END TAPE SIX, SIDE ONE. GO ON TO TAPE SEVEN)

(TAPE SEVEN, SIDE ONE)

**INT:** With Sal Finkelstein. Today is November 10, 1994. I was looking forward to being here today because aside from your wife's wonderful schnecken, I knew that this would be...

**SAL:** You always get the right kind of credit.

**INT:** (laughs) That's one of the reasons I was eager to be here.

**SAL:** I assumed this was one of the reasons. It's okay, we'll accept that, too. You've got question number one.

**INT:** Oh, no, I've got a bunch of questions. We're going to kind of jump around today. But overall I'm going to try to get some of your ideas. Let's start with confronting the Holocaust. Have you read or do you read any of the Holocaust literature?

**SAL:** Yes. I read some books; I occasionally read articles. Some I've found wanting, some I've found not. Most of them are pretty accurate. Those that I read.

**INT:** When you read them, what is it that you look for?

**SAL:** I don't know. Some of them I look for accuracy. Some of them I look for...self-pity. I read it again and dwell on it. Most of them, lately, if I can read any newspaper or magazine articles, I read them mostly for their assessment of it. I'm curious what and how people handle Holocaust-related subjects. That's about it.

**INT:** So are you interested in comparing your experiences with others to see if other people had different experiences, or worse, or better, or...

**SAL:** I don't know. I don't know. I basically say that all of our experiences were the same. There was nothing that happened to me that didn't happen to others. And nothing that happened to others that didn't happen to me. It might have been in a different town, a different location, a different name. But basically the treatment, the neglect, and the final result of being liberated, either emaciated and hungry and sick, or in semi-good health, the results are the same, most of them. Except for those that survived in the

woods in Poland, either as hideouts or fighters, or those who were in Russia. And they also survived the Holocaust, but in a different way, because they ran away. Their experiences were different. But those of us who went to camps, we all have about the same.

**INT:** So it's variations on a theme. The music was the same, just a variation.

**SAL:** There is an old Jewish proverb: [Yiddish]. They say that my siddur [prayer book] and your siddur they're both the same. Your siddur might be smaller letters, but the prayers are all the same. There are very few siddurim that the prayers are not identical. Basically that's what it is. And as I talk to some of my friends, sometimes, and we get to go in a camp, I realize that basically that was the same. They were starving; they were mishandled. They survived, they don't know how. Here we are. Fifty years already. Next year will be fifty-year anniversary of our liberation.

**INT:** Is it hard for you to believe it happened that long ago?

**SAL:** Five decades, it's almost five generations.

**INT:** What does the time feel like to you?

**SAL:** I don't know. I've never stopped to think about it. But it's almost unbelievable, that it's already fifty years. I'm an old man by now. Fifty years in May of this coming year. Which is what, five more months, six more months? Fifty years since I was liberated. I don't know if there is an after life, or if you come back. But if I come back in a couple of hundred years, I'll be curious to read up the history of this period, because you live too close to history to see it. So history is only things that happened way back.

**INT:** But still, within these fifty years that you've been here, there have been enormous changes within your life. And you have a perspective that is probably different from that of a person who was born in this country and didn't go through all that you went through.

**SAL:** Of course. Of course. It is only natural that experiences form your mind. Experiences form your opinions. And the things that I experienced, and some of my co-inmates are definitely different from what anybody could have had. Sometimes you read, and it's true, the Japanese complain about the concentration camp in America. And the problem was that they were moved from Los Angeles to a village, and given freedom to do whatever they want. And as terrible as it was, we know of American soldiers being prisoners of war in Japan and also being mistreated. But those were very far and few and in between. They were not under total degradation, and total death sentence. Some did die. Some died of starvation, some died of malnutrition, some died of mistreatment. But not the great mass. American prisoners of war were not designated by the Japanese, that they were all...

**INT:** As one part of a master plan, the way it was in...

**SAL:** Of course those who it happened to, their universe was very much affected. Their own lives were affected. But as a group, we were as a fly on the wall. We were not existing. Jews in Germany in the early forties were not a human species. Were not considered a human species. Not by the Germans, at least. And others did not bother to help out so much either. Including our so great president Roosevelt.

**INT:** Well, that's something that you've learned in the years that you've been here. Did you know right away?

**SAL:** No, no, we thought that Roosevelt was the great liberator. We thought that he will do marvels by us. He just let Hitler get away with it, at least for the first three years, and they were the worst years, because if he stopped him earlier he would have not continued. We know now from the archives, that if the whole world would have raised an outcry that Hitler would not have done it. But nobody said anything, so he figured: "Ah, I'll get away with this, too."

**INT:** That's the hardest thing to live with. To think that it could have been avoided...

**SAL:** And now we have a new little Hitler being the speaker of the House, Mr. Gingrich, Newt Gingrich, who also thinks of himself that he's better than the next guy. But he might not be anti-Semitic. I think he's even pro-Israel. But he thinks of a lot of people being below his...capabilities, and mind and abilities, whatever. I wonder. The Germans have an expression, "Mentschenfresser." You know what a Mentschenfresser is? He eats people up. He thinks that people are a nothing. Mentschenfresser. So.

**INT:** You see some of that in today's politics? Is that what you're seeing?

**SAL:** Some of it. Ollie North was one of those. Ollie North. Thank G-d he lost. It would have been a shame. I told a lot of people. I said I would have considered moving out of the States if a man like Ollie North would have been elected to the Senate. It's supposed to be a great institution, with not so great people.

