

INTERVIEW WITH PAUL ROHEIM

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

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INTERVIEWER: We're here doing an interview with Dr. Paul Roheim, survivor, on September 14, 1999. Paul, if you could...we'll start with you telling us a bit about...well, tell us your name.

PAUL: My name is Paul Roheim. I was born in July 11, 1925, in Hungary, in Kiskunhalas.

INT: Could you spell that, please?

PAUL: K-I-S-K-U-N-H-E-L-E-S. (Note: Kiskunhalas.)

INT: And that's one word.

PAUL: One word.

INT: What kind of a town was Kiskunhalas?

PAUL: Quite an agricultural town. Most of the people...we didn't have practically any industry in the town, mainly agricultural. The only industry was a big Jewish firm who were exporting mainly poultry and fruit to England.

INT: Was the Jewish presence large in Kiskunhalas?

PAUL: I believe we had about 250 families or something like that.

INT: So was that...that's a significant...

PAUL: It's a fair amount, but not...we had a very nice synagogue of our own. And also, the community was an Orthodox community.

INT: And was the home that you grew up in Orthodox?

PAUL: Sort of. Semi. We had a kosher home but my parents were not shomer Shabbat.

INT: And was that typical of most Jews in the town?

PAUL: Again, in that respect, there is a dichotomy within the Hungarian Jewry. One is the more assimilated one and the other is more of the Jews who came from Ukraine and Galicia. They were a very different kind in a way. They were more Orthodox and separated even from the assimilated Jews.

INT: And in your town there were those types of Jews as well?

PAUL: Yes.

INT: So you represented more of the assimilated. Yet, even the assimilated Jews kept kosher homes.

PAUL: Many of them. I don't know what percentage but I think a high percentage kept kosher homes.

INT: And did you have contact with the non-Jews in your hometown growing up as a child?

PAUL: Yes, in high school. We had some. In our class, we had four Jewish boys. It was a boys school, so it was an all-boys school. So out of forty or something.

INT: And was this a private...

PAUL: No. This was a Lutheran school.

INT: What kind of family...could you describe your family?

PAUL: It's quite difficult. It was a very close-knit family. My parents associated mainly with the cousins and relatives, less with the rest of the Jews even. The family get-together every weekend and often during weekdays and evenings, my mother's brother or sister came up or we went down to visit them in the evening.

INT: And they were all in Kiskunhalas?

PAUL: They were in Kiskunhalas. Not all of her brothers but--

INT: But she had family.

PAUL: She had quite an extended family there.

INT: And your father?

PAUL: My father also had family there from his mother's side. The Roheims came to Hungary from Batchkov, which is part of former Yugoslavia, former Hungary. They came to Kiskunhalas in 1920, after their store and home was ransacked by the Hungarians because they were Jews.

INT: As early as that.

PAUL: As early as the 1920's. And my grandmother originated from Kiskunhalas. Her family is one of the oldest families in Kiskunhalas. The tree goes back to the beginning of the middle of 18th century.

INT: Could you describe your immediate family?

PAUL: My immediate family was my mother, my father and we kept quite close contact with my mother's and my father's siblings, and also their children.

INT: So you were an only child?

PAUL: I was an only child. When I was playing in the weekend, I was mainly playing with my cousins.

INT: Could you tell me a bit about the structure of your family in terms of work, what your father's work was, your mother's work?

PAUL: My father owned a store, but he wasn't a businessman. The person who really ran the business was my mother. My father was the treasurer of the Jewish community. I remember that when the income for the Jewish community came, that they manufactured their own matzah, which was exceptionally fine and thin, and sold it all over the country, and also sold it before Pesach. I remember that my father irrespectively how busy they were in the store, they spent days and days busy with the matzah and mother alone would mind the store.

INT: What kind of store was it?

PAUL: It was sort of a haberdashery, I would call it.

INT: And for the record, could you tell us your father's name and your mother's name?

PAUL: Joseph, and my mother was Aranka Schon.

INT: So they together ran this haberdashery. What was your socio-economic status?

PAUL: I think middle class, lower middle class. We were not overly rich. They really had to work for every penny.

INT: And was that fairly representative of the Jewish community or of the whole town in general or there were variations with it?

PAUL: I think it's very representative of the Jewish community. The whole town I can not really tell. It was a wide variation in the town, especially since there were a lot of peasants and agriculture, and Kiskunhalas was one of the cities which had the largest surrounding which still belonged to the city limits. Very wide area, along with a lot of farms.

INT: Was there any kind of political or Zionist affiliation from you or your family?

PAUL: It depends when. In the late thirties, there were some Zionists or movement towards Israel. For example, we went to Hebrew class. We learned, or tried to learn, Hebrew. Actually, our teacher was the Hebrew teacher of the Jewish elementary school, who was the brother of Avigdor Hameyer, who was at that time a known Jewish poet in Israel. I forgot to tell -- we had a Jewish elementary school, so the first four grade school I went into a Jewish school.

INT: So there was a local day school. And was that coed or just...

PAUL: Coed. And what's interesting is that in that Jewish school, a number of non-Jewish kids, because they believed the schooling is much better there than the regular public schools.

INT: So after the first four levels in elementary, then you went on to high school?

PAUL: On to high school, yes.

INT: Would you consider your high school a gymnasium?

PAUL: It's a gymnasium.

INT: And once you were in high school, you started going to supplemental Hebrew school.

PAUL: Yes. We had regular...they had regular religion classes, and then we went to the rabbi's house and we had the reading Hebrew class there.

INT: So while the other students were having their religion--

PAUL: We were...

INT: And how did that work? Were people fairly accepting of that or were you made fun of?

PAUL: No, not at all. The Catholics had their Catholic class. The Lutherans had their Lutheran class. The Jews had their Jewish class.

INT: And was school held on Saturdays?

PAUL: No. This was during weekday. It was a given hour which was this.

INT: Right, but school met Monday through Friday. So you, as a teenager, got some Zionist exposure through your Jewish studies.

PAUL: Yes, that's right.

INT: But as a family, your parents didn't affiliate with any kind of Jewish organizations.

PAUL: No.

INT: Were you a member of any kind of youth group? Was there such a thing?

PAUL: Jewish or non-Jewish?

INT: Anything.

PAUL: That was one of the greatest disappointments in my early childhood. At first grade in gymnasium, they announced that you can come and enroll to become a Boy

Scout, and I went there and there's a rule you cannot become a Boy Scout because you are Jewish.

INT: And you had no idea until...

PAUL: Why not? That was in 1935.

INT: So you were at that time ten years old.

PAUL: Ten years old.

INT: Would you consider that your first exposure to anti-Semitism?

PAUL: I would, yes. It was really quite hard.

INT: And what did you do when you found that out?

PAUL: I just was very sad and I couldn't do anything.

INT: Did you talk to anybody about it?

PAUL: I talked to my parents about it. It was not only me, but the other Jewish kids were not accepted. None of us were accepted.

INT: How did your parents -- how did they comfort you or did they...were they surprised?

PAUL: Yes, they were surprised because this is really an early development of open anti-Semitism, although I have to say that Hungary had the distinction to have enacted the first anti-Semitic laws in Europe, I think, in 1919. They had so-called numerous clauses that just really restricted the number of Jews who can attend the universities.

INT: And that was not widespread in Europe at that time.

PAUL: No, it was not at all.

INT: It began in Hungary.

PAUL: It was in Hungary. So I know that a lot of my cousins went to either Czechoslovakia or Italy. For physicians, they went to Italy to become a physician.

INT: So this was not really news to your parents, but it was a personal experience.

PAUL: It was a shocking personal experience.

INT: And what was their reaction, do you remember? Was the reaction different between your father and mother? Do you remember how they handled it with you and how you were consoled?

PAUL: I don't recall. It was not a major problem.

INT: But you knew that you could go home and talk to your parents.

PAUL: Yes. It was a major shock to me and for them, but that's...okay, so he's not accepted, he's not accepted.

INT: And how did you feel when you sat with this information? Did you get angry and want revenge, or did you feel hurt and...

PAUL: I felt hurt.

INT: And that's where you left it. You didn't turn that around and get hatred-filled or angry?

PAUL: No.

INT: The level of education in your home -- your father, your mother.

PAUL: My father had gymnasium, finished gymnasium. My mother had four years of high school, girl's school.

INT: And the distinction would be...at what age did she finish?

PAUL: Fourteen, and my father eighteen.

INT: So she was finished her schooling at fourteen, and your father at eighteen. And the gymnasium education was close to what we would consider currently now like two years of college?

PAUL: Again, that gymnasium had the distinction of one of the easiest in Hungary. (Laughter) And we had a lot of outside boys who couldn't make it anywhere else who came down to go to that school.

INT: And your own level of education we'll get into in a moment. Would you describe them as intellectual or not particularly?

PAUL: Intellectuals. As far as my education, I went to English and German individual tutoring.

INT: So outside of gymnasium, you also had English classes, German classes.

PAUL: Individual.

INT: Private tutors in English, private tutors in German. So education was clearly valued highly. How would you describe your...we're going to go into a description of the individuals in your life. How would you describe yourself?

PAUL: I think I was a mouse. (Laughter) I was not a very aggressive boy. I wasn't an exceptionally good student. In the very first year, I didn't get excellent grades, which I was expected. After that, I really didn't care about studying at all.

INT: And how did your family handle this?

PAUL: Not very well. (Laughter) They weren't very happy at all. And then it's really sad, because I could have learned much more. JJS, your father, who went to an excellent school, and really they learned so much more than I did that it's not even funny.

INT: So you're saying it's because of the school?

PAUL: Because of the school.

INT: And how would you describe yourself now?

PAUL: In terms of what?

INT: What's your general personality like?

PAUL: I think I am trying to get involved in Jewish affairs, and very intellectually involved and keeping up with politics, local and Israeli. And also, some literature. I'm quite interested in the past in terms of the Holocaust. That's one of my "hobbies."

INT: And your occupation now, or in the recent past, has been--

PAUL: Well, a lot on the Holocaust. I'm really involved in my own work, which was with science. I really like what I am doing.

INT: What is it? Could you describe your work?

PAUL: I'm working on heart disease -- there are some factors which can influence the development of arteriosclerosis, some factors which can influence the development of arteriosclerosis.

INT: And you have a degree?

PAUL: I have an M.D. degree and I'm the Director of Division of Protein Metabolism and Physiology.

INT: And you are a professor at--

PAUL: Professor of physiology and medicine and pathology at LSU Medical Center. I am also named professor of...(?) professor.

INT: We're going to go back, just to stay in your family of origin for a minute, how would you...if you had to describe your mother, what kind of words would you use to describe her?

PAUL: She was a leader of the family. Was a very strong personality. Story goes way back to the First World War, where all of her brothers and brother-in-laws were in the army, and she was the only one who helped her widowed mother to carry on the store and to care for the entire family. She really had a very strong personality.

INT: I remember her running the show.

PAUL: (Laughter)

INT: Yes, she was a very strong woman.

