

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Emanuel Mandel
June 23, 1989
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Emanuel Mandel, conducted by Linda Kuzmack on June 23, 1989 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Research Institute's collection of oral testimonies.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

EMANUEL MANDEL

June 23, 1989

Q: Now, we'd like you to tell us your name and where you were born.

A: My name is Emanuel Mandel. I was born in Riga in the country of Latvia in 1936.

Q: 1936. And you've said that where you were born is not really important to the story, so would you describe your family and perhaps your earliest memories.

A: I said that it is not important to my story because uh there was an old adage that said you must be born where your mother is, and she was in Riga at the time because my father had a position in Latvia. As a matter of fact, he was about to leave Latvia to go to Hungary and they were just waiting for me to arrive, and when I was, I'm told, perhaps three months old or so, I left Riga and never to return. I've never been there since. I would say that my earliest recollections are probably three or four years later. Uh, and none of them are in Latvia. They are later on in Hungary and places further. As we moved, as the war came, other recollections come up in other countries.

Q: Well, let's start at your earliest recollections, and describe your family. What, who, who made up your family and where did you live?

A: My family consisted at the time of, a small family, I'm an only child. Uh, my parents had a son before I was born, some three years before, who was born healthy according to the pediatrics of the time and at the age of ten weeks died, probably from some problem that in this day

and age could have been handled uh very simply in any hospital. But that was 1933 and even though they were in major cities with major medical knowledge available, it could not save the child. I came in 1936 and I was the only child to my mother and father. Uh, to, to flesh out in a sense the information about them, my father is alive and well, lives in the city of Philadelphia. He is 85, just turned 85 this year. My mother died uh in 1967 in Philadelphia of causes unrelated to anything else. It was a disease and uh, she died quickly, at a rather young age, just under 60. I, uh, as I say, since I have no siblings, the family is kind of limited. If I were to give you background about the family itself, uh my father comes from a city, not a city, a village, a small village, which was, at the time that he was born in 1904, in Czechoslovakia, maybe Rumania, or maybe even Hungary, because the way the borders were moved at the time nobody really knew. His passport was Czech. His citizenship was Czech. The part of the land was part of Austro-Hungary, and his language is Hungarian, so it is difficult to determine. Legally, he was Czech. He served in the Czech Army and when he was 19 or 20 years old. But he never identified as a Czech. There's a document that I gave a copy of a little while ago, which is a Czech passport, which was, uh the pictures in the document are probably from 1939, 1940. I'm a young child but I'm still a Czech citizen on my father's papers. My father was raised in that general neighborhood which is in...east of Hungary--in Ruthenia today. Today it's in Rumania, as a matter of fact; so it's moved again. But he was raised there; and his travels took him to many places, but maybe you'll want to come back to that. My mother is from another part of the Austro-Hungary empire, that part of Hungary which was really Yugoslav. She's from a city in southern Hungary which today is Yugoslavia. And just to indicate the confusion, it had three names - one in Serb, one in Hungarian, and one in German. And people wouldn't know how to refer to these communities--whether you called them Újvidék in Hungarian, or Neusatz in German, or Novi Sad in Serb. She was raised there, in a family of uh six children, three boys and three

girls, and my father met her in that city and again we may want to come to his story, at least parts of it, as you want to pursue that. But . .

Q:Why don't you tell it to us?

A:I'd be glad to. Well, uh, my father was educated in Vienna and other places and eventually took a position in the city of Novi Sad where my mother lived, met her and they married and from there they moved to Riga to another position my father had, and that's why I was born in Riga. From there he went to Hungary which was something he wanted to do all his life, but the pattern of migration at that time was by choice, well, semi-choice. He wanted to do this because he was trying to get to a certain particular position in his life, but he also was constrained from getting to Hungary until 1940, uh, 1936, because as a Czech citizen, we go back to the old Czech citizenship, he could get no, he could not receive working papers or whatever permission to work in Hungary, as a Czech citizen. In '36 he received it, so he went from part of Hungary, back to Hungary, after all these various detours, in Yugoslavia, in Latvia. If that's confusing, I can understand.

Q:What was his position? What was his work?

A:My father was a cantor. My father was a cantor in a synagogue and has been that all his life. And he had positions in major congregations in Riga and in Budapest and in Novi Sad and in Vienna. And later on in Israel and in New York and in Philadelphia. And in order to be able to move in his own field, he had certain positions that he wanted to reach. And a cantor in the city of Budapest, in the synagogue that held 3500 seats with a choir of 40 people, was a major position, and he wanted that position. But he didn't have permission to go there until

'36.

Q:Why not?

A:He was a Czech citizen. And the Czech citizens were not given Hungarian working papers. So the pattern of migration was not because he was either a Jew or because he, the war came. This was before that. There may have been some overtones of that, I don't know. But very legally he was not permitted to get papers until '36 at which point he did assume the position of being one of the chief cantors of the city of Budapest, which was a major Jewish community center in central Europe at that time.

Q:Are you aware of any changes in your family's life when Hitler came to power?

A:Well, "Hitler came to power" needs to be addressed in terms of when - whether when he came to power in Germany, or as his power began to reach out throughout Europe. And what time are you talking about?

Q:Whenever it affected you?

A:Sure. Hitler comes to power in Germany and the laws, the various laws that are passed, the uh... I think there's a term called "Numerus Clausus." These various enumerated clauses that were passed to restrict certain life began way back probably in 1933. And they came, as history indicates, it's not germane to my particular story - it's available in lots of papers - that most of what happened was very legal, very correct, and did everything according to the rules. Now, if you want recollections from me for example, I know that uh one day, this was in Hungary,

in Budapest, the capital of the country, in a very lovely apartment, a large apartment, on the fifth floor of the building where I had lived which I recall quite clearly. As a matter of fact, for the first time in forty some years I visited it last year. My wife and I went to Hungary and we went to the apartment. Didn't go in because I didn't want to bother the people and there was nobody home. So the building is now probably 80 or 90 years old - it's in reasonable shape. But in 1940 or so, 1938, it was a very lovely apartment. And I remember that one day, I can't tell you which year, but some place in that general period, in '39, '40, '41, a telephone installer came in and said that he must take the telephone away. And I remember asking why, whether I asked him or my parents I don't recall. He said Jews may not have telephones. Period. Another incident. Uh, we had a maid, a live-in-maid - there was a maid's quarters in the apartment, that was very usual in those days, in those circumstances, and uh, she was told she could no longer be with us. She wanted to take me with her to her village. My parents thought about it, chose not to do that. But maids could not be employed by Jews. So the maid left.

Q: Why would she have taken you to her village?

A: Well, she thought she would in some way help me. Or maybe save me, or maybe protect me, or maybe help me, or raise me in a sense, because there were overtones of problems. Uh, I recall rather clearly that as a child of 5 or 6 or so I wanted a bicycle. Not an unusual request, a bicycle for a child of 5 or 6. My parents were certainly in a position to afford a bicycle or five. But there was major concern. I didn't understand the concern at the time. I just understood I didn't have a bike. And I probably threw the normal 5-year-old-tantrums about it. Later on I kind of understood that one of the reasons was that in a city, you ride bicycles in a park, and in the city of Budapest, large, urbane, sophisticated as it was, if a child with a

yellow star on his chest rode a bike, somebody might have knocked him off the bike, taken the bike and left him on the curb, and nobody really would have said too much. And my parents thought it was just unsafe. Not unsafe in terms of the kinds of problems you might have because of traffic, but just unsafe. I know that when I went to school, the apartment we had was on a corner of a building - you could see down the street if you stood in the bedroom, there was a circular kind of a set of windows - and the street I lived on, my house was number at 13, my school was at number 44. You could see from the fifth floor apartment window at number 13 to number 44. You could almost see the school, which was down the street several blocks. And I didn't know this but I was told that my father, for example, often would both watch me walk to school and sometimes follow me walking to school because of some safety concerns that the kid might be knocked into traffic. Nobody would have necessarily said too much if a child age six or seven with a yellow star would be pushed into traffic. Accidentally or deliberately by somebody who was trying to make an incident. These are certainly things that in some way affected my life as a child, and uh, hindsight is always perfect. Part of what I find fascinating in my own case is that I have very good recollections. But the time that this took place I didn't have the emotional impact of what this meant. I learned that later. A six year old doesn't understand political realities, doesn't understand various kinds of anti- this or anti- that. Uh, to a 6 year old, in a rather peculiar way, wearing a yellow star makes him an adult.¹ All the adults do. "Well, if they do and I don't, I'm a child. If they do and I do, I'm an adult." There's a certain badge of honor. They didn't understand the negative implications of that. To me, to be like an adult, I too have my own yellow star. It was an important achievement, of sorts. That sounds silly. But we are talking about a 6-year old child.

¹ The yellow star was introduced in Hungary on March 29, 1944. Mr. Mandel was wearing the star when he was 8 years old.

Q:Do you remember when you got your yellow star?

A:The specific day, no. But it must have been some time in uh ... Well, Hungary was in a peculiar position. Hungary, being an ally of Germany, was not overrun. I am reasonably certain that the reason I'm alive today is because I was not under German rule in 1939. Now, the Hungarian Nazi Party, known as the Arrow Cross, was not what I would call benevolent. On the other hand... Shall we stop?

Q:We're going to have to stop. I'm sorry.

A:I didn't want to pay attention to the flicker; but I figured when it went out, might as well stop.

Q:Let's do this as quickly as we can.

A:Anything you want to say while we're off for a minute in terms of where we are?

Q:This is very interesting and important and exactly what we want to have on the tape.

A:Well, is this the way you want to have it? I have another variation, another canned speech, although some of it is. I mean, I've done this before.

Q:...breathing in my ear to tell you that she's terrific.

A:Well, I know that. Come on!

Q:Go.

A:I was commenting on the fact that one of the--if you want to call it an advantage, or one of the blessings in disguise--was that Hungary was not occupied by the Germans until fairly late in the war. Hungary was an ally. Again, historians know that the region of Hungary was uh, struck some kind of ally pact with Hitler and they were allies, so Hungarian troops on the Russian front and so forth. As a consequence, the German presence, the physical presence of the Germans, specifically the SS and the Gestapo, did not enter Hungary until very late in the war. Literally until 1944. Earlier, the regime was run by the Hungarian Nazi Party--the so-called "Arrow Cross," the Nylas. And their symbol was crossed arrows, as opposed to the swastika that the Germans had. And as a consequence, the kind of life that one had was probably different. I'm not sure it was any better; but life was certainly different than it would have been under German occupation.