**INT:** How do you feel about Californians voting to deny schooling and health benefits?

**SAL:** It's so easy to be a demagogue. It's so easy to say we're not going to give somebody something of ours, because nobody wants to give away something of his. And little do they think that those little children are G-d's children, innocent; that they have nothing to do with their parents being illegal.

**INT:** It must seem so ironic to you. Because when we first started talking, you described your mother as sharing the little bit that you had, with the Hebrew teacher who would come around, and she would be so generous to him. And you've come so far from that philosophy to a place here where you see this difference.

**SAL:** Well, you see, it wasn't as bad as it got to be now. Each year it got progressively worse.

**INT:** That's what you've seen over the years?

**SAL:** Today I had lunch with somebody. We talked about politics, and I told him. "It's a cover-up. It's a basic cover-up of race issue. We don't want to give the n\*\*\*\*\* or the spics any money." They never mentioned. You see, they don't mind giving Lockheed 400 million dollars of lost money, our tax money. There is no problem giving tax benefits to the oil people. Oil depletion. It's good for business. It's like Hoover said. American business is business. American business.

**INT:** The business of America is business.

**SAL:** But it's not true. The business of America is to be free and liberal, and let everybody live. But it's so easy to make it so different. And you talk to the, you get the demagogues to speak about, "Oh, we want to protect; and we don't want a big government; we don't want to take our hard-earned money and give it away. We don't have enough for ourselves." It's so easy to say no to somebody who needs it, and if you have it. So that's why it left. That's why it won. The average guy in California, forget it. He's not going to give him two dollars here from his taxes to someone, who'll never be done. [topic shifts] My grandson and my granddaughter.

**INT:** Oh, these are caricatures. (Goldie shows Sal pictures that have just come in the mail.)

**SAL:** From Rochester, from Rochester. He's a sports fellow. And she's the ballerina or the artist. They're cute. When did you get them? Today? David and Ilana. (returns to subject)

But you see, and it's also easy for them, for a lot of people to vote for it because they know the courts are going to stop it.

**INT:** So it's like a cheap vote.

**SAL:** They protested. And it's a law on the books that will take a few years, and they'll have to take it off because the courts will have to take it off. This is just discriminatory.

**INT:** How important do you think the books and the films about the Holocaust are? What meaning does it have?

**SAL:** To that extent that it might educate other people -- other than me -- to the capability of people to be inhuman. And will show them what can happen if you let certain things pass. It's very important. Only to that extent, that there might be education. They certainly are not entertaining. They're certainly not anything else.

**INT:** You know I haven't gotten to see Schindler's List. Did you?

**SAL:** Yes. Yes. Got a point of crying in some parts of it. But, I'm curious to talk to people of certain background, how they see Schindler's List. Most of them find it very stunning and very depressing.

**INT:** Well, how did you find it? What was it that touched you the most in the film?

**SAL:** Well, I've seen myself walking around there. I've seen myself, and my friends, my parents. I was in that situation. I was there. I was there. And a lot of the goody-goody things I didn't experience, because they weren't there. It was made for dramatic effect. A lot of bad things were not shown, because you couldn't possibly; art cannot duplicate life to that extent. They would have never, the audience wouldn't take it, and the movie wouldn't show it, where you strip thousands of people naked and shove them into a chamber, and you close the door on them, and an hour later you have to rip them apart in order to put them into a crematorium. You wouldn't want to show it, and nobody would want to see it.

**INT:** So, what you identified with were some of the scenes.

**SAL:** Yes. The children hiding, the terror of being...I don't remember seeing anything like Schindler's List. But there are some very good books I read now and then. A friend of mine sent me some literature from a magazine.

**INT:** Have your children read any of these?

**SAL:** Well, yes, my number one son is I think either chairman or assistant chairman or something of the Second Generation Association in Rochester. They provide educational material and lectures, and similar oral history things for Rochester. And my number two son, you know he works for Jewish causes, and whenever you work for Jewish causes, you always stumble on some Holocaust survivor. So...

**INT:** I think I know the answer to this, but instead of asking whether the Holocaust affects your political views, I'm going to ask you how it affects your view.

**SAL:** If you know the answer, don't ask me. Answer it.

**INT:** (laughs) No, how. How does it? I'm sure it does. But how do you think it colors or affects your view of the world?

**SAL:** I don't know whether the Holocaust has a direct influence on it or not. Most probably it does. But I'm basically a very liberal minded person. I know what can happen to minorities. I know it can happen to poor people. And I'm in favor of helping anybody. I have no problems giving my tax money to black teenagers that have children, even so that she shouldn't have children, and she shouldn't smoke. Unfortunately, she is not educated enough, or guided enough not to be. But she's a human being. I am not in favor of those who say castrate them, or send them back to Africa, or hang them by their toenails. Whether she's black, white, green or blue; Spanish or non-Spanish.

**INT:** What happens when you read about the Christian right in this country, the religious right?

**SAL:** I only pray that G-d someday will teach them a lesson that they deserve. All their righteousness: the Bible in one hand and a knife in the other. The Christian right. Even our good friend, Mr. Pat Robertson on television, he's always pro-Jewish and pro-Israel. He only wants us to convert. If we only convert, then G-d will be so happy. Little does he know if they all become Jewish, G-d would be a lot happier, because he would have control, teach them how to behave. But any extreme, whether it's on the Jewish right, or on the Christian right. Any right.