PAUL: Actually, she got it from her mother. My grandmother, widowed when she was three years old and had six or eight children, and she had to raise them, which wasn't easy.

INT: And where was your mother in the birth order?

PAUL: The youngest. She was the youngest.

INT: And how would you describe your father?

PAUL: My father was a very well-meaning person. He really was nice. For example, he was interested in my studies too, but he asked my lesson whether I tell him or not, and if I didn't do correctly or something, he never raised his hand. The only thing what he did was he threw his hat on the floor. (Laughter)

INT: That was his expression of anger.

PAUL: Exactly. (Laughter)

INT: And what did you do when that happened?

PAUL: I had nothing. I just remember it clearly. It happened quite often. But he was interested in my studying and I do probably owe a lot.

INT: And what was your mother's reaction when you would come home with these reports?

PAUL: She was stronger. She really berated me and stimulated me. But it wasn't very...she almost accepted the fact, that's it.

INT: And so your father was a very gentle...

PAUL: Very gentle and good-willing and kind person, too kind.

INT: Too kind?

PAUL: Too kind, yes.

INT: How is that?

PAUL: He was taken in with all kinds of stories. He helped everybody.

INT: And how did your mother react to that?

PAUL: Well, she supported him. She really supported him.

INT: Do you remember people in particular that he helped?

PAUL: My father helped a lot with this very Orthodox, non-assimilated part. Since we had a store, they came and they got credit and so forth. I consider it now that it was his mitzvah.

INT: Did you have grandparents?

PAUL: Yes. I remember vaguely my grandfather, and I remember quite well my grandmother on my father's side, who was quite old. She had an impairment of vision so she could barely see anything. She was not running the household. My mother was running the household since I remember.

INT: Did she live with you?

PAUL: Yes. She lived with us. My grandfather lived with us too. He died when I was five or six years old.

INT: And your mother's parents? Your mother's father died early.

PAUL: Her father early, and her mother died also when I was around five or six.

INT: And do you remember aunts, uncles, cousins? Any particular close connections?

PAUL: There were a number of aunts and uncles and cousins, but one thing I remember most is my uncle who became a physician, and he was the director of a TB sanatorium in Budapest. They didn't have a child and I was also their child.

INT: Their surrogate child.

PAUL: Surrogate child, and I spent a lot of summers there.

INT: Where was that?

PAUL: In Budapest. They had a summer home next to the sanatorium, and I spent several weeks every summer and it was lovely. They were very much education-oriented. He was very unhappy about my grades. He was a great guy and unfortunately that's another story. He was murdered. Actually, he was director of a Jewish hospital in Budapest, and three or five days before the liberation, the entire hospital -- patients, nurses, physicians, were murdered. That's a different story.

INT: The Hungarians?

PAUL: These were the Hungarians. As a matter of fact, I believe the leader of that was a Catholic priest.

INT: And what was his name?

PAUL: Eugene Schon.

INT: So this was your mother's brother?

PAUL: My mother's brother, yes.

INT: Any other extended family that you remember?

PAUL: Everybody. I had my aunt -- maybe you remember -- Aunt Herminka. She had a son who was a physician and he finished in Italy.

INT: Herminka was your mother's--

PAUL: My mother's oldest sister. And actually, she had a diary during the Holocaust era, and I gave that, the original copy, to the Yad Vashem. They have it now. Her husband died in '44. In that respect, I can give you a story which is maybe out of sequence a little bit. He died actually, I think, in '43. His tombstone was erected in April, '44, at the time when we already had to wear the yellow star. We went to whatever ceremonies when they uncover the tombstone on a Sunday, and we were walking home and we met parishioners coming out from the Lutheran Church. I didn't know them at all. They came over to us and they told us, "It's not right what they are doing to you. Our pastor was telling us that it is not right. They shouldn't do it." And that's, again, shows that there was two Lutheran pastors who were exceptionally friendly for the Jews.

INT: In your area.

PAUL: In our town. So much so, that in Auschwitz, people were permitted to write postcards. Most of the postcards were addressed to the pastors.

INT: And they were actually delivered?

PAUL: Delivered, yes.

INT: And the pastors would then relay the messages?

PAUL: There was nobody to relay it to. I don't know whether you know -- they give you this postcard saying that we are well and so forth, and those postcards, most of them went to the pastors.

INT: And what did they do with them?

PAUL: After that, I think they gave it to whoever survived.

INT: Do you remember any of the pastors?

PAUL: Yes.

INT: Have you ever tried to contact them?

PAUL: I talked to them. One was a real peasant leader. The other was an American educated.

INT: But both had hearts in the right place.

PAUL: Very much so.

INT: Did they do anything to help save anybody?

PAUL: Not materially, but a number of people sent their belongings to them. But they did not hide any Jew as far as I know.

INT: But they preached opposition to hatred.

PAUL: Actually, the peasant pastor was the only one who voted against establishing the ghetto in the municipal council or whatever. But again, he was after that hunted by the Communists because he...

INT: You can't win. So Herminka's husband was murdered?

PAUL: Died in '44. He had a heart attack at forty-three.

INT: So your extended family was fairly wide.

PAUL: And close knit. There's too much to talk about every individual. The only thing I can tell was the house where my mother was born -- it was still in the family's possession. Actually, I have a deed from 1848, when my great-grandparents bought...didn't buy the house. Leased the house because at that time, Jews were not permitted to own property. The other side, my father's mother, my grandmother was born in another...my other uncle's house. She was born in 1860. It's a very well-rooted Hungarian family. There were three or four families in that town who had such an old history behind them.

INT: Let's come to your current family. You are married to--

PAUL: To Judy Roheim, who has since-- (End of tape 1, side 1)

INT: Your parents and your wife left together.

PAUL: Before we say about this, this is still pre-Holocaust era. One is that at the end of the gymnasium there is a celebration and everybody has to walk around, and the Jewish boys were separated and we had to walk separately. We were not invited to the banquet, and since then I haven't been invited to any class reunion for the gymnasium. Deeply

rooted, some of the anti-Semitism, although again, it's not a general...One of my main resentment is that the Western powers did not publicize the Holocaust. Nobody knew about it. I remember that a lot of peasants who were customers of my parents were telling her, "Mrs. Roheim, give Paul to me. I will put him up at the farm. Nobody will ever find him. Not one."

INT: Really? So you had many...

PAUL: Many people who would have--

INT: Many who made that offer to try to protect you and save you.

PAUL: Yes. Other people had the same experience but nobody knew anything about it, and I think the help would have been far greater if people would have known what was awaiting us.

INT: You think that more of the countrymen and neighbors would have been more willing to help had they known.

PAUL: Actually, my mother said that the peasants were less anti-Semitic than the intelligentsia.

INT: So on a one-to-one community basis, where you had interactions with your fellow townspeople, it wasn't a credo of anti-Semitism, but in fact you were simply neighbors and got along well.

PAUL: Exactly. Or just again an example. This is a long history I can tell you. We had some construction in our house just a year before '44, when the Germans came in. There was a worker there whom I was very, very friendly, and after, when you were wearing the yellow star, you weren't supposed to talk to non-Jews. We were walking on two sides of the street and I just was walking and I didn't want to give him any problems, and he was yelling at me, "Paul, you don't even want to recognize me anymore." That really is remarkable sometimes.

INT: And his act was one of ignoring the rules.

PAUL: Knowing it's against the rules and showing that I'm not abiding with that.

INT: We're going to get further into what happened when the Germans came. Let's just get a little brief...we're jumping briefly to the present. Just describe your family, your nuclear family now, which is Judy Roheim, who's your wife. You met in Europe. You married in Europe.

PAUL: And we came to the United States.

INT: And she is currently--

PAUL: She is currently a child psychiatrist, a doctor in New Orleans, and we have a son, John. My parents were living with us and we spent a year on sabbatical in Israel in 1970, and my father died there and he is buried there, and my mother died about twenty years ago.

INT: How would you describe your wife?

PAUL: Also a strong-willed person. She knows what she wants and really encouraged me in every level. She felt that I was doing...she said I can do this, I know you can do that, and helped me in every which way.

INT: And how would you describe John?

PAUL: John is a difficult person. He finished medical school and then went into training with quite a bumpy road. He finally got married and has a son whom he is very devoted to.

INT: And I believe his grandfather is very devoted to him as well.

PAUL: His grandmother is crazy about him.

INT: I think both of the grandparents are crazy about him. (Laughter) So John is a physician.

PAUL: A physician, and just moved to Alexandria, Louisiana, where he really likes it and he is very satisfied.

INT: And he is how old?

PAUL: Forty-two.

INT: Did you know your in-laws?

PAUL: Yes. I was actually courting Judy and we are going steady three-and-a-half years before we got married. I was a regular visitor on the weekends at their house.

INT: So you knew her--

PAUL: I knew her mother, father, her aunt and uncle, quite well.

INT: And how would you describe her parents?

PAUL: Her mother also was an exceptionally strong-willed lady, although she gave up easily. She knew what she wants. Her father was an excellent businessman. He traveled a lot, all over. By the time I courted Judy, he was traveling mainly on the Far East and Middle East.

INT: When did he die?

PAUL: He died in 1970.

INT: And that was in Hungary.

PAUL: He died in Hungary.

INT: How would you describe the relationships between your parents?

PAUL: My father accepted my mother as a leader. They were quite close. My mother helped him whatever he had to do.

INT: Do you remember them arguing?

PAUL: No. Not at all.

INT: Were they affectionate with one another?

PAUL: Yes.

INT: And they were physically affectionate?

PAUL: Yes.

INT: And openly warm.

PAUL: Openly warm.

INT: And how about with you? How were they with you?

PAUL: Very much so. (Laughter) Very affectionate.

INT: How would you describe the relationship between you and Judy?

PAUL: Getting better every day.

INT: How many years have you been married?

PAUL: We are married for forty-two years, and we are going together forty-five, forty-six years. It's improving all the time.

INT: From better to better to better to better. And how about the relationship with you guys and John?

PAUL: I'm more critical of him than Judy. Judy is more understanding and supportive of him than I am.

INT: Why do you think that is?

PAUL: She believes that's the way to treat him.

INT: And what do you believe?

PAUL: You have to tell what you feel. Don't swallow it.

INT: Would you say that's pretty much how you operate in general?

PAUL: Yes.

INT: And what about Judy?

PAUL: She is more conscious of what will be the consequence if I say this or that.

INT: So she's more calculating.

PAUL: Yes. I wouldn't say calculating.

INT: I don't mean that in a negative way.

PAUL: More assessing how it would be the reaction.

INT: So she's more deliberate.

PAUL: Deliberate. That's the right word.

INT: And you're more spontaneous, impulsive.

PAUL: More spontaneous.

INT: How would you describe the friendships when you were growing up, the kinds of friendships that you saw your parents have with other people?

PAUL: Again, friendship was almost completely restricted to family members. We were quite close to each other. Except one or two couples, I don't recall any others that they have been friends with.

