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# An Interview with Henry & Anita Schuster

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

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The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project

Oral History Research Center at UNLV  
University Libraries  
University of Nevada Las Vegas

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The transcript received minimal editing that includes the elimination of fragments, false starts, and repetitions in order to enhance the reader's understanding of the material. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the narrator. In several cases photographic sources accompany the individual interviews.

The following interview is part of a series of interviews conducted under the auspices of the Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project. Additional transcripts may be found under that series title.

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## Preface

In this oral history, the long married couple Henry and Anita Schuster recall the history of the 1930s and how they eventually met and created a life together. Their childhoods were distinctively different, but charted a future where they would inevitably meet.

Born in Germany in 1926, Henry recalls the dawn of Hitler and the Nazism. His mother would arrange for his evacuation to France, where he would not know her fate or that of his two sisters for a number of years. Along with hundreds of other displaced children, he escaped to America and lived with relatives in Louisiana where he finished his schooling and joined the US Army.

Anita on the other hand grew up with her family in New York. They share the story of meeting when she was 16, falling in love and marrying in 1948. They had four children and moved several times before settling in California. They retired to Las Vegas in 1993.

Henry's recollections include childhood memories of the Holocaust and its affect on his family, including the loss of his mother and one of his sisters. Finding his surviving sister Bertel (Betty Kale) after the war is a heartwarming tale of survival.

The Schusters are members of the approximately 300 members of the Holocaust Survivor Group that has settled in southern Nevada and Henry is President Emeritus of the group. He published his memoir, *Abraham's Son—the Making of an American* in 2010.



Anita and Henry Schuster (2008)

**This is Claytee White. It is March 1st, 2011. I am in the home of Anita and Henry Schuster.**

**Would you please pronounce your name and spell your last name for me, Henry?**

Henry, Dittmar is my middle name, and Schuster, S-C-H-U-S-T-E-R.

**And how do you spell your middle name?**

D-I, double T, M-A-R. I think that's right. I haven't used it for years.

**Okay, great. I am in the Schuster home here in Las Vegas.**

**I want to get started with your early life. Talk about where you were born, when you were born, let me know the date as well, and tell me about your early family.**

Okay. I'll start telling you about the town where I was born. It is part of the province of Hesse. It was strictly a farming community. There were 1300 people, population in the town, of which a hundred were Jews. We all had a wonderful life, as life goes.

I was born in 1926. I was a spoiled brat. My mother and my two sisters treated me as if I were a doll. But I was adventurous. I did a lot of things that children do, and I did some mighty dangerous things. We had a horse, we had a cow, and we had chickens, and we had the hayloft where we kept the hay. Our father could care less what was in the house, but his farm and his stables had to be spick and span. He would polish the horses' hooves. We had a beautiful carriage and a beautiful sleigh.

My father traveled some with the horse in the neighboring towns to sell his wares. Many times he went further and he took a train, a local train that would stop in the town of Sterbfritz (Germany). I know he went as far as around 25 miles where he had customers.

My mother operated a grocery store. It was typical like the country store, so was our country store. My mother was the most wonderful woman, just a wonderful person.

I am fortunate now that I have one sister that survived the Holocaust. My other sister and my mother perished in the Holocaust. My sister that is living lives in Santa Rosa, California. She thought I was her doll. I know that because she got a hernia and everybody attributed it to the fact that she carried me around when I was a little bitty baby.

**So give me their names.**

Okay. My oldest sister's name is Bertel, B-E-R-T-E-L. She changed it to Betty once she came to this country. My other sister was Margot, M-A-R-G-O-T. She was my protector. When the



Nazis came into power, even a year before they came into power, the little towns were hurt the most. So was the town of Sterbfritz where I was born. We children were being stoned and beaten by the non-Jewish children. Until 1933, we had a Jewish parochial school. It was a one room schoolhouse. Once the Nazis took power they absolutely cut off all assistance for the Jews of Germany. Also, in 1935, the edict came out from the headquarters of the Nazi that no one that owes money to Jews is no longer obligated to pay them. And also the teacher in public school, for some reason or another, took it out on me. Why, I don't know. But there wasn't a day that I was not punished, being hit with his stick that he would carry around. He encouraged the rest of the children to really act against us Jewish children. I, again, feel like I was singled out because -- my sister Margot was my protector. She was three years older than I was, but she was a very brave young child. She would definitely protect me from all the punishment that was doled out by our classmates.

The usual thing after World War I, it was, I would say -- what's the word I want to use? ...

*Anita Schuster: When people got together? Is that what you want to say?*

Yeah.

*The usual thing was that they got together, they played cards, they visited with one another, the community.*

**So this was the way it was before.**

*Before Hitler.*

**And everybody in the village are friends, Jewish people and everyone?**

Absolutely. And also, before that we had Jewish friends, the playmates, and we had non-Jewish playmates. But once the Nazi Party came into power, things completely changed. Before that it used to be an election. The governors, the mayors, and all were national. After Hitler came and they took over, it was now a dictatorship and the individual towns were granted positions of the German government. So was the town of Sterbfritz where I was born.

Hermann Göring, who was the number three man in the Nazi hierarchy, he went on a hunting trip in our area. There were a lot of wild boars. Göring came with his whole group. They were staying at an inn in a little larger town than Sterbfritz, which was about 30 miles from Sterbfritz, and they needed a weapons carrier and someone who knew the area. Well, the

innkeeper's son was 22 or 23 years old. They chose him to be the guide. Now, this particular young man became the mayor of the town of Sterbfritz and he had full power to do whatever he wanted to. So that's when life with the Jews completely changed. We Jewish children were forced to participate in the horrible inhumane stories -- I've got to stop.

This young man of 23 got the appointment of being the mayor of Sterbfritz. He was a Hitler Youth to start off with, and he was a typical Nazi. It was his privilege to punish. Anything possible, they had the Jews do. One of the things that stands out in my mind -- one person of each and every Jewish family had to report to a certain street, which was a dirt street. They brought in a load of rocks. And the Jewish men and women were forced to spread that. I went along with my mother because my father had passed away. It was very hard work, difficult work. But at the same time, people laughed and joked about it and made the best do. Now, this mayor would encourage the teacher to punish us Jewish children.

My father passed away in 1935. Before he died, fortunately he found someone who wanted to buy the grocery store. This man occupied the lower part of the building of our house, which, by the way, our house was one of the nicest in the town. My father built it in 1919. It was a three-story building. This man by the name of Kirst bought the grocery store, not living in the house yet. Maybe three or four months later he decided he wanted to take over the rest of the house. So he forced, actually with the help of the *bürgermeister*, forced us to move up into the third floor, which was more like an attic than anything else.

My mother's brother came to visit. He was from the town of Muehlhausen, he and his son, Gunter. Here this would be Gunther. They came to visit us. My uncle was known by the Jewish people of Sterbfritz. So a lot of people wanted to come and say hello. So they came through not the store but the house entrance and go upstairs to where we were living at the time. He didn't like the idea that Jews had the audacity to walk by his apartment. He made a sign. The sign was -- I'll say it in German. Then I'll give it to you. (Speaking German.) "The private entry for Jews is strictly prohibited."

My mother, as clever as she was, she snuck down during the night and changed one letter in the word *Juden*. *Juden* is Jews. She changed the "U" in *Juden* to an "E." So now it was, "The private entrance for everyone is strictly prohibited."

He called the bürgermeister, the mayor, and showed him what somebody did to his sign. So they were discussing it. I was in school. Here comes Kirst, the mayor, and the teacher. They participated in a conversation. When they opened the door for the teacher to come out, I could see those and I knew right then and there this is what's going to happen.

So he questioned me. The mayor took over. He questioned me, Who changed the sign? I played dumb and I said, What sign? The first thing, the teacher gave me a good slap and says, You know who did it; you better tell us. But I was really a brave little boy and I definitely knew that if I would say my mother did it she would be taken away right then and there. So they kept questioning me over and over again and I kept doing the same thing, I don't know what you're talking about.

So the teacher decided to let the class -- for the rest of the day was no more school. So the bürgermeister took me by my arm. We walked to the town hall where the jail was also located. Very seldom was there anybody incarcerated. But here was an opportunity to really make a mark. So constantly beating me. Then on the way the kids would throw rocks at me and yell. The teacher made me sing the most horrible songs about the Jews. He took me after maybe I would say at least a half hour and pushed me into a room, which was attached next to his office. There was no light switch in there. So he pushed me in there. It was pitch dark.

One of the Jewish classmates ran to our house and told my mother as to what happened. They were deciding what shall they do. But anyhow, I was so scared and just petrified that I constantly cried. I finally fell asleep. The next morning I begged my mother not to make --

A Jewish girl, a classmate, came running to our house to tell my mother what happened. I begged her not to make me go to school. Again, this Jewish girl came and told the story, what had happened. So my uncle who was visiting us and my mother, they decided to take me away from Sterbfritz. My uncle said he would take me home to the town where he lived. That's what we did. My mother packed a few things that I had and we left Sterbfritz. It was many, many years before I saw Sterbfritz again.

Another activity what happened, it was springtime and the public swimming pool was open.

**So is this before you left Sterbfritz, this story?**

Yes. This was before this business with the sign.

This girl came and told my mother what happened. My uncle Moritz Steinfeld agreed to take me with him to his town. We left Sterbfritz. As I said a minute ago, I hadn't seen Sterbfritz for many, many years. But somehow or the other, my aunt, my uncle's wife, she was a convert. She was a Christian and she converted to Judaism. They lived in an apartment building. Before he had me come in to say hello to my aunt, which she was, he asked me to stay in the hallway till he goes in and tells his wife what happened, that he brought me along to be with them. Even though she had converted to Judaism, she says what? I already have three Jews in my house; I don't want another Jew. But he convinced her. So I stayed there for about six weeks. Then it came to the point where she absolutely did not want me anymore.

So my mother made arrangements with a sister of my father if she would take me in. This was in a town called Burghaun, B-U-R-G-H-A-U-N. My aunt Rita was a wonderful woman. She just embraced me. I was crying. I was homesick. She embraced me. She showed me love and everything else. So life became much more pleasant for me.

**So your mother was able to arrange to get you moved.**

Yes.

**How did she know what you were going through?**

There were some people, Christians that were absolutely against the Nazis. My mother knew who they were. I assume -- I don't know this for sure -- but I assume that my mother wrote a letter to my aunt Rita in Burghaun. I think that's how it came about. So I came to be with her.

After about six months there, my cousin, my aunt's oldest son who lived in a big city in northern Germany, came to visit his mother and his brothers. He had two brothers there. He came and he drove. He worked for a department store. But the town was large enough that the businesses could be operated by only doing business with the Jewish population.

One other big incident that happened, the same teacher took us to the local swimming pool. The town had a swimming pool. He got the great idea that he needed a drowning person and he wanted the older boys to go out and rescue me. I begged. I said, I can't swim. He said (speaking German.) In other words, he yelled at me that I should go into the pool. I didn't want to. So he just grabbed me and pushed me in. Then the teacher decided, okay, somebody has to go out there

and try to pull me in. So one of the older boys -- see, in the classroom would be three grades. So I was there in second grade and the older boys were already close to teenagers. One of those older boys somehow or the other got me out of the pool. I was lying next to the pool. I think I was unconscious. I didn't know whether I was or I wasn't, but I think I was unconscious.

But this same Jewish girl that came before again came to our house. My mother and my oldest sister went out to the public pool. I was there. They saw me. I was alive, but I was full of water. Somehow or the other, I think I threw up and got rid of a lot of the water.

Now comes the third big incident. Somehow these people -- my mother would write a letter and give it to one of them and they would mail it to wherever I was.

While I was still in Sterbfritz, Weitling, which is the name of the teacher, decided to take the whole group out bird watching. We went out there. I remember he had his shotgun or a rifle. There was a squirrel up there. He aimed and he shot and killed the squirrel, trying to impress to everybody that he was the great teacher.

On that outing he took two of us Jewish boys, me and another one whose name was Hans Stern. He was going to teach them how to tie knots with a rope. In his knapsack he had a rope. He brought it out and he told Hans and me to stand next to two trees right there. They took both of us and turned us upside down and tied us to the tree.

Now, this Hans Stern lives in Rhode Island now. He was one of the kids that was tied up. When we were in Germany together to dedicate these monuments that we installed, he was there. We were talking about that particular time. So it's not something that I made up or anything. There was definitely proof to the fact.

Eventually my sister Bertel got a job.

*Tell how you got rescued from the tree.*

Oh, yeah. Bertel, my oldest sister -- this same Jewish girl came and told -- Bertel was already 14 I think at the time. So she wasn't at school. She came and she untied Hans and me.

Hans is now Henry. He changed the name. We took up our friendship again from when we were children. What was it, two years ago, five years ago we went --

*Anita: More. 2004. Seven years ago.*

Seven years ago. Now, Henry and I, we met. We met his wife and family. He was telling the

same story that I was telling. So these are facts that we have proof for that they did happen. My mother got a job to take care of an old lady. She had room and board. The lady died, so there was no more job for my mother. But my sister had gotten a job as -- what do you call that?

*Nursemaid.*

Not nursemaid. But she got a job to take care of two young boys whose parents were the directors of this Jewish old age home.

**So she was a nanny.**

*A nanny. Right.*

Yes. My sister got a job as a nanny for these two children whose parents were just ready to migrate from Germany into South America. So she had the job. My mother through her also was hired to work as a laundress and as a cook or whatever at this old age home. The people that were at the time directors, they recognized my mother's capabilities and everything else. She recommended to the board of the Jewish community of the city of Frankfurt that she is the person that should take over the directorship of this old age home.

**So did your mother and sister leave Sterbfritz?**

Yes. My sister Bertel went to Frankfurt. She got the job there at this old age home. My sister Margot got a job as a nanny for a Jewish dentist. My mother was given the job as the director of this old age home.

In the meantime, my mother tried desperately to get me into a safe situation. She was successful and I was accepted in a Jewish orphanage in the city of Frankfurt. At the old age home, my mother was director and my sister Margot also came there to the old age home to work. So they were right next door to where I was. The rear yards of both of those buildings had a wooden fence. We loosened a couple of boards so we could sneak through there. So I would go over there every day when I had some free time. My mother would feed me and I was with her and life was very pleasant.

The time came in 1938 that Germany decided that all Jews whose origin was from Poland, going back to grandparents and great-grandparents who lived in Germany and had made a successful life for them, but the ruling came out that all Jews of Polish decent had to leave Germany and go to Poland. So they actually picked up every Jew that they could find and pushed

them into Poland. Poland didn't want them, but there was nothing else to do. So they did go to Poland.

In 1938, in November, this young man who was going to school in Paris, his folks were pushed into Poland. But he was going to school and lived with his father's brother. He heard about what happened to his parents. So he decided he was going to get even. He got a gun. From where, I don't know. I don't think anybody knows. He went to the German embassy with the idea of he wanted to kill the ambassador. The ambassador was not in, but the third in the hierarchy was there. He took the gun and he shot this man by the name of Rob—I think that was his name. Whatever. It doesn't matter. That's when the program really started.

*That's when you had Kristallnacht.*

Yes. Kristallnacht is the night of the broken glass.

**Was that all over Germany?**

Yes. Yes, it was all over Germany.

**How did they orchestrate that? How did they program that so it could happen everywhere?**

The radio. The radio was a very powerful thing. Like in the town of Sterbfritz, one of the tenants in our house was an electrician. He was from some other city, but he came. They were stringing all the electric power lines into these small communities. He and his family lived on the second floor of our house. They were decent people. Whatever possibly they could do to help, they did. But if the Nazis would have known what they did, even those people would have perished.

So the world finally woke up and decided we must do something with the Jewish children of Germany. England took a large quantity of around 10,000 children from Germany into England. France had I don't remember exactly how many, but in the hundreds of children they took in. Holland did. Switzerland did. Belgium did. That's the famous Kristallnacht when they burned all the synagogues. They destroyed the Holy Scriptures. They trampled on them. They defecated on them. Just anything to aggravate the whole situation. Well, several of the Gestapo, that's the secret service, and the brownshirts—they came through all the Jewish properties, confiscated everything. They had free will. They could take anything they wanted to.

Well, in the orphanage where I was we had a built in synagogue, full-fledged synagogue with all the Holy Scriptures and all of that. Some elderly Jews who knew what was going on, they

were afraid for their lives. They came into the orphanage and asked for asylum to be accepted. Our director was smart enough that he told them don't come in here where the children are, go into our synagogue and see what happens. Well, they went into the synagogue, the Nazis. This was before they came into our dining room. They went into the synagogue. There were several Jewish men. Some had beards. I remember distinctly how they dragged one man by his beard right in front of us kids.

Then when the world woke up, as I said, and took these children, I was very fortunate. I was on one of the transports to France. This was a new life. I mean we blossomed, we children.

**How old were you then?**

I was just 13. No. I was going to be 13.

*Anita: It was before your bar mitzvah.*

Yes. I was going to be 13. That's right.

*I think he was ten years old.*

**When he first left with the uncle.**

Yes.

**Because he never really came back.**

*\*Well, he did for a visit one time. He came back once when this young man came to visit his mother, his aunt, he took him back. But that was a traumatic experience for him. He saw his mother and he didn't want to leave. And his mother had to make him leave because he was in danger.*

**Henry started to tell a story about the family on the second floor.**

*Anita: Yes. This man was an electrician. He came as an electrician to electrify the rural community. He decided he liked the community, so he stayed. He had a radio and he had communication devices because he was an electrician. So that's what he was trying to bring out. They had a radio and that radio said we will make sure that the Jews don't have anything anymore and we will destroy all the synagogues. That was the way it was proclaimed throughout the land.*

**So people knew, everybody knew a certain night that was going to happen?**

*Anita: That was going to happen. And then, of course, the mayor was informed and all his cohorts were informed and they were ready to do this. Now, some of the people were notified. One of his*



*cousins -- you ask him about this story. One of his cousins was notified that this is going to go down because he was a friend of all of these young men. So they told him to get out of town. So he went into the rural part in the countryside and he met a shepherd. The guy knew him and he said look, you stay with me when they come. So he told him to lie flat on the ground. The sheep all came around him and he was in the middle. They asked, Did you see that Jew come by here? And he said, yeah, he went that way. He saved his life. So there were people that did the right thing, but not everybody did right.*

*When we had the memorials, the ambassador that came as our keynote speaker is a friend of ours. He came to speak at this memorial.*

**Ambassador to?**

*He was the German ambassador to Madagascar. He was an ambassador in South America. He was an ambassador here in this country. So we know him. He told the people that were congregated for this memorial, he said, you didn't do anything bad, maybe, but you didn't do anything good, either. He told them that point blank in their faces. So this is one of theirs who told them that. So that's quite a deal.*

*I have been to Germany many times and we have very good friends there that have been extremely helpful to us. I don't feel any animosity. Neither does Henry.*

**Good.**

*And Henry always says, If you hate you can't love.*

**That's correct. Yes.**

*And he never has had any hatred for anybody. Now, he spoke at a high school in Germany. The kids asked him after he spoke, Do you hate us? And Henry said no. Well, we don't believe you—that was their reaction. They felt so guilty that they could not believe that Henry did not hate them.*

**After going through all of that.**

*Yes. And he doesn't because he's a loving man. Yes.*

**Amazing.**

*Yes, it is amazing. I mean, of course, he faults the people who destroyed his family. But to have that hatred around your neck for all your life, you can't do that.*

*It's an amazing time, that was. You know, you see what's happening in the Middle East right now. People are rebelling against these tyrants and you want them to succeed. You want them to succeed because you feel that they should have the same privileges you have.*

**Exactly.**

*Yeah. We watch that. Yet, we are fearful because if they are so anti-Israel, will they want to destroy Israel? This is a problem.*

**So you think that some of the people coming into power now --**

*Yes. I want to know what their feelings are. Are they still going to carry on that hatred? Are they still going to have that hatred? Yes. We fear that. We have been persecuted for many, many thousands of years. So, what else is new?*

**Wow.**

Translating it. Most of them said -- you know, I would ask how much will you charge? Three to \$4,000. It was out of the question. I mean we could have paid it, but we didn't want to do that. So I talked to our friend Sigrid Sommer. Sigrid was the consul for Germany here in Las Vegas. She is a fine, fine lady. We had been correspond -- relationship between us --  
*She's a good friend. She's a good friend.*

Yeah. She says you know what? There's Dr. Villanueva in the German department. Why don't you talk to him? She called him first to introduce me. I met Dan and I said how much will you charge me for doing it? He says nothing.

*He said it would be an honor to do it.*

Yeah. And believe me, it's a big job to do that.

**This is a very healthy sized book.**

Yeah.

*And not only that, it's an emotional book.*

**Yes. Yes.**

Yeah. And the thing is you just can't put the bare facts out like that. They have to be readable.

**Yes. It has to be in context.**

Yes. Daniel did a fabulous job. He did have some help with Sigrid Sommer, more or less editing some of the things. Now I consider Daniel a good friend of ours. So does Anita.

*Yes, I do. He's like a son of ours.*

**Good. Good.**

You see that E-mail there of all of the things. He segregated it. I have a lot, lot more. Philadelphia has a new Jewish museum. They would like to have whatever they can get. I would much prefer, if UNLV is interested, to give it to UNLV. Now, it's a lot of paper, not only my and Anita's life but life in general, how it affects the Jews in the United States.

Then with this Cuban situation, the people had a visa to go to Cuba from Germany. They took a ship -- are you familiar with that? No. It was a ship of 900 people who had the money.

*[St. Louis, German transatlantic line episode.]*

**So all 900 were from the same place? All 900 came from the same area?**

I don't think so. I think throughout. A lot of children were on there, too. Well, they had the visas to go. So when they came to Havana, they wouldn't let them get off the ship. It built from nothing to a big story. Roosevelt was afraid. He didn't intervene at all. But Mrs. Roosevelt. In the papers that I have here is -- so they tried to come to the United States. It just so happened that the captain of that German passenger ship was a very humane, very fine man. The ship went up and down the East Coast, hoping that the State Department would allow these people to come in. They did take the children. Part of the story when we record I will tell you how that happened. But Roosevelt absolutely would not. The State Department was worse. Part of my story is my dealing with the State Department. I mean those things you'll see in the book. It's all of that. But anyhow, we can continue now.

There were 11 of us from Frankfurt from the orphanage that were on a children's transport from Germany to France. I was one of the 11. Madame Rothschild greeted us. She made us welcome in France. Then there was an organization called OSE. They established several homes for refugee children to come and live. I was fortunate to be part of that group. That's how I came to the United States.

**So how long were you in France?**

Two years.

**What was the living situation like?**

For most in France was good. It was. First of all, we had plenty to eat. There was not only the 11

of us from Frankfurt. There were kids from Vienna. There were kids from Berlin and kids from Czechoslovakia and all of that that came.

**So which city in France were you?**

We were in Paris. In the meantime, these homes were established by this organization, the OSE.

What does that stand for?

*I don't know how to say that in French.*

They had two homes. One was for little kids and the other group was for children who came from orthodox Jewish homes. I was one from the orthodox Jewish home. We had a great life, believe me. We had ball games. We had dances. We had plenty of food. We were just greeted by the neighboring people that lived near these homes.

All together I think there were around 600 children that they established. When the time came that things were going to go from bad to worse, even in France, the OSE did a fabulous job of taking us children from the various homes into unoccupied France. There was the war between Germany and France, and England was there. They did a fabulous job situating us in free France. We had plays. We had all kinds of ball games. We did not have official schooling. There were a few who went to the French schools and then they established trade schools. They offered for the boys cabinet making, woodworking, and for the girls knitting and sewing.

The war between France and Germany started. Everybody wanted to -- the Germans were going to Paris.

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**This is Claytee White. I am again in the home of Anita and Henry Schuster. It is March 3rd, 2011. Mr. Schuster is going to start right now by telling us a little more about the teacher that he talked about the other day.**

Once the Jewish school was closed -- the reason this Jewish school had to be closed was because in Germany at the time all schools were subsidized by the federal government. Naturally, being such horrendous anti-humanity -- let's put it that way -- we had to attend the public school.

Now, the teacher by the name of Weitling, before the Nazis came into power, he was a great friend of the Jewish people in Sterbfritz. In fact, on Sunday afternoons on many occasions

the Jewish people would congregate as sort of a holiday spirit at the local Jewish cafe. They would be playing cards. He would participate and was very much well liked. He was really liked. But once the Nazi Party came in, right then and there he joined the Nazi Party.

My first grade I was in the Jewish school. The second grade I was in a public school (taught) by a young woman teacher. She was exceptionally nice to us Jewish children. Once I went into the third grade that's where this teacher by the name of Weitling comes in. At that point he no longer was a friend of the Jews. Why he abruptly changed his attitude, I don't know. I don't think anybody knows. He got great pleasure out of punishing us. He had like similar to a yardstick. He would have that on his desk and he would come by and he would ask a question, which the answer was not to his liking. So first thing he would say was put your hand out, which we did. Then he would take his switch and just hit us with that. This was a common affair, every day. He definitely encouraged our non-Jewish classmates to actually punish us or maltreat us just because we were Jewish.

And I think I talked about the other day about the outing that we had at the local swimming pool. I do think that I mentioned that I was pushed into the water. Well, I was begging, please, I can't swim. He wouldn't take that for any answer. I mean he just pushed me into the water. I remember that he asked one of the bigger boys who was in a grade higher than what we were, he says, you go in and see if you can rescue him. In other words, they were practicing to actually harm Jewish children.

The next thing we had -- it was in the same year, the same summer. It was 1933. We had another outing. The purpose of the outing was to go bird watching. I think I mentioned there was a squirrel. And he happened to have a rifle in part of his backpack. He took out and he shot the squirrel. I think he got a special feeling about seeing that blood squirt. I think that's the type of person he was.

*Anita: He was sadistic.*

Yes. We went out and we had normal walking. We came to this particular little area, not far from our house where we lived. There was a flock of birds and so this gave him a topic what to do. He then pulled out a rope out of his backpack. He told me and my other Jewish friend, Hans Stern -- he asked us to go near a tree. Then he had several of the boys turn us upside down. He would tie

us up against the tree. He just excused this class for the day and Hans and I were left there. This Jewish girl that I talked about the other day came and told my sister about it. My sister came and untied us. Hans was so petrified that he actually made in his pants. My sister walked with him to his house, which was not that far. At least he was calmed down. I was okay. But that was the beginning of the horrendous anti-Semitic actions in Sterbfritz.

I think I told about my father sold the business to -- so I don't have to repeat that.... My mother had no income anymore. Much of the grocery store business was done on credit and people would buy. When the crafts came in, they had the money to pay off the debt. I remember the number of actual money that was owed to us from that grocery store. I remember my mother talking about. It was something between four and 5,000 marks. Well, there was no more income, no business. I mean actually financially we were not that well off anymore.

