INTERVIEW WITH MAX WAGNER

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Transcending Trauma Project
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INTERVIEW WITH MAX WAGNER

INTERVIEWER: This is May 17th, 1995. This is an interview with a survivor. His name is Max Wagner. I told Max before, and this is an interview with a stipulation, because Max has already written many of his experiences into a document, which he hopes to publish as a book, and instead of asking Max to repeat the information, for most of this interview I will be reading from his work. Max and I will be talking about his life experiences in order to fill in parts of his life.

But before we begin, tell me a little bit about your life now. How old are you?

MAX WAGNER: I'm 79.

INT: Okay. And where were you born?

MAX: I was born in Berlin, in 1915.

INT: And when did you come to this country?

MAX: In 1949. (inaudible)

INT: Okay. Are you married? How long have you been married?

MAX: Yes. Since 1953. (inaudible)

INT: Okay. And what did you do in the United States?

MAX: My wife is from the United States.

INT: Where in the United States?

MAX: From here in Philadelphia.

INT: Here in the Philadelphia area. Can you tell me just a little bit about your family and such?

MAX: (inaudible) about eighteen years ago, twenty years ago, and ever since. Her mother passed away about three years ago. We had (inaudible) and a few stepsisters.

INT: So the family is still in Philadelphia? Her brothers?

MAX: Her brother is in Philadelphia, yes, and then she has a nephew, too, and some extended family.

INT: Tell me about your schooling. How far did you go in school before...

MAX: Well, I finished high school. It's called the Abitur in Germany, in Berlin.

INT: The Arbitur?

MAX: Abitur. Similar to what you have here. Almost a bachelor's degree, and I went one year to the University of Berlin.

INT: Can you spell that? Abitur?

MAX: Abitur. (spells it) We call it the Ober-prima class, that means finished high school, three years beyond the regular school.

INT: Okay. So it would be the equivalent of college?

MAX: Yes. Almost. I don't know scholastically if it's the same, but it's very close to it. And I also graduated from the Stern Conservatory of Music in Berlin. This was my life, music. It still is.

INT: What area of music?

MAX: Violin. I studied violin and other subjects related to music, like history and composition, theory. That's about it.

INT: What was your goal then?

MAX: Well, to become a musician, a professional musician, and I was fairly good, I guess. I was pretty good, I have to say myself, but (laughs). We had good reviews, and after we had fled Germany, we here and there (inaudible) and with the orchestra as a soloist. Basically when I came to this country, I couldn't pick up my career again. I was too old and too difficult and I was out of practice.

INT: Did you try, or you just knew it was too difficult?

MAX: Well, I tried. It was too difficult. I mean, there were so many young talents here to compete with those people against my background, which was years and years without practice. It was just impossible. I just couldn't make it anymore. I couldn't make an attempt. I did some teaching, you know, private teaching.

INT: Teaching violin?

MAX: Yes, violin, private teaching, but it was not successful, because it was very difficult to make a livelihood out of it. It was very difficult. I just primarily found my way into the business world. (Inaudible) It was primarily a sales company. The Van Heusen shirt company.

INT: What kind of work did you do?

MAX: I was selling for them, sales. I had a big territory, like Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington. I did very well for them, extremely well. They rewarded me well, but the end reward was I was laid off at one point. They changed the organizational system. Then I went into business for myself.

INT: What kind of business?

MAX: I went first into a dry cleaning business, then I had a stationery business, which is still existing under my name, but I don't own it anymore. People bought me out. And now I'm back in the dry cleaning business, hopefully not for long. (laughs) I'm ready to retire at this point.

INT: You feel ready. When you assessed the situation and decided that you wouldn't be able to go into music, was that very sad for you?

MAX: Yes, it was very sad, because it was my ambition, my life, my aim in life. Also it was interrupted so many years during the period of the Holocaust. However, I was young enough at one point that I should go back into it again, but it just wasn't meant to be. It was very disappointing. I developed also many pains, arthritic pains, which I acquired during that period, and I just couldn't do it.

INT: "That period" being the war?

MAX: Yes. Trying to cope with very stiff fingers, very hard.

INT: Did you continue playing for yourself?

MAX: Up to a point, yes. Up to a few years ago I did, and then I developed a problem in my (inaudible). I had several examinations. They wanted to operate on it, but I was against it because it would take too long, the recovery period. I just decided, I just became a very good listener, better than ever before.

INT: I believe you.

MAX: Yes, I could listen.

INT: You told me last time that you have music on all the time.

MAX: Yes, I do. This is the only pleasure I get, besides my family. My emotional pleasure is listening to music and enjoying it. Very much so.

INT: Is it only classical, or some other kind?

MAX: No, I like all music. I like music in general, but certain music which turns me off. Like modern music, I have no feeling for this. I was brought up with that feeling, so

I don't have any taste for that. But as far as the classical romantic music, it's the greatest pleasure in my life, emotionally.

INT: Does music comfort you?

MAX: Yeah, very much so. I feel like I would like to tell the people who use all kinds of drugs, "Look at music. It will give you much more than drugs and keep you healthy, keep you sane." But unfortunately, it doesn't penetrate with these people. And it costs you very little, or nothing. Just the radio.

INT: Can you put words on what music does for you? Describe it.

MAX: Well, it gives me a high and a low, and I'll tell you why. The music which you can see is happy music, makes me happy in a way, but it also makes me sad that I cannot do what I would have liked to do, to give people that kind of feeling. I should contribute personally to that kind of experience, that when you give people the joy of listening to your music, the way you do it, the way I would interpret it, you know. But unfortunately, it's not possible anymore. So I have some tapes I made here, and I can't find them, would you believe it? I don't know if my kids took them or where they are.

INT: Tapes of your playing.

MAX: Yeah. But I can't find them anymore. So it makes me sad. It makes me happy at the same time. I'm very happy that I have good ears. My wife, for instance, has very poor hearing. She has hearing problems, ear operations. She's had several ones, and so she has a hearing problem, and I feel sorry that she cannot enjoy it the way I do enjoy the fine tuning, the details, the construction of the music, which I enjoy listening to it now more than ever before, because I have the time, and I don't have to worry about practicing. Practicing is work, and it's a lot of work. But you know what? I enjoyed practicing. Maybe I used to go, not too long ago, six, seven years ago, I used to walk through the house up and down the stairs with my violin, playing, seeing how it sounds in this room and seeing how it sounds in the other room. Just to listen to that, right through the house here, and it was a great self-satisfaction. But unfortunately, all I'm now allowed to enjoy, the listening.

INT: Did you take advantage of music in the city? Did you go to concerts?

MAX: Oh, yeah. We used to go many times. We haven't been recently, but we used to. In fact, I met a lot of the fine musicians. I have good friends in the Philadelphia Orchestra.

INT: How did you meet them?

MAX: Through the musical circles. They know about me and I know about them.

INT: But you never worked in music, so how did you come...?

MAX: Well, I looked out for these people, we met them. For instance, my wife's sister, who unfortunately passed away at a young age recently, she was married to a Brusilow, and Anshel Brusilow, a very fine violinist, unfortunately he gave it up already before I knew him, I went to his concerts. But then he was related to us.

INT: Can you spell Brusilow?

MAX: B-r-u-s-i-l-o-w, I think. And his brother Nathan was married to my wife's sister, who was first clarinet player of, I think, the Houston Symphony Orchestra. But Anshel was a worldclass violinist.

INT: You spell it A-n-s-h-e-l?

MAX: Anshel. Yeah. (discussing Anshel) So music is very, very important to me today. I think I couldn't live without music today anymore, although I did many years without it. (laughs ruefully) Just had it in my head, of course.

INT: So you made the musicians your friends?

MAX: Oh, yeah.

INT: And you spent time with them?

MAX: Oh, yeah. Very much so, very much so. They came to my home.

INT: And is SPOUSEWM as much?

MAX: No, SPOUSEWM in her own right she's an artist. SPOUSEWM is a fine artist. She does beautiful work. She does it with silver smithing. She has things here in the study that she made -- beautiful.

INT: What kind of artwork does she do?

MAX: She does right now watercolor art, fine art. She's doing portraits now. And she goes to different mediums. She does pottery work. My daughter COSRJ does the same thing.

INT: Did she do art when you met her? Did you know that you were both artists?

MAX: She was teaching, I knew that. By that time she was teaching. She was teaching Hebrew school, actually. She's very talented, very bright. I hate to admit it, she's smarter than I am, a lot smarter than I am. (laughter) She has a tremendous analytical mind, and both my daughters take after that. A fine, sharp, analytical mind. COSRJ, my younger daughter, has a master's degree in child care development.

INT: Let's get this straight. COSSD is your oldest. And how old is she?

MAX: She's now 39. She's going to be 39 at the end of this year. She's married. She has two children.

INT: What does her husband do?

MAX: Her husband is a recruiter for the pharmaceutical industry. He works for one of the largest recruiting organizations. He's doing very well.

INT: And what does COSSD do?

MAX: COSSD's a nurse by profession, but now she works with case management for some time already. She used to work in hospitals, but she was burnt out there, but now she has a very nice, high position managing. Whatever she does exactly, I don't know. They call it "case management."

INT: Does she work full-time?

MAX: Oh, yeah. GOSSJ is my oldest grandson, is past fourteen. He's in the ninth grade. No, pardon me, he's in the eighth grade.

INT: What school?

MAX: Lower Merion Middle School. My granddaughter, his sister, is ten years old and she goes to Solomon Schechter Day School. She's in third or fourth grade, I'm not sure. I can't keep up.

INT: So your grandson's name is GOSSJ, and he went to Solomon Schechter until he graduated?

MAX: Then he went to public school.

INT: You were telling me the degrees that COSSD has. She has three degrees from Penn.

MAX: She went to Temple, and then she moved over to Penn. When she was twenty years old she graduated from Penn. She has a degree in Near Eastern Studies, and chemistry. Then she went to Jefferson and got her degree in nursing. That's it. And then she worked in hospitals.

INT: That's a lot.

MAX: She's a very, very, bright person.

INT: School was important to her?

MAX: To us and to her, we made sure, and she has a tremendous mind. Both of my daughters.
INT: Did she want to continue her studies?

MAX: She would have liked to, but now she can't do it at this point, the children came. Maybe eventually she might go back, but she can't do it right now. She has all kinds of certification, naturally.

INT: She was always self-motivated? She didn't need the pressure from you?

MAX: No, none of my children. Never, never. But the home atmosphere was conducive to learning, teaching, and just reading, and asking questions, and finding answers. Absolutely.

INT: And your younger daughter is COSRJ?

MAX: COSRJ, yes, but her name is COSRJ.

INT: How old is she?

MAX: COSRJ is 34. There's five years' difference in age. She's married, she has three children. She's married to Allen Rubinstein. Her husband is an actuary, and he's doing very well. He's the director of the Swiss International Bank in New York. COSRJ and Allen have three wonderful children. Barak, the oldest one, is eight and a half, Arik Moshe is four and a half, and Esti Shayna is ten months old. Gorgeous children, beautiful. Very athletic.

INT: Where are the boys in school?

MAX: Barak is in Solomon Schechter. Arik is starting Solomon Schechter kindergarten next year, and Esti is home with her mother.

INT: These are very Israeli-type names.

MAX: Yeah. My children, both of them, have a very traditional Jewish home. (long pause, crying) I'm very proud of them. If only my parents could see what kind of home they have. (long pause)

INT: Take your time. You know that your parents would have been proud to see them.

MAX: Yes. Immensely. Yes, actually Allen and COSRJ are Shomer Shabbas. (long pause)

INT: Are you crying now for sadness, or for happiness, or why? Do you know what you're feeling?

MAX: It's a combination of both. (long pause)

INT: If you want to cry about your parents, I don't want to stop you. (long pause) Have you always been like this?

MAX: Yes. I can go to a movie and cry. I get very involved. I cry when I read a book, I cry when I see something sad.

INT: I bet your children love you for it. Have they ever said to you how special it is for you to be so sensitive?

MAX: Definitely. (pause, break)

INT: Okay. We were talking about your children. What education does COSRJ have?

MAX: COSRJ has graduated from Temple and also from Tyler School of Art, and then she went to (inaudible) for a master's degree, I think in child development.

INT: And does she work now?

MAX: No.

INT: She's with her children.

MAX: She's with her children. She used to teach Hebrew, actually, for quite a few years, but it's too much for her. She has (inaudible) Sometimes she substitutes.

INT: Where, at Schechter?

MAX: No, not at Schechter. She actually applied for a particular job there earlier, but they refused to take her. It was their loss.

INT: Where did your children get their Jewish education?

MAX: Good question. I think it's mostly home.

INT: You said your daughter was teaching Hebrew, going to Hebrew school.

MAX: They both went to Har Zion for a while here. And Hebrew school, and COSRJ actually went through high school there, but mostly at home. The explanations, the traditions, the continuation that we wanted them to have. Traditional Jewish life.

INT: So that was important to you, and you gave it to them.

MAX: It was important to them. They were very much involved... (inaudible)

INT: Tell me about music. How do your daughters relate to music?

MAX: Quite well. They both have quite a few years studying piano and guitar. They don't do it anymore. (laughing) No time for them to do that. My oldest grandson is in guitar. He studied piano, violin, and finally guitar.

INT: Do you see talent in him?

MAX: Yes. I do see talent in him. But he's too involved. He's excellent in science -- that he's advanced. That I don't think he has the time for it now. I see great talent in him. He used to play my piano and develop music a little bit on his own, compositions. Simple, light lines, you know, which is very nice. That's how you begin. And I was very pleased. But he didn't continue.

INT: Does that disappoint you, or it's fine with you?

MAX: No, it's fine now. You can't push too much, because schoolwork comes first. If he gets all A's eventually, he'll find more time for it.

INT: Are you disappointed that you don't have another musician?

MAX: No, no. It's very hard in the music field as I see it. Unless you really have exceptionally great talent, and are willing to work very hard, you'll never get up to the top if that's your aim. It's very hard. There's so much talent out there. The new generation is unbelievable. I'm amazed to see how young children at the age of eight, ten, twelve years old, how they perform. I couldn't believe, I could never have done it myself, and I think I was pretty good. So when you see this kind of caliber coming up now, the new generation, with the type of quality performance, you have to be exceptionally talented, and work very, very, hard.

INT: Okay. Let me ask you, in terms of your Jewish environment, how would you describe your religious involvement in terms of your life, your family, or your Jewish involvement otherwise? Do you belong to any organizations?

MAX: No. There's a difference between my wife's philosophy on Judaism. She's very much national Jewish, and mine, I'm also nationalistic as far as Israel goes, but I have a much deeper religious conviction than my wife. She grew up in a family that didn't practice it very much, not much, not religiously, not from a religious point of view. My family is a different situation. My father came from a line of very Orthodox Jewish background. His great-great-grandfather was Chaim Wagner, who was a well-known person in Bucovina.

INT: Wait. You have to spell that. Okay, your father's great-great grandfather was a Shoter Rav.

MAX: His name was Chaim Wagner.

INT: Spell Shoter.
MAX: Well, he spelled it Shotzer, but Shotz is actually the Jewish name for a town called Suceava in Bucovina.

INT: Spell that.

MAX: Suceava. This was a county seat of Bucovina.

INT: Spell that.

MAX: Suceava, Bucovina. Bucovina is a province. After the First World War, after the Austrian Empire was dissolved, Bucovina was given to Romania, but mostly a German and Jewish population there. But Romania got it. They gave them Bessarabia, which was also a province given to Romania, which has a mostly Jewish and Ukrainian population.

INT: So being religiously involved goes back generations in your father's family.

MAX: Yes, absolutely, in my father's family. And his son was Mordechai Wagner, and his son was Menashe Wagner, which was my father's father, my grandfather, which I never met, and my father was Yehoshua Wagner, but in Austrian they used to call it Osias. That was his real name. Osias Wagner. That was my father's name, my father's family.

My mother's family comes also from a religious family. Her mother was Anna Rosner, her father was Yaakov Weisinger. He died when my mother was a little baby. And I understand that my mother's mother was a very religious Jewess.

INT: What is her name?

MAX: Holdengraber. Don't ask me what it means. This is my mother's grandmother, from my mother's side of the family.

INT: And they were also religious. Okay. So then you're saying that your wife comes from a background that is not very traditional.

MAX: They celebrated Passover, but as far as participating in Jewish rituals, were very little.

INT: Did they belong to a synagogue?

MAX: I don't know. I really don't.

INT: So in this difference between you and your wife, how did you handle that in your marriage?

MAX: We handled it in a way that...When I go to shul, I usually go by myself.
INT: So you have belonged to a synagogue in all the years of your marriage?

MAX: Yeah.

INT: And what kind of synagogue?

MAX: We belonged to Har Zion Temple first, and then we switched over to Lower Merion Synagogue in 1964 or '63, about that time.

INT: I am going to say for the sake of the tape that Har Zion is a Conservative synagogue.

MAX: Yes.

INT: Lower Merion Synagogue is Orthodox, and you say you changed membership in 1965?

MAX: 1964, I believe.

INT: Why did you change?

MAX: Well, we moved into the area here, more convenient, and I liked the synagogue very much. Very small synagogue, small group. But I'm not excited anymore about the Har Zion center, the way they are in their religious observations.

INT: Why are you not excited about religious observations?

MAX: Well, they brought in a new rabbi, I won't mention his name, and we weren't excited by it at all. Didn't like the arrogance.

INT: So you changed.

MAX: We changed.

INT: So what did you like in the new synagogue?

MAX: I liked the pleasant atmosphere. That was just before you came into the picture, I guess.

INT: (laughing) I've been here eighteen and a half years.

MAX: There was another rabbi when we came. Anyway, it's more heimish, if you can say it. Pleasant, cordial, a warm atmosphere, very much different, and I felt more comfortable there.

INT: How did the religious difference between the new one affect your choice of synagogue? Did it matter to you that one was Conservative and one was Orthodox?

MAX: No, it didn't matter. She would give in and come to certain things I would like to do. She would go along with it. She doesn't participate actively too much. We work it out. We work it out. No great differences as far as the relationship goes.

INT: Okay. So would you use any kind of religious labels to describe yourself?

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(TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO)

INT: Okay. You said you would like to be Shomer Shabbas, which means a Sabbath observer.

MAX: Yes, the way I was brought up. However, I made concessions. We do the best we can. Until the time comes if I live long enough to do it. And so, in the meantime, we get along very well. It's no problem. The children grew up with ritual Shabbat services here in the house, with the kiddush and the havdalah. And they do the same things in their home.

INT: So you do traditions for Shabbat?

MAX: Oh, yeah. And the other holidays, the same as well.

INT: And a kosher home?

MAX: Yeah, kosher. Well, there's different definitions of kosher. We're kosher. I don't have to tell you.

INT: I know. Tell me about Jewish organizations. Have you joined any?

MAX: No. I'm not an organization person.

INT: Any particular reason why not?

MAX: First of all, I don't have the time. My life is so full from morning till night, seven days a week, practically. Secondly, I'm not a person who likes, I'm not a person involved with organizational work. I think a lot of things are done which might be important, but sometimes I feel it's unnecessary, and too much talk, and too much self-praise. People want to talk to show how much they can do and show off. I'm not that sort of person.

INT: How about a Holocaust organization, a survivor organization?

MAX: No. I'm not really interested to listen to all the other stories, because I'm so full of mine. I know stories, so I know what it is, but I like to forget those times and not be constantly reminded.

INT: And politically? You say you feel very strongly about Israel. Do you call yourself a Zionist?

MAX: Absolutely. So does SPOUSEWM.

INT: Have you been to Israel?

MAX: Oh, yes. I've been there three times. I can afford it, and I can get away from what I have.

INT: Because of business. And economically, how would you describe yourself, your family?

MAX: For myself, for my family? For myself, not very sound. We had some financial losses in '67 from which I'm still trying to recover. But I look forward. I don't look back. I have done this before. My father, he looked forward and didn't give up, and I do the same thing.

INT: So you would call yourself an optimist, or a hopeful person?

MAX: Yes. That would be about the same. Yes, I'm an optimist.

INT: You know the phrase in English, "the cup is half full"?

MAX: Yeah.

INT: Which would you be?

MAX: My cup is full. I have a full life. I'm satisfied. I have my family and...

INT: In doing business. Has business given you satisfaction? Has it been the kind of work that you've liked, or you haven't liked? Hard for you to do?

MAX: Well, there are ups and downs in business. I see it differently. Just thinking for a moment what I would do if I wouldn't have any business, any obligations financially to my family or to my wife or whatever there is. I'd probably sit home and brood all day and be very unhappy. Of course, I'm not very happy doing what I'm doing either, because it consumes me a great deal, my time. But I try to think about it as a therapy, the occupation I have, to consider it occupational therapy, which I'm doing now. It keeps me busy. I can't think too much about my past, what I should have been. What I would have been if I hadn't come to America. Where would I be today if there wouldn't have been any Hitler. Where I would have been, for instance, if I had never married SPOUSEWM.

And what kind of children I would have if maybe I had stayed in Germany, like many people stayed. So I don't want to think about all those things. I'm busy. I come home at night, I'm really tired, very tired emotionally and mentally, and then I do some reading and just go to sleep. Then I wake sometimes during the night with nightmares, screaming during the middle of the night, which my wife hears. I recently had a dream about my father that really shook me up.

INT: Unusual? To have a dream about him?

MAX: No, I dream quite often. But there was one dream, I don't know where I have it. I have it here some place. I got up in the middle of the night and wrote it down so I don't forget it.

INT: When was it? Within the last few weeks?

MAX: No, it was a little while ago. Do you want to tape it? You don't want to tape it. (break)

INT: Everything is important. Do you want me to read it?

MAX: I don't think you will be able to. I will do it. "I had the following dream the night between the 9th of Adar, or 15th, 16th of March, 1989, approximately 3:00 a.m. I was sitting in a concert hall." Excuse me. (cries. Interviewer continues)

INT: "I was sitting in a concert hall. Suddenly heard a voice from behind me."

MAX: Ingishe, my sister, Inge.

INT: Ingishe. That's your sister, Inge. "When I turned around I saw Papa sitting a few rows behind me with some others. So I walked right towards Papa, picked him up out of his seat and carried him out into the street. When I asked him if he could walk, he said yes, so I put him down. Both of us walked in the pouring rain together. I asked him why he doesn't come home rather than sleeping with those people. He did not answer. So I told him that we are going home, have a bath, give him a fresh pajama and food. Incidentally, he was terribly dressed. All I saw was that he wore an unbuttoned shirt and a light coat, and carried an unopened umbrella, so I opened the umbrella, because we walked in the rain. All this went on in German. After this, I awoke with chills."

Now this was in 1989, and when did he pass away?

MAX: In 1966. I dreamt of him in between, but this was such a chilling dream.

INT: Is there any meaning to this dream, do you think?

MAX: I don't know. Everything... (inaudible)

INT: Okay. We were talking about work as therapy.

MAX: Yes. I find the work I'm doing all along has some therapeutic value for me.

INT: Your father was a businessman. We will talk about his story, but he was to his bones a businessman.

MAX: Yes. Very successful. Very successful.

INT: Like he was born to be a businessman.

MAX: I'm not sure. I don't know, but he was very successful. Very enterprising, self-starting individual. He did things. All of a sudden he was a banker. He knew all kinds of different fields. He was tremendously successful in the stock market. He dealt with the New York stock market, with Montreal. I remember the name from Berlin.

INT: Do you see yourself as a businessman in the same way that he was, or are you two different people?

MAX: No. It was different times, too, don't forget.

INT: I'm not talking about success. I'm talking about the sort of personality to be a businessman.

MAX: Yes. In one way I see myself with the same compassion that he had. He was exceptionally charitable. I mean, he gave not because it was a tax deduction, as a donation. He gave it from his heart so he could help other people. I know there were people came to Berlin from Eastern Europe, from Russia, from Poland, from wherever they came. They had nothing. And he went into the area where, it wasn't the ghetto, but it was a really Jewish section in Berlin. He went there purposely, usually not only this, and of course we had several cars and a chauffeur, he took a taxi when he went there, and he stopped the taxi and walked around. He helped people, gave them money. On Pesach, the Seder, he went there -- I went with him once -- and he picked up Jewish people with beards from Poland, with the peyos, and brought them to the house. Never knew who they were.

INT: And your mother knew there would be company coming.

MAX: Sure.

INT: And she prepared for them.

MAX: We had a big home. She was... (pause, crying) I'm just a very lucky person to have had a father and mother like that. (crying) Not everybody in the world was as fortunate as I was.

INT: So you have the sense of being lucky.

MAX: Oh, yes. Absolutely. I guess one of the reasons I call myself very lucky is because I'm still alive. Let's face it. I never dreamt that I'd reach that age to help create a new family in this country here. For all the people we lost, two and a half generations, already. My children and their children. What comes after this who can figure this out.

INT: Have you had friends in your life in America? Would you say that you've had close friends?

MAX: Yes. In the business. Business relationships, yes.

INT: Who have you confided in? Who have you talked to?

MAX: About this? No one.

INT: Over the years you have not talked to SPOUSEWM?

MAX: Only SPOUSEWM, only to SPOUSEWM. Sure, my children. Well, I've really not talked to anyone about this for many, many years. So I would say until the whole Holocaust era came so much in prominence, literature coming out and writings and speeches and meetings.

INT: When would you say that was?

MAX: I would say a good fifteen years ago. When my children grew up to a point, I remember we went to Montreal to an exhibit. That was 25, 30 years ago. And we walked into the Israeli pavilion at that time, and all of a sudden we heard all these Holocaust, what happened, speeches. My children, they were small. They started to cry, and they ran out. I mean, I never talked to them about it before. Then my wife insisted I should write down several experiences which happened to me. Little by little I wrote down things in a pretty disorganized way, whatever came to my mind. (phone interruption)

The situation was that SPOUSEWM said, "It's time for you to start talking about things," and I did.

INT: Talking to your daughters?

MAX: But in a brief way only. I didn't want to go into a lot of details. They were very impressionable young kids. But then eventually I started writing down things. These are the books I used here.

INT: When did you start writing?

MAX: I would say about fifteen years ago, between 1980-1985, around that period. In '85 I have it already. My son-in-law worked with me on his word processor. At that time we started there. These are written much earlier. I didn't put any dates on them.

INT: When you first started to write, you were doing it for the children, or did you have a sense that you one day would want to tell your whole story?

MAX: Exactly, yes. I didn't do it for my children only. I wanted to do it that it should be documented, some of my own points of view, the way I saw it from my own experience, used the words I felt best suitable to describing the situation. I keep refining it because I didn't like the way I wrote it. I want it even better. I went through the thesaurus. My English is fairly good, I think is fairly good. But I didn't have the fine detail information that I'd like to apply.

INT: The statement here about coping in the work camp, it's so beautifully written. It brings me to your experience. I'll read it into the tape when we get to that part.

MAX: This was what my intention was, but I want to be sure I describe it in a way that you would conceive it, that you should live through it. Well, when I said at the beginning I'm writing here, it would take, it needs an involvement by the reader. But anyway, it needs an involvement, and I tried to get you involved; the idea was to see if you can go through with me the same experience to some degree. Of course you can't go through that experience. But to some degree to feel what I felt at that time.

I have for instance here an incident where you read something very dramatic. Have you read any of this? (Referring to the memoirs)

INT: No, because I wanted to read it...

MAX: I give you an incident which happened, several ones. One, the most dramatic was we lived in Czernowitz, which is the capital of Bucovina.

INT: Spell that.

MAX: (Spells it) Czernowitz. The Romanians used to call it Czernowitz (accent on second syllable), but Czernowitz is the way you pronounce it (accent on first syllable). We rented a villa outside the city, which is like Bala Cynwyd here, and we shared that villa with another couple and two children. His name was Kalisher, he was a Dr. Kalisher. I don't know what kind of a doctor he was anyway. And my parents and my brother and my sister. And at that time, the city was occupied by the Russians. This was before the Germans were in their march through Russia and Stalingrad, you know, a crucial point in their campaign. This was when Romania was forced by Stalin to give up Bucovina and Bessarabia back to Russia, so we became Russian citizens. And we lived in that building, and across the street were several villas. The one across from our house was a villa occupied by Jews who fled Romania, Czernowitz, and went through the

Russian side because they were afraid of the Germans. The Germans were about to enter the city, and the Russians were supposed to flee. They gave up the city.

The city was burning all around, we saw that. We were on the highest level of the city. We saw everything around there, and the city was burning. And suddenly a shot was fired into the villa across the street from where we lived. The caretaker there was Ukrainian. Now we know that they are not very friendly to us, to say the least.

INT: Tell me what it was like inside there, to watch the city burn.

MAX: Well, wait -- you'll see. So he wasted no time to call, he saw outside some Russian military police. He called them and said to them that the Jews have guns, and they shot through to his house. So the military police came in, a bunch of soldiers, three, four or five soldiers, and one of the leaders, who was probably an officer, I don't know who he was, came in. They lined us up against the wall of the house. In the back of the house there was a little wall, a dividing wall. And everybody was lined up against the wall.

INT: Your parents and you?

MAX: Everybody. The children, the Kalishers, everybody, and one soldier was standing outside, marching up and down like an animal. One of the Asian-looking type Russians, from the Asian part of Russia. And he had one of these machine guns which had like a big drum around it, and I saw him walking up and down with the gun pointing at us while the others went inside the house and tore the house apart looking for guns. While this went on, every second was like a minute, you know, but we stood out there holding hands and shaking like this. They looked at our papers. We had the documents. Whatever documents we had said "Jew," that we were Jewish, and we were born in Berlin. That's all they had to see. (claps hands together) Not the Kalishers. They were Romanian Jews. Anyway, whatever time it took for them to tear the house apart, and we stood there shaking, that this would be the end of us. We knew this would be the end. Anyway, after they came out after a while. They signaled the soldiers and they all walked away. Now can you imagine what penetrated through us in our hearts, in our minds during those seconds, those minutes, whatever it was, while we stood there like this, shaking?

INT: You have to tell me what was going on.

MAX: You have it here.

INT: Oh, it's all written.

MAX: It's all written down.

INT: What was inside.

MAX: Inside. You have it written down.

INT: Tell me now.

MAX: No. It's written in here. You read it. You have it written in here. And then there's another incident when the Germans came in. It was in the same house. But you don't want me to tell you, because it's all written down, you can really read it from here.

INT: Okay. So we'll put that story when I read it. We were just talking about how you use language to really bring the inner spirit, and this way I can understand. I can't experience it, but a little closer understanding.

MAX: This is why my wife and my children insisted I should write it down. They wanted me to write a book, but I don't know how to write a book. I'm not an essayist, I'm not a poet, I'm not a writer. But in the best way I know from my own experience, I want to write down my experiences, what I personally went through to involve the reader. Primarily the family.

INT: Okay. Let me ask you one more question about present circumstances, and that is just, over the years since you've come to this country, have you had any significant medical problems or physical problems?

MAX: No. Nothing unusual. I'm really, physically, I think, in excellent shape for my age. I do have some problems, but nothing really serious.

INT: And emotional? You're sensitive. Have you had nightmares all through the years, or is it only recently?

MAX: They're sporadic, just sporadic. I mean, not continuous, no, I couldn't live like this. No way. Praise G-d. I come home so tired sometimes, I just collapse. (laughs)

INT: When would you have nightmares? Certain times?

MAX: I don't know. It's no specific time.

INT: Is it like when you write that you have nightmares?

MAX: Oh, when I write, it's just terrible. It's an experience you wouldn't believe.

INT: So when you write, it stays with you.

MAX: It stays with me. When I write, the night before, the day before, after, I just...it's very difficult.

INT: After a night of nightmares, do you feel...

MAX: I go to work, and then I'm fine. (laughs)

INT: The work helps you get out of it?

MAX: Yeah. It's like a therapy. I feel good about this. I'm tired of the work.

INT: You have to work hard to get out of the sad mood, or when you get to work it lightens?

MAX: When I go in I forget about everything, because problems are there, always. (laughs)

INT: You have to take care of them.

MAX: Problems are good, yeah. (laughs) There are problems. I forget about the rest of it.

INT: When you deal with problems, do you deal with them in a confident way, or a kind of nervous way?

MAX: I'm confident. I know what I'm doing. I'm very confident about what I'm doing. Very much so. I can tell you that the people I deal with, we have 600, 700, 800 customers, and we have a very strong personal relationship. And they're all waiting. They say, "I want your book." (laughs) They all tell me they want my book.

INT: What do you mean, your book?

MAX: What I'm writing, they all want.

INT: Oh.

MAX: They marvel at me. We have people in very high social life. As a matter of fact, John DuPont is very much interested in reading it, one of the DuPonts. He is very much involved in the Holocaust period.

INT: How is that?

MAX: He reads a lot. He wants to know. (Inaudible) He has an international wrestling team, and one of his wrestlers (inaudible) got the gold medal in Barcelona, and I have a picture here. (pause)

"Kevin Jackson, Olympic gold medalist, to the original Wagner's custom dry cleaners. Max, thank you for all your support. Kevin Jackson."

INT: So how did you get with Michael Jordon?

MAX: They're my customers.

INT: Michael Jordon?

MAX: No. I met him somewhere else. This is to GOSSJ. I didn't give it to him yet. (referring to autographed picture of Michael Jordon)

INT: Oh, wow.

MAX: I just got some basketball players. I give to my grandchildren. I don't keep it for myself. He gave me one. I didn't want it. I give it to my grandchildren.

INT: Why do you share your experiences with these people? I thought...

MAX: They're interested.

INT: Did they ask you?

MAX: Yes. They wanted to know. First thing they come in, first time we meet, they want to know, where do you come from? And that starts the whole thing. Then I give it to them. I want them to know what I went through. I want them to know what the Holocaust really meant, what people went through. I'm aware of it. They don't have any idea what a human being can go through, the suffering. And I do it intentionally.

INT: To accomplish what?

MAX: To accomplish the awareness, that it shouldn't happen again. They should be aware of what happened, and they don't forget. 95% of my customers are non-Jews, and they should know about it. I want them to know. This is like my aim.

INT: But you didn't do that in the days you worked for Van Heusen shirts.

MAX: No, no, no.

INT: What's different?

MAX: Different, I hadn't written it down. Nothing was written down. Now, since I started, I want to, you can say propaganda -- no, I want to disseminate the story. I want to disseminate the information first hand. I go so far as to tell them: “I want you to shake hands with me. You know what I want you to do? When you tell your children, you tell them that you met somebody who went through that. Flesh and blood, you met somebody.”

INT: And the reaction of these people?

MAX: They're very much involved, very much. They can't believe it. They've broken out into tears already. I'm talking about non-Jews. Goyim have no idea what happened, how it affected the people. They love me for that. You don't know what's going on here.

You know how many presents I get when it comes Christmas, Jewish holidays, for Chanukah. They give me presents. Ask SPOUSEWM.

INT: Why can you do this in the store and not speak to audiences?

MAX: On a one to one basis.

INT: You can share one to one.

MAX: Yeah. A one to one basis. I have done it already. I went to the Main Line Reform Synagogue. I went to schools to talk. But it takes a lot out of me.

INT: And why is it different one on one?

MAX: I don't know. The older I get, it's worse. I don't know why. Years ago it was much easier. I've spoken to the Rotary Club. It was much easier. And now it's very hard.

INT: So you're more than just a store. You're an experience for people.

MAX: Yeah, exactly. You know something? This was before, when I was in Paoli with my first business. I had a customer coming in, her name was Katherine Lanahan Miller. She was a freelance writer for various national magazines, and we were sitting having coffee together many times and talked about this. And I didn't talk about the Holocaust at all. It was my musical career she was interested in. And one day she comes in and brought me in a piece of paper like this and said, "Max, I'd like you to look this one over and sign it and give it back to me tomorrow morning." I said, "What is it?" (Rest of tape is muffled -- continues for a few minutes)

If it only moves one person to change his attitude, it's worth it.

(END TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE)

INT: Okay. What impression do you hope I have of you?

MAX: I hope you have the impression that I'm a modest person. I don't brag. I don't make any big deal of everything, because basically I'm just an average person. I just had the misfortune or fortune to go through all this and still survive. But these people really love me. I know it, I feel it. And I love them, too. They're very fine people, most people here. They have to tell you what's going on there. You talk to SPOUSEWM about this. She'll tell you.

INT: So it sounds to me like you have a belief about people, that people are basically good.

MAX: Very much so. Absolutely I think people are good. They just, those who can't think for themselves are usually influenced by bad images, and they're the ones who follow their leaders. Unfortunately, there are many adults who don't think for themselves.

INT: So you have a basic trust in people.

MAX: Yes. (break)

INT: Okay, at this point, I will begin to read from what Max calls, "Max's Book." And we will add to this story as I read it. Okay?

MAX: Yes.

MEMOIRS: Our family odyssey, which has endured and survived so many episodes, the highs and lows, the moments of hope and times of despair, will need an emotional involvement by the reader to comprehend these happenings. More than forty years have passed.

INT: Okay, Max is adding the emotional involvement by the reader to comprehend these happenings and to establish a common bond between us in order to carry forth his legacy. This was written in 1985, which is why you say, "More than forty years." At this point it's more than fifty years...

MEMOIRS: ...have passed since we fled Nazi Germany. It was an odyssey of over sixteen years, during which we encountered many life-threatening experiences and miracles. We were the lucky ones; we survived. I can think of no other way, but as a survivor I consider it my obligation to give to my children and their children and others a first-hand account of that period as I lived through it. I will be as truthful as my memory will serve me. However, it is quite difficult to say neither too little or too much. My children and grandchildren will find in this biographical accounting an excellent introduction into their family roots.

INT: Okay, I want to ask you a question, okay?

MAX: Yes.

INT: At the point at which SPOUSEWM said to you you have to tell the children, and before you started to talk to them, and before you started to write, what did you think about your children knowing your life? Did you think at that point that it wouldn't be important for them to know everything that happened in the war? Before you started to talk, did you think you would go through a lifetime and not tell them?

MAX: I didn't give any thought to that. It didn't occur to me to think about it. I was too involved in my daily life, building a life for myself. The children were babies, so small. I didn't think about it. As I said to you originally, I only started to seriously consider the

writing down of my experiences or talk about them first and then write them down. Only, only after the entire episode, the entire era of the Holocaust became so much in prominence. And I thought my children would eventually be exposed to that, they would want to know from me, my own personal experiences where they are coming from. At that time, at that point in time, I thought it was important for me to talk on my own.

INT: And before that, you did not think about it at all, that they would know or not know?

MAX: Right. Because I came to this country wanting nothing to do with the past. This was my aim. I never thought that I would sit down and write about it, or even talk about it. I just completely shut it out behind me.

INT: But once you started to do it, you realized it was important.

MAX: It was important for them to know from their own father, direct from the line from me, rather than read it from others, you know. Then you get involved with others. Too important. I wanted them to learn from others the experiences what happened in Auschwitz and all the other camps. You know. But that's something else.

MEMOIRS: To give you some understanding of the following events, I must try to put things in proper perspective. In 1936 we fled Germany on very short notice, because my father was in danger of being arrested by the Gestapo. (pause) We were not completely unprepared in regard to travel documents. However, there was not enough time to make any other arrangements. That very day my parents made the dramatic decision to leave Germany for good late in the evening. It was a rainful day, that we left our home and everything that had been meaningful, emotionally, physically, and materially to us behind. Each one of us carried a small suitcase so as not to create suspicion. My father, in a very frantic move, threw the keys to our home into the nearest gutter, knowing that we would never return to our home.