INT: So their life was really revolved around family. And how about you? What were your friendships like?

PAUL: Again, my cousins. With my cousins. I had a few Jewish classmates. I don't have really many non-Jewish friends.

INT: And did you keep up with these friends post-war?

PAUL: Yes. I did for one or two. There were not many. The cousins, yes. The family members, yes. We kept constant contact.

INT: So really, your life was with family.

PAUL: Yes.

INT: And close family.

PAUL: It depends how you define close family. Second cousins are close family. (Note: the interviewee and the interviewer are second cousins -- actually, first cousins once removed.)

INT: How would you describe friendships in your own life now?

PAUL: I have, again, restricted to family. My best friend is your father. I have some old friends, but again, not that close. I have way back friends from medical school and after or during, but since we moved to New Orleans, it's very difficult to establish real friendship. You have acquaintances, but not real friends.

INT: And is that a factor related to New Orleans? Is it related to your place in your life right now? Is it related generally to your personality?

PAUL: I think it's related to our personality.

INT: As a couple.

PAUL: As a couple. We really are, I would say, a very close-knit couple. That's one of our problems. We can't do anything because we like to do everything together, so we don't get anywhere easy. (Laughter) That's a major problem.

INT: I don't think it's a problem. I wouldn't describe it as a problem.

PAUL: It's a certain hindrance on certain things.

INT: Like what?

PAUL: If we want to do something, we'll never be able to do as much as we want because everything has to be done together.

INT: For example.

PAUL: To shop or this and that. I don't like to shop personally, but Judy loves it so if she goes somewhere and most of the time I go with her, and she wouldn't buy a coat or a dress without showing it to me. I go with her and it's time-consuming, but I do it not because I like it. I like to be with her, and she does the same thing.

INT: And what kinds of things does she do with you that you like to do, that aren't particularly her favorite things?

PAUL: I don't know. She comes with me shopping and groceries, which she doesn't like. That's an example. I don't recall other things. She helps me sometimes in my work.

INT: So you would describe yourselves as each other's...the second handle of the unit.

PAUL: No question.

INT: How would you say in your family growing up communication was handled? Was there a lot of verbal communication between your parents, between you and your parents? You already mentioned that there was a lot of affection freely expressed.

PAUL: Discussion of everything. There was no secrets or saying this is not for the children. It was really openly discussed, everything.

INT: And how was conflict dealt with? Do you remember?

PAUL: Conflict in terms of what?

INT: Well, let's say...you mentioned that when your grades were not quite...didn't meet the expectations, your father threw his hat on the ground and your mother was more berating verbally. So they each sort of expressed it their own way and there wasn't a conflict about it.

PAUL: Not at all.

INT: Do you remember any decisions that had to be made or how decisions were made in the family?

PAUL: Mainly joint decisions where my mother played the leading role in the decision but my father always accepted whatever she was...actually, he came up occasionally with some ideas. There was free communication. That's what they called it.

INT: So it was pretty open. Was there pretty much agreement about what was important, what was valued, as a unit, as a family unit, or did your father and mother have different ideas about what was important?

PAUL: Not at all. My mother was very supportive. For example, Lutz didn't have parents.

INT: Lutz was a cousin. He was the son of--

PAUL: The son of my father's brother who died early, and he was really considered my brother and I remember that I was very close to him also.

INT: And he was brought into the family?

PAUL: Without any question.

INT: So they were completely unified in how they expected to deal with this?

PAUL: No question about it. There was no disagreement. It was natural. One thing about the Zionist connection -- I overlooked that Lutz got involved in the Zionist movement in '38.

INT: So Lutz was a cousin who was orphaned. He was older than you.

PAUL: Considerably older than me. Eleven years older than me. He also lived with your father's family, half with your father's mother and father, and there he got involved in the Zionist movement, I think in the Hashomer Hatzair actually, and he also went to a kvutza in Budapest, but after the possibility to move to Israel did not materialize, and this was again a communist movement, in '38, he decided he will try to escape to Russia, and he succeeded there. He spent almost ten years in Russia.

INT: And what was he doing in Russia for ten years?

PAUL: Well, he was in a concentration camp up in Siberia, which was as bad as the Nazi concentration camps. The survival rate was about the same. Ten, twenty percent survived. It was really terrible conditions.

INT: So he was there from 1938 to 1948.

PAUL: 1948 or '47. I don't recall.

INT: Do you remember the reunion, how he came back?

PAUL: Well, I have quite vivid memories about that. First, we thought that he died. We didn't think that he survived.

INT: When he fled to Russia, his hope was that he would be welcomed because it was a communist ideology?

PAUL: He wanted to contribute to the fascist regime, to fight for his land. That's what he was saying. When we didn't hear anything from him until the first letter from Uzbekistan, from Tashkent, came, and I remember when I received the letter and I read it to my parents, I was in the store, and I had to run over to my aunt to tell her the whole thing. So after that, we had one or two letters.

INT: This was in the late thirties.

PAUL: No, '47.

INT: So when he left in '38 you didn't hear from him again until eight, nine years later?

PAUL: Eight, nine years. So we really thought that he is gone. Then we got a few letters, and I remember -- so does your father -- we got a letter that "I'm coming," and we went out to wait for him at the railway station on the date. He didn't come with the train we expected, so we went home, very disappointed. We shared an apartment. And then he banged on the door at three a.m., or two-thirty a.m. in the morning. We lived on the fourth floor or third floor, but the floors had a half-floor, which he didn't know, so he woke up the people under us. (Laughter)

INT: They must have been delighted.

PAUL: His condition health-wise was reasonable. He was not emaciated. He really gained a lot of weight in Uzbekistan, but he came in an old, Russian field uniform. And I told him, talking about lice, "Okay, come, let's sit down. In an hour, the public bath opens. I have my clothes -- we'll go to the public bath and you put on the clothes what I'm wearing, everything, and whatever you have you pack it up and throw it into the garbage." I just really didn't know how clean it is and I was afraid. Then we went together down to Kiskunhalas with him.

INT: That must have been an amazing reunion. What did he do in Uzbekistan?

PAUL: What happened is that '45, when the war ended, they weren't completely freed. They had to pick a place where they could work and show that they are there, that it was not complete freedom. They had to report to the police. But he worked as a laborer, packing rice and this.

INT: And he was paid?

PAUL: Some. He was paid. When he was able to regain some of his weight, he said that he went to the Jewish synagogue in Tashkent. He picked Uzbekistan because he said it's at least warm there. That was the main reason to go there. He didn't want to be in the cold anymore.

INT: Just for the record, Lutzi died this past year. Tell me about the way that religion and faith and G-d were dealt with in your family. Let's first talk about practice.

PAUL: My father put the tefillin on every day. He prayed regularly. Went to the synagogue Friday nights and every holiday.

INT: So your father put on tefillin and davened every morning?

PAUL: Yes.

INT: And then on Shabbas, did you go with him to synagogue?

PAUL: Yes. I went to the synagogue, which was...the kids, we were sitting separately. Actually, it was required. As a high school student, we were required to go to the synagogue on Friday, and we also had special services on Saturday, two p.m. in the afternoon, just for the youth.

INT: And Saturday morning?

PAUL: You also had to go to the synagogue, but the separate youth service was at two p.m.

INT: And did your father go on Shabbas morning as well?

PAUL: Yes. Whenever he could, he went. He went.

INT: Was the store opened on Saturday?

PAUL: Yes. I said she was not shomer Shabbat. He couldn't duchen.

INT: He couldn't duchen?

PAUL: Yes, because we are Kohanim, and if you are not shomer Shabbat you cannot duchen.

INT: Did that bother him?

PAUL: I don't recall.

INT: And what was the practice at home? What was your mother's practice?

PAUL: Didn't go to the synagogue that often, but she really prayed. We just looked for her prayer book. Since we are going to Hungary, Judy wanted to take it with her, her prayer book. She liked that very much and actually she asked for it when we came to the United States, that she wants to have her prayer book here. She wanted to pray.

INT: Do you remember her praying?

PAUL: Yes.

INT: And she prayed daily or on Shabbas?

PAUL: Occasionally. I don't recall any regular praying.

INT: Did she light candles Friday night?

PAUL: Oh yes. Every Friday night. It was routine.

INT: Did they talk about G-d?

PAUL: Not much.

INT: How about their faith? Do you remember any kind of discussion about faith or relationship with G-d?

PAUL: It wasn't expressed. It wasn't a topic that was discussed. That's what we have to do and we do it, because we were born that way.

INT: So you were practicing. Ritual was in there.

PAUL: Yes.

INT: How about once the war struck? Was there any talk about G-d or faith, belief?

PAUL: I don't recall, but I believe my mother had greater faith in G-d than my father.

INT: And what makes you think that?

PAUL: The way she behaved. Some remarks which I don't remember, but that's an impression that one gets.

INT: So your mother had more faith than your father. And how do you think she would articulate her faith in G-d? What do you think it was?

PAUL: Again, it went back to her mother. She also liked to help very much other people. Poor people.

INT: So she expressed her dedication--

PAUL: She liked to have on High Holidays guests and so forth. Again, the story -- the way she viewed it goes back to my grandmother, who was widowed, as I said before, but every Pesach she went and got a poor man, and the poor man was really giving the Seder. He was sitting at the head of the table, giving the Seder for the entire family. And she always recalled that fact, so I can see how she really believed in this.

INT: So this is a story that you grew up hearing, that still you get very emotional when you tell.

PAUL: Very much so.

INT: The tape can't see it, but this is a story that your mother tells, told, throughout your childhood.

PAUL: Exactly.

INT: Of the time when her mother, as a widow, around Pesach time, for the Seders, would go and find someone who could not afford or was not involved in any other Seder.

PAUL: Could not afford a Seder.

INT: And would go into town and find a poor person, and seat that person at the head of the table. When your mother told you this story, how did she tell you? Did she get emotional?

PAUL: Yes.

INT: I've heard this story from you. My guess is that when she was transmitting that story to you, the emotional impact--

PAUL: Was very much.

INT: Was tremendous. And it has carried on. (End of tape 1, side 2) So you were saying that the message in that story--

PAUL: This is the way you should behave, to help people and try to follow the commandment of mitzvot. She didn't say it in that many words, but that was the message.

INT: Do you see places in your life where you have thought of that story as a motivating force behind actions of yours?

PAUL: Yes.

INT: Where would that be?

PAUL: Again, whenever I can, I try to help. For example, I'm trying to help Jewish refugees from Russia. I've placed them and hired some of them, and give them livelihood and try to help them.

INT: Do you think consciously of that story, or you're conscious enough and aware enough that that story has influenced your actions?

PAUL: I think that story influenced my actions.

INT: And it's told...when you tell me and you tell my children at Seder, it's told, I would guess, with the same level of emotionality that it was told to you.

PAUL: Exactly.

INT: Are there other stories that come to mind like that, that you can see as having had an impact?

PAUL: Not necessarily family related.