**So when you sold the business, did you sell the payables?**

Yeah. My father had sold the business before he died. My mother and two sisters for the summer -- I was accepted in sort of a summer camp. It wasn't actually a camp, but it was a home like an orphanage, but it was for the general public. She got me into that facility because she and the two girls got a job at a Jewish hotel as laundresses. I was able to see her on a regular basis because I was then living with my father's older brother, in the same town of Bruekenau.

*Anita: Where the hotel was.*

Yes. Naturally, this was way below my mother's station in life. She was a very intelligent and very pleasant woman and really loved by everybody, Jews and Gentiles. But then some reason or another, my uncle Julius couldn't keep me no longer.

*Anita: That's another uncle.*

**This is the father's brother.**

*Anita: The other one was the mother's brother.*

**That's correct. Who had to give him up because the wife was not nice to him.**

*Anita: Yes.*

Which was in the same town. But somehow or another, he couldn't keep me anymore or didn't want me anymore. So my mother talked to the owners of the Jewish hotel there. They were wonderful. They invited me to come and stay there. I lived with my mother and sisters up in the

employees' floor. Life again was nice. It was pleasant until the next thing that happened. I talked the other day about when the summer was over I went back to school. When summer was over I went back to Sterbfritz. We lived up in the attic.

*Anita: Oh. And your mother went back to Sterbfritz?*

Yes, went back to Sterbfritz. My sister Margot got a job. I was maybe eight or nine years old at the time.

*No. Your father died when you were nine. So you must have been ten.*

Yeah. Maybe ten years old.

**So you're living in the same house that you grew up in?**

Yes. Yes.

**And you moved back in with the person -- and this was before the sign was changed or after the sign?**

Next comes the sign.

**I see.**

Well, it just so happens that my mother's brother came to visit. He was liked by the Jewish community of Sterbfritz. They all knew him because it was a small city, a small town. He and his son came to visit. This is what happened. During that period is when we were tied upside down. The next thing then my sister Margot got a job as a nanny for a dentist, Jewish dentist in a town called Offenbach, which is pretty close to the city of Frankfurt. In fact, the local trolley car would go all the way to Offenbach.

My uncle Moritz took me with him to Muehlhausen, which I mentioned the other day. My aunt, who had converted to Judaism, decided she didn't really want me. So she said I had enough; I already have three Jews in my house; I don't need another one. So the next thing happening was that I could no longer stay with my uncle Moritz.

So my aunt Rita, my father's sister, lived in a town called Burghaun, which I mentioned the other day. She took me in. She was a wonderful lady. She treated me like I was king. She was just that wonderful. In fact, many, many years later Anita met her.

**Oh, good.**

*Should I tell that story?*

**Yes, please.**

*I had had a baby. He was a year old, just about a year old. I went back to New York to visit my parents. So I went to see his aunt. She didn't speak a word of English and I didn't speak a word of German. But we had a wonderful afternoon. She was so happy to see the baby. She was a lovely lady.*

**Wonderful. So now, which portion of New York did she live that she could still spoke German the whole time?**

She lived in Washington Heights, which was a really German Jewish neighborhood. They could go to a market. They could go anyplace. Just like today the Hispanics can go in their neighborhood and speak Spanish, they could speak German.

I don't know if I mentioned that her oldest son lived in a larger city, in Bremen, which is a port. He lived there. He worked for a department store, Jewish department store. The bigger cities were not feeling the effects as much as the smaller town. They could make a living off the Jewish clientele. So I lived with her.

Then my mother got me into the orphanage in the city of Frankfurt. Margot worked for the dentist as a nanny. My sister Bertel worked for a couple who had two small boys. They were the directors of an old age home. It so happens to be that the old age home was right next door to the orphanage where I was staying. Life there—really I blossomed. It was just great. In fact, the two buildings, the old age home and the orphanage, were divided with a wooden fence. My sister Bertel was the one that was the nanny for those people.

My mother got a job taking care of an old lady who was very ill. But her children had migrated from Germany and they needed someone to take care of their mother. So my mother got that job. It was a job that she was very unhappy. I remember that it was just not her lifestyle or anything like that.

*It was demeaning.*

Yes. I sometimes took another friend. We would go in the backyard where the wooden fence was. My sister Bertel had loosened one of the fence boards that we could just move it on the side and we could slide through. I would go in to see my mother and the two sisters. My mother always had a goody or something for me to eat. I was having a great time in the orphanage.



All of us used to go to a Jewish parochial school. Then when the Nazi Party came in, the government would no longer subsidize. Actually what happened then, my mother was at the old age home and my two sisters were at the old age home and I was in the orphanage next door.

Then came the story about the young man whose parents were from Polish decent. The edict came out that all Jews that were Polish (ancestry), maybe back to the grandparent being Polish, all of those people had to leave Germany. Their homes and their properties were confiscated.

*Anita: And not necessarily born in Poland. They could have been born in Germany.*

**Yes. Okay. But with that ancestry.**

*Yeah. And these were doctors, accountants, scientists, psychologists. I mean people that are professionals.*

Now, this is in present day life. A young German teacher in Germany, he was researching the Jewish life in Sterbfritz. He came to the United States and he came to see us. He was telling us, he says, you know, since the Nazi Party came in -- this was post-World War II -- as the Nazi Party came in, Germany no longer had a --

*Anita: ...any Nobel prizes for Germany.*

This was the present day German youth.

**Because you lost all those professionals.**

*Yes.*

They were mostly Jews.

*Yes.*

So everybody was looking to get away from Germany. In the United States you had to get assigned a number for applying to get a visa to go to the United States. Those that had some funds, many of them went to Argentina. Some of them went to Palestine at that time, which now is Israel.

*To South Africa, Australia.*

*Yeah, South Africa and all over.*

**All over the world.**

*All over the world. China. They went to Singapore. Yeah. They went anyplace they could get a*

visa.

Now, we had numbers.

**To go where?**

We had to have an affidavit of support, which meant that you would not be a burden of the state.

And my sister had an affidavit. She went -- it wasn't the embassy.

*Consulate.*

Yeah. The German Consulate.

*United States Consulate in Stuttgart.*

Yeah, in Stuttgart. She was interviewed. She had everything. They said yes, you qualify. People in the United States are well financially so that you will not be a burden. But all the paperwork has to be okayed by their home office in the United States. They told my sister you go home and in a couple or three weeks you will get your visa. Well, they waited. Two weeks passed. Three weeks passed. It never happened. She never got her visa to come to the United States.

**Why?**

*The State Department in this country was very anti-Semitic, extremely anti-Semitic. So they turned down more people than they gave. Why? That's because they were anti-Semitic. It was a known fact.*

Did I talk about exactly what happened that the world opened up like France? France had accepted a certain number of German children.

**Yes, you started talking about that because, yes, we got to the Rothschild. But before you get to that, okay, tell me what happened to your sisters, the sister who came here?**

Yeah. My sister Margot --

*Your sister didn't come here. She didn't get here.*

She never got her visa because, as Anita said, the State Department was very anti-Semitic. They actually made a lot of promises, which they never kept. My sister Margot already had all the arrangements and a lift, which had personal belongings, already was shipped from Germany to Palestine because she was going to go to Palestine. Well, that never happened either because you had to have an exit visa from Germany, as well as you had to have an entry visa from the country. The German visa they stalled as much as they could.

*If you had money you could pay someone off. But his mother didn't have any money.*

Yes. That's absolutely right. So I was fortunate. From the orphanage I was picked, one of 11, who went to France.

*Can I interject something? Because his mother was the director of the home --*

**Oh, she became the director.**

*Director of the home. When these folks left to go to South America --*

**The owners?**

*Well, not the owners, but the directors. When these folks left to go to South America, they recommended his mother to become director because she was a very educated woman and she was a very fine --*

**And she had skills.**

*She had skills, yes. So she became the director; and, therefore, she was able to talk to the people in the orphanage on a one-to-one basis. That's how he got on the trip.*

Yes. Definitely. I have no proof that was the reason I got on that transport, but there were 11 of us accepted by France. The Rothschild family, which was the old prominent German-Jewish family in Europe, they had sponsored us to come to France.

There was an organization, which OSE it's called and has a French name. I can't think of it right now. This was an organization that was founded right after World War I by a group of Jewish doctors, lawyers and so on and so forth. So the OSE had changed -- originally they had headquarters in Russia. Then the headquarters moved to Germany. Then the headquarters of the organization was in France. We were divided up. Some of us were Orthodox Jews and some had no religion even though they were Jewish. So I was one of the Orthodox children.

Back and forth between France and Germany, I would write. My mother would write back. Basically I was a lazy writer. I have thought about this for many, many years and still think occasionally about it that I did not write to my mother more often. After the war broke out between Germany and France, all that stopped. Now, one of the people that were at the old age home had a daughter living in Switzerland. So my mother would write and this lady would send the letter to her daughter in Switzerland because Switzerland was neutral.

They would write to me and I would write to them. We were divided up to those that were

Orthodox and those that didn't matter. Also the little ones, the small children went to the home. It was --

By the way I have a book, which was written about us children that were being cared for by this OSE organization.

**So the 11 of you?**

*Well, no. It's about all these children.*

Not only the little ones, but our home for the Orthodox kids. Basically, I was brought up as an Orthodox Jew. So, therefore, I qualified to go into the Orthodox home of the OSE.

*They had gathered maybe a thousand children for various homes that they put them in.*

We didn't even know. We did not know how many.

*That's Henry, right there.*

**So we are looking at a picture on the back of a book called *Out of the Fire*. This book on the back has a photograph of --**

*This is Arens Povanik.*

It was his birthday.

*And these are all the children in that one home.*

**What do you mean one home?**

*They had maybe 50 homes.*

No. At that time there were three homes to start off with.

**All of these children in this photograph are in one home?**

Yeah, they were. The three homes were in different suburbs of the Paris.

**So how many children per home approximately?**

We had 60 in our home. It was boys and girls together. We had the greatest time. First of all, we didn't go to school, which we kids loved. But then after a while a certain group was sent to the French schools and others went to become apprentices to learn a trade. I was picked to learn about woodworking.

The director of the Orthodox home was also in charge of the woodworking. This man was a Russian Jew who came to Germany before World War I. He was loved by all of us. I mean the man was a fantastic man. He would teach us songs, Hebrew songs, teach us Russian songs, and he

was just great. But after a while there was a conflict. I don't know what happened. Nobody knows what happened between Moritz Genoteman -- that was the one that was running the home that I was in. I don't know what happened. But they released him. He was no longer part of the OSE. But he had worked previously for an organization called ORT, O-R-T. ORT was established in Russia by a group of white Russians to take care of the gangs of children that were roaming in Russia at the time. After World War I, I mean it was havoc over there. He had come to --

*They taught them a trade. That was the whole purpose of that ORT organization, to teach the children trades.*

Yes. I went to the part with the cabinet making. Not to be bragging, but I was the best.

Later on in life it came in very, very handy. I'll tell you about it.

**Good. Good.**

There were friendships between boys and girls. There was boyfriends and girlfriends. Surprising, really surprising that nobody ever got pregnant because we were teenagers. I was 13 at the time.

But when Moritz was released -- yeah. There was one of the girls. I remember her distinctly. She was originally from Vienna. She came on a transport to France. She was a matchmaker. She paired us up. You and you are boy and girlfriend. I didn't get the girl that I wanted to be my girlfriend; I got another one. But we had plenty of food...I mean this was 1939. This was in June and July of 1939. The war broke out in September between Germany and France.

**So tell me what a typical day was like in the home.**

The OSE had rented this mansion; it still is a mansion. In fact, some of our friends now have gone back to see it and had the opportunity to go through the grounds and see where we lived. We just were fancy and footloose. I mean we just had a great time.

**Did you learn French?**

I did. Yes. I have a talent for languages.

I learned French. I spoke rather well. At the home children had to go -- well, the older ones had to go every day to a local bakery to pick up bread. That French bread was fresh, coming out of the ovens. It was so delightful. We made a little hole in one of the loafs and dug in there

with our fingers to get that wonderful bread out of there. That went okay for a while until we were discovered. So that stopped.

*So you had to deal with the French people when you went to get the bread.*

Yes. I just had a thought and I lost it.

...I'm going to jump forward many years and I'll come back to children in France, but many, many years. In 1979 I had lost contact after we came to (the United States) -- I have to come to that period of time. But I just want to inject that now and then I'll come back to that.

Some, as I said, went to school. They had a shoe repair person that was a refugee from Hungary who taught shoemaking and all of that. Some of them were locally accepted by bakeries and they became bakers.

*Some went to Cordon Bleu.*

Yes, which is the world's most famous (cooking school). One of the boys, by the way, as a man in the United States opened up a shop in San Francisco. That's where he went to after we came here. It became a very famous bakery.

I'll talk about now, the war broke out. No. I'm going back. The villa that we stayed, the Orthodox home we stayed in had no central heating. It had fireplaces, which was not capable of taking care of it. So they engaged a company who was putting steam heat into each room. I watched them. I really enjoyed seeing how they were doing it. They made me their helper. I just enjoyed it very, very much.

But coming back to the girl I was paired up with, she was from Vienna, was a nice girl, but I didn't really care for her. But this was arranged. Her name was Sonia Kislowitz.

Life in France was wonderful for us. Now, this ship, the *St. Louis*, a German luxury liner, had 900 passengers that had visas to go into Cuba. Cuba would not allow the ship to dock. The captain of the ship was a German, but he was not a Nazi. He was very much concerned about his passengers, which were 900 Jews from all over Germany. So they decided, if Cuba won't let them in, maybe United States would do the humane thing and let the people depart from the ship in the United States. But the State Department would not in no way allow the ship to dock in the United States. But somehow or another this organization, OSE, convinced --

*Well, they docked in France, didn't they?*

Yes.

**So they had to go all the way back.**

Yeah. They docked in France. But the adults could not get off. They had no visas to go into France. But they did allow the children to get off. That's where the third home that the OSE had was established. We referred to that as the Kubaner, German way to say Cubans.

They had all the boys -- and we were -- I mean at that time I was 14. Some of those boys were 16, 17 years old. We had intramural activities. We put on a play called "The Great Circus." It was directed by Boris Gindoman, even though he was no longer head of the home we were in. He was head of the cabinet thing. But he directed this circus, as we referred to it. The French school in Eaubonne allowed us to come and perform in one of the schools. I was part of the kids that went to perform.

Now, I want to just quickly interject in 1979 I had lost contact with all of the people that were with me in Frankfurt, in Germany, and with me in France. I lost contact with all of them. It so happened that I knew that one of the boys went to San Francisco. I didn't know where and what, but I did know when we arrived -- by the way, they put us in an orphanage in New York when we arrived on Amsterdam Avenue. From there we were dispersed to the various cities in the United States, preferably with relatives or if not with relatives, foster parents.

Everybody was starting to leave. I was still there. I found out what happened. I had asked to be sent to my uncle Moritz Schuster. There were two Moritzes in my life. My uncle Moritz Schuster had been in this country a very short time and they wanted me to come there and I wanted to go there. But the cousins of mine in New York talked to the people from the Joint Distribution. They were the ones that were placing us into the various homes throughout the United States. One of my cousins thought that I should not go to my uncle Moritz because he wasn't in this country long enough. But we had some relatives in Shreveport, Louisiana. Now, these relatives in Shreveport, Louisiana, the name was Schuster. They were very wealthy, very prominent people. So the Joint Distribution Committee decided that's where I should go. So they contacted Sam Schuster.

Sam was actually a first cousin of my father's. Sam was born in this country in 1873. So his father had come to the United States from Germany in 1859. He and a cousin of his -- she

became pregnant.

*They shipped them both off to America, the family did.*

**The two cousins?**

*The two cousins. They did not marry. She married somebody else and he married somebody else.*

We all blossomed. All the children blossomed in France. Madame Rothschild, she greeted us when we came from Germany to France, to Paris. She greeted us at the railroad station. She was a lovely woman. I mean tall and very beautiful. I would say she was a handsome person. We went to the Rothschild Hospital, which was operated by the Rothschild family in France. The group from Frankfurt, we came. We were chaperoned by an adult from Germany, the 11 of us. We went to the French hospital in Paris. We were treated like royalty, really.

The younger children that were with us—there were two younger ones that came from Frankfurt—they went to the home that OSE established in the township of Montmorency. The rest of us, the Orthodox ones, we were sent to this villa. Chesnaie was the name of it that the OSE leased from the French people that owned the property there. It actually was a tremendous piece. We had a forest as part of it. It was newly painted. It was just ideal situation for us. All of us became like a family. I mean we took care of each other. The one incident was when -- the war already had broken out, but there was -- what's the sickness that was spread at the time?

Well, anyhow the OSE home, the overall director for the -- at that point two homes was Ernst Papanek. His wife was a physician. They both came from Vienna. His wife was a doctor. We all had to be inoculated—vaccinated for --

*Smallpox.*

I don't remember what it was. A lot of us came down sick. The injection was supposed to protect them.

*They got a mild case.*

Some of them were pretty hectic. They were all bedridden. I was fortunate it didn't affect me. I and two or three other older ones, we took care of the rest of the kids there. We made sure that they were fed. The kitchen was operated. We would take it to their beds. We just took care of each other. This is what it amounted to. It's really how we survived, by being a family together. Madame Rothschild is one. She greeted us at the train station. Then we all were sent to that home



in Montmorency. Right away the Rothschild had an estate in the city called, what's the name of the city, Maubuisson. That's where a group of the older ones my age, the ones that came from Berlin, the ones that came from Vienna, we all were sent to this house, the villa that the Rothschild gave to the OSE to operate a children's home. We were there while the building in Eaubonne was prepared to accept the Orthodox children. We were there with a group of kids. I think maybe 25 of us were. We were shown the earliest toilet that, you know, you flushed the toilet. There was the castle on the estate. A creek flowed through the area and it went right into that old castle. Supposedly the king that lived there, he went to the bathroom, which was over the creek. That was the first flushing toilet.

*This was very old.*

When we arrived the 11 of us were at the Rothschild Hospital. We had no idea what was going to happen to us. We didn't know where we were going or what we were doing. So a lot of the kids were sent to the other home, the Orthodox home. Madame Rothschild was actually -- she took a lot on herself. We had tremendous good living, a wonderful life. She took us to a zoo in Paris. She took us on a boat ride on the Seine in France.

As we arrived at the railroad station, she came and greeted us. We went to this hospital. I had to urinate. Oh, I had to go. We didn't speak any French. All the nurses came and made a big deal out of us because they heard we were the poor children. I tried to tell them I had to go to the bathroom. They looked at each other, the nurses, speaking French to me. It was gobbledygook. I had no idea what they were talking about. Finally, I pointed down there and I started doing this. Then they said, oh. They all thought that was great. So I relieved myself.

Now, after everybody was sent to the home, the young children were, I and my good friend Fred Strauss -- we still are good friends -- and Eric Gruenbaum, we're still good friends -- we were sent to an Orthodox French school. We didn't speak a word of French. We started Hebrew. We started all the various things. Somehow or the other we made out okay. The other transports that came in from Vienna, from Berlin, from Stettin, from all these different cities, they were sent throughout the whole of France to different homes that OSE had established. We were sent to an Orthodox Jewish --

We were sent to a school. Fred, Eric and I were sent to a school called Ecole Maimonides,

which was operated by the Rothschild family. Well, it was shortly before Passover. It was more than a school. I mean the kids lived there. They all went home to their families. So here were the three of us. It was Fred, is Fritz, and Eric is still Eric, and I, we were entertained by Madame Rothschild. She took us on the Eiffel Tower. She took us to the zoo, as I said. We had a boat ride on the Seine. A big fuss was made over us and naturally we loved that. We got all that attention. So everybody left from the Rothschild Hospital...

We went back after Passover came. They had no facilities at this school. So they sent us back to the Rothschild Hospital. They had kosher there. It was a Jewish hospital operated by the Rothschild. We could celebrate Passover there.

From there, finally we were sent to a town Maubuisson, which was owned by the Rothschild. They owned half of Paris at the time. That's where the group from Vienna came and the group from Berlin came. We had a great time there. One of the kids had roller skates she brought with her. It was a set of roller skates. She let us use them. There was the old fortress where we were. We didn't live in it, but part of the grounds was this old fortress. It had a very smooth ground floor and that's where we roller-skated.

From there, we finally came to Montmorency for a very short time for them to finish, get the villa where we were staying in Eaubonne ready for us to come. About two weeks we went there. The steamfitters were hired to put steam heat in all the various bedrooms and rooms. I was fascinated watching them. They were speaking French and already I started to pick up French a little bit. So I asked them if I could help them in a few words that I knew in French. Two plumbers were doing the work and they said yes, I can help them. So they made believe that I was going to be a big help to them. But I was with them I think it was two weeks. Naturally we were in the home already because it was summertime at the time. We didn't need the heat.

In Eaubonne this Boris Gindoman, who was the Russian Jew who I was talking about, he spoke perfect German because as a young man he came from Russia to Germany. He was a very talented man. He taught us all kinds of things. He was also the one that taught us woodworking. He organized a circus it was called with music. One of the girls, Sonia Kislowitz, could play the piano. She would play the piano. We had the gypsy dancers. This was in a French school. One of the things was the *Fledermaus*, the operetta by Strauss. The scene that we did was in the jail.

The warden of the area was drunk and he was going to be put into jail and the jailer was really a drunkard. So supposedly he was hitting us. He had a dog and tried to sick the dog on us. This is the story. They needed somebody to be the dog and I was the dog. I could yap.

*You can sound like a dog, yes.*

Yes. But those were the things that were happening to us. And we were corresponding with our families in Germany. The war broke out. No more writing directly to and from. So my mother by that time was the director of this old age home in Frankfurt. One of the women had a daughter living in Switzerland. So we would write as little as -- I was a very lazy writer -- as little as I could possibly get away with it and send it to this lady in Switzerland and they would send it to my mother and vice versa. My sisters and my mother, all had -- later on. This is not part of the history then. But later on it came in very, very handy to have this lady in Switzerland.

Eaubonne was fun. Food was good.

*Anita: Tell about your bar mitzvah.*

Yes, in this French school it was time for me to be a bar mitzvah. I had studied reading from the Torah already in Frankfurt. I was proficient in my portion of reading from the scrolls. The rabbi was told that it was my bar mitzvah. So naturally I was called up to be on the bema with the rabbi and the cantor. It was time for me to recite my portion of the scripture from the Torah. The rabbi started talking in French to the people. The ladies' section was a balcony area up there and the men would sit on the bottom. I was ready to recite my portion. The rabbi explained who I am and why I'm there. Some of the women started to cry, feeling sorry for us. When the women were crying, I became emotional that I started to cry. I mean it was a horrible thing. But the rabbi stopped the whole thing to calm me down. I did read my portion from the scroll. Something that is not normally done in a synagogue, but they all applauded. The whole congregation applauded. I now was a big shot.

From there, when the school closed for the Passover holidays, I went to rejoin the group, Orthodox and all of them, in the home in Montmorency. The OSE took over to care for us children. They had a very fine villa that OSE rented. One of the rooms we set aside to be our synagogue. Boris was Jewish, but he was not an observant Jew, but he was well versed about Judaism. Everybody fell in love with him, really. He was just that type of a person.

When the time came, the OSE decided they have to do something with those children; that we just can't be a drag on society. So they opened up the woodworking part. There was a young Hungarian Jewish, a 19-year-old who was a master shoemaker. They set up shoe repairing. Those that signed up for that went to him half a day and some of them, we went to the public school in France. I signed up to go to woodworking. My friend Fritz and another one, which we called him Doodoo -- that was his nickname -- we were --

*"The Three Musketeers."*

Yes, we were "The Three Musketeers." We were helping these steamfitters.

Now, the war broke out. The first thing, they had to prepare a bomb shelter. So the basement of this villa --

**So the woodworking.**

Yes. I took up woodworking and Fred took up woodworking. And Doodoo, whose name was Herman -- it was Doodoo because he stuttered. And kids can be vicious with people. But he was one of us. I mean he was our friend and we would not allow anybody to make any fun of him.

The war broke out. We prepared the bomb shelter in the basement. The basement had an earthen floor. They brought in loads of sand and they spread the sand over the floor. We practiced in case of an alarm. We all would have to get down there. One of the boys had to be the one that made sure that every bedroom was down into the bomb shelter. That was me. We were told not to pick up anything on the ground, like candy bars or anything like that, because the word got around that Germany was dropping poisoned candies and so on and so forth. Whether it was true or not, we don't know. But this was told.

Either Fred or I, when we got into Maubuisson, the place of the castle, when we got in there, we found a tin box. Well, we took the tin box and we had it with us. When it was time they had to do something with us because the Germans already had gone into France quite deep. We had our tin box with us. We saved that. So we figured in case of emergency we better have something to eat. So we took the tin box. From dinnertime we would take a piece of bread or something. We put it in the tin box. Now we had to find a place to bury that tin box with all our rations, which we needed to survive. We found a place and we dug a hole in the ground and we put the tin box in there and covered it. Many, many, many years later on we were visiting with

Fred. It was Fritz who was my cohort with the tin box. He asked me if we ever went back to see if we could find the tin box? We didn't.

But it got to the point where Paris was unsafe. So the OSE had made arrangements. We are now going into occupied France. I think we should leave it there.

**That's a great place to start next session.**

If you have a chance, read my book. I wrote my memoir. I do have a good memory.

**Oh, I can tell. This is amazing.**

I gave the Jewish paper here in Las Vegas, the Jewish Reporter -- a woman by the name of Caroline Otis, who was not Jewish to start off, but she converted to Judaism. She was the editor of that newspaper. When she resigned her position, she took my memoir. I had given it to her and she had --

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**It is March 9th, 2011. This is Claytee White. I'm with Henry and Anita again.**

**So how are you both today?**

We're fine. Thank you.

**Well, great. So Henry, I'm just going to let you start in France where you left off.**

There were 11 of us that came on the transport from Frankfurt to France. We were chaperoned by a lady. She was the sister of the director of the home I was in, in Frankfurt. We were received by Madame Rothschild. Right away, we boys, we all fell in love with her because she was really French. She had makeup on and she had high heeled shoes and she just looks like a delightful person. So that was Madame Rothschild.