We went to the railroad station and boarded the train. My father and two brothers went to Switzerland. My mother, my sister and myself went to Romania with a passport. We obtained this passport by bribing the Romanian Consul with a rather large sum of money. Later on the family was reunited in Romania.

The following sketches reveal some childhood views of our early family life. I must mention here that of all the ordeals I had to suffer, the loss of my brother Jacques...

INT: Jacques?

MAX: Yaakov, but we called him Jacques.

MEMOIRS: ...and sister Ingeborg, as a direct result of the Holocaust, were the greatest tragedies in my life. The picture changes dramatically through its passage of 70 years of my life. Knowledge of this biography represents an excellent introduction into our family

history to my children and grandchildren. If we, the still living witnesses of the Holocaust, fail to testify in all forms to the reality of the indescribable horrors the Nazis committed against our six million brothers and sisters, the rest of the human race, who passively stood by as spectators would happily forget that period of history.

MAX: This is exactly what I tell my customers, and about the book written called, "The Abandonment of the Jews." That book was written by a non-Jew whose father was a minister. I can't think of his name.

INT: Wyman.

MAX: Wyman. And he wrote in that book exactly what happened. And I tell you, if I would have known, those days before I came to America, if I would have had that book available to me, these documents, I probably would never have come to America, I tell you honestly.

INT: When did you read the book?

MAX: I read it whenever it came out. Fifteen, ten years ago, eight years ago or whatever, just not too long ago.

INT: Maybe like ten.

MAX: Ten years ago, yeah, when it came out. I read this book and I tell you I just couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe it. That this is the tendency, the anti-Semitic tendency in this country, the way they turned their back on all what happened in Europe. Including Roosevelt, including Roosevelt. The Jews cried when he died. He should have died a long time ago. He should have died.

INT: So how did that change your view of America?

MAX: Well, I became a realist. I started to realize that here in America we have a tremendous amount of anti-Semitism. People are prejudiced, and it's very distressing.

INT: What did you think about America before the war?

MAX: Entirely different. You come to America, the golden Medina, they called it. America was the dream of everybody in Europe. After the Holocaust they wanted to come to America. Anybody who couldn't come to America was just desperate. They had to come somehow. They had to make it. I worked in Germany for the Joint Distribution Committee in Munich after the war. Did I tell you this?

INT: Yes.

MAX: At that time I was working as a case worker there. And you should see the people who came to us from situations right out of the concentration camps. Terrible.

And they couldn't come to America because maybe there was a child, or the mother, one of the members of the family had tuberculosis or had some dark marks on their lungs, and they couldn't come. They wouldn't let them in. They wouldn't go by themselves and break up the family. Believe me, it was a terrible situation. People were dying to come to America. They would give their lives away to come to America, basically.

INT: So tell me, what did you think about America before reading the book?

MAX: I said this was a great country.

INT: What did the golden Medina mean to you?

MAX: That meant opportunities for everybody to start a new life, a happy life. It's a wonderful country. The opportunities are here for everyone.

INT: And you didn't think that there was anti-Semitism, or racism, or bigotry?

MAX: Well, no. I didn't think it was that pronounced, in official government circles, especially, and of course, from there it trickles down to the simple people.

INT: So what you said to me is that before reading the book you didn't think the bigotry was in the government. The anti-Semitism was in the government.

MAX: No, I figured the anti-Semites are everywhere where there are Jews, even where there are no Jews. I remember in Romania, there was a leader, Cuza was the leader of the right-wing extremists of the party. His name was Cuza. He was the leader of the Iron Guard.

INT: This was in Romania.

MAX: Romania. I heard once a speech he made. He said, "If we wouldn't have the Jews we would have to invent the Jews." They need a kapporah.

INT: Kapporah is sacrifice.

MAX: In Israel. It's a sacrifice. They need a sacrifice. So that's what it is. But at that time, when I came to America, I had different feelings in my mind. Liberation. I'm a human being again. You read in my book later. You find out what liberation we had, when we first met the Joint Distribution Committee, coming out of the concentration camp and back in Budapest, back in Vienna and Munich. I worked for them eventually. Anyway, so where were we?

INT: Reading the book. Your changing view.

MAX: About Wyman. My view was dramatically changed after I read this book. I said to my wife at that time, I said, "SPOUSEWM, I don't know that I would have come to

this country if I would have had this information before I came here. I probably would have gone to Palestine. I probably would have got killed in the war or something like that." (laughs)

INT: Not you, Max. Why didn't you go to Palestine?

MAX: Well, we had some distant family here. Only my mother's side. The Rosners, the name of my mother's family. She had an uncle here. My mother's mother's brother. My mother and her mother -- as she was an orphan -- and her older brother, they came to Berlin from the Bukovina. My mother was born in a town called Campulung. It's a beautiful, gorgeous little village in the Carpathian Mountains in the northern Bucovina. It's a resort area, and anybody from this area would know. It's absolutely gorgeous. Like Switzerland. She was born in this little town, and then her father passed away, died. Her mother, I don't know how it happened -- she married a guy by the name of, Natan Rath was his name. He was a homeopath.

INT: Rath would be R-o-t-h or R-a-t-h?

MAX: R-a-t-h. And he also had a family from before. He was a widower. He had a son who lived in Cracow. He was a chemist, and he had a daughter, Julia, who went to Australia, and never heard from her again after the war. They settled in Berlin, and my mother's mother's brother, Ben Rosner, came as a young kid here to America, at the turn of the century, probably. His name was Benjamin Rosner, and he has a big family here. Uncle Benny sent to my grandmother tickets, ship tickets, to come here, but they didn't want to go. They loved the life where she was. Anyway, it would have been a different world, and wouldn't have worked out.

INT: This was what, in the early thirties?

MAX: No, long before. Probably in the twenties or before that. Long before. Why did I come to this point?

INT: I was saying why didn't you go to Palestine.

MAX: Oh. Because the Rosners had a big family here. When I worked in Munich after the war for the Immigration Department of the Joint Distribution Committee, through the HIAS I found the family here. One side of the family was the Rosners from my mother's side, and the other side are the Burgs. As a matter of fact, Joseph Burg in Israel is also related to us. The Burgs.

INT: This is your mother's side.

MAX: My children met him in Israel in the Knesset. Anyway, so what else was I saying? I keep losing my place.

INT: When you worked for the immigration services, you found the family?

MAX: Yeah, I found the family and I wrote to them. She had a cousin in New York who had some optical institution there or whatever, and a son and some cousins here. And the girls, one of them was a doctor, whose father was Emanuel Rosner. She died, unfortunately, very young before we came here. What happened, they were so excited about us, they sent us affidavits. As a matter of fact, do you know the Wachs's?

INT: Yes. The Wachs family.

MAX: The Wachs family. You know them. Well, David and Ellis's father wrote the affidavits out for us to come to this country. He was an accountant or something, their father. I meet David Wachs quite often. He is so happy about this. He didn't know. I told him what happened to us. My cousin, my mother's cousin, Emanuel Wachs, had an office in one of his buildings. And Emanuel, he went over to him. He said, "Listen, I have cousins in Germany."

INT: So he did legal work?

MAX: He did the legal work.

INT: So this is David and Ellis's father.

MAX: Yeah, yeah. David and Ellis's father. Right. Their mother, they know me very well. And they knew my cousins, the Rosners, and so that's how we got together. In fact, I met them when we had the Torah rededication from the Hungarian town recently at the Beth Hillel Temple. They were all there. They hugged me, they kissed me. They know that relationship. So even you know Dr. Wachs, the other Wachs.

INT: Oh, yes. Juliet works with me on the project.

MAX: Oh, she works with you on the project. And Juliet Goldstein, isn't it?

INT: Well, Pearl Goldstein is Phil's first cousin.

MAX: So these are the people, and they sent me the papers to come here. I remember once when I first got here, I sent them a letter about our family. He got the letter and couldn't believe that I wrote it in English.

INT: That you wrote in English.

MAX: Yes. He couldn't believe it. (Crying)

INT: So why do you cry when you talk about this?

MAX: I don't know why. It brings back memories.

INT: But you said they are wonderful people.

MAX: Wonderful people.

INT: So these are good memories.

MAX: Very. They're all there.

INT: All of them. Well, you must have cousins.

MAX: Yeah, some. There were so many brothers and sisters. There were two brothers around and one sister. She's, nebbich, av tsuris. We went to see her in a nursing home. She looks terrible. She received me, they all received me. They gave us a welcome you wouldn't believe it.

INT: They were very good to your parents.

MAX: Very good. They set up an apartment for us. Carl went to New York.

INT: To meet you.

MAX: I didn't know that. (crying) It was so emotional, I couldn't believe it.

INT: It was emotional when they met you in New York?

MAX: Yes. We didn't know each other.

INT: But you still hugged and kissed like family?

MAX: He had no idea what we looked like, even. Did I show you a picture of me?

INT: As a young man? No.

MAX: Let me show it to you. (pause)

INT: You cry when you tell me about the very special things, because not everybody talks about family being welcoming them when they came here.

MAX: Oh, no.

INT: You know that.

MAX: (showing interviewer pictures) This was right after the war. You see here. It was 1946. I was a member of the (inaudible)

INT: How old?

MAX: I was here thirty years old. I was a member of the union of artist writers in Germany (inaudible). This is my brother. This is me when I was a youngster. This is my brother Jacques. I was next to him.

INT: So the family here helped you a lot to get started.

MAX: Well, yes, they were very nice to us. Here is a member of the Judisch Junggemein in Munich. Yeah, they were nice to us. They were in manufacturing. They had a big meeting there. They went bankrupt. They lost everything.

INT: Oh, later.

MAX: I had one cousin, one of the girls, her husband died rather young. The youngest one he died first. He was a violinist who played for the army in the Second World War in a military band. And she married then his brother after he died. And then his brother died, too, and the other one died. They all died. And what happened to the girls, they were the girls. Wonderful people. They were the Burgs.

I remember I came to this country, and they took me into their home, and he brought me his violin, and next door used to live a young woman, she played for the Philadelphia Orchestra, the harp. So she invited me to come over, and we played together. It was wonderful. Right up on Ogontz Avenue she lived. That was a nice neighborhood at that time. She was very nice. Then she went to New York and played for the Metropolitan Opera. I forgot her name already. It's a long time. And she married. Mary is the only one who is still alive. And she married a dentist. As a matter of fact, she married the guy who taught Leon Wertheimer dentistry. (Inaudible) He came to Leon Wertheimer's father's funeral.

INT: So in this family they didn't have children and children? You don't have cousins? The Burg family, the Rosner family? So they're all gone?

MAX: Well, they have children, but there's no connection. No, very little connection. I used to have a cousin I met once in a while, but it's all over.

INT: But you invite them to your simchas, and they invite you to their simchas.

MAX: Yeah, they came to the weddings and all that stuff. And whatever, the weddings my children came. The first cousin, she married somebody else, they get married by somebody else. One kid went here, one went there, we don't know the kids. And I wouldn't know who they are anymore, their children, not because of lack of us. They just weren't interested. Whenever there was a wedding, my children came. The first cousin, she married somebody else. One kid went here, one went there, and I wouldn't know who they are anymore, their children. Not because of us. They just weren't interested.

INT: They weren't interested.

MAX: Yes. They weren't interested. They know that I'm here. SPOUSEWM is interested. I just saw her many times. She's nebbich an old woman. She couldn't put an arm like this. Not much of her left. She went through hell. She has a brother here. Lives right here on (?) Boulevard. He is an attorney. He works for the insurance department.

INT: You were the only family from Europe that survived? Your father had an extended family, your mother?

MAX: They all did, Uncle Herman, the younger brother survived, and he went to Israel.

INT: Your father's younger brother.

MAX: Yes. He died there. The older brother died, and the sisters both were murdered, and he died in the concentration camp, and their children died, and I'll show you some pictures of them.

INT: So when the Rosners and the Burgs brought you over, oh, it was only the Rosners, only your parents, you and your sister, that was it?

MAX: Yes. My brother, I have a brother.

INT: And your brother. And the other uncle went to Israel, and that was it.

MAX: Eric died, and the sister's, the wife survived, and they have one son. His name is Manfried Wagner, and he lives in Cologne. He's an engineer, and he just lost his wife a few years ago. (inaudible) Okay, go ahead.

INT: Well, that's why this is good, because in telling your story, you're going to fill everything in. Okay, I'm returning now to the written work.

MEMOIRS: Various scenes, like paintings in a picture gallery, are passing through my mind, reflecting our family life in Berlin. I see my mother sitting at the piano, playing and singing for us. Then the picture changes. My father suddenly appearing, loaded with presents for us on his birthday, which was his way of rewarding us for the happiness he felt having us. The warmth and security of our family relationship extended to all who came in contact with us. This pictures changes again, and now I see Frieda Schwefel.

MAX: That was her name. Schwefel. She died a horrible death.

INT: Frieda Schwefel (spells it). Do you know what Schwefel is? (Short discussion of schwefel)

MAX: In German, I think it means sulfur.

MEMOIRS: ...taking care of us while Mama and Papa were away on a trip. Then again, I hear my older brother Marcel practicing the piano, and then I hear him playing with Frieda's husband, who played the violin, a segment of the overture to "Si j'etais roi." And that means: If I will be king. I always enjoy closing my eyes and dreaming while awake. As I got older, Marcel and I would play together. I played the violin. My sister Ingeborg, the youngest, was usually sitting on the floor near the piano and playing with her dolls. My brother Jacques, who was two years older than I, but two years younger than Marcel, would sometimes play four-hand piano with Mama or Marcel.

INT: Did you call your mother "Mama" in Europe?

MAX: Mutti. We called my grandmother "Mama" and we called my mother "Mutti," and my father, "Papa."

INT: And your grandfather?

MAX: Not Opah. How do you call it? I had only one grandfather when I grew up, Nathan Rath.

INT: Your father's?

MAX: No. No. My father's father I don't remember.

INT: Your mother's father.

MAX: Yeah. It was a stepfather, by the way. I don't remember. What I called him really doesn't matter. It was so long ago. It was seventy years ago. (laughs)

MEMOIRS: I remember that during my early childhood years we moved twice, and then finally my parents bought a beautiful home with lovely gardens and trees. It was a rather large place, with spacious rooms. Our music room, for example, was dominated by a magnificent black Bechstein.

(END TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO -- the first ten minutes of tape has an unidentified woman, speaking too softly to be transcribed, then interviewer abruptly goes on with memoirs.)

MEMOIRS: Let me go back in years and reveal to you, as my mother told me, how Papa started his career. He came to Berlin as a very young man in the year of 1904, when he was only 17 years old, with great hopes and limitless ambition.

INT: Why did he come when he was seventeen?

MAX: I don't know that. I can't answer you.

INT: Do you know -- did his family give him their blessings?

MAX: Yeah, I'm sure.

INT: But he came on his own.

MAX: Yeah. He was by himself. A young enterprising man, was quiet. Nobody was afraid (inaudible, laughs)

INT: But it is young to take off, unless...

MAX: Well, that's all I can tell you.

MEMOIRS: His first job was in a tobacco shop, hand-rolling cigarettes. After a short while, with his enterprising mind, he acquired a pushcart, and sold his own cigarettes, with related items, such as cigars and tobacco. He then drove a car through various business districts of Berlin, and his success was overwhelming. Soon he traded his pushcart for a retail store, and this was the start of his unusual success. Before he was thirty years old he owned 21 retail stores and a wholesale warehouse on Behrenstrasse 27. He was a partner in the Bankhause of Eugen Bad and Company. Also a co-owner of all the money exchange booths in Berlin's railroad station.

Let us go back to the year 1911. I would like to tell you Papa's version of how he met Mama. He was 24 years old, very handsome, tall and well groomed. It was a beautiful summer day. As he was walking home he saw this lovely girl with her mother walking down the street right in front of him. He followed them from a fair distance, when they finally entered an apartment house. By a coincidence, a friend of Papa's lived in the same building. Papa and his friend immediately did some detective work and succeeded in locating Mama's apartment. Papa, as he confessed in later years, a little bit of a Don Juan, certainly not lacking self-confidence, one day knocked at their door, and this is how he met Mama for the first time face to face. She was beautiful, very young, and shy. He said that he visited her very frequently, showered her with gifts, and finally proposed to her. My grandmother told me later that Papa was so charming, that after only a few months knowing him, they agreed to the marriage, in spite of the fact that Mama was only sixteen and a half years old.

INT: So how many years were between them?

MAX: Nine years.

INT: He was nine years older?

MAX: Yes.

(PAUSE)

INT: This is the second interview with Max Wagner. May 24th, 1995. When we stopped last time, we were reading from your biography the story of how your father met your mother. And you were thinking, imagining to yourself how romantic it was, to see them walking. You visualize them walking.

MAX: Right now sometimes when I walk down the street, by myself, I see my father going with my mother. I see the intimate relationship, the harmonious relationship. I don't know if they were always perfect, but whatever it was, any differences they had was never coming out. Always an amicable (inaudible). My father was a little bit of a gambler. He went to the stock market, and one day he lost a huge sum of money on the stock market. (inaudible) And people bought this stock very cheap, and my father lost like $50,000 in one day. It was Black Friday. And everybody lost, millions and millions of dollars.

INT: It was what? A fake company?

MAX: Yeah, not a fake company, but what he did is similar to, I guess, what some other people do, they build up some kind of a great reputation, but there's very little behind it, and he went bankrupt. And my father had a great deal of money. But as much as it was at that time, my mother tried to always hold him back from too much risky investment. But he did it, and Papa, he always came out on top. He made huge sums of money, and gave it away. It was his greatest joy. He was a baal tzedakah in the truest sense of the word. He gave it with pleasure, and had the joy of giving. He was a baal tzedakah.

But the relationship was always a harmonious one. As I want to say, I sometimes walk, and I think of my father, how he must have walked around, in the early days, 1911, '12, '13, you know. The years from when they first met and they got married, how happy they must have been. How my mother was absolutely a gorgeous woman. My father was a handsome person. Very handsome. They must have felt so elated and great. And then this all came to such a terrible end, you know. It could have been worse. But at least they lived pretty long lives. Still the memories stick with me, knowing that they were very happy in Germany.

INT: Did you never see them fight?

MAX: Not fight.

INT: Argue.

MAX: Yeah, argue. "Let's talk about this." Sure. Sure they had this. There was no question about it. But it wasn't blown out to a point where you were scared as children. It never reached that point. They might have had discussions like this in their bedroom without even us knowing. Consulting each other, and disagreements. But we saw only, I only can see my father coming home with presents for my mother. He bought her the most beautiful things. And not practical things. Like rings on all her fingers. In fact, my mother had gorgeous jewelry and she never wore it. Gorgeous jewelry. He bought her

the best. He could afford it, and he did it. But she was not fond of it. I have some jewelry.

INT: Why didn't she wear it?

MAX: Because she kept a low profile. She wasn't interested, it didn't bother her. She was very modest. And they, not just for the surface, they were really a very happy couple. My wife will tell you when she met them, she said they were in love with each other. Especially the fact that we were in such distressed situations during those bad years that they unified all of us tremendously. (inaudible)

INT: How did they do that?

MAX: They unified us, the conditions where we were living, they unified us tremendously. We had very little, we had, well, my older brother who is still alive, thank G-d, was a little more for himself. He was by himself.

INT: You mean he was like a loner?

MAX: No, he separated himself from us a little bit. He was (inaudible) certain privileges he wanted. But...as we get older, it was a different situation. He was always very protective of my sister, everybody was. She was the only girl, and a beautiful girl. A neshama, a golden neshama.

INT: Did she have any problems when she was young?

MAX: No, she had no problems. She was, all the time in the concentration camp she was very sick. She had typhus, she had diphtheria. She really was very ill. No, she had problems. Her problem was primarily, she was always thinking she was not clean enough. And that caused a lot of disturbance. I am writing about this here, and you find out later. (Inaudible) As a matter of fact, when we came here, the immigration department wanted to send her back.

INT: Why?

MAX: Why? They found a reason, because she had that problem. And luckily we found somebody at the HIAS, who was an attorney. She was the head of HIAS. (Inaudible) And she helped us. I was at that time living in New York. I came back and forth (inaudible).

INT: So this was a fear she had? Somehow she wasn't clean enough, like a phobia?

MAX: Yeah. It was like a psychosis. It was a psychosis. Well, and she went through hell...we went through hell with her, too. (inaudible -- pause)

INT: Okay. We can go back to the biography. But I want you to repeat one thing through, if you don't mind. This is an aside, but would you talk about going to the school?

MAX: Today?

INT: You don't just have to talk about what you said, but what the children, what it meant to you to go, and what you did at the end, before you left.

MAX: Well, what I'm doing now, as far as I'm in business now, I feel like I have a mission to accomplish. (pause, crying)

INT: You don't want to talk about it?

MAX: Yes, I do. I feel that I have to talk to people who don't have the vaguest idea what happened in those years. And being a survivor, being a witness to the happenings, from my own story, from my own perspective, I felt it was my duty, because I was lucky enough to survive, it is my duty to perpetuate this information to, this legacy I carry with me, to anybody who I can, mostly non-Jews. I feel it as an obligation I have. And I feel more than this. It may be a mission I have in life to do this. So I felt, and I went to many schools. I went to Girls High School in Philadelphia. I even went to Akiba when Jack was teaching there. I went to the Reform school. As I get older, it makes it more difficult for me to do this. You know? Strangely enough, I don't get harder, I get softer.

So I felt when I was called by the junior high school here, that I would like to talk to them. They have a program this month, about the Second World War, particularly of the Holocaust. They are reading the Anne Frank story. They're reading from the book text, which means something to them, but not enough. I as a living survivor, a witness to this era, I come in and talk to them on a one to one basis. They can't conceptuate, when you talk about millions of people, 20 million Russians are homeless, or whatever it was, six million Jews, it's very hard to have an idea of what that really means. But when you see one single person sharing his own life experiences, I think this will have a greater impact on them. That's why I accepted this kind of mission to do it.

INT: So you spoke to the junior high school.

MAX: Yeah. I spoke now only one class, my grandson's class. (Inaudible)

INT: This is what grade?

MAX: Grade eight. Fourteen-year-old children. Very big children. Growing. Some are taller even than I am. (laughs)

INT: So just share what you did before you left. Why did you say goodbye in the way that you did?

MAX: (pause)

INT: You want me to say it?

MAX: No. I wanted those children to know that when they grow up and have their own families, and their children, to tell them that they had met a person who had survived this Holocaust, and they had met and listened to him, what he had to say, and nobody can deny the fact that there was a Holocaust. Because I told them there are people today, voices being heard by a lot of people around us, ignorant people, but also academic people, who write books about that the Holocaust was a myth by the Jews, and it never existed. So I told them, that they should fight with all their might. Because first of all the Germans themselves, the German government has documented all the atrocities they committed. It is all down, and everybody has it, and it is available to everybody who wants to see it. It is on film, it is in books, it is on text written down. So I wanted them to know that I am the one who has seen it, whatever I have seen from my own point of view, and I wanted them to shake hands with me, so that when they leave, they know they met a person who went through that.

INT: Tell me the feeling?

MAX: My feeling? I felt very good about it. Emotional. I was stressed out. But (Inaudible)

INT: So in telling me about it, you're proud.

MAX: I'm very happy that I did it. Very happy. But I'm emotionally moved. See, what I'm doing...

INT: That you make contact with them.

MAX: I made contact. I wanted them to have a physical contact with me. You can read the Anne Frank story, which will move you absolutely, very deeply probably. But if Anne Frank would be here, and she would tell you personally what happened, it would be a much greater impact than reading in any text in the book.

INT: So tell me if I'm right about this. When your mission not only tells a story, but to make it alive for them, means that when you shake hands with each child, which means you make contact with each child.

MAX: Physical contact.

INT: You're actually making it harder for you, but you're doing what you feel needs to be done? And you're willing to make it harder on you to accomplish this goal. You want them to look you in the eye.

MAX: Because I think that is the sacrifice I have to make, the price I have to pay for being alive. It's the least I can do...

INT: The least you can do...

MAX: (crying) For those who didn't make it.

INT: So this much suffering you'll put up with for the sake of accomplishing, conveying to these children, these groups, that it really happened, and you're a living witness.

MAX: I want them to carry the legacy which I give them, which I impart on them.

INT: I couldn't understand why you were crying, because you're so proud of it. But then when I had an image, when I could see you shaking hands with each child, I could see how the contact makes it that much harder.

MAX: It makes it more dramatic. This idea.

INT: Right. Which is bound to hit you.

MAX: (inaudible) It comes out of me, and goes into them. And I hope it stays there.

INT: Because you could do a speech in front of a room, behind a podium in a very unemotional way. But you don't believe that that will affect them.

MAX: I don't think it will have the same impact. I also offered to them, if they want more information, they can contact me, get my phone number from my grandson. (pause)

INT: Now I'm going to return to the biography, and continue where we left off. The last thing I read was about the fact that your mother was only sixteen and a half years old.

MEMOIRS: The wedding took place on December 28, 1911. Some of the pictures of my parents, which were given to me by relatives in Israel will attest to my not so humble opinion, that Papa was really a handsome man, and Mama was very beautiful. Mama helped Papa in his business, until my oldest brother Marcel was born on September 30, 1912. Then followed her very busy schedule of raising four children. My brother Jacques was born in 1914, I in 1916, and Ingeborg in 1919.

The domestic and foreign tobacco industry took notice of my father's business success, and approached him to take over the distributorship of all major brands for Berlin. It is noteworthy here that Berlin at that time had a population of six million inhabitants. Here I will try to recapitulate the happenings on the night before our flight from Berlin.

I mentioned earlier my father's involvement with the bank of Eugen Bad and Company. There were three partners: a German Jew named Eugen Bad, my father, and a German

by the French name D'Avance. After Hitler came to power in 1933, my father entrusted D'Avance with many of his valuables, with the understanding that they would be returned on demand. Because of his business relationship with D'Avance, there were no doubts about his trustworthiness. On that particular evening, in the fall of 1936, Mr. D'Avance called on my father with an urgent message that he had to see him at once. Uncle Herman, my father's younger brother, happened to be visiting with us from Romania, witnessed the happenings on that fateful night.

D'Avance requested to talk to my father in private, but my father insisted on having his brother present. After D'Avance left, Mama and we all went into my father's room. Papa was sitting in his chair, his face was the color of ash gray, and Uncle Herman was standing right by his side. Mama went right over to Papa and embraced him. Papa said only a few words which still cling in my ears. He said, "Children, pack your absolute necessary belongings into a small suitcase, because we have to leave Germany at once."

Many years later Uncle Herman told us what really happened at that meeting.

MAX: (inaudible)

INT: You're seeing it?

MAX: I was twenty years old.

INT: Is it bringing back the feelings you felt then? You felt fear, or just sadness?

MAX: Sadness. (inaudible)

INT: Was it that extreme, or were you beginning to...

MAX: I didn't realize yet how extreme it was until we really left. The change was so traumatic, so dramatic. We left everything behind. Anything which ever meant to us. Life, the lifestyle, the material things, the emotional things, things we were attached to all our lives was all gone.

INT: Your instruments.

MAX: Really everything. Took everything. I had a violin which probably today would be worth half a million dollars.

INT: But things were building then.

MAX: Yeah, but we didn't expect it to come so suddenly.

INT: It was hard to believe.

MAX: It was hard to believe. All the non-Jewish friends that I had...you didn't expect to get that bad that the Gestapo would...if we wouldn't have known, even today, this would have been the (inaudible). Maybe there was no Gestapo. We don't know yet. These things came out afterwards. Maybe he made it up so he could take everything over for us, you know?

INT: Uh-huh. He wanted to scare you away.

MAX: It's very possible. But later you'll see he was a member of the Nazi party. We don't know. This is all...We don't know. We can speculate, but we don't know.

MEMOIRS: Many years later, Uncle Herman told us what happened really at that meeting. D'Avance told my father that he had authoritative information that the Gestapo was after him, and he would be picked up the next morning. Furthermore, when my father requested the valuables, D'Avance promptly and unashamedly confessed that he was a member of the Nazi Party for many years, and without shame displayed his membership insignia, which was pinned under his lapel. He also assured Papa that he was lucky that he came and advised him of the imminent danger.

INT: So in other words, he didn't give anything back.

MAX: No.

MEMOIRS: Thanks to my father's foresight, and Uncle Herman's influence with the Romanian consulate, he had prepared travel documents from the Romanian Consul at considerable cost. We were not completely unprepared in regard to travel documents. However, there was not enough time to make any other arrangements. That very evening my parents made the dramatic decision to leave Germany for good late in the night.

(END TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE)

INT: Well, I think you'll fill in some of the emotions there. That fills in the story. But you'll see.

MAX: But you'll tell me. I take your advice, whatever you tell me, I do. I think I get more involved later.

INT: See, there's a fact, and the fact implies feelings. I would assume that under these conditions that you would be very frightened, but you didn't put the words in. And also, because based on different personalities, you would show the fear differently. Was your mother crying? Was she silent? Did she try and cheer up the children? See, people have different ways of reacting.

MAX: I just put facts here, that's all.

INT: That's fine. That's the frame of the story. Now you have to put the layers of the experience, because you want people to feel the story, not just know the story. Okay?

MAX: You make a very good point. (Inaudible)

INT: In fact, right here, let me ask you a question. Clearly everyone was frightened, and shocked as you say. The change was so stressful.

MAX: Dramatic.

INT: Dramatic, that you're in shock. But each of you must have reacted to that a little bit differently. Your father was very decisive. "We're going tonight. Pack your things." No hesitation. No confusion. How did your mother react to this?

MAX: (inaudible)

INT: But you don't remember her crying in this scene within your house, do you?

MAX: No, no. Nobody was crying. We were just petrified at first. We were just stunned.

INT: Did that stun you into silence, or were you talking? Did your father...

MAX: No, no. We were just taken aback by what had happened. Just try to follow orders at that time. You couldn't make any decisions, and we just had to do it.

INT: At risk of life. How did you decide what to pack? Did you take practical things, or sentimental things?

MAX: (inaudible)

INT: You were twenty then? Did you have a girlfriend at that point?

MAX: Yes. (Inaudible) A very pretty girl. A German girl.

INT: So when you say German girl, you mean a Nazi?

MAX: (Inaudible) She was from school. She was just a friend. She had no affiliations. She was just a dear friend. I was too involved with my music to be thinking about girls. (long inaudible section)

INT: So if the war wouldn't have happened, would you have brought home a non-Jewish girl?

MAX: No, never. (inaudible)

INT: When you had to pack and leave that night, did you have in your mind any concerns or sadness about certain people that you wouldn't see, any friends?

MAX: We were so petrified, we had to leave in a question of hours, and I don't know what we took. I don't remember any more. (inaudible) Later on in the new place, you have time to think about the connections you made, the lifestyle you lived, everything else.

INT: So you knew that your father's life was at risk?

MAX: Oh, absolutely. We were definitely under the impression of that, because of D'Avance with the papers. At that point we knew this.

INT: You knew it was a life and death matter?

MAX: Absolutely. We had to save our lives and the life of my father was in danger.

INT: Before that time, had you known of people who were already taken away?

MAX: Yes. There were cases where people committed suicide, where the Gestapo was at the door and (inaudible) they killed themselves.

INT: So you knew those stories.

MAX: Oh, sure. But most of those people had political connections. They were either Communist, or anti-government, or tax evaders. People who cheated or did things like that were known to the public. But my father was in the business line, and outside of that he had nothing to do with politics. Those people were known. They got taken away.

INT: Before that there were people who knew they had to be afraid because of the politics.

MAX: Yes. Their political connections, or whatever they were involved in. Who knows. Don't forget, before Hitler came to power in 1933 the pendulum swung the other way, because Berlin or Germany had the strongest Communistic party. As a matter of fact, I remember in 1933 just before Hindenburg turned the power over to Hitler, (inaudible) the Communists had a demonstration at the Volksbuhne. They called it Karl Liebknecht Platz. He was a Communist leader in Berlin. He was known. (inaudible)

INT: You have to spell Karl.

MAX: (spells it)...a Communist demonstration, and a few days later Hitler came out. Those people who were there, who knows where they went.

INT: So in 1933 you were 17 years old, so you knew what was happening.

MAX: Yes. We saw it happening. In 1933, 1933 was a boycott against the Jews. They smashed stores and picked people up on the street and we never saw them again. There they had the SA, not SS. Sturmabteilung. They were the brown shirts. They were terrible, they were like hideous. They grabbed people. They tore the people's beards out and threw them out into the street. They burned them.

INT: So that was going on for a few years.

MAX: This was at first. Later on they calmed down a little bit and organized, making real razzias. You know what a razzia is. They go through the streets and the houses. Yeah. Razzias. They'd go through the streets, and they look for people, they take them, they disappear.

INT: So in those three years your father anticipated problems enough to prepare travel documents, but it's not like the family sat down and said, "We are in trouble."

MAX: No, no. We knew things were not good, but everybody assured us that in a year or two everything would be fine. But that didn't happen.

INT: Did you continue to be in school till the day you left, or were you already expelled?

MAX: No, I wasn't expelled. No. (inaudible) I don't know. I only know that dramatic moment came when we had to leave. (inaudible) Looking back today at what happened, and how Jews come back to Germany, I didn't understand. I was back in Germany in 1986 or '87. I was invited as a guest of the city of Berlin with my wife, and until the moment the limousine came to pick us up, I didn't want to go, because there was absolutely no feeling. I just didn't want to go. But SPOUSEWM said, "Go," so we went and they treated us extremely well. We met the leadership of the city and senators, and officials. And they wanted a dialogue with us. In retrospect now I feel I probably made the right decision to go. SPOUSEWM was insistent, and I think she was right. Because they really wanted to tell us how they felt. (inaudible) And I felt also good we had a chance to talk to them about how we felt, and that was exactly what they wanted to hear from us. All in all, it was a good experience. I haven't written about it, because I just felt, I don't know. (Inaudible) It was mixed feelings, in a way, looking back now, and then I felt I did the right thing, but I wouldn't do it again. I feel very uncomfortable as a whole. (long inaudible)

INT: Do you look back and wonder how Jews were ever as comfortable as they were?

MAX: Yes. But even at the turn of the century when Prussia was so militaristic, how the Jews feel so comfortable here. Maybe they weren't so comfortable, I don't know. But I think of my father, he felt good. Maybe there was an underlying current of anti-Semitism against Jews. But there were so few Jews. Let's not forget, Germany had a total population before the war of 60 million Germans. There were only 600,000 Jews. One

percent were Jews. There were no Negroes, there were no Spaniards, there were no Chinese, only Japanese students. So one percent of Jews has created such a tremendous example on all European Jewry, it's unbelievable. One percent. 600,000 people.

INT: When you were in Berlin, did you go back to where you lived and where you went to school, and where you walked?

MAX: Nothing there. The street even where we lived doesn't even exist anymore. And the warehouse my father had was a parking lot.

INT: How about the conservatory of music?

MAX: Nobody heard about it. Would you believe it? The Stern Conservatory, it was connected to the people involved (inaudible). I didn't see Karntnerstrasse. It was destroyed. They built it up eventually. But don't forget, the Germans walked around -- it was in March or April we were there -- in mink coats and a wonderful life. They have everything they wanted. They lived very nicely, believe me.

I**NT:** Oh, I know that. When the young people were telling you their feelings, which I guess is that they felt bad.

MAX: We talked about the Burgermeister.

INT: Did you believe them?

MAX: Yes. They were very sympathetic. First of all, many of them had been in Israel, they told us. And senators and whatever functionaries. They all spoke a beautiful English, and they opened up a museum for us, a Jewish museum of whatever they had. I didn't know at the time that Prague had all the Jewish artifacts. (inaudible) Anyway, we know that. Even today you see how they have all these art objects in Moscow Museum. Who knows what it is? Who's going to believe me when I say, "This is mine"? Nobody's going to believe me. How can I prove it? It was all taken away.

INT: So all these discussions were organized as part of the trip. You were the guest of Berlin in terms of hotels and travel.

MAX: Oh, yes. They sent us to shows, and to the opera. The only thing that I objected to was they showed a theater play called "Der Hauptmann from Kopenick." That's an interesting story.

INT: Say again?

MAX: Der Hauptmann, that's a captain, from Kopenick, that's a suburb of Berlin. And that's an interesting story because the whole world was laughing at it. Here's a story about a man who got out of prison, and he had some money in his pocket. He looked like a real Prussian with a big mustache. A Prussian military man. And as he walks by he

sees in a window the uniform of a captain, in a uniform store, and the guy who owned it was a Jew. So he goes in and finds it's his size, and he bought it. Next he packed it up, put it in a box and went into a railroad station into the men's room, and changed his garment from the prison and put on the uniform. And as he walked down the street, a platoon of maybe a dozen soldiers walked by and they all saluted him. And he looked like a captain, really, as he walked by. He called them back and said, "Come with me. You have a mission to accomplish." So he went to the Rathaus, which is the city hall of Kopenick.

INT: Spell Rathaus.

MAX: (spells it) He went to the Rathaus, which is the city hall in Kopenick. He walked straight into the mayor's office and said, "Mayor, you're under arrest. Hand over all your cash receipts." That's what he said. And he took it, all the cash receipts from him and walked out the way they came from, and told the platoon to go back. Now, when Kaiser Wilhelm, who was the emperor at that time, when Kaiser Wilhelm heard the story, he laughed. He couldn't believe it. But he [Kaiser Wilhelm] was so smart. He expelled him and he went to Holland, and lived for the rest of his life. But he admired him for what he did.

INT: And you didn't like it because it was a Jewish shopkeeper.

MAX: Yes. That's what I didn't like. It offended me a little bit.

INT: Okay. You say you had mixed feelings.

MAX: Yes. I had mixed feelings. But as a whole, I said it was a good experience, but I wouldn't want to go back, I never had any desire to go back.

INT: So what was good about it?

MAX: The feeling that we had a dialogue. I felt that these people sincerely admitted openly that what was done was a tremendous injustice, a tremendous error in government. But of course they felt they didn't make this decision. In reality, we cannot hold the children responsible for their parents' deeds. So that's the only positive thing which came out of it. But they treated us royally, and we had an airplane just for us waiting all week at the airport. We came back in the same plane in which we came.

INT: How many?

MAX: There must have been about a hundred. I was the only one there who was actually a born Berliner. There were people who lived in Berlin, but they were from Poland, from Russia, from other places. I was the only one who was a born Berliner.

INT: So how did Berlin find out about you?

MAX: I heard about this, and I sent them a letter to city hall. I heard about it, but I wasn't sure I wanted to go. But sure enough they sent me a card and tickets and everything.

INT: SPOUSEWM said you should go. What role did she play?

MAX: She's a strong woman. She's a lot stronger than I am emotionally. She has a lot more backbone, I think. She has a very strong character. Sometimes it's difficult to handle that situation. Sometimes I feel intimidated. (laughs) (inaudible, laughter)

INT: But it helped you.

MAX: Yes, she helped me. She's very important in my life. With all the differences we have, and we do have a lot, the religious difference is unimportant. She comes from an entirely different background than I have.

INT: Okay, back to the story.