**INT:** It's the fundamentalism itself that makes you nervous.

**SAL:** Sure. I can understand some Jewish fundamentalism, and I tolerate it because I know that they're...

**INT:** They're **our** fundamentalists, is that what it is?

**SAL:** No, not because they're ours. I tolerate them because I know they are almost a harmless minority. So let them have their fun with their fundamentalism. But when fundamentalism becomes an ideology of living for a nation or nations, when it's starting to guide everybody, that's what I object to.

**INT:** Well, now, take that over into Israel.

**SAL:** You want to be a fundamentalist? Fine. Be it in your house. You don't want to go to the movies on Saturday? Fine. You want to sit and pray all day? Fine. You want to get a beard, fine, but don't tell anybody else to do it.

**INT:** Well, what about in Israel, where fundamentalism...

**SAL:** Well, again, as long as they're a harmless minority, I don't mind them. It's a decoration, the frame around the mirror, a frame around the picture of Judaism. A nice frame; a not so nice frame. But they're not the picture itself. You understand what I'm saying?

**INT:** Yes. What about...what have your feelings been about Israel over these years? And what changes have you seen? And how closely do you connect yourself with what goes on there?

**SAL:** I cannot give you any opinions on that. I've been to Israel three times.

**INT:** When was the last time you were there?



**SAL:** Three years ago, I think. Four years ago. It's a beautiful little country. It's modern. Those parts that I've seen. It's modern, modern buildings, modern conveniences. I have lots of relatives there. They are very contented living there. I'm always a little afraid for the freedom and for the safety of those few Jews who live in a sea of Arabs. And I'd like to see it when they have their hundredth anniversary, and two hundredth anniversary. I'm going to come back. I'm going to come back for the two hundredth anniversary of the State of Israel.

**INT:** Well, I ask because I know that originally you and your wife would have liked to live in Israel. So your life would have been very different had you gone there.

**SAL:** But for the sake of G-d, that's what happened. I can't change that. But I have a very warm spot in my heart for Israel and those in Israel. And I accept their idiosyncrasies with a lot of understanding, because they're there, and we are here. And it's a lot easier for us, from a distance of four thousand miles, or five thousand miles, to say something negative about Israel, than to act on it while you're right there.

**INT:** Tell me, as you've read the newspaper over the years, and you've seen the changes that have taken place in Europe, what has your thinking been over the years since you've been here?

**SAL:** I've paid very little attention to Europe and what happens to Europe. My only dream at one time was that there will be a nuclear war between Russia and America, and it will be fought over Germany and Poland and Austria. And that's where the bombs will fall, and burn up that godforsaken country, the godforsaken people. Those...cursed people of Germany and Poland and Ukraine. But G-d has his own ways.

**INT:** What happens to you when you hear somebody speaking German?

**SAL:** It doesn't affect me.

**INT:** It doesn't bother you?

**SAL:** I don't take speaking German as being a German. It's just another language. I get upset when I hear them sing Horst Wessel's song. You know that song that the Nazis sang? (singing) Die Vaterhoe, die Rheienfest geschlossen." (sp?) [Reference book says it's: "*Die Fahne hoch*" ("The Flag on High")] That's a national anthem of the Nazis, not the Germans. They said: "When the knives drip with Jewish blood, then we are safe." That's how they actually did. That was their song.

**INT:** So it's not the language itself, it's what's being said.

**SAL:** I see some of these skinheads parading here in brown shirts and swastikas, and some of them as far right as the fundamentalists. They're going to save the white Christian world.

**INT:** What do you think when you see something like that?

**SAL:** G-d will take care of them. He does such a wonderful job. He always...

**INT:** (laughs) I wish I had your confidence.

**SAL:** But He does.

**INT:** Uh-huh. Okay.

**SAL:** Did you notice throughout the history how many skinheads like that were in many nations? And they all died. And Jews are still around here. And they'll be around here for the next 2,000 years again. I don't know what shape or form, but they'll be here.

**INT:** So you had the confidence that G-d will...

**SAL:** I'm just trying to get on His good side, so he'll send me back in a couple hundred years so I can take another look at it. But other than that...Don't you think G-d is good to you?

**INT:** Oh, I've been very blessed. Absolutely.

**SAL:** And if you were a white nun in some cloister, maybe He would be just good to you, too. Because He's good to you whether you're Christian or Jewish. You got to be a good person. The definition of being a good Jew is to be a good person. And that covers all sins; all multiple sins. A good person is a good person. It can be non-Jewish and still be good. That's all G-d wants. He says that Jews will be His priests and His servants, but He does not forget the whole world. He says: Just be a good person.

**INT:** So this is really something that you've believed over the years?

**SAL:** Goldie, be a good person! She doesn't hear me. Maybe she's not a good person, but no, she is. She's as my grandson would say, "the bestest."

**INT:** And that really, no matter what's happened to you over the years, you've managed to maintain that belief?

**SAL:** I happen to be the kind of optimist that always sees half full. I always see the good side of people, most of the time. And I'm blessed that my wife always is the type that we always find the better side of the person rather than the worst side.