Now, we were taken to the hospital. In the first group the ones that came from Germany and Austria were sent to a home that had just been established by the organization, the OSE, which we talked about. I would say maybe 15 or 20 of us still stayed at the hospital until they found out exactly where we should be going. We were sent to a chateau, an ancient castle. There was a big house on the grounds. The Orthodox children that came went to Maubuisson. That's the

name of the town. The rest of the kids, including those from Vienna, from Budapest, and other European countries, went to this Maubuisson where we went. We had to wait before we would be permanently assigned to whereas we were supposed to go and live and so on and so forth because they were installing equipment at the home in Montmorency in France. Once that home was ready, all of the children that came from Orthodox homes were transferred into that particular home. Actually only about four of those that came from Frankfurt were not sent anyplace; we were just at the hospital.

I think I talked about how I had to relieve myself. This is part of the story. That's why I'm telling it again.

Once the home in Eaubonne -- that's the home that most of us stayed during our stay in France. I shouldn't say most. That's not true. Almost everyone was sent to the Montmorency home. This home was established by the OSE. It's an international organization back then. I and a few of those from the Frankfurt transport, we were sent to this newly established home, which we called Ecole Maimonides , a school.

When the German armed forces were taking over most of the European countries, everybody tried to get out of Paris. The transportation that they arranged for us children from the home where I was in Eaubonne and a group of children was on the ship St. Louis. We were anticipated to wait long enough at Ecole Maimonides.

*Okay. You're going back again.*

Yeah. I shouldn't do that. I'm going to clear my head and forget about it just the same.

I'm going to start from the time we were taken to the Rothschild Hospital.

*You talked about all that.*

I've talked about that? Oh, I think I even talked about building the air raid shelter in Eaubonne.

Did I?

**I don't think you talked about building the shelter, but you've talked about learning the skills to do that kind of work.**

Okay. So I chose to learn how to do cabinet woodworking. Some of the kids were assigned to a master shoemaker and took up the trade how to repair and how to make shoes. Things were very, very good.

As the Germans were coming, just short of capturing Paris, the OSE made arrangements for us, those that were left at Montmorency and those of us that were left in Eaubonne, we were all taken to, again, an old building near Limoges. Montintin. They already had arranged for a large group to be taken to a French -- the group that decided they would like to learn woodworking. The place where we were being taught was in the home in Eaubonne. But every day we had to go and walk about two or three miles to a new place where children were being taken in. As the war progressed the German army was in the outskirts of Paris. So they had to make arrangements for us kids to get away from Paris.

**So were you in Paris?**

No. We were in a suburb of Paris. We went to a home that was in a castle-like building near the city of Limoges. When we got to Montintin they had absolutely nothing there. The main house, as we called it, had absolutely no furniture or anything. So we all slept on the floor because they had to get equipment that was in the various homes near Paris to Montintin.

I think there were around 60 of us that went to Eaubonne. The director of the home in Eaubonne was, as I mentioned before, Moritz Genoteman, who was an extremely talented person. All of us really loved him. We learned new songs. We put on plays. He would gather all of us and would tell us stories what happened during the First World War. This was at that time called the Big War.

They had absolutely nothing in the home. So we slept on the floor. About ten days later a truck came and had all of our bedding, mattresses and things in that. About 12 of the children that were at Montmorency came with the truck. We were wondering what had happened to them. Nobody knew or nobody told us what happened, but here they came. They got them away from Paris. They divided us up in two groups, those that were Orthodox and those that were just Jewish children.

**Now, this was when you first arrived in France; is that right?**

Yes.

**So you were now leaving because the Germans were about to surround the city, where did you go when you left? Where did they take you in the beginning?**

That was Montintin.

**Okay. So what was Montintin like?**

They had a main house that was built by extremely wealthy people because they also had a little house up on a little hill, five minutes' walk from the main house in Montintin. That's where the Orthodox children lived. As I mentioned, the furniture showed up. OSE, how they made the arrangements, none of us knew. But our bedding and things were all there. The kitchen was set up. They really did a tremendous job getting the place livable the way the situation was. I think I mentioned one of the kids brought roller skates.

**Yes. Yes.**

We really went through this about the whole situation because we didn't realize what the danger was if the Germans would come in. They did come in after we left. One day we were told a local policeman and a German officer -- even though this part was not occupied by the Germans where we were; this was still called free French -- we were told that a police investigating man would come and also a German military person came. They wanted to make sure that we didn't speak German, which we were using all the time because most of us came from Germany. So they took those of us who could speak French -- by that time I did pretty well. In fact, later on I was told that my French was as good as a six-year-old French kid. So they took us who spoke French in front, right near the entrance in that big room where we were. We were tutored in case they asked us any questions as to what to say and how to say it. So that episode went well.

**How long were you in Montintin?**

Over a year.

**So half of the time that you spent in France was there.**

Yes. Yes, we were there. Yeah, I definitely -- but it was in June of 1940. Paris had surrendered maybe six months before we got out.

**After experiencing what it was like to be treated by the Nazi Party, how did you feel now as they were coming into France?**

We were all scared. I mean, naturally, we were all scared because we knew that there was no longer ways to write or receive mail from our parents who lived in Germany or in Austria. But the adults that were with us in the various homes, such as in Eaubonne and in Montmorency, were well suited. They treated us like royalty. We really had a wonderful time. They established ball



games. They had a running track. They had weight lifting and all kinds of things to entertain us. A few of those of us that stayed at Montintin, some of them went to other homes that had been established by the OSE organization because now we were being cared for by the OSE, no longer the Rothschilds.

**Oh, so the Rothschilds didn't have anything to do with the OSE organization?**

That's right. They did not. I'm sure that the same people were on both boards of directors or whatever, but the financial end was taken over by the OSE. But after about a year of good living --

*They had names that they have put on there. Henry's nickname was Batch, B-A-T-C-H. That means short and squat. We have pictures of that.*

**So tell me about the air raid shelter.**

*Well, I can only tell you what he's told me. They used to go down there. Of course, the little ones were really scared.*

**Is this Montintin?**

*No. I think this was before. This was in Eaubonne because that's when they were fighting. The French were fighting against the Germans. So they had air raids. The little ones were really frightened. I'm sure the older ones, too. So they gave them chocolate, you know, a treat every time they went down into the air raid shelter.*

**Claytee to Anita: At some point are you going to want to tell me about your life? Why don't you just right now, since we're taking a little break, why don't you just tell me where you grew up?**

*Anita: Oh. I grew up in Midtown Manhattan, New York, in the East 80's. My father had a business in that area. That's why we were there. I went to school, to PS-6.*

**Regular public school?**

*Regular public school.*

**Tell me about your father's business.**

*My father had a candy store, stationery store, that kind of thing. My mother worked there, too. I had a younger brother, who is going to be 75 this year in May. That's my baby brother.*

**Oh, wow. So just two children?**

*Just the two of us, yes.*

**Did you work in the store?**

*I did at one point. My father went to work on the railroad because he was eligible for the service. They said that if you worked in something that had to do with the war effort, you didn't have to go. He was 35 already. So he decided he would go to work on the railroad. So my mother ran the business and I would come and help. Occasionally they'd leave me alone. I was 13 years old. So I did know how to do change and sell things and make sodas and all of that kind of thing.*

*But when I was 14, my father gave up the business because he was working on the railroad and it was too much for my mother. My mother was sick. My mother had asthma and she couldn't do much anymore. So that's what they did. We moved to the Bronx.*

**What did your father do on the railroad?**

*He fixed the couplings that put the two trains together. My father was a very learned man. He was very learned in Torah and he could speak Hebrew and he could read and write. He loved to read books in English, Hebrew and Yiddish.*

**Where did he grow up?**

*He grew up in the Ukraine, my mother as well. They met in London. After the First World War they had what was called a ship's company. You know, you would buy a ticket and you were their responsibility until you got to the United States. So they had this place in South Hampton where all these people congregated in the twenties. Until they got their ticket into the United States, a visa or whatever it was that they were getting, they stayed in this place.*

**So now, is it a kind of place like an Ellis Island?**

*No. It was run by the ship's company. They fed them. They had soccer teams and they had romances. My mother and father met there. My mother was 16 and my father was 18 when they met.*

**Wow. We're going to go back to Henry in just a few minutes. And this is going to be really interesting weaving it in and out like this. But tell me has anyone done the history of those kinds of ship companies that did that kind of thing?**

*Not that I know of.*

**Wouldn't that be interesting?**

*Yes. Not that I know of. I have some pictures of that. I have a picture of my father in a soccer uniform.*

**Oh, that's fabulous. See, people say that they don't have a story, but we all have a great story.**

*Oh, we all have a story, yes.*

**That is wonderful.**

**So Henry, are you ready to continue?**

Yes.

**I would like for you to continue with -- before you tell me how you left Montintin, I want you to tell me one of the evenings when you had to go down into the air raid shelter, what that was like.**

*That was in Eaubonne.*

Yes. The air raid shelter was before the French capitulated.

*I told her about the names, you know, Batch, your name on the air raid shelter.*

Oh, yes. I think I told you about I was watching the steamfitters putting pipes into radiators to heat the rooms. But we kids, we really didn't realize what the danger was going to be or what the danger could be. We did not realize that. We all felt that our parents were okay, even though we didn't get any direct mail from Germany or from Austria. But still we thought our parents and our families were okay. I was looking forward to someday naturally having a reunion of the whole family getting back together.

But the adults in Montintin -- that's a chateau where we went from Eaubonne to Limoges. In Montintin this chateau had an old fortress as part of the grounds there. I told you about the creek that ran through the building.

**Yes.**

The story we were told -- that's the oldest running water toilet that existed. We all had things that we especially loved to do and we would play those games. We played a ball game, which was called Foelke ball, which means world ball. In other words, it was a type of ball game, which was

divided like football. Some had schooling; others did not. I chose to go back to be with Boris, the one that was operating the cabinet making. I continued there.

I don't know if I wrote in the book about a "mishappening" with me and Boris. On the grounds was a large, huge building where they established the various trades that they wanted to teach us. We had the group that were not Orthodox and we, the Orthodox. Somehow or the other, we got along very well. There was one incident that happened down the road apiece. When we were taken from France to go to the United States --

In the air raid shelter -- the Germans were not even interested in Paris or French for a period of time. All at once the war really broke out. That's when it was decided that they had to have some way to shelter us children. They made arrangements for us to leave the Paris area. We went to unoccupied France after Paris fell. Once the war broke out, once France and England declared war on Germany, the whole French area, there were prepared for occupation by the Germans. So were the OSE concerned about the safety of us children who were in their care.

So they established that we must have someplace if there's an air raid where we should go. They knew that there was a basement under the building. The basement had sand. It was not paved. It was sand. One thing we were told is that when the sirens come on that means that there is an air raid. Nobody knew where and what. But for safety's sake we all had to leave our bedrooms and get down into the air raid shelter. This lasted usually about three or four hours until the all clear came about. But during those two or three hours that we were down there, we played games to keep us busy, you know, the typical what kids in this country play. We always had somebody telling stories.

I was raised in Sterbfritz, which is a farming community. So I was more familiar with food production than anybody else.

*Now, you leave Montintin.*

I'm coming back to the air raid shelter to give a little bit more background.

**Okay, good.**

One person got the assignment to make sure that everybody would be down in the air raid shelter. I was chosen to be the one. My job was, after the air raid sirens stopped, I had to go up and check to make sure that everybody was sound and safe, which it was. I mean actually there was no

reason to be that excited about it because the war was over, as far as we were concerned. France surrendered. So we felt things are going back to normal, as far as the general public. Naturally, we all knew that the Nazi organization would still be in existence just as horrible then as they were before. So that was one of the main reasons that they wanted us away from the part that was occupied by the Germans.

We had outings there. They took us to a lake. We all went into the lake. We used our undergarments. We had no swimming trunks or bathing suits. So we all were using our undergarments provided by OSE.

**So you weren't afraid to get into the water?**

*Were you afraid to get into the water?*

No. But it just so happens that one of the girls that we are friends with these days -- she was everybody's favorite. She was my favorite even though when this Frieda Kanneles, which I think I spoke earlier, paired us up with the various ones. I was not paired up with Elfreda, but Elfreda taught me how to swim. I learned how to swim. Several more times the next year from that point when we first lived in Montintin...

Because the Germans were concentrating on the city of Paris, and they were not really excited about occupying the rest of it at that time. The anti-Semitism was starting to be something to be concerned about because being Jewish, even though the Germans had not come to where we were, but the French government, which was -- World War I general, he was appointed by the Germans to be the -- what would you call it?

*Liaison between the French government and the Germans.*

Yes. We were prepared for anything that could possibly happen. The OSE and its people just did a wonderful thing. I think I wrote about it in the book. So it's still fresh in my mind even though I can't get it out of my mouth, but it's still fresh in my mind.

The rumor went around that a group of children from France will be part of a transport to go to the United States. I was one of them that was included to be on that. Why I was picked, I still don't know. None of us really know why we were picked, but we were. So they had to prepare us, just how we should act and so on and so forth in case the Germans would come. Do not speak German; they'll know exactly that you are Jewish children from Germany. So we were

forced to speak French. Once we were cleared from the area from Paris and sent to Montintin, which is in the area of Limoges, we had food. The Orthodox group, we had no meat because Jews don't eat meat that has not been slaughtered --

*Ritually slaughtered and kosher.*

Yes. There was one bicycle. I can't tell you who owned it or what, but there was one bicycle in Montintin. I was one of the very few who knew how to ride a bicycle. Our job was to go every night to a French farmer. This was arranged by the OSE some way or the other to pick up a milk can full of milk to be used in the kitchen for breakfast and so on and so forth. It was my turn. You know, I felt very good about it that I was entrusted with the project of going to get food for us kids.

It happens to be a very bright nighttime when I had to go to this farmhouse, which was maybe five miles from where we lived. The arrangement had been made. Not that they were so sympathetic to our cause, but they were paid well. I went with my bucket on the bicycle to the farmhouse. The farmer gave me the can full of milk, which I put on my handlebar. I put my bucket with the milk in it on the handlebar of my bicycle. On my way back to the home, it was very nice, bright.

One of the kids was ultraorthodox. His father was a rabbi. We asked to have a place where we could do our morning and evening area where we can have our --

*Pray.*

Yeah. One of the guys who was part of the thing -- this is a statue of Jesus. We don't believe in Jesus. I know this is not a pleasant thing. This was a childish thing that happened. Some of them wanted to cover it up. And then I got up and I spoke and I told them, I said, we are guests of these people. Let's appreciate what they're doing for us. I assure you God will excuse us for not adhering to all the religious --

*Precepts.*

Yes. By that time, there were more than just us two homes, the one in Montintin and one in an area near Limoges, Broût-Vernet, which is another smaller city.

**So all of these children are going to America?**

*No. They just chose certain people.*

**Right. But children from the different places were going?**

Yes. But none of us knew why we were picked. But we were overjoyed. I mean we were all excited and looking forward to a new adventure for us kids. We hadn't heard from our parents for a while. But we knew once we get to the United States -- the United States was not at war with Germany at the time -- that we most likely could correspond with our parents again. It happened that that's just exactly how it was; that once we came to the United States we could write. Mail from the United States went to Germany.

**So what about the kids who were left behind? How did they act? How did they feel?**

Everyone thought this was just the first movement. Everybody thought that they'll be maybe on the second or maybe on the third. In present time, a group of us lived in California. We lived there. Many of those that were Orthodox in Montintin, we lived -- I don't think I've talked about the Chevrette. I'm going to back up and get to that.

There was no furniture or anything, but Boris somehow or the other got material for us to make benches and tables. Madame Kanner, Frau Kanner as we called her, who was the cook in Eaubonne, was our cook in Montintin. There was an employees' place in Montintin that...

We tried to comfort them. We didn't know anymore than anybody else what's going to happen. But we wanted to comfort them that you're going to be on the next transport. And they were. There were two other transports that came after the one that I was on. The group of us in Los Angeles took up our friendship that we had when we were children. We are still today. I refer to them as our siblings. We all have that feeling that we were a family, part of a family.

**Yes. So what was the trip like? So you had to leave Montintin, go through the Pyrenees, go to Spain and Portugal, and then?**

To the United States.

**So by ship?**

By ship.

*Muzimo is the name of the ship.*

Right. I just now remembered we were in the train to go through the Pyrenees. It was a freight train, but they had one car that was for passengers. I remember looking out of the window from the car that we were in. We saw those mountains. The little engine in front was struggli

up that mountain. I visualized all kinds of things were going to happen. But we made it into Spain. Once we were there arrangements had been made that we were going to live in a convent for a very short period of time until the ship is being readied to bring us to the United States.

This is what I was trying to come into. So one of the ultra-Orthodox boys made an issue that we're Jews; we don't believe in Jesus; therefore, we don't want the statue of Jesus in the area where we're doing our praying. And, again, I took it on myself. I came out and I convinced everybody that we were guests of the convent and we should appreciate what they're doing for us; forget about the idea that it's Jesus or not being Jesus. And I convinced them all.

We had to be examined by a doctor for the United States.

**So was that in Spain or Portugal?**

That was actually in France. Anybody that had any kind of a disease was not allowed to go until they were cured. Naturally, it was a lot of sadness going on and happiness at the same time.

**So you got on the ship in Portugal. How long did it take you to get to -- was it New York?**

Eleven days.

**What was the ship like?**

The ship was actually a freighter. In other words, it was not a passenger ship. But they had one whole area cordoned off where those that were in the transport slept.

I want to go back with our friend Elfreda. She's the one that taught me how to swim. There were a hundred children approximately. We don't know exactly. I made sure that I'd be in the same little cubby where Elfreda is because she was the one I was in love with, none of the others. So she says today that I slept in her lap all the way from France to Spain to Portugal, is what she says. But I also remember there was a rack where they put suitcases. I climbed up in there and I slept in that rack. Life was just unbelievable. I mean ups and downs, ups and downs. But the ups always were the winner.

**What kind of treatment did you get from the crew on the ship?**

I knew it was a steamship and it operated on a coal furnace to create the electricity and that. We all had our physical examinations before we left France. There were two or three kids that did not make it of that group that was supposed to be in the transport. That was a very sad situation for all of us. We depended on each other.



It was euphoria. It was excitement. It was ups and downs. Then once we came to the United States, I'll talk about that.

**What about on the way on the ship?**

Yes. It was a freighter. It had a load of cork that was in Portugal that was an export product from the Portuguese to the United States. Most of the freighter was packed with cork. But they had set up places for a hundred of us. That's when I was talking about I made sure I was in the same place where Elfreda was.

Some of the kids got very seasick. It did not affect me in any way. Coming back to Elfreda, she had the worst case of seasickness. I remember seeing her at the rail of the deck leaning over and vomiting she was so bad.

Most people that came to the United States would come through the island.

**Ellis Island?**

Yeah. I mean I didn't know what was going to happen. But once we docked, word had gotten in the United States to expect a group of children from Europe that are coming in. There was an article in Life Magazine. It had the names of those of us who were on that transport. We docked in Staten Island, not in Ellis Island, which was unusual. But it was at a port where freight would be coming in and out.

In the book you may remember there was a little boat came. The ship was anchored. They had the anchor holding. We were not in a port yet, but we were outside of New York. Somebody told me somebody is yelling up from over there looking for Heinz Schuster. That was me. I asked the kid that did the yelling and looking for me, I says, well, what's happening? Why was my name? He said there are some people down there that are here to greet you. These are relatives of yours, two of my first cousins. One's name was Milan Schuster. The other one was also a first cousin, but his name came from the mother's side, from my grandmother.

So two of my cousins were down there waiting for us to arrive. It was just wild, the crying and the laughter. So I finally got to the railing and looked down there and I recognized one of my cousins right away. The other man who was with him, I knew I knew him, but I didn't know who he was. It turns out that was Milan who was actually -- he lived in Sterbfritz. I would see him every day. I knew him, but I did not recognize him. They made sure that I was comfortable, but

they couldn't take any of us home with them.

Some people came who wanted to take children who were relatives, take them to their homes. That was not the case. We all had to go to an American orphanage in New York City on Amsterdam Avenue.

**So were you in Harlem?**

Yes. None of us had ever met a black person. I remembered having seen one when I was real little. Three people came to Sterbfritz. One was a cook. He wore the cook's hat and dressed in a white apron and so on and so forth. He was an African-American. In other words, I had seen a black person. But many of us had not seen a black person. So some of the kids were afraid. Who knows what's going to happen? I mean this was just craziness, but that was the case.

We were now at the Jewish orphanage in Amsterdam Avenue. There they decided where we will be going. I wanted to go to my father's brother, my uncle Moritz, who lived in Bloomington, Illinois.

**And this is the same uncle that took you in at one time?**

No. Another one took us in.

*That's another uncle.*

**Oh, wait. You have two uncles with the same name?**

*Same first name. One is Schuster and the other is Steinfeld.*

No, no, no. I'm talking about David Braunschweiger.

Well, my cousin Milan, who I saw down waiting for us to get off the ship, he convinced the authorities that I should not go to Bloomington to be with my uncle Moritz Schuster. He knew about the wealthy family by the name of Schuster in Shreveport, Louisiana. Sam Schuster was actually my father's first cousin. For the time and day, they were extremely wealthy. Sam was a very good man. He took me in. He personally treated me well. Now comes the story in the United States, which is not the most popular time period, the next one.

**So let's stop right there. You're going to remember that story. Before we start with the life in the United States, I want to just go back and ask a few isolated questions here and there. I didn't realize that when you were in Sterbfritz that you had a farm, also. Tell me a little about your father selling the furniture and about the farm.**

**Now, Anita, you were talking about --**

*How my parents met.*

**That's correct. So go ahead and tell me the story of your parents. Give me their names, too.**

*My mother's name was Adele. Her maiden name was Teitelzweig, T-E-I-T-E-L-Z-W-E-I-G.*

*Oh, you know that by heart, huh?*

*It took me to the sixth grade.*

**I guess so.**

*My father's name was Hyman, H-Y-M-A-N, Kleiman, K-L-E-I-M-A-N. They met in London, in South Hampton actually. Then my father came to this country in 1926. He had an aunt in Philadelphia that he went to stay with. Then he went to California. He was interested in going to Israel. At that time it was called Palestine. He went to California to learn how to be a chicken farmer. The man who was responsible for that, who had the money behind it, died. His son did not want to carry on the work. So my father came back to Philadelphia and then he went to New York. He looked up my mother. They got married in 1929. I was born in 1930, the result of this marriage. My brother was born in 1936.*

**So now, where in New York?**

*Okay. We grew up in Midtown Manhattan in the East 80's. I loved living in that area because I could go to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. If I walked across Central Park, I could go to the Natural History Museum and the Hayden Planetarium. This was part of my growing-up years. This was what I did is try to avail myself of all the things that New York had to offer. In 1944 we moved to the Bronx. I went to high school at Walton High School. It was a school for girls, all girls.*

**A public school?**

*Public school, but all girl high school. It was an academic high school. In New York you had those kinds of differences. You could choose. And I wanted to go to someplace that had academics because I wanted to go to college. It was unusual for girls to go.*

**To college.**

*Yes. I'm 80 years old, so you have to kind of think about that. I would have gone to college, but*

*my husband was a man alone with no family and I knew that if I didn't marry him when he wanted to get married, he wouldn't wait for me. So I decided that this is the guy I wanted and I would marry him.*

*We both worked part-time after school. Henry was going to an institute to study electronics and I was going to high school. We both worked part-time at this department store.*

**What was the name of it?**

*It was called S. Klein, On The Square, on 14th Street, Union Square. We worked in the annex, which was the higher priced clothing. We met. I had a friend who was his packer. Henry was a cashier and this gal that I knew, Tilly, was his packer. I went to see her because she was talking about a party that she was giving for her boyfriend who was coming out of the service that she was going to marry. She asked me if she should invite him, Henry. And I said I don't know him from a hole in the wall, you do as you like, it's your party. Well, she asked him to come and he said no, he couldn't come; it was his sister's birthday. In all matter of speaking, it was his 21st birthday that he could not come.*

*Now, we met again in the employees' locker room and he asked me for a date. I said yes. Then I realized that it was Passover; that I couldn't go because we have a Seder. He said, well, I'm glad you told me because I have one to go to, too. So that was one thing in his favor; he was Jewish. That meant a lot to my father. My father was -- I told you.*

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Henry: I want to get to the point where we came.

Anita: All right. So you can stop me.

This is better than what I can tell you.

**You're not going to read to me, are you?**

No.

**Okay, good.**

This is Chapter 11. That tells a story. You don't want me to read or use any part of this?

**Oh, you may use it, but I don't want you to read.**

Okay. In case I get lost.

*I know where you are.*

Okay. Well, Sam Schuster's father came to the United States in 1859.

**Now, Sam is the man from Shreveport?**

Yes. In 1859. Julius (Schuster) was the name of my grandfather's brother, who came to the United States when he was 19 years old. He settled in -- they were all wanderers. They were a bunch of gypsies. Sam was born in Omaha. He was a teamster in Chicago. He had a pushcart that he manually had to push. He used to go to the local farms in the area and buy their produce. Then he would sell it to individuals, sell it to organizations and so forth. Anyway, they became very wealthy.

My cousin Milan Schuster, the one I saw when we had landed at the dock, he told the people of the Joint Distribution -- the Joint Distribution is an organization that was formed in the late 1800s because (Schiff) was part of that.

But I understand from people that knew about Sam, like the one who -- Pearl's sister. What's her name? It doesn't matter. But anyhow, they had distributorship of margarine. They had a poultry department where they had chickens. They had an egg department. In a very short time they became financially really well off.

My cousin Milan that met me at the dock, he told the people of the Joint Distribution that he feels that I should not go to Bloomington to live with my uncle Moritz because he just had been in this country a very short time himself. But then they knew about the Schuster from Shreveport. The way that came about -- I don't know if they have that in the book or not -- Julius at age 19 had --

*An affair.*

Yes. With a first cousin of his. She was pregnant. So naturally the family name went down in the pits. So they more or less sent him onto the United States at the age of 19 years old.

*Both of them. They sent both of them out of the country.*

Yes. The one with the child and Sam's father. Sam was very wealthy. Sam was a teamster in Chicago. One of his sisters had married a man from Shreveport, Louisiana. They moved to the

outskirts of Shreveport. Why am I telling you this? Oh, why I went -- yeah. My relatives did not want me to go to Bloomington, but rather go to Shreveport because I would be better off because they are extremely wealthy and all this and that, which is true. As I said they were like gypsies. They moved, constantly on the move.