MEMOIRS: The decision was made to go to Romania, where both of my parents had family roots. We felt that there we would be out of Hitler's reach. It was a rainy night that we left our home and everything that had been meaningful, emotionally, physically, and material, was left behind. Each one of us carried only a small suitcase so as not to create suspicion. My father, in a very frantic move, threw the keys to our home into the nearest gutter, knowing that we would never return to our home.

INT: Why do you think he did that?

MAX: Well, he was very angry.

INT: So he did that with a lot of emotion and breaking away.

MAX: Breaking away. Something which he built all his life because he knew we would never be back there. He didn't know the Russians would come in and be living there forty or fifty years later.

INT: So you were living in the part of Berlin that became East Berlin?

MAX: No, the business was in East Berlin, but we lived in West Berlin. (inaudible)

INT: So when you went back to Berlin it was already unified?

MAX: No, the wall was still there.

INT: So you didn't get in to East Berlin?

MAX: Yes, we went to East Berlin. We went through, what do you call it, Checkpoint Charlie. We went to the cemetery there in East Berlin. It was terrible.

MEMOIRS: At this point in our lives my father, who had built a beautiful and fruitful life for all of us, lost everything, but not his hope.

INT: Tell me, would you also say that about your mother, that she didn't lose her hope?

MAX: My father was a strong person. She was leaning on him for everything. She was a very soft...

INT: You were all leaning on him, all four children.

MAX: Oh, yes. We were all leaning on him. My father was our idol.

MEMOIRS: He put his face in the future and his passionate attachment to Judaism into G-d's hands. Thus began our wandering exile, which has been our people's legacy for centuries, into an unknown future. We went to the railroad station and boarded two different trains. My father and two brothers went to Switzerland. My mother, my sister and myself went with Uncle Herman to his home in Romania.

INT: So your mother took the younger ones. Was that okay with you? Would you rather have been with your father?

MAX: Well, I didn't make that decision. What my father said made a lot of sense. Besides, we knew we would get together again. It was just temporary.

MEMOIRS: ...went with Uncle Herman to his home in Romania, with a passport Papa had obtained by bribing the Romanian Consul with a rather large sum of money. The plan was for the family to later be reunited in Romania. Mama, Inge and I had a family passport, and Uncle Herman had his own, since he was a Romanian citizen. After eighteen hours of traveling through Poland, we finally arrived completely exhausted, in Czernowitz, the capital of the Bucovina. There we boarded a local train to Radautz.

MAX: Stop there. I went back to Romania. I wanted to get the death certificates of my family. I had a friend who worked for the acting manager.

INT: Tell me what year?

MAX: 1976.

INT: You went back alone, or with SPOUSEWM?

MAX: I went back alone. I had a friend who works managing (?). He is in charge of the whole thing, a big, tall guy. He came to me one Friday and said, "Max, I'm going to Romania on Monday." Yale University had this trip, and they want me to go with them.

And I said, "I wish I could go with you," I told him, "because I speak the language and I really need to go. I corresponded five or six times with the American consul. I want to get some documents there which I need." So he said, "Do you want to come with me?" And I said, "I don't see how I could make it, but I'll let you know." This was Friday. I went to the bank, I had a passport, and he called Monday at 9:00 A.M. and said, "Tell Max the limousine is coming at 12:00." And I went.

INT: This was Monday.

MAX: Yes. It was the Romanian airline, but with an American pilot. So we went. I remember this so distinctly, because on the way back, we stopped in Amsterdam, and the Entebbe raid was that day, July 4th or 5th, because I picked up a newspaper in Amsterdam and saw what happened there.

So we went, and as we came into Bucharest we separated from the group and took a plane up north to (?) where my great-great-grandfather came from. (Inaudible)

INT: This was the Shotzer.

MAX: Yes. We flew up there and rented a car and drove up to Radautz. I wanted to see it. (inaudible) My father had opened a bank account in Czernowitz for the family, whenever they need the money, to help themselves. He left there a million leis, I don't know what that means in American money. We also had a home there.

INT: So you would visit. This was not your first time there.

MAX: No, for me was the first time there. In '76 I came to visit, but when we came as refugees it was the first time I was there.

INT: Even though you had a home there.

MAX: Yes. Mother lived there. There was a house he bought from the military. A general, that's what he was. And he was transferred, and he bought the house. It was a white house, a good house. The Avenue of the Boots. (inaudible) He sold it eventually. So when I came there, I went to a restaurant for something to eat. So they said, "There is a young American here," a Fulbright scholar he was. He lived in a hotel. I said, "What are you doing here?" He said, "I'm writing a book, and I'm getting pictures." His wife is from Ankara.

INT: Alaska. Oh, Turkey.

MAX: He went to visit his wife's family. Did they know a Marcel or Max Wagner? They remembered us. They knew us. (inaudible)

INT: So this is a Jewish man?

MAX: Who?

INT: Who did this book.

MAX: Yes.

INT: Are there pictures of your family in this book?

MAX: No.

(END TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE THREE, SIDE TWO)

INT: So these are not pictures from before the war.

MAX: No. These came from the (inaudible). A Fulbright scholarship.

INT: So there was a Jewish community lived there.

MAX: Very few. Poor. Terrible. I came there in 1976 with a group. (Inaudible)

INT: So these Jews couldn't get out.

MAX: Very few. There was only a handful, maybe twenty-five, thirty Jews. No, they couldn't get out. Those that could get out, younger people went out to Bucharest. (inaudible)

INT: So what was it like for you emotionally?

MAX: Emotionally? It was terrible. I didn't like it.

INT: Did you cry?

MAX: No, no. I just wanted to get out of that city. The only thing was I went to the city hall and looked for some documents (inaudible) and everything was signs, "Long live the Communist Party." They were suspicious of us. I told them I'm looking for special documents, and could they help me. My friend offered them some cigarettes, and all at once they became friends. (inaudible) I told him what I wanted, and he said I should write out a (?), which means request in Romanian. So I asked him for a piece of paper so I could write it. And he said, "Do you know how to write it?" And I said, "Yes, I know how to speak the language, so I can write it." Anyhow, when we left the place, they all came out, the entire city hall. (laughter) It was a spectacle. We came in, they didn't trust us. The wouldn't say "Good morning" to us. When we left, even the secretaries came out waving goodbye.

INT: Why did you want the death certificates?

MAX: I wanted to read the documents; they're my people. Then we saw my grandfather's grave, my grandmother's grave, an aunt of my father's, and it was a very interesting experience that I wanted to do.

INT: The family was very established in Romania.

MAX: Oh, yes. I don't know how many generations. Let's see, Chaim, Menashe, four generations back. 120 years back. We're talking about 1860. He went to (inaudible). He died. I knew that he was not buried there. And we had an interesting experience. When we came to Bucharest (inaudible) next to the King's palace, so we checked into a hotel. The rooms were terrible. And early in the morning I went downstairs for a cup of coffee around 7:00 A.M. and I see waiters all lined up in a coffee shop waiting for customers, and I sit there waiting for a cup of coffee. But before I got there, you walk in through the vestibule and there are big steps there, and you see everywhere people working at all these rugs all across the place. No vacuum cleaner. They're cleaning, they're scrubbing. It was unbelievable. Like slave labor, you know. And this was **the** elite hotel in Bucharest. It looked like a little palace. It's a gorgeous city. Calea Victoriei Avenue. Victory Avenue.

INT: When you went, this was 1976?

MAX: When I went back, yes.

INT: Was this the time of which you were talking about it, like you mentioned before? Remember you said you never talked about?

MAX: When I came back I started talking about it. Writing down. This was when things came back to me already. So I wanted to get an airplane ticket to go north to the Russian border when we went to Radautz. So I went in the back of the hotel, was a little store front, like with people sitting around and waiting for whatever they were waiting for. We walked in, they made room for us and we walked in and I said I'd like to fly to (inaudible). And they gave me the ticket and a slip that like qualifies you. So we make it to the airport -- what a job that was, because the driver was a Russian, and just sat there like he was listening to what we were talking about. He was very quiet. We came to the airport, got on the plane, two little propellers, and we walk up one side, and the baggage went in the other side. And he walked in, too, and I couldn't believe it. So I was sitting next to a guy (inaudible). We spoke a little in Romanian, and a little in English, and we became friendly. They didn't know what to do for us there. People were very friendly. (inaudible). Then I took him to a place called Kutna, it's an old historic town with a monastery, twelfth or thirteenth century, and I took him there. Beautiful. (inaudible) Hand-embroidered vests. I brought one back. (inaudible) Then we went to the Black Sea, to Costanza, a seaport. And then we went back.

INT: Did you get your documents?

MAX: Yes, and that was the end of it. But it was interesting, and I enjoyed it. It was very inexpensive. And on the way back we stopped in (inaudible).

INT: It sounds like this trip didn't shake you up.

MAX: No. No way. I had my roots here. (inaudible) I know where I'm coming from, and where I want to go back. I would like to go back there some day.

INT: Why did this guy with this book on Radautz, why did he care about that time?

MAX: I don't know how he wound up there. He got there before I got there.

INT: I mean, there are hundreds of towns in Europe.

MAX: I didn't tell him to go there. I didn't know him from before. I met him there. When I came there they said, "There's a guy here from America. Do you want to meet him?" I didn't know him at all. I didn't know who he was.

INT: Okay. Shall we go back?

MAX: Yes.

MEMOIRS: We boarded a local train to Radautz, about an hour's ride. My mother was still young, only 39 years old, and I'm still wondering how she so quickly adjusted to the new dramatic changes. Radautz, which was a county seat, had a rather large Jewish population. Uncle Herman had a business there, and many of Papa's family were also established there. In fact, one cousin by the name of Heller was a postmaster, and another relative owned a beer brewery. They all tried very hard to make us comfortable. Although exile was overwhelming, we tried to look into the future with positive feelings, while trying to dismiss the past.

INT: When you say "we" what do you mean?

MAX: I speak here for my family.

INT: Yes. But you take six people, they're not all the same.

MAX: No. But I can speak for them because we usually sat down and talked about it. My father had a cousin there who was also a judge. We lived, as a matter of fact, in his home for a while. Didn't I write about this here? When I was in the military service, I wrote about this. His name was...oh, Charlotte was his wife, and he was Judge...I don't know. He was a wonderful person. He did filigree work as a hobby. He had a big case, and he showed us what he did there. The gendarmerie was next door to him.

INT: That's the police.

MAX: Yes. But gendarme is like state police. City police are something else. These are a little higher level. I talk about this later.

INT: Now when you got to Romania, were they afraid of what was coming with Hitler, or did they feel relatively secure?

MAX: No, as a matter of fact. When we moved later to Czernowitz, they heard you talking German on the street in Czernowitz, you were fined. You were not supposed to speak the German language. That's how anti-German they were at that time.

INT: But the sense was that you were safe there.

MAX: I thought so, relatively safe. We thought maybe we'd have to go back some day if Hitler goes down. There were so many things happening in those years. Some people tried to assassinate him. We followed this very carefully, and maybe if something happened we'll go back.

INT: Didn't you have a sense that you would have to escape from there, too? This was only temporary?

MAX: Not at that time, no.

MEMOIRS: We tried to look into the future with positive feeling while trying to dismiss the past.

INT: Does that mean you wouldn't talk about memories of the past?

MAX: We were busy trying to make a life for ourselves, but we'd talk occasionally. We were young. We were looking forward. Like when I came here. I came here, I was relatively young. I was 33 years old. I didn't want to know what happened in the past. I didn't want to talk to anybody about it. Because it was not what I came here for. I came here to start a new life.

INT: But then the past was painful. But when you got to Romania, the past was good.

MAX: No, the past was bad.

INT: Because you had to leave it?

MAX: Because we had to leave everything behind us.

INT: You wouldn't talk about the conservatory, you wouldn't talk about your old friends.

MAX: No, no. Well, I was playing. I was at that time teaching and playing. We did a lot of work there. We were busy. We started to get busy. People needed people like us. I came -- for instance, the Romanian, their music style, practice, was to talk about the

violin. The method taught there was an old- fashioned, old German method. Where people had a difficult time. Although they had some very fine musicians, but it was not because they were taught well, but because they were really, really talented people, who had found their own way into the instrument and perfected it. But people had...I demonstrate to you like, there's a strict German method. I studied in Berlin what they call a new Russian method called the (?). He was a great professor in Petersburg. He was the one who developed a method which is the legere playing. Legere menas like loose, relax your muscles and still have fun, but follow what you are doing, and therefore you can develop the technique of both hands very carefully, and develop it without any strain on your muscles. That's what it is.

So we taught technological and we picked that up in Berlin at that time. Karl Flesch was a professor at the Music Academy in Berlin. And he wrote a book -- actually, he wrote two books. The first book deals with the technological aspects of teaching how to play the violin, which is a bible for anybody who wants to play in every language. I have it in German. I found it when I came here. And I bought it here. Just in English at that time. The second book deals with the difficulties in certain pieces. He takes excerpts from very difficult musical parts of any kind of concerto or whatever it is, and takes sections out of that and shows you how to practice in order to accomplish what you have to accomplish. By how to practice, not how to play. How to practice. Forget the playing. He showed you how to practice. A very systematic teaching method, the best. When I came to Romania, this is what I taught. As a matter of fact, when I came home, I was so hoarse I couldn't talk. They flocked to me once they know who I am.

So we were very busy. We made a good life for ourselves.

MEMOIRS: Many years before we came there my father bought a beautiful villa from a military man who was transferred to a different post. The villa was situated on a street called in English the Avenue of Fruits. We had no choice but to sell the villa in order for us to get some money on which to live. Later on, several months, we decided to move to Czernowitz, because it was a charming city with a symphony orchestra, theaters, and many cultural institutions. There was also a great Jewish intelligentsia.

INT: You moved there specifically for the culture?

MAX: Yes. In a larger city. Radautz is a little town, a nice town. You turn around in two months, you know everybody, and everybody knows you.

INT: But Uncle Herman was in Radautz.

MAX: Yes, he lived there. He had a business there.

INT: And your father was from Radautz. He grew up there.

MAX: It's a whole story. He was born in Konigsberg, but he grew up in Radautz, yes.

MEMOIRS: Papa found employment with a wholesale hardware company through the connections of Uncle Herman and his wife, Tante Sabina.

MAX: She was born Shultz.

MEMOIRS: Sabina Shultz. Her brother was a high official at the Inter-Continental Company. Papa's job was to travel to many European countries, like Italy, Belgium and France, to purchase tools in very large quantities for the company. The remarkable adaptability that Papa possessed was, that without having any great knowledge of these products, nor did he speak French nor Italian, he was able through his super-intelligence and business skills to purchase merchandise at most advantageous prices for the company. Whenever he returned from his frequent trips, he was received by the president of the company, and was generously rewarded. So started a new career for Papa, and a rather normal family life for all of us, allowing us to enjoy a few normal years. But unfortunately, not for very long.

INT: You all lived together, and you all worked.

MAX: Yes.

MEMOIRS: The following autobiographical sketches reveal some childhood aspects of our bygone family life. I cannot help but to mention here that more than anything else, the loss of my parents, my brother Jack and sister Ingeborg were the greatest tragedies of my life. The picture changes dramatically through its passage of seventy years of my life. The knowledge of this biography can represent to my children an excellent introduction into our family history, as far as I can search my memory. I find it very pleasant to think of my early childhood, traveling back about sixty years of my life is certain to produce nostalgia, which I'd like to share with you.

INT: Okay, we're picking up at the point that you're in Romania, and a section called Military.

MEMOIRS: Soon after arriving in Romania, I was called to military duty. After checking my rather delicate physique, I was assigned to an artillery division. There it is worth noticing that I was at that time neither a Romanian citizen, nor did I know the Romanian language. My fate was sealed; there was no choice. I was assigned to an artillery division which was not motorized.

INT: Here I have to ask you what you were feeling and thinking.

MAX: I was scared to death. You wouldn't believe what went through my mind.

INT: How long between getting there and being drafted?

MAX: I'm not sure.

INT: Was it just you, or your two older brothers, too?

MAX: No, only me.

INT: How come only you?

MAX: I don't know. They picked me up and I had to go.

INT: So there was no warning, the family -- I don't know if you write about this -- so the family tries to get you out, or they accepted that this was?

MAX: No. You had no choice. You had to go. But they had a way of getting an easier situation, by buying a horse for them. They needed them.

INT: So you were scared throughout the entire period.

MAX: I should have (inaudible).

INT: Were you expecting to see action?

MAX: No. I didn't know what to expect. I wanted to get out of it in the worst way. You can't buy yourself out, but you can make it easy for you by bribing some of the officers, which we didn't do.

INT: Was your mother hysterical, your father?

MAX: Well, they were certainly not happy about it. Very unhappy.

INT: How long did you end up staying in?

MAX: I think it was about two years.

INT: Two years. Okay.

MEMOIRS: I had a choice: either to donate a horse to the unit and thus serve only two years, or else the service would be three years. It would be quite an understatement if I were to tell you that my initial training period was not just difficult, it was downright dangerous. I'm sure that there was divine intervention on some occasions.

INT: By "divine intervention," do you mean that G-d said, "I've got to help Max out here"?

MAX: Absolutely. Wait till you see what happens. Did you read this before?

INT: No.

MEMOIRS: I was able to learn the language rather quickly, which was a great advantage, and at the same time pleasing my superior. The military establishment had a reputation as being very anti-Semitic, and also extremely anti-communist. Jews were generally suspected of being at the very least sympathetic to communism. I was quite fortunate that I found favor in the eyes of my commanding captain, Popescu. He had shown cruelty toward other Jewish soldiers, but ignored me, which I did not mind, because of other experiences which I will describe later. I concluded that Captain Popescu really liked me, but did not show it either to me or to anybody under his command. He was a member of the extreme right wing.

MAX: Let me spell it out for you. G-u-a-r-d-a- d-e F-i-e-r. It means the Iron Guard.

INT: What was that, a national...

MAX: It was a Nazi party, so to speak, in Romania.

INT: He was sympathetic to the Germans?

MAX: Yes. He was sympathetic to that political party that was sympathetic to Hitler, sympathetic to that party.

INT: But you said Romanians hated the Jews.

MAX: Yes, but you see, there was always an extreme party there. The extreme party at that time was not that powerful, but it wasn't powerful, it was there. He was a member of that.

INT: And they were sympathetic to the Germans.

MAX: Sure. He was a member of that party.

INT: Did you know that at the time?

MAX: No. I found all that out later.

INT: So you didn't know how much danger you were in.

MAX: No, I had no idea. Wait till you see what happens to me. Wait till you read this.

MEMOIRS: In the fall of that year, our division was called to participate in the "King's maneuver." Off we went towards an historic battlefield about 250 miles away.

MAX: I don't know if it was exactly 250 miles. Maybe it was 200 miles, or 250 kilometers. I'm not so sure. (laughs) I estimated it.

MEMOIRS: I was assigned to a battery, appransoinare, which means supply line. We traveled for many days in columns of horse-drawn carts. Just before the actual military exercise was to begin, we encountered a rainstorm of such immense proportions that the exercise was canceled. The heavy, uninterrupted cold rain made travel impossible. We were up to our knees in mud. Furthermore, horses were falling on all sides. Nothing could move any further, yet we were only a few miles away from our destination. Everyone was trying to find shelter, and so was I of course. I dragged myself for several hours until late into the night, following a light that seemed to me illuminating from a house. There were many moments when I thought I was having hallucinations. When I finally reached the house...

INT: At this point were you separated from them? Alone?

MAX: By myself. All on my own.

MEMOIRS: When I finally reached the house, it was a farmhouse, I was soaked to the skin, exhausted, shivering, cold and hungry. I knocked at the door, and only after repeated pleading and begging was I led inside. At first my appearance probably frightened the farmer. Afterwards he saw the sad condition I was in, so he tried to be a little helpful. Getting out of my hiking boots was impossible. They were up under my knees, inside filled with mud and water. The only way to take them off was by slicing the sides with a sharp knife. What a relief it was to get my soaked and aching feet out. I also removed my uniform, and was then given a dry blanket, and the farmer pointed to a wooden board that was my bed for the night. Of course, I was extremely grateful for the help I received. Completely exhausted, I fell into a deep sleep instantly. The following morning I awoke to a clear and sunny sky. It took quite some time before I realized where I was and what happened to me. After a light breakfast, I was given directions to the nearest railroad station. After boarding the train to return to the base, I kept a low profile by spending most of the time in the bathroom. My appearance was not exactly like a soldier on furlough, more like a deserter.

MAX: Did you get the picture, what happened here?

INT: Yes.

MAX: Good description?

INT: Yes. But I don't have your emotions. Were you afraid, were you confident?

MAX: (inaudible)

INT: You're saying you were frightened.

MAX: Very frightened.

INT: Frightened of what? Being picked up as a deserter?

MAX: Go ahead.

MEMOIRS: Not knowing what lay ahead at the base, nevertheless, I could not suppress my feelings of relief when entering through the gatehouse.

INT: Why didn't you just go back to your family?

MAX: I couldn't, no. With the uniform, I had to go to the military.

INT: But you could go to a store and buy other clothes.

MAX: No. With my military uniform, what are you talking about? I had to go back to my unit. Otherwise I'd be a deserter. They'd shoot me. I had to go back. Wait till you see.

MEMOIRS: To my surprise, I soon found myself in the company of many of my comrades with similar experiences. They kept returning for several more days. Word got around that a number of soldiers died of exhaustion. How fortunate I was that luck was again on my side. However, the tension rose in me, because I was certain to have to face court martial.

INT: Does court martial mean death?

MAX: Whatever. I don't know. You never know. I was separated from the unit, but so many others were, too. They couldn't kill everybody. It was a disaster. It was completely disorganized. It was so terrible. They didn't know which end was up. They had no idea what they were doing. There was nobody there to control the situation. The commander, nobody. All fled. Everybody ran away. There was nobody to direct anything, what should we do. It was unbelievable. You could not picture what happened. Wait till you see what happened. I got pneumonia. I got sick.

MEMOIRS: Finally the moment came when the entire battery was called to assembly. Captain Popescu came out for inspection, and after mustering us, he announced a complete amnesty, realizing the seriousness of the situation of everyone involved. Needless to say, but I really did not expect such unusual fairness in judgment.

The following day I awoke with a high fever. After checking into the infirmary, I was transferred to a military hospital. The diagnosis was pneumonia. The treatment was so bad, that my condition worsened to the point that I started to cough blood. My father was called. When he saw me, he was so alarmed about my condition that he immediately sought outside help. He went to the best doctor he could find, and after explaining to him my condition, he prescribed other medication than that which the hospital had ordered. He returned very quickly, and after taking a few doses of the new medication, my fever started to subside. Of course the hospital doctor was sure his treatment finally cured me.

I remember my father coming to see me late at night bringing me cold milk. Later, when I asked him how he managed to get into the hospital at night, he told me he jumped over the fence in the back of the hospital to elude the guards. What a father I had. I shall miss him every moment for as long as I live. (cries)

INT: What are you feeling? (pause) Was this risking his life, to jump over the fence?

MAX: Yes. It was a military hospital. (pause) I tell you, I'd do the same for my kids.

(END TAPE THREE, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE FOUR, SIDE ONE)

(Inaudible first minute)

INT: Okay. So as I'm reading this, you're seeing this, right?

MAX: Yeah.

MEMOIRS: When I finally recovered and returned to my unit, I was ordered to see the captain. It was with great apprehension that I entered his office. After presenting myself, he told me to be at ease. He mentioned his satisfaction about my ability to adjust myself to the military situation, in particular learning the language. Then came the big surprise: I was being transferred to a unit in the Carpathian Mountains. There I was in charge of providing and sending hay to the division headquarters. My job and responsibility was to supervise the total operation. My commanding officer, a captain in reserve, who in civilian life was a school teacher, treated me as an equal. He gave me full proxy to sign and deliver periodic reports through the division, while he was pursuing his teaching job, which was most of the time. For doing my job well, I was promoted to secretary, which entitled me to one silver stripe to be put on the epaulets. The soldiers were under the impression that I was promoted to the rank of lieutenant, because the stripe I received was similar, except its design was in a light zig-zag.

INT: So when you were promoted to this, you were surprised?

MAX: (laughs) Yes, I couldn't believe it.

INT: So this was like the good life?

MAX: Yeah. Well, it was good for a while.

MEMOIRS: I forgot to mention earlier that this village location was an insignificant little mountain village with a spectacular view all around. I lived in the mayor's home, which was comfortable and pleasant. They were very hospitable. I even found time to play my violin occasionally, to the delight of my host, whose unsophisticated taste for

classical music I did not exactly consider a compliment. To my performance, however, I relished his enjoyment. I spent the weekends usually with my family in Czernowitz.

INT: That was the first time you could leave and go home with this particular situation?

MAX: Yes. That situation I went home every weekend. I had passes to go home for the weekends. I had these. I could sign it and then I would give each one to go home for the weekend.

INT: You made sure you had more.

MAX: I had when I needed one. I could move around anywhere. I was free. I really had...for that time as I was in that situation. It was wonderful. It was relatively safe. I felt good, you know. The first training period was unbelievably terrible, but the rest...

INT: Were you ever frightened of the other soldiers about being...you said you had sort of a slight physique, that they would abuse you.

MAX: No, no. I had a lot of protectors there. One guy, by the name of Greenberg. He was terribly persecuted by the captain. He was a Romanian from Roma. (inaudible)

INT: So people knew not to start with you because you had these protectors.

MAX: Yeah. I was their boss at that point. But I treated everyone nice and courteous. I never pushed anyone.

INT: I spent the weekend usually with my family in Czernowitz. The routine was pretty much the same week after week, except on Friday afternoon on my way home, I encountered quite an experience. The political situation was very tense. The Russians demanded from the Romanians to return the provinces of Bessarabia and northern Bucovina, which according to the Treaty of Versailles, were ceded to Romania at the conclusion of the First World War. Romania, which was a rather insignificant military power, flexed her muscle by moving military equipment toward the border.

As I mentioned, I was traveling home by train, having a window seat. I made notation in my notebook pertaining to the schedules for the following week. Looking occasionally out the window, I observed freight trains boarded with military equipment moving in the opposite direction. As we approached the next stop, two soldiers attached to the military police approached me, and I was asked to follow them. At the next stop I was taken off the train to a military command post, completely unaware of the reason, but terribly frightened. After waiting under guard for approximately one hour, an officer appeared and looked at me with great suspicion. The first few questions were about my identity: where I was traveling to, documents, etc. And then came a question which brought to light the reason for my detention. Question: Did you notice the transport of military equipment?

Answer: Yes. Reply: Show me the information you wrote in your notebook. He was quite sure that I was a spy until he read my notes. It will not be difficult to imagine the relief I found to get out of the situation. By the way, one should know that this incident could have turned out entirely differently. It would have been easy under the heightened political tension at the time, and the prevailing anti-Jewish sentiment.

INT: They would have killed you?

MAX: Sure, as a spy, sure.

INT: Again, without a trial? Without proof? Just suspicion?

MAX: If I had something written down about military, then and there. It was just my schedule, what I wanted to make. I had no idea what's going on there. I can't even express in words what went through me as I sat there waiting for the officer to come.

INT: Try.

MAX: I was absolutely frightened, terribly frightened. An unbelievable experience. Here I am in the military, away from home. I didn't know where, what, in the middle of nowhere.

INT: So you realized it could have led to your death.

MAX: Oh, yes.

INT: Did you feel afraid of death?

MAX: Well, at that time, yes. I was young. (inaudible)

MEMOIRS: Again, good luck was with me. Thank you, G-d.

INT: Do you mean that?

MAX: Oh, yes. Absolutely.

MEMOIRS: Soon after, another situation developed which put an end to my military career. It was June, 1940. Political tension was high, and rumors that the Russians were coming were spreading like fire. I was on my way home, wearing my uniform and having with me a briefcase with documents, and reports of weekly summaries. My parents were especially happy that we were together that particular Shabbat.

During the night, the Russian Army marched into Bessarabia and northern Bucovina. The next morning we were living under Russian occupation. At that time I had no choice but to discharge myself from the Romanian army, and so ended my military career.

INT: You don't mean a formal discharge. You just never went back.

MAX: (laughs) No, I couldn't go back. I became a Russian citizen.

MEMOIRS: Incidentally, I destroyed all the documents on the following Sunday. (Inaudible, long pause)

INT: How about the time when you weren't telling your children, and you said to yourself, "I'm going to put it behind me"?

MAX: That was a peaceful time.

INT: You slept well. No stomach cramps.

MAX: No, no. I didn't think about the past. I had no problems. No, no, I readjusted in Romania at that time. Once I came to this country, I, it's like you shed something away, it's off you, it's off your back. Like the whole legacy is gone. I was reborn here. I hate to use that name because the Gentiles use it, "reborn," but I was a reborn person, practically. I came here, I was free. I was just full of joy and happiness, I had really, as far as my own personal life goes, I was the happiest guy. I couldn't believe it. I enjoyed life.

Then when the sounds of the Holocaust came back into prominence, so much was being written, talked about and movies, and everything like that. It reactivated my thinking again, my feelings and everything is being reactivated. I'm going through like the same tension and experiences as before. Not when I'm awake, but when I'm asleep. I can feel it.

INT: This is the last ten years since you started to write about it?

MAX: Yeah, ten, twelve, thirteen years, whenever it started. (Inaudible) became so much a part.

INT: Do you wish for the time when you didn't think about it, didn't feel a thing, you could sleep?

MAX: Yes. Then I was at peace. (inaudible)

INT: So in the fifty years since the end of the war, you've only been dealing with it actively for fifteen years. For thirty-five years it was quiet.

MAX: More or less, except when my parents passed away, and my sister. There were a lot of tragedies in the family. But as far as this period or episode in my life, I really didn't think about it that much. (Inaudible) But you'll read how I (?) myself. (inaudible) I think that's the penalty I pay for being, for surviving and having these events. (inaudible)

INT: So you talk of this, it's like a penance, it's a personal conflict.

MAX: Like a yoke I'm carrying. It's a legacy I carry. (Inaudible)

INT: Do you think you'll have more peace once the story's told?

MAX: I don't know. I've told it. I read it. My children know. But once it's out, maybe then I'll find peace. But peace will come to me some day, whenever G-d wants. (laughs)

INT: I understand your saying that, but I don't like it. My mother does the same thing. It's a part of life, I know.

MAX: Well, as you get older, the older you get you have to accept the fact that you're getting there some day. We all have to. It's a law of nature. We have to face it. You're born, and then it's time to die. That's the way it is. (inaudible)

INT: But they see this in you, they see in you the passion to...

MAX: Yes. COSRJ invited me (inaudible). They have a beautiful big home. There were 35 people there. (inaudible) A man came up to me...(Inaudible) He and his wife are customers. They're friends. She has a book I gave her that's similar to mine. I wanted her to read what happened. He's very interested, too. To put this down for posterity, for anyone who wants to read it.

INT: We'll have to meet him.

MAX: I'm trying to relay in words what I went through. It's not easy for me, but my English is fairly good. I had it early in high school. And I try to improve my knowledge of it.

INT: Okay, so let's get back. I will begin reading again. We're picking up at the point where the Russian Army is coming in.

MEMOIRS: Overnight we became Russian subjects. Identity cards were issued for all citizens in the Russian and Romanian languages. Jews were singled out and marked "Jew" on their identity card. The transfer period was better than expected. However I.P.A. humorists...

INT: What is I.P.A.?

MAX: We gave it the name. Jewish Platka Agency. You know what platka means. That's Yiddish for rumor. The Jewish telegraph agency.

MEMOIRS: The Jewish Platka Agency, otherwise the Jewish rumor mill. Rumors were spreading of Russian infiltration, so-called "voluntary population exchange." Jewish

Platka Agency was a work by our news agency, which spread rumors -- mostly correct information -- through the Jewish community.

INT: So a lot of the information was correct. Some of it wasn't.

MAX: Like the underground, yeah. Usually we had some information somehow that was picked up for us, and mostly it was true.

INT: So it's not really rumors. It's information that spreads by word of mouth.

MEMOIRS: In retrospect I am firmly convinced that if the war between Germany and Russia did not break out in 1941, but one or two years later, the Russians would have been able to complete this hideous plan. They've proven this at the conclusion of the Second World War by the expulsion of millions of Germans from East Prussia, and by settling Poles in their places. I assure you that I have not shed a single tear over these actions. I was teaching and also playing in the Railroad Symphony Orchestra trying to get back to my profession.

Slowly, life was changing. Merchants as well as the population at large were hording all kinds of goods, including food. And after some time, it was quite difficult to find even the daily necessities. One had to look to the black market and be prepared to pay high prices. The Russians bought everything in sight. Clothing, shoes, wristwatches, cameras and the like were in great demand. One could observe Russian women wearing hand-embroidered nightgowns as street dresses. When the situation became real bad, there was very little of interest to find in the shops. Groups of Russian soldiers would demand entrance into your home or apartment under the pretext of looking for a suspect. After leaving, one would find many valuables missing. The population was helplessly victimized by a conqueror, and our family along with it. Here I would also like to point to the attitude and duplicity the Russians extended to their comrades outside the Soviet Union, who suffered persecutions under the Romanians for clandestine activities on behalf of Communist ideology. They crossed over the border into the newly occupied territory, hoping to be received as heroes in the Communist world. To their horror, they were not wanted. The reason: they were not needed in Russia. So the government promptly deported them to Siberia.

MAX: I knew some people who were sent.

MEMOIRS: Life became increasingly difficult. We are now in the year of 1941. War rumors were spreading. Everyone was reading and discussing the news, interpreting not only the surface news, but also what could possibly be hidden under the surface. The question of the day was what to do if the Russians decide to withdraw. There were only two choices: To remain and wait for the Germans, or to go east with the Russians.

We lived in a rented villa at the periphery of the city, and shared this house with another family. Dr. Kalisher, his wife, a son and a younger daughter. The Kalishers and their daughter lived on the main floor. We lived on the upper floor. The son lived in a

Mansard room (right under the roof). The area was suburban-like, with many vacant lands. The owner of the home directly across the street from us fled into Romania, anticipating trouble from the Russians. Caretakers were left in charge to look after the property. They were mostly Ukrainians and unfortunately for us Jews, were anti-Semitic with natural built-in vengeance. They proved to be the most reliable and voluntary allies the Russians as well as the Germans could find. This was an indisputable fact.

In the following sentences, I will try to describe a situation which would have put an end to the lives of all of us. The German armies marched through the Balkan States on their advance into Russia. Romania at that time sided with Germany. Therefore there was no resistance until they reached the Russian border. The fighting started at a river called the Seret, not far from our city. When the Germans reached the outskirts of Czernowitz, the Russian army set fire to all vital installations and challenged the population to go out and plunder the shops. Nothing of use should be left for the approaching German army.

I remember vividly, now 42 years later, which is really now 54 years later, the frightening and spectacular sight of watching people running through the streets, lugging everything they could manage to carry, from food to furniture, while the city was ablaze. I who am writing and trying to describe what is imprinted in my very own mind and soul, and you who are reading these lines, are now part of an overwhelming dramatic scene.

In the midst of all this tragedy, the exodus of the Jewish population started. It is impossible to describe the impact it had on me to see thousands of Jews, old, young, babies, men, women, children, cripples, with bundles, some so large that one saw only legs carrying the huge burdens. It was an exodus to the east to escape the Germans. There was absolutely no help from the retreating Russian army. While this unforgettable living picture of tragedy was continuing for several days and nights, a shot was fired into the home situated across the street from us. This incident, under the present situation, would most likely have gone unnoticed. However, the caretaker, who was Ukrainian and knew that we were Jewish, he did not waste any time to call in the Russian military police. He told them that the shots came from our house, and therefore he concluded that those Jews must have guns. That was enough for the Russians to turn to us with machine guns and line us up against the wall in our garden. After they checked our documents which indicated Birthplace: Berlin, and that we were Jewish, that was enough for us to realize that our fate was sealed.

The soldier who was guarding us, a wild-looking Asian of short stature, was walking up and down like a wild animal, while pointing his machine gun at us waiting for orders from his commander, who, with a number of other soldiers, was tearing the house apart looking for guns.

(END TAPE FOUR, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE FOUR, SIDE TWO)

MEMOIRS: As the search was going on inside, we stood against the wall, petrified and praying for a miracle to happen. A terrifying thought entered my mind: I knew that we had no guns, and I also was quite sure that the Kalishers had none, but what about his son? He was an introvert, never engaged in any conversation, so no one ever knew what was on his mind. It is impossible to describe the feelings and thoughts which changed from physical and mental numbness into tremendous tensions.

Finally we reached the climactic moment, when after about thirty minutes, which seemed more like hours, the leader appeared, signaled our guard, and they all departed. Unbelievable? Yes, but true. We all raised our heads toward heaven and said, "Thank you, G-d."

INT: Were you crying?

MAX: No. I was petrified.

INT: When the Russians left, did everyone start to cry?

MAX: We were emotionally drained. I don't remember ever seeing my father cry, but at that point when they left, it's like a...

INT: Release of the tension.

MAX: I feel it now. I feel it now.

INT: What do you feel now?

MAX: The same way. I'm re-living it. See, I'm a terribly sensitive person. I cry constantly, I can't help it.

INT: This is always you or only the last ten years?

MAX: (inaudible, crying)

INT: But you don't find yourself frightened, do you?

MAX: Today?

INT: In general, do you find yourself frightened and nervous?

MAX: I'm considered to be a nervous person, that I'm considered by others. I probably am. But crying, yes. As you get older, fear of losing your life isn't any more so much on my mind as when I was younger. But today I was always very emotional. Always was.

INT: You always were like that.

MAX: Yes, very emotional. Music makes me -- I'll give you an example. When I read the story in the Torah about Joseph, I always cry, even today. When the story comes up I always cry.

INT: Which part makes you cry?

MAX: When he was thrown into the pit, when he was in jail. Somehow I always had that feeling about him. Joseph, and Jacob, too. Certain things which are written so beautiful in the Torah that they make me feel like I'm there. I feel for them, compassion.

INT: And this was before the war, when you first read the story of Joseph it was before the war?

MAX: No, I wasn't like this.

INT: But after the war?

MAX: Yes.

INT: So his trials and tribulations, his tsuris...

MAX: Mitgefuhl, as we say in German. It means compassion.

INT: Empathy.

MAX: Empathy. That's the word.

INT: Now, when Joseph became second to the Pharaoh, you feel happy for him?

MAX: Yes, it's a good feeling, sure.

INT: You feel that, too, not just sorrow.

MAX: It's a good feeling. When I really cry is when his brothers gave him up. That was really emotional even now when I think about it, because I can just feel all the emotions when they gave each other up. Even today, tremendous.

INT: This is a wonderful part of you that feels so strongly. (Pause) You're not so comfortable with it.

MAX: I feel embarrassed by it, even now.

INT: With me?

MAX: Yeah. I should be perhaps stronger, I think.

INT: Maybe you can come to the point where you do accept this, that this is the way you are, and certainly you have reason.

MAX: When I'm by myself it doesn't bother me. When I'm with other people, I get embarrassed a little bit.

INT: I don't agree with you. I don't think there's any shame. I think that's the most beautiful way to express it.

MAX: Like a sympathetic chord.

INT: When you say this to me, it says that not only are you sympathetic, empathetic, because of what you went through, but that you were born with a sensitive nature.

MAX: I think so.

INT: I think musicians are.

