

Norbert Lipschuetz Interview

November 16, 1999

November 16, 1999. And I'm Jean Bratt and I'm interviewing Norbert Lipschuetz. What was your name at birth?

Norbert Lipschuetz.

And could you spell both those names into the recorder?

N-O-R-B-E-R-T. And, well, my middle name is after my grandfather, Nathan, **N-A-T-H-A-N.** And my last name is **L-I-P-S-C-H,** now it's **U-E-T-Z.** It used to be **ü,** with two dots on top, you know. Umlaut.

Without the e?

No, without the e, yeah. But the two dots on top of the u.

Right. Okay. When were you born?

I was born June 8th, 1925 in Berlin, Germany.

In Berlin. Do you know what the population of the city was?

Yes, about, approximately 4,000,000 people.

And what was the Jewish population?

170,000.

Uh-huh. You've got your facts. [Laughs] What do you know about your birth? Were you born at home?

Yeah, I was born at home. My mother had a midwife. I was born at home and my ... for the first eight years of my life, uneventful. I entered grade school in 1931 at age six at the neighborhood school. And for... attended there for three years, you know. The grades,

they go backwards here. You start at the first grade up and there they go from the eighth grade down.

Oh. Uh-huh.

And those three years I attended, 1934. And then I was kicked out of there because I was Jewish. And I had to attend a Jewish school, you know. And in a way, that was, I would say it was much better because there were excellent teachers there, you know. There were all Jewish kids and we didn't have to put up with antisemitism or anything. So the drawback was it was about half an hour, if I would walk. But there was a train going there for two stations, so I took that train there. And I attended that school through 1939. I was lucky to finish that up because in 1941 all Jewish schools were closed and there was no more education. And in 1939, at age 14, I had a pre-trade school, if you want to call it.

Keep talking. I'm going to move this. Keep talking. I'm going to move this around.

A pre-trade, if you want to call it that. A pre-trade school and that was for one year. And you had, for six months you was taking woodwork and for another six months, you were taking metalwork, to see what you...

And how old were you?

I was at that time 14.

Okay. But, now you're going way too fast because we have lots of other questions.

Okay. All right.

We'll come back to that.

Good. That's fine.

Okay? I want to talk about your life with your parents and what that was like. What were your parents' names?

My father's name was Izidor Lipschuetz and my mother's name was Margot Lipschuetz.

Margaret?

Margot. M-A-R-G-O-T.

And your father? How do you spell your father's name?

I-Z-I-D-O-R.

Okay. How did your parents meet?

Well, they was kind of, I think, introduced by my, from my mother's father. You know, from my grandfather they were introduced, you know.

Okay. And what did your mother do? Did she have a job outside of the house?

Well, she was... before she got married she had a business. She was in millinery. You know, a millinery shop.

A hat store?

A hat store. Yeah.

Uh-huh.

Yeah. Yeah. And my father, he had a business, a carpet business, you know. But it was... he was one of the first ones. They took his business away already in 1935.

Oh. And so, did your mother work after she had you? After she had children?

No. No. No.

She was a housewife?

Housewife, yes.

Now, how many members of your family were there? How many were there in your family?

Well, actually, it was... I had no brothers or sisters, but I was only child. But I had my grandparents, except from my father's father, my grandfather. He died three months before I was born. And I had aunts and uncles. And my, one of my aunts, from my father's sister, she was an opera singer. And, of course, she couldn't perform anymore. But they had in Berlin what they called the Jewish *Kulturbund*. You know, after it was only Jewish performers and she was there until they closed that also in 1941.

I'm going to stop you for one second. [Tape turned off momentarily] Did your grandparents live with you?

No. My grandmother lived, from my mother's side. Well, both groups lived with us... my grandfather died from my mother's side. He died in '31. And my grandmother lived with us till she died in 19-... early in 1941.

And what kind of jobs did they have? Did your grandmother work?

Well, no. No. No. See, they was all kind of older. My mother was already 39 when I was born and at that time it was, you know, very unusual, you know.

So your grandparents didn't work. They were just at home with you.

No. No. No.

Can you tell me some memories that you have of your grandparents?

Well, all I had you know my... from my father's side after my... like I said, my grandfather, he passed away before I was born. And my grandmother, I mean, she spoiled me up until, of course, but she was legally blind. And she lived with my aunts, with her two daughters who were not married. And, well, she passed away in 1939 and she was lucky. She had still, she had two girls and two boys. She was still all around them, you know. Because you don't... my uncle, he, he died. You know, he was in Sachsenhausen and when he was beaten so bad. And he came out that following New Year's he had a little party. He bent down and he dropped dead, you know, from it. But it was a blessing for him because both my father and both my aunts, they were, you know, deported and died. Except for my whole family, just my mother and I survived. Uncles, aunts, everybody...

Everybody.

I have... I told them. I have a book which came out several years ago. I paid \$200.00 for it. It's very heavy. The Germans they kept very close records that way. My family and everybody, there are thousands, I think, of names in there from, only from Berlin who got deported and where they got deported to and when and well, it says there, you know, they just disappeared, you know, that...

So, how... your mother survived the war?

Yeah. Like me, obviously.

Obviously. [Laughs] And your mother, is she still living?

No. Oh, no. She isn't. She died in 1967.

And did she live here in Kansas City with you?

No. She was for a while here and then she couldn't get adjusted. She was like *al-*, *also* [German for thus, however]. She had a very good girlfriend here. Not a Jewish friend. German in the, *oder*... She went back to Germany, you know.

Oh, I see.

They told me, "How could you let your mother go back there?" But I knew she wouldn't have lived. She was 81 when she passed away. So she wouldn't have lived that long if she was here, you know. She was lonely...

Sure.

My wife, you know, had to take care of the children and, so, it was very hard. And I was still... the year before I went over there for her 80th birthday and made a nice party. But I couldn't even go to the funeral because, see, I had to borrow the money to go and after paying. I thought that time Rabbi Solomon said, "You couldn't do anything anymore," so I have a nice stone in the Jewish cemetery for her, you know.

How nice. Yeah.

And I have also... they have there nice stones... marble, big marble stones for those who perished just for like a memorial.

Okay. Well, let's go back... [Laughs] I won't...

[Laughs] **That's fine.**

I want to hear and so I have trouble.

That's okay.

Okay. So tell me the neighborhood that you lived in when you were a little boy.

I was in a very weal-, more affluent neighborhood in Germany, you know. It was... I don't know whether you heard there that this right... one block where it was called The Zoo. You know where the, up there where the *Kurfürstendamm* that is in Berlin, that is a fancy estate there.

Oh. Uh-huh.

Well, we lived a few blocks there. But we lived in a very good neighborhood.

Did you have a house or did you live in an apartment?

No. No. Lived in an apartment.

And were there a lot of Jewish people in the neighborhood?

Yeah. They were. The time before the war that the whole neighborhood. Yeah, there were quite a few Jewish people there.

And what was your home like? Did you have electricity?

Oh, yes, we had. [laughing] Oh, sure, we had.

And running water.

Running... of course.

So pretty modern?

Oh, yeah, it was pretty modern.

And how many rooms were there in the apartment?

Well, when we were there they had, what they call now, it was [unclear]. It was quite a big apartment. Five rooms, you know, plus a kitchen and then they had a, well, it was actually four, what they call maybe four and a half rooms. There was a room that was in the back that was like for maid's quarter if you were to have a maid, you know.

Oh. Uh-huh. So you had your own bedroom?

Yes.

And where, did your grandparents have a bedroom?

Yes, they had a bedroom and a...

And a bedroom for...?

And my parents...

And your parents did. Oh! How did the laundry get done?

Well, the laundry get done. They had to... You had assigned days that you could do your laundry and that was way up on the, next to the roof, you know. There was a huge, huge tub, you know, that you could, you did your laundry. And, oh, you were hanging it up there too. You had it I believe every two weeks you could use that, you know. That was all.

Did you have servants?

No.

Did you take vacations?

Well, no, I didn't take, we did not that I know. The only vacations I knew of were twice, you know, we had the... when the school between, we had about two months or so break. School in Germany started in April, you know, and then stopped in April again. No, wait a minute. It started in April and then in July you had the big... And so I was ever, from just Jewish children. It was twice we were, we were sent, you know, in the suburbs of Berlin for a few weeks.

Like a camp or something?

Well, yeah, it was like a camp. But then, a few times, I had, the other times, they had a Jewish sport a place there that belonged to the Jewish community. And it was like a day camp. You left in the morning, came back in the afternoon. I liked that better, you know.

Right. Okay. What kind of foods did you eat?