What I heard not so many years ago from Lenore Gladstone that her mother knew Julius Schuster. The story is that he was a lazy bum, wasn't worth anything. When his son, Sam, came along and Sam was of age, Julius decided he was retired, which he never went to work. But he had odds-and-ends jobs. That's when Sam, one of his sisters went to Shreveport and established the Schusters of the United States. This was in the middle thirties, 1930s that Hitler was just really taking a big hold of Germany. I should say most Jews saw the handwriting on the wall and they wanted to get out of Germany. So Sam's sister sent for her brother. You can do very well here in Shreveport. He started that Schuster's wholesale produce and egg business. Then his brother, Dave, came along. Then they started a liquor and beer distribution. They had the franchise for Hague and Hague. What do you call that alcoholic drink?

*Scotch.*

Yeah. They had the liquor department, also.

*Sam gave a lot of affidavits for people to get out of Germany because he was well off.*

What I was told -- I don't know who told me that -- but I was told that Julius Schuster was not a nice person. In other words, Sam's father. But the Joint Distribution who was placing us all over the country, they decided to go with that. That's how I ended up in Shreveport, Louisiana.

**What did your father do on the farm?**

This was a tradition or so that back in the 1800s the most important thing was to learn something. Various brothers of my father, in other words my uncles, they went to work in department stores, to work in food industry and all of that. That whole clan became in northern Louisiana.

*No, no. She's talking about your father.*

Yeah. I'm coming. All right. I'll get away from that. I'll tell you why I started on that. Milan decided that I should not go to Shreveport.

*No. Not go to Bloomington.*

Yes. What happened was when Sam's father came he came to Ohio. The word in the United

States was the danger of the Jews living in Germany. The word got to the general public here. Sam was more or less illiterate, but he became a wealthy man. He had sent a letter addressed to the Family Schuster, Sterbfritz, Germany. That's all that was on the envelope. So somehow or the other, the letter ended up in Sterbfritz to my father. There were several of his brothers and so on and so forth, but he was the most active showing an interest in the rest of the family. My father was sent to school until age 14. Then he was sent to be a window dresser.

*Apprentice.*

He got a job in a big department store. That's how people in Germany knew that this was possible. So the letters came to Shreveport and asked for an affidavit of support because the United States government required that. You had to give support if necessary to any new emigrant so it wouldn't fall to the --

*American population.*

Yes. So my father became a window dresser. That's as far as his learning was concerned. But he was very industrious. Milan Schuster had known that there was a Schuster family in the United States. Milan was my father's nephew. They all learned merchandising. My father also learned. He more or less was a haberdasher. He would sell material. He would sell all the necessary things what the average house needs.

*If somebody got married, he would --*

Yes. The poor population had these wooden shoes. That was a big product that they had. Then there was a lady. Her name was Matilda. She was actually also a cousin.

*She was moving to another city and she sold her merchandise to your father and mother.*

No. My father kept that part. He kept the haberdashery stuff. But my father bought this -- Matilda was her name. She was a Schuster and had the grocery store. Her husband passed and she went back to Hammelburg where she was born. So they sold the grocery store to my --

**So that's how the store came about.**

Yes.

**So the store sold other things other than food.**

Yes.

**It was like a general store.**

Yes. But my father -- not only my father. People in that environment in Germany instead of becoming trades people, they all became merchants. This Matilda Schuster, her husband died. So she did not want to stay in Sterbfritz. She moved where her husband was from and she sold the grocery store. That's groceries. She sold the grocery store to my father and mother. My mother operated that business whereas my father still kept his business of selling furniture and material and that type.

*He had his own customers and he went from one place to another. He used to go on the train occasionally. Occasionally he'd take his horse and wagon. He had a beautiful horse. He would go to the neighboring farms and sell.*

And he saw that this piece of ground was for sale, which became our meadow. My father's love of life was his animals. He got into the sheep business. I remember every spring several -- this is what they did for a living, going from town to town and shearing the flock of sheep for the wool sake. So that was my father's business and definitely was as a merchant, never having a window to dress.

**Your father was really an entrepreneur, a real businessman.**

Yes, he was. There was a bit of friction between Jews and non-Jews in Germany. But my father didn't know of religion, color or anything, until the Nazi Party came to be.

*He was one of the boys.*

**What do you mean "boys?"**

*He was one of the boys in town. He knew everybody in town. They were all his friends. He grew up with them.*

**He was a community leader?**

*Yes.*

**Wonderful. Well, I thank both of you. I think I got some good segments today.**

*Let's make another date.*

**This is Claytee White. I'm with Mr. Henry Schuster. It is March 16th, 2011. This is our fourth session.**

**So how are you doing this afternoon?**



I'm doing fine.

**Great.**

Glad to see you.

**So today we're going to talk about being in America. We've already talked about how you met Anita. Now you are in Shreveport.**

Well, I think what I would like to do, if it's okay with you, I'll start right after the ship left Portugal to come to the United States. This was in June of 1941. There were approximately 100 European children that were allowed to come to the United States. It was sponsored by the Rothschilds in Europe. The American Quakers were very much involved. They were the out front people who did the negotiating with the European authorities and with the American authorities to take in those children. Now, for many, many years I only thought there was one transport coming, but actually there were three transports. I never realized that until very late in life.

In 1989 we organized a reunion of people who as children came to the United States. I and Anita more or less were the organizers. I tried to get publicity. I have a nucleus of a certain amount of people that we knew, but I needed more publicity. So I tried the L.A. Times. They said, we'll put a little article in, but it was just maybe a one- or two-line article, which was not what I wanted.

So I went to the Wiesenthal Center and I talked to Rabbi Cooper. I was telling him why I'm there. Another one of our so-called siblings was with me. We started to tell the story to Rabbi Cooper. He said wait a minute. He called on his intercom and asked a lady by the name of Shapiro to bring his staff into his office because they have a story they want to participate in. So they came. I and Aaron Low -- Aaron Low's name was actually Louv in German, but in the United States it was L-O-W. We both wrote him letters and he then got us publicity in 50 newspapers throughout not only United States, to Europe, to all over.

I was fortunate I had a secretary. I kept her busy with all of the response that was coming in from all over. We had people from Mexico, people from Australia, people from Ireland, from England, from all over. We had around 175 replies.

So we then made all the arrangements. We were deeply involved. We had to find a place where to have our meeting and we had to have the big to-do. So Rabbi Cooper recommended that

I contact a certain synagogue in Los Angeles, which was Orthodox. He figured it's just better to have a bigger thing than just the little thing. So we made it a large deal. I made arrangements with the local hotels. I made arrangements with various places where we could take the people. It was all real well and organized.

The day before all this was to be I came down with what I thought was a heart attack. Immediately Anita called 911 and the ambulance. I went to the hospital. They said you had a big problem with your heart. It's an arrhythmia. So he said we will go into your heart and see if we can find what we can do to alleviate that. So they did and I was there. I naturally wanted to be at this big to-do. The doctor said you're going at your own risk. I personally will recommend that you do not go to the meeting. So I didn't.

But the day or two before the big affair I turned on our radio recorder and I rehearsed my speech. Well, Anita knew that I had done that. So at the meeting, Aaron Low, the one that went with me to see Rabbi Cooper, he was the master of ceremony. It was up to Anita. She said I know you think Henry is not here, but I have Henry. She put in a tape in which I had rehearsed my speech, and there I addressed the group. Many, many came to see me in the hospital. A lot of them I didn't know, but this certain amount I did know. But this particular get-together was just like a bunch of kids, really having a great time.

**What was the program like?**

We had speakers. I was one of the speakers, which was on the radio. We had made arrangements with local hotels in the area from where we were going to have that. It had to be a hotel that could accommodate Orthodox people, which is on Saturday they're not supposed to take elevators. This is part of the Rabbinical Council that has been changed because that was considered in the olden days to use elevators you had to use pulleys and that would be work; and, therefore, it would not be the proper place for us to have that. So we had the meeting. I mean it was just like a bunch of children having a great time, meeting old friends, knowing some of them knew each other, others didn't. It was just with a lot of giggling and a lot of happiness and everything at that three-day affair, which I missed.

**Yes. Oh, it was three days.**

Yeah. Definitely. Friday was the first day. That was registration. Then on the Sabbath there was

no activity. Then on Sunday we had a kosher dinner at one of the local synagogues there. Anita got up and told them all what had happened to me. The result was that a lot of them came to the hospital to see me.

**Oh, I think that's wonderful.**

**When you first came -- I know that you were a young man, a very young man -- how did people feel about the United States at that time, because the United States really had not acted to help?**

Right. The United States was the ultimate. Everybody wanted to come to the United States because there was -- I mean religiously it was all of the things available and the United States was regarded as the place of the day. Everything was working out beautifully, as far as that's concerned.

But many came to visit me. Anita made that arrangement. We had someone videograph the whole thing. We had a local television station there. We had the Los Angeles Times. It was a big deal with 175 people. Some of them were not survivors, but they were married to survivors. So it was a joyous reunion. It really was.

**That's excellent.**

But I think I should talk about now from the time we landed in New York. From France we went through Spain to Portugal. There we were in one of the local schools. It was vacation time. So they had set up enough facilities to accommodate a big transport. We were on the ship Muzimo, which was a freighter. The big export from Portugal or import to the United States was cork that grew on certain trees in Portugal. Aside from just having people that were children there, many adults also had gotten permission and had affidavits of support.

Then the Joint Distribution took on the task of placing the children. Many of them had relatives in the States and others were sent to some of the orphanages in the United States, especially in Los Angeles. Vista Del Mar is an orphanage and quite a few were placed there. My father's brother, Moritz Schuster, had come --

**What is his first name again?**

Moritz, M-O-R-I-T-Z. He had been in this country a very short time, but they wanted me to live with them. But one of my cousins from New York thought I would be better off to be placed in an

American home. There was a Schuster family in Shreveport, Louisiana, who were definitely related. I was related to them. Sam Schuster was a very industrious man. When I got there he was already in his sixties. He had a tremendous business that he had established and they became very wealthy.

**What kind of business?**

They were in the produce. Aside from the produce, they also had a liquor distribution company and beer distribution. So my cousin Milan Schuster living in New York, he recommended that I would be placed in Shreveport with the Schusters.

**What is the relation between Milan and Sam?**

The same as I was with Sam. Milan's father and my grandfather, they were brothers. Milan actually was a second cousin, not a first cousin. But he had recommended to the Joint Distribution that I would be better off to go to Shreveport, Louisiana. It just so happens that Pearl Schuster, Sam's wife, was visiting in New York at the time. So the Joint Distribution got in touch with Sam in Shreveport. According to what I was told, he said it's okay with him, but it has to be approved by his wife, who happened to be visiting in New York right now. So he contacted his wife and his daughter and husband -- actually, Pearl Schuster is Sam's wife. I have to think just a second.

**Just take your time.**

Sam contacted Pearl. It was not a good relationship between the two. So he felt here's something he can please his wife and he asked her if she would be willing to take me in. She decided she wanted to do something to please Sam. So she agreed. She came to the orphanage that we were staying in New York. Before I met her, my clothes were raggedy. My shoes had holes in them. I was a horrible looking sight because I've seen pictures of me then. So she and a niece living in New York came to the orphanage on Amsterdam Avenue where we were to meet. I was instructed by Milan that I should say nice to meet you. So Pearl came, sort of a tiny, small woman, white hair, highly made up. She came with a niece of theirs who was living in New York. They came to meet me. Just the day before my cousin Milan and another cousin took me to a men's clothing store and bought me a -- what they call it? They had a name for those suits. It was a two-piece, pants and jacket, new shoes. They had me get a haircut before. So I was very presentable. Pearl agreed to take me. So the day before they were leaving --

### **Did you speak any English?**

I spoke no English whatsoever. But Sam and Pearl's daughter, Betty, were on their honeymoon with her husband Robert Lyons. Bob was a captain in the United States Air Force. This was in 1941. He was the medical doctor. He spoke a little German because in medical school they all had to learn a little bit. So I was picked up at the orphanage, taken to Bob Lyon's parents' house where I met some more relatives that were there. They were making a big deal out of me. I had no idea what was going on, absolutely none. Whenever anybody smiled and laughed, I smiled and laughed. Other than that I was just sitting there. They had a little Boston bull terrier dog and the dog was my friend. That evening they made up a bed for me on the sofa.

The next morning Bob Lyons, Betty, his wife, and Pearl and I went in the newly bought convertible Chevy that Sam gave them as a wedding gift. We started traveling. Where we were going or what, I had no idea. In the front seat Bob was driving, in the middle was Betty, who was pregnant, then was Pearl.

### **She was on her honeymoon?**

She was on her belated honeymoon. Because being in the military right at their wedding, he couldn't get -- because the United States was on the verge of entering the war. So all the military personnel had to be on duty.

But we went off. I and the little dog -- Shorty was his name -- was in the backseat. So that was my friend. And then I was naive. I didn't know what a big belly meant. I thought she was just a fat woman. But then I would hear the word baby. So then I put two and two together and I realized they were going to have a baby.

The first night we stopped at a cabin, tourist cabin. This was before motels. But they had these various tourist cabins through the country. The first night we stopped and we went into the local restaurant there. They served meat with milk. This was against my belief because we're not supposed to mix dairy with meat. So I was getting my plate and there was meat. I don't remember exactly what the dairy was, but there was dairy with it. What am I going to do? I don't know how to talk to them about it and I didn't want to really make an issue out of something. So I ate the meat and the dairy and I figured God will be okay with what the situation was.

So the third night was in Montgomery, Alabama, at Maxwell Field Air Base. That's where

Dr. Lyons had to report for duty. I had no idea that he was a military man because he was dressed in street clothes. But that morning before we went for breakfast Bob was in uniform right on the outside of Maxwell Field. That's when I realized that's where we were going to be. They didn't know how long he had to be there because his home base was in Barksdale Field in Shreveport. But he was assigned for some kind of a conference to be at Maxwell Field. That's the first I found out that he was.

Well, Bob with his little German that he learned in medical school -- we made out with hand motions and so on and so forth. I spoke in German that he could understand. The waitress overheard the conversation. She said she better call the air base and find out if this is okay that a German boy is in the United States. So the MPs from the base came to the restaurant where we were eating. Bob Lyons explained to them. So they tapped me on the head. You're okay, kid. Then we went on. Bob had to stay there in Maxwell. His orders were to be there for more time than what he thought he had to be. So I and Pearl took the train --

**So Betty stayed also?**

Yes. Betty stayed with Bob. Pearl and I went by train, Pullman car. It was a luxury of something, which is impossible. But anything in the United States to me then was the impossible. Pearl had a private compartment. I was in one of the Pullman bunks in there. It took overnight, the train. We arrived in Shreveport the next morning. Sam Schuster greeted us at the railroad station. When I saw Sam I was shocked. He was a spitting image of my father. They were first cousins. I just couldn't get over the fact that he looked just like my father.

**Were you able to tell him that?**

Not then. Many years later.

When we first got to Maxwell Field, Bob didn't know how long he has to be there. So we all stayed at a motor hotel outside the base. We ate at the officers' mess. Bob was in his uniform all the time. The base swimming pool -- they got me some bathing trunks and I had a great ball, great time in the swimming pool. They had a jukebox in the officers' club. You didn't need money to play it. So I finally found a piece of music, which I liked because I was not used to rock and roll or any of those. I was told many years later by Betty that it was the Air Force anthem, "Up we go into the" -- and I guess I pushed the button over and over to hear it. Betty told me that

they got so tired of listening to that. This is something she told me many, many years later.

So here I am in Shreveport. I was greeted. Pearl was with me. The chauffer -- David Bennett was his name -- he picked us up in their 1941 Buick, which was a big deal. I met Rosalee -- she was the cook at their home -- and David Bennett, the chauffer. Then all the relatives came to meet me. I was overwhelmed.

**So you had a lot of relatives in the Shreveport area?**

Yes. Sam's sister lived in Shreveport. Her name was Lazarus was her last name. She had a son. So that was part of the family. Then there was Sam's brother David and his wife Leah. Bertha Lazarus. I met their 15-year-old son -- no. He was 14. I was 15. He was 14. At least I had somebody that was my age. Bertha and several of the relatives were very kind to me, really. I just was so well treated.

This was the United States. This was heaven. But things changed. Pearl did not like me. She didn't like the idea that I came to live with them. She just agreed to do something to please Sam. They had Betty, the daughter, who was married and expecting a baby. Then they had Julius who was a 21-year-old Down syndrome man. This was something new to me. I couldn't understand what this young man -- I mean he looked different. He spoke different. It was just kind of shocking. But I got used to that, too.

Then a day later a young boy, also my age, Donald Zadek came to pick me up. It was vacation time. Byrd High School had the ROTC building that was used in the summer for recreation. So Donald took me on a walk -- it was very close -- to the Byrd High School, that recreation center. They had a ping pong table there. Ping pong we had in France and I was a pretty good ping pong player. I beat them all. Naturally I was proud but also embarrassed. But I met a lot of young boys my age at that time. Lewis Lazarus and Donald Zadek were the relatives. I started to speak a little English. It didn't take long. I could converse to a certain extent in English. Now it was time to decide what to do with me.

**How old are you now?**

Fifteen. She had no reason not to like me, but she just did this to please Sam. She definitely let me know that she didn't like me. You know, I just came from Europe. We bathed once a week. In America everybody took a shower once a day. I recall Sam sitting on one end of the dining

room and on the other end Pearl. And then Sue, who was a nursemaid taking care of Julius, and a couple of other people came for dinner. Pearl really embarrassed me. She said don't sit next to me; you stink. You can imagine how I [felt]...

Her idea was that I should learn a trade. I didn't need any schooling. But somehow or the other, the word got to the principal of Byrd High School that there was a new boy in town who just came from Europe. This was a novelty in Shreveport. There was a Jewish population, but none of them that came from Europe. But the principal heard about me. So he called. I don't remember how it happened. But I was to come and meet him. Mike Schuster, Sam's brother, his wife was actually taking care of Sam's personal business. Bess, she was not Jewish, but a wonderful lady, really a wonderful lady. She took me to meet the Principal Coffman is his name. Believe it or not, this was three months after I came, two and a half months after I came, and I spoke English enough to get along. It came naturally. He said no, I want him to come and be a freshman even though he's a year older than all the rest of the kids. He will be highly respected and he'll become an American youth. Reluctantly Pearl agreed to that.

Now, Lewis Lazarus was the son of Sam's -- let's see how he was related. Well anyhow, Lewis Lazarus was related, my age, 15. Donald Zadek, my age. So here I had an opening already into the summer months or to the field house from the ROTC.

**So recreational?**

Yes. But Bess took me to meet the principal. He took me in the first day of high school. Summer was over. This was the end of August. I came in June 15. I made out pretty good already. Mr. Coffman. He made an announcement over the public address system they should welcome me. Here I was now a hero. I mean I was a big shot. I was a novelty. The teachers were extremely nice to me, most helpful. I did really well. The only problem I had was American history. I knew the names, but they pronounce differently from what I was used to them and I was confused. I knew I didn't do well in history. So I did go to the assistant principal. I did this on my own. I told him what my problem was. He said, well, we will not put American history on your agenda for this semester. He says you're going to take a program we have, Nations at Work. Through that I did very well.

**So do you remember what the course of study was like?**



During the summer in the evenings I used to go to the movies. About a block from where they lived was a movie theater. In those days it was a dime to go to the movies. My cousins in New York had given me a dollar or two. So I had some money. I had enough to go to the movies almost every night. That's how I really learned to speak English. That was the best teacher.

**Did you go alone?**

Yeah, I would go by myself, just walk. It was a block or so away. Later on, I got to know a lot of people and everything, we did other activities. In fact, not that summer, but the next summer I had met my friend David Nevin. David Nevin, by the way, is a published author, tremendous writer. We became very close. Sam made the arrangements for me to meet David Nevin because David's father was an officer stationed at Barksdale. By trade he was a veterinarian. Veterinarians were the ones that were the food inspectors on the military base then because we were geared up to go to war. I mean they had publicity. They'd get volunteers for the service. Then the draft went into effect. Well, David Nevin's father used to go down to the produce house maybe once or twice a week to inspect to make sure that the food that they sold to the Barksdale Field was okay. So anyway, Sam talked to Major Nevin. He was a major. That's how I met David Nevin, my good friend. We were inseparable from that time on.

I did well in school. The first year I did better than I thought I would do. Then the second year I was not doing as well as I was doing the first year because now I was being "Charlie Good Time." Instead of buckling down and doing my studies, I did what all the rest of the kids did. I still was a B average whereas in my freshman year I was an A average. So I made out well.

Sam Schuster was a semi-illiterate person. His dad, which was my grandfather's brother, came to the United States in 1859. He came with a cousin that he had impregnated. I think I mentioned that before.

**Yes.**

I was coming to something. As I said, I had a favorite teacher, a lady by the name of Strother. She was a civic teacher and she was very helpful for me. She would tutor me in American history. I became rather well versed in American history and I did okay.

The time I lived in Shreveport, from 1941 until 1944, I made a lot of good friends. David Nevin was my best friend. David had a paper route. This was in the days when the boys had

paper routes. I wanted to get a paper because David was making money. I wanted to be a paperboy. So I needed a bicycle. Sam loaned me the money for the bicycle. He basically gave it to me. I had to get up early in the mornings. But that didn't last long because every Friday evening was collecting time for the newspaper. I was well versed in English and all that, but there were certain things I didn't understand. I would come to the people's house where I would deliver a paper in the mornings. I rang the doorbell and the lady came. Paperboy. She would say something so fast I didn't understand a word what she said and shut the door on me. So this happened for maybe a month or so. I decided this was not what I want to do. So I found one of my classmates who was an evening paperboy. He took over my morning paperboy.

Next summer -- well, actually before. There were shortages of people for jobs. There was a big chain grocery outfit who were customers of the Schuster Produce Company. I was what they called a bag boy on Saturdays. Stores were not open on Sundays. On Saturdays I would go. I mentioned Friday night I would collect. Then on Saturdays I worked as a bag boy at the grocery. Supermarket is really what it was, an early day supermarket. It was fine. I was doing very well.

Then the manager of the produce department at that store was drafted into the army and they needed a new manager for the produce department. Well, manager had to keep inventory as to what they have and then tell the manager of the store what's running low. So I became the produce manager. I was 16 at the time. That went very well.

**So was it a full-time job?**

No. No. It was after school. After school, yes. Well, I don't think it was every day. I know I did work on Saturday. I had to give an inventory to the managers so as what to order.

Dave Schuster, Sam's brother, went to a war bonds drive because we were already at war. I came in June of '41 and in December the United States entered World War II.

**You were going to talk about the war bonds?**

Yeah. Dave Schuster, Sam's brother, who actually ran the liquor department, which they had their own wine label -- they would import by tank cars, railroad tank cars full of wine from the West Coast. They would bottle it. They had their own bottling plant for the wine. Sam had about five liquor stores besides being the produce.

Okay. Dave Schuster went to a war bond drive. There they were auctioning off things for

war bonds. Dave bid on a rabbit, a white rabbit, a live rabbit. Dave bid on it and he got it. So he brought it home.

They lived next door to Sam. Dave lived next door to Sam. Dave's wife's name was Leah. She was a very heavy woman who had broken a leg just before I got to Shreveport, but she was a very kind woman. I mean whereas Pearl was a mean woman, Leah was a very kind woman.

So here I had this rabbit. I talked to David and I told my friend David what I got. He said what are you going to do with it? I asked Sam what can I do with the rabbit? I can't have it at the house here. He says no, I'll deliver some chicken coops. He talked to -- Major Nevins was no longer there. He was transferred overseas already, David's father. But David's mother was a teacher at the other high school in Shreveport. I don't know if they owned the house or rented it. We talked to Mary Nevin, David and I. She agreed that we could put a chicken coop in the backyard for a rabbit. Sam delivered from the produce house, because that's where they had the poultry department, two or three chicken coops. We had a real nice, cute, little rabbit.

I found out there was a fireman at a fire station just a few blocks from where we lived who was raising rabbits. At the firehouse he had also some kind of a like chicken coops and he was raising rabbits and he was going for pedigree white rabbits. Well, I knew about it. This was before we agreed to take care of the rabbit. But David Bennett took the rabbit home and took care of it for me. It was my rabbit now. So David Nevin and I went to the fire station where we heard there was this fireman who was raising rabbits. So we went to him. He said, oh, you got the rabbit that was -- yeah, he had donated it. So he told us what we need. He said you've got a little male rabbit. We need at least one or two female rabbits. We started off then with three rabbits. I think six months later we had 25 or 30 rabbits. Then our schoolwork really suffered because almost every day a rabbit would get out of the cage and we had to go and chase it down and put him back in. So it showed.

Then the rabbits got rabbit fever, a disease which only affected certain type of animals. Our rabbits were all infected. So the fireman who was our friend now, he came and looked over the thing. He said I will take the rabbits and dispose of them. He said we cannot have them because they'll infect the rabbits all over. So that was the end of our rabbit business. It was a good thing because my grades in school were suffering from being busy with the rabbits. That

was that summer.

The next summer there was a little place. It looked like an igloo, which was an icehouse not too far from where -- I have to come and tell you about that other. I'm going to stop there and backtrack a little bit.

Schuster had bought a horse for the daughter, Betty. He also bought a horse for Julius, the Down syndrome. He was boarding them at a local riding academy. Well, Sam was a real old-fashioned horseman because he used to be a teamster in his younger days in Chicago. He had a team of horses and wagons and he would be in the moving business and delivering. I mean he knew his horses. He had those two horses boarded out at the Broadmoor Riding Academy. Ilene, the woman who owned that riding academy, was in financial trouble. So she sold Sam the riding academy. I think there must have been at least 15 horses that they had they would rent out. I would go down whatever possible chance I had to the riding academy. I had a bicycle now. I could go over there. I became a pretty good horseman myself. I would actually invite some of my schoolmates and friends to come with me to go horseback riding because they didn't have to pay. I mean we just could do that.

Now, the war was going pretty strong. A lot of people were drafted into the service. Schuster's Produce and Poultry Company were not allowed to make second deliveries because of the gasoline shortage.