**INT:** Do you think we're born that way?

**SAL:** I imagine so. It eases a lot of things. We don't hold grudges. We're not envious. We're not worried. We have our own financial problems. We have other little problems. But we'll survive it. I hope we'll survive it.

**INT:** Well, you have so far, is what you know.

**SAL:** Oh, till now there is no question. Except that what they say: Today is the first day of your new life. Sure is. Tomorrow's Veteran's Day. November 11. Liberation Day of World War I. World War I ended November 11, 1918. My oldest brother was born November 11, 1918. Poland became a country in 1918 after World War I. A lot of other good things happened in 1918. Trotsky took over the Russian Bolshevik army, and fought the rightist and American expedition, and the British expedition, and he won. He beat the hell out of the Ukrainians, and Petrushek, and he won. And then Stalin put an ax in his head. You know that Trotsky was assassinated by some nut in Mexico?

**INT:** Mexico, yeah.

**SAL:** And they sent him after him, and they used a hatchet and buried it in his head.

**INT:** The strange thing is that people make jokes about that.

**SAL:** Well, forty years later.

**INT:** They can make jokes. Just to come back a little bit. Tell me, what was it like for you when you first arrived in the United States. Just visually. What did you see, what did you feel?

**SAL:** I can tell you this, because I remember they ask me this many times.

**INT:** Oh, sorry. (laughs)

**SAL:** My greatest and first impression was the absolute freedom of movement. I mean, you don't have to carry an identification card. You don't have to tell anybody where you're going, or why you're going, or what you're doing. All you have to do is have enough money to buy a ticket, and you go. You want to go to San Francisco? You can call up the airline: I want to go to San Francisco.

**INT:** No borders. No passes.

**SAL:** Nobody asks you. And when we arrived, the cities and the streets of America were very safe. I mean, in '48 there was no crime like we have now. So you could walk at 3:00, 4:00, 5:00 in the morning in New York, and nobody bothers you. And if you wanted to eat, there was a restaurant open. If you wanted a cake, there was a bakery open. If you wanted milk, there was another little store open. I mean, that life was continued and open and free. There was maybe one panhandler in all of...

**INT:** Did you have trouble with the fact that people who you met who were born here had no idea what it meant to be free?

**SAL:** I didn't even give them a second thought. I said: "They're stupid. What do they know?" They never appreciated America. I said: "If you don't, you're stupid. So what?" Can you believe that there is a country where, and there was Jewish anti-Semitism in America then, but it was mild, you didn't feel it. Can you imagine a country where a Senator is Jewish? Arthur Lehman. Lehman was the Senator from New York. And Morgenthau was Secretary of the Treasury. And Felix Frankfurter was the Supreme Court. A Jew, a Jewish Jew.

And then you could walk in New York City, and speak Yiddish, and nobody bothered you; or not speak Yiddish, and nobody bothered you. And just comparatively, you could be a German and nobody bothered you because you were a German, or because you're Spanish, or because you're anything. It was such an enormous feeling of absolute freedom. Openness. And opportunity. I mean, I came to the States, and three weeks later, somebody gave me a job to be a Fuller brush man. And I started to make money. And a dollar an hour was a lot of money. A quart of milk was 25 cents. A loaf of bread was 10 cents. A movie was a quarter. I paid 38 dollars a month for rent, and I thought I'm paying too much.

**INT:** That's pretty remarkable. So it sounds to me like you, when you got here, you were able to establish yourself and to feel trust in people. You were...

**SAL:** Yes. I had a very, very happy time because everybody was helpful. Everybody I met.

**INT:** Non-Jews as well as Jews?

**SAL:** Non-Jews and Jews were helpful.

**INT:** Who was the most helpful person to you? Do you remember?

**SAL:** I don't know. But everybody I met was courteous and helpful, and nobody pushed me around. There was an incident, I went to work originally, for a furrier shop, and apparently the union wanted to organize, and I didn't know that. And they went on strike, and I still worked. So the union organizer caught me once in the hallway, he started to push me around. And I told him: "Look, I survived Hitler, I'll survive you. You can't frighten me. You want to fight, we'll fight. But if you don't want to fight, just leave me be. I'll do my own thing."

**INT:** How old were you at the time?

**SAL:** 22. And he looked at me. He says, "You really want to fight? I said, "Well, I really *don't* want to fight, but if you want to fight, I don't give a damn." And I had a big pocketknife in my pocket, so I took out the pocketknife, and I said: "Now, you take it or I'll take it. Whoever wins, but don't scare me." And he looked at me, he said: "Come to the office, I'll give you a job." I said, "I don't want to come to your office to get a job. I have a job." Then I went upstairs to the boss and I told him, I said: "The union guy

stopped me." He said: "Yeah, they're trying to get more money." I said --I don't remember what his name is -- I said: "Mr. So and So, I'm quitting as of Friday. I don't want to be between you and the union. I don't want to join the union. I don't want to fight the union. I'll give you a week or two weeks' notice if you need it, and I'll go find another job." He says: "That's very nice. Work as long as you can, I'll replace you." And before I finished...

(END TAPE SEVEN, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE SEVEN, SIDE TWO)

**SAL:** [Refers back to inaudible comment at beginning of tape.] But most of the time, no. Now, I don't know whether there were things in business or in life, that somebody might have done something. But I never felt it as such.