Q:When you were six, you said that you weren't aware. Clearly, you weren't aware of these historical, political activities; but what about your friends, what about other six year-olds? Were you aware of danger to yourself from other kids?

A:Well, I have the recollection of recalling at the age of six that I was scared. Of kids. I lived in a fairly closed society, by choice. I mean, we lived in a certain neighborhood. You remember, you realize that the kind of transport that's available today, the kind of mobility that we have today--not because of any sense of available conveyances... I mean, again, Budapest is a major city with a subway, with trolley cars, with buses, with cars, with taxis. You could go anywhere anytime. But if you went anywhere that was more than an hour away, it was a trip.

Emotionally, it was not the kind of thing people did. People did not go to visit their friends. Certainly, children did not go to visit their friends. And Mom didn't drive you over for the afternoon and pick you up three hours later while she went shopping. It was not the norm. We owned no car. Few people did. It's not a question of where you were in the status of the community, but it was not the thing that people did. We used taxis, buses, trolley cars, subways--as everybody else did. As a consequence, the universe that one lives in is fairly limited. Interestingly, I mentioned earlier that I was back in Budapest last summer. And I kind of walked my neighborhood, all eight or nine blocks of it. It was that limited. It was my school, it was the park, it was the ice skating rink, it was the Danube banks where we used to take walks--which happened to be close to where I lived. It was the area of the synagogue, the area of the school. When we went to the zoo, or the circus, or to the amusement park, or to the other side of the Danube, those were excursions. Children did not do that by themselves. And in a sense, six or seven year-olds don't do it by themselves today, either. So the nature of life was that it was a fairly closed, kind of fairly limited society, for everybody. I was limited in my area. No ghetto. This is not a ghetto limitation, a legal limitation. I was limited in my area. I lived in the 7th District of Budapest, and I probably knew one quarter of the 7th District. And kids like I--Jews and non-Jews--probably living in the 3rd District, knew a quarter of their district. It was the nature of the world. I went to a parochial school, as everybody did. I mean, if you were Catholic, you went to a Catholic school. If you were Jewish, you went to a Jewish school. If you were something else--the term is "Reformed," meaning all Protestants--went to some Protestant schools. So I was with those children; and I recall having children in the building where I lived, around the corner from where I lived, who were my friends. I have no sense, Jews or non-Jews, and I have no sense of their being afraid, scared, or that they were impacted by the war anymore than I was. At least, that's not my recollection.

Q:Alright. That's when you were six. Let's proceed a little bit more chronologically. Did you live in Budapest for all of your childhood?

A:From Riga, if we back up, we moved to Budapest. I spent the summer, or a kind of a long summer, with my grandparents. I'm told that I had some kind of a reaction to...some allergic reaction. I developed some kind of hives at the age of one, and I was not inside Budapest. I was out in the fresh air of the suburbs for about six or eight months. But from that time until we actually were deported and left in 1945, I in fact lived in Budapest. The bulk of my life--I was eight when we left, so seven and a half years I spent in Budapest. From 1936, in the early...late summer, until the summer of 1944.

Q:Tell me about being deported. What led up to that?

A:Well, history tells it that at one time the Germans came into Hungary in early 1944. Eichmann, as the man in charge of the solution to the Jewish problem, was attempting to solve the problem. He was approached--and the story is very complex. But it's not my personal story. So I'm not going to detail all the issues about Eichmann and his negotiations with a man by the name of Joel Brand, who was sent to negotiate with the Allies, was arrested in Syria, was in jail in Egypt, and survived the war and died fairly recently. Or a man by the name of Kasztner--a lawyer, a Hungarian lawyer, who negotiated with uh Eichmann--who then immigrated to Israel after the war and was assassinated there by some people who thought...by a person who thought that he had done something that was inappropriate, or there was a collaborator.² Those particular stories are well documented elsewhere.

² Rezső Kasztner was a Labor Zionist activist from Cluj who became the guiding spirit of the

Specifically, there was an arrangement made based on the concept that Eichmann enunciated as a blood for merchandise, or blood for material, or blood for an exchange. The exchange proposal was that Eichmann wanted 10,000 trucks, western trucks, to be used against the eastern front, and for that he would release one million people and stop the extermination in the gas chambers. That didn't happen for many reasons, not the least of them being that the Allies would not give them the trucks and that they were not available, and the emissary was jailed in Syria [NB: Egypt], as I said. But there was a test group, essentially a group that was bartered, for serious money. The European Jewish community, the Hungarian Jewish community, and the rich Jewish community, they had money. And at that point, this is, we are talking about April/May of '44. Now, remember that the war ended in '45. The war was not going well for the Germans in '44. And I would not be surprised if they had made some decisions that said that whatever they do they will do to in someway improve their positions, whether it was personal or national I don't know. And an arrangement was made that some 1600 people would be assembled, would be placed on trains, and would be taken, I think... There were three choices that I recall--through Turkey, or through the Baltics, or through Spain--to Palestine. I think the final decision was to go through Spain. And the ruse was--and the Germans, you see, would do anything as long as it was legal and properly stamped, documented, indexed, filed and in a good chronology. It's amazing what kind of regimentation we were able to deal with. The 1600 plus people primarily professed to claim to be displaced persons captured in Central Europe, because of the war; but they really had Palestinian papers. Now, if you want to figure that one out, I mean, that's interesting. But the point remains, as long as you could provide Palestinian papers as citizens of Palestine under

Zionist movement's Relief and Rescue Committee of Budapest in 1943. Kasztner apparently believed negotiation was the only avenue for the rescue of Hungarian Jews, and sent Joel Brand to negotiate with Eichmann. When Brand was detained by the British, Kasztner and Brand's wife took over the negotiations with Eichmann.

British mandate, no matter where they had been born they were Palestinians. If you could provide those papers, the Germans would accept; because it is part of understanding that you don't challenge the documentation. "If you say you are a Palestinian, we'll accept it. And if we accept it, we'll give you an exit visa." This was part of the arrangement. It had to be proper. It had to be legal. It didn't have to be correct. Well, I was a Palestinian expatriate of some sort, and so was my mother. Not my father - he was not part of the group. These 1600 people that were composed of people from various parts of Hungary--and substantially from Budapest--were assembled in a school for the purpose of being deported. It should look as a deportation; but they would really be deported through Spain, placed on a ship, and sent to Palestine to be repatriated in Palestine, which is...which is their adopted country. My personal little group was my mother, myself, my uncle--who was my father's youngest brother--and another child. And I need to digress just for a moment as to how this was composed. My mother and I got fairly reasonable. We were living in Budapest, and we were part of the group. We received at that point four spaces in this group, for my mother, myself, my uncle and a cousin...a first cousin of mine who lived in Yugoslavia.

Q:How did you receive these spaces?

A:The allocations were made by decisions of the ruling Jewish community, council, party, Zionist underground, overground, leftist/rightist organizations who somehow got together and had to make decisions about who can, who cannot, who was healthy, who was not. I would not really today wish to be in their place. But in many ways decisions had to be made as to who in fact can perhaps afford it, who's free to do it, who's free to travel, who's maybe absence would not in some way be taken inappropriate by the Germans, some security issues, they would not be absconding with funds. The computers of today probably could not come up

with enough variables to determine by what way these 1600 people were chosen, selected, permitted may be a better way of saying it. But we had four spaces. My mother, myself, my uncle and a cousin. The cousin was the son of one of my father's brothers. The child came to stay with us as this group was being organized, because his parents thought that he might, in some way, have a better chance with us through this group than being in the city where he was. The child did not speak Hungarian. The superintendent of the building was very interested in making points, bounty points, with the local administration; and he kept complaining about the fact that there's a child staying with us who does not speak Hungarian. Obviously, he's not Hungarian. Obviously, he doesn't belong there. We were concerned that the child would be turned in to the police. We sent the child back. I don't mean I, but we--my parents--sent the child back to his parents awaiting the formation of the group. The child was deported to Auschwitz. We never saw him again. Three days before the group was about to leave, a woman came to the house, a woman who was a very distant cousin on my mother's side through her husband. I mean, really not a blood relation. With her four year-old son. And she said that "I understand that you have a space available, because the other child is no longer available." We had been waiting for several weeks, perhaps a couple of months for them to form, to be given marching orders. "Take the child. We'll take the risk." My mother took the child. I had a brother for several years. Uh, so this was the group of four.

Q:What about your father?

A:I need to make tangential comments. First of all, that the four year-old at the time--and I'll give you names. It's important. His name is...his name at that time was Ivan Fleishman (ph). His name is Joash (ph). He lives in Israel. Uh, both his mother and father survived the war. All of them reunited in Israel. His father has since died. Not of war causes, uh age causes. His

mother is still alive, and she is still my quasi-aunt; and I saw her last summer when I was in Israel. She is married, has several children, and is well. It's an amazing kind of a story of how he came into this, and how he probably was saved by being in this group with my mother, and my mother's willingness to accept it. The uncle who was with us was a student in the University of Budapest, was about to be married to a woman from another city--the city of Ungvár, which is now no longer Hungary. It's now in Czechoslovakia, it's called Uzhgorod.³ My aunt-to-be went back to her city to make preparation for the wedding. I think they'd gotten their...their non-religious, their...whatever, their civil license, in Budapest. So she went back to arrange, and she was deported. She went to Auschwitz. The uncle was with us, and I'll tell you where he was later. They reunited in Israel after the war. There were...they had twin children. Unfortunately, the uncle died of a heart attack at the age of 35 in 1948, 1949. But they made it. Where was my father? The Hungarian Jews...well, Jews were not conscripted into the Army. But, again, because we were not overrun, what Hungarian Jews did, they were conscripted into labor battalions. And they were ordered out to various kinds of duty, whether it was digging ditches, paving roads, do working in mines, and what not. Labor. I mean, physical kind of labor. Uh, if trenches had to be dug between the Germans and the Russians, the labor battalions dug the trenches between them. They were shot from both sides. My father was in a labor battalion, no longer in Budapest; and if he had in some way escaped that labor battalion to join us, he would have been clear, obvious. He would have been traced, he would have been shot. And I don't know what all the consequences would have been. So he was not part of this group. My mother and my father were separated at that time, and we went one way and he went another way. I already told you earlier he survived the war. So at least we know what the final story is.