Well, we ate regular food 'til... I mean...

Anything different that you don't eat here?

No. Not different. I ate there, of course, up to 1934, we were having a kosher home. And afterwards you know, no more kosher meat.

No more kosher.

And, I don't think my father ate any kind of meat, but my mother... See, I was kind of skinny and so... and I was [unclear] she said, "No matter what you do, you do, but the son, he is going to get meat." I mean, we never ate pork or anything. But, you know, we would mostly eat chicken. Beef was, meat was very expensive. And we had, you know, a problem after they took my father's business away. For one year, he was able, from '35 to '36, to work in the carpet department in one of the fanciest department store, and then they had to let him go because he was Jewish, you know. And, of course, from then on, we had a very hard time because he lived like on unemployment. He couldn't get no job. And barely pay the rent and for food we have to kind of... my mother was an excellent cook, you know. And, after the war, for a while in Germany, she was a cook for the British troops.

Oh. Wow.

So...

What kind of language was... what language did you speak at home?

Well, we spoke German at home. But see, my father is originally from Poland and my mother was from Hungary. [Laughs] All mixed up. So I learn... I learn with my

grandmother, I spoke mostly Hungarian, you know. So as a child... I still speak some Hungarian.

And did you speak Polish?

No. Not at all.

What about Yiddish? Did you speak Yiddish?

Well... no, I mean, my father used to speak some of it with his sister but, no, I didn't. But I picked up Yiddish pretty good right after the war. I'm pretty good at Yiddish.

Were your parents involved in anything political?

No.

Now, you told me about the school. The first school you attended was a public school.

Yes.

Then you went to a Jewish school.

Yes.

And how many years did you go to that Jewish school?

Well, let's see. It's three... five years.

Five years? And were the teachers, were the teachers in the public school antisemitic also? Did they say things to you?

No. At that time, they still, you know... I kept them as, they really were. Now it was in the beginning, they were not once they were all the teachers they were really not antisemitic. But already it started the third year. The children there, you know.

Oh, the children.

They were.

And the teachers were good at the Jewish school?

Yeah. There were not too many Jews. At the Jewish school, they were excellent, the teachers. Yes.

And what were your favorite subjects?

My favorite subject was Hebrew. [Laughs] Hebrew and Hebrew- Jewish history.

Oh, good. So you went there for five years and you left at... how old were you when you left that school?

14.

14? And then you went to a trade school?

Well, yeah. That was right there. It was a trade school, you know.

As part of it?

That was part of it, you know, like I said. Four to six... a year... for a half a year woodwork and for half a year, metal, you know, to see what you are more likely to...

And then what did you do after that?

Well, after that, I mean, it didn't make any difference if I went to that school or not because nobody would take me in as an apprentice anyplace.

Oh. Uh-huh.

But there was one place, one Jewish man. He had French citizenship and somehow was quite a way... he had a little upholstery shop. He still had it in 1940. So for... he took in a few of us to learn upholstery. So I went there for one year, until 1941. And then they closed the store shop too. And I was drafted to forced labor in Germany from 1941 to 1943 in an ammunition plant.

Okay. All right. Before we get up to all that... [Laughs]. So what did you do for fun?

Well, there was nothing. We do nothing for fun, you know. Starting in '41, of course, you had to wear the yellow star.

Well, but when you were a kid, did you have...?

Oh, well, when we were a kid, yeah. I played, you know. I was lucky. I played with the... even with some kids where I used to live. They knew that I was Jewish but somehow they, they played with me, you know. More or less, you know. On the street, you know, you played. You had the little cars you played, you know. You played with little things, you know. You went down there and, but, really, for fun, you couldn't even...

Were there clubs or anything like that?

What?

Did they have clubs?

No. No. No. No. I belonged to the *Bar-Kochba* that I went to. That was a sports club. But, again, that was, that was while I was in school. That was in '38 they dissolved it. It was no more.

Okay. So when you were... I was going to say, what were your teenage years like, but you got drafted into forced labor, you said.

Yeah. Right. All of them, you know. All of us. A lot of them got drafted.

And was it... where did you live when you did that?

Well, I could live at home, you know. I was, I was working. I was lucky, you know, they had two. They had one... there were shifts from six to six. Two shifts, you know. Morning and night. And then, I guess, I had two shifts. It was from six to three and then the other one were from three to midnight, you know. And... it was about an hour to get to that factory. [unclear] And came midnight, I came home about 1:30 in the morning, you know. It was pretty rough there.

So there was no time for any... for anything else besides doing that?

Oh, no. No. No. No.

Did you have friends of the opposite sex?

Well, yes. I had several. I had friends, you know. But it was just casual friends.

But not like dating or anything.

Dating, no. We had no time to date, you know. Well, there was... I started to with one ... I had, like I said, I was dating one girl. And after I dated her for about, we just seen each other. She was a year younger when I come from work, so we walked around. I went a few weeks. And one day I came home from the shift and my mother said that that girl was here, that the next day they had to report that she was deported, you know. And then I went, for a while, also with another girl a very short time. And she was deported, so I said to myself I'm not going to get involved in anything, you know? What's the use? And I don't know when it's going to be my turn, you know.

Right. Right. Did you get along with your parents?

Oh, yeah.

Were they strict?

My mother was stricter than my father was, you know. Either way, whenever I did something my mother said, "Just wait until dad comes home," you know. And came whenever he came home, he patted my back and said, "He'll be all right." You know? And, oh, she got so mad for that.

[Laughs] What kind of things in the house would cause tension? What would you do that would cause problems in the house?

Well, she was very strict with me that of course, that I'm home at a certain time. I mean, not night but when I was a child and we went someplace or so, and you know usually child things. What maybe you did, you know. But, I mean, I really didn't do anything too bad, but she was pretty strict, yeah.

What values or standards were most important to your parents?

Well, I mean, what could I say? Especially my father was pretty religious, you know. And my mother wasn't that, she, more or less, to accommodate him, you know. That was it. But he was, he was religious, you know, and he taught me. And I was lucky enough I got in - I stood *bar mitzvah* in 1938, you know. That was one of the last *bar mitzvahs* before the *Kristallnacht*, you know. It was... in fact, it almost... my mother, she was always scared. She wanted to call it off. What happened was in June of 19-... Early I got *Bar Mitzvahed* the 18th of June. And the first of June, the Germans passed a law that Jews can only walk two people on the street, you know? In other words, three, four, you couldn't walk. And it was very unclear if you could assemble at the synagogue, you know. So when I was *Bar Mitzvahed*, we were not too, I mean we had a minyan alright, but there wasn't too many people, and afterwards, there was just my grandmother and my two aunts were there. And my father. And only the rabbi came and one close friend to watch you. That's all. I didn't have a big one. They were just, for a while there, you know, had some, like some herrings, a little wine and some and they already left pretty soon. You know, everyone was scared.

Right. Right. Were the Jews generally accepted in the community, as a rule?

Well, like I said, there were some good Germans, but they were afraid themselves, you know. They would talk to you if they saw nobody sees them or so, but it was, they were so brainwashed that, you know, Jews were Jews, you know, and uh...

Did you experience any antisemitism toward you?

Oh yeah, plenty from the... there were some kids, I mean, yeah, they were very antisemitic, you know. And, yeah, I experienced it.

Now, how did you get your Jewish education?

Well, mostly ... I'll tell you, mostly from the Jewish school, you know. We had Hebrew. And I was there, not that I want to brag, but I was about the best in the class. And then later on, almost I could say the best in the school when I went in the upper grades. But from the time I was, at least, I don't know if it was five, or six... six years for sure. I went with my father not only Saturday but Friday evenings. The synagogues were packed. I went to school every Friday. And for one year, from our school, the music teacher was also, you know, here in one synagogue which had an organ, so they had a boys choir there, though. I went there Friday evenings and sang in the boys choir, you know. And I picked up quite a bit. After the war I was in Berlin. There was hardly anybody that acted as a cantor in Berlin, you know. And I taught myself for a while. Reading the Torah on high holidays. I probably made some mistakes, but I figured, you know, better than they had no, they had a few of them that started reading from the *Chumash* there, and I didn't like that. I did that over there. And, at first, you know, when we came to the States, with my wife, I came, we came to Lincoln. We weren't... we came... we did not come right away to Kansas City. And the first money I earned... we came shortly before the high holidays, I was, act as a cantor in Lincoln.

Oh. Wow!

[Laughs] They gave me \$50.00 for it. Wasn't much, but was better than nothing.

Wow! Gosh! Did you... so your... I was, the question was did they celebrate *Shabbat* and the holidays. Obviously, you did. Were, were the holidays important in your family? In your home?