MAX: Most people are. Well, I know musicians here in the orchestra are very close friends. They're interested for the money, if they can bargain, if they can get a good price, they stay. They're businessmen. I don't go for this.

INT: That's different than a musician.

MAX: When it comes to music, I think I am the ideal musician, idealistic. I don't care about money. If I could perform today without money. I used to teach it when I came here. I didn't ask for money. (inaudible) I donated the money. I could have used it, but I didn't want to. If I impart something to someone else it gives me the pleasure to do it.

INT: So you agree with me that you were a sensitive person in your youth.

MAX: Oh, yes.

INT: Before the war.

MAX: Did I show you a picture of me when I was a youngster? You can see from the picture, a youngster. I look at them myself today and I think: was that really me? I don't remember that. This was my life. It was I who went through all this. I had to go through all this and I'm still here now and I have a long life behind me. And then I look at this, you know, what if I would know who he is if someone would show me a picture.

INT: So that tells me that what you went through, I guess I have to caption that, that you must have felt what you went through even ten times stronger than most people, because you started out sensitive and aware.

MAX: Oh, yes. There was a tremendous impact on me. (inaudible) That's why I have these tensions.

INT: And yet you describe it in your personal profile, which I'll read later, the ability to cope by seeing the pictures in your mind and taking yourself away from the pain of the moment to another time.

MAX: When I go to work, I have a good time there. When I come home, I collapse. (laughs) I have a wonderful relationship with my customers. And I told you before, I felt like I must relate them about, I want everybody to know what I went through, how it affected me, and how they were completely unaware of what happened in the world before their lives, before they were born, or some others who were born already. And they haven't the faintest idea. From one single individual. You can't talk about six million. You can't talk about so many millions of people that you read in the paper, it has very little effect on you. You get the knowledge, you learn something, but it doesn't affect you emotionally in any way. But when you meet someone, an individual who can relate to you, that I feel is important. That's why when I go out there, I feel in a way good. (break)

MEMOIRS: Now came the time to make the decision whether to leave our home and go east, or stay. Discussing the pros and cons amongst ourselves and with the Kalishers and the Faliks, and Kleins, of whom I will speak later, we decided to stay. The reasons for our decision to stay were, we had no transportation except walking, and the Germans had the city encircled already, so how far could we get before falling into their hands? There was no chance to escape. In retrospect, it was the right decision at that time. But also, it could have been the wrong one. Later on, after the end of the war, we learned from eyewitness survivors that the German air force was following this exodus, which grew in great numbers as it passed through villages and towns into Bessarabia, and finally assembled in a forest near the city of Chotin. At that time, the German air force went into action, and bombed the entire area with incendiary bombs. Needless to say, what followed was a holocaust of indescribable, tragic proportions. If I were to use only superlatives to describe our mood and those of our brethren during the transition from the Russian withdrawal to the German army's entrance into our city, I would still not be able to describe fully our tensions, anxiety, and at times apathy.

INT: What do you mean by apathy?

MAX: Later you find out what apathy means at another point there. Apathy is where really you don't care anymore, you felt whatever will happen will happen.

INT: What brings you to a point where you don't care anymore?

MAX: Well, because you see no way out. There was no way out. The labor camp was the same thing. You just fell into the...you walk into a line and then what do you do?

INT: You just sort of accept it.

MAX: You have to accept it, like faith. Whatever will be, will be. You know what apathy is.

INT: Yes.

MAX: There's no escape. You become petrified. There's no solution, there's no solution to the problem. No escape. No escape.

INT: Like paralyzed.

MAX: Paralyzed. Mentally paralyzed. You give up.

MEMOIRS: The Russian withdrawal continued at a fast pace. The shelling and the fire slowly subsided, and so we waited, locked into our homes, listening to radio day and night, hoping for a miracle to happen.

INT: So you literally stayed home the whole time? You didn't go out of the house?

MAX: Oh, no.

INT: Did you stay in an area that you thought would be safe from bombs, like in the basement?

MAX: You read on.

MEMOIRS: The German army's arrival was imminent. Earlier I mentioned that when we left Berlin, that my father took with him the brass door sign off our front door. Since our name was a German name which didn't sound Jewish, he thought it advisable to put the sign then on our front door. The consequence of this seemingly unimportant decision was, as it will appear later, an intervention from the Almighty.

INT: Do you believe that, Max, that G-d guided that decision?

MAX: Oh, yes. I'm convinced now that it was a predestined fact that Papa took that nameplate along on our long journey.

MEMOIRS: The moment we heard over the radio that the Germans had taken our city, an indescribable heaviness and shuddering engulfed us. We felt danger all around and within us. We were scared to death, trapped in an inescapable situation. Peeking out from behind the curtains, we saw a German Panzer rolling through our street. We did not dare to leave our house. After a few days, the first Einsatzgruppen, a branch of SS, went into action going from house to house looking for Jews. As they came into our street, we were hiding in the basement looking at each other like for the last time, holding hands in complete silence, teeth uncontrollably chattering. We saw from under a little basement window the boots of the German soldiers approaching our house. Our hearts were beating faster and faster. They stood in front of our door for one minute, possibly looked

at the name on our door, and promptly left. At that moment I could only think of the Angel of Death passing over our house. Dear G-d, how glad we were that my father thought of taking that name sign with us from Berlin. Whether it was foresight or premonition, it certainly was an act of fate, one I can never forget. We were also fully aware of the fact that the Germans had just started to approach us, and their merciless grip would not lessen, but rather tighten. There certainly was only relief, only for the moment.

INT: So, when you believed that G-d guided your father's hand to take the nameplate that spared you for the moment. You certainly didn't count on G-d's protecting you in the next one.

MAX: Oh, yes we did. We hoped so. I think everything was because of my father. I really believe that.

INT: Because of merit.

MAX: Because of merit. He was absolutely, I think, a good person. He was a charitable person. (Inaudible)

INT: You don't think that G-d was saving you because you were a young man, and saving your sister because she was a child? Saving your mother? It was saving the family because of your father.

MAX: He was our Appellant, (inaudible) because of his deeds, because of what he did in his life. We were rewarded for that at that moment to live.

INT: And then as a young man you thought, "It is because of my father that we are saved"? It's very powerful.

MAX: Maybe his great-grandfather had something to do with this. I don't know. The Shotzer Rav.

INT: What do you mean? What did the Shotzer Rav have to do with it?

MAX: Well, my father tells me that when he was a little boy his father took him to the Shotzer Rav. (Inaudible) These were words my father said.

INT: And in what way did he teach them to you? What was his message to you, what was he trying to tell you?

MAX: I don't know. I just say that maybe because of all this connection with the Shotzer Rav and his blessings to my father that everything had to do with it.

INT: That the Shotzer Rav, through his merit, added...

MAX: Maybe through his merit he gave some intervention from my father from the other world. Who knows? I don't know. There are supernatural things we cannot do. We can only assume. Maybe it was, maybe it wasn't. Maybe it was just pure luck. You could say pure luck.

INT: But this is not you as an older man looking back on that life. That is you as the 21-year-old thinking.

MAX: No, at that time, I didn't think that way. I'm thinking now as an older man. I'm thinking about this now.

INT: Okay, but you did think that you were spared because of your father.

MAX: That my father's merit...yes. As far as a young man, I didn't know. Later on (inaudible).

INT: After surviving the war, did your father ever tell you that he thought the survival of the family was because of the Shotzer Rav's blessing?

MAX: No.

INT: He never talked about it.

MAX: No. He never talked about it. He never talked about it. I know my father's past and what he did. I put this together. If there was any supernatural or G-d's intervention in this, I would give credit to my father. Why would I be singled out to go through all this and then survive when so many other people I knew perished? Maybe there was an intervention. I don't know.

INT: So your father has been a role model for you your whole life?

MAX: I guess.

INT: Would he be proud of you now?

MAX: I think so.

INT: And your children?

MAX: He knew my children. (inaudible)

INT: (inaudible)

MAX: (inaudible)

INT: He has books on it. He has books that show dynasties of the rabbinic families.

MAX: (inaudible)

INT: He has books. You can just come over to the house.

MEMOIRS: Our ears were constantly tuned into our only radio. On one broadcast from the Soviet Union, it was announced the German military commander of Czernowitz gave permission to special SS groups to take care of the "Jewish problem." In three days they executed 3,000 Jews, men, women and children. How dreadful. From other local broadcasts, we learned that everything in our city was getting back to "normal." Occasionally we saw some people walking in the street. Finally we saw a neighbor, a non-Jew, who was coming toward our house. We asked him inside. He was happy to see us, and we likewise were overjoyed to see him. We learned from him that the caretaker from across the street fled with the Russians, which was welcome news.

INT: So were you afraid at this time of being turned in? People knew you were Jewish, and they would turn you in?

MAX: Oh, sure. Absolutely.

MEMOIRS: He was planning to go into town, and on his return would stop in again to let us know what was going on. We thought it a very kind gesture on his part. When he returned, he brought the news that indeed many Jews had been taken away by the Germans and probably killed. It seemed to him that he saw some people in the street who seemed to be Jewish, and many stores were open for business. One week had gone past since the German entry into our city. We received daily information that the number of people coming out of their homes had been steadily increasing. I mentioned earlier the names of Faliks and Kleins. They lived in a little home in the downtown area. The street was called Nikolausgasse. We were in telephone contact with them all through that period.

Let me tell you about the Kleins. Emil Klein was a concert violinist. He studied in Prague under Professor Kotzean. Manya, his wife, taught Latin and Greek at the high school. She lost both her parents as a child, and was raised by the Faliks, who were related to her. They came originally from Odessa. Emil and I had a very close relationship, both professionally and personally. This relationship extended to our families.

One morning I decided to go into town, persuading my parents that everything would be all right and not to worry. The closer I neared the city, the faster my heart was beating, for when I left Germany I hoped never to see a German soldier again. But unfortunately, that was not meant to be. The street was full of German military. I finally made my way to Nikolausgasse.

MAX: A gasse is a little street.

MEMOIRS: It was an emotional reunion with Emil and his family. They begged me to come with the family and share their home. We discussed the sad situation we were in, and left. But there was really no way to escape, unless the Allied Forces would come to our rescue. It seemed hopeless for the moment. I left very depressed, with a heavy heart, like carrying with me a huge burden. I walked up Nikolausgasse, turned into the next street, and encountered a group of soldiers escorting a number of civilians. I said to myself, "This is it." I was politely invited to join the others. Nobody talked. Everybody seemed petrified. We did not know where we were taken. We walked for about a half hour, when we finally arrived at a huge lumberyard. There we were grouped into two each and asked to move a huge pile of telephone poles from one area to another. Two soldiers, one on each side, picked up one of those poles to show us how to do it. That job did not seem to be too difficult for those two hulks. However, it was a different task for us, since much work had to be done, and they, the soldiers, certainly wouldn't do it. They permitted two of us, one on each side, to do the job.

MAX: These were soldiers. These weren't SS. They were regular military soldiers. They didn't have the job to kill us.

MEMOIRS: It was late in the afternoon when we were getting tired, hungry and thirsty, while watching the soldiers sit on logs, slicing salamis and drinking beer, and occasionally throwing bits and pieces to feed some of their sleeping dogs.
Those soldiers were not part of the Einsatzkommandos. On one transfer of a pole, as my partner and I were trying to lower our end and line it up on top of the other poles, his hand slipped. I was unable to hold the pole on my side, and my left hand got caught under the edge of the pole. When I finally freed my hand, it had immediately swelled and caused excruciating pain. Again, luck was on my side. I was released from my job.

INT: When you say "luck," do you mean luck, or do you mean G-d?

MAX: I don't know. Who knows?

MEMOIRS: Instead of going home, I went straight to the Jewish hospital. Aside from the terrible pain, my hand looked very blue. The diagnosis was a broken metacarpus. The entire arm was put into an exaggerated, huge bandage, to dare anyone to pick me up for slave work. A certificate was given to me, that I was unable to work for at least six weeks. Needless to describe my parents' reaction when they saw me walking into the house. From that moment, I became the only link to the outside world. I was able to get out, but not completely without risk, to bring daily necessities into the house.

INT: What did you feel about being the one to come and go?

MAX: I felt good, very good.

INT: You felt good that you could help.

MAX: Sure.

MEMOIRS: One day I met a good friend of mine by the name of Kahn, a band leader who had connections with some Romanian officers. Let me point out here that although the German army was a military control, the Romanians were given administrative power. Kahn's connections were very valuable, because there was an absolute shortage of all necessities. The Faliks and the Kleins had a friend who lived across the street, a medical doctor, who had an enterprising mind. He started to manufacture soap bars in his basement. We met, and I took over his distribution. My contact with Kahn became invaluable. Let me give you an example of how we set a price structure.

MAX: (crying) To survive.

MEMOIRS: Even though all of us, the Troika, the doctor, myself and Kahn, kept our part a secret. I doubled the price to Kahn, and he in turn doubled his price. Gradually I added other items to my profitable business. A method had to be derived to conceal the great number of items I carried with me.

(END TAPE FOUR, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE FIVE, SIDE ONE)

INT: This is a continuation of the interview with Max Wagner. The date is May 31st, 1995. I am continuing the story of the experience in Romania under German occupation.

MEMOIRS: Gradually I added other items to my profitable business. A method had to be derived to conceal the great number of items I carried with me. On some occasions I used my upper torso to wrap dress or suit material around me. It was a rather risky enterprise, but necessary for our survival. Walking through the streets, my left hand high up, suspended, flagging my black market activity. People stepped aside to make room for me to pass. I must have been a rather grotesque sight.

INT: What do you mean, "my left hand..."?

MAX: My left hand was like this.

INT: Because of the bandage.

MAX: It was in a cast.

INT: So when you say flagging, you mean camouflaging.

MAX: Camouflaging. Yes. That's what I meant.

INT: Camouflaging a black market activity.

MAX: No, no. Not flagging. Right.

INT: Because flagging means calling attention to it.

MAX: No, camouflaging.

MEMOIRS: As the summer weeks went by, ominous rumors were spreading within the Jewish community. The Germans were planning deportations to the East. In spite of the fact that the rumors were so terribly serious, when asked where this news originated, the answer was, "the Jewish Platka Agency." (This, again, means the Jewish rumor mill.) But the fact was that in spite of not receiving authentic information from outside the German sphere of occupation, our "Platka Agency" was rather a reliable source of information.

On a Friday morning in the middle of July in 1941 -- it was a real hot summer day -- a proclamation was issued that all Jews had to wear on their left side of their outer garments a six-pointed yellow star, six centimeters in width.

MAX: I don't know if it was six or three anymore, so I put down six. I don't remember. I have it here. We can measure it. I have one here. I have one survived. I'll show you later.

MEMOIRS: Furthermore, the following Saturday at 12:00 noon, all Jews had to be in a designated area of the city, the old Jewish section. Anyone found outside the designated area would be shot on sight.

I don't expect the reader could possibly share the feeling of panic which penetrated every Jewish heart. It was a time of utter desperation with no way out. Against all odds of survival we were hoping for a miracle.

Amy Klein and Manya, who lived in the designated area, asked us to come and join them. We packed some necessary personal belongings and went there. As we entered the area we saw German soldiers stationed at the barricaded entrance, watching the arrival. We shuddered at the sight of the murderers, and felt like we were walking into a lion's den to be sacrificed. Overcome by panic, anger, apathy and frustration...

INT: Isn't it amazing to have all those feelings together?

MAX: Yeah. It is.

MEMOIRS: ...we fell into each other's arms with the Kleins and Faliks, to find some strength from being so close together. It was a very small house with a few rooms we shared with Amy and Manya and some other friends -- about thirty persons altogether. It was extremely uncomfortable.

Nighttime was chaotic. I remember sleeping on a table. Four or five people slept on the sofa with their feet on chairs. From the time we fled Berlin, and now leaving our home in

Czernowitz, through those periods of great tension, I particularly suffered stomach cramps, but never told my parents.

INT: Why not?

MAX: I didn't want to bother them.

MEMOIRS: I never thought after leaving Berlin, we would have to face the Germans again. Everyone had their own burdens of strains and tensions. Yet we shared the same uncertain and frightened future.

One morning a proclamation was issued that heads of households were required to register all members of their family at one of the offices. If anyone failed, the penalty of death would be imposed. Notice, for any infraction, no matter how insignificant, the death penalty was standard punishment. Now the Germans possessed a complete list of the entire Jewish population of Czernowitz.

A committee of some elder Jews was nominated as liaisons. Several times during the week the Germans would issue a list of names to the committee. The committee would assemble all heads of families in the Piazza, and would read out the list of names of those who would have to be in the early morning of the following day, assembled in the Piazza for the next transport of unknown destination. Those with professions, like medical doctors, pharmacists, were temporarily exempt.

My brother Marcel had a friend named David Jurgrau. One particular day when my father happened to not be at the gathering, our name came up. For some reason the reader called, "Dr. Wagner?" (instead of Mister) to be excused for the next morning's transport. We were already packed with whatever little belongings we had, when Marcel came running to us with the message that we were excused from the next transport. David answered the call, when no one came forward to claim to be Dr. Wagner. After the end of the war we learned that there were no survivors from that particular transport. I was then, and I am now convinced that all the good deeds my father had done had somehow helped us see another miracle.

MAX: Maybe stop here a little bit. It's easy to read, you know, you read a few minutes, read those lines. It's very difficult. I hope my children don't have to go through that, or my grandchildren. I'm very upset about the whole darn situation.

INT: When you were called for a transport, did people know what was going to happen?

MAX: They knew nothing good was going to come out of it.

INT: So you knew it was bad, but you didn't know what it was.

MAX: Where, we didn't know where we were going.

INT: You didn't know about the concentration camps, the death camps?

MAX: No.

INT: No rumors had come?

MAX: No. No. These things, we knew bad things are happening.

INT: Did they create a story that the transport was going to be relocated to work camps? Or they just said, "Report"?

MAX: Report, they said. In some places, they said, "You're going to a work camp." They didn't say anything here. Not that I know of. I don't remember anything came through. People were trying. Some people had gold pieces, rings, anything to give away, you know, just to get out of there. There were people, Jewish people, who tried to make money out of this whole thing. One says, "I have a connection, I can do this."

INT: Nothing.

MAX: Nothing.

INT: Was your father asked to be on the Jewish committee?

MAX: No. He kept a low profile.

INT: Why did he keep a low profile? Did he understand?

MAX: I don't know. He didn't want to, he didn't want to (sighs) I don't know. There comes a responsibility with all that, and sometimes you have to point a finger at someone, I guess, and he didn't want to. He never was involved with politics or anything like this.

INT: What was your sense of him at this time? Did you see him as frightened, as sad, as quiet, as reclusive? How did you see him, and how did you see your mother?

MAX: My mother was terribly sick most of the time. She had migraine headaches. She suffered from migraine headaches.

INT: They began in the war?

MAX: No, she had it from earlier. But during that period became, later on we found out she had gall bladder problems. She had all kinds. When she came here, she had to be operated on, gall bladder. My mother was very delicate, very sensitive person.

INT: And what did you see on your father's face? Could you read anything on his face, or it was...

MAX: Yeah, in him, I saw...I saw hope. He always walked around with the feeling that something good might come out of it yet for us. But I had...I saw something more than just the person who is under pressure giving up. He always had hope. He was strong.

INT: Did he try and instill that into the children, or he didn't speak?

MAX: Yeah, we were talking. Yeah, sure.

INT: Would he say, "have hope," or "we have to hold on"?

MAX: Yeah, bitachon. Bitachon. We called it bitachon. He said you have bitachon.

INT: Bitachon. Faith.

MAX: Yes. Always faith, yeah. No, he was a great symbol to us.

INT: So he encouraged you to hold on.

MAX: Yeah. He encouraged. He gave us a feeling that things might turn out all right yet. But when he saw the daily situation, how they changed from bad to worse, he still had hope, but there is a conflict of hope and reality.

INT: Were you like him? Did you have hope, or did you feel despair?

MAX: I had hope when I looked at him in the face, and I see him. But when I didn't see him, I was very depressed. (pause) It is very hard to describe the day to day, the moment to moment feelings and understandings, surrounded by all this tumult, by all this constant fear and whatever was around you, you know? The people moving back and forth, and everything, and in desperation, people crying, people doing this, people doing that, and everybody was for himself, and yet not for himself. And it was very difficult. And when you watch all this, you feel like you are in a turmoil here. It's a terrible situation. It's unusual. You cannot describe this really. I don't think there are words to describe this kind of image, the impression it makes on a single individual, when you see all this around you, what's happening. People running, people going, people are afraid to go, yes to go, no to go. You hide. It's very difficult. Very difficult.

INT: It's the kind of feeling that you have never had since that time, right? Except as a memory? I mean after the war.

MAX: Well, when we came here, no. After we came here, it was something unknown, you expected, you have the feeling you come to America, it would be...

INT: But that's a different feeling.

MAX Yeah. That's an elated feeling. You feel great about this. Something which is the goldene medina. I don't know if it was the goldene medina, but it was something to

freedom, to life, a renewal of life. And there it was a desperate moment, from moment to moment. No matter what you see in your father, the great hope, he'll maybe help you that something might good come out of it, because he so believes in it, but it wasn't up to him. You know. You're surrounded by these unusual, unbelievable tensions and frictions and sadness and you name it. Everything combined together. It had a terrible impact. Terrible.

INT: Plus there's nothing to do...to distract yourself. There's nothing to do.

MAX: You do, but what can you do? That's right. There's nothing **positive** to do. What can you do? You're in a situation where you're...It's very, very difficult. I hate to think about it, it was a terrible time. I hate to remember it, I tell you honestly. I don't want to remember it, really. (pause, sighs)

INT: Well, you're remembering it because I just read it. What's so bad about remembering it? Is it just that the feelings come back, and they're terrible feelings, or does it do something philosophically, or does it do something spiritually? You...do you understand my question?

MAX: Yeah, at this point in my life, remembering it is a dual thing. It brings back those feelings again, which I'd rather not want to relive anymore. On the other hand, you feel relieved that you are through with it, that you made it, you know, that's the other side of it, you know? It's...in other words, you do appreciate what you have today. That you have life, that you started a new life here. I said that before. You feel like you're a new person again, you're reborn. You have a family, start a new family, many generations, hopefully it will sprout in the future, to do something to offset the terrible loss we had, millions loss we had, our Jewish people. And that's part of it.

INT: Does it make you question anything about G-d and the meaning of life? I mean, does it confuse you to go back to these memories?

MAX: I can only tell you there are people I know who went through this who gave up G-d completely. Felt that where was G-d when all this happened? Why did He let this happen? Crying out to G-d, "Why did you let this happen to our people? What did they do to deserve such tragedies?" And then there are people who became very much religious afterwards. I became religious. I mean, I was religious, but not as much as you might think. But now I feel a personal thanks, you'll read later what I did at one time. I made a commitment. If I survive. Did you read that?

INT: No. We didn't get there.

MAX: Yeah. I made a commitment at that time, and I live up to it, as much as I can.

INT: So you sustained your faith in G-d?

MAX: Yeah.

INT: Even though.

MAX: Yeah.

INT: I'll ask you a strange question. If you don't want to answer it, you tell me. But do you know about Primo Levi?

MAX: Yeah. I read most of the book, it's a very difficult book to read.

INT: Yeah. He was a scientist.

MAX: I know. And he committed suicide, I understand, afterwards. It bothers me a great deal. But I understand why he could do that.

INT: Okay. Tell me.

MAX: I didn't read the entire book, I tell you honestly.

INT: Successful man. International reputation. Very famous, chemist and author.

MAX: Yeah. And a great writer. Very prolific writer.

INT: And in communication with some of the great, well-known people.

MAX: I took out the book, I have to give it back.

INT: So what do you mean, you understand why he committed suicide?

MAX: Well, the book doesn't tell me this. A friend of mine who gave me the book, he's an attorney here. He gave it to me. And he told me this, and I understand this...a loss of faith in humanity, I guess. I don't know what made him do it but I can understand.

INT: Loss of faith in humanity. In people?

MAX: In human beings. The capability of the human being of evil, of the human race, of such evil.

INT: But why does it take 45 years?

MAX: I don't know what it took him. I don't know. I can't speak for him, why he did it, or why. I think this could have been caused by...he might have family problems. I don't know what the problems were, why he did it. There could be other things involved here. I can't say that.

INT: But tell me, why does it, I know that you don't know, that this is just your guess. But going with your guess, why does it take 45 years to do it, why not five years?

MAX: I don't know. I can't speak for him. How would I know what it is?

INT: I know. But...

MAX: What my rationale would be? Because after the war, what happened continues, continues, we continue struggling. Of the world. What's happening in the world today, after the war. Continue this killing and murdering. The problems, maybe that set him back, and he lost faith in humanity and he felt: What's the use? But on the other hand, what is the use of killing himself? What good will this do? You know? What kind of benefit will derive from this suicide? On the other hand, a man sees no hope, in ever achieving any kind of solution for all the problems of the world except for war and killing, so what's the use of living, you know? So I don't know. But I think it has very little meaning to what really happened. What he thought. I feel sorry for him, because I had read part of the book, it was too emotional for me to get involved.

INT: In the Auschwitz book?

MAX: Yeah. Describing every little detail, was very, very...did you read the whole book?

INT: No. No. But I have it.

MAX: I read half the book, and SPOUSEWM started reading it, she said, "I couldn't continue with it." She said she wouldn't read it either. And she's a strong person. SPOUSEWM is very strong. I rely on her a great deal for emotional strength, and all around, she's a strong woman.

(END TAPE FIVE, SIDE ONE. GO ON TO TAPE SIX)

INT: This is a continuation of an interview with Max Wagner, July 19, 1995.

Now in between our last meeting, Max continued to write down experiences, and fill in with the emotions that he remembers going through. So we'd like to add a segment. At the point that it says, they're talking about leaving their home, and it says, "Papa said only a few words which still cling in my ears. He said, "Children, pack your absolute necessary belongings into a small suitcase, because we have to leave Germany at once." The sudden decision by my parents to leave as Papa said "Germany for good" left us stunned. We felt conflicting emotions of fear, anger, and disbelief. But at the same time, trusted in my parents' judgment, that this was the right decision.

Mama, Inge and I had a family passport, and Uncle Herman had his own since he was a Romanian citizen. After eighteen hours of traveling through Poland, we finally arrived completely exhausted in Czernowitz, the capital of Bucovina. There we boarded a local train to Radautz, about an hour's ride. We arrived physically and emotionally completely exhausted. But there was time to reflect, and the reflection was that 24 hours before, we were still all together in comfort in our beautiful home in Berlin, and now a family in

exile, separated, homeless, and wondering what lies ahead. One could not help but feel the necessary self-inflicted abandonment. Uncle Herman, Tanta Sabina, and their family as well as some more distant relatives tried with great concern to comfort us, but it took time before we finally accepted the reality of our new situation.

INT: Another memory that Max recalls is about another work detail. This should be inserted before the story of being taken to work in the lumberyard, and then hurting his hand, when working in the lumberyard. Include this statement: Surrounded by German soldiers, we were marched to the laundry belonging to Herr Seifert, a German who worked for the German military command. Could you imagine the frustration, the inexplicable feeling of trying to escape from a situation where there is no escape? Fleeing the Nazis and then facing the same oppressors in a different world miles away? We were ten young men assigned to wash German military uniforms. The work was heavy, but silently, and inwardly we derived some satisfaction. The reason for that was that those uniforms were soaked in German blood. As we were washing them, we noticed many bullet holes. That gave us some satisfaction that most of those soldiers paid the ultimate price for executing the madman's orders. Of course all those observations were made with eye contact, which was the only way, safe way. This work lasted until we were forced into the ghetto.

INT: This is the continuation of the interview with Max Wagner. He's now going to describe being in the ghetto, and then being transported to the concentration camp. The time is Fall, 1941.

MAX: It was decreed by the German military authorities that all Jews must leave Czernowitz. Jews have lived in Bucovina for centuries and thrived in business as well as in professions. But the order was that Bucovina must be Judenrein. The awesome moment of our departure was near. There were many rumors amongst others that we were being sent to work on farms. Under heavy military escort, we were marched to the railroad station, and waited for our departure. I find it almost impossible to describe our mental and psychological state of horror, terror, fear and absolute numbness. How can one find words to describe the utter humiliation, and the dehumanization? Here we reached the lowest point in our lives, when our destiny was in the hands of thugs and murderers, who were herding us like animals into the slaughterhouse. All the dramatic moments we had to endure since we fled Berlin faded in the face of what followed from this moment on. (sighs)

How can we describe the indescribable, when men, women, children, old and young, were pushed into cattle cars, about 100 persons per car, and then doors shut and locked from the outside? Again, the state of mind was numbness, glaring at each other with glazed looks. Papa, raising his hands, looking up to the ceiling in silent prayers. I firmly believe that Papa had certain powers to handle these so many times repeated special situations better than the rest of us. If there was under these dreadful situations any hope, little bit of hope, to be found in Papa's attitude.

I had an interesting flashback about an event Papa told us. When he was a little boy, his father, Menashe Wagner, took him to see his great-grandfather, the Shatzer Rav, Chaim Wagner, and his rebbetzin. He was blessed by the Rav and the rebbetzin, with a special emphasis that he and his children's children shall always be successful and protected by the Almighty.

Now we traveled for about a day and a half, when we finally arrived at daylight, a place called Ataki, which is in the province of Bessarabia, which is located at the river Dniester. Later on, we learned that nighttime arrivals were received by hordes of local Ukrainians and Romanian military who robbed, beat the refugees, and many were thrown into the river and drowned.

INT: When you're saying Ataki and Bessarabia, where is this?

MAX: This is at the River Dniester.

INT: What country?

MAX: Oh, that's Romania. That's the last, the border between Romania and the Ukraine.

INT: Ukraine being Russia.

MAX: Yeah. At that time, yeah.

MEMOIRS: At our arrival, we were not aware what the earlier transport went through. Nevertheless, again we were seized by terror and agony. There was no comfort, in the masses of refugees who kept coming continuously, discharging the unfortunate human cargo like waste. Many families separated at that time. Thousands were lined up at the shoreline to board little barges that would take them across the waterway. Our crossing was, thank G-d, uneventful. After arrival at the eastern shore, the other side of the river, our group managed in all the confusion to follow a more organized convoy on a march to the city of Mogilev. We entered the city unmolested. Later on we learned that other groups were not as fortunate. Furthermore, we were again lucky that a friend of our family by the name of Yaegendorf, the former officer in the Romanian army, also an engineer with [the company] Siemens, made himself a spokesman for our group, and was recognized as such. He negotiated with the Romanian commandant to help us and others find shelters. Before long, I was separated with other groups, and sent to work into a stone quarry.

INT: Can I ask you some questions about what you wrote, and then we'll go on from there? You were talking about the terrible feelings that people went through, that you went through. And then you said, "Numb." You said, frightened, desperately frightened.

MAX: In several places I mention this. The reason why I said it is because...

INT: You talk about great fear and numbness. How does that happen together? Numb means feeling nothing.

MAX: Nothing. Feeling like apathy. Yeah. Like you don't care what happens, you know? On the other hand, you were afraid, you get numb because you are in shock. You start to tremble, you got to shake, you are confused, you are terrorized, you feel that you have no control over anything, over yourself or anything else around you. And then again that changes and sometimes you feel like apathy. You have no control over anything. It changes. And it's very difficult. These feelings are not at the same time, but they interchange. You feel for a moment you feel the terror, which is a good feeling, because you know at least you are alive, and you tried to do something. And then again, like on the trip itself, people were terrorized. They banged on the walls. Some people were quiet, some were screaming, some babies were crying, some people were fainting. The sanitary condition was indescribable what happened on that train, on that ride. But then again, then sometimes you sit back, you stand and you say, what can I do? Nothing. You become numb. You feel apathy. You feel this is the end of the line. This is a terrible feeling.

INT: Apathy is feeling out of control. Feeling that there's nothing you can do, and feeling that you're going to your death?

MAX: Yeah. Well, you feel that your destiny is not in your hands anymore. It's in somebody else's hand. Whatever they want to do to you, they can do. You have no choice. You can't do anything about it. Like somebody is led to death. Somebody is led to be hanged or shot or something, this is it, and then you are powerless. You have no control over yourself anymore. You're in the hands of other people. That's the numb. That's the same thing that happened when you remember when I talked to you in Czernowitz. (Are you taping this?) When we were lined up against the wall, and the Russian soldiers came in and we were lined up against the wall and one of the soldiers was walking up and down like a wild animal, with his Tommy gun, back and forth, waiting to shoot all of us here. (inaudible) While they tore the house apart inside and we were standing there shaking like this. We were not numb. You couldn't do anything about it. You were just ready to give up. That's it. You saw the end. And this is a feeling which, how can you describe that? Except to say, you were terrorized. You were numb. You were terrorized. You had these constant changes of feelings.

INT: When everyone was gathered from the ghetto for the transport, what did you think was going to happen? You said some people thought that you were being transported to work on farms. But what did **you** think?

MAX: Not much. What I heard, that's what I listened to. I had no...

INT: So you also thought that that was...

MAX: Sure. We thought this is possible, it could be a trap, it could be anything. You didn't know. Nobody believed anything, really, you know. But we heard rumors. Where they stemmed from, nobody knew.

INT: And at that time it was you, your mother and father, your brother and your sister. So it was five of you. Did you stay together?

MAX: We were together, yeah, sure. At that time we were together. Until I was separated from them.

INT: Was it important to stay together? Did you hold each other's hand, did you...

MAX: Yeah. We were always very close together. We tried to comfort each other, but there was very little one could do for the other one. The only person who was towering over everything with us, including physically as well as emotionally was my father. He was the only one who we looked up to and hoped that maybe his influence with the Almighty perhaps, and good deeds he did would help us all.

INT: So when you were going through this, even though you weren't talking, speaking, you felt a dependency on him.

MAX: Oh, sure. The bond was like iron. It was an emotional bond which you cannot separate, you know, no matter what you do.

INT: And you felt that somehow, if anything were to help, his connection to Hashem would help.

MAX: We all felt this way. I can speak for myself only, but I think anybody in our home, in my family, we felt the same way. My father was our guiding light. He was everything for us, you know. We looked up to him for some kind of miracle, perhaps. We really did. Whether it was in his zechus, or somebody else's, we don't know. But I think he had a great deal to do with this.

INT: When you were pushed onto the trains and locked in, you said that your father looked up?

MAX: He looked up to the ceiling.

INT: As if he were davening?

MAX: Yeah.

INT: Or you knew he was davening?

MAX: Well, I knew. He was moving his lips. He was saying prayers or whatever he said.

INT: And do you think they were the set prayers that come from the siddur, or he was talking in his language?

MAX: I don't know. I'm sure it was something he said, maybe some Tehillim. Whatever he said, I don't know.

INT: When you said you thought he had special powers, is that what you mean, that through his zechus, Hashem would protect him and the family?

MAX: Yeah. I think so, I think so. I mean, I cannot say anything like this for certainty, but that was my feeling.

INT: Did anything in your life ever change your mind about that, or did you believe that until the day he died?

MAX: Oh, I am convinced that this is what it was. I am convinced today as much as I was at that time. That we probably have survived because of his good deeds. I would say this person, what he stood for, he was a righteous person. I hate to say it, but maybe I shouldn't hate to say it, but I should rather say I don't like to say it in a way that it sounds really conceited, but I think my father in my opinion was a tzaddik. (pause, crying)

INT: I want to ask you a very hard question about faith. Because what you're talking about now is about faith. His faith in Hashem, the way he lived, and...

MAX: A great influence on me. Especially on me it has a great influence.

INT: Your faith.

MAX: My faith. He has influenced me, my thinking, my entire lifestyle.

INT: There were certainly other righteous people, some on his level, who didn't make it. How do you explain that to yourself?

MAX: I wish I would know. I wish I would know. I wish I knew why so many good people died. I don't know, what we went through, an episode about Emil Klein, we'll talk about that. The violinist Emil Klein. How he was taken away. A very fine concert violinist. A delightful young man, and his wife, Manya. And they were shot like dogs. (inaudible) He was taken up, and they told him, "You dirty Jew, take your fiddle and play." And while he played they shot him to death, and he played beautifully. And his wife, she was a teacher, she was an orphan, actually. She was a teacher of Latin and Greek languages, in Czernowitz, in high school. She was a brilliant young woman. Shot her the same way.

INT: The fact that you can't explain it to yourself, does that disturb you?

MAX: Very much so. Why was I chosen? You see, that creates a guilt complex.

INT: A guilt complex?

MAX: Yeah.

INT: Why guilt? You had nothing to do with who lived and who died.

MAX: No. But I have a guilt complex, because I, in my own thinking was not the most valuable person, who should have been chosen to survive. Yet I was. This is my own evaluation of myself, and I know myself. My weaknesses, my failures, and I wasn't that ideal person all my life the way I would have liked to be. Other people, I'm sure, were more deserving perhaps, but they didn't make it. So I have that guilt complex. I live with that.

INT: Guilt usually means that a person feels bad for doing something wrong.

MAX: Right. In a way.

INT: You didn't do anything wrong.

MAX: Well, maybe I did. I don't know. How can I review my entire life since I was conscious of what's happening around me?

INT: Well, you certainly had no role in your survival, and you had no role in other people's death.

MAX: Yeah. But the other things, you know, why some place, if you see people who are very good people, are dying young of miserable diseases. And some people who are not as good, considered by the acts they do, the known acts they have performed in their lifetime, live in comfort? You know, live and thrive, and continue doing probably bad things to other people, and yet they're still alive. I can't answer this. Nobody knows the answer to this question. This is G-d's will, I think.

INT: Does it make you question your faith in G-d?

MAX: No. No.

INT: How do you explain it to yourself?

MAX: I can't. I wish I could. Does anybody, can anybody explain that?

INT: So we live without the explanation.

MAX: You live to do the right thing. In your mind, what you think is right, and conscious, help others. As they say, gemilut chasadim. You say in Hebrew, you say, "shlosha devarim haolam omed." You know? "Al ha-Torah, ve al ha-avoda, ve al

gemilut chasadim." You do the right thing. I don't fulfill all these, but I try to do what I can. "Al shlosha devarim."

INT: And translate that, it means...

MAX: It means, "On three things the world stands: the learning of the Torah, a productive life, and kindness to your fellow man."

INT: And this is the creed of your life as it was for your father.

MAX: Yeah. It's the creed of the Jewish people. Of our people. We should live by that.

INT: When you saw your father praying in the cattle car, and you emotionally depended on that, that maybe through his merit, you all would survive, did you also pray? Or did you just watch your father pray? Did you also talk to G-d then?

MAX: I don't know. I really don't remember what I did. I just was looking up to him and I tried with my thinking to help him that his prayer should go through, give him like an invisible moral support for what he's doing, and connect with him, mentally, emotionally somehow.

INT: But you didn't think he was silly to pray to G-d.

MAX: No. Oh, absolutely not. Not at all. There was no time for any silly things.

INT: I don't mean silly. I mean useless.

MAX: No, no. I didn't give up.

INT: You didn't give up your hope and your faith?

MAX: No. Because as I said before, every time I say this it may be a cliché, but to me he was like a pillar of strength, my father, to look up to him. And we all did. He was really an unusual person.

INT: Would you say that your brother and sister thought about him in the same way?

MAX: I don't know. I'm sure they thought about him. Exactly to the same degree, I don't know. I can't speak for them.