³ **Slovak:** U_horod. City located in what is now the Transcarpathian Oblast of the Ukrainian SSR. This area, then known as Carpathian Ruthenia, was part of the Czechoslovak Republic between 1918 and 1939.

Q:Now, it seems that we have made a little jump. Let's try to fill in what we're missing. You were what? About seven, at the time of the deportation?

A:Um-hum.

Q:When did your father leave, and how was this explained to you? It seems that you must have gradually become aware that things are not very good.

A:Well, I knew that things were not very good. But I did not... What I was saying to you before is that I understood what went on, in a sense of recalling and having kind of cognitive understanding of what it is. It's the emotional impact, the scarring that wasn't there. My father was in one of the labor camps in 1939. His being gone for two weeks, a month, three days, was not at all unusual. I mean, I didn't understand exactly why. But other fathers went, so why shouldn't he go? There was nothing unusual about this. It was like being in the reserves, if you will; or having, in this...in this community we talk about government employees having TDY's--fairly long assignments in other cities or other countries for two weeks, three weeks. Even, you know, being in the Navy or something. There was nothing about it, it was so routinized. Interestingly, I mentioned that my uncle who was with us was my father's youngest brother, had been a university student. When he was called to labor camp for the first time--I remember as clearly as I'm sitting here today--I threw a wild fit. My grandmother, who lived with us at the time, fainted; because that was a first-time unique experience, that my Uncle David. I mean, his friends came; and they had to report at some, whatever, induction station. And they went. And I was convinced I'll never see him again, and I was convinced that something's going to happen. That was unusual. That disturbed me.

My father's coming and going didn't, because from the age of three--my age of three--he was gone. And then he was home. And then he was gone. And then he was home. And I had no predictable kind of understanding as to when he would be or wouldn't be home. Uh, you know, the world did not at that point have _____-based _____, didn't have to take me to the game every Wednesday afternoon. And I was perfectly used to the fact that he would be home uh at times and at other times would not. When my uncle was taken, that was a particularly...that was particularly traumatic to me. Because it was the first time. So, there was nothing unusual about my father not being there. Unusual in that sense. I don't know if I filled that gap, but let me go on with the point of what happens at this deportation. Finally, the orders came that we would meet in a given school. And uh ...for the purpose of kind of forming the group; and we were in the school for several days. I don't know exactly how many. This is in June of 1944. **[PHRASES MISSING--Re: waiting in a large gymnasium]** . . . trains to arrive. We were put on trains; and these were the typical trains that you see in movies today. These were cattle cars with some straw.

Q:Can you describe them?

A:Well, cattle cars are just plain freight cars with big doors with wooden floors. They were reasonably clean. They had some straw on the floor. They were not full of... Some had some residue of lime, or some other kind of chemical that had been transported. But they were not full of cattle droppings, and uh in that sense they were O.K. The reason they used these because these were more available than uh - they could not haul coal. They could not haul passengers, well, passengers. We were not passengers, we were freight. And we were put into these cars, uh, I am told later there were...may have been as many as 80 people in a car, which made it very uncomfortable. But survivable. We were not there that long. The doors

were closed. I don't know if they were sealed. They were certainly locked. You could not open them from the inside. But I'm not sure they were sealed with some kind of sealant material that you see sometimes. That happened in transports to Auschwitz. And we started by train uh... I remember, and I've read in some of these pieces of information, that the train really circled the city for a day and the next morning we were back where we started from. I understand that they really didn't know exactly what to do with us. I also understand that the notion was being trained to neutral Spain. Israel was never contemplated by them. But the train did begin to go north. And the adults in the group, I mean, they had some sense of what was going on. I mean, everything was not a secret. And if you went, depending on what direction you went, you had an idea of where you were going. And the major fear was the awful fear of Auschwitz. Auschwitz was known in 1944. I mean, it was known everywhere, including this country.

Q:Did you know what that meant?

A:I, personally?

Q:Yes.

A:I don't think so. I don't think so. But the train went on a different route. It went up the Rhine Valley; and eventually wound up, we were told, for a rest stop, for kind of a showers and some rest and relaxation, and whatever--an R&R stop. We were there a couple of days, in uh...south of the city of Hamburg--which is familiar as the city of Hannover, which is a major railhead. And perhaps 20 kilometers south of Hannover, was a...this new camp called Bergen-Belsen. Bergen-Belsen is more known now than it was then. We were marched to

that camp. Reasonably civilized treatment. Uh, people who were older, children, were taken by truck. I remember, I was with my mother. I was the man of the family. Here was my mother. My uncle was involved with some of the leadership of the group. My mother and the eight year old, and this youngster who was four. So I lugged the uh whatever suitcases we had, and I marched with my mother. And I recall that. I suppose I must have had some subconscious understanding of my role in the family as being the only male with my father away. And I said before that my father being away was not unusual. But I'm not suggesting that it had no impact at all. It was just something that was dis...not disturbing. But I knew that he wasn't there; and I was the man of the family, of sorts.

Q:But leaving your home was unusual, and what did it seem to you was happening?

A:This was a deportation. I mean, it's a contradiction in terms. It was a deportation by choice. We were willing to take our risk, our chance, with this group. Even though on the German hand...in German hands, and even though we weren't too sure that we could trust those decisions, we were willing to essentially accept this deportation as opposed to staying where we were and taking our chances there. But people survived who stayed in Budapest as well. So...don't know exactly how many. So this was a deportation by choice. Now, remember when we left the apartment... I mean, usually if we went somewhere, my mother and father, or my mother or whatever, with a suitcase or two, went to my grandparents or something, we would take a cab. No. Here we had a horse and a wagon; and I don't mean a hansom cab. Kind of a horse-drawn wagon, which was kind of a freight wagon--which was still used in Europe at the time. And we sat on that with our baggage; and I remember my mother saying to me something to the effect is, "Don't look at this as a happy adventure. I mean, we are being deported." As though she was saying, you're being deported - on the other hand, it's a

deportation with an asterisk. That's a deportation maybe with some possibilities, or maybe it won't be as bad as traditional deportations could be. We knew my grandparents, uncles and aunts had been deported to Auschwitz from surrounding communities. We didn't know their fate, but we knew they were deported not by choice. We were being deported by choice because we joined the group by...with some choice. So there's...there's an interesting kind of juxtaposition of being under SS guard by choice. But that's, in a sense, what this was. 'Cause you didn't have to join the group. The SS certainly didn't determine who went into the group.

Q:Can you remember what the conditions were that made it preferable to take this risky step?

A:Well, we thought we were going to be taken to some port of debarkation and sent to Palestine. That seemed like a much better choice than being bombed, or being deported to concentration camps. And we didn't precisely know perhaps exactly what happened in those camps. But we just had the assumption that since nobody has yet come back, it can't be too terribly nice.

Q:Did you feel that you mother was afraid?

A:Afraid in what way? Help me out.

Q:I'm trying to imagine what it would be like to leave my home, as a very young child, and what my mother would be feeling or doing, what the atmosphere would be.

A:My mother's feelings, as I found out later, in a sense had to do with the fact that she was not just leaving her house. That, they had done. Remember, they were married in one community, I

was born in another community, we were now living in a third community in the space of six or seven years. And by choice. So that was not unusual. But I think separation from my father was a major point. I mean, she at that point had to contemplate that maybe she'll never see him again. Had she stayed, he would have at least, I expect, come home--as he had come home from labor camps previously. As it turned out, he never came home from labor camps subsequent to that time; because by that time, although he was still in Hungary when we were deported, within several weeks he was in the Ukraine. And was there for some time. Eventually he came back right after we left. But this business of being home three days and gone for a week, or being away for three weeks and home for two days, no longer would have played. And no one could have known that. But if my mother thought about replicating or maintaining what was the status quo, the assumption would have been he would have come home as he had done before. She had to make a decision and to agree with the decision--his decision--in their communication; my uncle's insistence that if one can in some way be given a better chance, take the better chance. Now her feelings. I go back to being, what...eight years old. And there was a certain sense of excitement. But dulled excitement. It's difficult to convey what it feels like when you are talking about feelings at the age of eight in retrospect. The understanding of what a Holocaust is about was totally foreign to me at the time. I'm not sure an eight year-old can comprehend what it is that people killed, what gas chambers are like, and whether they exist. Slowly I began to understand some of it, and I'll tell you about that in a moment. The group that we were with eventually does leave, and we were headed north. And we wind up in Bergen-Belsen.

Q:Leaves on a train?

A:Yeah, the train. The gathering point in Budapest, we leave on a train. We're on a train for several

days. And the train is going in a direction that is not Auschwitz. And we wind up in a place that was unfamiliar to us, but we found that it was called Bergen-Belsen.

Q: Was there food on the train?