INT: Anything.

PAUL: As I mentioned to you, there was a Jewish "industry," the poultry, who really were exceptional rich. They had a fleet of trucks and all of that. The guy who was one of the owners was the mainstay of the community. He always...he gave money to a lot of people. He was asked, "How can you do that? This is such a tremendous amount of money. Why are you doing it?" "This is just a loan."

INT: Just a loan.

PAUL: (Crying) Hashem Yisborach is giving back for me.

INT: Once again, you're emotional. It's so emotional that you're unable to talk about it. But I'd like you to try to repeat that.

PAUL: "It's just a loan, because Hashem Yisborach is going to give it to me with interest."

INT: This story is that the man of such great wealth is generously giving--

PAUL: Should generously give.

INT: Should generously give away money, and the message that he said was this is simply a loan from Hashem and the payment will come in the next life.

PAUL: Not necessarily in the next life.

INT: In time.

PAUL: In time.

INT: You get extremely emotional when you tell this. What--

PAUL: Because I believe it. (Crying)

INT: But what's touched in you when you hear that?

PAUL: I really don't know. I cannot describe it, but again, this was a story which really made a tremendous impact on me.

INT: And you heard this story from?

PAUL: From my mother. Several times, not once.

INT: This was when she was growing up?

PAUL: No. That was when she was...when I was growing up.

INT: But as a child, you weren't aware of it. Your mother -- one of the things she repeatedly told you was this story, and the theme was generosity.

PAUL: Generosity and no selfishness. Really, I would call it again, it's a true mitzvah.

INT: So these were the lessons that your mother imparted on you, that you have not forgotten.

PAUL: Exactly.

INT: Did your father tell stories like that too?

PAUL: No.

INT: So she took that--

PAUL: She took the lead.

INT: Are there other pivotal stories like that that you can think of?

PAUL: Not at the moment. It will come eventually.

INT: But now, in your adult life, you can look back at certain actions in your life and see their roots.

PAUL: Exactly. And I have to say that Judy is exceptionally supportive of me in these things.

INT: And would you say that she also had those kinds of teachings told to her?

PAUL: I don't think so.

INT: But she recognizes them.

PAUL: She recognizes them and very supportive and helping.

INT: Do you think that you, in turn, have talked through your life actions like that to Johnny?

PAUL: (Pause) I think I wasn't successful enough. He really sees what I am doing, but not necessarily following it.

INT: And would you say that you were as verbally didactic and telling these stories as much as your mother, or you have done the actions but not the stories?

PAUL: Not the stories. Occasionally I said it, but not that constancy like my mother. She had many small stories which I can't really recall, but it made a tremendous impact on me.

INT: So she talked through, narrated her actions.

PAUL: Yes, exactly.

INT: And that never leaves you.

PAUL: Never.

INT: Let's go back to the faith issue with your mother. Through her actions, you know that she believed in mitzvot.

PAUL: Very much so.

INT: Whether she called them because G-d commands us is another story, but her actions were grounded in the notions of mitzvot.

PAUL: Exactly.

INT: When war came, did she talk at all about we have to have faith or Hashem will provide? Was there anything like that?

PAUL: That Hashem will help us.

INT: She actually verbalized that.

PAUL: Yes.

INT: And your father?

PAUL: Also. They believed that we will be helped. They really couldn't imagine what will happen, and then they really hoped that everything will turn out right, that G-d helps.

INT: What effect did that have on you?

PAUL: I wasn't that certain at that time. I think I was more, "We should do something."

INT: So you see that as more passive acceptance.

PAUL: And I have some stories that we should do something, and that's a very typical story. Again, it shows the lack of knowledge of what went on in Auschwitz, because we listened to BBC and the Voice of America every day, at least twice. When the Germans came, the neighboring cities, from the neighboring cities, many males were collected and sent to concentration camp. For example, our aunt's husband, Freeda's Neni's husband, was taken away and sent to concentration camp. When we learned that around twenty young guys--

INT: This was around what year?

PAUL: '44 April. We learned about it and we decided, okay, we are not going to be collected by the Nazis. We were not very far from Tito, Yugoslavia. We are going to try to escape and go over to Tito. And every one of us made a rucksack and baked some zwieback, that hard...and we wanted to go. Once the elders of the community learned about it, they came over to us and prayed, "Please don't do it. If the authorities find out that you are deserting, the whole community will be decimated." And from all those twenty boys, not more than four or five is alive or came back. But if you would have known what is waiting for you, what is expected, the whole development would have been very different. But this is a very important point when people ask why was no Jewish resistance. And the reason is because they were unaware of the dangers of what they are facing.

INT: I would add that the threat of the rest of the community being punished was a real one.

PAUL: Exactly. A real one. That is a very powerful one. We couldn't take it on ourselves, to take that burden.

INT: Let's talk about the war years. Let's just jump to the war years.

PAUL: I don't know if you know that Novi Sad, former Yugoslavia, there was a massacre there in '43 of Jews. Several hundred were killed and put into the Danube. I had

a classmate or schoolmate one year younger whose father was an officer. He was telling me that, "Well, our father and this and that killed so many Jews in there."

INT: How was he telling you?

PAUL: Just telling us.

INT: With pride? With--

PAUL: With pride.

INT: Teasing you?

PAUL: No, with pride and hope for the future. "Well, the Jews and the Russians are inferior. We are going to have them as our slaves and we are going to live it up."

INT: And he knew you were Jewish?

PAUL: He certainly knew that I'm Jewish.

INT: And what was your reaction?

PAUL: First of all, I didn't believe that story. It was so...It would have been a fantasy, I thought. And again, this shows the mentality of the populace.

INT: And this was a classmate.

PAUL: A schoolmate.

INT: At the gymnasium. So these were not the peasant people.

PAUL: I remember we were walking home from the school to our house.

INT: Just chit-chatting.

PAUL: Chit-chatting.

INT: So do you remember what you were doing in March of '44, February of '44? Where were you in your life? You were at this point eighteen.

PAUL: I was eighteen and--

INT: Or turning eighteen.

PAUL: I was a carpenter apprentice. (Laughter)

INT: How did that come to be?

PAUL: Because in '44, '43, it already was the situation very tight. They really didn't like the intellectual Jews and they wanted to have some laborers. Therefore, I was a...

INT: Who wanted laborers?

PAUL: Manual labor.

INT: Who wanted the manual labor?

PAUL: The Hungarian government. So that was a practice among the young Jews to become apprentice. One of my cousins became an electrician, the other a plumber. I became a carpenter. Even today, if I have to put a nail in the wall, you start sweating. I don't like it. (Laughter)

INT: So it wasn't your occupation of choice.

PAUL: It wasn't choice, exactly.

INT: But you start sweating because it reminds you of what?

PAUL: No, not because...I'm just so inept to do any manual thing. And that also was a period before that, that when my uncle died in '43, for a few months I helped my aunt in the store and after that I became an apprentice.

INT: So you were an apprentice for whom?

PAUL: For another cousin. (Laughter)

INT: Who was actually a carpenter?

PAUL: He did very high quality carpentry.

INT: Like cabinet making.

PAUL: Nice designs.

INT: Can you tell me what was the series of events when the Germans came?

PAUL: It was March 19th. It was a beautiful day and then we learned that the Germans marched in and it took about two days until the Germans appeared in Kiskunhalas.

INT: So March 19th you learned that the Germans are on Hungarian soil.

PAUL: And they are picking up Jews who wanted to leave Budapest and nobody knows where did they take them. And then the Germans came into our town and then within a few weeks, they established a ghetto. They moved the Jews into three different compounds, because they were unable to put them in one place.

INT: Where were you moved to?

PAUL: To another house, another big house.

INT: In your neighborhood?

PAUL: No. Actually, that compound was around the synagogue and really didn't...actually, five of us were living in a room. It was my mother, father, aunt Herminka, myself and another cousin.

INT: And you were assigned that room?

PAUL: Yes. You were assigned to that room. There was a curfew what time you can go and get water. We were getting drinking water from a well. So from ten to twelve or whatever specific times. After that--

INT: Who was the cousin that you were with?

PAUL: One of the Schons. After that, we were called to press the hay.

INT: In bales.

PAUL: Again, I have to say that I was a very weak boy, very weak. It was very good for me to go out and try to do some manual labor in the open field.

INT: Good for you in what way?

PAUL: That my strength should come back and improved considerably. I wasn't doing any sport or anything.

INT: As a child you weren't athletic.

PAUL: It was about four, five weeks or six weeks we were doing that. Again, my uncles were very careful, helping me and not to let me do anything heavy. So you felt the protective shield of the family around you, which is...that's one of the reasons why I'm really exceptionally family oriented. Probably you know that. (Laughter)

INT: I noticed that. So you sort of said jokingly that it was fun.

PAUL: It was really...we never imagined or thought that we are going to be taken away. I said, "Okay, this is the end. This will be great. We can survive this hardship until the Russians will come," because the Russians were already a hundred, two hundred miles away. It was a reasonable...and we didn't have any idea at that time what happened in the upper part of Hungary, which formerly belonged to Czechoslovakia, when they immediately took the Jews and they carried them to Auschwitz.

INT: And you didn't know what happened to the Jews in Budapest.

PAUL: We didn't know a thing about it.

INT: How were your parents at this point?

PAUL: Just hoping that everything will be over.

INT: So there was no generalized panic at this point.

PAUL: No general panic whatsoever. They didn't know, and they said, "Okay, this is quite an acceptable situation. We can live here and we can 'survive.'"

INT: Then what happened?

PAUL: Then in June 5th, I believe, or even before, we had to report to be in the army for supplementary labor.

INT: And this was only boys of a certain age.

PAUL: Boys above eighteen or above seventeen, at a certain age, at a certain time.

INT: This is right before your eighteenth birthday.

PAUL: Yes. So we went there. Again, with my cousin, we were together.

INT: What was his first name?

PAUL: It was Joseph. Joseph Schon.

INT: Was he older than you?

PAUL: He was older, six years older. We were actually together all the way through. Then we were...the name of the town was Hugmitz in Russian. It doesn't really mean anything. Jews of the area were collected and then we were doing some work, nominal work, and one thing was really sad, was bad, that we had to march like a military and they made us sing anti-Jewish songs.

INT: This is the day that you--

PAUL: After.

INT: Once you registered, you were immediately--

PAUL: Registered, and they put them into a different compound.

INT: So you said goodbye to your parents.

PAUL: To my parents, and then went to that place.

INT: Not knowing that you were registering and being taken now to a compound.

PAUL: I knew that we are going to register to be used as a laborer.

INT: With an unknown period of time.

PAUL: Unknown period of time. And with the understanding that my parents will be staying in Kiskunhalas, in the ghetto.

INT: So now you're marching in lines.

PAUL: In lines, and then we were singing anti-Jewish songs.

INT: How did you...

PAUL: It was very...it was uncomfortable.

INT: How did you even know the song?

PAUL: They told us. It was actually a polka, a Strauss polka, which was--

INT: So they just changed the words.