Like I said, yeah. Again, you know, I said there were very important more or less for my father that he was very religious, you know. But, yeah, we went and had *Seder*. If you didn't... at our house, we had good friends, so we went to the *Seder* there. And, you were afraid to do those things, you know. And later on that somebody sees you, and so. But, yeah, we did the holidays and I was from the time I was 13 I was fasting on Yom Kippur.

What was your favorite holiday when you were a child?

Well, I don't know whether I can know. But, you know, Passover, I liked. I liked that with the, the food, and the *Seder*, the *Seder* evening, you know, that was... I liked the family together.

Did you celebrate any secular holidays? Like did they have any national holidays in Germany?

Yeah, well, the national holidays, we had lots of holidays. But they were more geared toward, you know the Nazis, those holidays. They had that, you know like the first of May

they had that was May Day and things like that, and we didn't celebrate Christmas. I mean, nothing.

Were there cultural events in your town that you took part of?

Well, I was, like I said, they had until in the early '30s, I just went to the movies and I went... I liked opera, I liked to go. And then, when I had the chance, you know, when my aunt, she was there at the Jewish theater, I went with her. I had you know, they had plenty, but you couldn't go there, so. And also was no money for anything like that.

Right. Right.

Like I told you, it was very tight.

Were your parents more concerned about maintaining Jewish identity or fitting in before the Nazis came?

Well, I really... Before the Nazis came, I was eight years old when they came, and so, I think they were trying to fit in, but also, you know, they didn't make any bones about being Jewish.

Right. Did they care or encourage you to have non-Jewish friends?

Well, yeah. They said I had, yeah, they encouraged me to have good with everybody, yeah.

Did Zionism affect you or your Jewish community?

Well, it was there. They had, what they had there, they had a some Jewish movement there ... the Theodor Herzl group, you know, and all kind of... In fact, there was one group that wasn't Zionist, that was already when the Nazis were there, they had the group they called the Naumann group. They were trying to imitate the Nazis. They were wearing dark brown shirts, you know, and they were very much leaned to what the Germans say, you know. But even that group was later on dissolved. You couldn't have any groups. There were also Betar and there were several Jewish groups there, but...

Were your parents or you involved in them at all?

No. No. No.

Okay. Now, okay, we've covered that. You... that's for later because you're too young. Okay. When and how did you first become aware of the Nazi presence in Germany?

Well, early in, even before 19-... before they really came to power in 1932, you know. They had already storm troopers running around there, you know. And before Jewish stores, don't buy a Jew's. And they, they were beating, beating up people. You know, they were

even beating up people who they thought they looked like Jews, you know. And I remember there was... they were beating up one man, he wasn't Jewish. He said, "What do you want from me? I am not Jewish." So they said, "Well, if you're not a Jew, why aren't you with us and wearing the uniform?" You know, so that ...

Do you remember the first day of the occupation?

What, when the Germans came?

Uh-huh.

Well, it wasn't... It was January 31 of 1933. You know I wasn't even eight years old then. And there was a big... They marching through the streets and celebrating the victory.

So they were pretty much there from 1932 on?

Oh, yeah.

Okay. What were your impressions, or your family's impressions, upon first seeing the Nazis?

Well, they were nothing like... most Jews, they said, "Ah, nothing to worry about. They'll last a few, maybe a few months, a year or so and then something else will come." You know?

Right.

And there was nothing to worry about.

Did you have any friends who thought it was something to worry about and left?

Oh, yeah. There were, well, there were, starting in '33, '34, there were very few of them, you know. But there were not many places to go. To come here, you had to have money and, or somebody to say that they'd take care of you.

Sponsor? Yeah.

Yeah, sponsor, so... And they left and like I said, most of the Germans, even the ones that were well off, they didn't want to leave, you know. They thought, "Why should I leave my, everything I have worked for years and leave?" you know. And then later on there were quite a few of them left, but then it was too late. There was no place to go.

Right.

And those who went to Europe in the places, except the ones who went to England, you know, were just, for after the war, they got them there too.

Right. Right. Did you remember your parents having discussions in the house about the Nazis?

No, I don't.

Okay. So, you remember, you remember *Kristallnacht*?

Oh, yeah. In fact, I spoke about it last year and made the, at the, at the Temple. I spoke there. And that was the sixtieth anniversary, and then I spoke ten years earlier and it was here already I was interviewed, here, you know. I remember *Kristallnacht* as if it was yesterday.

And book burnings? Do you remember were there book burnings?

Oh, yeah. There was burnings, you know, when I came out of the house and went to go to the school, there was one synagogue two blocks away, you know. And when I went there, you know, when I went out of the house, I seen smoke coming out there. And, you know, as a child, you're curious. I went there and I seen the synagogue burning, and there was, the fire department was there but they didn't do nothing except they were pouring water, there was a house next to it, so that it wouldn't... And on the left there were railroad tracks. And I remember there was, as I stood there, there was one woman. She innocently asked, "Aren't you going to try to put that fire out?" And they answered, they told her, "Lady, if you know what's good for you, then you'd better leave." You know, so. Yeah, and then when I went to school that day, I walked and came by some Jewish stores and everything was, you know... You know, the windows were broken and the merchandise, and the Nazis, as the Germans went by there, "Help yourself. Help yourself to the merchandise." You know, and of course, that was the day when my uncle was taken. They arrested so many people too. And they were taken to Sachsenhausen, the ones from Berlin, you know. It was very hard. And then, in the morning, I heard, I didn't see it, but I heard about it. You know, many Jewish store owners, they had their apartment right behind their stores, so as the men got taken out early in the morning in their nightgowns and barefoot and they made them dance on the broken glass, barefoot.

Oh, gosh.

So, it was, it was awful, you know. And then, well, I remember about [unclear] oh about six weeks later, they started to release them, you know. But there was a condition that you had to leave Germany within, don't put me up, take me exactly - I believe it was 72 hours.

Oh, my gosh!

And they could take with them ten German Marks, which was at that time about two and a half dollars, you know. And I seen them still there. And, of course, nobody was, wanted to take them in, you know. So they finally, the German, you know, the Jewish agencies, they contacted Britain. They wanted them to send what was then Palestine, and they said, "No way." You know, they don't want that problem with the Arabs. Even here, they finally they called on President Roosevelt, and he said, "Uh!" It was the winter, he said. "Congress is on vacation," and they wouldn't let them. Anyway, he can't, he said you can't do nothing. He wouldn't take them in either. So in the last desperate moves, they contacted the British government again, and they finally agreed to take a certain amount and send them to Shanghai, you know. That's where they went...

I've never heard that!

Oh, yeah. They went to Shanghai and that's where they, that's ... they were treated there pretty well, but it was, you know, the climate was different for older people. A few of them died, but most of them survived and... But then, again, when the war broke out, they were arrested, but not because they were Jews, because they were holding British papers and they were the enemy. But, to be fair to the Japanese, they were, they treated, they were just put in a camp, treated and most of them survived and then they came back. We have quite a few of them in Kansas City used to be in Shanghai.

Oh, really?

Yeah.

I've never, ever heard that!

Yeah.

So, did any non-Jews help you?

Well, yeah, they helped [unclear]. But, of course, we had an apartment was leased to a Swede. He was a tailor and he let... helped us. He let us stay there and some...

Oh!

See, what happened was, on... for two years, like I said, I worked at that factory.

Upholstery?

No. No. No. No. That was the ammunition plant.

Oh, right. Uh-huh. Uh-huh. The forced labor.

And, so I missed a day on February - Saturday, February 27, 1943, there was what they called the *Großaktion*. They wanted to get rid of all the Jews, you know.

It was called a what?

Großaktion.

Oh, okay.

That means, the big action, you know?

Okay. Gross action. Uh-huh. Right.

And, we were arrested from the plant there and taken to a camp that was supposed to send them off to concentration camps.

Away from home... you were not at home.

That was... no, no. That was... I was two weeks in that camp. What happened was that they asked, you know, of course, there was a big confusion. There were thousands of people there. That used to be an old synagogue that wasn't all burned down, and they used the place to, from the people who are sent to camp. And they asked if there are any people who have non-Jewish wives or [unclear] or who are not fully Jewish. And there were some of them, young kids, who said we have to lose them. I said, "I am not... I have a parent that's not Jewish." So we were put for two weeks in a camp. And, see, I was not a German citizen. I was stateless because of my parents. You know, like my father came from Poland and he had the German citizenship. But right away they took it away from him and he was stateless. So I had a passport. So after two weeks, they had to vacate the building, so I was temporarily released there, you know. And of course then, immediately I went into hiding because... together with my mother. I mean, I had no food stamps, no nothing. And, what I had to wear for two years... I had... I believe I had two or three pairs of socks. I had maybe one change of underwear, two shirts and only one jacket that was an old suit and a pair of pants and one pair of shoes.