A: Yes, but I don't know from where. I know that when we left, we were told that we could pack certain basic essential belongings, you know. Maybe a backpack and a suitcase, or something like that. We were not... I mean, we certainly didn't take furniture and cutlery with you. The adults, you know, there's other people, and I was not one of them, must have in some way had a notion that they were going to be on the road for some time and needed to pack. What was packed I don't know. Obviously they packed something, but I do know this. My mother packed three things. This is very unusual to do this. She had with her a liter bottle of honey, a liter bottle of fat, like chicken fat, and a, I don't know, a five or six pound, several kilo, piece of some kind of bacon-like substance. Now, bacon in my house didn't happen. A strictly kosher home with my father's background and my mother's background. But somehow, by some dispensation, or by some foresight, they thought that's new, that nutritious, let's take it. We can always not use it. I don't know how they justified it. But there's a sense of survival that says you take what you need. And we ate, I'm sure we ate. We had no malnutrition problems in the four or five days. Nobody died. I recall, for example, we stopped two or three days out. As I remember it was a cool pleasant evening, the doors of the cars were open and we kind of camped on the ground. There were little flap-top tents, but we slept outside on blankets and things. It was perfectly O.K. And there was some kind of cooking going on. But you ask me where the food came from, I don't know. Maybe it was provided by the folks who ran the train. You know, the German, maybe there was a, a, military mess backed up the truck and gave us certain food. Sixteen hundred people you

know require, you know, you can't pack it in a doggie bag. But there was food. I can't tell you from where. That's not part of my recollection. We get to Bergen-Belsen. I see a march (ph) in Bergen-Belsen which begin to notice is there's barbed wire, there's fences, there's very big search lights, there's towers and there's guns. And that gives you the nature or the understanding that wait a minute, this is not, you know, Camp Summit. And you talk and you understand and you're given rules and you're given restrictions and you're told not to go near the barbed wire and you're told not to do this, and maybe not to shout too much or maybe not to do this and not the other thing. A small recollection, not particularly _____, but it happened while I am in camp. We get to camp sometime in June, the summer is there and winter sets in. The German winters are not particularly pleasant, uh you know, rain and snow and wet. Before we left, again, think about the kind of perception or some kind of clairvoyance that sometimes people have. Traditionally the people bought shoes at the store. If we bought shoes, we had the shoes made. We didn't buy them. You know, Thom McAnn wasn't available and neither was Florsheim. My mother had a pair of boots made for me. Not high boots, kind of ankle boots, because the assumption was if we're going to be traveling away under circumstances unknown, maybe those kind of high-top kind of boots would be better than softer city shoes. The way shoes were made is that you glued the sole in some way, and then you put holes in, and then you put wooden dowels in it, and then you kind of _____ at the bottom with these wooden dowels. You didn't sew them. I don't know about shoe making but that's the way hand-crafted shoes were made. They were not designed to go through muck and mire day after day. But at camp as the rainy season began, began, and we were told every four, every day at four o'clock there would be a roll call, a census taken. We had to be out. We had to be out at four. The census takers could have counted, the roll could have been taken any time after four - five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, whatever. We had to be out there. If it was muddy, it was muddy. If it was mucky, it was mucky. Well, the wooden

dowels began to fall out of the shoes. My uncle, Uncle David, made some arrangements with some other people in our group to fix the shoes. Now think about, it is a fascinating notion to know that some people brought cobbler tools with them. Somebody was a cobbler. Somebody fixed shoes. So you traded, uh for cigarettes, which was a legal barter, uh rate of exchange, for shoe repair. My shoes were repaired. The dowels were replaced. And then my uncle says to me, son, you can't run around anymore. Well, I understood what he was saying. He was a young man at the time, he was in his early thirties, his late twenties. But he says to his nephew, you can't run around. What will an eight year old do when he can't even run around? I mean the only recreation is kind of run around and play tag and chase other kids. But if you run around your shoes fall apart. If your shoes fall apart, your feet get wet. Your feet get wet, you get pneumonia. You get pneumonia, you're taken to a German hospital. You go to German hospital, you die. So if you don't want to die, don't run. That's a difficult concept (ph) for an eight year old to understand. I did get pneumonia, from some other source, and I spent some time in bed, but in bed, you know, in the bunks, but that's a recollection.

Q:How much do you recollect or remember about the camp.?

A:I was, let me tell some recollections about the camp. I just said to you that somebody set up a shoe-making shop. Well, so there were several doctors with us. Because when I had pneumonia, I remember the doctor--his name was Feldman--he was from the city of Debrecen. I had some recollections of him. I was reminded of him recently in a different connection. But who treated pneumonia as pneumonia could be treated at the time with mustard packs and other kinds of things, which were the regimen of the day. But somebody... So the doctor is a doctor, the cobbler was the cobbler. I'm sure, although I don't

recall specifically, somebody did something about repair of clothes, somebody was a tailor. There was a small school. And even more fascinating to me is the fact that within days I think, people were into business. They set out to do business in the labor camp. You asked me how, where the food came from and I said people must have brought some. And I remember, for example, I remember very clearly, that while my father was in labor camp, before we were deported, we would ship him tins of pre-cooked food. Cause it was much more nourishing than what he was receiving up there. Now again I don't know too much about how you prepare canned food, but I do know that what you have to do is somehow to vacuum seal it. So tins had the tops cut off, you took it to a factory that made tins, aluminum cans, and they would put a new top and kind of vacuum it and seal it in some way. And that could be shipped and it wouldn't go bad. We had some of those with us, obviously. So did others. From the notion of CARE packages to my father, we had some with us. We got to Bergen-Belsen in the summertime. The sun was out. The weather was nice. And I recall clearly people with chairs and benches or card tables of some sort, out in the yards, with hand-tooled jewelry-type things made of tin cans. As the tin cans were used, sparingly and lovingly and gently, they did not throw them away. They made certain kinds of artifacts out of them. What I'm saying to you is that the fascinating point comes from the fact that what happened immediately is that peoples' need to survive makes them want to create some sense of normalcy. I don't know whether the people that did this craft were in that business before they left, much as I don't know whether the shoe-maker was in fact a shoe-maker or an attorney. I don't know what he was. But somehow the need to survive, the need to stabilize, the need to somehow put down a normal set of existence within barbed wire, within turrets with machine guns, within hot lights, within . . . the people who told you be out at four in the morning and they may have shown up at ten in the morning. I mean that was not normal. But within this abnormal normalcy, there was an attempt to have normalcy. The school ran. They

decided to teach Hebrew and French. I thought (ph) it would have been German. What occurs if later we're in Germany, and after the war we might be repatriated, liberated to France, which was a neighboring country, or to Palestine, which is where we're headed in the first place. But we didn't have to teach Hungarian kids Hungarian. People knew Hungarian. And there would have been nobody there who could teach them Turkish, you know, which would have been. . or Spanish because there may be no Spanish-speakers. But French was not unusual. My mother didn't teach French. My mother was a teacher. She was a teacher, an elementary school teacher, before she was married. She knew some French because in their training, typically in Europe people spoke three or four languages. So teach them French. Well, think about the inanity in a sense, or the, the peculiarity of people. There's a French school in labor camp, in concentration camp. Now we didn't expect to be there for any length of time. And what I'm describing to you about this normalcy really happened several days after we got there obviously because we thought we were going to be there for few days. One of the visual kinds of recollections that I have is that as we march into camp, there's a large sign--and you've seen this sign in documentaries--above the camp, is "Arbeit Macht Frei"--"Work Makes You Free." If you work, it's OK. Our group, and as _____ would say of the group, was not turned out to work. Maybe we were special group. We came in as a transient group. We came in as a special group. The Red Cross...monitored us. Eichmann had a personal stake in this one, we understand. We, I don't mean we. I [was] probably too young to work, typically as an eight year old; but they did not, they were not turned out to work every morning, which was the major reason that the starvation rate was limited. We did not lose any human being in camp. Nobody died. Nobody died. And I think that's correct. And if there were deaths, there may have been one. I don't recall the circumstance. I now recall vaguely, and I cannot recall specifically, a young woman who did die. And I don't know exactly what happened. I think she may have had... I don't recall. But if so, I mean, the

mortality in the camp was well below what it should have been in a concentration camp in a period of seven or eight months. Because, you see, we didn't leave the camp in three or four days. They decided they have us in camp, there's a way to hold us in hostage. Three hundred and some members of the six hundred plus...sixteen hundred plus group were, in fact, taken out of the camp within weeks and taken to Switzerland. I was not among that group. The balance of the group--another, whatever...thirteen hundred or so--were taken to Switzerland, by the Germans, based on additional _____ bribery. What else can you call it? More money was raised, more money exchanged hands, more money was deposited. Uh without talking about just, you know, kind of a... Without being nasty about what I'm not really interested in talking about, I would imagine that the...the post-war German wealth of Argentina and Brazil came from, partially from, those monies. But we were taken by German train; again the Germans were uh meticulous in what they did. When they put us on the train, the train ran. It may have run over bombed out bridges, which I remember having a great fright about going over this bridge is over the Rhine or whatever else, which were heavily bombed. We saw bombers every day. Hannover, which is a near-by community, was a major railhead. And the Allies were bombing the _____ out of that place. We saw Russian and American airplanes all the time. It's interesting that when we read the history of the era today, we know that there was some discussion about bombing the rail lines to the concentration camps. And then somebody said they couldn't do that because they couldn't find it. There were aerial pictures of the place, taken pictures of the rail lines. And conversely, I mean, I among others saw the planes--American planes with American markings, and Russian planes with Russian markings, bombers--flying in formation towards Hannover and towards Hamburg, which was also a severely bombed. So the planes were there, but the bombs didn't fall. Well, I'm glad they didn't fall on us in one sense. On the other hand, the notion that they couldn't bomb the rail lines leaves you... I mean, from

personal experience, I...I challenge that statement. In any case, they took us, by train, to the German-Swiss border. And the German trains cannot run in Switzerland. But the Swiss trains can't run in Germany, either. They are a different gauge, as I understand it. I'm no train...you know, I'm no authority on trains. As I understand, the Swiss did this in order to make sure nobody can invade them by rail. So the German train came up on one side of the...of the...of the platform, and we came out of these... These were passenger trains. These were not transport cars for cattle anymore. Passenger trains--not Amtrak, but passenger trains. Seats. We came out of these rather... And they were all...black-out had to be observed. And some of the windows were smashed, you know, without particularly...they were not pullman cars. But we came out of one side; and crossed the platform into these warm, lit, beautiful, typically Swiss-clean Swiss trains to be taken to the city of Saint Gallen,⁴ to a high school gymnasium, to a...a gathering point to be deloused. The first recollection I have of Switzerland is that we were all deloused. I don't know if everybody had...was in fact infested with lice; but that was the first thing that had to be. Because the Swiss said, "We have rules."

Q:How did they de-louse you?

A:They made us take baths, and de-loused us with sprays. But we were first... Before we entered into the country, you know, we were not permitted to kind of mingle with the world until we were properly handled. You know, we had to be decontaminated. You know, the Swiss are even perhaps more meticulous in their own ways than Germans are. Uh, from that point, uh we were then...then the story continues in terms of what we did, about...about uh what we did. But at least we were out of the camp. And this was in 194-...I say, January of '45, maybe

⁴ **Ger:** Sankt Gallen, or **Fr:** Saint Gall.

February. But it may have been late December [1944]. I don't know exactly the date.

Q: This is a good point for us to change tapes. Just have a drink of water, and we'll go ahead and change the tape.

A: Can I breathe now?

Q: You can breathe

TAPE #2

. . . Now one of the reasons she was able to survive and to be in fairly good health is she got up every morning and she, informationally it's interesting, so ask me some _____, I'll make a couple of additional comments about things.