PAUL: They changed the words. You know what was unconscious, great retaliation?

INT: What's that?

PAUL: We taught the military who was keeping us the Hatikva. (Laughter)

INT: So some kind of...an act of revolution, a musical revolution or a spiritual resistance.

PAUL: To teach them how to sing the Hatikva.

INT: And they learned it?

PAUL: They learned it, at least the melodies.

INT: They wanted to learn a new song and you taught them Hatikva.

PAUL: Another guy, military guy, came around and said, "What are you singing? You idiot. Don't you know this is the Jewish song?" (Laughter)

INT: And were you punished for this?

PAUL: No.

INT: That's a great resistance.

PAUL: It's not a resistance but it made us feel good.

INT: On some level, it is using your wits to get back.

PAUL: To outwit them.

INT: To outwit them. The relationship between the captives and your keepers was--

PAUL: Was variable.

INT: Was variable. It was to the point where you could teach them a song. So it was amicable enough in that respect.

PAUL: Yes.

INT: And these were Hungarians or these were Nazis?

PAUL: Hungarians. Ordinary military personnel. No affiliation with the Nazi party.

INT: So you went to the compound.

PAUL: And then were there two or three weeks. Then we went to a munition depot, and spent there again about two months or something.

INT: This is in mid-Hungary, northern-Hungary?

PAUL: Middle Hungary. Again, Kiskunhalas -- there was a unit there. Not only family but all the Jews from Kiskunhalas were a unit.

INT: Were you frightened?

PAUL: No, not really. There was a big factory nearby, producing all kinds of marmalade and things. Several hundred workers. They asked the director for the...not the director but the leader of the military to give them thirty or forty Jews. We were selected, the group of Kiskunhalas and some others to go there, which was excellent. They were really nice there, by the way, because they gave extra flour, extra meals for us to eat, and we have as much food as we can. It really, again, helped us to fortify us.

INT: So every day you would go to that factory?

PAUL: Actually, for I think two or three weeks we were living out at the factory and camping out, and going back for the weekend or whatever.

INT: Going back to the compound. At this time, were there any rumors of what was going on more generally?

PAUL: Not the vaguest notion. Still didn't know...at the end then we already heard cannons, because the Russians were about a hundred miles or less. Sixty miles from us. That was the time when we had to evacuate the ammunition depot. We were doing something, building something -- I don't know, fortification or whatever you call it. It was just to find work for the Jews.

INT: And then what happened?

PAUL: When they came close, the Russians, we were evacuated and we were marching. On September 15 -- that's the day when Horthy resigned and handed over the rule to a government who wanted to make peace. There was a twenty-four hour period before the

Nazis came over to govern. We were on the road. Everything is free. Everybody could have left, and nobody left because we have time and the next morning, the Nazis came and then we had to march over the Danube and eventually to the concentration camp. Again, one or two people later on asked...you never know what fate is holding for you. If I would have escaped, I would have had two choices. Most likely I would have gone off to my uncle in Budapest, who was murdered, or gone down to Hallasch. And the timing was such that that coincided with the massacre of two hundred Jewish forced laborers in the railway station of Budapest at that time, by Germans.

INT: On that day.

PAUL: On that day. That is the most frightening thing that what I remember in '46, and I was a medical student. I had to participate...I volunteered to participate in the exhumation of the bodies. There is a big memorial now there in the cemetery in Budapest for all of those who were killed, about two hundred.

INT: Why did they exhume the bodies?

PAUL: They wanted to move them and identify them, who is what. It was a terrible job.

INT: So why do you think you volunteered for this?

PAUL: They needed work. They needed somebody to do these things. I didn't know exactly why I am doing it, but I just felt I have to do it.

INT: Mostly Jews did it?

PAUL: The exhumation? Yes, only Jews. By the way, the pastor I was telling you, when the bodies were put on the trains, he gave a fantastic sermon. That's the pastor who was very outspoken against this act. He gave a fantastic sermon.

INT: He survived the war, this pastor? (End of tape 2, side 1) So the day is September 15th. Suddenly, you're in there.

PAUL: We could have left.

INT: But you couldn't have left, because then the next stop would have been...you would have run into a different set of...So you're now being marched. Do you know where you're being marched?

PAUL: I knew the name of the...to a collection center. I was in the other part of the Danube. We stayed there for two weeks or so, and after that we were marched to Austria.

INT: Did everyone understand what was happening at this time?

PAUL: We didn't know why are we being marched.

INT: What was your reaction at this point?

PAUL: Afraid at that time to escape. It was very difficult. Afraid to escape.

INT: Just out of curiosity, where there those among you who didn't understand German?

PAUL: Yes.

INT: And did you sort of translate? Well, your cousins -- did all your cousins understand German?

PAUL: As much as necessary. There wasn't too much German required.

INT: So you know something is going on and now you're scared to escape. You have no choice but to go ahead.

PAUL: And you hope that the Russians are coming.

INT: So that is the predominant hope.

PAUL: Yes, the Russians are coming.

INT: And that will be your savior.

PAUL: And then after that we were marched through the Austrian border. Put into railroad cars and shipped to Dachau.

INT: And everyone from your Kiskunhalas group that initially was taken to do this manual labor for the Hungarians was together.

PAUL: Yes. One guy escaped just before the border.

INT: Do you know if he made it through the war?

PAUL: No. He also became a Resistance fighter and he was killed.

INT: He was a partisan?

PAUL: Yes. In Budapest. The Resistance. Whatever he was doing, he was fighting the Germans.

INT: So this whole group now is in a train, in a cattle car, on its way to Dachau. Did you know where you were going?

PAUL: No.

INT: And how long was the trip?

PAUL: One or two days. It wasn't long. It wasn't long and it wasn't that bad. We came from relatively close, and then we went to Dachau and there was some kind of a

selection. The weaklings were put aside, but again, we didn't have the vaguest notion of what's going on.

INT: Were there any of your friends or close people that you came with that were selected out?

PAUL: No. All of them were in the younger group who were really strong. And then in Dachau, we had to take a shower and they shaved our head and the loisenstrasser, the lice street. Your hair is scraped, and then there is a thing like this shaven into that in your head.

INT: An indentation.

PAUL: An indentation.

INT: About two fingers wide, so that if you escaped, it's clear that you had this particular haircut and that was an indication that you escaped from a camp.

PAUL: Exactly. It was called loisenstrasser, lice street. (Laughter)

INT: That's said with humor, obviously. So even now, you're a bunch of young men. I assume at this point you're fearful. And yet, you still have this piece of humor.

PAUL: To say that. Yes. One interesting thing is that it got quite cold. It was October. There were barracks, and you had to evacuate the barracks for a long period of time. Our clothing was striped clothes that were very, very flimsy, and we were very cold. The next barrack, there were (?), but the people showed us that you have to go get together, close contact and rhythmically move, and the outsider had to be changed from time to time to get warm, so this way you preserved the body warmth.

INT: So you had a method of keeping warm while you were out. And someone showed you in the next barrack.

PAUL: He just showed us how to do it.

INT: And how many were you huddled together?

PAUL: Fifty or something.

INT: And the folks on the outside came inside.

PAUL: We just switched.

INT: Were the Germans watching this?

PAUL: I believe so. I don't know.

INT: But the point for them was just to have you out there.

PAUL: And that was really still better than standing Appel, which was later on. You had to stay in one place in line. This is a very liberal way to handle...

INT: So when you first came, they took your...you had no belongings at this time?

PAUL: Yes, I had, but everything was taken away.

INT: What did you have with you?

PAUL: I had my rucksack and garments. I always kept some cigarettes. I wasn't smoking but this was a good exchange. Probably I had money too. I'm sure I had money but everything was taken away and I didn't have anything.

INT: Did you wear glasses at the time?

PAUL: Yes.

INT: They let you keep them.

PAUL: They let me keep my glasses. At least I think. I'm not 100% sure.

INT: When you first got there, what was the routine?

PAUL: Well, we stayed in Dachau only four...less than a week or a few days.

INT: You were in Dachau less than a week?

PAUL: Yes, because we went after that to a sub-camp of Dachau, which was by far worse than Dachau.

INT: And what was that called?

PAUL: It was actually...the main camp of that was Neudorf, and we went from there to Kolwader Lager. It was in Obrick. That's the name of the Austrian town. We lived in the beginning in tents for a while, and that's where we were really taken out for work. That was quite...that was the tough life. I was released. Again, everything is luck. We arrived and we were put into separate commandos. The main commando was -- actually, I believe they were preparing a place where they could fire the rockets to England -- a building, cement-work. But a small contingent, I think around fourteen, was selected randomly to go to the Hinderrecord. That's the name of the commando which was...we had to do something in the railway station of Obrick, but it was very, very benign. It was not heavy at all. There's where I really started to get my education.

INT: And what do you mean by that?

PAUL: We saw the old (?), who were there for a long time before.

INT: The inmates?

PAUL: Inmates. Concentration lager. We were strong and we had to wash in the snow every morning. They said wait a few weeks and you will not be doing that.

INT: You did that for your own personal hygiene?

PAUL: For hygiene. Exactly. And (?) a weakening about the camp was -- I don't know what was the name, how we called it, the foreman from Czechoslovakia, and he says, "Look, you have 1200 people in the camp. Twenty of them die daily. Count when it will be your turn." And he was right. The camp had to be replenished every three, four weeks with new inmates. I don't know exactly the 1200 number, but the twenty I clearly remember. That was really the first reminder that it's really very bad.

INT: And what did you do with this information? How did you handle it? Did you talk with your friends there, your relatives, or did you keep to yourself with your thoughts?

PAUL: He openly said it. There was no discussion about it. These are facts. You just hope that you will survive.

INT: Did you find yourself...how did you hope to survive? Were you...

PAUL: Well, I couldn't see any method. Later on, I talked with survivors, but one example which I feel is very interesting. As I said, that was a contingent of forty or fifty, about three, four miles from the camp, and we had some German guards who were guarding us. Again, I don't know the sequence. One of the leaders at the time was an S.S. guy with the bone and scarf and everything. He took the weak ones -- this was by the end, by the way -- and marched with them separately, and after, when we stopped work, he left an hour earlier, and waited for us until the (?) came. He may have killed hundreds of Jews before but he was exceptionally nice at that time, compared to when he was changed. It was a regular Wehrmacht guy who went ahead and would say run, run, lauf, lauf, lustig laufen. Run, run, happily run. And we had to run to the work and back to the work, and if you got out of the line you will be shot. But one was an S.S. guy, one was a Wehrmacht guy. You really do not know the distinction. You asked me about survival. This I remember.