Oh.

So when you think I wear for two years, only the same thing.

Now, wait a minute. When they took you from that plant, did they take... and took you to this camp, was your mother with you?

No, my mother wasn't with me. She was... they didn't get to her. She was at that time at home.

So when they released you temporarily, you got your mother?

I went there. I went with my mother and we stayed there with that... at our apartment with, we had a room together.

And is that where the non-Jewish person helped you?

Yeah, that was the Swede. Yeah.

A Swede. And, so, how long did he hide you?

Two years.

You were in that house for...

In there for two years, yes. Somebody... they didn't know if my mother, you know... what was going on. They figured, well if she is there, she is... they didn't. Of course, I didn't... I didn't wear the star anymore and anything. I hardly went out of the house, you know. But my mother, she went...

She just went about her business?

Well, not above board. You know, we had no food ration cards, you know. So she... she was good at needlepoint, so she made a lot of stuff, you know, and traded it for a little bit of food. And mostly food, but we had, uh, I had no meat for two years. There was no fat... I weighed 90 pounds when it was over. And...

And how old were you?

I was older... let's see. That was '43 that I was 18 years old.

So, '43 to...

To '45.

So you spent the entire war in hiding?

Yeah... well, not the entire war. The war started in '39.

Right. Right. But... but, those...

From '43 to the last...

...to the end of the war...

And I couldn't... the worst part was when they had almost everyday air raids, twice... during the day, the Americans came and during the night, the British came. And we couldn't use any shelter, you know. Going out and no shelter. So we just... they had the fire bombs, you know. They had some planes. First, the British in the night, they came. They had one plane. It was staking out. You know, you could see. They colored it like Christmas trees. And then the other one from where they dropped the bombs, and it was...

Okay, so I'm not really understanding where you were. You were... were you in a room in somebody else's apartment?

In a room, yeah. Yeah, that was... that apartment belonged to that Swede.

I see. I see.

He was a tailor.

Wow! Okay, so... Okay, so let's go to liberation.

Yeah.

What happened?

Well, I'll tell you, liberation wasn't even what I thought about. It was officially on May 8th, 1945 when the Russians took the city, you know.

Oh.

And, of course, there's another story. We just now had the ten years of anniversary of the wall coming down. And then before that they had the 50th anniversary in Berlin of that airlift.

Uh-huh.

But, the Russians, when they came in, they said, I had to be... have a low profile still. Why? Because they said, if you told them you were Jewish, they said that you're a liar. The Germans killed off all the Jews. There are no Jews left.

The Russians said that to you?

The Russians said that, so some of them, they were very [unclear]. I can't... my liberation was two months later on July 4th, 1945. I lived in that park when the British took over, and when they came in, that was actually the liberation, you see.

Well, tell me exactly... exactly what happened when the Russians came in.

Well, it was -they came in. It took six weeks before they took the city, even though you couldn't...

And you were still in hiding all that time?

Still in... yeah. Still in hiding. But you can... if you ever see those pictures on television, the last days of Berlin. I'm more than amazed that anybody could have survived that fire power, you know.

Uh-huh.

You had dead bodies laying there, all over the streets. Russians, German, everybody. It was ... so when they came finally... they came in and they didn't do. They took the... mostly they took the watches from people, you know. They were... said, "Yuri! Yuri!" you know. And some of them, you know, that's the one thing ... the meanness they sent in... The Russians that took that were not really what you'd call White Russians from the European. They were from Siberia. They didn't even know where they were, you know. [Laughs]

[Laughs] Right.

And what they did was they took out the faucets from the wall, you know. And they said, when you asked them what for, they said, "Yeah, we take it home." And they took out from the ceiling. They said, "We want to have water from wall and light from ceiling." They thought if they just stick 'em up that... that, you know, that was it, you know.

[Laughs]

And then also, they had... they were crazy for watches. And one kid, we had a big alarm clock, I seen. And he said, "Well, I'm going to bring that to a watchmaker and have him make me two or three watches from that," you know?

[Laughs]

So, it was really bad, you know, when they came in, and there were for a while, the whole city... I mean, 90% of the city was destroyed. What wasn't destroyed by bombs was destroyed from the fighting there before they took the city.

So, what ... how did you know that the Russians were coming?

They were coming anyway. You seen them come in.

Did you know that they were going to come? Did somebody tell... was there people talking ...?

Well, there's some of them... there were some of them... some were there in the house, and finally we went downstairs, you know. And there was somebody come hollering, "The Russians are coming. The Russians are coming."

Oh.

And then they came in.

So...

And they took some... right away, they took girls, you know, they took them and they raped them and... well, it was not a pretty sight.

No. And so, you said, they came in and... when did they come in?

May 8th.

In May. But a month later, you considered your...

Two months later. It was July 4th when the British came in.

The British came in. When the Russians came in, then were you... they told you to kind of lay low, but were you...

We laid... I laid... they didn't tell, but we laid low because they were running around. We were afraid that they might grab you and send you off.

Oh. So you really didn't have much more freedom than...

No. No. Not too much more freedom.

So the British came in and...

That was when they came in to Berlin, you know, was just...

And what did you do? They came in and ...

Well, nothing. They came in. I mean I had, for a while, I tried to... I went I think, for a while, I went for a few weeks in a Jewish hospital, you know, to get a little bit pepped up.

In Berlin?

Berlin. In Berlin. And then, for a few months, you know, I tried to relax, you know, to see what's going on. And, I mean, if the war would have lasted just maybe two or three

months more, I wouldn't have survived it. We were at the end of our rope. We had no more money, no more nothing. And we did... I tell you the truth, there was a time when I didn't care when there was an air raids, there were times I sort of wished a bomb would fall and it would be all over because it was just, you know. It's the nerves. And, see when I, like I said, when I came here, went to Lincoln, I weighed 90 pounds and I weighed... they sent me to a doctor and it was a Jewish doctor. At that time it was new.

Here in Kansas... here in the United States?

In the United States.

Hold on. I want to get to that. [Laughs] Just a little bit more chronology. So you were in the hospital in Berlin, a British hospital.

No, not a British... in a German. It was a German Jewish hospital.

Oh, German Jewish. And, and... and were there anybody in particular that helped you that you remember as...?

No. There was... there was the regular, you know, the nurses and stuff. I was not long there. I was maybe a couple of weeks and then I went back home.

And went back home to your old apartment?

Yeah. Yeah. We got that old apartment. That Swede who had us, he said he had enough. He left and went to Sweden.

Have you heard from him since?

No. He was an older male. At that time, he was late in his 60s or 70s, old.

So what happened? You went back to the apartment and what did you do from there?

Well, later I got a job with the Joint - American Joint for a year. And then, uh, for...

So you're living in Berlin?

Yeah.

You're just...

In Berlin. I was living in Berlin, you know. And then, for a year. And then I worked also for the Jewish ... the same counterpart of the Joint the British relief Joint... so I worked there. And...

What did you do?

Well, I was there. And in '46, I made my driver's license and I was driving...
Oh.

...people around. So, I did that. But later on, you know, I was in [unclear], I was organizing – there were some of them, the Jewish youth group... I was... that came about, you know. The American chaplain there, he opened... they had a like a villa which they occupied, and he opened it. He said, every Friday evening, he wanted Jewish people there. And I went there and there were another few of them, older people, who after two, three weeks, that chapter, and he called us after they had... they were going to finish. And he said, "You know, I see I'm glad to see you, but I like to see some young people." So, some of us... it was only through word of mouth, you know, there were some of them, maybe 40 people, that was all that survived of thousands and thousands of... there were hardly any young people survived. So we had that youth organization, and then I met my wife. And then in, oh, late '47, we got engaged in 4-..., May '48 and got married in June, in August. The reason we did it that fast, we wanted to get out together, you know, for the papers and...

Now, you were with your mom?

Yeah.

How did you know that your dad had perished?

Well, if he didn't... it was, you know, if he didn't come. We were waiting after the war was over and we were hoping after they brought people back by trains, so they... After four weeks, you know, if they didn't come back, you know they never will be.

Was there anybody who had come back and said...?

No. From... no... from that particular place, he was sent to Riga, you know.

Uh-huh.