**INT:** No, I'm asking about you.

**SAL:** No. The only mistreatment I got is from my wife.

**INT:** (laughs)

**SAL:** Goldie, did you hear it? [Going forward, Goldie is used instead of Mrs. G]

**GOLDIE:** No.

**SAL:** She asked me if I was ever mistreated. I said the only mistreatment I had is from you.

**INT:** He says the only mistreatment he ever got was from you?

**GOLDIE:** The worst treatment?

**SAL:** Mistreatment.

**INT:** You killed him with kindness, I think that's what it was. (laughs) Listen, nobody can see you, but I can. I can tell you, you look pretty good. Your wife has taken very good care of you over these years.

**SAL:** That she does. That she does.

**INT:** Was there any conflict between the values that you had when you were raised in Europe and the values in the United States?

**SAL:** I doubt it. I don't think so.

**GOLDIE:** Can I hear the question again?

**INT:** Yeah. I was asking about the values that Sal had as a young person in Europe. The values that he learned from his family, and that he brought here. Did he find the values here different? Was it difficult with your children, because they were being raised in a society that was different?

**SAL:** No. My wife raised them the way she was raised at home. She raised them perfect.

**GOLDIE:** I think when I was raising them it wasn't as bad yet, you know?

**INT:** So you think the values that you brought with you were the values that you used to raise your children?

**GOLDIE:** Oh, absolutely. That's the only thing I knew. I mean...I mean, it's a different world, and it's a different... I raised three kids, and the difference between Joe and Jack is three years. Between Evie and Joe is four, and between Jack and Evie, it's seven. And years ago, it used to be one generation. Now, it's like every two years a different generation. The values have changed so much.

**INT:** But you taught your children, you said, respect for the parents.

**GOLDIE:** Oh, yeah.

**INT:** So this is certainly a value that you...

**SAL:** I didn't know anything different. She didn't know anything different. She raised them, I didn't. I was out making money.

**GOLDIE:** They never talked back to us. They never...I remember once he disciplined them. He never had to discipline them. And once I...(laughs) we used to live in a small rural area, and it was winter, and they were going to school. And they had to go like a quarter mile to the bus? Walk. It was snow up till above their ankles. And they didn't want to put boots on, or galoshes, because it was a bother. When they went to school, they had to take them off. They had to take them off. So they said they're not going to put them on. I said, you're not going to put them on; you're not going to go to school. And they didn't believe me that I'm gonna, and they didn't. And the next time they had to put on galoshes, or boots, they put them on. I mean, they wanted to go to school.

**INT:** But you stood your ground.

**GOLDIE:** Absolutely. How can you let them go...

**INT:** (laughs) Alright.

**GOLDIE:** I mean, this is a silly example, but I'm just saying.

**INT:** No, it's an example.

**GOLDIE:** It's just, if you say something else, and you mean something else, the kid knows right away. One thing between us, we never contradicted ourselves. And I said it to my children too. Whatever one says to the other, don't ever let them pit you against each other, because otherwise you're losing it. And it worked. I don't think I...I don't know how it happened, but we raised three wonderful human beings. Really. I think if there's nothing else I'll do in my life, I think I'm proud of that. Right?

**INT:** Oh, yes. I've always felt that way too. Because I think if you raise children and they turn out to be a terrible disappointment, then nothing else you do matters.

**GOLDIE:** And what I see is they're doing the same thing with their children. Joe and Jackie are raising them Jewish, and they're very much involved in the Jewish community.

**INT:** It would appear so.

**GOLDIE:** I never, never said: "Look, I did something right, and you did something wrong." Because you know what the "cholent" is? You put it [in the oven on] Friday night, and you take it out in the morning, and you never know how it's going to turn out? That's how I feel the children are. You raise them the best you can, and you **never** know how they're going to turn out. You never do.

**INT:** But you're saying that the two of you were consistent and you agreed with one another.

**GOLDIE:** Even if we disagreed, we didn't disagree in front of the children. Never. Absolutely.

**INT:** You had a united front with the children.

**GOLDIE:** Absolutely. But he was there, too. He had to make a living. But he, you see what happened is we were both kids so we really grew up with our children together. Between my oldest son and myself, how much difference was there?

**SAL:** Eighteen years.

**GOLDIE:** Eighteen years? So we grew up together. We grew up learning from each other. (laughs)

**INT:** It's pretty amazing. Here you were in a new country, with a baby.

**GOLDIE:** And I remember when they were little, I was active in the PTA, and I had my opinion, I told them that the schools in Europe were much better than they were here. They had a very good education. It's another stupid example. I always say to my

husband. I used to watch Groucho Marx. You know? "You Bet Your Life?" And there were contestants, and one was an attorney. And he asked him a history question, I don't remember exactly what it was, and he said, "I don't know. I studied law, I didn't study history or geography." And I said to my husband, "This could have never happened in Europe. You had to have a well-rounded education. Otherwise you couldn't go to law school." I don't know how it is, maybe it's better now. I think it's improved. And I saw when my kids went to grade school, it was lacking a lot. And I didn't have that much education myself, but I could see it. (Pause) I didn't know I was being taped. (laughs)

**INT:** Well, you certainly didn't say anything that you shouldn't have. Do you have any regrets or disappointments? When you look back on your life from when you were a child, and what you might have been, had things gone okay. When you look back, do you have any regrets or disappointments?