Again, back to the story of how did I survive. Really, the story of twenty people died. By January 20, for one reason or another, the census of the camp was very low. There were no more inmates available for the main work station, the hauptborshteller. This is January 20th. I remember the date. And they said no more other commandos. Everybody has to go to the hauptborshteller tomorrow. And I figured it out myself, believe it or not. I said well, we got x number of calories, 800 calories or whatever, per day. Do that heavy work, you can't. If you go to a hospital, you get half of the portion, but your energy expenditure is considerably less. Not only that, and also you have to face the threat of selection, because every ten days or so they came and selected the weak ones. So I faked diarrhea, and went to the hospital, and the physician who put me into the hospital was later on turned out, I found out, a very good friend of my father, of my friend Schoenfeld, Josh Schoenfeld's father. You know the story?

INT: No.

PAUL: He was the physician who really evaluated inmates if they need hospitalization or not. And again, there was a great effort to have the younger people survive, and I looked very young by then because I really lost a lot of weight and my face was always, at that time, quite young. He put me into the hospital. The way the selection was circumvented - - when the hospital personnel knew that the selection was coming, the real ones who are really in good shape were also put in the roll that they are going to be discharged tomorrow, so they are not a hospital person anymore but will be discharged. That's interesting.

INT: So they were in cahoots with the inmates.

PAUL: But interestingly enough, the ones who were weeks in the hospital, the percentage survival rate was by far higher, so my calculation was correct.

INT: Did you discuss this with anyone?

PAUL: Yes. My cousin, for example, Joseph. He didn't believe it and had to be hospitalized by the time was beyond help, and he died in the hospital after I left the hospital.

INT: After you returned to work?

PAUL: No. In April sometime--

INT: How long were you in the hospital?

PAUL: From January 20 until the beginning of April. There was my friendship with my Hasidic friend. We were together in the same bed for three months. (Crying)

INT: In the hospital.

PAUL: In the hospital.

INT: And was he sick?

PAUL: He wasn't sick either. These were the people who really faked the sicknesses and that's the reason we survived. Joseph, who came very late, was emaciated and died a few days after I left the hospital. They were evacuating the camp at that time, in April. We were out of the hospital in a barracks for a week or two, and then we went into the train, the destination to be killed.

INT: So tell me about that. You're released from--

PAUL: From the hospital just for a temporary barracks.

INT: So the war is not over yet.

PAUL: War is not over yet.

INT: This is a way of evacuating the hospital.

PAUL: Evacuating the hospital, evacuating the camp. The real sick ones stayed in the hospital, who cannot be evacuated, like my cousin. And then we were put in the trains. Actually, again, there was a day there which coincided with Hitler's death, end of April, and they opened up the doors and we were able to go out then and in an hour or two they came with machine guns and put us back into the train. They didn't give us any food or drink for three or four days actually. It was terrible. The train stopped once, and the guards disappeared and American troops opened the doors.

INT: And what was that like?

PAUL: Actually, we didn't really realize it. We wanted to go and get a place where we can sit and eat and so forth, so on, but by the time I and my friend went into--

INT: Which friend?

PAUL: That's Sandburg, Moshe Sandburg.

INT: This is the Hasidic friend?

PAUL: No, this is not the Hasidic. The Hasidic guy actually, I think, he wasn't with us at that time. But who I know way back and were together in the labor camp in Hungary. We decided that there is no place for us here because all the houses are filled with former inmates. So we started to walk.

INT: This is at liberation?

PAUL: At liberation. To go to the next town. I said we have to reach a hospital or something. And as we walked into a town at that time, and they were just putting down the white flags. We almost walked back to the Germans. This is a variance of history, because he wrote a book, the one which you're supposed to have, "My Longest Day," and the ending he differs with me. He didn't say that, that we walked together, but I clearly remember that we walked to a place and then went to a German house and stayed there overnight.

INT: How does that work? You just walk to a town and knock on a door?

PAUL: Yes. At that time, the Germans were really afraid. They knew us. They knew what they did with us and did to us. They had to accommodate us.

INT: And were you afraid?

PAUL: No.

INT: So you and Moshe went to this home.

PAUL: To this home, and we slept there.

INT: Did you have any idea where you were?

PAUL: Right now I remember. At that time I don't recall. It was Tutzing, the place. Right now it's a famous vacation town. That was there. We stayed there overnight and then the Germans got trucks and collected all the inmates which were sort of wandering around, and collected us into a "hospital," in a big tent. I think that was the place where I contacted typhus.

INT: So now you were really sick.

PAUL: I was really sick.

INT: And these were the Germans--

PAUL: Well, the Germans who collected us, and the hospital was run by Germans under American supervision.

INT: And how long were you there?

PAUL: In this tent-hospital, a few days, and then we moved to another place. We moved to another place and I don't recall because then I got really feverish. I remember that first we were already at the other hospital, which was sort of, I believe, a school converted to a hospital. I don't recall anything. The only thing I remember that when I regained my consciousness there was a large number of boxes below my bed, which was the Joint packages, the Joint Distribution Committee distributed among the Jewish soldiers. That was a great help, because I was hungry like a horse. I was sick for five months.

INT: In that place?

PAUL: No. I moved from hospital to hospital. From that place we went to another hospital, and then finally I went to Feldafing, a displaced person's camp.

INT: In Austria?

PAUL: In Bier. It was a hospital again, run by German doctors, supervised by Americans. I was there until the beginning of September, when I moved to another small hospital. I decided that by now I'm strong enough to try my luck and I heard that there is a Jewish regiment in Ingersoll, a military regiment, who is going to go to Hungary eventually. So there were a few Jews among us, Hungarian Jews, decided to go there and got one way or another, some bus transportation, we went there. Imagine that -- this was in September of '45. We were still called Jews by the commander of the military unit, and we were separate from the other troops and so forth, so on. But then, I decided that this place is not going anywhere. I don't know when they are going, so I took upon myself to find a place where I can join, to find a place which will take me, or a unit which will take me home. I wandered three or four days.

INT: By yourself?

PAUL: Yes. By myself, in a truck, hitchhiking.

INT: So you weren't with Moshe? You weren't with anyone at this point?

PAUL: We separated, actually, after the first hospitalization.

INT: So for several months you were alone at the end.

PAUL: For several months I was completely alone. This was a decision which I took on myself. I even have the food card with the stamps that I obtained food from, which is allotted for the Germans and everybody. It was still very much restricted how much food can you have, so they gave me food and I remember that I (?) -- I don't know how. I ended up in Passow. From Passow there was a Hungarian military unit which took us to Hungary.

INT: And at this point, was there any way to communicate with your parents?

PAUL: No. I personally didn't know at all whether they are alive or not. But I went to Munich just before we went to Ingersoll, to the Jewish Distribution Center. As a matter of fact, I have the document stating that "give safe conduct to Paul Roheim to Czechoslovakia and to Romania, and back." My idea was if I don't find my parents alive, I immediately turn around and come back to Feldafing, and then go to Israel. But fortunately, my parents were there.

INT: And how did they spend the war? (Tape shuts)

PAUL: How to cope is not to suppress. You should remember what's going on and never try to overlook it.

INT: Not like some people we know?

PAUL: Yes. (Laughter) But he's doing much better. He's getting much better.

INT: That's true. You were about to tell me about your parents.

PAUL: Apparently, the ghetto in Kiskunhalas was transferred about a week or two after we left for the forced labor camp, military camp or whatever you call it. They were put into another ghetto, a central ghetto. It was in Seget. I don't know if you remember. That was, again, a large collection of Jews from the area. They were put in three transports. The first transport went directly to Auschwitz. The second transport planned to go to Auschwitz, but on the way they had to change their route because the Allies had bombed some railroad connections and they could not go to Auschwitz. They went to [name of place]. They went and the third transport directly went to [name of place]. Again, that was a distribution center. Those people were sent into family lagers. I believe it was with plan that those people eventually can be exchanged for money.

INT: And this was where your parents were sent?

PAUL: Yes. My parents were there. And what happened-- (end of tape 2, side 2)

INT: So they got the minimum allowance of food.

PAUL: Food what the Germans were getting, which was enough to really sustain them. I even have...my father was the leader of this small compound, and I have his notes of the distribution, how many cheese we get, how many pounds of butter we get, how was it distributed. He was unbelievably meticulous person.

INT: And he did this by assignment of the Germans? The Germans assigned him this role.

PAUL: I think it was elected. He was the most docile person. (Laughter) He could be trusted.

INT: Who did they anticipate trading these people for money?

PAUL: I think this was part of the Eichmann deal, I believe. I don't know. From there, there was another main ghetto where the Jews were sent to these family lagers. I believe about 5000-10,000 people were the small groups and the people survived.

INT: So that's where they spent the war.

PAUL: Yes. Actually, they moved from one place to another. I think they were at two different locations.

INT: But doing light work.

PAUL: Reasonably light work.

INT: And having enough food to sustain them.

PAUL: My grandmother, who at that time was eighty-five years old, survived. My father's mother. And not only her, but other ladies like her, also in the same group whom I know, survived, my second cousins.

INT: So when they were liberated, they went back to Kiskunhalas?

PAUL: They were liberated sometime in April and they went back to Kiskunhalas.

INT: And they knew nothing about where you were.

PAUL: They knew nothing about me. I don't know whether I told you. The first news about me was given by your father. Did I tell you? They learned that from the same forced labor camp that people returned back to Seget. Your father went over to talk to them, to find out whether they knew what happened with us. And then he went back to Hallasch--

INT: But the information that was given to him at that point, the last time they saw you--

PAUL: It was after liberation at the hospital.

INT: So then what happened?

PAUL: Then he went and talked to one or two guys, and they told that I am alive and then he went back. That was just a trip directly to find out what's happening.

INT: How far is Seget from Kiskunhalas?

PAUL: Fifty miles or so. It was about two, three hours train ride or something like that. Within a day he was able to go back and forth. And then he was the one who passed the news to my mother. He says my mother always said that she was standing in front of the store, and she saw JJS coming and she was like...

INT: Who told you this, your mother or my father?

PAUL: My mother. Your father doesn't talk about this. (Laughter)

INT: So he was the messenger to find out.

PAUL: He was the messenger to find out. I think by then he finished probably...he finished high school in (?), and then moved over to us, I think, at that time.

INT: So at that point, they didn't know where you were exactly.

PAUL: They didn't know anything about me.

INT: They knew that you had survived.

PAUL: Exactly. And they didn't know anything about my arrival either.

INT: So it was five months of news since they learned that you were alive until they saw you.

PAUL: Less than five months. This must have been in June or July when your father went to Seget, and I came home in October. Actually, your father enrolled me to the medical school. Did you know that? In absentia. (Laughter) I still was in Germany when he took--

INT: And he didn't know where you were?

PAUL: No. But he knew that I am alive. He knew that I wanted to become a physician, so he enrolled me, not to lose time, into the medical school. (Laughter)

INT: I have never heard this story. So you came in October.

PAUL: In October, and I had to do some extra examinations. I came in October. I went right away to the Joint Distribution Center where I learned that my parents...actually, I didn't know. I learned that my uncle was murdered and his wife was murdered. And then

I went to my other cousins, another second cousin, which was very close. They were ten minutes walk from the Joint Center, and they told me, when I went to their house, they told me that my parents are alive and that JJS is there. I don't know how did I get to JJS. I think he came and picked me up and we housed together and then we went together. I don't know if we went together to Hovosh or not, or I just went myself, and spent only three days there and went back immediately to school.