And nobody came there... it was... I don't even know that different things. Some of them said that it was the cold, you know, was in early December, and that they left them there on the track to be to frozen to death and then buried them there. And some of them said that they put them there in the camp there and let them die there, so I don't know.

Now, do... do... are there many people of your town that you were friends with that have survived? Do you know any of them?

No. No, there... there were very few. Yeah, very few of them survived there.

And now, so you met your wife when you were working ...

No, when I was with the youth group. When I had that youth group.

Right. With the youth group. In Berlin also?

In Berlin also.

And where did she come from? Where had she been?

Well, she was... her mother was by birth she was not Jewish, you know. So, and my father-in-law was blind. So, somehow, they let them, mixed marriages, they let them stay. I mean, she converted, but it didn't cause a stir. They let her stay, so she...

Converted to Judaism?

...lived in the eastern part of Germany. Berlin, of Berlin.

Oh, so she was a Berlin girl?

Yeah, she was just...

And you just happened to find her.

Yeah, that's right. After the war, you know.

Oh. Okay. All right. So you worked in the youth group and then, and you got married and then what happened after you... in '48, right?

In '48.

What happened after you married?

Well, I'll tell you, I couldn't get... I couldn't get a job, really, because of my honesty, because everybody was hiring. They knew I was Jewish and they said, "Well, let's be honest. Are you going to stay here or are you going to plan to leave?" And I told them, "Well, we need food, fare for that." So we lived on unemployment, you know. And, also I did a little bit cantorial work there and I got little bit of money from there.

What kind of work?

Well... as a cantor, you know?

Oh, cantorial. Yeah. Right.

Cantorial, yeah, so. And then in 1949, our oldest daughter was born, you know. So, we had there. And then, now it was completely responsible for me. We had about three months later, she got pregnant again, and so, then we came over here, you know. Actually, they didn't let people go if the wife was more than six months pregnant, you know. We go by plane, but she was already almost eight months pregnant when we came to Lincoln. You know our boy was... the oldest boy was born in Lincoln. And we always tease him. We say, "You were born in America but you were made in Germany." [Laughs]

[Laughs] So, wait a minute. You came with your mom?

No, that was my wife and my girl. My mom came a little bit later.

And you came by plane?

Yeah. Oh, that was... that was something else. It took 27 hours, you know, going from Munich. And it was an old converted Army plane, you know, and that is a story by itself, our arrival here.

Well, you went to Lincoln?

Yeah.

Lincoln, Nebraska?

Yeah. Yeah.

And how did you happen to go to Lincoln?

We had to go where they send you. Where there was room. See, we came as refugees, so you had to go. And they told us, we really didn't want to go. They said, "Well, either you go there or you have to start later all over again." That was the only place that was empty. And they said after one year, you can... you have to stay there by law, a year. And after six months, you can apply to go someplace else. So, immediately after six months, I applied there and we wanted to go to Philadelphia. And...

Why?

Well, it was close to the... we had some people we knew there and it was a big city. So, we had never even heard of Kansas City at that time, you know. But then, finally, my mother was with us and they sent my... the parents of my wife. They sent them to Kansas City. They were supposed to go to Omaha, but when they told them, "Well, your daughter and

son-in-law not going to stay in Lincoln. We send you to Kansas City." They had here also for the blind something, so anyway, then they wrote me a letter from New York if we would consider going to Kansas City. They like their families together. So one Saturday morning, I just took a bus and came here for visit. Went to see what was going on. And I seen the Union Station. I see the hustle and bustle here. And I found out that there was a large Jewish community so it would be great to come to Kansas City.

I'm going to stop.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1]

Tell me a little bit – we kind of glanced over meeting your wife. Tell me what attracted you to your wife when you met her.

Well, what attracted? We just when we went there we started talking to each other and we started dating, you know. There weren't too many people, girls there, and I tell you the truth, the Jewish girls, they were going mostly with the they were survivors from Poland, you know? And they were doing all kind on the black market and they had a pocket full of money and so on. So, they were going with them and so but my wife, she just she started dating you know. And I don't know how we say it's like uh, God made a proposal because we ... I really ... you know that I didn't even want to propose for what happen. It was on Passover in 1948. I went over there and had to the parents, you know, conducted the *Seder*, you know. It was too late and I stayed - spent the night downstairs. And they had a little house there. And by noon, I wanted to be [unclear]. In the morning, we were sitting there just talking in the yard for about just like I talk to you now. All of a sudden I ask her if she wanted to marry ... I had no intention of that. And that came, you know. And she agreed. And then, we had actually problems. My father-in-law wasn't very happy about it because, you know, he said, "Well, how are you going to take care of her? You have nothing," you know. And said, "Well, we want to go out," then and so he finally agreed, you know. And then, we got married.

And what kind of wedding did you have?

Oh, a beautiful wedding. Well, it was of course at the synagogue. We got married twice. You know, in Germany, you had to go to the Justice of the Peace first because - before the rabbi could marry you. So we got married on the Friday and then on a Sunday at the synagogue. And, we had somehow my wife had an aunt who was a seamstress. She made a beautiful wedding dress for her. And I didn't even know but my father-in-law insisted. "Oh, you want to make a good wedding." We even had a carriage with two horses that picked us up, you know.

How did you get the money for that?

Well, it wasn't, it came from, I don't know, from the synagogue. I don't know. They gave us ... I had a little bit. Actually, I spent most of the money on the wedding, you know. So we had a beautiful wedding there, and ...

How many people came?

Well there weren't too many. You see, my wife had a little bit of ... from my side, there was only my mother and then some friends. There were maybe 20 people there.

And was there music?

No. Oh, no. No music. Nothing.

Did your wife have a job?

No. Not ... she had, well, for a while, yeah. They had the DP camps there, in Berlin, you know, where some of them. And she was for a while taking care there of the children, you know.

Oh. Uh-huh.

Yeah. She did. But, later on, no.

So your daughter, your daughter, Monica?

Uh-huh.

I went to Sunday School with her.

Oh, you went to Sunday...

Yeah. I realized it after I made the appointment with you. So Monica was born in Berlin?

Yes.

In 1949?

Yeah. She was 13 months when she came over here.

And ... so, so, we can go on from that.

Yeah.

Right. So then you came to the United States. And they called you and asked if you would go to Kansas City.

Right.

And you agreed.

Yeah. Well, I agreed, yeah.

And you came to Kansas City. Where did you go?

Well, they had us for about ... they had a little ... I came with my mother too. She had a little apartment with some Jewish family. She had a room. And for a little while, we stayed in a two room apartment with my in-laws, you know.

Where was that?

On Linwood Boulevard. 1907. That apartment doesn't exist. And then we were allotted - it was awful at that time, 1951. So it was after the flood when we came here.

Uh-huh. Oh yeah.

Then so, we were lucky that somebody moved out on the bottom and so we got that - they gave us that apartment there. But we had to redo it and, so...

And where ... wait a minute ... well, let's go back. You said, your son ... I forgot this part. Your son was born in Lincoln?

Yes.

And what's his name?

Benny.

Benny. And he was born in 1950?

'50.

1950.

1950.

Okay. So then you ... now when you were in Lincoln, did you work?

Oh, yeah. Well, here and there I worked, you know. It was awful hard to get a job. See that is town for those students. They worked for next to nothing just to make extra. So finally I worked at... there was one Jewish guy there who came in 1938 and he worked at the junkyard there, you know. So, he gave me a job there. It wasn't... but I really didn't like it too well. It was hard to work, you know, and so... before that I worked at... I knew that was temporary at the factory. They were making peanut brittle, you know. So what... we... so it was hard... it was... the foreman was a German. He was a Nazi. Oh, that was bad! But, anyway... I tried to, and then... also I worked there for a few weeks at the grocery store. All the Jewish people and there they decided, they didn't, so they laid me off too. So I don't know... it was...

You said it was pretty antisemitic in Lincoln?

Oh, yeah. And the one guy said, "Oh, you're German. Oh that's nice." And as soon as they found out you're Jewish, they said, "You know what Hitler did was, it was really bad. But with the Jews, you know, he should have killed them all." And I said, "To that, I come to the United States for that?" So, I was glad when I left Lincoln.

And so you came to the Kansas City and you lived on Lincoln Boulevard.

Linwood Boulevard.

Linwood. I said Lincoln. Linwood. And, did you work?