TECHNICAL CONVERSATION

Q:Can we roll?

A:O.K., just give me a cue.

Q:I would like to begin. OK. Good. Alright, good. Now we are rolling. So let's go back to Bergen-Belsen, and I'd like you to describe if there's any interaction, what were the officials like? How did they treat you? How did they seem to treat others?

A:Interaction with other inmates of the camp did not exist. I mean, in a sense--I don't know if I could ever prove this--but if you approached the fence too close, I'm not certain that... I would expect the orders were to shoot, from the turrets that were guarding. I don't know. Nobody ever was shot, because people knew. But there was no contact. The other reason there was no contact is my recollection is that the group right next to us, with whom you could have shouted across the fence, was a group from Poland; and there was no common language of communication. Hungarians may have spoken French and German, but probably not Polish--at least not most of them. I certainly didn't. So typically what kids would have done is talk to

each other. If there had been kids there, I couldn't. But I don't have any recollection of any kids around. Our particular quadrant in the camp, our section, in the back there were woods, if you faced the entrance. On the left were this Polish group. On the right, I think was vacant. And the front was right off the main road. So really, we were not surrounded by people. Our contact with the outside world--and I don't know what contact there may have been by adults, who had the communication ability by some communication with the German command. Although I think it was quite limited; because nobody knew where, you know, what was going on, precisely where we were. Except, they had a sense. I mean, people had traveled around Europe knew that you go from Budapest in a certain direction for three and a half days, you're going to wind up in a certain area north of the Black Forest. I mean, that's easy enough. Remember, Bergen-Belsen did not exist. It's near a small village of Arendenheim (ph), or something like that. I mean, there's no such place before. Auschwitz was a tiny little Polish village that nobody ever paid attention to, until it became Auschwitz. Nobody would know where O_wi_cim--or something of that nature in Polish--where that community is. The camp itself. So contact with others in camp was really nil. With the wardens, with the jailers, there was a different contact. I remember leaving camp several times while we were there to go to the showers. Now, we talk about showers; we have to remember what showers represented. I certainly didn't know. But I wonder how many adults knew that when you enter showers, one of two things can happen. Water or gas. Because the major way of extermination was the Zyklon [B] gas that came out of shower pods. Shower heads. Again, in our case, that was not the situation. We were given certain sanitary privileges, because the only place you had hot water was in the showers. I mean, not inside the compound. It's cold, and they didn't want to bury the pipes deep enough so they wouldn't freeze. Cold water we had, I think, with some arrangement. No hot water. So uh we went to the showers at various intervals. I don't recall exactly when, but any number of times. That's

the only time that we left the camp. The only time others left the camp was to go to the hospital. And I'm sure some people did who were taken into the base hospital or to the camp hospital, and they came back. And the other contact was when people went out to bring in the food. Our people, as it happens, were kind of katty-corner, maybe a hundred yards from one of the camp kitchens. And the food was brought in in these large like 50-gallon vats. Because everything that we got was some kind of liquid. Some bread and some kind of soup-like thing and some kind of coffee-like thing. My only recollections of food that were brought into the camp were a type of soup, with whatever floated in it, a type of coffee, a type of, and bread. Water was, you know, water was available. And people were let out under guard to go across the street, uh, people from our camp, and to...I don't know, a dozen people, whatever. Whatever it took to carry these vats, and to bring to the camp and put in certain place; and people would line up, and this would be served by our people. Under the supervision of the German soldiers. Beyond that, the only contact was with the German troopers who would come to inspect, as I said, every day. Initially, we were told to line up at four o'clock in the morning, regardless of weather and regardless of what time they came. I remember there were, I remember, two...whatever their rank was, I don't what. Two folks who were in charge of the detail that would come. And I remember both of these in the winter; because I guess earlier I just, it didn't matter. We would be out there, and by this time the shoes that I described before that had been repaired, had not yet been repaired, maybe hadn't fallen apart yet. And here comes, through the camp gate, this small _____ line of several soldiers and several officer types with their black shiny boots up to their knees without a fleck on them. I think somebody was running behind them and cleaning the boots as they walked in the mud. And one was a great big, tall, unpleasant-looking fellow, and he was the one who said four o'clock every morning, and when they asked him, well, couldn't you give us an idea as when you might be by, based on your sequence, we would be out a

half-hour before. He says, four o'clock every morning. I'm boss and you're nothing. He didn't realize he was boss over nothing. He was then replaced. Not because of our concern. He was rotated on a different job. And next comes a short guy. I just remember he was a short guy. Also shiny boots, and he met with whatever the camp, our group leadership was, and they made an agreement that said, look, I will be out every morning, let's say at eight o'clock, or whatever the time was. I don't care when you gather, but when I come to that gate, you folks be out there. You can be there a minute before, two days before, but when I get there, you be there. We thought that was a major human, or humane kind of an act. He did say that if every he comes and we're not ready - four o'clock in the morning. It worked. I don't know how long. I mean those kinds of, the sense of what a week was or a month was is difficult for me to reflect on. And one day as he was walking by, he saw a young woman standing and her feet were literally out of her shoes because they'd disintegrated. I mean the kind of decent city shoes were not made for the mud of the country. And after several weeks, they just wouldn't last very long. And he took a notice of it. Uh, the next day or the day after or whatever, as he came by, his assistant had a pair of shoes for the woman. Unfortunately, they were about eight sizes too small. I mean, I don't know eight sizes, but you know feet tend to swell when they're in, or maybe they had a little frostbite or whatnot, and they were too small. I think they made some arrangement and the shoes were enlarged, because we had a cobbler, but there's a certain sense of humanity even under those circumstances. And a sense of comedy as well. But order. As he came by to check, as he came by to check the people, standing outside, those who were unable to come outside, that were sick and what not, were permitted to stay in the barracks. And some other officer, sergeant-type, would walk down the barrack doors and check those. Well, some of these camp guards really didn't come from the elite of the German Air Force. They were locals in sense. In uniform. And we dubbed one of them "Popeye," because he smoked a pipe and he had kind of a jut jaw, and was

Popeye. Popeye sometimes would skip walking through the barracks. When he discovered there was somebody in the barracks who spoke German, all he would do is shout inside, "Alles in ordnung?" And if the response was, "Alles in ordnung," he'd go on. As long as order was maintained, he was happy. And, they, a piece of comic relief if you will. I know this on the inside because when I had pneumonia, I was in the barracks in the bunks, and I heard this. And one of the people whose name I don't remember, she was a grandmother-type but of course to an eight-year old, anybody over 20 is a grandmother. She was the one who was in charge of the inside. Uh, the barracks were elongated, long things sectioned. So our section may have had, I don't know - 40, 50, 60 people, a hundred people. And she was in charge of getting the census for the inside people in that particular barrack. Uh, I stayed in the barrack with my mother and other mothers and their children. There were no men in that barracks, but we were, we had free access to the men in the group. My recollection, interestingly, is that the group was overwhelmingly female and children. Out of 1600, but I don't really know. I know there were husbands and wives and other kinds of things there, but they were separate latrines. I went to the men's latrine - I was a big boy. So some recollections about the camp and life and some elements of very peculiar humor and some elements of humanity. But this was all within the confines of lights, barbed wire, showers, food that is uh indescribable, and live machine guns and turrets that surrounded your place, and I didn't know at what point they would have started shooting.

Q:When you say the food was indescribable, uh I'm sure you mean it was delicious.

A:I was, I would respond if I could in some humorous way of saying delicious for I mean somebody would like it, but I can't think of anybody. The food was, talk about the ability of the human to invent and to in some way overcome certain adversity. My recollection was as I said we

had a certain kind of bread, which was alright, and some kind of a coffee and some kind of a soup, stew, something. It was always in big vats, it was always some kind of liquid that could be doled out with a ladle, and it was also always something swimming in it. Uh, how thin or how thick it was we never knew. We didn't know if horse meat or not, but it didn't matter. The invention of the Hungarian cook, Hungarians are known as good cooks I'm told, I recall. And the invention of people's need to, that is generally that people need to survive. Tremendous will. I guess the soup would be, people would drink the soup. It was warm. It was warmer than the cold water. And that was OK. Now I don't know what everybody did, everybody had their own inventions. Mother would fish the potatoes, if there were any in the soup, out of the soup. OK. And maybe some of the carrots, and make a kind of potato salad kind of thing which she would combine with a little bit of the chicken fat in the bottles that were packed months before. OK. There may have been some salt and pepper that we may have brought. That's easy to carry. And the bread, which was fine bread. I mean, European peasants don't know how to make bad bread. The problem with the bread was not very much of it. So people became experts at slicing bread, so paper-thin that you could probably read through it. So you had bread which was this thin, packed with this much of this potato salad laced with a little bit of chicken fat which had some taste to it, and that was a much better piece of food than whatever was floating in the vat. But every morsel of it was used. I personally have never had problems with being over-weight, but I have some pictures at home, directly after camp, and everyone one of my ribs are showing. I mean, I must have been as close to being, and I was not emaciated, I suppose. We ate. We were healthy. But I am certain that if we had had the kind of nourishment that we had and had been made to go to work everyday, people would have begun to drop like flies. So this was the food in camp. Now, we also had some care packages through the Red Cross. I don't know whether once or twice while we were there, I don't recall. And some people brought certain things with them,

and I'm sure people bartered back and forth with tins and what not. And I don't recall that bacon or salt pork or whatever it was that was taken was ever used. I just don't remember. But I knew, I do know that the bottle of honey and the bottle of fat lasted the length of camp. And I'm willing to bet if we had been in camp five years, it would have lasted the length of camp. Don't ask me how.

Q: You had a smart mother.

A: Yes. Yes. A strong lady. A strong lady.

Q: Were you aware of feeling that it was a bad time, a difficult time, a challenging time, or how did you think about that period of time?