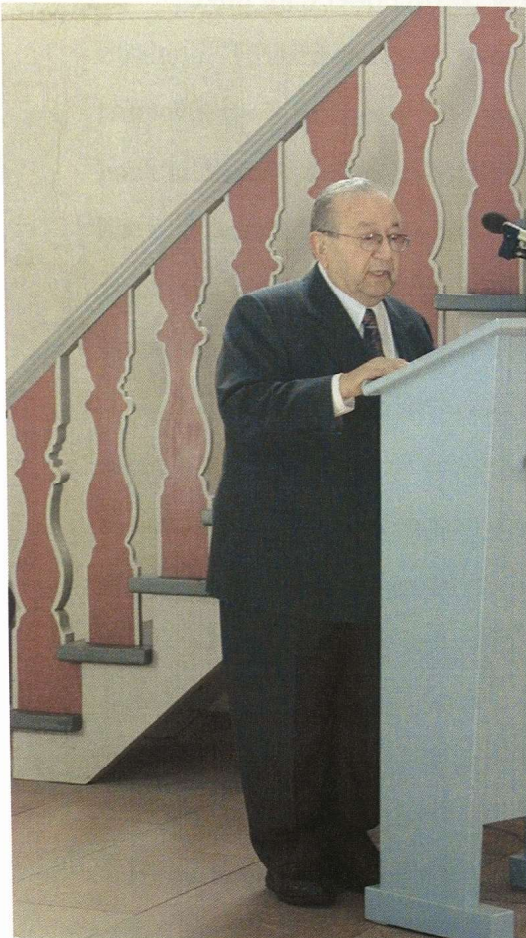
**What do you mean by second deliveries?**

In other words, if you had a grocery store, you would order produce from them, and if you were running low, you'd call Schuster and they would send you more. But they were not allowed because of the war effort. So Sam had the bright idea that the horse by the name of Dixie that he had bought for Betty, he decided he was going to train Dixie to pull a wagon. One of the men that worked at the riding academy -- Buster was his name; I don't know what his name was -- he would every morning take Dixie and the wagon from there down to the produce company. If somebody would call that needed something right away, they were not supposed to be able to make a second delivery, so they used that for second deliveries to the customers.

**That was to save gasoline? Is that why that rule was made, no second deliveries?**

Yes. So then I became pretty much of a horseman. I would invite friends to come with me. Pearl





didn't know what was going on with me. I mean she had no interest in me whatsoever.

**So you were just on your own?**

Yes, definitely on my own. Things like when she told me in front of all those people don't sit next to me, you stink, those things happened on a pretty regular basis, which made life pretty miserable for me.

**Well, what did Sam say about all that?**

He couldn't help me in the situation. I mean he would try to make me feel good and so on and so forth because Sam got to like me, really. I mean I was a Schuster; he was a Schuster. He was very kind to me. So that helped a lot.

And then Bob Lyons, who was the medical doctor in the Air Force, had a new duty to go to England. He had to report to a U.S. air base in England. He was overseas. Now, Betty had Michael, their little boy. He was already by that time two years old. Betty and Michael came back to Shreveport to live there. Betty had a bedroom of her own, which I was using. So she got her bedroom back for her and for Michael, the baby. I was sort of in a hallway up on the second floor was my bedroom then. Now, Betty was my friend. See, I mean she was very kind and she knew what was going on between me and her mother. Her mother was a neurotic, definitely.

Years ago and still is today there is some animosity of German Jews and Polish Jews. I mean it's not true anymore. But there was always a rough relationship between German Jews and Polish Jews. Pearl's family were Polish Jews and Sam's were German Jews. So all of that had an effect on me. But my outside life made up for it because I had good friends. I started to date.

There was one girl. She was a freshman when I was, and she blossomed into a very lovely, beautiful girl. I got to like her. I don't know if she liked me or not, but I got to like her. I took her on a date. So the first Christmas they had a Christmas party and there they had mistletoe. That meant if you stand under the mistletoe, you get to kiss a girl. That was lots of fun. I learned that custom very fast. Then there was this girl. Patina was her name, well developed, very pretty. They lived not far from where the riding academy was.

**So you're probably a senior by now.**

I never got to go what's called a senior. I graduated my junior year because I was 18 and I volunteered to go into the army.

**So Patina was before?**

Yes. Yes. She was nice and everything. But David Nevin and I cooked up something how we're going to get Patina's attention. We're going to ride our bicycle in front of her house and you have to fall off. I'm sure Patina will come out running to help you get up. It worked, but that's as far as it went.

**That's cute.**

Many, many years later, maybe 15 years ago, Anita and I went to a Byrd High School reunion in Shreveport. Dr. Patina Hellman was there. Anita says I was baffled. I couldn't talk, you know, because I had a crush on her. But she became a very prominent cancer doctor in Shreveport.

And she was also a very talented musician. I've always liked classical music and things of that. She would be playing at her house occasionally and I would be invited to a party or something over there and she would play the piano. In fact, she played in music class at Byrd High School. She was very talented. She was brilliant because she did become a well-known doctor. But Anita says I was baffled. I didn't know how to act or anything.

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I got credit for French because they were teaching French at Byrd High School. The arrangement was made that I would take a French test because I spoke French. I did pass. I got credit. Then Centenary College in Shreveport had German. Byrd High School didn't, or none of them. At Centenary College I took a test there for German, and I got credit for that. So by taking six subjects in my junior year I had enough to graduate. And because my 18th birthday was in March, I went in June 6th, the same day that we landed --

*Landed in the United States. Right?*

**June 6th of?**

*Forty-four.*

**Okay. Was that one of the beaches?**

Yeah. That was when the major landing was in Europe. But going away, Sam bought me a watch, which was very nice. But in the meantime while I was living there, I bought all my own clothes with part-time money that I was making. At first Sam used to give me a dollar a week, which was fine. But after a while I didn't even need that anymore because my part-time jobs I



made enough. Actually, my diploma says September of '41 that I -- no.

*Forty-four.*

September '44. I went in there -- on June 6th I remember going. I went to the draft board and I told them my story that I want to go into the service. They said they couldn't accept me right away. I wanted to learn how to fly and you had to be a citizen of the United States. My diploma actually was dated in August of '44 even though I left in June for the army.

As I said Sam was very kind, bought me the watch. He just acted like he was sorry to see me go. I really got to the point where I really was very fond and loved him. Sue, the nursemaid of Julius, at first she thought I was competition to her. She was not very receptive towards me when I first got there. Maybe a month or two later Sue became my friend. Rosalee, the maid, was my best friend. Rosalee used to come and give me a hug and say you're all right, honey; don't worry about it; you're okay. So it was difficult at first, but after a while it --

Many, many years later Anita and I went to visit Betty and Bob Lyons. Bob was stationed at that time at the air base in San Antonio, Texas. We hadn't planned on going to San Antonio. But we went on a trip down to New Orleans.

**Was that how it was, Anita?**

*Well, we went to Shreveport.*

Yeah, we went to Shreveport. We found out that -- well, Sam had died in the meantime. He was no longer alive. But Pearl was visiting Betty and Bob in San Antonio. I had not been in touch with them. But we got their phone number and I called. She was just come, you've got to come. So we drove over from New Orleans. We went to San Antonio. Pearl was there. She apologized to me. Yeah. She apologized for the way she acted towards me, which I accepted. That meant that.

But the next thing -- as I said I went to the draft board, but I couldn't enlist because I wasn't a citizen, but I could be drafted. So that's how it worked out. They put me like I wanted. I wanted to go to the Air Force. So I went to the United States Air Force.

*It was called the Army Air Corps.*

Yeah, Army Air Corps. I was inducted in -- what city was that? I know you weren't there.

*In Monroe.*

No. In Alexandria, Louisiana. That's where I had to report to. So you want to go on or you want to -- it's up to you.

Well, let me go to the army. I went to Alexandria, Louisiana, and I was inducted there into the United States Army. They gave me my wishes, what I wanted, to go into the Air Corps. That's where I went, into the Air Corps. I can't think of the name of the base that I was there. I'm just trying to remember what. But anyhow, I was there at the base in Alexandria, Louisiana. At the base I was there for maybe two or three weeks. They issued me a pair of boots, army boots, and an army helmet. Because I wasn't a citizen, they didn't know exactly what to do with me. But they got the word in that I was okay. I went to Sheppard Field in Texas. I went there for my basic training.

**Were there lots of young Jewish men going into the service?**

Yeah. Like six percent of the national average in those days were American Jews. So I would say six percent of the military were also Jewish. Now, basic training was in the hellhole of the United States. It was hot and humid and windy at Sheppard Field. Six weeks of basic training I was there. From there we were inducted. I was assigned to a barrack and all this and that. A corporal was our drill instructor. He was a mean son-of-a-bitch. I wanted to find out what I had to do about my naturalization. I had to have second papers to become. So he was walking through the barracks. We were in the barrack bunks. At the end of a barrack was where usually the drill instructor was.

*He had his own room.*

Yeah, had his own room. But he was walking through the barracks. I went over and I said, hey, you, Corporal. Then he stopped and he looked at me. He says don't you talk to me in the middle of the street. You want to see me, you knock on my door. That was strictly army -- you know what the word is.

**Yeah. Nonsense.**

Yeah. After basic training they were assigning our unit to various schools and things. Some went to become radio operators. I was sent to Madison, Wisconsin, to Truax Field to study electronics. Basically I was there to become a radar operator. Radar at the time was a very secretive thing in our military. I went to radio school through the whole winter. Then from there I went to Chanute

Field in Illinois. I was there for six weeks for further instruction of the theory of radar and all of that.

While I was at Madison at Truax Field, our barrack was full. When we all were there, all the bunks were taken except the bunk right next to where I was put. Many years later I found out this was an FBI agent planted in there -- he was older looking than the rest of us -- to see if I pass the idea of being involved in the most secretive weapon we had. I guess I passed.

*He could have been an enemy alien. You know, he was German.*

**Oh, that's right.**

*Even though he was Jewish, he was still a German and he was stateless.*

Yeah. Right. So it was through the winter I was definitely at Truax Field because it was so cold. The barracks were flimsy buildings put up. We had two potbelly stoves, one on each end of the barrack. We had to keep a watch. Somebody had to be awake all the time. So it would be turns.

**So you heated it with coal?**

Wood, logs like, because it was a pretty big sized stove. There was one guy by the name of Zimmerman who was a big anti-Semite. He'd come up with the wildest story about what the Jews do, what they are and so on and so forth. He said he knows that circumcision, they had to make a meal out of the foreskin; this kind of nonsense things. My army buddies who were there with me got sick and tired of hearing this crap that he was espousing and they beat --

*The daylight out of him.*

Oh. And I don't know. I think he may have even been taken out of our barracks and placed someplace else. But I became a typical American. I mean I spoke English. You know, my tests, all that went well.

Then I ended up -- it was in February of '45 -- from Chanute Field my whole class went from Chanute Field to Boca Raton, Florida, to go to radar school. We were on a troop train. When we got to Boca Raton, they wouldn't let us get off the train because one guy from our group had the mumps. So they quarantined the whole car, which we were in. For two weeks we were living in the hotel, the Boca Hotel, the fanciest hotel, white sheets and beds changed every day. We had nothing to do except lay on the beach and just sun ourselves.

**Wow. What a way to be quarantined.**

Yes. While I was there on weekends I used to go to Miami. We were 35 or 40 miles from Miami, Boca Raton. On weekends we used to go. We would be off from school on Saturday and Sunday and we had to be back Monday morning. I don't know how I knew it that I had an aunt living in Jacksonville, Florida. Jacksonville was 400 miles from where I was stationed.

**So whose sister is that? Your mother's sister?**

My mother's sister.

*Her name was Matilda.*

Her name is Matilda, yes, my aunt. She was newly arrived in the United States, too, but her two daughters had been in the States for several years already. They all lived in Jacksonville. I knew that my aunt was living in Jacksonville and I sent a telegram to my mother's brother who lived in New York. I sent a telegram asking for aunt Matilda's address and he wired it back to me. I just want to kind of interject something there about my uncle Sali.

**This is the one in New York?**

Yes. When we came and we got off the ship, we went by buses. We were sent to this orphanage in New York at 137th Street. Lo and behold, who worked there as a janitor? My uncle Sali. He got permission to take me on Friday evening to his house for Sabbath dinner. On the way while we were walking towards his house, he gave me the lesson that every boy needed to know, and that was never walk with your hands in your pocket because that means that you're lazy and don't buy Coca-Cola because if you buy a Pepsi for five cents you get twice as much as you get in Coca-Cola. Those were the most important lessons that my uncle Sali had for me.

**You're going back to Matilda?**

Yeah.

*You're going back to Matilda, but you didn't tell about your citizenship in Wisconsin.*

Yes. That's right. They waived my primary papers. I didn't need them because I was in the service. I was informed I had to go to a federal judge in the city of Madison. I was told to bring two witnesses. So we went. We met the judge. The judge said I'm here to swear you in as an American citizen. I see you have two soldiers with you there as witnesses. I raised my right hand and I followed what he said. Then he said okay, gentlemen, it's time for lunch; I'm going to take you all to lunch. That was really nice.

**How did you feel that day?**

I felt sky high, really.

**Which year was your citizenship?**

That was the judge when I got my citizenship while I was in Madison, Wisconsin.

So '44?

Forty-four.

**Okay, good. So we can get back to Matilda.**

In fact, I don't even know where my citizenship --

*I know where it is.*

You know where it is?

*Yes. It's under our bed.*

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**(Session V commences on March 23, 2011.)**

**How did you find out what had happened to your mother and sister?**

I was having regular correspondence with my mother until the war broke out between France, England and Germany. We knew about concentration camps. But I was always under the impression -- I'm sure most others in my position were -- that they were only arresting men and the women were left alone. I had two sisters and my mother. My mother at this time was the director of this old age home and both my sisters worked there. So my understanding all this time was that after the war we would get reunited and everything would be fine.

Then the word got out that there was atrocities against all Jews, whether men, women or whatever. So all of that stopped. My sister was in Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. She was liberated by the British soldiers, by the British Army. She was very ill. They were starving them to death and they were working them to death. My sister was very ill at the time. She had asthma and lung problem. So the British were taking care of all of those that were needy.

My sister heard that there was -- this is from her end I'm speaking now -- there was an American newspaperman traveling with the British Army. My sister heard that he was on the camp of Belsen. So she pulled herself together. She found out where the American newspaperman was and she told him that she had a brother living in Shreveport, Louisiana.

The news came in the States, New York Times and all of those, with all the information. I was out for the weekend in Miami. Once I got into the barracks there was a note on my bunk. I'm to report to the officer of the day. No matter what time I get this information I'm to report. My first thought was what the heck did I do that they want to see me? I went to what they called the orderly room. The captain was on duty. I saluted like we were supposed to. He handed me a note and said a radio station had called Sam Schuster in Shreveport wanting to know if anybody knew anything about a Heinz Schuster. My sister remembered even the address from where I was. So I knew then somebody from my family was alive. I had no idea who it was.

We had corresponded up to a certain point in 1945. I would write and send it to a lady in England who in turn would send it to her son who was stationed in Germany with the occupation forces. That's how it came that I found out which one of my sisters it was.

I wanted to do something. I wanted to make sure that we get in touch with her, anything I can do to help the whole situation. So I asked my commanding officer if I could get an emergency leave and try to find out what's happening. I wanted to go to Washington to actually see what the information was and where it was and so on and so forth.

So I got my ten day leave (and) I went to Washington, D.C. I went to the American Red Cross there. I told them what I knew. They didn't make a big deal out of it at all. They said, well, with this information there's nothing we can do. In other words, they shut me off very harshly.

But I still had time on my leave. So I did go to New York, talked to my cousins there. One of my cousins had friends who had lived in France with this cousin of mine. My cousin knew that the family friend came back to Germany. So I got the information. I knew she was alive, which one it was. I knew she was alive. I didn't know much more information.

So we were finished with our training, our final training in Boca Raton. Actually, our orders were what they called a leave in transit. In other words, we were supposed to report to Williams Field in Chandler, Arizona. From there we were supposed to be prepared to go to the Philippine Islands. From the Philippine Islands once the war with Japan was over, we were to go to Japan and be part of the liberation.

I got a letter from my sister who had given it to this British soldier who sent it to his mother. His mother sent it to me in Shreveport, Louisiana, which was the address my sister had

given them. She knew where I was. So now my problem was what am I going to do next? I tried everything. I went to see the chaplain. I went to see the American Red Cross in Arizona where I was stationed and asked for help, but there was no help to give me. They all told me there's nothing we can do until the situation is over with Japan.

So Japan had surrendered. I was to report for the leave in transit that I had. Those of us who were trained for radar and everything, we were supposed to go to the occupation forces in Japan. I didn't want to go to Japan. I wanted to go to Europe to see if I could find my sister.

Another cousin who had these friends of his from France, he knew that his friends actually went to North Africa to escape the Nazis from taking over. My cousin Leo also knew that his friends were back in Paris. I had talked to him on the telephone and I told him the situation. So he said if there's a possible way that you can get to France and go see those people, they may be able to tell you exactly who was liberated and what the situation was.

Time came for us to go to Seattle, Washington, to Fort Lewis, which is in Washington. We were outfitted to be part of the Japanese occupation forces. I absolutely tried everything. Then I decided I'm going to call Sam Schuster in Shreveport. He actually was the one that had informed me what the newspaperman had written. We were to ship out on a Friday. I think it was on Wednesday or Thursday I called Sam Schuster and I told Sam what the situation was that I'm ready to ship to the Philippines and from there to Japan. He had a lot of connections. He knew the senator from Louisiana personally, Senator Ellender, Ellender with an E, and the congressman from the district. They knew him when he knew them. Sam got in touch and told if they could help, use their influence to have me go to Europe instead.

Well, I didn't know what was happening. It was Friday morning. We were packed, our entire group, which was the class that I graduated from. We were all packed and we were supposed to report to the base railway office. They actually had a train link coming into Williams Field in Chandler. Over the loud speaker system there was an announcement looking for Corporal Henry Schuster. I was a corporal by that time. Sam talked to the senator, and the senator was on the committee of the army. Sure enough, help came because my name was over the loudspeaker system. My buddy says, hey, they just called for your name over the PA system on the base, he heard.

So I went to our orderly room. I asked what the situation was. They said here, we have orders that you are to report to Monroe, Louisiana; you're not to be part of the group that goes to the Philippines. They gave me a railway ticket. The army made that arrangement. I had my papers, my military records, which were sealed, which I had to take to Louisiana. Off I was on the train to Louisiana. The train did make a stop in Shreveport. Sure enough, here was Sam Schuster there. I was so happy to see him and thankful what he had done.

The orders were for me to actually go to -- I don't remember exactly which base we had to report to. But my orders were changed that I was supposed to go to the Signal Corps, even though I was in the Air Corps. But they transferred me to the Signal Corps because I was trained for electronics and so on and so forth. I was assigned to a transport ship to go to Le Havre, France. Once we got to Le Havre, we went on a troop transport to France. I was part of the group that was assigned on that duty. We were settled at -- I'm trying to think of the name -- Chateau Thierry. We settled in at Chateau Thierry. There was an American Army base there. I was to report with my orders and everything to go to the base in Chateau Thierry. I finagled a way to go there.

I wanted to contact the people that my cousin Leo had told me were back in Paris. He gave me their address. He told me, he says, I'm going to write a letter. There was already mail service between France and the United States. I'm going to write a letter to my friends back in Paris to see if they could somehow or the other find out where a woman survived, a young person by the name of Bertha was her legal name. I decided I wanted to get to -- yeah.

After we arrived in Le Havre, France, again the entire outfit was to report to Chateau Thierry to an army base. It was a temporary situation. So I had my papers and everything that were sealed by an official military pouch. I went to the officer in charge who was supposed to have all the information for me, what I should be doing. So I reported. It just so happens the officer in charge was a Jewish captain. He was very sympathetic for the situation. I asked him if I could get a leave. He says I can't give you a leave because we're only here temporarily and from here you guys are going to be attached to Signal Corps in Germany. That was a big hurdle. He said I will not have roll call for three days. Nobody knows who you are and what you are because your papers and everything are sealed. He said you know what I mean. He couldn't come out and tell me what to do. He says you know what I mean. I said yes.



So with all the guys that I became real friends with that were on our ship transport, we were all together. There was a PX in Chateau Thierry, France that was established because Paris and France already had come into American hands. It had been for quite some time. So it was pretty well organized. Cigarettes were king in Europe. I got all the cigarettes that I could get. My army buddies that were not smokers but were allowed to buy a carton a week gave me their rationing. I got all kinds of goodies that I knew would be useful and I took off to go to see those people by the name of Franks who had come back to Paris.

The first thing I did is I got a ride on an army -- they had a Repo Depo they called it for us to be assigned to the various thing. So I knew who to report to Fürstenfeldbruck in Germany. They gave me the instructions and all that, what I'm supposed to be doing once I get there. Well, I was in France, but I still hadn't talked to my sister personally or anything. I did have a letter from her telling me what had happened to her and my other sister and my mother. So I already knew what the situation was.

But anyhow, I got a ride on an army six-by-six truck to maybe -- I don't know how many miles from Chateau Thierry they were going to. But they said you can ride with us to Strasbourg, which is in France. We're going to Strasbourg; you can ride with us there. That's what I did. I took my belongings and reported and off we were. I actually went AWOL. I was absent without leave. But it was with the permission by our captain who was in charge of our thing.

The orders there were that once I get into Germany I'm to report to the Signal Corps in Illesheim, Germany. American forces were there. The war with Germany was over then at that time. I was supposed to report there.

Off I went. I got this ride up to Strasbourg. Then from Strasbourg I hitchhiked. I got a ride to within about ten miles from Paris. It was early in the morning. The farmers in the area were bringing their produce to Paris. Here came this farmer. He had a team of oxen pulling his wagon with the fruit and vegetables and things that were to be sold in Paris. So I got a ride with that for a certain distance. They said, well, we have to go this way, and what you want to do you have to go the other way. So I thanked them and I got off of there.

I was still in no man's land. I didn't really know what to expect next. I heard a train coming. I ran over there to the railroad station in Strasbourg. I waved down the train. Believe it

or not, here was a freight train coming in and I had the guts to stand on the tracks, trying to halt. And I did. The train stopped. I still spoke French. So I spoke to them. They said, well, you can ride with us in the engine to such-and-such place in Paris. Once you get there you are on your own.

I did go to Paris. The subway was in full operation. They had a map of the city of Paris in all of the subway stations. I knew the street name. Through some research and some people that I could speak with, I found out exactly where the street was where these people by the name of Franks lived. So here I had my duffle bag filled with all the goodies, with the cigarettes and all this and that. I took the subway to the station close to these people. Then I walked maybe a block and a half or two blocks to the address where these Franks lived. I looked at the mailboxes and I saw their name. It says they lived on the third floor. Well, in Europe it still is different. What we call the ground floor they called -- no. I looked at the mailboxes and it said they are at such-and-such, which apartment that they were in.

So I started to walk up the stairs. I heard some voices coming down the stairs. Here I am an American soldier in a foreign country. I didn't want people to get scared and I didn't want to be scared. So I figured I better let these voices come down the stairs and wait until they are passed, then I'll go looking for names on the apartment. Here two women came down. I looked up at my sister and a friend. We fell into each other's arms. We hugged. We cried. It was just an amazing thing. In fact, I wrote a story that was published about that.—*A Day to Remember*. It was published in the newspaper.

**Oh, great.**

So my sister was -- actually, the way these people by the name of Franks -- she and a friend of hers who got to Paris together were babysitting for these people by the name of Franks. They had small children. They were living with the American Red Cross in a displaced persons camp. So my cousin Leo wrote to his friends saying that my sister is in Paris someplace to see if they can possibly -- if somebody can help me where to look for her. They did. They went to the various displaced persons camps. Sure enough, they found my sister. They were not living with these Franks, but they were baby-sitting.

So I spent three wonderful days with my sister and her friend Elsa. I had to get back to my

base because I was AWOL. I told my sister -- I gave her all the goodies. She had enough stuff to sell on the black market to buy and do anything that she wanted. Well, these Franks had connections already. After they came back from North Africa back to Paris, they knew exactly what is in demand, what money it would bring. They told her as to what.

So with all of that my time was up. I had to get back to Chateau Thierry to the base. It was in the middle of the night. How I got back, I don't remember. I just don't remember how I got back from Paris to Chateau Thierry.

I found my bunk. We were in tents because it was a temporary situation. The tents actually had the lower half was made out of wood. They had wooden floors and a half wall. Then the rest of it was tent material. So I went to my bunk where I knew it was. Believe it or not, here was a French prostitute doing her services in my bunk. So I told her to get the hell out of here, in French. She says, oh, you can have me for whatever time you want me, just let me stay here. I said nothing doing, get out of here.

**But that was the way that they were able to survive at that point.**

Yeah. It was not an unusual thing. A lot of people were. But the American public had no idea exactly what was going on over there.

**Right.**

They had gathered a troop train full of American soldiers, and we were supposed to go from Chateau Thierry in France to Fürstenfeldbruck in Germany.

**So how much time did you have --**

I was with them I think it was three days. I got back. Everything had already been organized to the point where the entire outfit that came on that coach, we were to report to the base in Germany. But on the way I'm supposed to go to Würzburg, a town, and report to the RTO, Railway Transportation Office, American. I reported to the officer in charge. I gave him my orders that I had and everything. He says, well, I'll send you tomorrow. I'll have somebody take to you Illshcim where the nearest Signal Corps office was.

**So did you miss your friends?**

Yes.

**Oh. So you were late getting back?**

Yeah. We were separated and everything. But I was told that there will be another transport of soldiers coming; that I should hang around there until they were able to get a jeep for me to be taken to Illesheim.

When we got to Illesheim, there was no American in sight. They had left about two weeks before that time. Here I was. Nobody knew what to do with me. So the officer at the Railway Transportation Office in Würzburg said I'll put you to work until we find out what to do with you. So he gave me a pistol. He said what happens here on the trains, many German prisoners of war that had been released by the allies from the prisoner of war outfits, I was told, on the trains there will be German soldiers on top of the train, in between the cars. It was just any way that they could get a ride to get home where they wanted to go to their home. He says I'm going to have you as temporary orders to be here in Würzburg until I find what to do with you.

At the railroad station guarding for the American troop train to come through here, there will be German soldiers were on top of the train, any way they could hide. He said your job is to get them off the train. He had given me a pistol. He says the trains would be coming through at such-and-such time. Your job was to get them off the trains.

Here came a train, as he had told me. There were 20 or 25 German prisoners of war that were released to go home. They were on top of the train. I ordered them to get down, in German. Nobody made a move. I yelled at them, gave them strict orders to get off that train. Nobody moved. I pulled my gun out of my holster. I had no intention of shooting anybody, but I figured I'll blow it in the air and scare them. Sure enough, I pulled the gun and pointed it and a bullet went up. What goes up has to come down. It came down and hit a German soldier on the leg. So his buddies grabbed him and they all ran as fast as they could because they were frightened as to what's going to happen to them. So I did my job.

Then orders came through. Where he got the orders from, I don't know. But the orders came through that I was supposed to go back to the Air Corps from the Signal Corps and report to an air base in Ansbach in Bavaria, in Germany. I got there. I reported to the headquarters on the base. The first sergeant says I don't know what to do with you. I don't have a job for you. He said but I see by your training that you went through electronic schools and all that. He said I'll put you to work with the telephone crew.