**SAL:** No.

**GOLDIE:** I don't believe you.

**SAL:** No regrets. Que sera, sera.

**GOLDIE:** Because he wanted to go to law school. He wanted to get more education. So did I. This is my only regret.

**SAL:** I have no regrets, because things happen, and they happen. That's it.

**INT:** But Goldie is saying that she thinks you would have liked to have been...

**SAL:** Who knows?

**GOLDIE:** Well, that's what she's asking you.

**SAL:** Who knows?

**GOLDIE:** Not that your terribly disappointed, but you have regrets.

**SAL:** I should have won last night's lottery. That I regret.

**INT:** (laughs)

**SAL:** But I didn't have the numbers.

**GOLDIE:** You see, it was our fault. I wouldn't say that it wasn't our fault. If we would be a little older when the war was over, he would understand that it's okay to make a living, but an education is more important.



**SAL:** I told you in the early stages of the interview, that coming out of camp, material things meant nothing to me for **many**, many years. So that when I came to the States, or even in Germany before, I married a lovely girl. I was very happy having her, and a wonderful life. Had a child, and then we started to farm, and I had to work hard to keep it going. Then another child, then another child. And we were just happy to have them, and see them grow, and grow up nice and healthy. And wise.

**GOLDIE:** In retrospect, when you think back, if he would have had an education, he wouldn't have to work that hard, and he would have...

**SAL:** But then who knows what else would turn around?

**GOLDIE:** That's the only other thing I always said so much about. I never told them [the children]: "You have to be a doctor, or you have to be a lawyer or you have to be a singer." I knew from our experience: Life is difficult as it is, so whatever you do for a living, do something that you like because you have to do it all your life.

**SAL:** And do it well.

**GOLDIE:** They each chose their own. We never pushed any of our kids any kind of way.

**INT:** You didn't tell them what to become, you just said, whatever you become, do something you like and do it well.

**GOLDIE:** Yes. The only thing that we did push was -- there was no question about it -- that you're going to go to college whether you want it or not.

**SAL:** Of course. Every Jewish child has to be educated. Don't shake your head. If it isn't, it's accidental. It's bred in. It's bred in you. You have to be educated.

**GOLDIE:** My oldest son, when he was five years old, I remember he went to sleep, and the TV was on, and I turned it off. And he said: "Mom, please don't turn it off." I said: "Why? You won't be able to go to sleep." He said: "I'll go to sleep better, because if it's quiet, I keep thinking about the atom bomb." He was a scientist when he was five years old. He knew already then that he wants to go into the sciences.

**INT:** At five years old already he was worried about the atomic bomb?

**SAL:** Don't forget, that was when the Rosenbergs were accused of treason. That was at the height of that scare, '52, '53.

**GOLDIE:** He was born in '49. Because I was so shocked when he said that.

**SAL:** Eisenhower was elected President, and the Rosenbergs went on trial, and he wouldn't commute it, and Mr. Fuchs...

**GOLDIE:** Isn't it strange how kids think and you don't even know?

**SAL:** And now they seem to have found evidence that the Rosenbergs were not guilty.

**INT:** But back then people would have thought that was impossible, but I think everybody's become much more cynical now, and they say, well, that's what happens.

**GOLDIE:** Nothing was impossible. Look at Hiroshima. How could they think it was impossible? It wasn't impossible. To be honest with you, I'm scared more now than then because there's less control now than there was then.

**INT:** The control of atomic weapons, of nuclear weapons?

**GOLDIE:** At that time, it was in responsible hands. Now you don't know who's going to get it. Right?

**INT:** Yeah, that's true. [Goldie starts to leave the room.] She just came in to cheer us up. (laughs)

**SAL:** Yes, she did. You did very well. You're a good cheerer-upper.

**GOLDIE:** I had to correct him.

**INT:** Don't let him get away with it. (laughs) Well, just piggy-backing onto that. What do you see as- what are the successes of your life? If somebody asked you, Sal, what were your biggest successes, what would you say?

**SAL:** Well, it's very hard for anyone objectively to judge oneself. It is...I have nothing outstanding as a success. I have nothing outstanding as a failure. The total sum of it is that I have a very lovely family, and they're growing up to have lovely families, and that in itself is a great success. I think that I can say, that I rightfully can say that I have **never** knowingly harmed anybody, and I don't intend to do it.

**INT:** That's your personal code.

**SAL:** I've never knowingly tried to cheat somebody out of anything. And I don't know whether this is due to my upbringing as a child, or something that I learned later. But there is, you know, these little steps in life that you did this, you did this, you did this; they are not individual successes. They're total sums of things. I did a lot of little things. I was president of the Farmer's Association. I was a member of the city planning board, as a recognition of my civic activities. I was vice-president of our synagogue. But these are not successes. These are accidental happenings in one's life. And I did them. And I did them for as long as I did them. Usually these praises of success or failures are left to the rabbi at time of eulogy. He says: "Here lies a guy who did this or didn't do that."

I think it was the help of my wife, and maybe because of her, I've happened to wind up in a very happy house, with a happy life together. I have three wonderful children, five grandchildren. I have a brother and a sister, and we are close, with them and their family. And there is no extreme strifes. I guess that's a success. But it's not, you know, I wasn't elected president of the United States. I didn't run General Motors. I did not become a millionaire. I always had one dollar more than I needed, according to Uncle Marcus. Lately I have a dollar less, but I figure that I need less, because I spend less.