Oh, I tell you. The first four years here I had one job after another. And not so... I started first at a garment factory. And there I was there as a truck driver, you know. What they tried to do, I worked for three of them, that was for tax purposes, they put one that they called Textile Care, you know. Just to take care of their delivery. It was Youth Craft [unclear] Manufacturing and Louis Walter at that time. Well, what happened there was I had to make two pick ups, you know, besides delivery. One in the, starting at 2:00 and then work my way up and then bring the stuff to the Post Office. And I had to take turns. And when the time was for them, you know, the season, everybody want to ship as much as they could. So when I was a runner, I picked up the first. They said, "When you get done with the other two, come on back and we have some more." So I said, "I'll gladly come, but I'm not going to make it back by the time..." They didn't want to pay no overtime. Made \$1.00 an hour and they didn't want to pay no overtime for that little bit. So they said, "Don't worry about it. We call up there and have them sign your card, and you get paid." So I did and I got paid after about a year. Finally the one from, the boss from Louis Walter called and he said, "You know, you're an excellent worker and so on. But we have to let you go. We decided we are not in the trucking business. We are in the garment business. So let everybody hire their own driver." So I was out of a job. And then I worked a year for a Rival Manufacturing. Also I worked in department, the plating department. You know, where they plated the parts for can openers?

Uh-huh. Un-huh.

But I was a helper and I was down there, and there was a box like with sawdust. And I had to see that everything was all right. If not, I had to put it on the side. They had to do it again. And I liked it. So after one year, one of the platers quit, you know. So there were no Jewish people, they were from Poland. The slum people. And, well, they told me that... it was actually union officially... but you know, that's nothing... they said, "You have to go up there. You're next in line to go up for the plater." And there were two other helpers. "Oh, yes, so lucky to go up there. You get a good raise right away." And then, well, I said, "You can have it." So, I went there and told them, said, "No, you have to go up there." I didn't want to refuse it. I went up and after one week I had a big rash on my arm, you know. You know, from those chemicals. So, I went to the doctor. At that time, it was Dr. Waxman was my doctor at that time. And he said, "Well the rash is nothing. I give you some ointment. It'll go away. But what are you doing." So I explained. I still weighed just about a little over 100 pounds. And so he said, "Those fumes, they're going to get in your lung and you're done for." So, I told them and they give me they wrote it down. I said, "I'll be glad to go back down and take less money." "We can't do that," they said. They didn't want to send me another department, so I had to quit.

Oh, my gosh!

And then I worked a year for... I worked R.D. Mann Carpet. I knew my father had the business. And I was, I told Mr. Mann, I said, "This is a hard worker. [unclear]" He said, "Oh, you'll be all right." He said, "There is a man there. He is going to retire. This is just, you know, you're supposed to learn how to keep track and it will be like a desk job." So I was there almost a year and that man didn't retire. And at the end of one year, he told me, "I see it is a little hard for you." And that man is here so long, he decides to work another couple of years. So I called up... you know the Jewish Vocational Service?

Uh-huh.

Well... he let me go. But, then... so, finally, I was out of work. And I was so disgusted because I wanted to have a steady job. And then in October I got the job at Ace Electric. I don't know if you heard about it. That was, at that time on 31st and Gillham. That was a small place with 20 people. It was by two Hungarian Jews. They were having that they were brother-in-laws. It was October and I was already a while out of a job. I went. They sent me there. I went there. And right away I was accept...

[Sneezes] Excuse me.

Bless you.

Thank you.

It was the... there was a foreman. He was very nice. A Jewish guy. But besides that I was the only Jew. And they wanted to show that they don't show me any... you know, preference. It was... for every dime I had to fight. But I thought maybe... well, it was October and winter it's hard to find a job. I thought maybe in the spring, I'm going to look for... look something... really try to find something. And, so, the way it turned out, I spend... I was a piece worker. I was 17 years with Ace Electric at that time. [Laughs]

[Laughs] Oh!

And then, they go and close. They had over 100 employees, mostly from Yugoslavia, they took in, lot of women. And finally, the one owner passed away and the other sold out. And, I asked them finally after 17 years, I asked them for a little raise. "Oh, we can't give you. Eventually you'll get some." You know, I did a lot of work for them. And, so, I... my wife said, "I see you're so unhappy there. Do me a favor. Quit. Because once you work, you can find another job." So after 17 years, I quit. And it was very hard on us because for at least six weeks, you didn't get no unemployment if you quit.

Uh-huh.

And we had no saving or nothing. I almost lost my house and everything. So, finally, you know, my wife has a sister too, who lives here in Kansas City. And her husband, he passed away a few years ago. He worked for the railroad. He said, "Why don't you come and make an application there? They pay more than what you did there and it's a steady job." So, I went there and that guy who I was supposed to see was on vacation. But the one who told me, said, "What kind of job you want?" I said, "I take any kind of job, you know, cleaning engines." Said, "Well, for that right now we don't hire." I thought it was another bum steer. I left already at the door handle - wanted to leave. He said, "One minute. What did you do?" So I told him what I did, I worked 17 years for Ace Electric. Said, "Oh, you're an electrician." I said, "No, I'm not. That what you call it." He said, "Well, we need some good people. Piece work electrician is anyhow different from the other one." And let me talk to the union steward. So I talked to him and he said, that was at 10:00 in the morning, he said, "Come back at 12:00." So I had to go upstairs and tell him what you told me, what you did, and we'll see what we can do for you. I said, "What do I have to lose?" So I came back, and I told him what I had done. And then I went out and ten minutes later I come back. "We hire you for 30 days on trial. And if you work out you pay your union dues, you are in." I figured what... I was out of a job. I needed the money. So I went to work there. But I worked night shift only, you know. From midnight to eight.

Oh!

And after the 30 days were up, nobody said that I was supposed to go before the Board again. I figured I'd let it get another week or so, and then finally I said, "I'm going to get into trouble." I talked to the foreman. I said, "Listen. I'm here already six weeks. I'm

supposed to be before the Board." Foreman said, "Oh. You are in already. We would have let you go a long time ago."

[Laughs]

"You work out just fine. Just go pay your union dues and you are in." And I worked there for 15 years until I retired. But that was... first it was hard work. And then, on top of it, I was the only Jew there. So tried to convert me into... they said, "This is a Christian railroad." You know, and all these things.

Oh, gosh!

And they messed with my car, too, you know, a few times. But I stuck it out and I'm glad I did because they pay a fairly good pension.

Oh, great!

But I said... told my wife right away... ask her, when I turn 62... I said, "I'm going to retire even if it's 20 because I can't take it no more." There was 20% off. So, I found out how much I'm going to get. And I figure you know, you had no bills. Our car was paid for and everything except, that time, our house. We still had to pay on it. But that was the only one. So, I quit and... August 1st, I quit in '87, you know. And then I worked part-time at the *Hadassah* store here, you know, as a driver. For that I made \$5.00 an hour. But four hours a day. But that add a little bit, you know.

Yeah.

The check was \$90.00 a week, and I did that for two years. But then that girl, that manager - was a nice Jewish lady, a friend of ours - she retired. And I said, "When you retire, I quit there too." Because started to *schlep* the furniture and...

Oh, gosh!

So for another couple of years... not quite a year and a half... it was a little tight because my wife is three years eight months younger than I am, so she gets part of her, my pension too. She gets part. So, what's the fee? Oh, I don't know. And by that time, our house paid off. And, so we were, so I'm retired since 1987.

And did your wife work during all this?

Well... she worked for about two, a little over two years. She worked at Macy's at The Landing. The reason she had to work was our third daughter, our second daughter, she was born in 1955. And...

And what's her name?

Yvonne. We are fortunate. We had another boy in '59. Jeffrey.

Okay.

And, so she had... her teeth were sticking out quite a bit, so the doctor said, "She needs braces." And there was no way, you know, that I could pay for them. That was \$900.00. You had to pay \$50.00 down and... \$950.00 and then \$50.00 for 18 months. So she went to work there for two years at Macy's. But she wasn't too [unclear]. She quit there too, then. And I told her I'd rather stay home with the kids.

Right. So let's go back a little bit. That's all stuff we wanted to know.

Yeah.

That's why I let you go. When did you move from the apartment on Linwood?

Oh, well, we moved there after almost, let's see, when... A year, year and a half, we moved to another apartment. It was bigger. It was a house on 27th and Harrison. A man converted the house to an apartment, you know. And we lived on the second floor. We had there a little bit more room.

27th and Harrison?

Yeah.

What year was that?

Well, I tell you exactly looking for... it was either '52 or '53. 2726 Harrison.

Did you know... did you know a grocery store on the corner of 31st and Harrison... Hillcrest Market?

Yeah.

That was my dad!

Yeah, we went to shop there.

27th and Harrison... that's right down the street! Yeah!

Yeah, right down the street.

Oh, my gosh!

Yeah. Yeah.

Okay. All right.