As the American Army advanced through Germany, they strung telephone wires any possible way -- over trees, over houses and things of that. Now the job was to get the German system incorporated into our American system. So here I am now in the telephone group. I was assigned to a sergeant. Well, in Ansbach they had all kinds of personnel of the various things. But the army was -- I have to get out of my thoughts.

I met this first sergeant and he told me I'm going to have you stay in -- the German Air Corps were living like royalty there. They were all permanent buildings, brick buildings on that base. So I was assigned to First Sergeant Slayback's barracks. I was to be part with another sergeant who had only one person in the room. So I was assigned to that room. Sergeant Slayback, by looking at my records there, he saw that I was naturalized citizen. He says by any chance do you speak German? I said yes. He says I want you. So he said you can use my jeep and he gave me directions where to go, his barracks were. I took the jeep. My duffle bag was full. It was heavy.

**With clothes this time or with goodies?**

Clothes, whatever. I was still doing the illegal thing and gathering things on the black market. So I was assigned to this sergeant. Slayback said to me -- I told him that I did speak German. He says, well, our barracks, the furniture there is not very nice. It's pretty well worn up. In the dayroom we would like to have it more pleasant for our airmen here. He says do you think you can gather up someplace here in the area where we can get the necessary things?

So I moved into the barrack with this other sergeant. I was a telephone man. We were to integrate the two systems, the German and the American system. That gave me the opportunity that I could talk to my sister in Paris anytime I wanted to because American bases were established throughout. So we almost spoke to each other every evening.

First thing then was my job. Besides being a telephone man, to take down the wires that were just strung anywhere, I had to learn how to climb a telephone pole. So I was sent to a town called Erlangen, which was close by the Signal Corps. They figured out, being the Signal Corps, they need somebody that could climb a telephone pole. So I was sent there to learn how to climb a telephone pole, which I did. That worked out pretty good.

Slayback asked me if I could get some better furniture for the dayroom. I said I'll try. So I

found a German cabinetmaker, woodworking company. Speaking the language I told them what I'm looking for. He says, well, I can help you. Of course, cigarettes, again as I said, were king. So I gave him a carton of cigarettes, which I got from the PX. He gave me the name of an upholstery company because the chairs and the sofas and all that in the dayroom were pretty well worn down. We needed yard goods, material to reupholster. They needed new springs and all of that. So I got all that information. To the carpenter that I had met, I said, okay, you are going to be my supervisor.

So I went with the German upholsterer to a factory in Hanau. There we picked up springs. We picked up material for reupholstering. The German upholsterer, he had helped. About a week or so after that we had the most beautiful dayroom. I was the big shot now. Almost anything I wanted --

**So the army paid for this?**

No. What happened was part of the armistice signed with Germany was that all the civilian employees that are working for the Americans will be paid by the German government. So the army didn't have to pay for anything. There was paperwork we had to do. But this upholsterer that I met through the carpenter, we went to Hanau and we got all the materials that we needed. Slayback gave me the idea we have no entertainment for our soldiers, our airmen here. He says we do have a movie theater, but we have no other kind of activities except going to the movies. Do you think we could somehow or the other get a place where we can really have entertainment and things of that?

Again, I got this information out from my upholsterer and from my German cabinetmaker. We gathered all the material that the upholsterer needed, the cabinetmaker needed. There was a huge building there. It was an indoor where they used to have auctions, cattle and hogs. They had all of that. The place was huge, but it had an earthen floor and it had tiers where the public that was there would be sitting. So what are we going to do with all of this? But anyway, the army requisitioned to take over that particular place. And whatever the army wanted at the time, they got.

So the cabinetmaker, he gathered a whole crew for the whole entire area there who were craftsmen, carpentry or anything like that. We decided we're going turn this into a number-one

servicemen's club. There was a sawmill close by, not too far from Ansbach where I was stationed. The cabinetmaker went with me. We went to the sawmill. I had authorization from the American military government that anything that I needed I could requisition. My orders were as good as --  
*Anita: ...Any general.*

Yes. So we got lumber, lots of lumber. We tore out all of those bleachers that were inside that building. We put in a hardwood floor in that huge place. We built booth platforms. It was a showplace in Germany for American soldiers. I was actually the soldier of the -- I mean I got a medal for what I did.

**Wonderful.**

Now the American government allowed officers bring their wives over to Germany. The colonel, the base commander, his wife came. Her request was she wanted the radio. So Sergeant Slayback told me what the colonel's wife wanted. Sure enough, with cartons of cigarettes I got the best radio that was available. Now I was the darling of the American army there.

**Wow.**

I lived high on the hog, really.

*Anita: You made an apartment there, didn't you?*

Yes. As part of the renovation that we did, underneath the bleachers that were there, we built a bedroom, really. It wasn't an apartment; it was a bedroom. The plumbing was there. The public toilets were there. The plumbing was there. Imagine an oval shaped building and at each end of the building bars were set up. All of the soldiers, American personnel was allowed one bottle of alcohol per month. So the soldiers could take their bottle of booze and the German girlfriends that they all got. Now we needed glasses. Also, we were allowed to have 3.125 beer. We had to find a brewery where we could get that. With the help of my carpenter, we found everything.

**Wow.**

In fact, Sergeant Slayback, who was my intermediate between me and the base commander, he requisitioned a plane, a C-3 plane --

**So one of those cargo planes?**

But we went to Italy to get glasses. We went to Belgium to get more necessary things because those countries already were flourishing again. They had these things going on. So now I heard

that in the city of Nuremberg there was a place that was having entertainers that were available. They had a circus there. I requisitioned for that circus on the weekends to come and perform as part. We had a German band. An American band was organized. The German band played "In the Mood." Yeah, it was very slow movement and everything. And there always was a GI found that could play the boogie-woogie. On the weekends this place was jumping.

**Wow. So I want you to stop your story there. I just want to ask some little isolated questions, not stories, just questions. Why were cigarettes so important to the Germans?**

They didn't grow tobacco. The climate wasn't right for tobacco. The German cigarettes, I know they used to get Turkish tobacco. It was hard to get. Actually it became like currency. I mean they were smokers and a smoker wants a cigarette. They'll do anything to get it. That's why it became really something.

In fact, I almost got in trouble. I'm just going to mention it that I almost got in trouble. My sister had told me about two brothers who survived the concentration camp, who were from city of Frankfurt. She met them after they were liberated. I had a jeep. I went to see these brothers, just to say hello. They asked if I want to stay, I can stay overnight. They had a plush apartment that they had requisitioned and got. I stayed overnight with them. The next day I was called into the American Secret Service. It wasn't called Secret Service. But anyhow --

*Anita: I'm just trying to think what it would be. The OSS?*

Oh, yes. I went to Frankfurt because I had a jeep at my disposal. I went to Frankfurt to meet with these two brothers. They asked me if I would drive them to actually Hanau, which is about 25 miles from Frankfurt. There was a place where they were trading for anything and anybody had for sale-- so these guys had gotten cameras, expensive cameras and things and they wanted it into the Frankfurt underground market. I had no idea that's what I was going to do. But they asked me if I would do them a favor to take them there and they a few things.

Sure enough, the officer in charge of the area called me in. I was back in Ansbach. Called me and said we understand you did such and such and you know this is 100 percent against the law for any American soldiers to do that. You know, he was a Jewish major. He knew I was Jewish. We started talking. I told him about my family. So he says, look, I'm not going to have any charges brought against you, but don't ever do that again.



*Anita: Well, you explained to him that you didn't know what was going on. He was a whole 19 years old.*

**Tell me about the Germany that you remember and the Germany that you saw when you went back. What was the difference? Was it destroyed?**

A lot of it. A lot of destruction. I mean in the cities. Frankfurt was so much destruction. I mean, bombed out buildings and that, all of the bigger cities. But the Germans, when they want to do something, they do it. The first thing was to bring Germany back on their feet. It was a lot like a flower. It was blossoming. They started cleaning up all the rubble and things of that nature and new buildings started coming out. This was all things that I knew nothing about. But that was what was happening.

Germany was divided in four sections. Naturally, I was in the American section. Every German who was what they called fluechting (someone who runs away and hides)-- the ones from the Russian zone, they didn't want to be under occupation by the Russians. They all wanted to be in the American zone because they knew that at least they will be treated like people. But fraternization at first was not allowed. We were not allowed at first (to) intermingle with the German public. Shortly after I got there, they allowed that. In other words, every soldier had a girlfriend, married or not married. It was a great time to be an American soldier in Germany at the time.

**The Germans had nothing; especially the German women had nothing.**

That's right. Many of them had husbands, but they were killed. Like the ones in the Russian zone, they were still prisoners of war. So everybody wanted to be in the American zone.

**When you had the facilities that was like a nightclub --**

That's exactly right.

**-- did the officers and the privates, did everybody mingle together?**

No. No.

**How did that work?**

They would have special open house. In fact, I became the manager of the club after it was finished. At first -- what do they call that? It was opened up. We could fraternize with the Germans. An American that spoke German was king. We worked hard. We did our jobs. But

we all had a good time.

**So some nights the officers would go and then some nights the privates?**

There were special weekends that they would open it up for anybody. Corporal Williams I assigned to be my deputy. We had the MPs that would actually be the door people to make sure that only American soldiers -- I mean only Americans could go in there. A lot of American officers brought their wives over. We could not marry German girls. That was strictly against the law. That had changed while I was there. I mean we were now the victors.

*Anita: They were the vanquished.*

Right. Life was actually very good for any American that was over there at the time, including me. There's a part that I think you may want to enter into the end about our house. I don't think we talked about it.

**We're going to stop in a few minutes. So don't tell me any more stories today. I just want to clear up some things. Earlier when I had the tape off I wanted to know how the German soldiers were supposed to get home.**

It was up to them. I mean it was strictly up to them to find ways to get home. Germans that had automobiles or any buses or anything -- they had developed a system that they would use wood fires to -- actually from the smoke and all of that was energy. So you would see these trucks and cars with this special little burner that were on all of the German vehicles.

**What kind of plans did you and your sister make?**

Now, we had met on that three days when I went AWOL. But in the spring of 1946 -- wait. Was it in '46 or was it in '45? Yes, in '45 I did get a furlough in Germany, officially a ten day leave. I went to Frankfurt because I knew where she was. We got together (and) I took her to movies, which they weren't allowed. I wasn't allowed to take her into the PX, ice cream parlors and things. This was all against rules and regulations. But when I would tell them my story about my sister being liberated and the rest of the family, I had no problem whatsoever. Like I went to the PX where they actually had an ice cream parlor, part of the PX. I go to the officer in charge of the place. I would explain to him what the situation was. Oh, bring her in, come on in. She could buy at the PX anything that she wanted.

**Did you make plans to bring her back to the United States?**

When the war was over and I was in Washington—I knew that a Schuster woman was liberated and I needed help. So that's when I got that emergency leave and I went to Paris.

*Anita: You went to the State Department.*

That's right. I tried with the Red Cross. They were not even nice about the whole thing, really. I went to the State Department to see if I could get some information from them. The war was just over and they really were not well enough organized yet. I would explain the story. So I always got help for what I wanted. When I was at the State Department and they couldn't do anything, there was a young American Jewish man. He was my age (and) was an aide to somebody at the State Department. As I was leaving down the hall because I didn't get any help, he came to me. He said the first thing you should do, you should get affidavits of support that your sister would not be a burden. He says get an affidavit of support. This is the first thing they had to have in order to get a visa to come to the United States.

When I had that ten day leave, it was in February. My sister's birthday was February the 11th. February 10th I think it was the American consulate was opened up again. This young guy I met at the State Department, he told me the first thing you have to do is get affidavits of support because as soon as we allow people to come in, at least she'll get a number and she will be able. So I did all of those things.

My affidavit of support would not have been good enough to support another person. But Sam Schuster again came. I had called him before I knew that I was going to Germany. I had called him and I told him the whole thing again. He had given before the war a lot of affidavits of support. But I think he felt that they may not honor any more because he had given so many affidavits of support. So his brother Dave was the one that gave me an affidavit of support. I had that with me when I went over there.

We went to the American consulate. They had just opened up the day before. The head consul was there. It so happens that this was the 10th of February. My sister's birthday is the 11th. I went to the consulate with her in Paris. I wanted to see the consul. Again, I told my story. They were all sympathetic. So I went to see the head of the consulate in Paris. He gave my sister a visa. He said because it's your birthday tomorrow, this is my birthday present to you, but it's also the birthday present from our American --

*Anita: President Abraham Lincoln because his birthday was the 12th of February.*

Yes, he was very nice man. He was so friendly and everything. So I had all of those papers ready to go. It was just a matter that they had no way to come to this country yet.

*Anita: So he advised --*

Yeah. But they did allow for American war brides.. They had an American war bride ship that brought people that had the proper paper to go in legally, and she got that. He gave her that. So she made arrangements. She went to London first to thank the mother of the soldier that's -- to thank her. She came, one of the very early ones that were liberated from camps that came to the United States. I was always under the impression, once I found out, that I was going to take care of her. But it turned out I didn't take care of her. She took care of me.

**You'll have to tell me that story later.**

*Right.*

**So we almost have been talking for an hour and a half. So the last question: How were you treated by Germans?**

First of all, I used to tell them that I was more than Germany. No. If I had told them I was born in Germany, they would all say, oh, what horrible times. You must have been awful. Be just very sympathetic. But in the meantime, they didn't know how to react to --

*They thought he had horns. Where are your horns?*

Yes.

**They who?**

*Germans.*

While we were talking about Fürstfeldbruck where I was sent to until they had orders for me to go someplace, the American Red Cross was there and they had doughnuts and coffee for the GIs. There were a lot of foreign country people that had come to Germany from Czechoslovakia, from Poland, from all of that. American soldiers were allowed to marry any of those, but they were not allowed to marry German women yet. I went to the Red Cross. The American Red Cross had set up this place where we could go and socialize with the people that were not German citizens at first. But all that opened up shortly afterwards. At this point the German girls were allowed to work for Americans. The Red Cross had set up this recreation center. A young girl, I would say

she was maybe 19 or 20 years old, she was a waitress. She was waiting on us. She said how come you speak German so well? I told her I was born in Germany. The first thing that came out of her mouth, but you can't be. She felt my forehead and said you don't have horns; Jews are supposed to have horns. That was taught in the schools back then. You know, it didn't take long they found out differently. But anyhow, that was the knowledge that was going around then.

*Anita: I mean they made Jews the other; that they were less than human. That's why they could annihilate them because they were less than human.*

**This was just great information. Are you tired?**

No. I'm okay. I'm okay. I'm not as fluid as I'd like to be.

**Oh, it was wonderful today. We've been talking for an hour and a half. So we can stop now.**

**I want you to start -- there was a story that you started to tell me about --**

*The house.*

**The house. So that's where we'll start the next time.**

Yeah, the house. Also my father had land. We had meadows. We had acreage and all the things. We had an orchard. Those are the things that I'll tell you about the next time.

**Great. This is wonderful. Thank you.**

**(Session 6 commences on April 6, 2011.)**

**You were going to start by telling me a story about a house in Germany? Let me see.**

Have we talked about me and my sister in Paris?

**Oh, yes. We were all the way to meeting Anita. Yeah. You were already back from the military. You were working at -- what was the department store?**

S. Klein, On The Square.

**And she was working there, also?**

Yeah. She was going to high school.

Okay. So we'll take on from the time that I met Anita. I was going to an electronic engineering school in New York. I was getting what they called the 52/20. The government gave each of us GIs or former GIs \$50 for 20 weeks. No. That's not correct. I'm sorry. That's not correct. We got a year. For one year we would get \$50.

**So 52 weeks.**

No. Fifty dollars per month, which was not really enough money to live. My sister had arranged already for me to have a furnished room at the local family in New York. This was in Manhattan. I had a part-time job at S. Klein, On The Square to supplement my income. I was a cashier there, part-time naturally. Anita was a high school girl. She worked part-time on weekends, on Saturday at this department store. I was put into the fur department, which was the most expensive part that they had there. I had a packer with me, somebody who would pack what I would ring up. Tilly was her name. She was having a big party for her boyfriend coming out of the service. So she invited Anita to come to the party. She asked Anita do you think I could invite him, also? Anita says I don't know him; I cannot tell you much about it.

So anyhow, Anita came to see her and I was introduced. Very pretty girl. I mean like that picture right there. Very pretty girl. We started talking. She was on a break. The following Saturday I would have a break every so often to go into the employees' lounge. Anita was there also on a break. So we started talking and she really impressed me with being quite an intelligent young lady and being 16 years old making a lot more sense than most 16-year-olds. So I asked her for a date. I didn't really know how old she was, but I knew she was still going to high school. She accepted when we made the date, which was shortly before Passover.

The next Saturday she was working part-time and on Saturdays I was working full-time. She said I have to beg off. I had forgotten about it. It's Passover and I have to be home for our Seder. I said, oh my god, I also forgot it's Passover and I'm invited by a cousin. Well, she felt relieved, as she tells me now, that she didn't know whether or not I was Jewish and she only wanted to date Jewish and now she realized that I was Jewish.

So we made a date for another time. We went to a movie in the Bronx. The movie, I don't remember what it was. She does. The theater's ceiling had little stars that flickered. Somehow or the other it became rather a romantic evening and I reached over to hold her hand. She agreed to hold her hand. After the movie we went to an ice cream parlor, which was very close to where the movie theater was. We ordered banana splits. The portions of the banana splits were humongous. We both ate the banana split, almost splitting ourselves. So that was over (and) so I walked her home. They lived about I would say maybe a mile from where the theater was. It was in the

evening and I decided to walk her home. They lived on the fifth floor of a no elevator apartment. We walked up the five flights to her apartment. We were saying good night and I asked if I could give her a kiss. She says no, not on the first date. Well, I don't know if that's exactly what she said, not on the first date, but anyhow she said no. So I said can I see you again sometime? Yes.

Then we still met the following Saturday back at S. Klein, On The Square. I was really, really falling in love with her. We had a date. Then we had another date. I met all her girlfriends. She was a senior in the Bronx at the Walton High School. She was a senior there and she was going to graduate. No. Excuse me. She was a junior there. Yes, she was a junior there. Then I kind of felt guilty that here I was 20 years old, just about 21. I kind of felt guilty for dating a 16-year-old girl. But she just struck me as being the type of person that I really liked. We had one date. Then I asked her for another date, maybe two or three dates.

My sister had gotten married. They found an apartment in Brooklyn. She and her husband then found -- which was difficult in New York after the war to find apartments to live in. But they had found an apartment. The only way you could get apartments or anything was on the black market. You had to pay under the table because they had rent control in New York. So the thing was that I was to go get a furnished room near their apartment and I would come to eat there every day at my sister's. That was a pretty good idea.

So now I had to travel to date Anita from Brooklyn to the Bronx. There were two subways I had to take. There was the IRT and the BMT, the subway lines. I would usually take her home and then I'd go to the subway station. And I fell asleep. I woke up. Here came the cleanup crew through the subway. They woke me. He says, hey, young man, we're at the end station. I said, oh my gosh, what do I do now? So they told me you get out here and you walk a stairway going up and there's a walkway to the other side for the train to go back. So by the time I finally got into my furnished apartment it was five o'clock in the morning.

**Oh, wow. But you had a good night's sleep.**

But I still had to go to school and I think I missed that day. I was doing well in school. All of the students were from the GI Bill and we were subsidized by the VA, Veterans Administration. I was becoming really the best student in the class. One day the instructor that we had, our class, he called in or something, but he couldn't come in. We all had been in our classroom already waiting

for the teacher to arrive. So the dean came in and asked me to come with him. So we left the classroom and went to his office. He said the teacher for that particular day called sick. He said, look, you are doing very well in the class. Do you think you could take over and teach the class today? I said yes, I'll do it. I know I did a good job, did a real good job. I think I did a better job than the professor that we had. This was natural because I was more involved at the point where we were in school than the professor who was not a GI. It was an older person. So I took the class for that day. When it was finished the dean came in while the students were all still there and asked, how did Schuster do with you guys? They all said very good.

Now, I had a part-time job teaching at the Manhattan Technical Institute. The school was in Midtown Manhattan. I would usually take the subway. I was teaching actually two classes -- the first class was in late morning and the second class was in the afternoon -- because of the professor that was supposed to have been our instructor, he was no longer -- I don't know why -- he was no longer coming to teach there. So I became a part-time teacher.

Now, our school also had another school in the same building, also for former GIs, drafting. They had to move the drafting school. They moved it to 66th Street from 45th Street. They rented a place on 66th Street. So they had to make arrangements to get the classroom ready and everything before we moved over there. The place needed work and I volunteered to fix it up. At that time, by then, I was already 21. I did a good job getting this classroom ready. It just so happened that in the same building Anita's dad was working. There was an automobile parts manufacturer. Her father was working at this automobile parts manufacturer.

### **Did you know that?**

I didn't know then. By that time Anita and I were dating pretty regularly. One day while I was there working I had split my pants. I was gaining weight. I bent over and split my pants. I was in a fix. So I called Anita. I knew she was home. I told her what the situation was. I asked if somehow or the other she could get a pair of pants from her father and bring them to me. And she did.

When I first met her, she was a junior in high school. Now she was a senior and was getting ready to graduate. I took her to her junior prom. We had definitely become a pair. Then came graduation time. I went to her graduation. A girlfriend had a date and Anita and I had a



date. So we all went out to New Jersey, across the George Washington Bridge. This young man who was the date of Anita's actually cousin, it was the first time he was allowed to have the car. We were at the Palisades there. There was a big drop-off into the Hudson River. I knew that he was not capable of getting us out of the fix there. So I had been driving for years already. So I asked him would you want me to do that? He said yes, please do. So I backed the car out of there and now I was Anita's hero.

I went to her graduation. We were talking about getting married. She had talked to her mother -- well, I knew the family well by that time. She says she wants to get married. Her mother said not until you graduate. And that was the plan after she graduated in June or something. We were married in September.

Even before that point her mother thought we were getting a little bit too serious and she wanted to kind of keep us apart. So a cousin of theirs had a summer home in the Catskills. Her mother made arrangements for Anita to go for the summer and go visit at the country home. Anita was spending the summer in the Catskills. Her mother somehow or the other got to the point where she really didn't achieve what she wanted to achieve, so she invited me for dinner at their house while Anita was in the country. I went for dinner. I discussed with her mother and her father. In fact, I had asked her father. I thought I'd do the proper thing. I had asked her father because as I said he worked in the same building that I was in. During a break I went over to the machine shop where he was working and I said, Mr. Kleiman -- I was not on a personal basis with the mother or father -- I said, Mr. Kleiman, I would like to marry your daughter. He said we'll see, because I found out later on her father would not make any decisions without checking it with his wife. So I guess they discussed it and decided yes, but she has to graduate first.

So I went to her graduation. I took her to a senior ball and the whole thing. We had set a date when we were going to get married, which was September the 10th of 1948. It was not a huge affair. But we had invited all their relatives and all of my relatives to the wedding. We had made arrangements at that particular synagogue with a rabbi to marry us. Part of the ceremony was a little boy with a soprano voice. He had a special Hebrew song that he performed, which we didn't know it was going to be part of the rabbi's marrying us, which was beautiful. So then we had not a sit-down dinner, but it was sort of a buffet-type at the synagogue. We left before the

party was over. We were going to spend the first night at the Waldorf Astoria. And we had already made plans to go on our honeymoon in the Pocono Mountains in Pennsylvania.

So we did spend the night at the Waldorf Astoria. That was the first time that we had sex because she was from the old school and she did not want to. And I agreed with her, fine.

Now, my best friend from way back, from childhood time in Germany, was getting married the night before we were getting married. We had double dated with him with his fiancé and Anita and I. We had double dated. So we all had decided we're going to go on our honeymoon to the Pocono Mountains. One of my students was also getting married. The student was not Jewish; he was Catholic. But he also had made arrangements to go on his honeymoon to the same area hotel in Pennsylvania. So there were three couples. We all stayed at the same lodge.

My friend and the student, neither one of them had ever driven a car. But I had really been driving before I even went into the army and then naturally I drove in the army. So we rented a jeep and I did the driving. We went throughout the whole area there, which was beautiful. It was a military jeep that was being sold on the private market because the army didn't need them anymore, and this was an open jeep. Jean, who was my friend's wife by now, was stung by a bee. She got quite ill from that. So we found a doctor who we went to take her there. He gave her an injection of some kind and she was fine. Now it was time to go back. Now I was a full-time teacher at the Manhattan Technical Institute.

**Did you give up the part-time job at the department store?**

Yes. Yes, I gave it up. I taught actually two classes. I was making \$125 a week because I was teaching two classes, the early shift and then the afternoon shift. So I made 125, which was unheard of back then; that kind of money.

So we found an apartment, which was almost impossible at that time. There were no apartments available right after the war. But it so happens that Anita's father's cousin had a gasoline station in Brooklyn. That was during the time you could only buy a gallon or two gallons of gasoline because gasoline rationing was still on. This painter would come by and get his allowance for gasoline. The cousin, Anita's father's cousin asked him you get around? He says my cousin's daughter got married and they're looking for a place to live. The painter said yes, I

know where there is an apartment available. The official rent was \$35 a month. That was rent control. He told me right off the bat the painter wanted \$300 for finding an apartment for us. He made arrangements with the owner of that particular apartment that he would paint the apartment, but he also wanted \$300 under the table. Well, I had saved. I had all my money from overseas.

**Okay. Military pay?**

Yes. Yes. I had saved that and I think I had around \$3,000, which was a lot of money. Anita already had a part-time job then. So we had no problem with money. We had to come up with 300 for the painter, plus to pay him for painting the apartment, and 300 under the table to the landlord. We had a very nice apartment.

**How big was it?**

It had one bedroom, a living room, and a kitchen where we would eat and everything else. Anita had no idea about cooking. Her mother would never let her in the kitchen. They were Orthodox and they did not want -- you know, what they called dairy and meat. So she wanted to make sure that no accident would happen, you use a dairy dish for meat or so on and so forth. So somehow or the other she just never let Anita into the kitchen.

But I was not afraid of anything. So I did the cooking. I taught her how to cook. When we came back from our honeymoon, we had a party. My best man, who was also with me from Europe and came to the United States together, he was our best man at our wedding, Fred and his wife, Jean. So I made veal cutlets, wiener schnitzel. We were kosher at the time, not that we were to the point where we were that strict ourselves. We weren't. But for her family's sake we kept a kosher home.