**INT:** So these were really personal, they're personal successes. It's not as though you're not using this great yardstick of public office. You're talking about the successes that you had in your own personal life that were important to you.

**SAL:** Well, if you reflect for yourself, my successes are judged by me, would be equally reflected by other people as applied to themselves. What is a person's success? A happy family life. A fairly decent old age. Wonderful children, wonderful grandchildren. What else does one want? And if he wants, beware of what you want, because as the Chinese say, you might get it.

**INT:** That's going back to the person who's happy with his lot.

**SAL:** Yes. I don't want to be a jet-setter. I really would not enjoy flying on vacations to Monte Carlo, or to Shanghai, or to...I am moderately happy. I have friends, we meet, we talk. We spend good time together. We play cards. We go to the casino and have a good time. What else? It's a very successful life.

**INT:** Are there any mistakes that you've made in life?

**SAL:** Many, but none of them were the cardinal mistakes that meant anything. My mistake was that I sometimes did not follow my instinct in business. I should have been maybe more daring, or more adventurous, or less adventurous, or trust less from people, or trust more. But at the end, it still would wind up as the same. So there is not much of an issue there. Of course, if my father were alive, and he came to the States, I would have had a very rich father, and I would have been a very rich son, of a very rich father, because my father was very capable. But I don't. So now, I'll have to tell my grandchildren to be very happy, because their parents would prepare them for...I came without anything except good will.

**INT:** Your children are able to provide.

**SAL:** Oh, yes, they're doing very nice.

**INT:** Material things.

**SAL:** They do it themselves well, and they also prepare the children well. Give them a very basic, good education, and good examples how to live. Yes. When I come up to G-

d, and if He would happen to be in court and He would ask me if I have any regrets or any complaints, I'll tell Him, no. Thank you G-d, but I have no complaints.

**INT:** Looking back now, how did you -- this is all retrospective -- how did you cope with the memories of all your war experiences?

**SAL:** Most of the time I shut them out. Closed them out. I think the most impressionate [?] sermon I ever heard was in a small synagogue in New York on Kol Nidre night. And the Orthodox rabbi, I don't remember exactly the words, because it's about 45 years ago. It's '94, about 45 years ago.

**INT:** Soon after you came to this country.

**SAL:** Yeah. About a year, year and a half, maybe two years. And he said: "G-d has created man in His image. And He gave him a capacity of remembrance, and a capacity to forget. He said, there are certain things G-d wants you to remember. But if we were to live with our memories day by day, we could not live a sane life. So we thank G-d for giving us the capacity of shutting out certain things. Out of our memories. Even if they're buried subconsciously in there, that we don't live with them day by day." Also we do quite often live with them day by day. Occasionally we'll get those bad dreams, and bad shakes. But it's not that I daily live with it, or daily remember it, or daily get burdened with it.

**INT:** So that was very meaningful to you, because it gave you...

**SAL:** Oh, I remember that sermon so, because it reflected a deep thought that I didn't, I couldn't...

**INT:** You didn't verbalize it, or you couldn't...

**SAL:** I couldn't verbalize it. I couldn't bring it forward. Why? But he verbalized it for me. And it's part of a lot of my approaches to things, that I'm glad that I can forget certain things, or at least not pay any mind to them, even if they're still in that computer file. It's on a desk that I don't use...

**INT:** You consciously choose to...

**SAL:** Or subconsciously. But that's what G-d gave us. The capacity of remembrance, and forgetfulness, or at least, forgiveness. You know, a lot of our people say that when G-d said in the Bible "Zechor mah she asah Amalek," remember what Amalek did to you. And therefore you should eradicate him. G-d said to the Jews they should kill Amalek. We added a post-Renaissance line to it. "It's good to forgive, but not to forget." Forgiving is not the greatest sin. Forgetting is. But, so even if we don't forget, we forgive. That's another capacity we have in our brain, also G-d given.

**INT:** That's the way that you've been able to live.

**SAL:** Yes.

**INT:** Because you were telling me before we started taping that you go to sleep at night, and it's another day. How were you putting that? In terms of dealing with things that are difficult?

**SAL:** Well, sometimes you carry these things with you. But, and I forgot the name of the rabbi, but I can see him as of now; small, weary, with a little red beard.

**INT:** Were there other survivors in the synagogue, or was it a mixed crowd? This message just spoke to you. It really said something to you.

**SAL:** Well, he spoke to the whole congregation.

**INT:** Yeah, but I mean, it said something to you.

**SAL:** I thought he was talking to me. There might have been others. I didn't pay any attention. It so happens that I went to the synagogue on Yom Kippur night, before we moved down to Vineland. It was the first and only service I spent in New York City in a synagogue. Because after that I came to town here, to Vineland, and in Vineland we had our own synagogue.

**INT:** There are so many other questions that come to mind, that I think in some of the things that we've talked about we've really answered this.

**SAL:** We covered most of it, you're just asking these for perfunctory questions. In those seven hours or eight hours that I've talked to you, I covered almost everything.

**INT:** How do you make sense out of life, in terms of the randomness of things that have happened?

**SAL:** You're not supposed to. I told you this before. Just being alive is good enough. You don't philosophize about being alive. You do the best with it while you have it. And you have it for a short time, only.