A: It was a restricting time. To the eight-year old, it mostly, the thing that bothered me is the fact that first of all I knew there was danger. I mean, I was told in so many ways that the march to the showers had some potential problems. And I was not either so naive nor so young that I didn't realize that uniforms and helmets and machine guns and search lights did not represent, you know, kindergarten attendance. It represented some sense of danger. I mean, I mean, eight-year olds know what guns are to the point that they realize that guns are made to shoot people, and when you get shot, you die. So the danger was there, and clearly, I don't want to make any mistake about it, the turrets were there, the lights were there, the guns were there, and the barbed wire was there. What I don't know, I don't remember, I don't think so, I don't think the wires were electrified. And if they were, they may have been at a very low voltage, maybe give you a bit of shock to let you know, hey, you don't touch. But maybe that wasn't even the case. So nobody would have gotten electrocuted necessarily from

touching the wires, but you don't have to be electrocuted when there are machine guns and turrets at every corner of your compound. So a sense of danger was there, clearly. And a sense of restriction. An eight-year old is told, don't run. Well, what else can you do when you have nothing else. You don't really go to school, you really don't have a bicycle, you really can't go to the park. That what you do is you kind of play tag, and if you can't do that, you're restricted. And those restrictions are difficult.

Q:Is there anything else about the camp that you think you should say before we go on to Switzerland?

A:I would suspect that there might be many other things which I might recall tomorrow, but for the moment I don't.

Q:Were you aware that other people had a very hard time there?

A:In our group, or in other groups?

Q:No, in the other groups.

A:Well, sure. Uh, every day we would see people marching. We were out there standing at four o'clock in the morning waiting for the uh, roll to be called. We saw people marching past our camp and then in the evening, while we were not out being counted, we saw people marching back. And they didn't look too happy. Although they were marching with, very easily with, in that particular community in that particular area, with what looked like farming implements. They may have been working in fields, or digging ditches or storm

drains or things like that. But they did not seem very happy. They did not seem very pleased. And nobody was, you know, marching to the band, singing a song, going out, you know, to be in the country.

Q:Did they look healthy?

A:No. They looked... It's important, No. To me, it's important; and my recollection is that these people did not look like the Allies saw the Auschwitz inmates and Bergen-Belsen inmates six months later--by which [time] they had not been fed for months, literally, and they were working every day and they were, you know, the...the skeletons. They did not look like skeletons. But when people are malnourished to some degree--enough to stay alive, but not to be well--they look sallow, they looked deep-set eyes. I also have [the] recollection that an awful lot of people had their heads shaved. Now, maybe they did that for cleanliness purposes, for de-lousing purposes. It's easier to keep yourself clean when you don't have a lot of hair. Uh, and they were in uniforms of some sort, some kind of work uniform, like prison uniform kind of things. Not stripes, necessarily. And they did not look like happy campers.

Q:Well, let's proceed to Switzerland again. Uh, where we left off, you had just been de-loused. Did you have your head shaved ?

A:No, no, no. Uh, no. Not in camp, nor afterwards. I mentioned before it's my impression, or maybe just my wishful thinking because being lousy in that sense is a very uncomfortable notion. I'm not sure we had to be. I think we were very clean, because I recall people, clearly, washing themselves and cleaning themselves, and picking at themselves. And I saw the men in the men's latrines, picking hair out of the, examining the pubic areas and whatnot, or their

other hairy areas to make sure that there's nothing there. People, since we didn't go to work, people had time to do that. And since we didn't go to work and had some food, we were probably in much better physical shape. And if we had some sores from cuts whatever, they probably healed more so than if we had had no, nothing in our bodies with which to in some way attempt to heal those wounds. I am sure that my mother checked me five times a day, and the little boy who was with us. But no, my head was not shaved. Uh although it would not have been unusual; because every summer my head used to be shaved, by choice. Sometimes my father and I both had our heads shaved. We were kind of bald eagles for a while. Today I wouldn't do it. It is no longer a sense of pride. But we got to Switzerland, to Saint Gallen; and from Saint Gallen--which is in the German part of Switzerland--we were taken to a city, to a hotel in the village of Caux. And it's [spelled] C-A-U-X. Caux is a community directly above the city of Montreux, in the French part. There was a hotel whose name escapes me, and I just can't remember it. I've not been back there, but my parents had. It was a hotel that was taken over...over by the Red Cross, strictly as kind of a transition point for DP's; because DP's were coming into Switzerland from various places all the time, it being a neutral country. Uh, my recollection of the place...well, several recollections. It's in a beautiful... It's in the Alps, it's beautiful, it's gorgeous. I mean, it's wintertime and the snow; and the rooms are heated and the beds are clean. And...and you can go to the showers whenever you wish. And uh if you go to the bathroom, you can even have a sense of privacy. You know, they're not latrines. Lots of good things about it. But again, the Swiss are neat. Everybody knows about them, so. I think that we were fed for the two or three weeks a kind of stabilization, was potatoes. And everything else. The point was to in some way nourish us a little bit, to fatten us up just a little bit, so we would be a little bit stronger. By this time, my father knew where we were, 'cause he traced us both through the arrangement that were done through Customs of Hungary and the Red Cross. And my mother and father were in

correspondence by mail, which was a little difficult only because the war was still on when we arrived. But through either direct or indirectly, I know that my mother made contact with an aunt of mine who lived in Philadelphia. That was a later part of the story. That aunt is still alive--93 years old--my father's sister who sent us a care package. Among them, a pair of shoes; because I told him my shoes had kind of seen their last. I don't know whose shoes they were, but they were shoes that were large enough to put eight pairs of socks on, and really use them as skis. Not quite, but they kind of slid down the side of a mountain. And it was delightful; because, you see, this is the first time that the restriction of territory was no longer on me. I mean, not that I could go climb mountains, but if I wanted to be outside, I was outside. If I wanted to be inside, I could be inside. I didn't have to worry about not walking beyond the fifty foot perimeter of the barbed wire. So this was a...a place where we had a chance to kind of truly R&R, not as Bergen-Belsen was. And the idea was, at that point again, that the whatever--whether it was the World Zionist Congress, or arrangements with the Jewish Agency overseas, or elements of the underground, elements of political parties-- whoever was making the arrangements, they had to divide the people up to go to various places. Because people could not stay in this kind of transition hotel. Other people were coming in. My uncle, Uncle David, who was with me, went to be in some community in one part of Switzerland with his agemates, as you will. And they didn't know what to do with 20 Hungarian-speaking kids ages probably six to maybe fourteen who were in the group. And who either had single parents, or couldn't stay with their parents or something. So someone came up with a brilliant idea. Maybe what they should do is send this group of 20 kids to Heiden, which is... Heiden is a small village in Saint Gallen, or [Appenzell-Ausser Rhoden] province in Switzerland. And it was a children's camp for kind of displaced persons, displaced kids--Belgian, French. I don't even know if they were all Jewish. My mother had been a teacher. "Ah-ha! Why don't we sent Ella..."--my mother's name was Ella--

"...with these children? At least she speaks the language." I mean, not too many people spoke Hungarian in central Europe outside of Hungary. It's still one of the most useless languages around. It's marvelous in Hungary, but no place else can you speak it; except in certain sections of Brooklyn. But my mother went with this group, these kids, to Heiden, and kind of ran a one-room school house in Hungarian for ages six to fourteen. The director of this home of several hundred kids was a man by the name of Paul Miller. Paul Miller later came to the States and directed a children's home in Philadelphia; and I had some reunions with him. He is now gone; but if he were alive, he would be 100. Uh, a Swiss-French-Belgian Jew who did this for...this was his calling. But I remember Paul Miller later. And we spent some time in the camp, in the camp...in the children's home. My mother was the teacher. And that was uh...and that created its own problems; because being the teacher's son, no matter what went wrong, I was at fault. You know, somebody ratted on the kid. I did it. But we survived. I had my share of beatings at the time, but that was not the worst. Now, I was with my mother; and of course, the little boy was with us still. And we were in Heiden after the war ended, which in Europe ended on the 8th of May, 1945. Coincidental with my 9th birthday. 'Cause I wanted, it ended on my birthday eve (?). To this day I celebrate my birthday as the end of the war. We were still in camp until September of that year. And the...all I can say is the powers that be made the arrangements to...in fact, to make the decision to continue our way south. And at this point, we are no longer displaced Palestinians in Hungary. But we just had a place, what was going on; and by this time we knew what had happened, and what Auschwitz was, and who didn't come back and who did come back. And who my father, who did come back, could find. And where the brothers were; and not only that cousin of mine that was deported, but his parents. And another brother, and another brother. And my mother's family and her parents, and her sisters and her brothers, and where they were. The decision was maybe...my mother's decision again was to

not go back to Hungary, which my father said we can do; but to in fact continue to, at that time, Palestine, where we arrived in September of 1945 by British troop carrier. We went by bus and by train and by truck from Switzerland to Taranto, which is in the boot of Italy. It's a big port. Awaited nearby in the city of Bari, again for several days, until transport was secured. And a British troop carrier on its way to uh Egypt dropped us off at Haifa. I don't mean just us. I don't even know at this point how many of the 1600 were in that particular group. Because some stayed in Switzerland, some went back to Hungary, some went elsewhere. Time had gone by, and the war was over. So people made various arrangements. But I do know that my mother and the two boys--myself and this youngster--and my uncle were on that boat. And we wound up in Palestine of those days in September of 1945.

Q: You say...you say you began to talk about, to find about the fates of other people. Did your mother talk to you about this? Did you begin yourself to have a sense of what had really befallen others that you knew, that were related to you?

A: No. The history...again, the information, as I am able to relate it to you, was something I could understand very clearly. I've said several times in this discussion that the missing piece--not missing. Uh, the piece that was not there was the emotional scarring that would have been there had I understood what this meant. But the information was there. And, of course, I've learned other things since. By the end of the war, the concept of Auschwitz, as I say, was clear. And we knew...I'm trying to think; I think all members of my family who died--and not all died, but most of them did--in fact, were in Auschwitz or on their way to Auschwitz. Or in labor camp. And there was documentation as to when they got there, when they left, when the deportations took place, when they got to where they got, and the fact that they didn't make it out. Example: My mother had two sisters. There were three girls in the

family. The two sisters and their parents, my grandparents, were deported together--towards Auschwitz--with the daughter of one of those sisters. At the camp, as we know, they were separated. The daughter went this way, never to be seen again. The grandparents went that [way], never to be seen again. The two sisters went a third direction, and they survived the war. The younger sister is alive in Israel. The other one, the middle sister--my mother was the oldest--died two years ago in Israel, after a very productive and happy life. I mean, she was _____; yes, second husband, and second family. Because the husband didn't make it. He died in labor camp. But we had, at that point, a very clear understanding. And uh my recollection of those is that this was an understanding of what happened, and an anger about what happened, and a concentration of energy towards what has to happen next. Not a preservation of what has just happened. We did not have the opportunity. And my mother didn't demonstrate to me the need to now sit and sulk about what was. I mean, sadness and all, yes. But we all set to go ahead, because you couldn't go back. I mean, she was now in...in Palestine with two children. And what do you do now? She's here, she couldn't be a teacher. She was 37 years old--which is certainly not old--and a very seasoned 37. Typically, uh people in those days if they had uh... I mean, they had certain ideological kinds of commitments and connections. They went into the collective settlements called kibbutzim. A 37 year-old in a kibbutz is a veteran. A serious veteran. 'Cause the average age is 26. And she never trained for this. She never had any skills in agricultural things. What do you do? Arrangement was made that she would be sent to a kibbutz not far from the city of Haifa, uh Kibbutz _____. A very-well known kibbutz which was originally peopled by persons from Yugoslavia and from Hungary; so she could talk to them. She didn't know Hebrew. She spoke Serb and Hungarian. That was good. And they said to her, very simply--I'm not sure that this happened in a confrontational manner--"Look. You have two children and yourself. If you can in some way make yourself useful here and kind of earn your keep, no problem.