At our wedding my cousin Alfred Schuster from Bloomington, Illinois -- we had invited my uncle and aunts and all that. So my uncle in Bloomington, Illinois asked his son Alfred, who had started a furniture business -- before he went into the army, he was manager of a furniture department at Montgomery Ward. He had saved his money. So when he came out of the army, there was an empty store that some relatives owned the building, so they rented that and he started a furniture business. So when Alfred came to our wedding, he says if you ever feel like you would like to leave New York, I would like for you to come and work for me. Maybe after we get going and you know the business we can open up another store, which sounded good.

**Yes.**

So Anita and I discussed it. In the meantime, we had our first baby. Alan, our oldest son, was born on July 1st in 1949. We discussed it and we decided I'm going to make the change even though I was making good money in New York. My cousin said he couldn't afford to pay me that much. But I was eligible for the GI Bill. I was using that anyhow to go to school. But they had another thing from the GI that if you had a job you could get subsidies. So I applied. We decided we're going to go to Bloomington. Alfred was going to give me \$75 a week. I applied for my GI loan, the second type that they were offering. On-the-job training is what it was. So I went to Bloomington.

My uncle Moritz Schuster, he was already not a well man. Actually he had started that furniture business where Alfred took over. It was used furniture because there was no way to get new furniture because it was wartime. But things let up and there was a mattress factory. So Alfred and I could have mattresses, then. Being the manager of the furniture department before he went in the army, he knew all of the salespeople and everything. So it became a regular furniture, not a used furniture business. We decided we'll take it.

**So how long were you in New York?**

Three years all together. (Anita) was born in New York.

...Now, there's a little story I want to tell you what happened. I was teaching at Manhattan Tech. I would take the subway on Eighth Avenue and where I was teaching was on Tenth Avenue. So it was always a walk to go to the subway station. So I finished teaching my class and I was walking towards the subway station and I passed like a building. It was an apartment building, but they had a courtyard there. Some guy ran out and grabbed my arm. He said hey -- I don't remember what he called me -- come with me; I've got to show you something. Okay, I'll go with you; show me something. He pulled out a ring, a gold ring. He says it's hot, red-hot. I just swiped it and the cops are after me. He says I've got to get rid of it; give me \$200 and you can have it. I got all excited, but I said I don't have \$200. He said, well, what have you got? I've got to get rid of it. So I took out my wallet and I had \$20. But I had a subway card, so it was no problem. So he says give me the \$20. And he gave me that expensive gold ring. I think it had a diamond in it.

When I got to my sister's house, I was as pale as -- you can imagine. This is what he told me. I could see every New York policeman following me all the way. What's the matter with you? So I pulled out the ring. My brother-in-law Harold looked at it. Oh, my gosh. Where did you get it? I told him. We were eating dinner. He says, okay, we're not going to eat right now. You and I are going someplace.

So he was from Brooklyn, a native Brooklyn. He was brought up with the gangsters and the whole thing. So there was Dubrois Cafeteria in Brooklyn. Harold knew that a lot of these Jewish jewelry store people would eat there. So we went to Dubrois and he knew this guy by name of Jaime. He takes me over to Jaime and he says you've got that store on whatever street? Yeah. He says I've got to show you something. You've got to tell me. So I handed him the ring. He took out his glass that they put in and he looked it over and over and over. I'm waiting and Harold is waiting anxiously because that ring was going to be my official engagement ring. He looked at it. He said, well, it's maybe \$20. It was a ring painted gold. That's how that guy made his living.

...There were elevator operators in those days. It didn't have the automatic elevators. The elevator operator in the building where I worked, you know, we got to know him and everything else. I showed him the ring. I didn't want to make a big deal. I showed it to him. I said I'll sell it to you cheap. He says how much do you want for it? But I was afraid. I was afraid to sell him the ring under false pretenses. So I said no, I decided I don't want to sell it. I had that ring for years. I don't know what happened to it.

**So what did you give Anita for an engagement ring?**

My cousin Katherine Swabacher was married to Leo Swabacher. They had a jewelry store in Peoria, Illinois. So I wrote to Katherine and I told them that I was getting engaged and getting married and I would like to have a ring and I know I can get a better deal. So they sent me a ring. She still wears it. It was a diamond in there. I think I paid a hundred dollars for it, which I understand it was worth \$300. But that's how I bought her the engagement ring.

The wedding ring we both bought ourselves. Anita and I. I never could stand rings on my finger. So I always found an excuse for not wearing my wedding band. And people were making fun because you just want to make hay with the girls. So I don't know what happened to -- the

engagement ring she has. Wedding bands we both had. I hardly ever wore the wedding band, but I lost it anyhow. We decided years later after we had lived in Illinois and when we were --

**So when did you leave New York?**

When did I leave New York? In 1949.

**Oh, so the next year. You got married in '48 and left in '49?**

Yes.

**So why did you decide to leave New York?**

My cousin made that offer for me to come and work for him in the furniture business. Eventually we would open up another store, which would be my part of the store. So that's why we left. We agreed to it, Anita and I. We discussed it and we agreed to it. So here we had a baby who was born in July and we moved in I think -- I'm not sure when we moved. Alan was over a year old already. We moved to Bloomington.

Oh, yes. Alfred couldn't afford to pay me a lot. That was all agreed upon. But I was eligible for on-the-job training even though I had used my GI Bill. But there was on-the-job training. I was eligible for a year from the VA to be subsidized. That's what I did. I worked for Alfred.

In Bloomington there was an old Jewish family. Their background was from Germany. They were distantly related to my cousin Alfred on the mother's side. They took Anita under their wing. They fell in love with her. They were the type of people that had a good -- they just were very elegant. Everything was very elegant. Anita is a fast learner. She caught on before and she knew all the etiquette of what to do, so on and so forth.

Before we left New York we lived in Brooklyn. We had that apartment. We got through the painter. The apartment building was only four apartments. The owner's daughter lived in one of the apartments. This was an Italian neighborhood. Another Italian young family lived in the other. We had the fourth. They were all very nice. I mean the women, they were not working. The husbands were working. I mean they were very good to Anita. So we had a very good life there.

But we took the chance and moved to Bloomington. I worked for Alfred. I worked for him for a year. Then business was good, but I was only making from him \$75 a week.

**Wow. And you were accustomed to making more than that in New York.**

Much more. So time went on. Another year passed. I would make a little bit more money. On many occasions I would manage the store. Alfred would go on a buying trip or something. It got to the point I felt I was not being treated right.

It just so happens a Jewish couple moved -- both husband and wife. They also had a one-year-old baby. He was in the Coast Guard and she was in the Coast Guard. They met. But anyhow, they had opened up what's called a railroad salvage business. They would buy whatever they could find. I mean the name was Good Railroad Salvage, but most of the stuff was not bought from the railroads. So they came and Manny Kaplan approached me. Besides a store in Bloomington, he and a brother-in-law of his opened a railroad salvage store in Decatur, Illinois. Manny said he wants to open up a store in Peoria, Illinois. Are you interested maybe to make a move?

We discussed it and we decided that the offer that Manny made was good and here I was a partner in a business. So we moved to Peoria. Then we already had three children. Alan was -- we moved in '53 -- he was born in '49. Fifty-three. So what is that, four years?

**Yes.**

Our son Kenneth was two years behind Alan, and Michael was 14 months younger than Kenneth.

**Wow. So three boys.**

Yes, we had three boys. Before we decided to go with Manny, we had bought an old house in Bloomington. We paid \$4200 for the house. But it was an old house from pre-Civil War time. And I was handy. I would daytime work in the store and nighttime I would be fixing up. I took this old house and made two apartments out of it.

**Great. That's right because you knew electrical and everything.**

Well, when I was still working for Alfred all that time, at nighttime I was fixing. And it just so happens that an alley was dividing our house and the Bloomfelds' house. Bloomfelds were related to Alfred's mother. But distantly they were also related to me because my mother and the Bloomfeld family lived about ten kilometers apart in Germany. So I called them uncle and aunt. Moritz Bloomfeld was working for a cleaning store. That's all the work they could find. But he had heart trouble, so he could no longer work in the cleaning store. But in the meantime, his

daughters, both daughters had graduated from high school and they had jobs. Their son Warner was still in high school when we lived there, but Warner had a part-time job. So the family did okay because Moritz could no longer work.

But our son Kenneth became attached to Moritz Bloomfeld. Moritz would have a cane, walk with a cane. You could go look out the back door and you would see Moritz Bloomfeld holding his hand with the little boy, Kenny. They became a pair believe it or not. Moritz Bloomfeld was more or less a babysitter for Kenny.

Tragedy came into our lives. We had opened up the store called The Bargain Barn. We would sell everything and anything that we could get. We sold plumbing equipment. We sold electrical equipment. Whatever we could buy on wholesale we would sell. It was a pretty good going business. But business was in Peoria and we lived in this old house in Bloomington, 40 miles apart. I had to have a truck because the idea was I would go whenever necessary to Chicago or St. Louis to buy merchandise. The truck was a pretty good-sized truck. I would load the truck and bring it back to the store and have it there the next day. So that worked out pretty good.

On Mondays the store was open late. We still lived in Bloomington. So Anita used to take the bus. ...On Saturdays Anita would come with me in the truck. Now, on Mondays the store was open late and she would take the bus to come to help in the store and we'd have a babysitter, a lady. Mrs. Sullivan was her name. She was not very bright. I tagged her the name Dumb Stupid Sullivan. I wouldn't definitely no way would -- but she was a nice, pleasant lady. She was not retarded, but she wasn't very bright. We couldn't afford to pay that much. But that worked out fine.

But Alan was already rambunctious. He was a daredevil. One day he would lock himself in the bathroom. Anita wanted him to come out of the bathroom. He says I'm staying here till daddy comes home; I will not come out until daddy comes and lets me out. This went on for...maybe half an hour. Moritz Bloomfeld came over to help. Nope, Alan wouldn't open the bathroom door. So finally he gave in and he got out of the bathroom.

Kenny and Moritz Bloomfeld, they were just like buddies, an old man and a little boy. Michael was just a baby when we decided to sell the house in Bloomington. We would rent in Peoria until we were ready to have our own house. We rented a nice old house, which was



two-story. Now, we had Alan, Kenny and Michael. Rene was born when we had lived there already for a year -- more than a year. Rene was born. So now we had four children.

We built our own homes. I was handy. I had a contractor. I bought the lot on the GI Bill, \$1500, in a new subdivision, got a nice lot. I had the contractor build the shell. I was running the store, but I was also working evenings, nights and weekends to -- I made two apartments -- excuse me. The new house that we put on that lot, I finished the inside of it. One Sunday while I was working -- the store was not open on Sunday -- while I was working in the house, I was there by myself. We weren't living there yet. We still lived in that rented house. This couple came in. An elderly couple came in. She said is this house for sale? I said yes. I had gotten a mortgage on the GI Bill. The mortgage was \$17,000 I think. Is this house for sale? And I said yes. Can we look around? Yes. They asked how much do you want for the house? I think I said \$30,000. Okay. They came back the following week and we sold the house.

**So did you tell Anita?**

Yeah. We had discussed all that. We had discussed it and we decided that we were going to -- by that time we lived in the house -- no. When they came and looked we were not living in there, but when they came back we had moved into the house. So we sold the house and we moved. We rented a house in the same neighborhood where we were building.

Anita worked full-time in the store with me. We had a maid, a very lovely lady. In fact, in the rented house where we lived, I asked the landlord if we could put up a room in the basement where our maid would be able to live in? Esse was a black lady, wonderful, just a wonderful person. The kids loved her. She loved the kids. Everything was fine.

One day Michael and Kenny -- Kenny was already nine years old by then and Michael was a year and two months behind that. One day it was raining very hard where we lived in that rented house. The rain stopped and the boys wanted to go outside and play. So Esse let them go out and play, which was normal. Well, down the street from where we lived construction was going on. But the rain was so hard it was flooded. You couldn't see. There was a manhole cover not visible with water. Michael was falling into the manhole. Kenny saved Michael by pulling him out. Kenny was washed into the manhole. About a mile from there the open storm sewer is where they found the body. This was the most horrible time of our life.

**It had to be.**

I mean the best thing was that we both loved each other, so we rode the tragedy.

We had all kinds of lawyers wanted to represent us. One of the lawyers who we knew said if anybody will sue the contractor who left the manhole open, Michael would have to come and testify. We did not want Michael to because it was tragedy. Michael had blocked that out of his head completely until he became older. Naturally, we had discussed it and all that. He couldn't write anymore. He already was in school writing. He forgot everything. Well, now he is a Ph.D. in Honolulu, curator of a museum. But it was tragedy. It was just awful. I mean, you know, parents you know you're going to lose. But children, no. Your children are not going to die before you do.

**That's right.**

But we had to live on and we lived on. During the Eisenhower administration there was a recession. Business was not that good anymore, but it was still okay. The location that we had been there turned into a bad neighborhood. We decided we have to move the store into another neighborhood. So we rented this abandoned movie house. I shouldn't call it abandoned. It was just not used anymore. We rented that. It had a building besides a movie, a store. We rented that store from the people that owned the theater and we moved our business there. We made a big mistake. I made the big mistake. I changed the name of the store, no longer The Bargain Barn. I called it Schuster's Town and Country. Business really started to drop off.

So my sister was living in California. They had moved some years before. They moved to California in Glendora, which is in the San Gabriel area.

Christmastime in Peoria -- we had moved to Peoria and we lived in Peoria. And we became very active in the synagogue. Anita taught Sunday school. Alan and Kenny went to Sunday school already. Michael was too young. Michael and I would go do things on Sunday morning while mother and the other two boys were in Sunday school. But Michael had blocked everything out of his head later on when all that happened.

I had gotten to the point I was selling plumbing material, I was selling electrical, as I said, all kinds of things dear to the building trade. So I had sold that house and made money on it. So we decided I'll make more money in the building business than in the store. So we closed the

store. We went into the building business. I go too fast. I took on too much too soon. I had to declare bankruptcy, which was not easy.

In the meantime, my sister was living in Glendora. One Sunday watching television -- this was in 1959 -- we were watching television. It was opening day of the baseball season and they were televising San Diego. Here it was snowing and freezing. Business was no good. There we saw San Diego, sunshine and everything else.

### **People in their short sleeves.**

We decided to go to California. I felt like I was going to have -- I said we had to declare bankruptcy. And I thought this was the end of my world, really. But I overcame that, too. But I thought I would never find a job. So Anita saw -- she reads everything and anything. Somehow or the other in the Wall Street Journal was an ad looking for a construction manager for a computer company. The computer company was building their own buildings. Anita looked at the job, and I said I don't think I'll ever get that.

I called and talked to Harry Rosen, who was head of the purchasing department for Scientific Data System. We made an appointment. This was on a Monday. Made an appointment. Oh, in the meantime, over the phone I spoke to Harry Rosen. He got all kinds of information from me, what kind of references. I gave him the references from Peoria. Harry Rosen had made his homework before I had my appointment with him. He had called already two references that I gave from Peoria. And they gave me good reference.

So when I came for the interview, I was dressed in a new suit and neat and everything else. My interview went extremely well. Harry Rosen said can you go to Washington, DC?

I'm trying to think. Harry Rosen asked me if I could leave on Friday -- this was Monday -- if I could leave on Friday to go to a building that was being constructed in Pennsylvania. That Scientific Data System was going to open up a factory there. So I said I guess I can. So we negotiated as to how much.

Well, while we were there, before I went to interview for that job, I went looking for work in the furniture business because I had knowledge in the furniture. Well, I had three offers. And I accepted all three offers. My brother-in-law Harold, in the meantime, he was working for a store. He was looking to get a better store. So he also went looking for the furniture stores. Somehow

or the other they got in a conversation. So they all wanted to know what happened to your brother-in-law? He was supposed to come to work for us. But here I was already working for Scientific Data System.

I made \$20,000 a year, which was a lot of money then. I did real well. I think I had enough. They had buildings in Pomona, California, and a new building in Rockport, Pennsylvania, which was right outside of Washington, D.C. They were building a building and they had lots of trouble. So I had to go. I had the interview on Monday. On Friday I was on the plane going back east to see if I could straighten out the problem they were having in the building being built.

While I was doing that we were staying with my sister at the time. While I was gone to Maryland, right outside of Washington, D.C., she went looking for an apartment for us to live. So she went into the El Segundo area because that's where I had my job. She saw a synagogue and she stopped and went to the synagogue. She introduced herself to the office. She said we're looking for a place to live. We're staying with my sister. We're just moving. It just so happens there was a real estate agent at the office of the synagogue that day. So the lady she was talking to said wait a minute, and she called this real estate agent over. They talked and he said I have a building near the airport. It's reasonable I think. But we didn't want to buy anything. So Anita said I'd like to see the building, but can you wait until Henry comes back?

We went and looked at the house. It was a nice house. It was empty. The owner had gotten a different job in Seattle, so they put the house up for sale. But I told the real estate man right off the bat that we don't want to buy. I said but the house needs some work. I said to the real estate salesman see if we can rent the house from him if I fix it up. That's what we did.

**Oh, wonderful.**

So for \$300 we got the house. We rented it. We stayed there a couple of years. We moved to Inglewood because I no longer was working for Scientific Data System because the company was sold to Xerox Corporation and Xerox decided they were not going to be in the construction business. They were going to, for their buildings that they were expanding, hire contractors. So they didn't need me anymore. But they offered me a job with Xerox Company for the same money that I was making. No, it wasn't for the same. They offered me if I stayed with Xerox and

I can work there for a while, then I can come back and make my same salary. I am getting confused at the moment.

**This is Claytee White, and I am with Anita and Henry Schuster. It is April 25th, 2011, and I'm in their home.**

**How are the two of you today?**

I'm doing fine. I was anxiously awaiting you.

**Oh, that's great.**

*Yes. We were looking forward to seeing you.*

**Well, good. So Anita, we're going to start with you today. Where we left off with you, we were in New York and you were working together with Henry. And you were making a decision about school and marriage. But prior to you telling me that, prior to you starting with that, I want to know if you could go back as a child? What did you hear in the community, in the Jewish community at the time that everything was happening before World War II?**

*Anita: Before World War II you have to realize that I lived in a German neighborhood. I lived in New York in Yorkville, which was a completely German neighborhood. My father had a business there. That's why we lived in that area. The Nazi Party was very prominent in that neighborhood. In fact, on 86th Street, which is a major thoroughfare between Lexington and Third, they marched with banners flying. The Nazi Bund marched up that street. Now, this was prior to World War II. My father --*

**As Hitler was coming into power?**

*Yes. Oh, Hitler came into power in 1933. So I was only three years old then. But I remember them marching down the street in '38 or '39. I don't exactly remember the date. It was horrific. It was terrifying to us Jewish children. They took a razor and scratched in my father's window "Jew," just like they did in Germany. Of course, we didn't suffer like the German children did. But we did have to take precautions. Occasionally we would go in a cab to Hebrew school because they were after us. They took a rabbi and beat him up mercilessly in our neighborhood. And the children were saying denigrating remarks to us. I mean this is New York and this is the*

*United States, but it was not pleasant.*

**So what did the government, the city government do?**

*Nothing. Nothing.*

**Oh. When I asked that question I had no idea I was going to get that kind of an answer. I thought you were going to say, oh, they were raising money, sending it. Oh, my.**

*No. There was a priest named Father Coughlin. I'm sure you've heard that name.*

**Oh, yes.**

*He was a rebel-rouser. He was an anti-Semitic rebel-rouser. And he was on the radio and his people sold magazines on the street corners. And the big headlines were always anti-Semitic. These were being gobbled up by the people, just like the Tea Party today, the same kind of -- it reminds me terribly of that. This is the background in which I grew up.*

*Now, my parents were very civic-minded. They were air raid wardens during the war. But they were under constant belittling, you know, maybe not threat, but constant belittling because they were Jews. This is here in the United States. So don't say it can't happen here. And we were very much aware of what was going on in Germany. My parents read a Jewish newspaper daily and they knew what was going on in Europe. My parents both had family in Russia, in the Ukraine. So they were worried about that. I could feel that in the household. Children always feel those things.*

*I remember my parents going to a rally at Madison Square Garden to allow Jewish people to come to the United States. Now, the United States was so anti-Semitic the State Department would not issue any visas for people like Henry and his mother and sisters. They went to this rally in Madison Square Garden. Rabbi Hillo Silver was the rabbi. I remember all this stuff. I was a little girl. So I remember that very clearly that it was an issue that every Jewish family was aware of. They tried to do as much as they could. It was the middle of the depression. There were people that didn't have anything. That was the situation in New York.*

**Okay. Now I'd like for you to jump forward where we had stopped. How long did that go on?**

*It went on till the war ended. Well, no, I shouldn't say that because once we were in the war with Germany, then they were very quiet. And they picked up a lot of fathers on our street and put*

*them in jail because they were German Bund members.*

**What is that?**

*That is the organization that was the Nazi organization in America. Lindbergh was a member of that.*

**Charles Lindbergh?**

*Charles Lindbergh was -- we must take care of America first. He was a Nazi sympathizer. Jack Kennedy's father was also a Nazi sympathizer, and they had to recall him from London because he was the ambassador because he was too sympathetic to Hitler. I mean people don't know these things.*

**You're right.**

*Yes. And I'm a student of history, so I am very interested in that. This is what happened.*

**So as the war goes on, do we have a lot of American Jewish young men --**

*In the war. Volunteering and being drafted, just like every other American. Everybody of a certain age had to go. My father had a draft card. He was 35. He's the youth of America, he said. But, of course, they didn't take him because he had a family. He got a job on the Pennsylvania Railroad. That was considered... a defense job. So he didn't have to go.*

**Wow. So after the war is over, of course, you get a job. You're going to school and --**  
*I'm going to school.*

**So tell me about meeting Henry and the decision that you made because you had planned to go to college at one time.**

*Oh, I definitely planned to go to college. I was working in a place called S. Klein, On The Square. I was a contingent. Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday is when I worked after school. I would take the subway down to 14th Street and I would work there.*

*I had a friend whose boyfriend was coming home from the service and she was making a party for him and I was invited. I went to see her. She was his packer. He was a cashier; she was the one that wrapped up the goods. She said to me should I invite him to the party? I said, Tilly, I don't know this guy; you do what you think is right. I had no idea who he was or what. I said it's your party. Well, she asked him and he said he couldn't go because it was his sister's birthday. It was actually his 21st birthday. That was it.*

*We met in the locker room, in the employees' locker room, and he asked me for a date. I looked at him and I said okay. I'll take a chance, you know. He looked like a nice man. He spoke well. So I said yes. Then I met him again the following week and I said I cannot go on this date because it's Passover and I have to go to a Seder. And he said I'm glad you reminded me, I have to go too. So that was one thing in his favor, at least he was Jewish.*

*We went out the following Wednesday I think it was. We had a wonderful time together and we talked and talked and talked. You know, when you can talk to somebody, that's important. Then we went and he introduced me to his friends. That was very nice. They told him, what are you trying to do, rob the cradle, because I was very young and I didn't realize how old he was. See that picture? That's our engagement picture. No. The little one.*

**This photo right here. Beautiful.**

*Our brother-in-law took that picture.*

**So how old are you here?**

*I'm 17 there. So we started going out and we never stopped.*

**Okay, great. So I know what happens then. Henry has already taken me up to the place where we're now in El Segundo, California.**

*Yes.*

**So Henry, I don't know exactly where we were. I think you're in the building trade?**

*No. Well, El Segundo is what we used as a cutoff date.*

**Yes.**

*I don't know if we talked about what I was -- I think we did. My sister lived in the San Gabriel Valley.*

*Okay. When Henry got his job at SDS, Scientific Data System, they asked him to go to Washington, D.C. That was on a Friday he had to go. Now, we were staying with his sister in Glendora. We couldn't do that. We were five people and we could not do that, stay there forever. So we had another car and I took that with a son and we went to El Segundo looking for a place to live. We wound up -- you want me to tell you the story how we found it?*

*Yes.*

*Okay. I called the synagogue and I said to them where do the Jews live? And they said they live*



*all over; there's no such thing as a Jewish neighborhood here. So I said fine. They happened to have a real estate person in the office at the time. So he said I'll find you a place to live, because I said we don't want to buy anything until we know where we are. So he found us a house to rent and we lived there for a year because the north runway opened up. We were near the airport, LAX, and all those 747s trying to come in there. We'd have to stop conversation in the middle. So we moved. We moved to Inglewood on a beautiful street and we had a lovely two-story house that we lived in. We didn't buy it. We just rented it. Okay. So that's where we are now.*

Let me back up a little bit. I had my interview at SDS to the man the head of purchasing for the company, Harry Rosen. I had an interview with him on Tuesday. He had already checked me out before I met him because I found out that he called people who I had given as references in Peoria; that he called these people to ask about me. They all gave me a good report. So this was Tuesday. He asked me are you ready to go to Rockville, Maryland on Friday? Rockville is a suburb of Washington, D.C. I mean it just happened one-two-three. I said yes, I am. So on Friday two men who are with not security but maintenance, they and I were sent to Rockville, Maryland. There was a problem with the construction. They were building a building and there was a problem with the building. My forte was construction. So they asked me to go and see what the problem is. I went.

The man who was the superintendent of that building was actually an electrical contractor. He knew his electric, but he knew nothing about construction. So I noticed that right away. So I came back to El Segundo and I reported back to them. So they made the change. Harold Miller was his name. They kept him on, but I was more or less to be his supervisor. I followed that up. I was part of the purchasing department. But I was strictly involved in purchasing for the building electric light fixtures, all types of things. I was in charge of getting it for the building -- Venetian blinds, light fixtures, and all of that. So I did that while I was in El Segundo. I had to go back to Rockville a couple more times. I would go back there. The problem straightened out because I had enough experience to get it resolved. So that was fine and I made a very good impression on my boss Harry Rosen.

He realized that I was a house builder before and he had a problem at his home. His wife was very ill. She had cancer. The problem was pertaining to her health. So Harry Rosen asked

me if I would come to his house on a Saturday and see what I could add to her welfare. I made some recommendations and that worked out.

Then Scientific Data System was sold to Xerox Corporation.

*Excuse me one minute. I worked there as well.*

**Really?**

*Yes.*

**So now, at this time you had three children?**

*Yeah. But they were all teenagers.*

**So tell me what you did.**

*I was in the accounting department and I worked in accounts payable. So I couldn't work in accounts payable. I had to work in accounts receivable because I could not pay out to his contractor. So I worked in accounts receivable.*

**Wow. That's interesting.**

A little side story. Her supervisor was -- I don't know if he was anti-Semitic.

*He was a picayune. He just looked for little things to pick on.*

Well, I was categorized as management. They had a big party for management from that grade on up forward. My supervisor there was at the party and Anita worked for him. Anita was with me there.

*At the party. I'm his spouse, right? And he was in shock that I was there.*

And I outranked him.