**INT:** I remember at the very beginning you were telling me about why the Holocaust happened, and the way your grandfather would look at it, and the way your father would look at it, and you used some expressions, and I really regretted not asking you at that point, well, how do you, how would **you** see it? Do you remember, how did your grandfather...

**SAL:** To the best of my memory, I remember my grandfather said, "Zeh Bashert. G-d wanted it that way." So there is no turning back what G-d wanted to have for us. (phone interruption)

**INT:** We're just concluding our interview. You told me that you would describe yourself as an optimist.

**SAL:** Yes. I'm definitely an optimist.

**INT:** You're a very hopeful person. What do you, what do you see happening in the world? What do you see happening in your life in the next ten, twenty years?

**SAL:** Oy! You're an optimist asking me about ten, twenty years! You know how old I am?

**INT:** You're seventy. 69 or 70, depending on who's counting. You're 69. I think you'll be around for a while longer.

**SAL:** I hope to make it another 69, but who knows? The contract I have with G-d is that He'll do what ever He wants. Well, I hope to live as long as I live, and watch my grandchildren grow up to be people, grownups. For them to continue. I hope to have my wife with me, and take her on a trip to Monte Carlo or someplace. I just want to live a quiet, contented life. Maybe go to Israel again for a visit. And be physically well, because at this point in time, when age, health is getting to be a predominant thing to worry about, especially in view of my last years with severe pneumonia, I am very leery when I start sniffing, or when I don't feel good. But I'll make it. I'm an optimist. I have a good nurse, and a good wife, and a good girlfriend. Between the three of them they'll take good care of me.

**INT:** (laughs)

**SAL:** Did you hear it?

**GOLDIE:** I heard it.

**INT:** Is there anything else that you would like to be part of your permanent record?

**SAL:** Not necessarily. I am playing with an invention. I would like it to take off, so that I make one hit before I come to the pearly gates. But if I don't, I'll leave it for the next generation.

**INT:** Is there any question I should have asked you that I didn't ask you?

**SAL:** No. You asked too many.

**INT:** (laughs)

**SAL:** You asked all the questions that you wanted to ask, plus, and some of them you asked repeatedly, only because you wanted to compare my notes. I know. I got wise to you. And you have a remarkable memory of what I said to you two or three weeks ago,

because I don't even remember. Because I'm a very spontaneous person. You ask me something, I spontaneously answer you what I think at this moment. But I appreciate the effort that you made, and I appreciate the time that I gave you, so that if they have some value for the future, they can evaluate it and put it together as part of a scientific prescription for other people. It has nothing to do with me personally, but they, I guess, what they're trying to do is put a psychological profile, so that people can study, and people can treat people with other disorders.

**INT:** Well, as I explained to Goldie, it's like putting all the information into a pot and making chicken soup.

**SAL:** By the way, Goldie does make extremely good chicken soup. Even my grandchildren say, "Nobody makes chicken soup like grandma." Which is true. [referring to interviewer's form] I will fill out these things for you after the wedding.

**INT:** The tapes will be archived: I'm hoping that they will be archived at the Holocaust Museum in Washington.

**SAL:** Yeah, there's no problem. They got plenty of room. And they're looking for things like that. They're looking to be busy. All public officials are looking for causes, to perpetuate their position and their problems.

**INT:** Now you sound like a cynic.

**SAL:** But it's true. All politicians are looking for causes, even if they're losers, but it's a good cause. They have something to run for.

**INT:** Well, I thank you personally for having to remember some of the things that you would rather keep locked up behind the doors.

**SAL:** I don't know whether you should include in your thanks the good cookies that my wife gave you. But maybe that should not be part of the tape, so edit it out.

**INT:** I just wanted to add that Goldie, your wife, was asked to be interviewed, and she said that she felt that she would rather not.

**SAL:** She finds it very hard. A lot harder than I. Women are more sensitive. She'll sleep a lot fewer nights after. I can answer you some questions about her if you ask, but it's a lot harder on her, than it would be on me. Not because my experiences weren't as bad as hers. Maybe they were slightly worse, or maybe not. She also was a lot younger than I was, so her impressions are different. And she's the only survivor of her family, and that makes it different, because I did survive with a brother, a sister and a mother. But you'll have to settle without it. She did put in a few comments on tape, and that'll give you a guide as to what she is.

**INT:** But she had said that when she talks, as an adult now she becomes the person she is, certainly as a result of who she was initially. But when she talks about those days during the war, it brings back so much for her that it's really very painful.

**SAL:** Those memories are pretty painful, and it's harder for her to handle it than for me.

**INT:** I understand.

**GOLDIE:** You see, I'm trying to be my own psychologist. Apparently I did not make peace with it yet. I'd never seen my parents killed. Visually...

**INT:** There's no closure.

**GOLDIE:** Right. Do you understand? I don't know; that might be it. I have no idea. So...

**INT:** Who's to judge?

**GOLDIE:** No, I'm just making a comment. I have no idea.

**INT:** You're saying that because you didn't see...

**GOLDIE:** For years I had dreams that I'm some place at this big party, and all of a sudden the door opens and my father walks in, or my mother walks in, because there's no closure there. There's no grave. There's no eyewitness. Do you understand what I'm saying? Logically, I know that they're dead, you know. But some of it is not finished. It will never be. Maybe some of it, I have no idea.

**INT:** I can certainly respect that.

**SAL:** When we come back in a couple hundred years, our great-great-grandchildren will...

END OF INTERVIEW