But if you can't, we can't keep you. We can't feed three people without in some way some quid pro quo." So she said, "Look. I mean, I am healthy. I'll do whatever you need to have to do." So they assigned her to the place she could do least damage. See if you pick fruit, you can damage fruit. But nobody can damage an onion when you pull it out of the ground. So she... END OF TAPE ...she was there. I mean, she did that. The boy, the other boy and I-- Joash, or Ivan, and I--were in age by groups. I was with the eight year-olds, and he was with the five year olds. Or eight...or four year- olds, or whatever. No, nine and five by then. Because kids lived by age groups. Not with their parents. And, you know, I did my daily whatever. I went to school, and did my chores and played with the kids; and he did this with his. And sometime we'd see each other. I'd see my mother as well. But the interesting part of the kibbutz business was that at some point--fairly soon--for some reason I don't recall, there was a...somebody was sick or they needed somebody to take a shift in the kitchen. And my mother was...uh I mean, she said she was really not indispensable in the onion-picking department. Anybody could do that, the kitchen. And they began to remark that the fact that the food improved. Now, why? I mean, she was a very fine cook. She learned from her mother. But the reason that her cooking made a difference was that uh she was perhaps the only woman, adult woman, in the kibbutz who had ever kept house. The others went to various training courses and agricultural schools and what not--married or otherwise--and came as young people, maybe 18 or 19, to Israel...to Palestine, settled in the kibbutz and built the kibbutz. And housekeeping skills were never imparted to them. I mean, think about it. And material in those days did not come with instructions in the microwave, pre-seasoned. So my mother was able to steal a little bit of margarine, put a little bit of salt in it, or whatever. Two hundred people ate every day, and it made a difference. And they thought they made this marvelous discovery. She became the chief cook of the day shift, or whatever it was. And they I think elected her to membership in the kibbutz. And they probably would

have... would have probably paved her way with gold had she permitted that. She found a niche. She found a legitimate kind of a value, and became a valued member of the kibbutz. Now there was no problem about staying. They offered her... A kibbutz elects its members, unless you come in from the very beginning; and they offered her election. That didn't happen, for other reasons which probably created the first clear recollection of trauma in my life that I remember. We were in the kibbutz from '45 to '46; and in the fall of '46, my father finally gets to Israel. The whole story about what happens with him, that is much too detailed. Let me simply say that he gets to Israel by an illegal immigration ship, and that story's known to people. And his particular story is the story of the...of the uh two ships that came out of [La] Spezia. And the only reason I mention that is that we know the kind of conglomerate and docu-history that the _____ puts in the book Exodus;⁵ and in that, there is a chapter about a hunger strike taking place in Cyprus, which was not in Cyprus. That takes place in [La] Spezia. That's a fishing village in western Italy...north, northwestern Italy, where two boats are chartered. The people are on board, and a British destroyer blocked the harbor. The strike takes place; and these people, because of the particular position of the at that time Labor [Party] government in England, they are...the human cry of [a] 96- hour hunger strike is so large in the world they are permitted to go to Palestine with these boats under British escort, not under British guard. So my father gets there without going through Cyprus, and without landing on the beach; and kind of walks off the ship kind of with [his] own two feet. It's a whole other story. His story is fascinating; but again, it's not the particular one I want to dwell on. I told you before that my father is a cantor. He comes out of an orthodox background. He is ordained as a rabbi from three seminaries, or whatever; and certainly his life is a religious life, and his commitment is a traditional one. The kibbutz

⁵ Novel by Leon Uris concerning the ship of that name, which illegally delivered a group of Jewish Holocaust survivors to British-controlled Palestine in 1947.

is ideologically left...left in kibbutz, a left-wing kibbutz--HaShomer HaTzair--where God does not exist, and Judaism is a nation and it's a heritage, and it's a tradition. And uh in the kibbutz, when Passover comes and we have a Passover seder, the Passover seder is all translated or transmuted or transposed into issues of nature. The reason that plagues took place is because Moses was really a naturalist, and he could talk to animals and whatever else. And everything is explained. Now, I'm not going to debate the veracity of the explanations--both biblical, historical or left-wing. But God does not exist, religion does not exist and historical incidents are described by some kind of natural agricultural settings. That's OK. Now, my father arrives at this kibbutz; and it's very clear this is not...not something he is really willing to do. They would like to have him as a traveling music teacher. He is educated in Vienna in music, and he could... They would give him either a horse or a car or bicycle--I don't know which--so he could travel to several of these group of kibbutzim and uh teach music, run choruses, lead an orchestra. I mean, various kinds of musically-connected things, which under some circumstances would have been OK. I mean, my mother had just become the chef. It was not what he wanted to do. He wanted to stay in his field; but beside the fact that he wanted to stay in his field, the living situation, the emotional conditions of a left-wing kibbutz, were adjustments my father was either unable but certainly unwilling to make. He takes a position in Haifa, in a synagogue, as a cantor. But that means we have to leave the kibbutz. Well, that was terribly traumatic for me. I did not want to leave the kibbutz. I did not want to...I mean, I finally found a niche of some sort. I mean, finally...I'm only nine years old. But for the last three years... I mean, when you're four it doesn't matter. When you're six, it begins to matter; and at that point my group sense disappears. I finally was back in school. My first grade was in Hungary. Part of second grade was in Hungary. Third grade was in Bergen-Belsen, if you want to call it school. Fourth grade was in Israel. I was learning a new language, of course, my third language of school.

But I was very upset. I thought the kibbutz was neat. It was a life that I had not been familiar with, but became accustomed to. Certain cultural things _____ this and that. A process so there's a certain macho, a legitimate macho, which made a lot of sense. It was outdoors, it was nice. I was no longer segregated in some ways. I was shocked a few times. First day I get to the kibbutz, I'm nine years old and I was assigned to a room, you know. I think there were three or four kids in a room--four corners, four beds, and shelves and desks and stuff. And I think I wanted either to wash up or take a shower or something, and saw no problem. Now this is very nice indoor facilities; very nice, a stucco building, heated, but not air-conditioned. Maybe not even heated, there was not...no need. And I walk in, and there were girls there taking showers. Now, I knew what I saw; a little bit about girls, probably more than other nine year olds do. I learned a lot in the children's home, when we were in a group of six and fourteen year-olds. And fourteen year-olds in their pubescent kind of interest are different than a six year-old; and I probably learned more than my age would permit. But I had never seen girls, and I certainly never showered with girls. I mean, my notion was that boys showered and girls showered, and not together. And this is not because of the free love and all that nonsense about kibbutz life. I mean, kibbutz life was fine. I just wasn't used to it. They just came to the very pragmatic decision of who the hell needs separate showers. I mean, two sets of facilities for boys and girls age nine. OK. If I remember, kind of making a bee-line and running as fast as I knew how out of that room; and I remember screaming, I left my towel somewhere. I was going to get my towel. I was acting embarrassed out of...out of my skin. I got used to it. The second time it was OK. But it was _____. I mean, this is not a major sexual traumatic experience. It was just a difference in style. I had no sisters. Uh I just didn't shower with girls 'cause I'd never done that before. Maybe since, but not before. And uh this was the kibbutz. But we leave the kibbutz. We go to Haifa. OK. I adjusted to it in some ways. Even my father didn't. My father

had a sister in this country, who he had not seen in 35 years--the only remaining sibling except for his brother, David, who survived the camp. He was still alive. His sister came out in 1914, or something like that. As a youngster, as a young woman of 18 or so, to find her future in the country which was the land of milk and honey, and the streets were paved with gold. She did OK. Came visit her. His pangs for family were strong enough, and we were able to do that. I also think that he also came here to see what the world was about. The cantor business in--by this time, not still in Palestine--was not particularly booming, because every immigrant who had ever gone to Yeshiva or to a cheder or anyplace could do it. And there was no need for star-quality cantors. And my father was that. And that's why he had various positions on his way to his Metropolitan Opera, namely the [Doromboh (ph)] Temple in Budapest, which was really a star-attraction place. He came to the States, came to Philly, was able to make some arrangements; and wrote to my mother and said, "What I want you to do is..." He always did this. He left, and then he told us to pack up and come. But that's not important. And we came to the States. We arrived...my mother and I arrived here in March of...March the 9th, 1949. Lived in New York for a year, and moved to Philadelphia. Grew up in Philadelphia, and the rest is current history.

Q:I'm curious what the reunion of your mother and father was in Palestine. Do you recall that?