INT: But in the same way.

MAX: Yeah, yeah, sure. So did my mother. My mother was a wonderful person. I don't speak much about her, you know why? Because she was very passive. And she was a wonderful person, a beautiful woman. I showed you a picture of her. And she suffered a great deal. Her big problem was migraine headaches. Terrible.

INT: I want to ask you also, you said you had a memory of a story your father told you, when his father...

MAX: Took him to the Shotzer Rav.

INT: Right. You were thinking about that on the train?

MAX: At that time, yeah. It came to my mind.

INT: In the cattle car.

MAX: Yeah. Because we need some kind of a...nes, of a wonder to happen. And I thought maybe at that time, this blessing of this Shotzer Rav to my father, when he was a child, that maybe this will help somehow. This came to my mind at that time. Never mind the other things that come to the light because you sit there so many hours, like sixteen hours on that train, or fourteen hours. We had no watch. We had no kind of way. The train was going back and forth. Sometimes we didn't know if we go backwards or we go forwards, you know, we were shifting. And at that time, I thought maybe a connection. And as you can see, all through that, after we arrived there, and after we were starting to march, we had to go through Mogilev, everything...(inaudible)

INT: So when you say that things happened to your group which were lucky...

MAX: Up to a point, yeah.

INT: Right. When you went to the barges, and then after that, the man...you see that as happening to your family because of the zechus of your father?

MAX: Possibly. I think destined.

INT: Destined. So it's not just luck.

MAX: No. I think it was destined. Yaegendorf was a very controversial person. He came into the city of Mogilev. The city was destroyed.

INT: Now Yaegendorf was the man who put himself in charge of your group.

MAX: Yeah. What happened, what he did, he took, he had his uniform with him. And he put on the Romanian uniform, and he went to the prefect, who was the commandant, and the city was destroyed. But there was one huge building there, which had, it was called (?) it used to be at one time an armament factory, or an iron factory, whatever it is. Now that building was devastated. The city has no electricity.

INT: Which city now?

MAX: Mogilev. So he undertook, he put his uniform on, and went to the prefect, the commandant, as you call it, and told him, "We have in our group engineers, carpenters, electricians, builders. We have anything you want. We can put the city back on its feet. You should go over to the German commandant and tell him rather than taking these people away and kill them, let them build up the city."

INT: Now was this man Jewish?

MAX: Yeah, he was Jewish.

INT: And he had his uniform with him?

MAX: Yeah. He took his uniform with him. He had it.

INT: He was on the transport with you.

MAX: Yeah. It just so happened that the brother of the commandant, at one time before, was also an engineer, and he worked for Siemans also. So there was a connection with him. He established a connection with the commandant. The commandant went to the -- that's what I heard later -- went to the German military man in charge of the area, and he said what they should do, and he said, what we could do for the city, and he agreed, let's try it. And that's how they saved a lot of Jews. Like Schindler, almost. The same story. He saved a lot of Jews. However, he also had to give in, because the Germans came in periodically, took out several hundred.

INT: Which he, the commandant, or Yaegendorf?

MAX: No, Yaegendorf. He was controversial, because what he did, people say it wasn't very ethical, but he had probably no choice. They came in, they gave him a list, they wanted a hundred people to take them away, and the Germans came, he said, “Who do you want to take,” so he had to give some people away, sacrifice them. And they never saw these people again. This was Yaegendorf. But he saved the others.

(END TAPE SIX, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE SIX, SIDE TWO)

MAX: Not much connection with him afterwards. What happened to the stone quarry. I think, what I think about him, it's very hard to say whether I would have done differently or not, you know? You have to weigh this. He saved tens of thousands of people. There was 150,000 people there. He might have sacrificed 500 or 1,000 or 2,000. I don't know. I can't be the judge. I don't want to be the judge. I just say in reality he saved a lot of people.

INT: And where did you live? You lived in barracks, you were in a concentration camp?

MAX: Yeah. We lived in a barracks. We had like a shed, you know.

INT: So it wasn't an organized concentration camp, like the other camps.

MAX: Oh, no, we were guarded by soldiers with dogs and with guns, are you kidding? You had to perform, I wrote this, we didn't get to this. We had to perform so much per day, and we had to make one cubic meter of stones every day, load up. We'll talk about it later.

INT: You used the word "dehumanization." How do you feel about yourself? I know it's terrible, and it's the paralyzing terror, and the numbness, but what does it do to your sense of self, to be in a dehumanizing situation? Could you put words on that? Is that too difficult to describe?

MAX: Well, I think, you feel all of a sudden there is no value. You have no value anymore in society. You have no function. You're disposable. Like trash, like garbage.

INT: You lose your own sense of worth.

MAX: Well, you lose it and you don't. You lose it because you are being treated like this. But you don't lose it because you think you're better. At a point like this, when you reach a point like this where people push you around, and lock your door, shut your door from the outside, put you in a cattle and send you away, what do you feel? How can you describe that? You feel like you're like trash. Ready to throw into somewhere, throw away. No value. They came in constantly, like waste. They came out of the train, they threw them away. You know. What else can I describe? I don't know.

INT: So you can't even feel angry about the abuse?

MAX: No. When you feel angry, you still have a sense of your own value. You want to prevail. That you are a human being, you want to show, you want to protest. There's no way. You cannot protest like this. You give me very difficult questions, you know that? That's very hard to answer.

INT: I know. But you're doing well. Most people can't even begin to try and answer. There's no answer. But there is just to describe.

MAX: To describe the feelings, yes. It's not easy.

INT: Does the sense of worth come back at liberation?

MAX: Sense of what?

INT: Worth, self-worth.

MAX: Oh, yeah.

INT: The moment you're liberated?

MAX: I wrote about this.

INT: Okay. (Pause) Before I read the next section, could you just explain what happened? You ended by saying that you were sent to the stone quarries. So you were separated from your family. First tell me how did it feel like to be separated?

MAX: Well, it was like a selection. We were all lined up, and they selected certain people, like myself and other young men who looked able to work, a little taller, and they separated us into a group, because we were not aware at the time what's going to happen to us. We didn't know if they were going to shoot us in the field, or take us somewhere else. We were sure they would take us somewhere else, but for what, what to do with us, we had no idea.

INT: And you were thinking that. Who knows where we're going to go?

MAX: Yeah. Nothing was announced in advance what they were going to do with us. They always kept us in their book, and of course we were surrounded by military people, with guns, and we were marched off, we were about like 35 or 40. I don't remember. In fact one of these men I met in Israel. I remember I told you about that.

INT: The point at which you were separated from your family, what was your reaction, and what was their reaction? Was there a reaction?

MAX: How do I know? I can't tell you. They must have been frantic. Because we didn't see each other at this point. They separated us away, and that was the end of it.

INT: "Separated us," being this work detail. This work group.

MAX: Yeah, it was like a work detail that we thought they would take us. We didn't know whether we are coming back the same day or we don't come back at all.

INT: What was the name of this camp, or this...

MAX: It was a mountain.

INT: So it didn't have a name, like other camps had a name.

MAX: No, no. There was no name.

INT: But the city was...

MAX: It was outside the city of Mogilev. And we were taken, we marched off to a place, and there was a little barrack there, and you received those little tools we had to use. I described it to you before, I believe.

INT: No.

MAX: Well, we received, they were like a flexible wooden stick, like about three feet, two feet, and at the end was like a little hammer. (pause) A spontaneous answer like this is very difficult to give you the description. I must think about it.

INT: You were describing the tool. You said it was three feet long, it was wooden.

MAX: Yeah. Wooden. Flexible. And it had like a hammer, like five inches, four inches wide, and they showed us how they have these big boulders, stones, you hold it with your foot, and you hit it, and it breaks apart. Now, they use these stones for filling in the road beds, because the German military equipment had to go through. And when it rains, it fell in everything, but there was obviously no foundation on these roads. So we had to keep filling it in. But it was a very difficult job. It didn't seem so bad at the beginning, but when you worked with this all day long, and you hold this wooden thing in your hand here, even though I had, we had blisters, pus, infections, and many people lost their sight, because some of these splinters flow back. We had no protection at all, no protective gear. We had no gloves, nothing. And a lot of people had eye damage, but they didn't care. You lost an eye, you lost an eye. Period. No problem. And we worked every day. We had to do a certain amount, and sometimes the days run into the nights, especially on Jewish holidays. And we had to load them, and be finished doing this. We had to go down in a pit and they had these...wagons come to pick up the stuff. We had these long forks, with four or five little forks, what do you call it?

INT: Prongs?

MAX: Prongs, right. You had to dig in, pick it up and throw it into the...this is heavy, I mean. I have a problem from this, a tear in my shoulder. Anyway, this is what you had to do. It was the daily routine.

INT: And you say you have some physical effects of that now.

MAX: Oh yeah. Sure.

INT: Your shoulder. You had a torn shoulder?

MAX: I have a tear in a rotator cuff. And I don't want to do anything about it. Because it, I don't want to.

INT: You say maybe your back.

MAX: I played afterwards the violin, and I had no problem with it. It was already, now it comes back. Its arthritic condition sits on top of it, but this is nothing in comparison, you know. You pay a price for this.

INT: And where did the rest of your family go? What work situation did they end up in?

MAX: They had different occupations in that building. In the kitchen, they worked here. They had jobs to do. Everybody was assigned to different work.

INT: And did they live together as a family, or were they separated men and women, different barracks?

MAX: They were separated, men and women, yeah. They were separated.

INT: So your brother and your father went together?

MAX: Only Yaegendorf was having a separate apartment.

INT: So your brother and your father were together, and your sister and your mother?

MAX: Yeah. My sister developed typhus there. She lost her hair, she was sick, no medication, but she recovered.

INT: And the way you were fed was the same way as in the camps, like one bowl of soup a day, or...

MAX: I don't know what they got there, I really didn't even discuss it, because we had very limited food, the food was really terrible. But they didn't know it, they gave...we had, for instance, they gave us a bread which they made from the core of the corn. From the core. The inside, the cob, what do they call it?

INT: The cob.

MAX: The cob. From the inside. And it was so hard that you can break your teeth on it, but you ate it. It was food, right? And then in the morning they had like, it looked like wash water or something. Was tea, supposedly some tea. And at night you had a little soup. They gave us the skin of the potatoes. They cooked it. You know what? That was very nourishing. They didn't know it.

INT: Was there any...

MAX: I was so sick after the war that I collapsed on a street in Brooklyn.

INT: Was there any medical attention?

MAX: No. None whatsoever. As a matter of fact, there was a young man with us, he was diabetic. And he hurt himself. And I had in my pocket a little tube with antiseptic something. And he hurt himself, and I knew that he would have a big problem. I gave him the tube. Whatever happened to him I don't remember. I remember certain names of

people. There were two brothers Dashevsky, who came from Bessarabia. There was a young man there, he was a little bit of a cripple. He had a little...

INT: Hunchback?

MAX: And his head was a little pointed. They called him Shpitz. Shpitz head. He was a very funny guy. But we had a little humor sometimes, sometimes we had some humor. (inaudible) You had to do something about it. Basically that's what it was. I remember certain names. Bebe (?), who we met in Jerusalem.

INT: And you were there from 1941 through 1945? Four years.

MAX: Three and a half years.

INT: Three and a half years in the stone quarry.

MAX: Yeah. Summer and winter. Winters were cold, miserable cold. There was one incident that I would like to tell you about. There was a German, how do you call this, staff sergeant? Whatever he was. He happened to be a very nice person. In civilian life he told us he was a furniture manufacturer. I saw him in the wintertime take his gloves off and give it to an older person there.

INT: He was German.

MAX: Yeah, German. Later on I found out he died in a hospital in Bucharest. He had pneumonia and died.

INT: But he had some...

MAX: Feeling.

INT: Were you ever in any of these circumstances helped by any German or Romanian?

MAX: No. Never.

INT: Never.

MAX: I tried to be, I made myself so invisible, I didn't ask for anything, I didn't offer, I didn't ask questions. I just did what I had to do. I did my work and didn't bother anybody. Maybe this is one of the reasons why I maybe survived. I don't know. Very, very quiet.

INT: And felt you had to be in order to survive.

MAX: That was my attitude.

INT: And you were hopeful that the rest of the family was okay, because everybody was working?

MAX: Yeah.

INT: Did you get any news of them?

MAX: No. Nobody knew where anybody...I didn't know what happened to them, they didn't know what happened to me.

INT: Because you weren't too far away from them.

MAX: Well, we were away. I don't know exactly where. If you told me where, I wouldn't know where it was. But we were away, quite a distance.

INT: So you marched there.

MAX: We marched there. So it could have been twenty miles, it could have been forty miles, it could have been a hundred miles. I don't know where we were. It was a long walk. Walking was a long way. But we traveled by car, it's possibly maybe only fifteen, twenty miles. I don't know where.

INT: Okay. So let me read this. Okay? This is a statement about how you coped with what you were going through.

MEMOIRS: Trying to preserve my sanity in the midst of a world gone mad, through the power of imagination. Like creating my own surrealistic world. In the end, I succeeded, through inner strength, to rise above reality and balance my emotional and spiritual sanity. In the face of ever present danger, knowing quite well that if I were to survive physically, I also must find a way to save myself mentally.

MAX: I just want to tell you. You see that sentence? It's unbelievable. A long sentence.

INT: It's a long sentence.

MAX: This is the German in me. My schooling. The Germans can make sentences like a whole page with one sentence. (laughs) But this is the German in me. Forgive me.

INT: That's okay. (laughs)

MAX: I can say it all in one sentence, you know. I don't make two sentences out of it. But it sounds all right, doesn't it.

INT: It sounds fine. Now you say you had to find a way to save yourself mentally, and I will go on reading. But would you say that you had that sense of surviving mentally for the three and a half years? You knew that every day that you had to...

MAX: I had that feeling, I think this is something I inherited from my father directly. That positivity.

INT: Because you know a lot of survivors in the camps describe that they didn't think, and they didn't feel.

MAX: Oh, no.

INT: That they were working like machines.

MAX: I had the strength, I said to myself: If I were to survive I must be surviving not only physically, but mentally and emotionally. This is what I needed to do. And then I found an answer to that.

MEMOIRS: When this realization came to me, I had no idea how to go about it. Although the chances of survival were so far removed, nevertheless, there were times when the dream of this possibility did occupy my thoughts occasionally. While doing the daily and sometimes nightly endless hard labor in the quarries, when days and nights ran together, I managed with great concentration to temporarily shut out the present, and to recall happier events in my life.

MAX: This I did. That gave me the impetus to continue, to live with hope.

INT: Can you give me some examples of what you would think of?

MAX: Well, it is written here.

MEMOIRS: When I was able to create these images, visible to me alone, like a picture gallery parading in front of me, like scenes working on musical passages, actually using the fingers of my left hand, playing a picture of soundless sounds, only audible to me, a phrase on a piece of wood or stone.

INT: So you would play music in your head? You would see the notes?

MAX: Everything I ever learned, I know, I have it in my head. That I am very proud of -- my memory is fantastic. I'm talking about music. Every music piece. I may not be able to play the way I used to play it, but I know it.

INT: You see it.

MAX: I see it in front of me.

MEMOIRS: Other scenes of our happy youth, vacation times, and other happy occasions, I realized that I found the answer to that so vital mental outlet. In retrospect, I find that the benefit of these mental exercises and imaging through concentration had a positive effect on my mental equilibrium up to this day. In the face of great adversity of hard labor, very insufficient nourishment, humiliation, I developed a feeling of victory over my captors. I even could manage to smile to myself inwardly.
(Pause)

INT: What are you proud of?

MAX: That I was able to express myself and put it down. For future generations. Maybe some people who go in prison who are innocently held for some other things, against their will, and they need some kind of emotional and spiritual help to help them survive the desperate situation, this might be a guide, a textbook or something for them, to help them. A text to give them the courage to go through difficult times.

INT: Mm-hm. Well, you say that you use this even now.

MAX: Oh, yeah. I go through difficult times every day.

INT: And do you play music in your head? Do you think of the good times?

MAX: Oh, yeah. When I hear a piece of music which I used to play, or something else, especially things that I used to...I'm a terrible critic. (laughs) But you know what? I'm a very good listener. I go through, and I learn from others. Last night I heard playing an Israeli violinist playing the (?) from the (?) conducting, and I came in too late to hear the (?), but (inaudible) and his style of evolving. I never heard it in my whole life. I was very fascinated by it. It was very nice. He did very, very nicely. But it wasn't really melodious, it was very...

INT: This was a live concert, or on the...

MAX: (inaudible) He is fantastic, the (?), he is fantastic. But this young man was very good, very good. This is from the New York Symphony, from the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, some of the groups got together, called them, All Mozart, or something like that.

INT: And this was on television?

MAX: Yeah, it was on television, on channel 12. You don't have to tape this, do you?

INT: Why not? What do you think of Itzhak Perlman?

MAX: I think he is absolutely great. I think he is great. He's superb. He's also a little bit of a showman, but that's all right. That goes with it. And I admire him for living a Jewish life. He's absolutely very accomplished, very fine musician all around. And a

fine human being. I know that. I met him once. I met him through a friend of mine. (inaudible) I met Itzhak Perlman. I met...there are some very fine musicians in this world today.

INT: So I'm going to read on, now.

MAX: Yes, if you want to.

MEMOIRS: On the occasion of Jewish holidays, we were actually ordered to work through the night. As a special consideration for that occasion, the bonus usually was loading freight cars with stones. To do that kind of hard labor, we were standing in a position approximately one foot below the ground level. We had to throw fully loaded large forks with stones way above our heads into the freight car. Holding these heavy weighted forks with bare hands caused blisters, which painfully infected our hands for a long time.

I remember distinctly that on one of those Yom Kippur nights when my thoughts, and I'm sure most of those of most of the others, were directed at the prayer of Kol Nidre, I made a commitment to the Almighty, that if He wants me to survive I will pray and thank Him every day for the rest of my life. I made this pledge under the open sky, for the Almighty to hear me, and so He did.

And so did you fulfill your pledge?

MAX: Every day. Unfortunately I don't go to shul every time.

INT: And when you say, "pray," do you mean your own personal prayer, or do you mean tefillah?

MAX: Both. I say the tefillah, and also I say a personal prayer, in my own way. Absolutely. And I thank G-d every day, morning and night. I may not wear a kippah all day long, but I keep it in my heart. I'm a Jew.

INT: So do you daven at home? You do Shacharis?

MAX: I daven at home. Shacharis here. Minchah time, I daven Minchah and Maariv here. If not I just say Maariv if I come too late. And I say the Shema before I go to bed, and thank G-d for everything, for my children. All this, my children, my grandchildren, my wife, my children, my grandchildren, and I have five of them, my son-in-laws, and then I pray to G-d for the neshamas who are not with us anymore.

INT: Do you have a set prayer?

MAX: Yeah.

INT: Is it the same prayer all the time?

MAX: Yeah.

INT: Would you say it now, or is it...

MAX: No, it's too personal. You don't mind, do you? You understand. (pause)

MEMOIRS: In 1943, rumors of the retreat of the German army were circulating.

Oh, I wanted to ask you, how did you know it was Yom Kippur? How did you keep track?

MAX: Oh, we knew it.

INT: How did you know?

MAX: We knew it. Somehow somebody knew.

INT: Somebody kept track.

MAX: Yeah. And if it was the wrong day, we still celebrated Yom Kippur. (laughs)

INT: Did you do anything special for any of the holidays, ever?

MAX: The only thing we had, they punished us on the holiday. We had to work harder.

INT: So they knew when the holidays were.

MAX: They knew. Oh, yes, they knew it. So that's how we knew it. I guess that's how we knew it.

INT: Tell me again your description of yourself. You said, "If I were to describe myself, I might be too sensitive. But I am a dedicated Jew." Why didn't you throw it all away? You were persecuted for being Jewish.

MAX: But you see what I wrote here, you just read something very important, what I did under the open sky on Kol Nidre night. I made a commitment.

INT: So can't you thank G-d every day for saving you, but throw away the traditions?

MAX: No. This is part of it. The tradition and learning, and feeling the Judaism, it's all inter-connected. So no way can you separate it one from the other one. I cannot separate it. Some people might. I know some people who after the war, after they were liberated, became complete atheists, they didn't believe in G-d anymore, because if G-d can do, can see that something like this should happen to our people, they don't believe in G-d anymore, that He have somebody who oversees our well-being. And I feel a personal gratitude to G-d, because after all, we were still saved, many were saved. Many were

sacrificed. Too many were sacrificed. But there were those of us who were saved. To start a new life. New generations are being formulated from that, came out of that. Eventually, hopefully, we will replenish all our losses. We can't forget the losses. There are many Einsteins, many Perlmans, any of these were unnecessarily murdered. When I heard not too long ago something, that there was an evaluation, after they decided, the Germans decided not to shoot the little children when they killed them, one and a half million children, because it's too expensive. A bullet at that time was worth, equivalent to a penny and a half. But they threw them right into the fire. When you hear this, what do you think? What kind of people are these? It's not like human beings.

INT: So you blame the people for being evil, you don't blame G-d.

MAX: That's exactly it. People evil. G-d gave us the ability to be good and to be bad. To be decent human beings, murderers. Those who choose to do what they did, I'm sure they'll get punished for it eventually.

INT: You are sure of that.

MAX: Oh, yeah. I'm sure. But it doesn't give me any satisfaction. (inaudible) They did what they did.

INT: Did you ask of your family, of your children, to be as dedicated to Judaism as you?

MAX: No, I cannot ask this, but we showed them an example. We brought them up in the Jewish tradition. We sent them to Hebrew school. They had a very good Jewish background, as far as the learning, and the Jewish tradition, and the house. We brought them home all the meaning. My daughters, they were bas mitzvahed, my two daughters. As a matter of fact, what happened both of my son-in-laws, who came from very untraditional homes, **very** untraditional homes, COSRJ's husband, who came from a home with nothing. Gary, when he got bar mitzvahed, they borrowed from someone else a pair of tefillin. My children taught their husbands the meaning of Judaism, and to live Jewish. So now, Allen, who is married to my younger daughter, COSRJ, is actually Orthodox. He goes to work, to New York, he wears a kippah. He prays every morning, he prays every night. He is a Shomer Shabbas. He's more than she was. Gary is little by little, picks up more of the Jewish tradition and his obligations, and they celebrate Shabbat every Friday night. We go to them, and they go to us. And in fact, when COSRJ has a little daughter, they come here. They walk back home from here, and that's quite a distance, with the children. Their children are getting the same kind of Jewish background and education. They're going to Solomon Schechter school, and they all went there. And they get the best education they can give them. They teach them at home. Now he reads perfectly Hebrew. He davens.

INT: Why didn't you send the girls to Orthodox schools?

MAX: My daughters? I don't know. My wife is not that Orthodox. I have to listen to my wife, too. But they went through the Akiba, and COSSD did not go to Akiba. She

went to Har Zion. And she got a very good education, and then she went to the University of Pennsylvania, she studied Hebrew there. They all speak quite well Hebrew. Both children. I'm very pleased. Considering the fact that SPOUSEWM is not religious.

INT: But she's happy that they are?

MAX: Oh, yeah, sure. We make here, we have Shabbat services.

(END TAPE SIX, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE SEVEN, SIDE ONE)

MEMOIRS: Dear Diary: In 1943 rumors of the retreat of the German army were circulating. Of course, we had no idea of the origin of these rumors, but hoping that they were authentic. No matter how skeptical we were, we felt only for a moment a spiritual uplift. Towards the middle of 1944 sounds of explosions in the distance were heard, which later on appeared to become closer and closer. I had a feeling that something of great importance is going to happen soon. We actually saw and were able to identify British bombers flying overhead. Of course, we made sure that when we looked towards the sky that we were not seen. It became a very dangerous situation.

In spite of the fact that our hearts were rejoicing, we could not afford to give any outward sign of our feelings or thoughts. At that time the possibility of survival became more evident than ever before.

Towards the end of 1944, the Germans in their desperation committed an atrocity of which all of us were involuntary witnesses, that made all of us hiding in our own shells like turtles.

INT: What do you mean by that sentence?

MAX: Well, continue, you will find out.

INT: So you were all literally hiding?

MAX: No, no.

MEMOIRS: In a distance of two to three kilometers from our camp was a camp of Russian prisoners.

INT: This was army people or not? Russian civilians?

MAX: No, Russian soldiers.

MEMOIRS: On a clear day, we could see the outline of the entire compound. Even from our vantage point, it was very large, so we assumed that there were many thousand

prisoners confined there. The Germans at that time bombed the entire compound with incendiary bombs, and flattened the area to ashes. At that point, in spite of the fact that we were performing a vital job, to keep the roads open for passage of the German heavy equipment, we felt again that we might be the next project for the Germans.

MAX: This is what you asked me, the question. Here is the answer.

MEMOIRS: I'm shuddering when I think today, when I'm writing this episode after approximately 45 years.

MAX: It was more than 45 years when I wrote that, a long time ago.

INT: It was 51 years.

MEMOIRS: It was an unnecessary act of brutality against human beings, inflicted by others. Although I have never been close to that camp, I always felt a deep compassion for those who were prisoners. Although this tragedy never made any headlines, but it headlines with me ever since.

INT: So you think about it a lot.

MAX: Not anymore, no. Only when I really get involved with it, you know.

INT: But you watched it. You watched the bombing.

MAX: Oh! When I tell you when we saw the flames coming up, we knew they were incendiary bombs.

INT: Could you hear the screaming?

MAX: Sure, we saw it. No. It was too far away. It was, like you look a mile or two away from here, you know, from a distance. We saw the compound. It was a shack or whatever it was. It was destroyed. In minutes it was all gone. Human flesh.

MEMOIRS: Rumors of massive German retreat were circulating amongst our camp with increasing speed. Suddenly our apathy turned into hope, and fear that the climax of our ordeal might be near. But the big question was whose end would it be -- ours or theirs? Whatever our diversity and background was, we were united in a common bond in our hope for survival.

INT: Tell me, did you talk to the people you worked with? Did you ever talk?

MAX: Very seldom.

INT: Did you ever share memories, or talk about hope or the end?

MAX: There was no time for that. You couldn't. You couldn't. You were constantly watched.

INT: How about before, when you were going to sleep? You were just exhausted?

MAX: You were totally exhausted. You were so knocked out. There was an occasion you said a few words to each other, you know, but you couldn't in length describe anything. It's impossible. You couldn't. You were watched.

MEMOIRS: There was Bibi Geltner, Shpitz, two brothers Dashevsky, and so many others whose name I don't remember. Although we did not dare talk to anyone in our group, not even gesturing, indicating fear or anxiety, we all harbored the same awesome feeling. Strangely enough, the hard labor at that time had a degree of a positive side. Our regular wake-up time was 5:00 A.M., and there was usually a great deal of commotion, of soldiers and peasants, who came with their wagons to be loaded with stones. But this one great wonderful morning, as we woke up there was an awesome silence. Sneaking slowly towards the entrance of our shack, not really daring to look outside, but then again, extreme curiosity made us eventually, at great risk, take a step outside our camp. It was amazing. There was no one outside. At first the thought came to us of a possible trap. We all gathered together and decided a few of our men should go and walk around the immediate area of our shack, and with soft signals, be in touch with the inside. After those initial scouting in the area, we decided to enlarge the perimeter, and we were actually finding out there was no one around, as far as we could see. We threw our tools down, and we started to embrace each other. Some cried, some laughed, and some did neither. What to do next, or what not to do, was a big dilemma we found ourselves in. We dared to feel free of our oppressors.

MAX: You see I'm going through all these experiences right now. Would you believe it?

INT: You see it in your head?

MAX: Yeah. I'm going through this now. The emotions.

INT: Because you live life with images? What are the emotions you're feeling now?

MAX: The same I felt then. (pause) Not believing that we are finally free, and we lived that long. Still not knowing what lay ahead of us, but we felt some kind of relief.

INT: So it's relief and disbelief, you're saying?

MAX: Relief and disbelief, and still uncertain. Uncertainty both at the same time. We don't know what lay ahead. I remember the moment when we threw the tools down.

MEMOIRS: We dared to feel free of our oppressors, but could not afford the luxury of accepting it de facto. It was like being in a vacuum. We were sure that some armored exchanges were going to follow, and discussed and debated quite excitedly all the various

possibilities that could occur. For a while we stood still, fastened to the ground like embedded stones, afraid to move or make any sound. With the afternoon approaching, so did the avant guard of the Russian Army.

INT: You mean the advanced units?

MAX: Yeah.

MEMOIRS: ...of the Russian Army. It was a sight to behold, to see the entry of the great army of the liberator. Horse-drawn wagons occupied with soldiers, holding in one hand a gun, and in the other hand a bottle of what was presumably vodka. There at one time, two or three of these wagons passing by.

INT: What do you mean by wagons?

MAX: Well, they were horse-drawn wagons, like carts.

MEMOIRS: Then minutes later, a few more, and so on. At one time I noticed one soldier falling off the wagon into the road with a bottle still in his hand. The wagon proceeded, leaving the soldier behind.

INT: So they didn't stop to help you?

MAX: No, no, they didn't stop. Wait till you see. We were on top, we weren't on the bottom.

INT: Oh, so you were watching them.

MAX: We were afraid, we don't know what...you know.

MEMOIRS: I could not help but wonder how this loose contingent of soldiers could have beaten the highly motorized German army. Regardless of these thoughts, I was excited, and hoped that we would at least be perceived as allies in the struggle against the Germans. That was not to be, as I will later on describe how the liberators really treated us.

Suddenly we saw from the distance masses of people appearing on the horizon. It seemed like a human wall, moving ever closer and closer to our position. Rather than standing on the road, we decided to go to a higher location in our quarry to assess this new development. It didn't take long before we were faced with a wave of thousands of German prisoners, passing by escorted by a few Russian soldiers on both sides of the road. For a while I studied their faces. They were reflecting apathy, fear, starvation. Many were barefoot, in torn and shredded clothes. It was a pathetic sight to behold. This situation presented an inexplicable emotional dilemma for me. On the one hand, I should have felt great satisfaction to see my oppressors humiliated and degraded to that level. But on the other hand, the inherent compassion for other people suffering created an

inexplicable degree of sympathy. I was accepting at that moment the pain of my oppressed oppressors. In a way I felt guilt about betraying my own people, when only revenge should be ruling my feelings. Certainly at that moment their sufferings were greater than mine. Indeed, these were my own personal feelings, which I did not share with any other person. I suppose since no one in our group discussed that particular aspect, I now firmly believe that I was not the only one who found that mixed feeling extremely difficult to handle and to understand.

MAX: Do you understand this? Did I say it right here? It was work. I had to wait for a long time. I had to live through this to write it for you, for everybody. To write it, I had to live through it, the same experience of that time.

INT: And when you look back on it, it's still amazing to believe that you could feel compassion for them.

MAX: Oh, yeah. SPOUSEWM was angry with me, when I told her that. “How could you?” she said.

INT: As if you did something wrong?

MAX: Yeah. She said, "You shouldn't have felt this way." But I can't help it. This was my feeling. When I see people in distress. I don't care who they are. I started to discuss this with Bob Kovacs. And I said to him, "Is there any kind of similarity, anything happen in the history of the Jewish people, when the oppressors became oppressed?" He said, "Yes." Is it justified, not from the emotional point of view, but from the legal point of view, or the humanitarian point of view?

INT: Legal? Psychological point of view.

MAX: Psychological point of view, that one can justify himself feeling sorry for his oppressor?

INT: Of course.

MAX: Of course. I felt this way. I felt it.

INT: I think it's a sign of great humanity.

MAX: I don't know great. I felt this way. I felt terrible.

INT: I don't think there's anything to feel bad about. I can understand that it surprised you.

MAX: And SPOUSEWM was, she couldn't believe me when I told her. When I read it to her. I said, "SPOUSEWM," she said to me, "How could you feel this way?" Because that's the way I felt. That was my own personal experience.

INT: Well, I think it speaks to your sensitivity, and I don't think you have anything to feel bad about.

MAX: No, I don't feel bad. I just have, in order to write whatever, all the images, I think, to describe exactly how I felt, I had to go through this emotional experience, even though I was in a comfort, and an air-conditioned home, wherever I was, you know, in a free country, but I had to go through this again, in order to express in my words, my feeling at that time. Which I know I felt, I had to relive it. It's not easy.

MEMOIRS: I would like to attempt to describe the experience of relief. Liberation was a personal, but also a shared feeling with all around us. After the long period of extreme tension and apathy, we were timidly looking around, questioning each other, debating, uncertain what will follow. No guards, no soldiers, no orders were given. There were moments we wanted to scream, "Freedom!" but were reluctant, because we were unsure of what lay ahead. When finally we were confronted with our liberators, and rightly so, we felt freedom. But could not grasp the full impact the feeling had on us -- that it was ours to finally have and enjoy.

(PAUSE)

INT: This is a continuation of the interview with Max Wagner. It is August 9, 1995.

MAX: I'd like to go back to the point where we arrived in Mogilev. I would like you to trace back to that point. Here's what happened. At the moment of separation, I looked back and saw Mama, Papa, and Inge, and myself crying. Papa had moist eyes, and moving his lips in silent prayer. I know he prayed for me, and so did I. I had a strong subconscious feeling that Papa possessed some unseen power that was giving me hope. From that moment on, when for the last time, we stretched out our arms to each other, in a gesture of embracing, that was the last time that I saw my family before I was marched off to an unknown destination.

INT: Max is now picking up at the point where I read before, that once free, it was difficult for the prisoners to really grasp the fact that they were free. It was difficult to understand it, and to enjoy it. Picking up at that point, Max continues his story.

MEMOIRS: It was vital to my emotional and spiritual equilibrium to continue to hold onto my past. I found an additional source of strength in a blessing my father received from the Shatzer Rav, Chaim Wagner to extend to his children's children. Holding onto this blessing is something concrete, which has proven itself in all those many life-threatening situations in the past. As an invisible, powerful force, working on our behalf. I prayed incessantly in silence to G-d to help me find my family alive. My first decision was to get to Mogilev as soon as possible. After all, that was the place where we were separated. The question was how to get there. Something strange and completely unexpected happened at this time. The local Ukrainians, who so willingly collaborated with the Germans as volunteers, were called (?) in German, that stands for (?), were looking for our good will because they feared for their lives. They became very friendly,

and offered to take us in their horse-drawn wagons to Mogilev. Our new Ukrainian "friends" were aware of the fact that an encounter with Russian troops could be a disaster for all of us. So we traveled through side roads, some forests with no roads, to bypass the main highway. And after traveling for many hours, even sharing some of the food our friends had, we arrived completely exhausted, but unmolested, in Mogilev. Now came the major task of finding my family. My heart was pounding with anticipation, hoping for the best, but also having great doubts.

Asking anybody I met about the whereabouts of the refugees, I was directed to two buildings, where I could possibly find many refugees. The first building was an old armament factory called Turnatoria. Everybody was asking about families and friends, but unfortunately, many questions were unanswered. I heard that many refugees were periodically taken away by the Nazis, presumably for work details, but never heard from them again. At the Turnatoria, I learned the sad news about my dear friend and colleague, Emil Klein and his lovely wife, Manya. They were shot while he was playing the violin. An especially fine musician, and the same tragic end happened to my friend Paul (?) an outstanding concert pianist. Well, my family was not there. Now doubts were conquering my thoughts. After I gained some strength, I managed to go to building number two, an old schoolhouse.

INT: You said doubts were conquering your thoughts. What do you mean? You became afraid that they didn't...

MAX: Find them. That I wouldn't find them. Or they're not alive anymore.

MEMOIRS: I managed to get to building number two, an old schoolhouse, after wandering and asking everybody I saw, "Have you seen my family the Wagners?" Lo and behold, they were all sitting on the floor in one corner. The moment...(pause, crying). The moment of my greatest and happiest excitement came, when we kissed, hugged, and of course cried a long time. It was almost an unending excitement. We knew then that it was G-d's will for us to survive. Our ordeal, which has lasted up to this time, almost ten years.

INT: How old were you here?

MAX: For this moment of reunification and feeling free from our oppressors. How old? In '45, I must have been 29. This is what I wrote.

INT: So you were describing, you used the words, "unending excitement." And yet you're crying.

MAX: Well, because I'm reliving that great excitement. (Crying)

INT: So you cry from joy and you cry from sadness, and you cry when something is meaningful.

MAX: And moves me. If anything moves me.

INT: If something moves you.

MAX: You see, when we first fled Germany, going back to the time when we fled Berlin in the middle of the night, it was our decision. We had control over our own lives. We made a decision to go. My father decided, and we followed him. And afterwards it wasn't our decision anymore. We were controlled by outside forces. We had no (?), loaded on that train, we were prisoners of other people's decisions. We had no control over our own lives anymore. And we were happy, we survived in the end. Most people didn't. And so I'm grateful, but you lose a lot of people, over all these years, with all the running. See, it was different, I don't say it was less, but when people were taken, most people were taken from small villages of the towns of Poland and Russia, loaded on trains and taken to concentration camp, unfortunately, most of them didn't make it. But with us it was an odyssey of going on from years and years, from one strenuous, from one uncertain, unbelievable, unbelievable situation into another one. There was no end to it. Thanks G-d, the end was all right, but you never knew what's going to be. When we went from one town to the other town.

INT: It's almost like you can't believe that you found them.

MAX: Oh, that was unbelievable. (pause)

INT: When you stopped crying, what did you all say to each other?

MAX: Well, what did we have to say? We just looked at each other, we were happy to see each other. We knew we went through difficult times, and we talked about it afterwards when we relaxed and we had a little more time to think about it.

INT: So you didn't talk about it then.

MAX: No. No. At that time.

INT: So what happened then? Where did you go?

MAX: Well, then we went...Here, I wrote about it here. I wrote a brief statement about what happened. Let me read it to you. But do you want me to read it now?

MEMOIRS: The local Romanian authorities as well as the Russians had made an agreement to return all refugees, all surviving refugees to Czernowitz. The arrangements were made to return us, and when finally our turn came to board the train, it seemed like another miracle has happened, and the cycle of real surviving is closing. We only could estimate that the return to Czernowitz almost took eighteen hours.

INT: So like the next day you went back to Czernowitz or you were in Mogilev for a long time?

MAX: No, it was just a short time. Maybe like six, eight hours. I don't know. Time had no meaning at that time anymore. (laughs) You didn't count the time. You only counted time when you had no control over yourself. Once you felt free, it doesn't matter anymore, whether it was a day, an hour. It had no meaning.

INT: So then you went to Czernowitz, and you were under the Russian army, or the American army?

MAX: No, the Russians. Here we go to this point here. I'm writing here about returning to Czernowitz. Where was I here?

INT: Okay. I have it. Before I go back to reading from your memoirs, when you saw your family, and certainly you were overjoyed, did you notice any difference in them? Did your father seem different to you, your mother seem different, your sister or your brother? Or you didn't notice?

MAX: No, we were so overjoyed, you know, that knowing that we're all alive, except of course, my brother Jacques, who wasn't living anymore. I imagine for an outsider to look at us, we looked terrible, probably, all of us. (laughs) We were so dilapidated, terribly undernourished, you know, which I was. We all were. But we just were happy to see each other. There was no, we didn't examine each other.

INT: Did you tell me how Jacques died? Did you tell me that story?

MAX: We'll get to it, when you come to the individual profiles. We have it written. My sister Inge, too. I have it all written there.