INT: And just picked up where you left.

PAUL: Exactly. The reason I became a physician because of my uncle. He was very, very instrumental in my education. These stories are really intertwined tremendously.

INT: While you were in the camp, what went through your soul about faith and about G-d? Did you have any conversations with G-d? Did you have any questioning?

PAUL: No. Nothing at all. More like faith, okay? You really don't consciously think about G-d, and I really would phrase it more of faith. You don't have any control about it and you just have to trust that something will happen. But it was not personalized as G-d.

INT: Did you pray at all?

PAUL: We had Passover. We had a little service at the hospital. I admired the Hasidic Jews. They were fantastic. Their survival rate is, I believe, higher than the non-observant.

INT: Why do you think that is?

PAUL: I don't know. There was more camaraderie between them. I think that faith is the reason.

INT: So whether it's intervention on the part of a G-d or whether it's the belief giving you--

PAUL: The belief, the inner strength. That's exceptionally important to survive. That's what I wanted. Don't give up. I never gave up, and that was the reason why I survived. Don't lose your head. Be objective, irrespective of whether it is good for you or not. Don't hide the facts. Face them.

INT: And where do you think you got those messages from -- don't give up and face the facts and assess the reality?

PAUL: I think they go back to my mother. My mother was really very...and my uncle. He was also quite analytical in many respects.

INT: But the perseverance and the not giving up.

PAUL: From my mother, without a question. From the Schon...

INT: From the Schon genes.

PAUL: Exactly. That's your Schon genes.

INT: You mentioned that one of the things you admired with the Hasidic Jews was their camaraderie, which you needed. You were with people you knew most of the time.

PAUL: Yes.

INT: Do you think that played a role in your well-being?

PAUL: Well actually, not people. One, that Joseph. He really helped me whenever I...

INT: Your cousin, Joseph.

PAUL: He helped me anywhere he could, until I went to the hospital. And I told him when I went in, when he came to visit the hospital, to try to come in, and he said no, no. They don't give us enough food. But he really helped and tried to...It was a heavy load and he took it over and protected me.

INT: So physically, he was--

PAUL: He was a good athlete way back. Long distance runner and all of that.

INT: And how do you think it helped with morale, to be with someone like that?

PAUL: It gave comfort. I don't know whether it was morale or not, but it gave comfort, that you have somebody you know whom you can rely on and trust.

INT: Would you say there was a difference between those of you like you and Joseph who had each other, and those of you in the group who were alone?

PAUL: I can't tell. I really don't know. I believe the couples survived better, the brothers and this. That's my impression.

INT: And functionally, you and Joseph were like brothers.

PAUL: Yes.

INT: What was his faith, belief system? Did he speak of anything?

PAUL: No, not at all. I think he was less religiously oriented than I am.

INT: And how would you describe your faith now?

PAUL: Again, I cannot say G-d per se. I believe that something is directing us. Not necessarily a super, but I really don't know. I cannot qualify or describe it.

INT: Did your belief system change before the war, during the war, after the war?

PAUL: My system? I believe. Actually, you know who was very influential in that respect? Rabbi Ira Eisenstein. We belonged to his congregation way back, and he was wonderful. I was thinking supernatural. That was the word I was looking for. There is something which governs your...

INT: Did it change for you because of the war, or would you say it was pretty much unchanged?

PAUL: Unchanged. You know why? It's interesting. I had a lunch with one of the (?). He knew that I was in the concentration camp and he said to me -- by the way, (?) is Orthodox. How can you believe in G-d who went through concentration camp? It's a very tough question. How to answer it? If you see the real, every day interpretation, that just really does not ride a G-d. He couldn't let what was happening with us. This is the wrong way to look at it. The question is slanted to begin with.

INT: So how would you change that question?

PAUL: How would you call what happened? How did G-d or anything happen to help you to survive and cope with the situation?

INT: And how would you answer that?

PAUL: Actually, you have something which governs us. You cannot really personalize and describe it, but there is something.

INT: And did that something protect you?

PAUL: I protect myself. Again, that could be direct or indirect. I protect myself. When you protect yourself, it's not necessarily G-d's doing that you are or whoever is -- you are doing it because. It's not divine intervention directly.

INT: And if you had to answer how did you survive the war, you would say, "I protected myself."

PAUL: I protected myself and I really faced the facts and I didn't give up. A lot of people died because they gave up, and that's an important concentration. That's where the Hasidic had a tremendous edge.

INT: I know it's hard to answer for your parents but do you think they would probably say the same thing about their survival?

PAUL: Yes. I believe my mother for sure. Even my father. He wasn't...personalize religion more than my mother.

INT: Your father did.

PAUL: Yes.

INT: And because of that, what do you think he would say?

PAUL: He would refer that that was the way G-d was helping us. He really believed in G-d very sincerely.

INT: I'm going to just review the questions to make sure I'm not missing anything major. Do you remember any events, specific events, after liberation that come to mind, that were positive or negative?

PAUL: About what?

INT: Tell me about liberation and immigrating to the U.S. Tell me about post-liberation. You're now in medical school. You're living a normal life.

PAUL: Yes. Again, I refer back...it's interesting. I have a friend, a co-worker of mine, not Jewish. This Federation business is by far much more than I partied for. And he said, "Gee, Paul, it's payback time." (Laughter)

INT: This is a not Jewish person saying this.

PAUL: Yes. And that's true. We got clothing. For example, during the medical school, we ate in a Joint sponsored cafeteria every day. We had our food there. I got some clothing and a house, and to come to the States was also sponsored by the HIAS and we lived in Vienna very well. Relatively very comfortably. Very, very well. We totally enjoyed it, all the money what we received from the Joint. It was really a fun time. (Laughter)

INT: Who were you with at this point?

PAUL: At that point, my parents and Judy. You had to go every week, got your money. We had our routine. Eat at certain restaurant. We were able to go to a restaurant to have dinners together. This all was supported by the money we got from the Joint. I went to Falshood, we lived there.

INT: Let's back up a minute because I don't want to miss the part about meeting Judy. How did you meet?

PAUL: I was her teacher at medical school. You didn't know that?

INT: There are laws against that now. (Laughter)

PAUL: Even at that time there were laws against that.

INT: I didn't realize that.

PAUL: I was her teacher. Actually her index...They had a book where everything is entered, what classes, and she has my signature that she performed satisfactorily.

INT: You gave her a passing grade. So you met...what year did you meet?

PAUL: It was in '52.

INT: And where was she in her medical training?

PAUL: Second year.

INT: So she still had--

PAUL: She still had the second year, and she finished the fourth when we left. Actually, she started the fifth year and we left. We were together and we routinely went up to her house. There was a period when we were not on good terms, half a year or so. I loved her mother. Her mother was a wonderful lady. We had an exceptional relationship. It's really amazing. I went to their house quite often.

INT: And you had mentioned earlier that one of your possibilities in your plans was to go to Israel. How did you decide where to go once you left Hungary?

PAUL: That wasn't an easy thing. At that time, I still was very serious about Israel, but Judy was not very much for it, especially the language barrier. Then we had two options - - either to go to Canada, to my other cousin, or to come to the United States to join your father. I had a former physiology professor who was the head of the Department of Physiology at Ottawa, and I didn't know him personally but Priest you probably heard of. He was his pupil. I wrote to him what is his advice -- better I should go to Canada or I should go to the United States? His letter was, "I counsel you to go to the United States. The slave market is much better." (Laughter)

INT: So you just went. And where did you go originally?

PAUL: Philadelphia. I was working with your father for a year and a half and we lived at your house for six weeks before we moved to our own house.

INT: And what year was this?

PAUL: '57.

INT: And you came with your parents?

PAUL: Yes. We left Hungary together and we had a ten-mile walk at night in rain and everything.

INT: So this was not legally.

PAUL: No. It was completely illegal. We went to Vienna. There we got the support of the Joint.

INT: How long were you in Vienna?

PAUL: From December 8 I believe until sometime mid-January. Actually, it should have been end of January because we were married in Vienna on January 16th. It was the end of January when we left Vienna for Salzburg.

INT: How would you describe your life in New Orleans now? How would you describe your daily life with community and family and friends and work?

PAUL: With community I'm very involved in the Jewish community, and have been in the past several years. Family -- your parents are our family and friends; we have acquaintances but not real friends. And very much involved with Johnny.

INT: Your son. Do you have any kind of synagogue or organizational affiliations other than Federation?

PAUL: We belong to the Tikveh Sholom, the Shir Chodosh.

INT: And what kind of synagogue is that?

PAUL: It's a Conservative synagogue, but I would prefer a Reconstructionist.

INT: And how does Judy feel about that?

PAUL: Exactly the same.

INT: And the reason you don't belong to one is because--

PAUL: Because there is none, and we didn't go to the Reform because Judy says the prayer book starts the wrong way. (Laughter) I don't like it, to go to synagogue without a kippah. I was very upset one of the celebrations. The Reform rabbi on the pulpit without a kippah.

INT: Are you active in the synagogue that you belong to?

PAUL: No.

INT: Let's talk about the parent-child relationship a little bit. How do you think the child rearing practice was developed with you and Judy and John? Were there differences in the way you were with John growing up and the way Judy was, and now you mentioned that you're different with him than Judy is.

PAUL: In a way, to handle. But most of the time we agreed. We don't have any disagreements. I really relied on her.

INT: It should be mentioned that she's a child psychiatrist. What do you think was stressed as what's important in life?

PAUL: Actually, we tried to stress Judaism very much. Judaism manifesting in pro-Israeli content. I didn't say it, but I really feel very strongly about Israel. I have emotional ties and thoughts about that.

INT: And do you think that transmitted to John?

PAUL: He says so, but I am not certain that is the case.

INT: What do you think is the case?

PAUL: He's not very Jewish. He has a big mouth, but doesn't come through. For example, synagogue affiliations and all that.

INT: That he does affiliate or does not?

PAUL: He is affiliating now but he was sort of...not reluctant, but very slow. I would have liked him to look up more Jews in the community. Unfortunately, he married a non-Jew who converted Reform, and I don't believe she ever converted truly. Judy was very much against intermarriage, and one thing which really swayed me was that in the very beginning that Johnny started to court her, he said that, "Shinay's telling me that she's disillusioned in Catholicism and wants to have other roots, and 'I'd like to look to become Jewish.'" The reason why she did that, I believe, to catch Johnny. And the way it looks like, that's the case.

INT: Does he express disappointment about her level of Jewish commitment?

PAUL: Yes. But he cannot do anything about it.

INT: And how would you like his commitment to be expressed differently? You said that you wished he had more social Jewish connections.

PAUL: And also by deeds, to really act, really participate, in some of the activities of the Federation.

INT: In terms of tzedakah and mitzvot?