A:Uh-huh. I recall it particularly, because there was some... some concern. My mother come to this kibbutz, and uh I don't remember at this point anymore. Look, it's also forty some years ago. Although I have a fairly good recollection, some details escape. I have no recollection of whether or not she knew any of the members of the kibbutz from her hometown, or maybe from school days, or through family. Perhaps she did. But she made friends with several of them. I mean, you know, you have different levels of friendships. And I recall that my uncle-

-Uncle David again--came, who was in a different kibbutz, uh came to our kibbutz to _____ one day and I, I'm sure I asked him why he came and I'm sure he gave me some reason. I asked my mother why he came. I'm sure she gave me some reason. But between the lines there was some other expression, maybe from some other people, kids or whatever. That he came really to talk with my mother because there had been some rumors that maybe she and some of these other kibbutz people were in some way establishing a relationship that would compromise my father. Now, I never asked my mother if she did that. I wouldn't dare. But I knew my mother. My mother was a uh very strong and very committed woman. So even though this stuff was going on, I'm sure this was hot air. My mother was a very attractive woman, 37 years old, and I'm sure there may have been some notion that said, look, if she were available, I'd be delighted to, and someone may have interest. But I don't think that she expressed that. So when my father came, their reunion, I have two recollections of it. One, and I don't mean the specific moment. When my father arrived at camp, at the kibbutz, I was not there. I had taken an excursion, maybe in an attempt to avoid, I didn't know who the hell I was going to meet. I hardly knew the man, in a sense. But their reunion was one very instantaneous and very warm. And soon too raised a major issue. My mother also did not want to leave the kibbutz. She found a home. But my mother understood that she had made a commitment and a lifestyle. She also came from a traditional home, but she was not professionally traditional. I mean, my father was, that was his livelihood. And she made an adjustment for that. And she was willing to leave the kibbutz, but the initial reaction was very instantaneous. We want to remember that the kind of separations during the war in Europe did not permit you perhaps to separate. Your mind was full, your emotions were full, your _____ may have been full of, or maybe somebody just away. There is no human being alive that overcame any separation pangs, so the reunion was not one of a reunion having come out of a POW camp without communication for five years. And

secondly, there, well, they had been apart for two years, the better part of two years. But the reunion, my recollection was very smooth. The readjustment was very smooth. One hitch. Leaving the kibbutz. How big a hitch it was I don't know. I think it was a much more dramatic and traumatic for me than it was for my mother. Cause she understood. My mother had a certain sense of duty, and she knew it. She had been the cantor's wife before. She would be that again. But she did express it would be nice maybe to not, but I know I can't do that.

Q:But for you, you had finally found some . . .

A:I found age-mates, a group. I was part of the, I think I recall. The groups had names. We were the Oak Group, the whatever eight, nine year, the fourth-graders or so were the Oak Group. I don't remember what the youngster who was with us was in. It was a different group. But I thought that was terrific. Twenty kids, boys and girls, you know, a class-size, dorm-size, a cohesive group with some good kids, bad kids, smart kids, dumb kids, fat kids, skinny kids. It was a very nice group. It was a perfect kind of a little tiny universe in which I could live. And it's the first universe I had after some non-universes. I remember the most previous experience was for eight months in Switzerland, being the representative eight year old in a group of six to fourteen. We had no age mates. And my mother was a teacher and that raised hackles with some people. And you know, by others, uh. A tiny digression, I recall one of the kids, one of the ogler kids whose face I recall but not his name, for some reason, he, somebody came to visit me, and he accompanied me back to the village, off-campus which was against the rules. He was punished in some fashion, not corporal punishment, but punished for walking off campus without letting someone know. He probably could have gotten permission to walk back to the village, I don't know, twenty minutes away. So he

could take the train back. But he didn't tell anybody, so he was missed. When he came back, he was pulled on the carpet by Mr. Miller. Guess who had lumps on his back the next morning for having ratted on him? But after all, if everybody got ratted on, the teacher's kid must have done it. It wasn't all bad, but I'm saying these are the negative elements. So that was not a very kind of a cohesive group for me to be in. Not only because I was the teacher's kid, but I was also the only eight year old. I don't recall another eight year old in the group.

Q:I would think it would have been hard that you wouldn't be able to talk to kids of you own age, to figure out your experience.

A:That's what I did in Israel. Now, in Israel incidentally, or Palestine in those days, most of the kids were not Holocaust kids. They're natives. Well, if you think about it, the people, the kibbutz had been established perhaps ten years before, maybe twelve. Eighteen, nineteen year olds got to the kibbutz. In their early twenties were child-bearing. Their children would be anywhere from age zero to maybe twelve, fourteen, thirteen. And in those days the kibbutz did not keep the kids in the kibbutz I think past fourteen. If I recall, they would gather them in an intermediate or high school setting where several kibbutzim would bring the kids together and really live away from home. So 9 year-olds were perfectly appropriate in the age range on the kibbutz on a parental life. And I finally found a group, although it was a group that I had to adjust to and they had to adjust to me. I didn't speak Hebrew. They did. I wasn't really much of an outdoorsman or agriculturalist. Interesting difference. Most of the kids most of the summer ran around barefoot. Now, they had shoes and sandals; but they ran around barefoot. And when you do that, you can run on anything. Broken glass. You develop a callus on the bottom of your feet. This one didn't, because he'd never done it before. And he looked like a ninety year-old man walking on the street, trying to make street, on the

roads, trying to make sure that he avoids anything that could possibly... And I really was the loner used to ____ develop callused feet. I mean, I got better at it; but I wore sandals most of the time. But when people went into...into the swimming pool--yes, we had a swimming pool--I had to take my shoes off, and they didn't. I mean, there were a certain difference. But those were...those are reconcilable differences, not irreconcilable differences. And I found a group, and I had to leave. And that was very difficult. Now what it did to me, I don't know.

Q:In your group of friends, were there other children from the Holocaust?

A:I said a minute ago that I think most of those kids were native born, or Israelis. I don't think so. Truly, I don't remember.

Q:Let's cross the ocean.

A:Let me just think back. I do recall some kids who were there, but they were European-born but not Holocaust kids. I mean, they had gotten there before the war, like in '39; or their parents did. So they may have...'39, yeah, they may have been two when they arrived, three or four. And they were not Holo...they were European, not Israeli-born. But not Holocaust victims. And there's a difference.

Q:But you were unique in your experience?

A:I don't know if I was unique, maybe there was another one. I certainly...in the kibbutz there must have been somebody else. I mean, there was the kid that was with us; but I don't have any recollection of another kid. I may have in some way just decided to block that out, or I just

plain don't remember. That's also possible.

Q:Because you're so old now.

A:Older than I was then.

Q:Shall we cross the ocean, and remember how you came to the United States and what you went through? I'm curious if you had to go through any processing, _____ papers. Did you have to present documents? What did you go through?

A:Well, I can dispose of that very quickly, because I came in as a non-quota immigrant. The laws of the land, the immigration laws, none of that was, the _____ or whatever the laws were at that time, is that certain clergy can come in without waiting for quotas. My father, being ordained and holding a position in New York as the cantor of the congregation and as the associate rabbi as well, was permitted ...when he came here he was permitted to enter non-quota. Which physically meant he had to go to Niagara Falls, which was the closest Canadian, non-American, point to Philadelphia. Went to Niagara Falls, crossed the bridge, walked back. He entered the country non-quota. As a consequence, his family didn't go through any processing. We arrived by plane. 1949. Left Palestine--at that time Israel--left Haifa in, on March the 6th, 1949. Flew from a British military airport near Haifa by some two-engine plane to land in the Sahara. I remember a man carrying out two pails, two buckets. Those were the slop buckets. This was a few years ago. These were like DC-3 type planes. We landed in Tunis. We spent a night in Tunis, or several hours in Tunis. We landed in Nice. We landed in Brussels. In Brussels, we spent the night I know for sure. And transferred to a...to then ocean-going airplanes - the Constellations. They were very

interesting planes, these sway-back things that TWA used to run. But this was not TWA. This was the Sabena, the British [NB: Belgian] airlines. The first leg was the British, not British, the Belgian airlines. The first leg was run by [Kobata (ph)], which at that time was their inland short route; puddle-jumping from, you know, from Haifa to Sahara to Tunis to Nice to Brussels. Uh, spent the day in Brussels. I have not been to Brussels since. Will one of these days. My mother bought a piece of lace, I remember that. I mean, after all, in Brussels you have to do that. And uh neither of us had ever flown before, of course. Neither my mother or I. I mean, in 1949, the air travel was not as prevalent. And I am always amazed to find that today, a very small percentage, proportion of the population, has never flown. There are lots of people who haven't today, in the States. Well, brave people that we were, it was the fastest way to come. We got on the Constellation, went from Brussels to Shannon. In Shannon, one of the radios went kablooey. And we sat in Shannon for several hours; because the captain--and I remember him, he was a short gentlemen, a Belgian I guess--who came and announced to the passengers that he will not take off without that particular piece of equipment. We said we agreed, although we didn't know why. But we agreed. Landed in Gander.⁶ I mean, typical trans-Atlantic crossings; and those were from someplace--Brussels, London, something--often to Shannon. Shannon-Gander was the trans-Atlantic piece to Newfoundland. And then, Gander to Idlewild--not John F. Kennedy--in New York, where my father and my aunt and my uncle waited for us. And I don't know, by bus, by taxi, by something went to Penn Central Station. Then took the Pennsylvania Railroad--which still existed in those days--non-stop to Newark, non-stop to Trenton and non-stop to Philadelphia; from which we went by cab probably to...from that was the North Philadelphia Station to 2533 North Douglas Street, my aunt's house. And we had arrived. But no

⁶ Airport in Newfoundland, Canada. Prior to the introduction of the jet engine, all trans-Atlantic flights had to stop either here or at Shannon to refuel.

processing at all. No hoops to run through. I mean, just...I mean, immigration and customs; but you do that today, too, if you go overseas. And that was not...nothing, no DP, no stock-pile, I mean no Ellis Island type things. None. And no de-lousing. (Laughter)

Q:That's wonderful. We have about three minutes. You can, if there's anything you can think that you want to say in that remaining time.

A:Well, perhaps it's an interest of mine which is not just personal, but I think that part of the reason for doing this tape is to enrich history in tiny ways. Because it's important for people to look at this tape and to look at other tapes and make sure that all the history that's possible, that possibly can be captured is captured. Because although I am one of the youngest people that I know that went through this particular experience, the people who were there at this point are getting to be fewer and fewer in between. And each story is unique. Not all of the stories are valuable. Not all of them are interesting. Not all of them are noteworthy, but all should be recaptured in some way because you never know what kind of mosaic you want to put together and what piece of total information you get from this particular tape. Let the scholars determine what is important and what is not. But let's take whatever care we can to at least capture. The technology is there to do it. Wouldn't it be nice to have a videotape of the Civil War? We can stop.

Q:Thank you very much.

A:It was a pleasure.

Q:You certainly did a beautiful job.

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Conclusion of Interview.