INT: So I'm going to read from the return to Czernowitz.

MEMOIRS: It was early February, 1945. I returned to Czernowitz. We arrived on a horse-drawn wagon. The perfect picture of a refugee family, crumpled together, frightened, cold and hungry. Papa and Mama were full of hope. They spoke to us with great certainty that since we had survived so far, that the chances are good, and with G-d's help we'll make it all the way. Of course, the war was still going on. The Russians were taking men off the streets, putting them in uniform, and off they went to the front. As a matter of fact, women were also sent, as entertainment to soldiers, as far east as the Ural Mountains.

Now, let us go back to our entrance into the city of Czernowitz. The destination was a house from where we had been deported. It was situated in the Jewish ghetto section, and it was occupied by the Falik family, their daughter Manya, and their son-in-law Emil Klein. Emil was a concert violinist, and we were as close as brothers.

INT: Were you friendly with Emil from Germany, or from Czernowitz?

MAX: No, he was from Bucovina. He came from a little town in Bucovina. But I met him in Czernowitz. We had a great music center. Czernowitz had a tremendous, fine symphony orchestra, great conductors from all over came, from all over the world. It was a great orchestra.

MEMOIRS: Manya was teaching classical language at the local high school. At that time we had no news of the whereabouts of these families, or anyone else from this time.

MAX: Well, I knew that. This is wrong. When I came back, I knew about it already.

INT: Well, you knew about Emil Klein, and that he was killed while playing the violin. But you didn't know about other people.

MAX: No, no. I didn't know.

MEMOIRS: I will try to describe to you my impressions of the city as I remember. Although the war was still going on, the shooting had stopped within the city. The scars of the war were evident everywhere, physically as well as emotionally. Russian military personnel, as well as civilians, took possession of homes and buildings, and other property. The daily return of survivors, huddled together in silence, brought an atmosphere of gloom as well as hope. Rumors were spreading that those who wanted to be repatriated to their place of birth would be able to do so. Other more ominous rumors circulated, that the Russians needed more men for the front, and were going to search every home.

MAX: It shows you, when I said we didn't know what lies ahead. You see, we thought we were free, everything is fine, but certain dangers were lurking around waiting for us. Who knows? We were always worried what might happen next.

INT: And certainly you and your brother were at risk.

MAX: Sure.

MEMOIRS: Every morning people were meeting at the nearest Piazza, Plaza, to look for new ordinances and edicts issued by the local and central government authority. Those proclamations were mostly printed in the Russian language. Seldom in Romanian. With the help of those who knew Russian well, we learned finally, one day, that registration for repatriation would soon begin. That was enough food for thought to provoke endless discussions as to pros and cons, which lasted sometimes well past midnight.

INT: These were just discussions within your family, or just between all the people?

MAX: All the people.

(END TAPE SEVEN, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE SEVEN, SIDE TWO)

MEMOIRS: All of us who had the strong desire to get out of Russia had at the same time a terrible fear of declaring our true intentions. Here I would like to explain the emotional stress that we and others in the same situation were facing. We were liberated by the Russians from the Nazis. And that was good. We were able to return to Czernowitz, and that was great. Now we were looking forward to freedom from fear. The reality was that we were feeling the unsympathetic side of the Russians, and more than that, we were actually frightened of them. By declaring our intentions for repatriation, we risked to be considered undesirables, and certain deportation to Siberia. But if we decided not to register, and their intentions were sincere, we would possibly miss the only chance in our lifetime to get out of Russia. So we decided to take the chance and register. What followed were many sleepless nights and endless discussions amongst ourselves, and with others who were facing the same situation.

INT: You were living in the house now?

MAX: That house, yeah.

INT: That same house.

MEMOIRS: Finally, after about five weeks, an ordinance appeared instructing all those who registered for repatriation to assemble on a given day. I believe it was the middle of May, at the Piazza, at 7:00 in the morning. Every person was permitted to take one piece of luggage only.

INT: Did you have luggage?

MAX: We had a bag, whatever we had.

MEMOIRS: From that day on until our actual departure, the tension rose steadily within all of us. We were afraid to think of the possibility that the trucks which we were to board to take us to freedom, could possibly take us to doom. I remember the night before our departure. Papa went into seclusion, and prayed for hours.

INT: How did he do that? Seclusion. He was in a room by himself, in a corner?

MAX: No, no, he just...in a corner. Yeah. He was just by himself. He didn't want to be disturbed.

MEMOIRS: The rest of us were not saying much to each other, but having the same thoughts. After an almost sleepless night, we headed to the Piazza at 6:00 in the morning. By the time we arrived there, there were already 20 or 25 people assembled. Around 7:30 several trucks appeared. On each truck there were two Russian civilians, most likely political commissars. As our names were called out, we were instructed to

climb onto the trucks, and were seated on benches along the sides. We were very frightened, to say the least.

INT: Was this fear similar to the times with the Nazis?

MAX: Yes, it was very, very similar.

INT: So you had the sense that the Russians might want to destroy you, betray you?

MAX: Well, I don't know that we thought they would destroy us, but I think they might betray our trust, and take us where we didn't want to go, of course, to Siberia.

INT: So it wasn't necessarily for your life, but it was to once again be trapped and controlled.

MAX: To be controlled by outside forces.

MEMOIRS: Few words were exchanged. We were holding each other's hands, and our hearts were palpitating.

INT: So when your family went together, you were very close together, the five of you?

MAX: Yeah.

INT: The four of you. Five of you?

MAX: Five of us, yes.

MEMOIRS: We were waiting for the trucks to start rolling. As I am writing these lines I am actually reliving those tense moments, and I find it almost impossible to express those feelings in words.

When the truck started turning southwest suddenly, all the tensions and fears were replaced by tensions of joy. But we were not giving ourselves the freedom of displaying our feelings. It was about noon when we arrived at a place without a name. It was desolate.

MAX: There is a name. I can tell you, Dorohoi. I didn't think of it at that time.

INT: And that was where? In Romania?

MAX: Border, yeah. This was still Russia, that's a border town, yeah.

MEMOIRS: Just some abandoned houses, sheds and partial roofs. It was desolate. Dorohoi was the name of it. Abandoned houses, and sheds with partial roofs. The only living beings we noticed were some stray dogs. For eight days we lived under the most

enduring conditions. We were all undernourished with little or no protection against the almost continuous cold and rainy weather.

INT: So they just left you there.

MAX: Yeah. Wait, you'll see.

MEMOIRS: Because of the hope that we would be free people again, we summoned all our strength to overcome those terrible days. On the morning of the eighth day, we were told to gather our belongings, and start walking towards the Romanian border. The thought of what lies ahead gave us the spiritual and primarily the physical strength, to survive the two hour walk through no man's land. Finally...

INT: So you didn't have any guide with you. It was just the group of refugees.

MEMOIRS: Finally we saw from the fair distance some movement of people, and as we got closer, we noticed soldiers of the Romanian border police, passing through the borders without an incident. To our tremendous surprise, we were greeted by a delegation of representatives of the AJDC, which is what...

MAX: American Joint Distribution Committee.

MEMOIRS: They brought us clothing, food, and money. But more than the feeling that there were human beings on the other side of our world who cared for us, evoked an indescribable emotional ties. It was kissing and hugging, and many tears were shed for happiness. We felt that those great brothers of ours from America were sent to us like angels from heaven.

I do not remember how long it took us to calm down, but when we were finally ready to leave, there were trucks waiting to take us to any place we wanted to return to Romania. Tears come to me now as I visualize my father stretching his arms out to heaven, thanking the Almighty for another miracle.

Our destination was Bacau, a fairly large city in the province of Moldova. We were given a small apartment with some furniture, enough to give us the comfort we had not dared to dream of for so many years. I did not waste any time, and made contacts in musical circles.

INT: Why? You were ready to go back to music.

MAX: Yeah. I had to do something.

MEMOIRS: A teaching position was offered to me at the music conservatory. Within a short time I became the most sought-after violin teacher at the school.

MAX: Yeah, I have a document to show you. I was playing at that time (?). There was an organization called ARLUS, it was an association between Russia and Romania. And they sent us out to play, what they called music experimentalie, we educated the people about the composition of music, how it was put together, the sonata, concertos, and so forth, and it was a tremendous success. At one point, as a matter of fact, when I taught at this conservatory, it's very technical, you might not understand it. When I studied in Berlin, I studied at a very fine school, the Stern Conservatory, and we learned what is called the new modern Russian method, when in the past the German method was a strict method, the way they played...it was more legere.

INT: Lyrical.

MAX: Not lyrical, it was more technically legere.

INT: What's legere?

MAX: Legere means not as stiff. The opposite of being stiff. Legere.

INT: Fluid?

MAX: Fluid, yeah. And they never heard of this before when I came there. So everybody came to me.

INT: Came where, Bacau?

MAX: Bacau. They came to me.

INT: Bacau was Romanian or Russian?

MAX: Yes, Romania. It's in the Moldova. It's a large city.

INT: So they had never learned the Russian method.

MAX: Right. They had the Austrian method, and what happened, once we challenged the students how to play, how to make it easier for them to achieve what they were striving at, they were so excited about it, because it was an easy way to do it, because it was a time of transition till they get to that point, but anyway, when people play for years in a certain way, and then you make changes, it's not easy, but once you reach it, then you see how easy it is for people to reach the most difficult heights.

Anyway, so that made me very popular there.

INT: Why didn't you just throw music out the window?

MAX: Why should I throw it away? It's the only thing I knew. What should I do? This was my education, my background. This is all I wanted to get back. This fits me, it's my life, it was my life.

INT: So it wasn't just to be busy. It was to express yourself.

MAX: To express myself, sure. My inner thoughts, my feelings, my interpretive...

INT: Is it amazing to you that after so much suffering, people can still hold on to music? Does that make sense to you?

MAX: Absolutely. It was like a therapy to me. It was beautiful, the best thing I could have ever done. I think it was wonderful. It was like a refuge to me, it was something more positive. It was something happy. Something I wanted to do.

INT: So you didn't lose faith, that there could be happiness.

MAX: Oh, no. Absolutely. I saw it in ourselves. You see, when I saw, Yom Kippur night, and I made the pact with the Almighty at that time, and I said, "If I survive, I will serve you for the rest of my life." (crying)

INT: Was music a way of serving then?

MAX: Well, it's through that, yes, in a way, yes, because it gave me my mental equilibrium, my emotion equilibrium, which I was thinking. That without that I could never do anything positive anymore, without that equilibrium. I mean, I would be lost. I would be probably, who knows what I would have done to myself? I still feel sometimes like doing it to myself.

INT: So it was a way of recuperating, restoring yourself?

MAX: Emotionally, absolutely. It was a therapy, believe me.

INT: So it was a...weapon, against despair.

MAX: It wasn't a weapon, it was an instrument.

INT: It was an instrument to fight despair.

MAX: Yeah. It was an instrument to help me put back the past in a way, and for the moment at least, to continue to look positive into the future. And maybe I will make it.

INT: And you've experienced it as healing?

MAX: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. It's a very warming experience, if you can, if you get the help from the outside, and people really enjoy listening to you when you play, when you

express your feelings through what you're doing, and you feel that it has a positive effect on others, you know.

MEMOIRS: Within a short time I became the most sought after violin teacher in the school. I introduced a new method of teaching, a method that was developed by a professor, Carl Flesch, of the Academy of Music in Berlin. The emphasis was on the physiological aspects to replace the antiquated stiff German method. The results were so encouraging, that I received a professorship at the school at the age of thirty. Under the auspices of ARLUS, which stands for Russian/ Romanian cultural organization. In addition to my teaching obligations, I was asked to participate in concerts and musical lectures, which took me to many other cities in Romania.

INT: So your family must have also been happy for you that you found this. But your brother did not do this?

MAX: Yes he did. You know how we were going to play? They took us in open trucks during the night, not in a limousine.

INT: (laughs) And your sister did not play?

MAX: No. She played the piano when she was a child.

INT: But not at this time.

MAX: She was very sick.

MEMOIRS: The Russian influence and ideology increased steadily in every aspect of life. We felt it was time again for us to move on. We decided to settle temporarily in the city in the province of Transylvania, not far from the Hungarian border. The name of the city was Arad. It was a great feeling that we had the right to move on our own from one place to another. That feeling gave us slowly the self-confidence that we were robbed of for so many years.

Just before leaving Bacau I had the great pleasure of being introduced to one of the musical geniuses of that period. That was George Enescu. It was after his absolutely magnificent performance, I was invited to a reception in his honor. His physical appearance was quite pathetic, because of an obvious serious back problem. His upper body was bent over almost at a 25% angle. I was and still am delighted to have had this opportunity to meet this great man.

INT: He stayed in...

MAX: Bucharest. Yeah. Let me tell you something about him that was interesting. When I was on the way back to Germany, I stopped in Vienna. We were in Vienna in a refugee camp, and I bought a recording of George Enescu. Listen to this. Solo playing the Second Partita by Bach. I think the first and second. Recently I heard on the radio,

Sotheby sold a Bach partita played by George Enescu, they auctioned it off for $26,000, because they lost the original disk or whatever it was. So I called them up, I said, "I have that recording." I am waiting for them to call me back. For $26,000 I'll sell it. (laughter) I bought it, I have it right here. When I saw it, but he was a universal genius, this man. He was not only a great violinist, he was a pianist. He was a composer. You heard about the Romanian Rhapsodies. He took Romanian folk music, which is beautiful, magnificent, and made it into a rhapsody. You've heard it many times on the radio, I'm sure. This is so popular, everybody knows it. And he was also a great conductor at the same time. And he was married to a woman, she was from the noble families of the side of the king, I guess, and she was a picture to look at. (laughs) She was old, but that's nothing wrong with it. But she painted her face like a parrot. And she had a hat on, with feathers. She looked absolutely horrible! (laughs) And he was a very modest person. In fact, he wore a suit, which was not a tuxedo, just a plain suit. It was wrinkled. He sat there on the stage, sitting down playing, because he couldn't stand up. But he was absolutely a genius. He was a teacher of very famous people, like Yehudi Menuhin was his favorite student. And so many in Paris, and so many other fine musicians came out of his [teaching]. I am very fortunate I had the chance to have met him. I was too modest to ask him for an autograph. It wasn't important. Nobody thought about these things in those days.

INT: Not at that time.

MEMOIRS: Destination: Arad. A fairly large city in the northwestern corner of the province of Transylvania, close to the Hungarian border. I arrived there with a number of excellent recommendations for teaching positions, but I decided to teach privately, because our plans were only for a temporary stay there. It was in Arad that for the first time in such a long odyssey for so many years, the anxiety of freedom from the totalitarian regime we had endured had given me the impetus to experience a tremendous excitement of freedom.

Mama had relatives in Philadelphia, but we had no information about them. As one can see, our thoughts were already directing us to America. In spite of the fact that we at that point had no concrete plans of how to get out of Eastern Europe, into the new world, our mental and spiritual status were beyond the state of dreams. The possibility of realizing our goal gained greater momentum as the days and nights passed.

INT: This is about how long after liberation?

MAX: I'll tell you when it was: In the fall of '45. No, no, that was already in '46. We came in '46 back from Germany, and now we came in the fall of '46 to Germany. So this was the beginning of '46.

INT: So it's a little less than a year.

MAX: Yes. It took us about a year to get from one place to another. So it was the beginning of the spring of '46.

MEMOIRS: In Arad I shared a room with a young yeshiva student by the name of David. Our landlady, Mrs. Arradine.

MAX: A goy. She was not Jewish.

MEMOIRS: Already in her seventies, not Jewish, but most kind and sympathetic to us. She favored me with special Hungarian cuisine, and reminded me that I must gain weight, because I was still under 100 pounds. My healthy weight was 150 pounds.

INT: So you're alone here? Not with your family?

MAX: No, my family was in a separate place. I was here for myself. My family was there, too.

INT: Oh. But you just lived separately.

MAX: Yeah, separately. We couldn't find a place for all of us together in one place.

MEMOIRS: David was involved in black market dealings, and traveled continuously between Arad and Budapest, by trading special food products to Budapest, and returning with gold coins. Through David we made contact with Bricha, a group of young Israelis who helped Jews escape from Eastern Europe to Israel. The first step in that dangerous and complicated operation, was to help to cross the Romanian-Hungarian border. Once you were on Hungarian territory, the American Joint Distribution Committee provided for your help. In Arad we experienced an earthquake that sent everybody into the streets.

It was in late summer 1946 when we contacted to prepare for the first stage of our trip.

INT: So you joined Bricha?

MAX: Yeah.

INT: And you were intending to go to Israel?

MAX: Yeah. We had connections. Well, no, we did not know anything yet. We just wanted to get out of there. They tried to help us get us out.

INT: And this is your family, the five of you.

MAX: Yeah. All of us.

MEMOIRS: It meant crossing the Hungarian border from Romania into Hungary clandestinely. Finally, the day of our departure came, and we were advised to be ready at 1:00 after midnight for our trip. It was a hot night in August, when a truck pulled up in front of Mrs. Arradine's house. I had prepared a little suitcase and my violin to take with me.

INT: Where did you get a violin? Did you buy one?

MAX: No. Somebody gave me one, a very inexpensive one, it helped me. I lost it afterwards. The Russians took it away from me.

MEMOIRS: Mrs. Arradine escorted me outside, holding a little hurricane lamp in her hand. Embraced me, tears running down her cheeks. She said, "Max, I'm sure that you'll get to America and be very successful." I said goodbye to a very compassionate and wonderful person, but I was sad knowing that I would never see her again.

It was about 2:30 in the morning when we reached a narrow wooded area. We got off the truck, and the driver guided us for a short walk of about twenty minutes, and lo and behold, we were on Hungarian territory. A small bus was waiting for us to take us to Budapest. The planning and execution of this escapade was perfect. We were so elated that we cried for happiness, but the emotional climax came when we arrived at the main train station in Budapest. There the American Joint Distribution Committee delegates greeted us with a warmth that overwhelmed us. They escorted us to the Orient Express. They gave us train tickets to Vienna, food, money, and lots of hugs and kisses.

MAX: This was unbelievable. I remember this all like yesterday. (crying)

MEMOIRS: After calming down and settling into our seats, the train finally started moving out of the station. Then Papa raised his hands, tears coming down his cheeks thanking the Almighty. We were all in an emotional time, but wait. There were many hurdles yet to overcome.

It was a rather comfortable trip. We really felt for the first time like free people. Traveling where we wanted to go, doing what we wanted to do.

INT: So this was the first time you really felt free. Before that you were in Russia.

MAX: Yes.

INT: Or under Communist rule.

MAX: The same thing. That's right.

MEMOIRS: I would like to assure the reader that it was not difficult to adjust our feelings to a normal situation. As we got closer to the Austrian border, some anxiety overcame us, but we were not overly concerned. The reason for that was any time we were facing uniformed personnel a certain sense of apprehension and retreat came over us. We all had some documents given to us by the American Joint Distribution Committee, identifying us as refugees. The train finally stopped at the Hungarian-Austrian border. First Hungarians, and then the Austrian border police entered our compartment, checked our documents, and without any incident, we went on our way to Vienna.

Before the war, Vienna was one of the most beautiful cities in Europe. It was a center of culture, great musicians, composers and poets lived there and left their mark. But when we arrived there, the physical devastation of the war was evident everywhere. Our hopes were that our stay would be only a short duration, because our plans were already extending to America. We finally made it to a refugee center. It was a medium-sized building which at one time must have been a private home. We found there refugees from all over Eastern Europe, crowded in the rooms, hallways, constantly stepping over bags, luggage, people trying to get where we wanted to go. After the long procedure of registration, we were assigned a small area for our meager belongings and sleeping facilities. We were also given some money, and most importantly good advice after discussing our plans. I learned at the time that a close friend of mine in Czernowitz was in charge of all the refugee problems in Munich, and would certainly be able to assist us with our plans to go to America. So the decision was made to go to Munich.

The refugee officer promised us to assist, and told us that it might take several weeks before we'd be able to travel to Munich. During those weeks we had a chance to see Vienna and more importantly, to mingle with some of the Viennese people. We noticed that everywhere we went, people were showing their displeasure with refugees in a rather blunt way. No wonder, when you consider that Hitler was one of their sons.

INT: So you're saying the Viennese people didn't want the Jews back.

MAX: Very anti-Semitic. Oh! Are you kidding? Very anti-Semitic.

INT: But you didn't have the kind of incidents that took place in Poland. They didn't harm the refugees, they were just unpleasant.

MAX: What do you mean, in Poland?

INT: In Poland, you know, the Polish national, the (?) came, they would shoot the survivors that would come back.

MAX: Well, the Austrians are very much in favor of bringing Hitler in. The Anschluss, when he took over. They denounced some Jews, and they probably did it very happily. I don't know any particular case, but I'm sure they did it.

INT: You didn't come back to the Viennese people saying that they were sorry for what had happened.

MAX: No, no. Even today they are not sorry. No. That was it. It's common knowledge. We know this.

MEMOIRS: We finally decided to spend more time with our refugee friends than with the Viennese. We exchanged our experiences, which had a good and at the same time a very depressing effect on us, because we were now trying to focus only on what the future holds for us.

INT: When you say, "share experiences," do you mean among the family or with other people?

MAX: With other people, yeah, sure. We all were one, there. Everyone had a story to tell. It was a regular refugee camp there, believe me. Hundreds of people, where everybody stepped over. But it was still...

MEMOIRS: Finally the day came when we were called to the Joint office and were told that everything was arranged for our trip to Munich. We were given train tickets, again money, and good wishes. Packed our few belongings and quickly went to the train station. Here I would like to point out the fact that at that time, Austria was divided into four zones of occupation by the Allied forces. Vienna was in the Russian zone of occupation. Furthermore, we learned that before the train leaves the Russian zone, the Russian military police board the train and check all passengers. We were also given some not so encouraging news that in the past some very dramatic situations developed, when the Russians took some passengers off the train. Again we were experiencing great anxiety and hoping for the best.

When we arrived at that checkpoint, the Russians boarded the train, and the tension of all of us was at an all time...

(END TAPE SEVEN, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE EIGHT, SIDE ONE)

MEMOIRS: In order to give them the impression we were calm, Marcel had a piece of music in front of him. It was...a partitur of a Johann Strauss composition. My violin was quite visible, which we purposely left to be noted. It was a strategy which we planned because we knew that with prior contacts with the Russians that they greatly admired Johann Strauss and were great music lovers. Well, the plan worked. We were immediately engaged in discussions, switching from German to some Russian. They were visibly excited to talk to us. After saying goodbye we realized that they had not even bothered to check our travel documents.

The train finally continued to Munich. We were so relieved of our tensions that we started to laugh, and laughed for quite some time. It must have been our first laugh after all those years of tense and sad experiences. It was a good feeling, perhaps passing a test of our ability to return to some degree to normal human reaction. (pause)

The train was chugging along at a tremendous speed, and so were our heartbeats. Although oceans and continents away, we had the indescribable feeling of being closer to the fulfillment of our dream. When I say "indescribable," it was because under normal conditions, America had been a dream of the survivors of the Holocaust. That dream at that time seemed more and more a reality.

When we arrived at Munich, it was in late September 1946, a cold, rainy night. A taxi took us to a small fifth-class hotel. The next day we went to the Jewish refugee organization and registered. They assigned to us two rooms in the Ohmstrasse. Frau Hindermeiner, our landlady, was a short, fat little woman, with a very good-natured disposition. Munich at that time was a bombed-out city. Entire sections of the city were reduced to rubble. It was a very depressing sight, but I must confess of little concern to me, because I felt no sympathy for the Germans. Dachau was almost a suburb of Munich, where tens of thousands of Jews and others were murdered and tortured, yet no one at that time in Munich claimed to have any knowledge of what was going on there.

INT: You knew. You have heard all these stories.

MAX: Sure. Sure. But they denied everything.

MEMOIRS: The first order of the day was to find Leo Retter, a close friend from Czernowitz I mentioned earlier. He was, as I found out, heading a refugee organization, and a liaison between the IRO, International Refugee Organization. It was a warm reunion. We were reminiscing about the good times in Czernowitz before the war. After discussing our plans for America, he suggested that we should remain in Munich, and promising his assistance with everything in his power. He arranged an interview with the Department of Immigration of the American Joint Distribution Committee for me. I was given a job to work there, and it was my first chance to work with some Americans. The King's English I learned in high school in Berlin came to good use. After a few weeks I was in a position to handle my office work, and to communicate with my American co-workers well. I then realized the amazing capacity of the self-conscious to store information learned so many years ago.

Working in the Immigration Department gave me the opportunity to get all the inside information of the many difficulties one has to face in planning to apply to immigrate to the United States. First of all, there was the Displaced Persons Act of Congress, that required that a displaced person is a person who was forcibly taken during the war years from his original domicile and transported to another location. Secondly, in order to register for immigration to the United States, the person had to be at a given date in December 1945 either in the American Occupation Zone of West Berlin, or West Germany, or Austria. That disqualified me to even undertake the first step in registering, because we did not arrive in Munich until the fall of 1946. Furthermore I quickly learned of the many other obstacles and difficult situations some of the refugees had to face. For example, required medical examinations to detect lung or eye disease had created some very dramatic situations if one member of the family had either of those diseases. Many families were split, or in most cases had to give up their dreams of going to America. Furthermore, personal interviews with the CIC - the Counter-Intelligence Corps. Those officers were more interested in rejecting Jewish survivors about affiliation with any Soviet activity than looking more closely at the Ukrainians, who were actually collaborating with Nazis, trying to vanish into America. It was a screening process designed not to be helpful to the survivors of the Holocaust, but rather to make it difficult for them to meet all of the bureaucratic requirements.

As a consequence of the situation, a clandestine business of producing false documents for those who needed them for various reasons, to hide their true identity or their whereabouts during the war time. As an example, if a person was liberated by the Russian army and subsequently performed some service under the Russian occupation, he would rather not disclose this episode for fear of being suspected of having leanings towards the Communist ideology. Of course, exactly the opposite reasoning would have been more logical. Unfortunately, the CIC interrogator evaluated such a situation not by logic, but by limiting the number of Jews allowed to immigrate to the United States.

MAX: Does it make sense? That's exactly what happened.

MEMOIRS: In 1947 The Displaced Persons Act amended by Truman, advancing the dateline for registration from 1945 to December 1946. That was good news for us, but certainly tempered by the fact that we were foreseeing the serious difficulties with good reason. My sister, Ingeborg, suffered from a compulsive neurosis. It manifested itself as a need to constantly wash her hands from the dirt she experienced in the years in camp. This sad condition consumed her emotionally, and physically, to a point of exhaustion. As she explained to me, she felt an internal force destroying her, and she desperately wanted to put an end to it. I arranged appointments with the most prominent psychiatrists in Munich and Stuttgart, whose diagnoses were the same, and there was no cure. At that time we decided that if the CIC interrogator rejects her, no one will go to America. We prayed and hoped that her condition would not be detected. Ingeborg was my only sister. She was soft-hearted, kind and beautiful. And I had a special relationship with her. She talked freely to me, and there were times when the condition fluctuated to some degree of temporary relief. It was heartbreaking seeing her suffering with such intense inside pressure against her obsessive compulsion. And not being able to help her distract herself or relieve herself from such pressures. She suffered quietly, crying with indescribable depression. I will get back to Ingeborg with more details later.

When I finally received official direction from European headquarters of the AJDP, the Joint in Paris, we started to initiate the necessary procedures to register our application to immigrate to the United States. I made certain that all our forms and documents of immigration were submitted as quickly as possible.

INT: So here you were taking charge.

MAX: Charge. I was in charge of everything, yes.

INT: And your father worked along with you.

MAX: No, I did everything. I did everything. I handled the whole thing. I was the instrument doing everything for the family always.

INT: Always.

MAX: After we left Berlin. I'm the only one who writes about this; nobody else does it, so I had to do. Somebody had to do it.

MEMOIRS: The medical examinations, as well as the CIC interrogations went without any problems. Nevertheless, we waited for almost two and a half years before we received our papers for immigration. From that day on we tried to put the past behind us, and our thoughts were only directed with great confidence towards the future.

INT: For those two and a half years you worked...

MAX: At the Joint.

INT: In the immigration. And what did your father do?

MAX: They lived there. Nothing. I got rations, I got everything. He couldn't do anything. I did everything.

INT: Why? He was still a young man.

MAX: Yeah, but he didn't feel, you see, there are only two ways you could do it when we were there. You could either enroll yourself in the German economy, and do something for the Germans, or work on the black market.

INT: Or work for the Joint.

MAX: Right. He couldn't work. He didn't know English.

INT: What about your brother?

MAX: My brother played. He played there with some Jewish musicians there. He played.

INT: Uh-huh. So he did music. And Ingeborg just stayed with your parents.

MAX: She had typhus, she lost a lot of hair, she got it back, she was devastated. I can show you pictures.

INT: Your father didn't feel bored, unfocused?

MAX: No, no. My father at that time became very religious. Very religious from that point. They gave him the freedom now to do whatever he wanted to do.

INT: So in which displaced persons camp were you in?

MAX: In Weinheim, it was outside of Munich. We were there for a short time. First we went to, we were registered in Weinheim, which is not far from Munich.

INT: But you weren't there for two and a half years?

MAX: No, no. We lived in Munich.

INT: And where did your father pray?

MAX: They had a synagogue.

INT: Was it an old synagogue that was reopened?

MAX: I don't remember anymore. I really don't know.

INT: He had a chevra of men that...

MAX: Friends, old friends he met. People made acquaintances there, people his own age, you know.

MEMOIRS: From that day on, we tried to put the past behind us, and our thoughts were only directed with great confidence toward the future. Already we felt like Americans, strong, tall and proud, and very happy and excited to leave Germany. It was an indescribable high after all the years of despair and hopelessness. I would like to assure the reader that there was no time wasted in preparing ourselves to leave Germany. Every day seemed like an eternity until our actual day of departure.

On a beautiful day in the month of May in 1949 we finally were scheduled to leave Munich. Our train was a happy train, the passengers were one happy family of several hundred immigrants traveling to an unknown future, but with hope for a secure and better life.

MAX: I remember this like yesterday.

INT: Why America and not Israel?

MAX: Well, at that time, first of all, it was Palestine, and as a matter of fact, where I worked for the Joint next door was a building which housed the Jewish Agency, and we thought about it, if we can't go to America we probably would have gone to Palestine, I'm pretty sure. But we had family. That was the whole thing.

INT: And the only family you had was here?

MAX: In that respect, let me tell you something: If I would have known what I know now, did you read the book about the "Abandonment of the Jews"? If I would have known what I knew after I read this book by Wyman, I don't think I would have come to America. I don't think I would have. But it was the Goldene Medina, they called it. You had family here.

MEMOIRS: After arriving in Bremen where we were taken to a transit camp, which was quite adequate and comfortable, there was enough time to tour the city with its rich and old history. The camp resembled a beehive. Their apathy was at the highest level you could imagine. Finally, when our time came for further processing, the assignment of the actual departure date, a sudden hitch developed: we and another family from Berlin were the first immigrants to be processed for immigration under the extended and revised DP Act, and the immigration officers in Bremen claimed that they did not at that time have the official interpretation from Washington whether we qualified. Frankfurt, which was the headquarters of the immigration department, had to okay our departure. It was a tremendous setback. The other family from Berlin and ourselves decided to send, at our expense, a courier with special instructions to Frankfurt to obtain the necessary interpretation from Washington. We were especially concerned about Ingeborg's condition, which should not be detected, since all toilet and washing facilities were shared. It finally happened. We were cleared. On May 20, 1949, we boarded the military transport ship, General M. B. Stewart. We looked at each other, holding hands, with tears running down, kissing and hugging for joy, not really comprehending that we actually were standing on U.S. territory. The joy was overwhelming to say the least.

The majority on this transport were Ukrainian. That would not have mattered if it would not have been for the fact that most of those Ukrainians were actually not entitled to the status of displaced persons, and therefore should not have been permitted as émigrés to the United States. As it was established after the war, those Ukrainians were mostly deserters of the Fifth Ukrainian Army. The official DP Act specifically stated a person to be classified as a displaced person is one who is forcibly taken from his domicile and transported against his will to a DP camp, or concentration camp or prison camp. Thus by law, the DP status did not apply to those who voluntarily left their homeland. The American immigration officers were charged with investigating prospective émigrés to the United States, as well as CIC bureaucrats were in charge of clearing prospective immigrants on their background during the Second World War, and the possible role they played throughout that period. They were primarily interested in checking and rejecting those with even the slightest suspicion of in any way connected or working with the Soviets.

INT: But they weren't suspicious of the Ukrainians?

MAX: They didn't see them.

MEMOIRS: Conversely, those who were actually collaborators with the Germans, their past was intentionally ignored.

MAX: Do you know what's happening today? They're coming out now. They happen to find them now. These are the people who came here with us on our ship and other ships, these are the people who snuck in.

MEMOIRS: As a result of that biased policy, the United States Government, through the immigration officers, had extended an open door and a life of freedom to thousands

who not only took the freedom from innocent people away, but also were responsible for the murder of countless Jews. When the German army on their campaign into Russian in 1941 occupied Ukrainia, those people deserted their ranks and gave themselves up to the German army. The Germans on their return used them as so-called HI-WI's. This stands for Hilff Freiwillig. They were stationed behind the front lines. Because of a natural hate for Jews, which at times exceeded the degree of brutality even of those of the Germans, they became trusted allies. Many of the Holocaust survivors will attest to that fact. We also noticed that our travel companions were very fluent in German.

The crossing of the ocean, even so, almost all passengers, including the sailors, suffered from seasickness. Soon after we passed Dover and Calais, the seasickness was accepted with a certain amount of necessary occurrence. Even some of the anti-Jewish slurs by our fellow travelers were ignored, hoping that our ways would never cross again.

The most memorable and unforgettable moment came when in the early morning mist of May 30th, 1949, the Statue of Liberty slowly emerged on the horizon. Tears of joy were flowing. It was an overwhelming experience to live and see what was only a dream, and at that, a luxury of a dream a few years ago. But inner emotional experience in my opinion could hardly be expressed more. I felt that nothing could go wrong from this moment on.

Outside the New York Harbor, the immigration officers boarded our ship, checked our documents, asked many questions, and after several hours the ship proceeded into the harbor. We finally left the ship and stepped out onto firm American soil. I had a strong desire to kiss the ground, in order to relieve my emotional high, but that was physically impossible, because we were literally swept away by hundreds of people all around us. There were delegates from HIAS and from the Joint. Probably several thousand people were crammed together. From behind the fence which divided us from the people waiting on the outside, you noticed many people waving and gesticulating. We were sure that families from my mother's side were amongst those expecting us. We knew each other only by name, since we never met before in our lives. When we finally approached the area of the fence which divided us, we heard loud voices calling out our names. I'm trying to describe this encounter after so many years have passed, and I'm still shaking with emotion, thinking of the extraordinarily warm welcome the Rosners and Burgs had given us. It was a union of families which had never met before, but being at that moment united into a blood bond stronger than steel, endless kissing and hugging mixed by tears of joy. It was amazing that those tears of joy never run dry.

MAX: You feel something about it?

INT: I can feel it. How did you make contact with the Rosners and the Burgs? How did you track them down?

MAX: I have a couple of letters. I wrote to them from Munich after I found out who they were and the address.

INT: How did you find out?

MAX: Through HIAS. We knew them.

INT: So you wrote, not your father. You did all of this.

MAX: I'm the only one who wrote English. I did everything. I have the letters here, I'll show it to you.

INT: So you were the shaliach for the family.

MAX: That's right. I wrote to the one in New York, his name was Sam Burg. He was an optometrist. He had two offices in New York, two places. And his son David Burg was also there, and I wrote him in English, (laughs) and he couldn't believe it. He said to me, "Where did you learn English?" Anyway, then I wrote and I found out, then I wrote to Sam here, Sam Rosner, who was a dentist. You remember I told you about the Wachs's?

INT: Right. So how were these people related to your mother?

MAX: Well, my mother's a Rosner. The Rosners, all the Rosners, there were seven or eight kids. The old Ben Rosner, was my mother's uncle. His sister was Hannah Rosner, my daughter's named after her. My grandmother.

INT: Your mother's mother.

MAX: Yeah, my mother's mother. So what happened, I wrote to him, and he wrote me back, I couldn't believe it, very emotional. Then when I wrote to Sam here, he lived...See, the Wachs's had a ladies shop, I met him afterwards. I didn't meet the father. The father I think was an accountant. David and Ellis's father. We contacted Sam. He contacted Wachs, he had his office here. And he contacted him, he said we needed affidavits. So he would get the papers. Then the Burgs also prepared papers.

INT: So he was an accountant or a lawyer?

MAX: I don't know what he was. He was a lawyer maybe. I don't know. Just David and Ellis's father.

INT: So this is already Phil's grandfather.

MAX: Yeah, Phil's grandfather. And they know it. They know me. And the Sidewaters know me through Phil.

INT: Sidewater is the businessman.

MAX: Yeah. They're extremely wealthy people. As a matter of fact, a friend of mine who went to a concert to hear Itzhak Perlman, she was sitting next to him, to Moe Sidewater. She said to him, "I have special regards for you from Max Wagner."

INT: So Rosner contacted Wachs to help you.

MAX: Yeah. And they sent us the affidavits. Then at one time came the guy by the name of Schwartz. He was the head of the immigration department in Paris. He came in for inspection to Munich. And he came to our offices, and I met him there and I told him about our situation. This was before they changed the qualification date. It had to be that particular date, and I remember the Americans...

INT: So when you met with Schwartz, did you have to demand a meeting with him, or did you...

MAX: No, no, he came around to everybody. He came for good will. He came to see what was going on. And he came, and I talked to him, he said I should wait and be patient, he says to me, because there will be a change in the status. You can qualify later. There's something in the making in the Congress in Washington. At that time, the head of that Joint in Munich was a guy by the name of Haber. He was a banker, or whatever he was. He was a nice guy, but he wasn't as nice as, and he went back to America, it changed, a woman by the name of Amy Zahl. She was from England, she was an officer in the British army, or the air force, wherever she was. I have a picture with her and I. I have a picture of her in Munich. And as a matter of fact, I was scheduled for a transfer already, and I couldn't go, because they had no replacement for me. They wouldn't want to bring someone from America, because the local people spoke English, you know? So strangely enough, one day I was in Baltimore here, checking out of the hotel, and she steps in front of me, I didn't know who she was, I was in back of her. I said, "Amy?" She hugged me and kissed me. I took her out for breakfast, we had breakfast together. I have a picture of her. Very lovely woman. Very lovely, tall, very handsome.

I had a nice position there. I was actually a caseworker. And people came to me. I tell you one thing: we went through hell, people came to me with stories -- unbelievable. Unbelievable.

INT: Oh, when you were working for the Joint.

MAX: Unbelievable. I mean, we went through hell, but ours was an unending situation going from one end to another, one to another. It was continuous tension and problems, you never know where to believe, but yet we survived. But some people didn't have that luck. They went through one experience, that was the end of it.

INT: The people coming to you in Europe, the Jewish people, how amazing it was that you survived with your family.

MAX: Everybody was so happy. It was just here they told me. When we came here. You know, it was...well, it was amazing. I tell you, as I mentioned before, I attribute a great deal of our success in surviving with my father's zechus. This we had, I think. Going back to the Shatzer Rav.