*And he was not pleasant about it. No, no. He took it out on me all the time.*

But I got you transferred to the telephone.

*Yeah. I got transferred to the -- what did they call that?*

**PBX?**

Communications?

*No, no, not communications. I was in the -- like a bank.*

Oh, the credit union.

*Credit union.*

Credit union, yes. She worked for his boss in accounting. But they had a telephone system. They

had, I don't know, maybe six or eight telephone operators. The girls were suffering from itching. They couldn't figure out what was what. So I was told about it. I said I'm going to look into it. And I did and I found out that the air conditioning system had -- the ductwork was spewing --

**Asbestos?**

Insulation. And that caused them to itch. Well, I had the position to make a change there. And I did. Oh, Anita was transferred, then, from the accounting department into the communications.

*I didn't even remember that.*

Yeah.

*And then I went to the credit union?*

Yeah.

*Oh, okay.*

Yes. Yes. It was very unusual for a husband and wife to work together. But they found two people who knew what they were doing.

**So in your spare time when you were in El Segundo, did you do any work for the Jewish community?**

*We did not -- well, we did somewhat. Yeah. You were in a play where you raised money.*

Yeah. We joined a synagogue there.

*Because Rene was still a young person, our daughter, and she needed the contacts, you know, to have. So they had a youth group that she belonged to. Yes.*

**Good.**

Yes. They were putting on a play based on a Yiddish story, and I got a part in the play. So she called to have people come to build the set. It was on a Saturday.

*It was on a Sunday.*

Sunday, yes. I had experience set building because when we lived in Peoria I was at the Peoria Players.

*We both were.*

I was active in Peoria Players. In fact, I just ran across a critique from my part that I had. It's in there.

**That's great. Oh, good. Good.**

It's in there. I had this part. She called for people that knew how to do set building. Nobody showed up, except I did. I had experience in set building. So I started right away. I was rehearsing for my part in the play. I was the only one that showed up. I don't remember her name right now. She said, oh my god, we've got to do something; I need you more building the set than being part of the play. I said okay, that's fine. So I no longer was in the play. She gave my part to somebody else. I think it was on a Sunday they had the play at the synagogue. The program was put out, and in the program I was listed as such-and-such person in the play.

**Oh, they didn't change it.**

No. They didn't have time to change it. So I was listed there. Well, the rabbi from the synagogue was there to congratulate all the players. My name was on the program. So this is a typical rabbi. He came to our next Shabbat, which was the Saturday after the Sabbath. They gave us a special dinner. And my name was in the program, but I wasn't in the play. And the rabbi went from table to table. He came to our table and he knew that my name was in as the part. Typical rabbi. He says, oh, Mr. Schuster, you were so good in the part. So I said to myself you dumb so-and-so. I wasn't even in the play. But I didn't want to upset the applecart, so I let it pass.

**That's cute.**

**So, you are both working in El Segundo. I was asking about the activities of the Jewish communities, and he was telling me about the play. What about you?**

*I was busy between working and taking care of a house and trying to take care of the kids and see to it that everybody's okay. That was my job. Yeah. So I really did not do much in the community at that time. I did not.*

**So when you left El Segundo to come to Las Vegas, what was the reason?**

*Oh. Well, we lived all over.*

**But when you left California to come to Las Vegas.**

*Well, we retired. That's why we came to Las Vegas.*

**So why did you decide Las Vegas?**

*Well, we used to come two, three times a year, and we always liked it. It was a smaller community. It was easier to get around. Los Angeles is so big and so much traveling all the time that we decided this is what we need when we're older. We came in 1993, November of '93. And*

*we have not regretted a minute.*

**I'm going to stop right there because now I'm going to ask you about your involvement with the Jewish --**

*With the Holocaust Survivor Group.*

**That's exactly right. That's what I want you to ask you about. So we can wait until Henry comes back because I'm sure that Henry wants to tell --**

*Oh, yes.*

A paper that I had from a teacher. And his students sent me a thank you letter for coming. I look at the signature of the teacher. It is Daniel Villanueva. I don't know if it's the same Daniel Villanueva. Or maybe he was a teacher before he got his Ph.D. Could be. So I don't know if it's the same Daniel. I'm going to ask him.

**Yes. Small world.**

**We were talking about Anita's position. You had told me about the play. So were there other involvements with the Jewish community in California?**

There was a lot. First of all, when we lived in Westchester -- that's where the synagogue that I talked about the rabbi -- and Xerox Corporation was no longer in the building business -- before that at Scientific Data System they would build the buildings to their needs and that's who I worked for. But then I no longer was needed for that. So I had a meeting with Harry Rosen, who was my boss, and he told me your department is being closed. I was making at the time \$20,000 a year, which was a lot of money then. Harry Rosen asked me --

*To stay on at a reduced salary.*

Oh, yes. Yeah.

*Or you could have severance pay and an office to find another job and a secretary. He had a secretary. So Henry elected to find another job. Now.*

While I was with Xerox, I was the purchasing agent for their buildings. I had to order some Venetian blinds for the building in Rockville, Maryland. I had a vendor who was in that business. I guess he found out about it. So he called me and he took me out to lunch. I was going to do the business with him anyhow, but he gave me a sales pitch and all that. So that worked out very well. But after, I had the choice to stay with them at a reduced salary or leave and keep my

secretary and keep my office. So I chose to do that, to leave. At this party that Grossman, the Venetian blinds salesman had --

*He had a party and he invited us.*

He had a big party. He invited us to come to the party. It so happened there was a husband and wife. The husband was an interior designer. Anita was sitting with his wife at the party and they hit it right off the bat. So she told her newly found friend that I'm leaving there.

*And he's looking for a job.*

So she told -- I don't know. How did it come about?

*Well, I know Grossman told Joe that you're a good guy and they needed somebody there. Joe was looking for just what you had, construction management. The wedding was arranged and they got married. And he was hired by SLS, which is a design firm. Betty and I are still good friends to this day. Whenever they come to Vegas we're with them.*

**Oh, that's wonderful.**

*So we're all good friends.*

**So how long did you work for SLS?**

Maybe a year.

*And Joe decided he wanted to go off on his own. He was a vice president of SLS, but he decided he wanted to go off on his own and he asked Henry to come with him. Henry said no, not unless I get a piece of the action. He wanted a piece of the business. That's what happened.*

Yes. Airlines, what's the name of the airlines in El Segundo that had the building? Continental Airlines had built a ten- or 12-story building in El Segundo.

*They did the interior design for it and Henry had it all built out. Now, you see, when they designed and they had a space -- what did they call that, space arrangement, when they used to do a space study?*

Yeah. Planning.

*Yeah. They would take the space and decide how to plan it out. And then they would design the elements that go in there and he would construct it. He hired all the people to do the construction and he knows exactly how to do that. In the meantime, they always had trouble getting good cabinets, cabinets that are substantial and hold up in offices because they were lawyers and*

*doctors and those kinds of offices.*

**And you had built cabinets before.**

*He had that in France.*

**That's right. I remember.**

*So he established a cabinet shop for the firm. When Henry decided to leave that firm, he said for my part I'll take the cabinet shop and you guys can have the construction company. That's how we wound up with the cabinet shop.*

**Oh, I see.**

*Let me show you something here. This is the kind of stuff that Henry did.*

**Oh, wow. So all of this part?**

*Yes. All the wood.*

**Oh, wow. That's amazing.**

*See this?*

**Oh, yes.**

*And this?*

**So, on this, you did the cabinetry?**

*Yes, all that. And all this.*

**Oh, the table?**

*Yeah.*

**Oh, these are beautiful.**

*Yes. I have much more back there I can show you.*

**So you actually did this table from scratch?**

*Yes. That's his company.*

*From bare wood.*

*And this.*

**Oh, these are beautiful. Oh, this is simply beautiful.**

*I've got in there a whole book of all the stuff.*

**The furniture is almost back in style.**

*Yes. But this is his stuff.*

**Oh, this is beautiful work.**

*Yeah. This is all stuff he did. But he didn't do manually anymore.*

**I understand.**

*He had people doing that. And this is all a book full.*

**And the pictures they're showing me is all cabinetry, tables, planters.**

*Yes. Whatever had to be made of wood.*

**Oh, this is beautiful.**

*Yeah. He did gorgeous stuff. And we were known as a premier company. See this? Even this is wood.*

**Yes, it is.**

*The back of the picture is wood. Did you know that?*

*Yeah.*

**Oh, these are just beautiful.**

ABC --

*Pictures.*

-- they were in the movie business, also. And ABC opened an office in Century City in Los Angeles. I did the work. A lot of that was done for ABC.

**Beautiful work.**

*So that's what we did. I was working in this company as the controller.*

**For?**

*The cabinet company.*

We had 19 employees. I mean I didn't work with the tools. I had a partner. I took in a partner who was from Argentina, very good mechanic, a very good woodworker, excellent worker. I gave him a piece of the action when I got the cabinet shop. It took off right from the beginning.

*Henry knew all the designers in town because he had worked with them at SLS. So that was his entree.*

**Oh, that's amazing. So now, when you left there to come here, did you sell that business?**

*Yes. We sold the building.*

Well, yeah. We owned the building. What happened, the riots in Los Angeles.



**The Rodney King riots.**

*Yes. In South Central.*

My building was in that neighborhood.

**That's why I left Los Angeles.**

*That's where we were.*

It was an old building, which I bought. We had 17,000 square feet.

**So where was it located?**

And we set up our cabinet shop. We moved. We rented a place first. The cabinet shop was part of the company that I worked for.

*Yes. Yes. I explained that.*

But then we broke away and we --

*Where was it, what street was it? Where was the cabinet shop, on what street?*

104th Street, the first one.

*No, no. The second one.*

The one we owned?

*Yes.*

Gage. Yeah, it was an old building, but we bought it. It perfectly fit our need, really.

*Just the right size.*

It was the right size. We had plenty of parking and the whole thing. But the riots came and the neighborhood was burning. I said I'm going down to the shop. It was on a weekend.

*No. You just left. I was asleep and he left. And I was hysterical because he went down there. He shouldn't have gone. It was too dangerous at that time. It was too dangerous at that time.*

Especially I had a blue car. And the Crips and the --

*Bloods. Yeah. One was blue and one was red.*

I went down there to see if my building was burning.

*No, it wasn't.*

It wasn't. But that was the end of our cabinet --

*We decided we can't live here.*

We had a big account. The biggest account we had was Tishman Construction, which is well

known in the east and here. I had the studios.

*We had a lot of clients.*

I had a lot of good studios. I did their cabinets and all.

**Okay. Movie studios.**

*Yeah. But we're happy to be here in Las Vegas.*

**Oh, yes. So eventually you decide to move here to Las Vegas. Anita already told me that you had a friend here.**

*Yeah. We had Nadine and Eddie Cofman. They retired and came from Peoria, Illinois. We had known them for 50 years.*

We were friends.

*We were friends. So they introduced us to society here. And as I said, she put me to work right away. That's how I got involved in the community.*

I went to Peoria for a funeral and Nadine and Ed Cofman were there at the --

*They paid what we call a shiva. It's seven days people sit and mourn. So they came for that period to this house.*

They mentioned that they had a going out of business -- they were in the furniture business -- and they were moving to Las Vegas to retire. We had talked about it already.

*Yeah. We were going to do it.*

Yeah. I told them I says, well, we're moving to Las Vegas, too. But we had an entree when we got here because Nadine is a busy body -- she was a busy body. She had a hen-pecked husband, a very good man, very good man. We right away had inputs through them.

**Oh, that is great. So how did you start the Jewish survivors' group?**

On a house exchange in Germany. There's a company that was booking people that would like to exchange homes and cars with somebody in Germany. You did that.

*Yes. We ordered the book where you could choose who to do that with and we found this couple that wanted to do that. They had a car and we had a car, so we didn't have that expense over there, and a house. We didn't have the lodging expense. We decided that that was the way to go. We had a beautiful house in the country. It was gorgeous. They were so happy to be here in Las Vegas. We had a Cadillac. They had a nice car and a nice house. They came, two couples. We*

*didn't know that, but we had two bedrooms they could use. We gave them our house. And we were invited to Nadine's house for a Break Fast. That was after Yom Kippur. After our day of atonement you have a fast because you don't eat all day. So you have a party -- not a party, but at least a meal. So we were invited to her house. And across from us sat --*

Edythe Yarchever. Well, her name was Katz at the time.

*You know Edythe.*

**Yes.**

We had to leave early from the Break Fast party that she had. Edythe says why are you going to Germany? I said because -- we were staying at a hotel overnight.

*We were staying at the Gold Coast because these folks already had our house and our car. So we were going to this hotel to spend the night, and from there we would go to the airport.*

Yeah. So that worked out very, very well. Our son Alan, his wife, and two boys came.

*Oh, yeah, to visit us in Germany. But you're going to tell her about Edythe.*

Yes. Edythe wanted to know why are you going to Germany? So I told her in a quick way. I said I was born in Germany and lost my mother and sister and all that. Edythe said I'm going away for a month or so, would you please call me when I get back? And I said I would. So the Jewish Community Center -- it was Dr. Saroki.

*Who was a friend of mine.*

Yeah. She was --

*President.*

Yeah. Which way am I going?

*And they asked us after we contacted them when they got back and when we got back to form this group. We decided we would give it a try.*

They tried to do it many times and it never worked out. Edythe asked me -- and Dr. Saroki. The two of them talked to us and asked us if we would try to form the Holocaust Survivor Group. We talked it over.

*Now, under the auspices of Jewish Community Center. We talked it over.*

We said we would. We worked that through the Jewish Federation.

*Jewish Community Center.*

Jewish Community Center. Right. We went and called for a meeting of all Holocaust survivors. I went on the radio.

*The first meeting we had 35 people. When we wound up we wound up with 300 people plus. And this is because Henry went on the radio. He gave interviews in the newspaper. He talked to everybody and anybody who would listen. This is what we did. I did the underlying paperwork and all of that stuff. We always were empathetic, we were sympathetic, and we were a resource. And this is what made this organization work; that we were the resource. If they needed something, they knew they could come to us.*

We brought in an attorney from Germany.

**Why Germany?**

*Because reparations were coming from Germany and they needed legal -- yes. And this is what they needed. Are you getting too cool?*

**It's okay. You don't have to turn it down. I'm just going to put this around me.**

You are such an elegant woman.

**Thank you so much.**

**So now, did Edythe play a part in the forming of this, the formation?**

*That's right.*

Edythe is a part of everything.

**That's true.**

*Well, at the first meeting we had an agenda. Henry had an agenda and Doris and Edythe tried to take over that meeting. I went to them and I said Henry has an agenda and you better let him follow it. That was the last time they tried to take over because they saw that we had it planned and we knew what we were doing and it has been a success.*

**So how did the two of you know how to put it together?**

*Well, in Peoria we were youth advisers to the young people.*

Synagogue Youth.

*To the Synagogue Youth, the teenagers. Our children were involved. So that's why we got involved. We put together an organization. We're both those kinds of people. We know that if you want to do something, you have to do it; you can't rely on somebody else to do it.*

In 1989 -- where am I going?

*In 1989 we organized a reunion of all the children that were in France with him. We had 175 people at a reunion from all over the world. We went to the Wiesenthal Center. Henry went to the Wiesenthal Center with another friend and they talked to them. And they put it in all of their publications, in 96 newspapers around the world. All that stuff is in there. Unfortunately, Henry got sick and had to be in the hospital when we had the reunion. He had practiced his speech. I brought the television set and the speech to the reunion. Everybody remembers that. It's better than if you had been there, believe me. Everybody remembers it. It was a huge success.*

**Wow.**

Rabbi [Abraham] Cooper is the associate director of the Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles. His title is dean.

And Rabbi Cooper is coming here on May 1st when there is what's called Yom Hashoah. That is the day of remembrance of the Holocaust. He's coming here to be the main keynote speaker.

**So where is the event being held?**

*At Ner Tamid in Henderson.*

**Oh, that's wonderful.**

*So you are invited. If you want to come, you can come.*

**So you have to give me the information.**

*I'll give you the information.*

I sent Rabbi Cooper my book.

**Oh, good.**

He called me. He took a whole weekend, he said, to read my book. He fell in love with the book. Our rabbi fell in love with our book, too. And he wrote a critique, beautiful critique. We have it. *And the Department of Foreign Languages, they also wrote a beautiful critique.*

**Oh, that's great.**

*From UNLV.*

**Yes. That's wonderful.**

**I want to know when you put the survivors' group together what ideas did you have as the purpose, purposes?**

I wanted to help indigent survivors. And we have quite a few here in Las Vegas. We wanted to help them. We brought this lawyer over here to take their cases against Germany. I brought the state insurance commissioner. We brought her in here from --

*Alice Molasky Armand.*

Yeah. And asked her to join with other states' attorneys and insurance commissioners. She came with her staff. We had a meeting. They interviewed a lot of our survivors. In there I have a magazine, Caroline's magazine in there. It is an article that one of the local former newspapermen wrote for that magazine. And it talks about if you mention the name Schuster, he says, they have a big smile on their face.

*Well, it was not only for reparations, but it was for socialization and for people to be able to talk freely among themselves because not everybody wants to hear what happened to you. Not everybody is interested in what happened to you.*

**But in this group you could be safe to tell your story.**

*Yes.*

And we learned many years ago if you want to have a successful meeting, feed them.

**That's right.**

So we had brunches.

*And lunches.*

Yeah. And we made arrangements at the buffets and we made arrangements -- in fact, we took a bus tour to Death Valley. We did all kinds of things for the benefit of the survivors.

**That's great.**

*And they knew if they had a problem, they could call on us.*

They still do.

*They still call us.*

**So just like the letter that a person received that had been written in German and they couldn't read it, they know that they could give it to you.**

*That's right. They could get it to us and we would get it for them.*

We started -- if a husband survivor was sick in the hospital and the wife of a survivor wanted to go visit her husband in the hospital, we organized transportation for women who wanted to visit their

husbands. It was a sort of success.

*Yes. There were always problems that crept up. Somebody needed a dentist. Somebody needed a doctor. Somebody needed a lawyer. We would arrange for those people to get help.*

**So you put together a reference list or referral list.**

*Yes. And we worked with Jewish Family Service. They helped us and we helped them.*

In fact, she was at a meeting yesterday. Shelley Berkley was there. I didn't go because I had invited Rabbi Mintz to come and perform a Seder for our Jewish people here.

**That's great. So he came here to do the Seder.**

*Yes. She.*

She came. It's a lady rabbi. She performed the Seder yesterday. So I had to stay to greet her. Shelley Berkley, who we dearly liked and who likes us, too -- she attended Shelley Berkley's meeting.

**So do you think Shelley is going to be our next senator?**

*I hope so.*

**Me too. Me too.**

*I hope so. She is such a delight.*

I don't want her to lose.

**I don't want her to lose, either.**

And I don't want her to give up her seat in Congress.

**I know.**

*But she is so well loved.*

**Yes. I think she can do it.**

*I think she can too. We're all going to have to help her.*

**Oh, yes. Oh, yes. We're going to have to get out there and knock on doors and make phone calls.**

*I volunteered yesterday. I gave her young man that was with her our information. So they will contact us to do things.*

**And they usually have an office near UNLV. I've worked before after hours, a couple hours on Saturday, whenever. So I'll do it again.**

Did I show you that picture with Shelley? If we go someplace where Shelley is, she'll stop and come right over to us.

**Oh, that's great.**

*I mean we have been at one end of the building and she saw us and she ran to the other end of the building to come see us.*

**Reading: "Congressional recognition, Congresswoman Shelley Berkley, Nevada's First Congressional District honors Anita and Henry Schuster, co-presidents, for your many years of selfless service to the Las Vegas Holocaust Survivors Group." That's September 9th, 2007.**

*That's when we retired.*

**So that's when you retired from the group.**

*Yes.*

**So you had the group in operation for how many years?**

*Twelve years we worked.*

**So now, who did all this? Who did all the referrals and putting all the lists together and all the work? Oh, my goodness. Just the two of you did most of the work?**

*Yes. I would say we did all of it.*

**Oh, my. So in 2007 when you gave it up, what happened?**

*We had Dr. Bournstein who came and took it over. But unfortunately he's sick, so someone else had to step in. So now we have a lady, Ray Fiol, who is doing that. And she's doing a good job.*

**And right now if you know other people in the group who were not interviewed before and their stories need to be captured, we would like to capture those stories. So if you know of anyone who never had the opportunity.**

*I think Ray. I think Ray, probably, the president. She has an unusual story. You might want to contact her. I'll give you her phone number.*

**Please.**

She doesn't know if she's first generation or second generation. The reason was -- she's French. They were from France. She was a baby and they gave her to a Christian family to keep her for them. That's how she survived.



*Her parents were killed. Her aunts picked her up.*

Yeah. Her parents were killed. The Christian family brought her up. She's prominent here in Las Vegas now.

**So is there anything else about the survivors' group that --**

*It was our retirement project. We loved every minute of it. But we just can't do it physically anymore.*

**Yes. They had to be a lot of work.**

*It was a lot of work, but it was a lot of love.*

**Oh, yes. So how often would you have meetings?**

*Oh, at least six times a year, at least that often, and then we'd have a board meeting in between. But every day there was something to do, every day.*

**How many people were on the board?**

*About ten or 15. Maybe 20. I have to count them.*

**Okay. But about that number. How did you raise money?**

*We got a grant from the Claims Conference. I don't know if you're familiar with that. There is a conference called -- it's material claims against Germany. They provided claims against Germany and Germany provided money for this. So we made an application. I made a -- what do you call that?*

**So did you become a 501(c)(3) organization?**

*Yes, we did.*

**So you filled out a grant application, probably.**

*Grant application. That's what I did.*

They had two grants. One grant goes to Jewish Family Service. That is I think 30 --

*Oh, it's more. It's a lot of money. They've got a lot of different grants. But our group has a grant for socialization and for emergency type things. Our group has a specific grant. I wrote the original grant and they're still working on that.*

**Wonderful.**

She wrote that grant. She wrote the grant. It's Cafe Aropa is the name which gave us to start off with \$5,000. I don't know how much it's now on a monthly basis.

*You spend the money. Then you present your receipts and they give you the money back. Within that program. They have certain criteria that you have to follow.*

This Ray Fiol that she was talking about, she's doing a good job, but it's not the same.

*It's not the same organization. It cannot be.*

**Yeah. So what kinds of changes do you see?**

*I see the fact that if people don't pay their dues they're very unhappy about it. We used to let that slide because we would see that people couldn't afford to pay their dues and we would let them participate no matter what.*

We started off with 20 a month dues.

*Not a month. A year.*

A year. Excuse me. Yes. Twenty dollars a year. Then we raised it to \$25.

*And you should have heard the complaints. You're making money off of us?*

**Twenty-five dollars a year. That's great.**

That's not the words they used.

*Whatever it was.*

**Oh, that is amazing. So it became a social organization --**

*Yes, of course.*

**-- as well as civic and political.**

*No, not political. We would not let any politics in.*

I would not allow politics to be discussed. That's one of the rules we enforced right off the bat. I mean I had an idea, too. But I had called Ed --

*Ed Bernstein.*

Yeah. Ed Bernstein, the lawyer, wanted to speak to the group. I said you can speak to the group, but you cannot talk about money. You cannot talk about politics.

**Well now, isn't he the one who --**

*He ran for Senate.*

**Oh, he did run. Okay.**

*Yeah. Against Ensign. He had no chance. But we have had Republicans and Democrats and every other kind of "crat" come to our group to ask to speak and we've said no politics.*

**Okay. I love it. I love it.**

*Yeah. Because you have people that are involved in all kinds of things and you don't want to get involved in the middle of that. Now, we have survivors from China, from Shanghai. They went from Germany to Shanghai. So they stayed there. We have people who were in Australia, people who were in South Africa, people who were in South America. You know, they were dispersed all over the world. A lot of them found their way to Las Vegas.*

**That is great. That's what makes your group so strong, probably.**

*And that's what makes Las Vegas what it is.*

**Yes. How large is the Las Vegas group?**

*Well, when we left it was 300, around 300. So maybe with attrition and deaths -- you know, they're getting older -- maybe it's 250 now.*

**So do you two still participate?**

*We do.*

**Oh, great. Great.**

*Yes, we do.*

I went to every Jewish survivor funeral --

*Until we couldn't go anymore.*

Yeah. I made sure that they had Jewish funerals. I would go to all those funerals.

**So tell me what a Jewish funeral is like.**

*Well, we don't believe in embalming.*

**Okay, yes. I remember.**

*So, in other words, they have to be buried the next day. They have to be washed. There's a group of people who do that. That is a mitzvah. It's a good deed.*

Called chevra kaddisha is the name of that.

*It means holy people.*

Yes. Men will wash the male. I don't know about the ladies.

*They have women that wash women's bodies.*

Because when the Messiah comes, they're supposed to be clean. I mean we're Jewish. We practice our Judaism. But that doesn't mean that we believe all of it.

*You know. You pick and choose, like everything else. But this is what's important is you follow the ritual for the living, not for the dead.*

**That's wonderful.**

Today's Monday, right? Yesterday Anita went to see Shelley Berkley and I stayed to greet Rabbi Mintz, the lady. She gave us a mock Seder. She brought three young people with her. They had a play that they put on. We had a good turnout.

**Wonderful. So about what percentage of the population here do you think?**

We think about 20 to 25 Jewish people.

*And there are 90 people living.*

**That's a good percentage.**

*Yeah. But we don't flaunt it. We want to be with everybody. So we're part of the community.*

**That is wonderful. You know, this has been a great interview. I've gotten information about Germany and France and New York and information that I just never expected. So this has just been a great experience.**

*Well, it's been a great experience for us, too.*

Yes. It's our great pleasure to meet you.

**Oh, yes. And we've known each other now for several years.**

*Several years, yes.*

**So what is going to happen is the transcriber is transcribing this as I go. She's a little behind because she has another big project she's working on. But probably June or July she's going to have it all transcribed. I am going to bring you a copy or send you a copy and just let you read it through. You'll be able to make changes. I don't want you to take out whole paragraphs or anything like that, but if you see something that oh yes, I should have said this word, okay, so this sentence should have gone in here. Things like that.**

*Okay.*

Now, I have a lot of things in here, but I have more to go. I got another full drawer full of papers. When I have them ready, I'll get in touch with her.

**Just give me a call because I will be able to -- even if Su Kim is not back and if you get some things ready or a bag ready, I'll run out here and pick them up.**

*We'll keep this box.*

**Thank you so much.**

*Oh. Such a pleasure. The only thing I'm sad about is that you won't be coming out here anymore.*

**But we'll find reasons because I've got to pick up the papers. I've got to bring the interview back to you.**

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