And then we stayed there... it must have been in '55, because we stayed there two years. And then, we, I got a little bit of restitution money there, and we bought a house on... we had nobody to help us, finally buy... So, and it was a... it was 5050 Lydia. We bought a house. We took over the payments and we lived there for 12 years. But then, you had a problem if you had to sell because Monica started high school in Paseo and it was bad. And so, I got to... I put the house on the market. I couldn't sell it. To make a long story short, we lost everything we had in the house there.

Oh!

But, I figured I didn't lose too much. We finally sold it to a broker. So he gave us what we paid down on that house, and he paid the rest of it off, you know. So I figured I lived for about... for \$85.00 a month for 12 years. How could you live cheaper, you know?

Oh, my gosh! Oh, my gosh!

So... we finally... we sold it to him. And then we moved for a year. I said, "I had enough. I'm not going to buy a house anymore." So we moved. We looked and looked for an apartment... a house. And it was a very small house on 72nd Terrace and right off Troost. Can't tell you... That was, the owners were Jewish, you know. I don't know whether if Ginsberg, whether than means anything to you, well anyway...

Which Ginsberg?

I don't know. It is Pauline Ginsberg. You know, she is a... anyway, what happened... what was... it was a very small house. It had a nice big living room, but it had only like one and a half bedrooms, so... But we just had two kids living with us. My youngest boy and Yvonne, you know. So we were happy there. We added rooms as... they slept together with just two bunk beds. But was a nice kitchen and it had on the bottom, it had drive-in garage, basement garage.

Oh, yeah.

And there was a little room. And that room we used- my son was in the service, the older one. He was in the Air Force. He was in Vietnam.

Oh.

And when he came on leave, he slept there. But anyhow, we rented that house. First they didn't want to rent it because it was so small, but they knew my wife, those people. And, well okay. Well, we lived there for two years. Well, we had to make a lease for one year. And after, they see how they got the house anyway was to rent. The mother of those Ginsberg... the father passed away but he left stipulation as long as the mother is alive, they cannot sell the house. So they wanted her to have an income.

I see.

So, she went to live with one of the children. And after one year, we took a lease out for another year. And no sooner did we take the lease out, the mother died.

[Laughs]

So they came to us and said, "Of course, we honor the lease. But we give you plenty time." They said, "We don't even hold you to it. Look for it. If you find something after one year, we going to sell the house." Well, we started looking and looking. Of course, my daughter wanted to... she had one more year to go at Southwest. She was starting to making a fuss. She wants to graduate there. So, we were kind of, wherever we go, we started my wife don't want to go to another apartment and so on. So we started looking around for a house where we move. So finally we found that where we live now. Actually, I didn't want to pay much down because I didn't want to lose much.

Right.

And I said the only way I buy is FHA. And we looked all over, you know. So, anyway, we had, we found that one where we live now. But that owner, he already bought in Johnson County. He didn't want to sell FHA. I said, "Hey" so we looked around some more and then about two weeks later, the real estate agent called, said, "Well, he decided that it was FHA." And we bought that house. And we lived there now, the first of October we lived there 28 years.

And where is that?

8212 Grand. So my children, they drive me nuts. So both of us said, "We should move." You know, it is ... the neighborhood, it is still it is all right. Used to be a pretty Jewish neighborhood. There were a lot of them. There are still a few of them left here. But, I would like to move to Kansas, you know, where close to the synagogue, at KI.

KI?

We're very active at KI. We do all the mailings for them. And my wife, she is doing for the Sisterhood, you know. And the kitchen when they have the *kiddush* for *Shabbat*, and of course, the biggest money making project is what we're starting now. At Oak Park Mall... the gift wrap.

Oh, right. Uh-huh.

We do both, we go twice a week at Christmas

Keeps you busy.

Yeah. Really keeps us busy.

Well, when you came to the United States, how did you learn English?

Well, I knew you had to learn it! We had... we knew a little bit. I took English in Germany, you know, in school.

Oh, uh-huh.

But, of course, it's a different kind. It's the King's England. But, we just had to ... when we were in Lincoln, there was one Jewish couple. They gave us a little radio for 50 years back now. We had that thing on day, almost day and night just to get used to the sound.

Oh. Yeah.

And then, another couple, they give us, you know, for newspaper.

Oh, Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

***The Lincoln Journal.* So we got that everyday and, of course, it took a long time before I could usually read the headlines. And I started reading everything. And, you know, pretty soon you find out what it was about, and that was it. You know, we got... you had to learn English. I know when we came here to Kansas City, we had that uh, who is that? I keep on forgetting this name. They call him Mr. Social Security, that, what... Oh, you probably knew him. He was teaching. He knew Yiddish and he was teaching at the old Center. He was teaching English. So when I came there and introduced myself and I talked, I said, "We are staying a few weeks and we like to take, enter in a course." And he talked with me five minutes. He said, "Well, maybe come back next year." He said, "You would be wasting your time. You know already too much."**

Oh.

So, right away in '55 we became citizens, you know.

Right away. As soon as you could.

Right away. In fact, you know, we were at that time we were required to go to school for a, about a year or so to learn about, you know, everything here. I never went to school. But

it was... so I said, "Well, I might give it a try." When we got here we had a friend here who became citizen. She gave me a book. I looked through that book, so maybe right book. And we were lucky that the guy who went, who interviewed us here for citizenship, he just became a grandpa and we had Yvonne with us. She was just a few months old. And he fooled around with her a little bit. And he asked me... but it was hard, because he looked down on the paper and asked me questions. You know, you had to be very... I think I just missed two or three of them, you know. So he said, "Well," and with my wife, too, "I won't make you come back, but promise me you will anyway go to school." I said, "Okay." I never went. So, but, I learned more or less, you know, with... if you have to, you have to, you know.

Right. Right. Well, what were your biggest challenges when you came here?

Well, to get adjusted. You know. I tell you the truth, you know, in '59, I went the first time back to Germany, you know, to visit my mother. And she was pretty sick then. And when I went there, that was, you know, Berlin was already they were looking in western for people to work, so just for the heck of it, I went to one place, and I worked already four years at Ace Electric. That was, I think it was Siemens, when I went, I just showed them my passport, I told them so and so. They would look my papers. I said, "If I would come back here, could I get a job here with you?" He said, "When do you want to start?" And, you really when I was, to tell you the truth, when I got the first time back, I was homesick.

Oh, yeah.

You know, after you leave. But when I come, came back here and got back to that grind. But the biggest challenge, of course, was to adjust to life here, you know.

Right. Right.

In '59, you know, our son was born. And so he is now, all our children, they are doing well. He is in Texas. He has a very good job there.

Uh-huh. Where is Monica?

Monica is here. She is... she was divorced and she remarried again.

Oh, good.

And she has already two grown girls. And she is a grandmother already. So we are...

My oldest is 12. We're at the same age.

Oh, gosh! Yeah. So, she is... she has the three so far she has four grandchildren and one coming from another [unclear].

Oh, my gosh! Oh, my gosh!

And in April going to be five times great-grandparents.

Wow! Wow! Oh, my gosh! Wow!

Unfortunately, most of, except for Yvonne, all of them married out of faith.

Oh. That's ...

It hurts.

It's a shame for what you went through.

Yeah, that's right.

That...

That's... that's right.

So do they not practice their religion at all?

They did. I mean, well, both my boys were *bar mitzvah*, you know. And Yvonne was *bat mitzvah*. But she lives out there in Peso, you know, it's by Leavenworth. And she is doing all right. She is a medical technician. You know, she works for a pediatrician's office there, you know.

Oh, uh-huh.

And her husband, they have a big, like a [unclear], a ranch, they're raising cattle.

Oh!

On the side. Just as a side line. He is in real estate.

Oh!

So they do all right.

Well, good.

They have two daughters, and one is in college now and the other one's already in junior college.

And she married somebody Jewish?

Yvonne did. Yeah, she did. She married a Rosenthal. I don't know if...

I don't know.

That one...you know...

I know the name but I don't know which one.

Yeah.

Do you talk about your experiences to other people? Not just here, but...

No. I mean, I don't talk. I used to... was at the school, I used to. One time I talked. But, yeah, I talked a little bit too much. First of all, I mean, the words never hear really.

Oh.

[Laughs] Second of all, you know, it, it's hard to talk about it and I am not somebody who is going to exaggerate it. [Laughs] It was bad enough without exaggerating, you know.

Right. Right. Did you talk about it with your kids?

Well, I don't know. They said... they always said, "You should write a book or you do something." I didn't even talk. They know what was going on and what... I didn't talk about it, see.