INT: Tell me about G-d and faith and traditional observance in that time period after liberation. So that was '45 to '49. Four years.

MAX: My deep feeling was great gratitude to the Almighty G-d that I expressed all the time. Even if I didn't say it, I had a deep feeling of gratitude. Even today. Of course, let me tell you, when I came to this country and I put everything behind me. I tried to build a new life. I didn't have much time for anything else. I was just throwing myself into the American stream, into the American dream, to build a life, a family. It was a different day.

INT: But your father became...**very** religious.

MAX: Oh, he was very religious. When he was a youngster, when he was successful in business, he was not a Shomer Shabbas, I will tell you this right now. Also he went to the synagogue. Not only was he a great baal tzedakah, he was tremendous. There was never a Yom Tov in our house he didn't bring over, he went down to Berlin to the Jewish section, and he didn't take his car. We had a car, did I show you the pictures? With a chauffeur, and the limousine. He went down, he took a taxi. He didn't want to show off. (phone interruption)

INT: We were talking about your father becoming **very** religious. You were saying that before when he wasn't Shomer Shabbas, he was still a baal tzedakah, he had guests.

MAX: Not only that he gave charity, he adopted, I don't know whether I mentioned it to you. After the revolution, two Russian families, they are both Jews from Moscow, the Rifkins and the Herzels, they became like our family. And he gave charity. And there was no tax benefits for doing it like you have here. He was just giving it from his heart. He had it, he shared it, and he did it with great joy and happiness. Not only for Jewish causes, even for German causes. Germany was in a tremendous depression after the First World War. And he gave her truckloads of potatoes and coal, whatever they needed. He had many thank you letters from the authorities in Berlin, from the chief mayor of Berlin and other organizations.

INT: Now through everything, you sustained your faith in G-d, but you didn't keep up all the traditions. So here you are, your father was very religious, and you weren't so religious.

MAX: Well, deep in my heart I was religious. You don't express everything in the actions.

INT: Right, absolutely. Right now I'm really focusing on the actions.

MAX: Yeah. On the actions.

INT: Did your father and you ever talk about that? Did he ever say to you anything about…

MAX: No, he never said anything to me. He knew that I feel the same way he felt, about doing the right thing. That was important. So was my mother. My mother was a fantastic person.

INT: Was she also very religious after the war?

MAX: No. Well, yes, after the war. Yes, yes.

INT: She also became more religious than before?

MAX: Oh, yeah. Became a greater believer. Absolutely.

(END TAPE EIGHT, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE EIGHT, SIDE TWO)

MAX: ...and you suffered a great deal as a youngster -- discrimination because you didn't have the right clothing to wear like other kids. But you cannot compare this. I mean, we came down from whatever we had, from nothing, the dehumanization, the degradation of the basic human respect. We had nothing. People suffer poverty...they suffered deprivations. That's nothing. If you go through this I'm not looking for comparisons here at this point, but...

INT: So your father and your mother lived their lives in Philadelphia as Orthodox Jews?

MAX: Oh, yeah. We belonged to the Novoseller shul at one time.

INT: And what about your brother and your sister?

MAX: My brother is not as religious as I am. My sister, she had so many problems, very many problems. She reached a point where she could not return, she committed suicide. It was a terrible tragedy. My parents had to bury their own child. They have no name for that.

INT: So she lived with them all the years?

MAX: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

INT: Should I read the profile now? Does that make sense?

MEMOIRS: Papa and Mama, two wonderful people who made one great pair. Papa was extremely bright, energetic, and possessed an unusual enterprising mind. His diversified business ventures were leading him to great financial success early in his life. He was a trailblazer in merchandising concepts, fifty years ahead of his time. Starting from very humble beginnings, taking a pushcart with cigarettes through Berlin's various business districts, he became the leading wholesaler distributor retailer for domestic and foreign tobacco products in Berlin. He also was a partner in a banking firm, Eugen Bad & Company. Jointly with Eugen Bad and D'Avance. In addition, they owned all foreign currency exchange booths located all over Berlin. Through his banking business, he was always very much involved with stock market transactions in Berlin, New York and Montreal. I remember Papa mentioning names like Chrysler, Ford, and others, of which he owned a substantial number of shares. Mama worked with him together, exercising some control over Papa's risky ventures at times. Together they developed a check and balance system.

Papa was most charitable to worthwhile organizations, as well as individuals who needed his help. He extended a helping hand to many non-Jewish charities, especially during the great depression. I remember seeing in his office framed thank you letters from high officials in Berlin, including the chief mayor. His charitable activities were not going unnoticed in Berlin, although he never mentioned anything about it. All his good deeds were done for the sake of helping others, not for his own glorification. With all his financial success, Papa and Mama tried to keep a very modest, low-profile style of life. On many occasions he mentioned the fact that the Jews were at best tolerated by the Germans. His heart went out to refugees who fled the Russian revolution. He was instrumental in helping many in getting employment, and helping others getting to different destinations. I distinctly remember the names of two Russian Jewish families who fled to Berlin. My father literally adopted them -- the Herzogs and the Rifkins. They stayed with us, and together we took them as guests on vacation. Later the Herzogs went to Argentina, and the Rifkins to Paris.

INT: So they missed the war completely?

MAX: Who?

INT: The Herzogs and the Rifkins. Or they went after the war?

MAX: This was before. All this was before.

INT: They left before?

MAX: This is after the Revolution. I mean, these people weren't alive anymore, I believe, when the war broke out, the Second World War. The Rifkins went to Paris. Who knows what happened to them? We don't know. And the other ones went to Argentina.

MEMOIRS: Even after we fled Germany, and during our terrible times of crisis, Papa would take risks to help others. He never thought twice of himself when help was needed, only what he thought was his obligation. He was a true altruist. His greatest support came from Mama. He played a respected role in the Jewish life of Berlin. We observed the traditional Jewish way of life out of commitment for a continuation of something sustaining. Papa's impulses were always directed towards doing good from his yetzer tov, towards loyalty and a strong sense of responsibility.

My parents had a mutual loving relationship, not only in times of crisis, but during their best times of life. I can scarcely remember relations between my parents ever being seriously strained. Conflicts were rare and never lasting. If there was love after life, I'm convinced that their love affair is continuing. (Crying)

Ingeborg. It is because of our shared experiences, starting with an exciting and happy childhood, through the difficult and tragic times we had to endure, that I am able to sketch a close-up profile of my dear and unforgettable sister, Ingeborg. She was a genuine person with an inborn sensitivity and kindness, warmth and understanding, and most of all an amazing endurance to later in life fight her affliction until it seemed hopeless. She was the youngest of the four children, born to my parents on July 3rd, 1919. The long-awaited only girl gracing her three brothers, Marcel, seven, Jacques, five, and myself, three. Needless to say, my parents were overjoyed, and so were her brothers. She became the center of attention. According to what Mama told us later, Jacques and I played with Inge quite often together in great harmony, giving her all the advantages of brotherly love. She grew up a loving, caring, sweet little girl. After her elementary school, she went to a Lyceum for girls (a high school). Took private piano lessons, and later on joined her older brothers at the Stern Conservatory of Music. Unfortunately, the normal routine of our family life came to a sudden end when we were forced to flee Germany. Never was there any indication that would predict the terrible sickness that would possess her in later life.

Her struggle with the affliction, diagnosed as compulsive neurosis, became a struggle for the entire family. After returning to Germany in 1946, I arranged consultations with some of the best-known psychiatrists and institutions for Ingrid. The diagnosis was the same. There seemed to be no treatment at that time for such a condition.

MAX: Today they have a treatment.

INT: Today. There's also medication.

MEMOIRS: Since she was not accepted for treatment anywhere, subsequently, there was also no record of her problem. Later on, as I was working on the immigration for the AJC, I learned that if her condition would have been recorded at any of these institutions, she would never have been cleared for immigration to the United States. From that time on, it was simply heartbreaking. Our only hope was to somehow get to the United States and possibly find some help for her.

After arriving here in 1949 we were recommended to Dr. Winkelman, a psychiatrist of great reputation. He was an elderly gentleman who had great compassion for Inge. He treated her for almost six years without any compensation. She was institutionalized in various hospitals. She received the brutal electric shocks treatments, several trans-orbital lobotomies, but the end result was only minimal, except for some brief relief from the constant inner pressure. The lobotomies caused some unwanted results, and from that she developed epilepsy. Finally her condition worsened to the point that she tried several times to put an end to her life. It was a drama played out in my parents' small apartment.

Finally she planned an escape from life successfully, and this time it happened, as I recall the event very clearly. It was on the fourteenth of June, 1956.

INT: So she was very young. How old was she?

MAX: She was 36, 37.

MEMOIRS: A hot summer day. I remember vividly in front of my house, in my little garden with my wife SPOUSEWM, playing with my daughter COSSD, who was seven months old at that time. Suddenly I saw Ingrid coming towards us. She took COSSD in her arms, loved and kissed her, embraced all of us and kissed us, which was the normal greeting whenever we met. After we asked her to stay with us, she told us she preferred to take a long walk. That was the last time I saw my sister alive.

INT: So you lived close to your parents?

MAX: Yeah. We both lived close. We had an apartment.

MEMOIRS: After she did not return that evening we became alarmed, called the police, and simultaneously went out looking for her in the streets of Philadelphia, through the parks and suburban areas. Finally after three days we received a call from the police and were informed about the terrible news -- that they had found her floating in the Schuylkill River. Another devastating shock to all of us, especially for my aging parents. My cousin George Rosner took me to the city morgue for identification. As we were sitting in the waiting room, while George went inside, there also was a little side drama playing itself out in the waiting room. I became very restless, and started to walk towards the door, and as I reached the door, the complete ceiling fixture under which I was sitting just seconds before, came crashing down. Was it another miracle?

It was amazing to me the emotional strength my parents possessed to keep their sanity after receiving blow after blow. They lost my brother Jacques, my sister Inge, two innocent victims of the Holocaust, who would have lived a long and happy life otherwise.

INT: So you are convinced that her illness came from the war?

MAX: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. It started from there. (sighs) Absolutely. No question about it.

MEMOIRS: Jacques. This is the tragic life story of my dear brother Jacques. He was born on March 25th, 1914. As Mama told us, from early on in his life he was very tender and frail. But developed beautifully after the first few years. He displayed later on a softness and kindness which he obviously inherited from both my parents. In school he was a good and an eager learner. He also showed a great interest in music. So the second of the Wagner children was enrolled at the Stern Conservatory, following his older brother Marcel. As he grew up, I felt very confident in talking to him, without the slightest reservation, about anything an adolescent would probably not discuss with his parents. He was two years older than I, but never exerted any dominance. I will pass over the years until we fled Berlin and describe, as painful as it is, what led to his tragic end.

Shortly after we arrived in Romania, we settled temporarily in a small provincial town, Radautz, where my Uncle Herman lived and my parents owned a villa. It was a hot summer day when Jacques decided to go to the beach in a nearby town called Dornesti, about ten kilometers away from Radautz. Here's what happened on that fateful day. He told us that he had a rendezvous with some friends, and off he went by bicycle to meet them. My parents, of course, had no objections; after all, he was a twenty-year-old man already. When nightfall came, and Jacques did not return, we became alarmed, and ominous feelings overcame us. The road to Dornesti was not lit up at night, so we surmised that if he did not return before nightfall, something terrible must have happened. After the traumatic fleeing Berlin, any kind of scare put all of us immediately into a psychologically charged tension. We notified the local police, but they refused to do anything until daylight, probably because of incompetence, or other reasons. The same response came from the Gendarmeries (the State Police), whose headquarters was right next door to the house where we lived. It was the house of my father's cousin, Rachmuth, who was a local judge.

We could hardly wait for daybreak after a night of indescribable tension for all of us. The next morning, Papa, and Uncle Herman, and Rachmuth went with the gendarmes to Dornesti, and there they made the awesome discovery we were all afraid to think: Jacques's belongings were found next to the water, but not the bicycle. After searching the waters, my brother's body was brought out. It was especially, to Papa, a devastating shock to witness the bringing out of his dead son.

INT: Were you there?

MAX: (No answer can be heard)

MEMOIRS: The tragedy was so immense, that the entire city of Radautz was in shock. I remember the day of the funeral. There were literally hundreds of people, strangers we never knew, joining us on foot to the cemetery. Many stores and businesses closed as a sign of sharing our grief. The big question arose of what really happened to my brother on that day. With the help of Papa's cousin, the investigation by the police and the Gendarmeries never brought out any evidence of foul play. However, we had questions whether Jacques really died of drowning. First his bicycle was never found.

Furthermore, we had no idea who his friends were. They were not from Radautz, because we knew his friends, who were also my friends, because we all belonged to a Zionist organization. Furthermore, there were no Jews living in Dornesti, therefore, his friends must have been non-Jews. When Jacques was taken out of the water, they found there was a deep gash on his head. There is also another possibility: that he could have been drawn in by one of the many whirlpools found in this body of water. But the gash on his head, and the missing bicycle were questions which were never answered. Therefore we will never know the real cause of his death. And so ended the life of a charming and sweet young man, after whom the family has never stopped mourning.

MAX: We later found out there was Nazis involved. They had a lot of Nazis there.

INT: Has the family talked of Jacques over the years?

MAX: Oh, are you kidding? Are you kidding?

MEMOIRS: Marcel, the first-born son, the joy of my parents. He was, since early in his childhood, inspired by my mother to a musical career. Very bright and quick to understand, well beyond his age, difficult concepts, and he also possessed the ability to retain and memorize rather well. Mama used to receive piano lessons every week from an elderly lady. Marcel listened very attentively and watched all the movements of my mother's and the teacher's hands. As soon as the teacher left, Marcel went promptly to the piano, and figured out the melodies to the amazement of my mother. He was about eight years old when Mama decided that he should begin with formal instruction. After a few years of lessons twice a week, he progressed so rapidly, that the teacher recommended he should be enrolled in the Music Conservatory. Mama enrolled him at the Stern Conservatory for Music in Berlin. The school had some world-famous professors teaching there, like Claudio Arrau, Maxine Jacobson, Petschnikov, Frederic Lamond, etc. They were highly celebrated musicians and teachers. It was a long and hard road to be considered as a student by one of those leading professors. Not so for Marcel. At the age of fifteen, after having auditioned with Lamond, he was accepted as a student in the master class. Lamond, who was a student of Franz Liszt, and considered one of the foremost interpreters of Liszt, as well as Beethoven, was in a sense given a direct line of interpretation through these geniuses.

Marcel was taken in the inner circle of Lamond, who had an inner circle of only five students at that time. Marcel has given many piano recitals in school auditoriums which were received with great ovations. It was those successes which encouraged him to proceed with great enthusiasm his musical career. I am delighted that at this point in my life, as I am giving this profile of my brother, that we are still together and enjoying our advanced age.

INT: He is a musician, right? Where does he play?

MAX: Yeah. No longer. He is very sick. He is not well.

MEMOIRS: This is a story of personal life sufferings, tragedy, and bittersweet victory. I was born in 1916, son number three. I was the baby until my sister Ingeborg was born in 1919. The first three years of my life were years of special privileges as Mama told me. I was a quiet child, who seldom awoke during the night. My school years were uneventful because I was never fully awake for the first hour of the classroom. I am proud to be the beneficiary, inheriting from my parents some of the traits of compassion and sensitivity towards others. Music meant a great deal to me, playing as well as listening to. It has remained for me a source of intense pleasure, a need throughout my life. I took with me a lingering memory of my happy childhood, and my love for music, passion.

INT: This is not the end. I get to come back again, right, and ask questions?

MAX: Whatever you say. I wanted to leave this primarily for my children, but anybody else who would be interested, for posterity.

INT: Okay, so that's your homework for this. Because we stopped at New York Harbor.

(END TAPE EIGHT, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE NINE, SIDE ONE)

INT: [This is a continuation] of the interview with Max Wagner. We're meeting today on February 14, 1996, after many winter months when we haven't met. We are going to pick up Max's life history from the point at which he and his family came to the United States and they were united with their family, the Rosners and the Burgs. So please continue, Max.

MEMOIRS: Starting a new life with the daily challenges, and trying to catch up for so many agonizing, lost years, but absorbing to the fullest the gift of freedom and life itself, was inspiring me to look positively to new heights into the future. At times, however, it was difficult, when one lives in the shadow of the past while trying to forget the unforgettable.

I found employment in Philadelphia, and then in New York, and back in Philadelphia, in various fields, while at the same time teaching music privately. The most significant employment, however, was working for an insurance agency in Philadelphia. I am convinced that this connection was predestined. It happened there that through one of their secretaries I was introduced to my future wife.

SPOUSEWM was not just another date. She was a warm, charming young lady full of compassion, highly educated, almost eleven years younger. She was deeply involved in Jewish education, and at the same time an accomplished fine artist. She is a graduate of the Philadelphia College of Art, where she received acclaim from the professors as well as from art connoisseurs everywhere she exhibited her works. I admired her for possessing a rare analytical mind, which always was and still is a great source of

inspiration to me throughout our life together. Our relationship, which endured some glitches, finally reached a climax when on December 22nd, 1953 we exchanged our wedding vows in a traditional Orthodox wedding ceremony.

Thus a bond was forged, not only between SPOUSEWM and myself, but also between the past and the future. Facing these challenges together during those early years in our marriage, we moved several times from apartment to apartment with the few things we owned, trying to improve our living conditions. I was traveling while SPOUSEWM was continuing her career in education. In early 1956 SPOUSEWM broke the unforgettable news to me that she was pregnant. We were expecting a baby. Was it true? Was I predestined with SPOUSEWM to bring into this world a new generation? Was this the reason for my survival? Why me? After all, six million brothers and sisters did not get that chance. Again I ask myself, why me? Was perhaps the Shatzer Rav still looking after us, after me and the future generations? Who can answer this question?

The excitement grew the closer we came to the due date. SPOUSEWM, as brave as she was and always will be, worked almost until the final hour before we had to race to the hospital. Finally on November 30, 1956, about 11:00 P.M., the first day of Chanukah, we received our most precious gift from the Almighty. A new generation was born. (pause, crying) She was the most beautiful baby. We gave her the name Chana, COSSD in English, a treasure. She developed rapidly, was intelligent, showed a rare understanding in communicating with us very early in life. At six months she said her first word: not "Mommy" or "Daddy," but "more." (Esti does the same thing now.) A new world opened up for us. A new purpose, and of course the awareness of our responsibility as parents.

SPOUSEWM and COSSD taught me various duties a father must learn, and I was an eager student. My favorite time with the baby was feeding. We had a midnight rendezvous. That's when COSSD and I had heart to heart talks, just the two of us. I was offered a new sales position with a major corporation, which I was delighted to accept, although I traveled a great deal more. But I managed often to make day trips. On those occasions I left very early in the morning for Baltimore, Washington or New York, for my appointments, returned home the same day to make sure of my midnight date.

About the time when COSSD was eight months old, a tragedy befell our family. My sister Ingeborg, who suffered severe illness for many years and whose life I'm describing in more detail in my family profile, found no other escape from her many years of intolerable sufferings but to put an end to her life. When all efforts of medical treatments had failed to give her any hope, this soft, lovely, beautiful human being, to whom I had a special attachment, possessed the psychological and physical strengths to act on her own. How sad. (pause) This family drama I will carry with me for the rest of my life.

Now, new chapter. In 1960 we moved from our little apartment into our first home. How beautiful life could be. SPOUSEWM and I were completely absorbed in our new situation, a lovely family life. We painted, fixed what needed to be done in our home. We were excited. We had birthday parties, with puppet shows -- the actors, SPOUSEWM and I. In all, business was good, and we decided to try for another baby.

September 27, 1961, we were again blessed with a beautiful young girl. Her name is COSRJ, Malka. A happy, delightful, beautiful girl, COSSD was at that time almost five years old, was eager to help SPOUSEWM any way she could. I remember the times when I traveled more extensively, staying away for days. My homecoming was an excitement and thrill for all of us. As I drove into the driveway I heard the children screaming, "Daddy's home!" My heart was beating faster and faster, and as I opened the front door, loaded with presents, both my daughters were running into me, almost knocking me over with hugs and kisses. This I consider the greatest reward for all the past years of agonizing pain. At that time I felt compensated. If I could have foreseen those happy moments during those unforgettable years I would have been smiling at my oppressors. (Pause) In other words, if somehow I would have dreamt that the future would offer me such great rewards, I probably would have been smiling at my oppressors during the bitter years.

Now my daughters are grown. They're happily married to two fine young men I could have easily wished my sons. They gave me five beautiful grandchildren: GOSSJ, GOSSA, Barak, Arik and Esti. Now I'm close to eighty years old and looking back at all that happened to me in one man's lifetime, I'm rather pleased, and hope that the Shatzer Rav (pause, crying) will continue to look after my family and their future generations.

INT: Okay. Now that you've finished reading, let me ask you my questions, okay? First, just tell me, what year did you land in America?

MAX: 1949. May 30, 1949, Memorial Day. Everybody celebrated my arrival. (laughs)

INT: Oh, yeah? With fireworks. (laughs)

MAX: With fireworks, flags.

INT: Did you come into port at Ellis Island?

MAX: No. We came into New York. They boarded the ship outside Ellis Island. And from there we proceeded into the New York harbor. But the immigration officers came on.

INT: Okay. I'm going to sort of track what you read, and my first question, I guess, is about how did you set up your lives here? You met with the Rosners and the Burgs. Did you and your parents, and your brother and your sister all live together? Did you have different places to live? How did you set up life?

MAX: What happened, when we first came here, we all split up, because the family took us in. I lived with one cousin up in West Oak Lane, and my parents and my sister lived with another cousin in West Philadelphia. At that time it was still good neighborhoods. And Marcel lived with another cousin, too. Later on the cousins, they rented an apartment for us in South Philadelphia. And so my brother Marcel, I don't remember, he lived somewhere else. And my sister and myself and my parents of course, we lived in

that apartment in South Philadelphia near Snyder Avenue. They set it up with furniture, and food. They were very wonderful. The Burgs and the Rosners did everything together. It was a project.

INT: So the four of you lived together.

MAX: Yeah. Then I moved to New York. And I spent almost a year in New York. I had a friend of mine who came here a little before me before I came to this country. And he worked in an office somewhere. He said, "Come to New York," and I spent there a year. But...what I did there was I sold insurance there, worked for Mutual of Omaha. I worked in an office. I taught music, and I found some person, one man in that office where I worked, he was the manager or something. He was well-off. He invited me to his home, and I played for him, and he says maybe he can find a sponsor for me and do this and that, but nothing materialized, really. Then after a year by myself and having the very nasty experience at one time, I had a few girlfriends, and one time I went to visit my girl, I think it was Labor Day, and as I walked from her to the subway, somebody attacked me on the street, big Black guys attacked me in the face, tried to harm me. Anyway, this was one experience. And then I was sick from the food. I couldn't take it, the fast food, always eating outside. So I came back here.

INT: To Philadelphia.

MAX: Yeah. I came back to Philadelphia. And then I took a room in Strawberry Mansion. I lived there, there was an old elderly woman there, she had a son who was an attorney, his name was Sperling. Mrs. Sperling, a very nice lady. And I had a room at the house really, but they gave me a room to live in. And I lived there. My parents and my sister by themselves, they had a small apartment. So I started working.

INT: So in 1949 you were how old?

MAX: I was 33 years old. I was a young man.

INT: And when you were split up with the family, when you first got here, and you lived with different people, did that feel strange, or did that feel good?

MAX: No, we were constantly, I mean, we'd talk to each other, we'd be together. We visited them. Sure. Everything was just fine.

INT: But did it feel strange to be with these strangers, or did it feel good?

MAX: No, no. This is family. They were family.

INT: But you never knew them.

MAX: But they received us like family. They went out of their way. The Burgs and the Rosners. I mean, they didn't know what to do for us. They came in with a car, about ten,

twelve automobiles to New York, to bring us here. They made a big party for us. It was a beautiful reception. First we had a party in New York with one of the cousins who was an optometrist. And then from there drove here, and half a night we were celebrating. It was a big party.

INT: So it felt good.

MAX: Yeah, it felt very good. And I lived, when I came here first I lived with the Burgs up in West Oak Lane, I told you, and it was very interesting there, because next door to them lived a young woman. She was a harpist with the Philadelphia Orchestra. And she wanted to play with me together. One of the Burgs had a fine violin, he came over and we played. It was a very nice, cozy relationship. Then the Burgs wanted me to come and work for them in their factory. They had a big knitting mill. But I didn't like that. I don't like this kind of work. And...

INT: Did they accept that well? That you didn't want to work for them?

MAX: Oh, yeah, sure. They figured, they just wanted to show me something, if I wanted to work to make some money while I came here, they helped me. And it was, it was an experience. They were not unhappy that I left. No, they said if I feel I should, then I went to New York from there.

INT: In the challenge to find work to support yourself, did you feel confident?

MAX: Yeah, very.

INT: Did you feel scared?

MAX: No, no. I...

INT: You were fluent in English.

MAX: Yeah, I had no problem. No, as a matter of fact, what happened, once I was looking, after I came back from New York, I started to look for an ad in the paper, and I found, with these people, very fine people, the Oppenheimers, they had a big factory here, a clothing manufacturers. They were looking for a salesperson, so I applied for the job, and they were German Jews from way back, highly educated, a fine pianist and the (?) family was involved with them. They took me right into their family. And then after I applied for the job, he didn't give me the answer right away, because he felt my accent might be handicapping with the non-Jewish population here. But then she came running after me as I walked out. She said, "I'll call you." Or, "Call me back." I don't know exactly how it was. "And I'll talk to my husband." They gave me the job. As a matter of fact, when they had problems inside the operation, they wanted me to go inside and work running the office for them and not selling, because he got very sick, he had a heart attack in his office. And they took me right into their family, these people. Unbelievable. And I worked for them. In fact, I helped them liquidate their business, because after he got a

second heart attack, he had to move, he had to give everything up. One of the partners in his firm was a man by the name of Wexler, who was killed in an automobile accident. It all happened at the same time.

INT: And it was Wexler who...

MAX: Wexler was killed in an automobile accident. Then he was alone, and this whole thing was a real mess. So finally I helped her to liquidate the business. We sold everything out there, and from there on in, I wound up with Van Heusen. That was part of the connections. Because it was...growing up in this business, you know, and making a name for myself, which I did. Because once I went out selling for them, I did fantastic for them. They never did any business there, where I went. I went all the way up to Connecticut, and the New England states, and Boston. I went to New Jersey.

INT: So you would say you were confident?

MAX: Yeah. I have self-confidence.

INT: And you knew English. Did you feel like a foreigner?

MAX: No, not at all. Never occurred to me. People know that I was foreign. They noticed my accent, even today I can't hide it.

INT: But you felt like you were an American.

MAX: 100%.

INT: And would people say to you, "Where do you come from? Were you in the war? What happened?" Or people didn't talk.

MAX: Yes, many people who became friendly, they wanted to know who I am and where I came from, and I told them.

INT: Was it hard for you to answer their questions?

MAX: Not at all. Not at all.

INT: So it didn't bring back the pain.

MAX: No, no, because I looked forward only. I barely never touched really the depth of the bad experiences during those years. I just wanted to put it behind me. But "I was born in Germany, and we came here in '49," and tried to skip over all these years.

INT: Like a story. Just the facts.

MAX: Yeah. They only started to bring back those memories when my children and SPOUSEWM insisted I should write down those happenings, because little by little they asked me questions, and I had to answer them truthfully, you know. When they said, "Dad, write it down. Make sure you want to have it recorded," that's when I started.

INT: Okay. So you went off to work. And what did your parents do, and your sister and your brother? How did they adjust?

MAX: My brother played piano here. He played in various clubs.

INT: How did he make those connections? Easily also?

MAX: Yeah, also very easy. He had no problem making these connections. And Inge was home. She didn't do anything. She couldn't do anything. She was sick.

INT: "Sick" means depressed, right?

MAX: She had a neurosis, a compulsive neurosis. (Whispers) She was very, very sick. From the dirt and the shmutz, she just couldn't clean herself. I'm writing about this, how we went with her to a Dr. Winkelman, in the profile. And he treated her, but he over-treated her a little bit.

INT: And what was the effect?

MAX: The effect was she developed epilepsy from that. He performed several trans-orbital lobotomies, and that caused that, and then she was really...a complete mess. A complete mess.

INT: So she stayed with your parents.

MAX: Yeah.

INT: Did your father and mother work?

MAX: No, my mother didn't work. My father went out to work, and he got jobs.

INT: How old was he then?

MAX: My father, when he came here to this country, it was '49. He was 62 already. Wait a minute. 63.

INT: So he was 63 and started to work.

MAX: He started to work. At one time he worked for the Lubavitchers. He worked, I have a letter from the rabbi, from New York. I don't know whether Schneerson or one of the others. (inaubible)

INT: So he worked in Philadelphia for Lubavitch causes?

MAX: Yeah. For Lubavitch causes.

INT: Like fundraising or organization?

MAX: Fundraising. These are the things he did. And he walked his way through the city. He walked everywhere. The only time he took a bus is if he went to the northeast, he took a bus. But then he walked, and he'd know his way back. My father was a very unique person. He came here not knowing the language, not knowing anything about the city. He walked the city to learn the city. The first day he came in, he walked out. He wanted to see where I am and where I have to go, what's going on here. He was like an adventurer, you know? Not knowing the language.

INT: So he also wasn't frightened.

MAX: No!

INT: He lived with confidence.

MAX: Absolutely. He was very successful in his earlier years, and he had confidence in himself.

INT: He didn't lose that because of the war?

MAX: No. No. None whatsoever.

INT: So did he succeed in supporting himself, or did you help them?

MAX: No, he supported himself. If they needed anything, I was always there. I mean, I went shopping for them. I helped them, whatever I could. Believe me.

INT: And Marcel, did he also help?

MAX: Whatever he could. I don't know exactly what his problem was. Marcel never had a car. He never learned how to drive a car. So he always depended on people to take him, even today. So I am the chauffeur. I take care of him. I go to the supermarket, I do anything for him, and I do it.

INT: It sounds, though, that he was more independent of the family than you, is that correct?

MAX: Right. Correct.

INT: A little more distant?

MAX: Yeah, that's correct. I hate to say it, but he's a little more self-centered than myself. No question about it.

INT: So when he got here, he took off, lived on his own.

MAX: Yeah. He mingled with a lot of people from radio.

INT: So he knew he wanted music, and he went after it.

MAX: Yeah, yeah.

INT: And what happened with music for you? You wanted it, or you didn't want it?

MAX: I did want it, but I had to make a living. And I'd say there was no way I could make it.

INT: In music. But why, he thought he could make it?

MAX: Well, it's different for a pianist than a violinist.

INT: Oh. I don't understand this. Tell me.

MAX: The difference is in piano, with a violinist, you have to make the tone, if it's not there, you have to bring it out. And if you don't practice for years and years and years, you lose that touch. You can play it, but not good enough. Not good enough. I would have to practice day in and day out, and I didn't have the time to do that. I had to earn money, I had to do something. I was interested to make a life for myself, financially, so I can survive. And I had the idea I wanted to get married. He didn't want to get married, he was on his own. He never wanted to get in touch. He had friends, girlfriends, but he never wanted to get involved to that point.

INT: Did he ever get married?

MAX: No. No.

INT: Oh, so he never did.

MAX: He never did.

INT: Why do you think that was? Did that have something to do with the war?

MAX: I don't know. This is his philosophy. He'd rather have girlfriends with no attachment. He didn't want the responsibility, I guess.

INT: Did you ever talk about it? Or you just accepted it.

MAX: I accepted it, really. I don't want to bring it up, because I know it might be painful this subject for him, especially today, when he's old and he needed somebody to be with him, and he could have used someone.

INT: So did he ever say to you, "Max, why get married?"

MAX: No.

INT: How does he relate to your children?

MAX: Pretty good.

INT: Is he close to them? Or not so.

MAX: Yes, he is. Yes and no. Yes and no. He asks for them, he sees them. He comes on Yom Tov. He goes to them, they come here. We eat together. Marcel comes here at least twice a week. I bring him for dinner, or for lunch. Oh, yeah, he comes and plays the piano a little bit. Although he can't play much anymore, his fingers hurt. His arthritis. He's 83.

INT: But for him as a pianist, he really could work in music.

MAX: Yeah, he could.

INT: Was that hard for you?

MAX: Hard for me?

INT: Well, hard for you to accept that he had music and you didn't?

MAX: No, this had nothing to do with this. I felt very bad that I couldn't do it, because music is my life. Honestly, I'll tell you, I live by music. I live by my family, you know, but music is what gives me my intellectual, my emotional support. Music. So today I became a very good listener. Better than I was before. But when I hear something playing which I used to perform and did well, I say to myself, "Well, I wish I could have that dexterity today. I wish I could hold my hands like this." When GOSSA asked me a few months ago I should play for her, and I played for her, and I couldn't put my fingers around it, I did it, but with pain. But those days I didn't have the arthritis condition. But I just got involved in the business world, and I couldn't get out of it, and I needed the money. I wanted to be independent. I wanted to be independent. The first thing I did when I came, after a few months, I bought a car. I had a (?) I sold it, whatever it is, I bought a car, it cost me eighty dollars, an old car, an old jalopy. An old Ford T model, would you believe it? For eighty dollars. I bought it in Strawberry Mansion, we lived there for a while. The first thing I came here. From South Philadelphia, we moved to Strawberry Mansion. And I bought it there from somebody, maybe on sale it was about eighty dollars, but I bought it and I drove it around a little.

INT: (laughs)

MAX: And I took it to (inaudible) when I gave music lessons, you know, and I parked the car one block away. I was ashamed to park it, it looked so old. But I got somewhere I wanted to go.

INT: Why was being independent so important to you?

MAX: Because I wanted to be independent. I didn't want to pay anybody to drive me, to take me. I wanted to do it on my own. That's why I wanted my life for myself. I wanted a family. I was determined to get married and have children.

INT: Anything else to add about the family, family relationships, and adjusting to America?

MAX: No. As far as family relationship goes, Ingeborg, my sister -- we called her Inge for short -- was an unbelievable, wonderful person. Not because she's not with me, I tell you this. SPOUSEWM would tell you, (inaudible). At one point, when the authorities found out that she had an emotional, psychological problem, they wanted to send her back to Germany.

INT: Oh, once you were here?

MAX: Yeah.

INT: In Philadelphia?

MAX: In Philadelphia.

INT: In the apartment?

MAX: And she was here already. Somehow something came about, some document showed up somewhere that she was under treatment. And at that time I was in New York already at that time. I came running back here, and I saw at HIAS a Miss Corens, I think was her name. She was the head, she was an attorney at HIAS. In fact, about two years ago I found an announcement in the Jewish Exponent that she passed away. So I called her son up. Anyway, I went to her desperately, and said, “You've got to help me,” and she did.

INT: She smoothed the way for Inge.

MAX: My parents were desperate. They didn't want to go back. (inaudible) You see, what happened, in Germany itself, while we lived in Munich after the war. We were there for three years. Till '49. I took it on my own, and I went to somebody, the greatest psychiatric institutions in southern Germany I went to. I went to Stuttgart at one point, then there was another place near the Bodensee, near the Swiss-Italian border, there was

an institution there. I went on my own, without her, just to find out what kind of treatment. There's nothing they could do. They can't do anything about it. Today, she could have been saved. There are means and medications that could have saved her. Unfortunately...there was nothing there.

INT: That's probably true.

MAX: Dr. Winkelman, in good meaning, but never wanted to get paid for it. Not that I had the money anyway to pay for treatments…

INT: So he donated his treatment.

MAX: Oh, yeah, he loved her. He loved her dearly. He says, "What a wonderful human being," and he wanted to help her. He wouldn't take any money for it.

INT: What institution?

(END TAPE NINE, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE NINE, SIDE TWO)

MAX: Now it's a big institution there. But she was there, we took her into the Boulevard was a place, we took her there. What she went through.

INT: Friends hospital?

MAX: I think so. Yeah. Don't ask.

INT: Okay. Now this is a hard question, but let me try and ask it and see what the answer is. I'm asking for a description of your impression of how your parents changed as a result of the war. We know what kind of people they were before the war, because you've described them. How would you describe them as people after the war? What stayed the same, what changed? How were they different, how were they the same?

MAX: Well, actually, I don't think it was any great change happening to them. We always were a very close-knit family. The feelings for each other was undiminished. In fact, increased with age and we got closer together. You know, when we suffer together, it binds us together too, at the same time. In our case, that's what it was, anyway. And the only great change was my father, he became much more religious than he was before. He was religious originally, as a youngster. Then during the progressive years in Germany when he was so successful, he didn't have the time, but he still was extremely charitable, mostly to Jewish causes. Also to others, but mostly to Jewish causes. And when we came here, he was religious, went to Novoseller's shul.

INT: What's the name of the shul?

MAX: Novoseller's shul. I don't know the name of it. It was in Wynnefield.

INT: It was in Wynnefield.

MAX: Yeah. The old man. He liked him very much. My father liked him. He was very close to him. So it was...in fact, if anything, he was always warm, and very outgoing and full of compassion. And I don't know if that changed it, but if anything, it was more intensified, this feeling. I remember the night before my father passed away, I just came home from, I think it was Washington or New York, I don't know where it was. I came home, and I stopped, and my car was parked where they lived at the Wynnefield apartment house there. And I went over to see them, and it was Erev Shabbas, Friday night. And as I walked in, my father usually, whatever it was, he came right to the door to greet me. Escorted me always out. And my mother was there, I said, "Papa, how are you? Mama, how are you?" "Fine. I think they just need..." I don't know if they made a Shabbas service or not. But he, and I said, "Papa, I don't have too much time, because I'm running late, and SPOUSEWM is waiting for me, but I just wanted to say hello to you." (pause) So I told him that "SPOUSEWM and the children are waiting for me, and I can't stay long, but I just want to say hello to you and see how you feel." He said, "Everything is fine." And as I walked out, he said to me, "Forgive me for not escorting you to the door, because I'm tired." I said, "Papa, just sit there. Don't worry about it. I'll see you tomorrow." Well, tomorrow, on Shabbas morning, he died.

INT: How old was he?

MAX: He was 79. Just a week before 79.

INT: And you were?

MAX: I was 50. That's the day SPOUSEWM planned a big surprise party for me, fiftieth birthday, 30 years ago.

INT: And what was it? His heart?

MAX: Yeah. His heart, he just, the doctor came and said he had a massive coronary. That's what they said. Who knows? He just died.

INT: So that was a great shock.

MAX: Well, Saturday morning, I get a terrible phone call, ringing, ringing, emergency, my mother called me, she says, "Come right over, Papa just died." (crying, pause) I couldn't believe it. Yeah. It was a terrible shock.

INT: He died like a tzaddik.

MAX: Like a tzaddik, in his sleep. Mama told me that. He was sitting in a chair, and he told her that he's tired, so she said, "Why don't you lie down?" so he lied down, and she

took his shoes off, and as she took his shoes off, she don't know it, he was gone. His yahrzeit is, I have to go to shul this Shabbas. My mother, when she died, the same way. Same Shabbas.

INT: Same Shabbas.

MAX: Same Shabbas. Ten minutes after 12:00.

INT: How many years later?

MAX: Mama died in '79 and he died in '66. Thirteen years later.

INT: And Inge?