PAUL: Yes, exactly. I really miss that in him.

INT: In your practice...what is your religious practice now?

PAUL: Really on the High Holidays. (End of tape 3, side 1)

INT: Judy lights candles Friday night.

PAUL: Every Friday night.

INT: How about kiddush or motzi or any of those?

PAUL: No.

INT: Would you like John to do the same, to light candles?

PAUL: I would love it.

INT: And they don't light candles.

PAUL: No, not at all.

INT: So is it fair to say that the level of your observance is what you would like John to...

PAUL: At least.

INT: And why do you say at least?

PAUL: Because I wouldn't mind if he would be more religious than I am.

INT: Do you wish you were more religious?

PAUL: Maybe. It would make life easier.

INT: How so?

PAUL: It's easier to really do things which is really commanded to you. I don't have to think that...the Hasids have the easiest time in the world. Everything is prescribed for them what to do. It gives strength, I believe. But it has to come from inner, and cannot be forced upon.

INT: When you were growing up, your home was more observant than what you live in now. Do you miss having a kosher home?

PAUL: Not really. I wouldn't mind, but I don't want to put the burden on Judy. That would be a major, major burden on her.

INT: And your father put on tefillin every day and davened every day. Is that something that you do?

PAUL: No.

INT: Was there a time in your life when you wanted to do that?

PAUL: A few years after the bar mitzvah.

INT: But it wasn't something...and after the war, your father continued with tefillin and davening?

PAUL: Yes.

INT: And how did you relate to that?

PAUL: I accepted it.

INT: That was him and this is you and it's different.

PAUL: He never mentioned that I should do these things.

INT: I think we've covered a lot of stuff. We've alluded to a couple of things but your health. As a child, you were--

PAUL: Quite a weakling. They called...I had minimal TB. My uncle was a specialist in tuberculosis. He was very conscious of that. 90% of Hungarian boys had the same thing as I did. At that time, practically everybody was TB positive.

INT: Because it was just in the air?

PAUL: Just in the air, yes.

INT: And you were just generally weak and frail.

PAUL: And sickly. I had scarlet fever and they said I had it twice and I'm not supposed to have it twice and all kinds of nonsense. But really kept very much sheltered in terms of the physical environment.

INT: And what about post-war? Do you think your health was changed by the effects of the war?

PAUL: I think it took time until I completely recovered. You have to realize that I was eighty pounds when I was liberated and in Budapest I was a 200 pounder.

INT: You weighted 200 pounds?

PAUL: Yes.

INT: At what point was that?

PAUL: End of '45 or something like that.

INT: In those few months you put on 120 pounds?

PAUL: Yes. I remember that after I woke up from the typhus, I was starving. I had the packages. I would wake up at night and I'd eat a loaf of bread.

INT: And then what happened? You were weighing 200 pounds--

PAUL: Without any trying, slowly but surely, went back to my normal weight. Right now I'm exactly the same weight as I was at age eighteen.

INT: And is that intentional?

PAUL: No.

INT: That's by watching yourself?

PAUL: No.

INT: Are there any long-term physical...how would you describe your physical health at this point?

PAUL: Well, I think my heart was not helped by the whole thing. I recall that I had carditis after liberation. Unfortunately, I wrote home my medical records and I lost it. I had a whole slew of different diseases -- typhus, pleurisy, polyarthritis. You name it, I had it.

INT: During the war?

PAUL: After the war. Right after. That's the reason why it took me five months to recover.

INT: But immediately.

PAUL: Immediately. And on that one, I think my heart was the one where I had what they called enlargement of the heart, but that went back.

INT: And is it likely that these were the results of the treatment?

PAUL: Yes.

INT: And what lasted beyond those first several months?

PAUL: Some of the arthritic pain.

INT: So they never went away.

PAUL: Never went away.

INT: And you didn't have them before the war.

PAUL: They weren't there before the war.

INT: How would you describe your sleeping patterns?

PAUL: Excellent. (Laughter)

INT: That's the Roheim piece.

PAUL: Unfortunately I sleep even during lectures. Your mother doesn't like that. Objects strenuously.

INT: So you haven't had trouble sleeping. You don't have nightmares.

PAUL: Never had. That's what I believe, that you don't suppress this kind of thing.

INT: What would you like for John and by extension, for your grandson Noah, to know about the war, about the Holocaust? What lessons would you like them to take away?

PAUL: Actually, there are two different questions. One is knowledge, the other is the lesson. I really would like to have them as much knowledge as humanely possible. Unfortunately, Johnny is not that interested in it, and I would like to really instill eventually in Noah more of my memories and the stories what I have, and let him draw the conclusion.

INT: The stories of the war?

PAUL: Of the war, and pre and post-war area. How were we treated in Hungary under a non-philos-Semitic regime, and how were we treated during the war, and let them appreciate what we have here in the United States. It's an important lesson.

INT: So you'd like their lessons to be--

PAUL: They drew the lessons from my experience, and I would like them to be more pro-Israel. Johnny is. I don't know the deeds, but he expresses pro-Israeli feeling. That's not enough.

INT: And do you think that it could happen again, the Shoah?

PAUL: Not the same extent, but a similar problem can happen.

INT: To Jews?

PAUL: To Jews. Definitely.

INT: Do you think here in the United States?

PAUL: I hope not. I am not certain.

INT: Do you worry about it?

PAUL: I worry about it. Look, in Louisiana, where Duke collected 55% of the white vote for the government, and he's totally anti-Semitic and openly racist.

INT: And does it ever cross your mind that you may want to live elsewhere because of that?

PAUL: We decided, actually, if he would have been elected, that we would have moved.

INT: Where would you have moved?

PAUL: That we didn't...I don't know where. This was just a decision, that we'd move. I don't know whether you know that there was a time I seriously considered moving to Israel, even here. I had my sabbatical in '70 and we were very close friends with the Steins, but also...you know Pessie Segal? Okay, she was also a very good friend way

back. She was a co-worker of mine. After we came back to Israel, we decided we'll go to Israel. Actually, they were ready to set up a lab for me in Tel Hashomer. They were buying equipment and everything. The Yom Kippur War came and nixed everything.

INT: Why did it nix everything? On whose account?

PAUL: The thing is the situation changed over there, the financial situation. I wouldn't have been able to support us, and a major problem was Judy. As a child psychiatrist, the lack of Ivrit knowledge would have interfered. I couldn't have any argument about that. Look, she loved to be there and she likes it very much.

INT: So you've always held Israel on the back burner as a place to live.

PAUL: As a place to live, yes.

INT: Do you do any public speaking about the Holocaust?

PAUL: Not really. I would like to ask you a question -- should I or shouldn't?

INT: And you're asking me...

PAUL: What is your opinion about that?

INT: You as Paul Roheim, or you as a generic Holocaust survivor?

PAUL: As Paul Roheim because I'm a generic Holocaust survivor.

INT: I think there's nothing like the value of hearing firsthand from a survivor what their stories are. The impact on the listener is indescribable.

PAUL: I have mixed feelings about it, not that I don't want to do it. I'm always afraid that people... "Oh, it's an old story. Why do they bore us with that," and all of that. I don't want to have a backlash. Now, since I'm involved in the Federation I have to...they just told me that I have to give a...as a matter of fact, I will send it to you. I had to write an article why I am doing what I am doing, and also, on October 6th or 7th I will have to give a two-minute speech at the kickoff dinner. I have to have a short speech that describes briefly, two minutes, that I was a concentration camp survivor and my parents survived and my aunts, uncles and relatives did not, and I received a lot of help, and also, then I finish up with the importance of having our voices heard, because that prevents things to happen, and we really should try to voice ourselves, help ourselves, have tikkun olam.

INT: I think you answered your own question. For the same reasons that your mother's stories about bringing the unknown stranger who can't afford a Seder into the home and placing him at the head of the table, that story had an effect on you, has an effect on everyone you tell.

PAUL: It's unbelievable.

INT: And in the same way, a story that you're going to tell will have an effect on someone else, and you never know what the person who's receiving that story is going to do with it.

PAUL: Okay, I agree.

INT: And that's why we tell the stories.

PAUL: So you like that two-minute speech.

INT: That's lovely. How would you describe yourself? Are you an optimist, a pessimist?

PAUL: Realistic optimist. (Laughter) Basically I'm an optimist.

INT: And how do you feel about--

PAUL: I don't like to be unrealistic.

INT: Okay, fair enough. What would you say, looking back on your life, were your greatest successes?

PAUL: In terms of what?

INT: Anything you call success.

PAUL: Maybe it sounds funny but I established a very close relationship with Judy.

INT: That was my prediction. (Laughter)

PAUL: It is not easy.

INT: And if you had any failures, what would you...

PAUL: I think I still feel that Johnny's upbringing, I may not have played a good enough role.

INT: So your successes and failures are pretty much measured in your nuclear family, the two people that you created life with.

PAUL: I don't call work and profession success, although Judy was a fantastic help in that one. I remember that...(tape shuts)

INT: So you were just saying that Judy--

PAUL: Judy really was and is a fantastic support. Even in the Federation, I can't thank her more.

INT: Do you have any regrets, looking back on your life?

PAUL: Not really.

INT: Is there anything else that you would like to say?

PAUL: No, not really. Eventually, I'll let you know.

INT: About?

PAUL: Concentration camp and what's happening there. For example, the first time I learned about Majdanek and Sobibor in camp.

INT: When was that?

PAUL: It was in mid-January, actually that time that camp was replenished by people who came from Auschwitz. You know Auschwitz was evacuated, and a contingent of that eventually ended up in our camp. One guy there was talking about that this is nothing. Auschwitz in nothing. Sobibor and Majdanek were really terrible.

INT: And how did you receive that news?

PAUL: I really couldn't place it. I don't have any measure and I wasn't even fully aware what's going on in Auschwitz. One thing we knew, and that's an interesting fact. The weaklings were selected and many of them volunteered to be selected, knowing that they will go to the gas chambers. Many of them were so discouraged, didn't want to live and give up everything and volunteered to be on the transport. The Germans gave them a loaf of bread, a big slice of butter and honey to make them feel better.

INT: And then killed them?

PAUL: Killed them, yes.

INT: And what does that story mean to you?

PAUL: Again, don't give up. You should not give up whatever.

INT: Was there ever a time during the war when you were with someone who was about to give up?

PAUL: I can't recall. Again, because of the isolation of my environment of the people whom I associated with.

INT: They weren't giving up.

PAUL: They weren't giving up.

INT: Did you know anyone post-war that gave up, that survived and then gave up?

PAUL: After the war?

INT: That for one reason or another couldn't bear to continue with it?

PAUL: I don't know. Maybe. I didn't notice them. I don't know. I don't believe in committing suicide, if that's what you were referring to.

INT: I know you don't believe. I was just wondering...

PAUL: Some people. I don't know.

INT: It's not a solution.

PAUL: It's not a solution. Thank you very much. I appreciated the chance to tell my story.

INT: Thank you. (End of interview)