So how did they know? But, did they... they don't know about your personal experiences? About what went on with you?

Not too... they know, not too much. No, they don't know, not too much.

Okay. Well, you answered, practically answered all my questions.

Well, really.

Was it a significant event for you to become a citizen?

Oh, yeah.

You did it right away?

We did it right away, as soon as possible, yes.

What do you... so you, you're active in the synagogue. Is there anything else that you do as hobbies or any kind of recreation?

No. Really I don't, if I do, I am an avid with the crossword puzzle, you know?

Crossword puzzles?

It took me long, you know, when I started that. I mean, even I still do German puzzles, too, you know.

Oh.

They send them to me, some of them, and I do that. But, I... that was a challenge for me when I started many years back. When I seen that in paper, I said, "Well, I won't give up until I have at least a few of them down there." And one of them I'd usually get them. On Sundays, I get them also. I do that, you know. But otherwise, I don't have... My wife, she likes to putter in the yard, you know. She does it. And she does all fixing, and so I'm not very good for that, so this kind of thing.

So you... you... A couple of things here I want to go back to.

Yeah.

Did your... How did your kids know that you were a survivor?

Well, they knew that. We both of us are survivors. I mean, we told them we were survivors.

How old were they when you told them?

I don't know. They were in their teens, maybe.

In their teens? Do you think they felt different as children of survivors?

I don't think so.

Were they active in those children of survivor organizations?

No. As a matter, I thought it was funny, especially my son, you know, he was very active in the synagogue, you know. And he had a beautiful... he had a *bar mitzvah*. But people still talk about what happened was that just about a month before his *bar mitzvah*, they had a guest rabbi here. And it turned out to be the rabbi where I was *bar mitzvah*.

No!

He went from when he got out he went to Australia and then he went back, Rabbi Dr. Berkowitz. And then he was in Chicago. And then, of course, it was, he came specially, he came to me for my son's *bar mitzvah*.

Oh.

But, you know, he is, after my son, after he came back from Vietnam... I've got to tell you, he wanted to have nothing to do with Jewishness anymore. That's it. He goes only to if there's a very special things going on. And he was a pet from the cantor and everybody. He won't have nothing to... he is divorced, too, you know. He is living by himself. He's been working for the Prairie Village Police Department.

Oh.

He was a dispatcher for over 20 years and he is the head of the computer department. He has enough... see, he was four years in the service. He bought out that, I think he could retire in a year or two.

Wow.

But I think he should stay, what should he do, you know?

Well, maybe. Yeah. Well, now how do you think the Holocaust memories affect your life today? Do they, are they part of your life everyday?

Well, I mean, I think about it and sometimes you have nightmares about it. Is... but I always say sometimes, again, you belong, even though people [unclear] German clock, you belong to that. Now the kind of people get, no, that's fading out. But I always say, if you hate, hate is going to eat you up. You know, it's going to eat you up.

Right. Right.

And, it's worse to you than to another one. And, so... I just... The Holocaust, you think it is something that can't be changed. It just will never go away. But there's nothing you can do about it.

How do you think you survived? Why did you survive?

That is a very good question. That's why I asked the rabbi. I said, "How come I survived and the rest of the family and what of my friends and school mates, they didn't survive?" I just had a few months ago, I had a reunion. I went to Las Vegas. I found out we get the paper from Germany every three months. You know that? And they're looking for

people. And there were, there are a couple... a few of them who served... who I went to school with who were able to get out before I did. And, we just met a couple months ago, you know, after 60 years.

Oh. Oh, my gosh!

It was very nice. And there is one here in Kansas City I went to school with. I didn't know, Henry Hirsekorn.

I know the name Hirsekorn. I went to school with Bob ... Robert Hirsekorn.

Yeah, that is the father of Robert Hirsekorn.

Oh, really!

I went in the same class.

Oh, my gosh!

That was all the ... like I said, not a funny when something was at that time the synagogue was on Rockhill. And something was going on there. And he was sitting behind me. And you know how it is. Sometimes they say for people, if they did something, stand up to be recognized. And when I heard that name, the names assembly were called, I didn't think about it, so you know. So after a while, he was sitting, he was sitting right behind me. So I turned around and said, "Listen, Hirsekorn is not such a common name. I used to go in a class with a Heinz Hirsekorn." He changed it, you know. He said, "That is me." And then when I looked closer, I knew because he had an ear operation when he was with, and this was how I recognized him. So he is here in Kansas City.

Isn't that funny? Gosh. Did... how did the war affect your attitude and practice of religion? Did it make you stronger, or not?

Well, I don't know. You know, some of them say, of course, this religion you could go either one way or the other. A lot of them say, "Where was God?" Of course, was there, but I think that especially my father and everybody, they would want me to stick with it, so I did. And I even go to Talmud class here with the rabbi, you know, we just...

That's great.

And, I'm not that strict religious as I would like to be because especially my wife is not. If she is doing something, she is doing it right. In fact, you know, if we would have a strictly kosher house and be strictly kosher, we couldn't go to none of our kids sometime to eat or nothing.

Right.

And, you know, lots of people, they say if you have a kosher house, then you have it and you go out and eat, and who are they fooling?

Right. Right.

You know, that is right. And, of course, we have to, we live in Missouri and its seven and half miles to the synagogue. We have to drive there and so on. But we do the best we can.

How did you happen to join KI?

Well, that is again a story in itself. We started out at Beth Shalom for, but when the kids started for the first two years, they had the scholarship. And then they wanted right away \$125.00. And I wasn't making... how could I make that one? So I went for months and then got to the other and somebody said, "Why don't you go to talk to Rabbi Solomon down at KI?" So that's how I went in '57. We went there. I went there and I talked to him and I asked him. And he was the first rabbi made me a blessing that he said... first he said, the kids, "Hebrew schools have you talked about." And they were very nice to me. I even, I know I start out with \$75.00 and said anyway, you can pay it out. You pay it. And, even with that much money, you know, with four kids, I got behind every year. And they wrote it off. They were very nice to me.

Wow. What does being an American mean to you?

Well, actually it does... I don't know what is going on here with the crime and I don't think the justice system is very, you know what they're doing here it is not right all together. It is... but in a way, here is too, that I met a lot of antisemitism too here in America, in Kansas City, so I'm glad that they took me in after the war. It would have been nice if they would have taken... if I could have come before the war.

Right. Right. Right.

For the family it would have been nice. But, right now, you know, I'm 74 years old. I'm... I wouldn't say I'm on my last leg. You know I had... in '92 I had a heart attack.

Oh.

But I had angioplasty and they wanted to do a bypass. And I said, "If I have a choice, let's try angioplasty first." And it helped. And in 1995 I had a gall bladder operation. In '96 I had my back operated on. So...

You're running out of places! [laughs]

Yeah! That's right. So, anyway, it was, I am content, you know, with what we have, you know. And thank God, I mean, we are by no means we are rich or anything, but like I said, the kids would like us to move, but I'm not going to take on a mortgage and another house.

Right. Right.

Stay where I live. So I think we stay there, we have no, thank God, financial worries, you know.

Great.

That is... you can see how low our income is. I haven't filed income tax for, I don't know, five years or more.

Oh.

Yeah. I know the laws, standards, but we are content, you know. And if we want to go someplace, we can go. And, of course, now Hanukkah come up as long as the grandchildren goes, that runs into money, you know.

Right. Right.

But again I'm not going to go into that just...

You have a wonderful attitude. Here's my last question.

Yes.

What's the most important lesson that we can learn from the Holocaust?

Well, just that people shouldn't sit by there and that the Holocaust actually, should stand up if people are against, you know. But I still think the Holocaust in that sense cannot happen now because we have Israel so if... And Jews in Germany, I know they are not very welcome, and, so most of them over there are Russians, and then there are some second or third generation from those Polish people, they have everything. I shouldn't say that at all, but if anything would happen to them, I wouldn't have any [unclear] over them because they have no business being there. They are there for greed and so on, and antisemitism is growing in Germany again because, because of the Russians - because they come there and they don't learn German. They just walk around, you know, and apartments are scarce. They aren't able to get apartments so it makes antisemitism. But here, what I learned from the Holocaust that if there... I know it could happen... I know people don't believe it that something similar could happen here, too. I mean, people they feel so secure and that is of course, in Germany, had to be registered and everybody knew you were a Jew. But here you're... they don't know if you are, you know... what you are.

But it still... something similar could happen here, you know. But, like I said, there is always Israel. It is very important that it stay, because it could back up and go there, but it is. I think for the time being, everything is going to be all right.

Well, let's hope so.