MAX: Inge died in '57.

INT: So you're saying that you didn't really see a change in them, that they were still the basic people they were before.

MAX: Mellow, wonderful people. They worked hard.

INT: Even though your father didn't have the business, the success.

MAX: No. He looked forward. Same what happened to me in '87. I was ready to take life easy, and I lost everything. That's why I'm still working. I can't look back. I look forward. This is a gift I think we have from watching my father. He walked away from everything he ever had, he owned, emotionally, mentally, materially, walked away from everything just to save his life and the family. And he never looked back.

INT: And never regretted it.

MAX: No way.

INT: Would you say that he was a guide somehow in your life until his death?

MAX: Absolutely. Absolutely. 100%.

INT: Did you ask him, did you check, did you discuss decisions with him? Did you ask his advice?

MAX: Always. Always. I told my children, I wish I had a father to talk to him. To ask him questions. I would say there's a guiding light, my father was a guiding light. And my mother was the softest...

INT: And the light never went out, even after all of the horror of the war.

MAX: Yeah. He looked positively to the future, whatever it was.

INT: How did the family, I guess I'm just recalling now that you did lose a brother in the war.

MAX: Yeah. Jacques.

INT: Jacques. How did the family talk about him, deal with him once here?

MAX: When we were here?

INT: Yeah.

MAX: I don't know. I didn't bring it up to them. I mean, this is like opening up a wound, you know? I think about this, sometimes many times, as a matter of fact. I think, if my brother Jacques would he come up right now and see what happened, Marcel, he would have a family, and he'd live in America, what would it be for him? If he is in heaven, he knows about it hopefully. But if he isn't, who knows what happened? How would he react to see this? Because when we left, we were running at that time.

INT: But his pictures were in the house, and...

MAX: Oh, yeah.

INT: Was there a yahrzeit for him?

MAX: Absolutely. Even today. I have yahrzeit every year for him. Inge died the same day he died. She committed suicide **that day**. (Pause) She joined him.

INT: Do you think she was thinking that?

MAX: Absolutely! She planned it this way.

INT: She knew it was his yahrzeit.

MAX: Absolutely. She planned it this way. She knew the yahrzeit. She knows exactly.

INT: What did that mean to her, do you think?

MAX: I don't know. She wanted to put an end to her life. She couldn't take it anymore.

INT: On the day that his life ended.

MAX: She wrote me a letter. I have the letter here. She wrote me a letter.

INT: Explaining why?

MAX: Yeah. I have the letter here. She wrote it in English.

INT: Could you summarize the letter? I don't think you want to read it, but could you summarize it?

MAX: In essence she wrote that she's sorry what she's doing, but she cannot find a way out. There's no other way she could continue living like this. She is possessed by a demon. She can't live like this anymore. And she just cannot tolerate to be suffering for herself and for the family. Oh, it was a terrible thing, especially after she developed epilepsy, it was a terrible thing. The whole thing was such a mess.

INT: Did she also write a letter to your parents, or was one letter for everyone?

MAX: No, one to my parents and one to me.

INT: Was the letter to your parents different, or the same?

MAX: Basically the same thing. She apologized. In fact, my father was supposed to go to Israel, and she writes in the letter, "Papa, go to Israel. Don't postpone your trip. Go." That's what she wrote. Let me see if I have it here. (Pause)

INT: So talking about that time, did your father go to Israel or not?

MAX: He did, yeah. I think he postponed it. I'm not sure exactly when.

INT: So it was just a vacation trip?

MAX: No, no, he went on a mission, I think, with the Lubavitch or something, whenever he went there. I think he brought back a Sefer Torah or something from there. (Inaudible)

INT: For the first time since the war?

MAX: Yeah, since the war, sure.

INT: Okay. Inge's death was sad and tragic for everyone, and I'm sure a shock. So how would you describe the impact on each family member?

MAX: Individually? I think for all of us it was a terrible shock. When she didn't come back that night, you know, we were running through day and night through the neighborhood, through the park, through everywhere, to look for her. Called the police. It took several days afterwards till they found her.

INT: Did it have an effect on anyone in the family? Did it really change their life? I mean you were devastated, but you went on with your life, your wife and your children, and your father and mother, did they go on? Did it change...

MAX: It was very, very sad. I can't tell you now anymore. I'm sure that they went through terrible. See, there's no way to describe the pain of a parent burying a child, you know? It's so unnatural. Because the other way around, it's not this way normally. This way, that a parent has to go through that kind of pain twice, you know, in their lifetime.

INT: Was it so hard on either one of them that you were worried about them?

MAX: Well, I was worried about them, but not to the point that I had to stay with them.

INT: No, no. I know.

MAX: I worried about them, but eventually...

INT: They went on, though.

MAX: Pain like this, it doesn't go away, but it dwindles as time goes on. You're involved with daily problems, besides that, you know.

INT: So your parents went on in their way.

MAX: Yes. With the pain in their heart, you know.

INT: Did anyone have guilt feelings that...

MAX: We didn't do enough for her?

INT: Right.

MAX: It's always natural. This is a natural thing. I thought maybe I should have done more for her, I don't know.

INT: But the family did work very hard to help her.

MAX: Sure. I did the same thing with my father. When he passed away, I said, "Maybe I should have done more for him," I didn't know. Maybe I didn't spend enough time with him. You feel these things. This is always like this. You can't...you can't deny it.

INT: Okay. Go back again. Building life in America. One more question before I ask you about SPOUSEWM. You said your father became very religious.

MAX: Yeah.

INT: Was that ever a source of conflict between you and him?

MAX: No. No! On the contrary, no. I supported him. No.

INT: But did he ever want it from you? Did he ever say, "Max..."

MAX: No. He never told me. My father never mixed in. I'm feeling the same way right now going in the same footsteps as he is. I can't do it, I'd love to. I'd love to become a Shomer Shabbas now, and I can't do it. It's too involved. I'd love to do it. SPOUSEWM would go along with me, of course, but she's not as religious. I mean, she likes the traditional things, you know, not from the religious aspect. More nationalistic, more traditional.

INT: But it was never...

MAX: A conflict between me and SPOUSEWM? No. No. She understands.

INT: No, not you and SPOUSEWM. You and your father.

MAX: Oh, no, no. My father never imposed on us what to do. When we were younger, of course, he wanted we had teachers coming in to learn.

INT: But no, here, in this country.

MAX: No, he never, never, never told my father I shouldn't go here, I shouldn't go there. No way. He never told us.

INT: Did he ever talk to you, or your mother ever talk to you about their faith in G-d and Yiddishkeit, and how they understood the war? Did they ever talk about it?

MAX: We went through it together, so.

INT: No, not **what** happened, but why, and G-d, and...

MAX: You mean having a discussion on this issue, why did this happen to us? Not really. Everybody thinks about it. We don't feel like offending G-d, why ask G-d why this happened to us. We should ask, but it's...(sighs). No, we didn't intellectualize it in any way.

INT: Or philosophize it.

MAX: Or philosophize it, no. We didn't.

INT: But clearly it didn't stop his faith.

MAX: Oh, no, not at all. On the contrary. People ask **me** sometimes. You know, I've noticed that many people who went through and survived became agnostics, or turned away from religion altogether, you know? Many people I know. On the contrary, I am very grateful that I survived and I feel obliged, not obliged, but I feel a deep drive in me to be grateful to the Almighty for what He has done for me, and for my family.

INT: That's a good lead-in to my question, because you said in your memoir that it was predestined for you to work for the insurance company, because then you were introduced to SPOUSEWM. Do you really mean, G-d's will?

MAX: I think everything is predestined. I believe that.

INT: Predestined by luck, predestined by...G-d?

MAX: Faith. I don't know G-d. I can't say that I can answer you fully right now. I think it's predestined somehow through some superior power maybe, because I feel in many ways where I would have gone instead of to the right, to the left, I wouldn't have been here talking to you.

INT: Right. But you saw that SPOUSEWM was...bashert for you.

MAX: Yeah. I'm positive. (laughs) I don't know if she feels the same way about me.

INT: Don't ask her. (laughs) But you felt that then and still today.

MAX: Yeah, yeah.

INT: That she was meant to be your life partner.

MAX: Yeah. It doesn't mean that our life was always 100% ideal with the relationship, you know, we had our ups and downs, but she has many strong views on some things which I don't have strong views, and that doesn't mean I don't respect her for this. She's a very strong-minded person. Very opinionated, and you can't change her opinions on certain things. I don't try to anymore. (Laughter)

INT: You used to.

MAX: Well.

INT: You also said before that you said marrying SPOUSEWM was like the bond between the past and the future. What do you mean by that?

MAX: Well, she helped me really...you know, I carry with me that package on my shoulders of the past, and through her eyes and through her thinking I changed a great deal. I look into the future more positively. I think she helped me a great deal with the future.

INT: How?

MAX: How? I don't know exactly how. Thinking the way she thinks in certain ways.

INT: I'm going to turn you into a psychologist with all my questions. What about her changed your thinking? How did she help change your thinking?

MAX: Because I thought she was many times when we had the, let's say, a discussion of something of importance, I thought her point of view was more valid than mine, or she looked at it differently, in a more positive way than I, or a suspicious way.

INT: You were more suspicious.

MAX: Yeah, yeah.

INT: She was more positive?

MAX: But she's also suspicious, too. She has that female intuition of suspicion. Not everything is going to serve as she believes, and I'm much more gullible than that.

INT: So she's optimistic, but realistic.

MAX: She's optimistic, but realistic. **Very** realistic, and I'm a little more between.

INT: Gullible and a dreamer.

MAX: I'm a dreamer. There's no question about it. I'm a Romanticist and a dreamer.

INT: And yet you have talent...

MAX: Did I show you a picture of me as a young person? Did I show you a picture?

INT: Yeah.

MAX: You see it in my eyes. I was a dreamer. I was always a dreamer.

INT: And yet you did well in business.

MAX: Yeah. Because I had no choice. I had to. I put my mind to it, I have to do it, and I did it. I was also very, very fortunate in one regard: I'm very sincere with people I deal with, and they sense it. And they give me an opening, you know, and I don't overdo, they say, here, establish a relationship on a business basis with someone, you know? I know when to back off. Somehow it's a personality involved here which, I hate to say it, I don't want to sound...very, how do you say it in English...snobbish in any way, but people like me when I deal with them. They just like me, they tell me this. And I like them, too.

INT: And that gives you a lot of satisfaction.

MAX: Yeah, yeah.

INT: In doing business, did you feel you had to fight against your basic romantic nature?

MAX: No, no, no. This is how I feel with people. I communicate, I think, in a very positive way with people, even though what I'm doing, I must tell you honestly, while I'm out there, those people, they love me, I can't believe it. Ask SPOUSEWM. She'll tell you better than I. I hate to brag about this and tell you, but they love me, because I feel the same way about them. And I'm talking about mostly non-Jewish people. Even the Jewish people.

INT: Do you have satisfaction when you have success in business?

MAX: Oh, yeah. Sure.

INT: Beyond just financial?

MAX: Yeah, yeah.

INT: You feel successful?

MAX: Yeah. That part, I feel very successful. Communicating relationship, forming relationships, whether it's in business or personal, I feel good about that.

INT: Do you sense that that's some of your father in you, or do you do it differently than him?

MAX: He had it in a different way, but he had the same success. I mean, I was offered, years ago, the position to work as a public relations man for a big insurance company, they offered me a job, and I didn't take it.

INT: Why not?

MAX: Because I was in business at that time for myself. (laughs)

INT: Oh. And you wanted that more.

MAX: Yeah, I didn't want to. I mean, we had no problem. I interact with people, I think, in a very good way. If I feel, I do feel that I'm maybe exaggerating in some way, or overstating it, ask SPOUSEWM, she'll tell you better.

INT: Okay, I'll ask SPOUSEWM in her interview. (laughs)

MAX: I can escape from a typical situation like this very easily, if I think what I want to do, and do it. (inaudible) Something is ruined, something is spoiled, I think: now how do I get out of it?

INT: You said that at a certain point you were looking forward to retiring, and then had business problems. I'm not going to ask you for the specifics, but how did you cope with that? How did you deal with that?

MAX: It was hard. It was very difficult, because I was set in a way that I said to SPOUSEWM, "You know what? Maybe soon we'll be able to take life a little easier." And then this thing happened, we lost a lot, and then I went into this, and I got into debts with this business I have now, and I can't get out of them. For a simple reason. Those who are interested, perhaps, don't want to invest the money and then have to work for it, too. And those who want to work for it don't have the money. So...

INT: So those are the facts about why it's difficult. But how did you cope with it inside? Was it devastating for you? Did you lose confidence?

MAX: Inside me? No. When I'm by myself I'm quite disturbed, because I feel it's time for me to find a little easier way to life than this constant daily going from morning to night with the health problems. But I have no choice right now. I have no choice. I bear it. Another cross I bear, as they say, you know? I bear this burden, and I have no choice.

INT: Was it hard picking up after that loss, and starting again?

MAX: No, at that time it didn't feel, because I figured, I'll do it again, build it up and sell it. My idea was...

INT: So you just moved forward then.

MAX: Yeah. That's what I want to do. I said, if you find the location, and you do a good job, build it up and sell it. It was thought out beautifully; it didn't work.

INT: Okay, so at that time...

MAX: You build it up.

INT: You just set a new goal. You just went after...

MAX: The idea was to work maybe for a few years and then sell it. Six, seven years, the seventh year, and I can't make a dent in it. It doesn't look like it will happen so soon. And I'm stuck.

INT: You said also before that of course every marriage has glitches. You want to tell me some of the glitches that you've experienced?

MAX: No, not really. If SPOUSEWM wants to tell you about it...just basically we are two different people. We come also from two different backgrounds. Completely different.

INT: Worlds.

MAX: Worlds apart, yeah. The appeal I had for SPOUSEWM, I don't know what she saw in me, but her appeal to me was that she was very warm, very intellectual, very beautiful, very charming and pleasant and understanding, that and warm. What she saw in me, I don't know. She always laughs about me how everybody liked me. (laughs) Maybe that was the reason why.

INT: That everybody else liked you?

MAX: Not everybody else, but she saw there were several people sitting at my feet while I talked. (laughs)

INT: She figured there was something good here? (laughs)

MAX: I'm not always crying. I'm just crying when I'm reminiscing. It touches an emotional nerve in me.

INT: I know. I understand. You know I understand.

MAX: I can be really pretty funny, too.

INT: When you got together, were you both aware of how different you were, and how different the backgrounds, or you didn't pay attention to that?

MAX: We didn't think about it.

INT: So the awareness of the differences came later.

MAX: Yeah, the difference, because she came from an anti-religious home, of course. I mean, they were traditional Jewish people, but nothing religious and I at minimum even, when I wasn't observing, I do now many things. I still came from a religious home.

INT: So you had to negotiate that.

MAX: I just did what I wanted to do.

INT: Did you...

MAX: And she wanted to take a trip somewhere, and it was on a Shabbas, I said there's no way I'm going on Shabbas.

INT: And she'd say, "Okay. We'll go Sunday"?

MAX: Yeah.

INT: So that worked out, give and take.

MAX: Yeah, give and take. Whatever it is. It is more now...(pause) Is this going to be part of my book?

INT: I think you should. You don't have to, of course, but I think a life story should be a life story. I think one of the problems with Holocaust biographies is that it's only the war years. I think it should be life. And the war years is the middle chapter. Because you understand...

MAX: There's more. Even I went back to Germany. You know they invited me as a guest of the city of Berlin. I didn't write about this.

INT: Well, you should.

MAX: Well, there's very mixed feelings.

INT: That's right. That's the point. The point is...

MAX: I will add it in eventually.

INT: Did you and SPOUSEWM have a common goal for the future, a common way of raising the children?

MAX: Well, SPOUSEWM was more involved with that than I. I followed her. She was in education, and she was very, very good at this.

INT: So you just sort of trusted her to make those decisions about school?

MAX: Oh, yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. We talked about it together.

INT: Activities and values?

MAX: Yes. It was mostly her. She told me what she was doing, and sometimes she asked me, sometimes she told me, and I said fine. What school to go to, what courses to take, and so forth.

INT: All of that was her department.

MAX: Well, yeah, to a degree. It was together, but she took the initiative.

INT: That's not unusual.

MAX: I like it with her, because I trusted her very much, her judgment.

INT: You said that when you had your baby, babies, which of course were wonderful times for you, you would ask yourself the question, "Why me? Why did I merit this?"

MAX: Exactly, yeah.

INT: Most people don't think that. They live life, they get married, they have a baby, they feel lucky to have a healthy...

MAX: If they grew up a normal life, fine. But if you didn't live normally...Why me, because...

INT: Could you put more words on that? What does it mean to be a survivor, and then to have a baby?

MAX: It's a special kind of gratitude you owe, I guess. You owe it to the Almighty that you were selected to, you were singled out to be able to perpetuate the generations now to come, to continue our family trend, whatever that was. To recreate what was lost, so much of it. To contribute, at least to a certain degree.

INT: So you felt that strongly then.

MAX: The two children, you have the two son-in-laws, with five grandchildren, they eventually will hopefully grow up normally and have their children, and this will continue like a domino effect, it continues and continues and continues. Who knows?

INT: So you were aware of that when the babies were born?

MAX: Oh, absolutely.

INT: Not just when you opened the chapter on the war years.

MAX: No. SPOUSEWM will probably tell you when you interview her, she will tell you probably, I mean, I didn't want any children, if she says it.

INT: She will remember that you didn't want?

MAX: Yes. That's what she says to me. I said, "I don't remember telling you this." This is one of the contentions. But she feels that I mentioned that to her. If I did, it could have been for the fact that I didn't want maybe people to suffer. But I don't think I ever had that thought. But this is one of the disagreements we have sometimes. She said, but I don't know that I ever actually pronounced this, or said it to her.

INT: But if you would have, it would have been to say that you wouldn't want your children to suffer?

MAX: To suffer and go through it. Because I see the world today, and ever since the Second World War it's happening. Some day we might run into a similar situation again, and now I worry about my children and grandchildren now. What will happen to them. So on the other hand, it's a difficult situation. Either you say yes, or you say no.

INT: Do you think you worry more than the average parent and grandparent?

MAX: I'm a great worrier. I worry.

(END TAPE NINE, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE TEN, SIDE ONE)

MAX: The downside of that is that I am a poor sleeper. I don't rest well at night. Never did, really, since the war years, you know? Waking up in the middle of the night, I start thinking right away my process of...working out things in my mind, it starts working immediately, and then I have a difficult time falling asleep again.

INT: The things you worry about, about the children and grandchildren, do you play it over in your head over and over again?

MAX: No, no, not that much now. Only when you discuss it like right now. Just philosophically we talk about this. But what worries me about, I'm getting older, and the business is working me over very badly. I'll give you an example what happened. One employee walked out on me yesterday, went crazy and walked out. And we treat him very well. And the other one, today he came to work and he called his wife to take him to the hospital, he got sick. So I had to do his work.

INT: So how did you get out of the store?

MAX: I finished, but I did the work, what I did I did do in the morning hours, and I had to go back. So these are the things which happen. You know, I worry about who's going to be in tomorrow. You know. What's going to be.

INT: Right. I understand how you worry.

MAX: It's a problem. Because when you are in a service business like we are, you have to be there. You have to perform according to our agreement with our customers, you know.

INT: With a smile on your face.

MAX: Absolutely.

INT: Okay, tell me. You mentioned a new purpose in life when you had your children. Can you explain more about that? Of course, you love your children, you want to take care of them. What does it mean to have a new purpose?

MAX: Well, the obligations you have, bringing a child into the world, you know, it's a great responsibility, to provide for them. Protect them. Provide for them the proper education, the guidance, to see them grow up decent, normal human beings. Both my children are a little resentful towards me because I over-protected them, always over-protected them. I mean, they went to an appointment, they had to go to school in the morning. I warmed up the car for them before they got in, I got out in the car warming it up in the wintertime so they don't go into a cold car. This is overprotection. I mean, this is the way. When they came home from school and I happened to be in town, I was here, I came over and wait for them on the corner, make sure they cross the street properly.

INT: So they tell you now that they're resentful?

MAX: No, they don't tell me this anymore. (laughs)

INT: They used to, when they were young.

MAX: "I can do it myself, Daddy. I'm not afraid." But I kept my eyes on them, you know? Because in my judgment, life is the most precious thing. The world G-d gave us, and you have to really protect it, and you have to watch it. As a parent, you have, I think, a very special obligation, first of all towards the children, but also to yourself, too, because if you don't take care of yourself, they won't have a parent, and it's their loss again. So it's important for everybody involved that we protect ourselves and them. And the responsibility to give them the best education you can. SPOUSEWM and I, we supported our children to the fullest with their education, and help, with everything else. COSSD for instance, was allergic in early childhood. Against milk, regular milk, with wheat products, you name it, almost everything. And we finally licked the problem somehow by...well, with a lot of doctor visits and so forth, and protect her. And then she went through school with flying colors. She graduated from Penn when she was twenty years old. And then she went to Jefferson and took another degree. COSRJ went to Villanova and took a master's degree, and the children got the best education we could afford to give them. And if I couldn't afford it, which I probably couldn't at that time, I still did it. So I paid for it afterwards, but they got it.

INT: Who did the girls talk to when they had problems? Who did they run to when they were crying?

MAX: It depends on what kind of problem it was. I think mostly to SPOUSEWM, I guess. Then SPOUSEWM came to me, or they came to me. It was mutually discussed openly amongst all of us. But I think at first, whatever it was, a little problem, or communication problem, I think they went to SPOUSEWM first. Because she was always more available than I, to begin with. When I came home, then I heard what happened.

INT: I guess at this point I just want to ask you some general questions, and maybe things that you shared before. But sort of to end the interview, let me ask you: as you look back on your life, what would you say are your successes, and what are your regrets?

MAX: That's a very loaded question. (Pause)

INT: This is a statement that Max wrote about life.

MAX: To the end, my life was a triumph over evil. Coming to America, trying as best as I was able to put the troubled past behind me and creating with SPOUSEWM new generations, to carry on our family, and more importantly our Jewish heritage, we consider that our most important obligation towards our people.

INT: So you would say doing that has been among the successes of your life.

MAX: This is probably the only success I had. (laughs)

INT: Well, it's the big important thing.

MAX: Yeah. It's summing up the whole period, my whole life.

INT: Regrets?

MAX: Regrets? I would many times think, what would have happened if we wouldn't have to flee Germany? Would we have gone on in a normal life, and where would I have been today, and what would happen not only to myself, but to the rest of the world? But putting myself in the center, I thought, I might have had a pretty good life there, too. Living with my music. Who knows?

INT: You certainly would have had your music.

MAX: Oh, there's no question about it. I was very successful in Romania when I came there. I had a lot of admirers for what I did. But it changed, it wasn't G-d's will. So I'm pleased and satisfied, first of all, that I reached the long life I have, that I reached that long. It was troublesome, but I made it, and I don't have to worry about getting old anymore. I'm there already.

INT: I know that at a certain point in time it became important to tell your children about the war, to make them aware of your experiences, and what happened in general. What messages do you want them to sort of keep about understanding what happened to you in the Holocaust for the future? I didn't phrase that well, but what do you want them to learn, I guess, what do you want them to learn about the Holocaust having happened?

MAX: Well, first of all, I wouldn't want them to live with that thought continuously, because this is a rather depressing episode in life, you know, so you don't want to carry it

as a burden with you. But I'm sure they're well aware of today what happened, and I think it's very much inscribed in their mind, and that whole era, and I'm sure they will perpetuate the episodes from my own life to future generations, so it cannot be denied. And this is the purpose of writing all these down, so that people cannot say some day, maybe in fifty years, no survivor, I mean, maybe ten or twenty years no survivor will be around anymore to testify as a witness to the happenings that can't be denied. Therefore it has to be written down, it has to be documented, and most of all, most importantly, the Germans themselves have documented their own atrocities, so nobody should really deny it, because it's in the archives, in their own archives, and we have it here in Washington.

INT: So you see it's important for them to be witnesses.

MAX: Yeah.

INT: But not to immerse themselves.

MAX: That's right.

INT: Be overwhelmed by it.

MAX: That's right. Don't, as you say, immerse yourself. Don't live with that thought continuously, it becomes a...an obsession.

INT: You, once opening the door to the past experiences, and talking about it and writing about it, you have said that has made you much more emotional. At times it's hard to sleep. That you cry. Someone might look at that and say, "Look, that's the negative effects of going through it."

MAX: There's some residue from all that. What's left. You live with that. I have spent many nights, and SPOUSEWM will testify to it, I wake up some nights screaming.

INT: What are you dreaming?

MAX: Nightmares. The past, the past.

INT: Is it...

MAX: I sometimes smell the uniforms of the Germans, of the Russians, their military uniforms. They all have a certain odor, you know? I can smell them, when you are surrounded by them.

INT: So if you smell it in a dream you start to scream?

MAX: Yeah, I get frightened. It doesn't happen too often lately, but it happens. Dreams, many times.

INT: Okay, let me ask you a few questions about that. Having gone through that, having gone through a time when you shut it away, so you lived without it in the front of your mind, and now opening the door to it, talking about it, writing about it, what's better? To shut it away? Or to have it be present?

MAX: I don't know. It's a difficult question to answer. I think if you could manage to shut it away and eliminate it from your mind, maybe it would be healthier, I don't know. But it's not realistic, it can't be done. And you just can't shut off these things.

INT: But you did it.

MAX: Well, I did it for the time being, because I was preoccupied in making a new life here.

INT: So you're saying that inevitably...

MAX: Yeah. It comes back to you. Because I didn't want to talk about it, and neither did anybody else, and I understand many people just kept it for themselves. But eventually when my children grew up, they wanted to know. SPOUSEWM wanted to know, and so little by little some of the episodes came out, and they decided to influence me to write it down. They said, "Daddy, write it down. We want to know about it."

INT: So how would you say, in general now, how would you say you have coped in your life with the horror of what you went through?

MAX: I think pretty well.

INT: But not just sort of a qualitative assessment, but how did you do that? So you'd wake up at night screaming from the nightmare. How do you get up, how do you go to work? How do you go to shul? How do you kiss your children?

MAX: It's too many things to think about. The daily challenges are so...that is the advantage of being involved in something which takes you from morning to night, the business, or whatever you do, you know? That your mind immediately has to switch over to something which is the active urge which you need. You have to make a living, you have to work.

INT: So by focusing on day-to-day responsibilities.

MAX: Yeah, that's exactly right.

INT: Is it a struggle to focus on day-to-day responsibilities, or does that happen automatically to you?

MAX: I think it's more automatically than anything else. (laughs)

INT: That you're sort of built that way.

MAX: You've got to get up, you've got to get ready, you've got to wash, you've got to shave, you've got to go to work. And then your mind is already engaged in other thoughts. You just...

INT: How about teaching your children about life and values and what's important, and meaningful, and about G-d and religion? Did you ever feel that it was hard to teach them these things because of the horror you went through?

MAX: Not at all.

INT: So what was important and meaningful before the war is important and meaningful after the war?

MAX: I think so.

INT: The war didn't take away...

MAX: My believing.

INT: Anything that...

MAX: My beliefs.

INT: Right. Your beliefs. Your values.

MAX: No. I even feel sometimes, I have feelings of, I describe this very carefully, about the Germans. You remember, I wrote about the fact when we saw the German prisoners coming by us while we were standing in the stone quarry. Remember how I described this? How I was in an inner conflict thinking perhaps I should take a stone and throw it at them, and yet on the other hand I felt that my oppressors became the oppressed, and I became, I saw the end of the line. The light at the tunnel, and I felt so terribly uncomfortable about this, because I should have acted differently than I did, and I didn't act at all, actually, I just felt sympathy. Internally I was caught in a dilemma here, not knowing how to act. I wasn't probably the only one. Many people probably had the same feelings. Nobody raised their hand against them. You saw they were...in terrible shape. They were dehumanized like we were.

INT: Do you have ongoing negative feelings towards Germans, young Germans, Germany?

MAX: Not since I went back.

INT: When did you go back?

MAX: It was probably eight, nine years ago. I was a guest in the city of Berlin with SPOUSEWM. I had great apprehensions of going. In retrospect I felt I did the right thing. I didn't want to go, actually, until the limousine came to pick us up to the airport. They paid for everything. They were very generous as this goes. But generosity is an understatement. It's not a statement really. I shouldn't say generous, because they took everything away from us. But the point is that I didn't want to go. I was hesitant, because I envisioned different Germans. But when we came there, the people we met which were mostly political leaders, the burgermeister of Berlin and the big senators at that time, were still divided. Berlin was divided. And they wanted to create, start a dialogue with us, telling us how they felt about this whole episode during the war. And they wanted to hear how we felt about it, and really, they wanted to tell us actually that although they were aware of what happened, they know all about it, but they're the children of those people, they're the younger generation, or grandchildren. And I felt we really couldn't hold them responsible for the deeds of their parents or grandparents. However, you cannot forget it, you know? You cannot forget it.

INT: So somehow that changed your thinking a little?

MAX: Yeah. But I thought when you read today in the papers the Nazis and the skinheads and all what's going on, I never would like to go back to Germany, even for anything. Only if I can collect the money that's ours. (laughs) I mean, only get the money out of them. They owe my parents. Did you read the new article about Mendelssohn? Felix Mendelssohn, the estate outside of Berlin, how the mayor of that little town there appropriated it for himself, he didn't want to let the Jews back into the city? They claimed they can't get it, he took it. This happened to my parents. My father had a house and a building. Well, anyway.

INT: Your politics as an American. Democrat, Republican, social, I mean, where did you...?

MAX: (laughs) Well, I certainly am not, I don't, actually traditionally since I came here, once I started voting, I think I voted Democratic. This was what my feeling was. I don't always follow exactly. You know, all politicians have their own agenda to fulfill, you know, and first of all take care of themselves before they take care of anybody else, and that's universal. It's all over the world the same. But I think in general, I lean more center left. Not left, but center.

INT: Liberal.

MAX: Liberal.

INT: We can still use the word.

MAX: I use it. I'm not ashamed of it. I mean, I like the liberal ideology. Whatever it is.

INT: Did it ever change? Or you're still the same?

MAX: I'm the same.

INT: When you look at the world today, are you worried about our future?

MAX: Yeah. I'm worried about the insecurity, the crimes, the murders, the lack of...feelings for human life. What is happening, how thousands of people are being killed and murdered. Wars all over the world. Human life has no value anymore. Yet it's the greatest, most precious gift we have. People are destroying each other.

INT: So you fear that that will affect America some day?

MAX: Who knows? I hope not.

INT: I know. But do you fear that somehow? Do you have a sense that...

MAX: Uh-huh. It's affecting already. You see how many people are being killed and murdered every day here in this country.

INT: You mean street crime.

MAX: Yeah. Everywhere. All over the city. All over the country. You take one little city, what's happening, and multiply it in all the major cities in smaller towns what's happening here. What's happening in Israel, people are getting killed. What happens all over the world, Blacks, Whites, everybody kills each other.

INT: Do you think America was right to go into Bosnia?

MAX: I think so.

INT: Why?

MAX: Well, I feel there are innocent people being murdered here. If they want to be independent, let them be independent. Why should they deny them, slaughter them because they want to become independent? Let's face it, Moslems are human beings, too. Why should they be paying for their life for what they wanted? Why should other people have the right to murder them in masses? Committing genocide against them, innocent people, women, children, men, everybody?

INT: So your experience is part of your opinion.

MAX: Yeah, I think so.

INT: Does it affect your opinion that the Moslems and the Bosnians were on different sides of the Jewish issue in the war, or that's irrelevant?

MAX: That's irrelevant, because I think that when you talk about human beings being slaughtered, innocent people, that's bad. As a matter of fact, there are many Moslems from Bosnia who live now in Israel. You know that. Israelis brought them in. Vietnamese people, boat people in Israel. I mean, we open the door for people when nobody wanted them. People are not garbage. You don't throw them away. You don't get rid of them. People are human beings.

INT: What's your...this is a quick interview on politics here. (laughs)

MAX: I don't know why you ask me this, because I'm not a politician, and I...

INT: I know. But you are a thoughtful person. What do you think about the peace process in Israel?

MAX: I think anything to stop the wars which have plagued Israel and caused so many unnecessary human lives on both sides, especially young people in Israel. I think anything to stop that war is worth to give it a chance. That's the answer, we should try it, I think. You know what the other side is. You can't trust them. But you have to be prepared then, I guess, that's all. I mean the other side.

INT: Be prepared in case.

MAX: If you can't trust them, you don't know what Syria will do, and if they really mean what they say, then we should be prepared, and retaliate if they start anything. The same with Jordan. I think they made the right move, and I think the best deal they have is with Jordan at this point. It might be better with them than with Egypt even. And Jordan, they need each other, and they have been needing each other all along. As little as I know about politics, but following our Jewish agenda, usually, you know, which is more to our heart than anything else, you know. I feel very good about Jordan's relationship with Israel, I'm very comfortable about it, and I think all Jews should be comfortable with it. It's very hard to undo through the sentiments they have created over the years in the generations against Israel from all sides, and now to undo all that somehow is not going to be easy because these people are like...injected with these anti-Semitic thoughts. Slanders and always thinking what the Jews are. It's hard to undo all this. And the children, the early forming years in school have learned that the Jews should be killed. The Jews are no good. Whatever they teach them there in Egypt even today, I understand. Propaganda is entering these young minds and creating tremendous hostility.

INT: So it's worth the risk to try for peace.

MAX: I think so.

INT: Do you think it will work?

MAX: I hope. I hope so. If there's a will, it will work. It might not work forever, but...

INT: You sound like a man who's against the death penalty. Am I right?

MAX: Yeah. Absolutely. I'm definitely against it. I think human beings don't have the right to take another person's life, no matter what the crime is. On the other hand, I think it shouldn't come to that point. You should give the people the means, to educate them, to not murder, kill for money, and do all these things. I mean, this society has to do something about this, it's a problem with the entire society.

INT: The Black/Jewish situation?

MAX: I'm very angry about that. I'm very angry. I'm very angry about Farrakhan. I mean, I don't know how the majority of the Blacks feel, but I'm sure there are quite a few who have great anti-Semitic feelings about Jews and their propaganda is being used as tools. And they know deep in their heart, many of them, that the Jews are on their side. The Jews are always with the underdog, and we help them, and we did help them, we marched for them, and did all kinds of things which no other people did. Unfortunately, it isn't being recognized anymore. So I'm very, very sad about this.

INT: Do you see that the problems for Black people, that they brought the problems on themselves, or that it's part of history's societal problems? Racism?

MAX: I think it's both. Just don't hurt people. But the trouble is, many of them don't have the ambition, and they just sit back and would rather do nothing. And let the world go by them. Life go by them. Generations go by them. Than doing something about it. I mean, I came here to this country with nothing. I have very little now, but I have a life. I have a family. I'm not a burden to anybody. I don't know what it means, unemployment compensation or anything like this. I never went to these places. I never burdened anybody for anything. In fact, I pay taxes, and take care for everybody else.

INT: But you support the social service programs that try to help?

MAX: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely.

INT: Okay. What other political or philosophical, or emotional or religious statements would you like to make to end this interview?

MAX: I think I said it all already. The questions you asked me, they should all be contained in that.

INT: What was it like to do this?

MAX: The entire interview? It was good. It was important, I think. And I think it will contribute something to dispel the notion that those terrible happenings during the Second World War never happened. And it did happen. I testify to that from my own point of view what I saw. I haven't seen everything. But I saw enough, I witnessed enough.

INT: Do you see that the rest of your life story, which is life after the war, and rebuilding life, also contains within it lessons for people? That someone can learn from what it took for you to...

MAX: To come to a new country?

INT: To rebuild?

MAX: To rebuild a life? Sure. It is not easy. It was much more difficult for people who came here without a knowledge of the language. This was my greatest thought in coming here, that I knew the language. But it is not easy. But it can be done. I think I'm the living proof. I haven't reached the height I wanted to reach, by giving a lot of charity away like my father did, like helping other people more than I did. Unfortunately I haven't been able to do this, but in my own little way, I did what I could, and could afford, and sometimes a lot more than I could afford. Because I had to consider my family first, my children. And I have been helping people. We just discovered recently, a cousin, my father's sister's daughter survived, and she lives in Rumania.

INT: You just found that out?

MAX: I found that out about a year ago, and we're sending her occasional money. We send her money. And COSRJ helped me out. She gave me, and together we (Inaudible) And do things, whatever we have to. We support, of course, Israel as much as we possibly can, and more. And more.

INT: It would be nice in your life now not to have any nightmares?

MAX: It's so many years with me, I will have every night nightmares. (laughs) If I didn't have it, I'd probably miss it. I have every night a nightmare. It's living with me. The mind plays pretty tricky things on you. I tried to eliminate those things in my sleep sometimes, I think of something else, and it just, it doesn't work.

INT: It doesn't work.

MAX: Do you go through this yourself sometimes? If something worries you, you want to get rid of it?

INT: I'm not a worrier. Rick's a worrier.

MAX: Yeah. He looks it, too.

INT: He's a worrier and he catastrophizes things. This is bad, then this is bad, and I wait till I have to worry. I wait. My mother's a worrier. But I wait.

MAX: So is SPOUSEWM. She doesn't worry. She worries. When she goes to sleep, she's out. She's out like death, G-d forbid. Sometimes she has a rough time. Last night, she had a rough night. Are you still taping this?

INT: Yeah.

MAX: Oh, for G-d's sake.

INT: We didn't say goodbye yet. I do want to ask you one more thing. One more question? I know that you feel blessed...

(END TAPE TEN, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE TEN, SIDE TWO)

INT: ...that you felt with your children you had a new purpose, and you wanted to go forward. Looking back, are you surprised that you were able to do it after what you went through? I know you feel lucky and blessed and fortunate. But looking back, are you surprised?

MAX: Well, I mentioned something to you, today I read about it. If I would have known in those days, what's expecting me here, that my children would run into me, kissing me and hugging me and knocking me almost over, I come home with a smile and bring them presents, so...

INT: Right. But looking back, are you surprised that you were able to do it? That you were strong enough to do it, that you were smart enough to do it?

MAX: I don't know whether smart enough.

INT: You had enough courage to do it.

MAX: I don't think I was surprised. I'm not surprised. I don't think so. Because I have confidence in myself, that's the one thing I must tell you. Because I know, after all, you interact with people. Everything isn't done by yourself; it's done with other people. And at that point I feel that I have the, I can interact with people, and I make friends. And I'm not asking anybody for anything, but I somehow I made an impact on people.

INT: So the human connection is very important?

MAX: Very important for me. I mean, this is, I think this is a great forte of me.

INT: A strength. And it means a lot to you?

MAX: Oh, yeah. I get satisfaction out of this. Very great satisfaction.

INT: Well, you have given me and the project a gift, with your story, and I'm very grateful to you, and we'll continue by, I'll give you your memoirs, and we'll talk some more, and I'll hopefully interview the family. But thank you very much.

MAX: I want to thank you for your patience, in giving me the chance to express to you my inner feelings and inner thoughts. I told my feelings and thoughts, both, because to express feelings in words, is not that easy.

INT: I know.

MAX: I hope it was a contribution.

INT: It certainly was, and I hope the book works.

MAX: We'll see. If not, still for the family, we have something for the family to keep.

(END OF INTERVIEW)