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# **Tiberius Klausner Interview**

## **November 22, 1999**

This is Karen Golden, and I am sitting here with Tibor Klausner in his home. Today is November 22, yeah?

**Yeah, I put the wrong date. I put the 21<sup>st</sup>.**

That's ok, that's ok. And we're here discussing Tibor's life for Project 2000, the portrait project for MCHE. Good afternoon.

**Good afternoon, Karen. It's nice to have you here.**

Thank you. First of all, I'm going to repeat myself, and I will ask you one more time, if you would please, tell me your given name at birth, and if you would, please, spell it for me.

**My given name by birth was Tiberiu and I added the S, in Paris, some years later. And it's spelled T-i-b-e-r-i-u-s. And the last name is K-l-a-u-s-n-e-r.**

And tell me what city you were born in?

**I was born in Arad. A-r-a-d in Romania. It's part of Romania, in Transylvania, actually. That was part of Romani - uh, part of Hungary that became Romania after the First World War.**

Do you know at the time you were born, how large of a city it was?

**It was about 100,000 maybe. Now it's about 130...eight years ago, we went back. I went back with my wife.**

Did you? How wonderful.

**And my brother who lives in Israel and then his wife was still living. Just to show, show our wives where we were born.**

What were some of the things that you particularly were interested in seeing when you went back?

**Well, it was still under Ceausescu. It was still under the Communist regime, so it was still very oppressive. It was very sad. I...you know, the synagogue we attended, the cemetery, the school where we went to school, where we were expelled from during the War, and the Jewish school, and the ghetto where we lived. The old place where I was born, and then....**

Well, remember some of these things because I'm going to want to come back to it and ask you about some of your memories of some of these things. Tell me, how many brothers and sisters do you have?

**I have two brothers. One died, but one is still alive.**

And are both of...in what order?

**I was the middle one.**

The middle child?

**My older brother is three years older, and he lives in Israel.**

And what is your older brother's name?

**Gabriel.**

Gabriel? And what about your younger brother?

**Toma.**

Toma?

**Toma.**

Toma, ok.

**T-o-m-a.**

And what are your parents' names?

**Herman was my father's name. And Miriam - Margareta, actually, was my mother's name. They both died in Israel.**

In Israel. Where were your parents from?

**My mother was born in Hungary, and my father was born in Czechoslovakia. And fortunately, they settled...we lived...Arad was near the Hungarian border. And fortunately, they settled on the Romanian side, because that's how we survived.**

**Because practically the whole family on my mother's side, except for a cousin, died in Auschwitz, in concentration camps. And...**

Do you recall, do you recall how your parents met? Did they ever discuss that?

**No.**

Do you know where they were when they met?

**I think they were already in Arad when they met.**

They were.

**I think so.**

Do you know when they both came to Arad?

**I don't know when they...I know they were...my mother was born in 1904, and my father was born in 1898. My father... I don't know. I should've asked my brother, he would have known. You want me to call him?**

No, no, no, no, no, no, no. That's ok, that's ok.

**I think it was arranged. One of...you know those days....**

Well, that's why we're curious.

**I think it was arranged, because I come from a religious family.**

Tell me about that. You were raised in...Orthodox?

**In an Orthodox environment.**

Kosher home?

**Kosher home. We still have a kosher home, now.**

You do?

**And I still lay *Tefillin* now, and...but I left Romania right after my *bar mitzvah*. And so, what I remember, you know, war years I was, you know, I was seven or eight before the war, and I remember well, when.... Well, we lived in the center of the town, and my father had a little restaurant. Actually, it was really more of a drinking place. And I remember it was next to a big open café. There was a Gypsy player. I remember that very well, because that was my first exposure to violin.**

How old were you?

**I was maybe four or five. I always wanted a violin, but we couldn't afford it, so I had to wait. But that was my first exposure to the violin, and my father always reminded me that he couldn't take me away from listening.**

Did you spend a lot of time with your father at his restaurant?

**Well, yeah. Yeah. The early years, coming back from school I always stopped by and had a syrup and a pretzel and listened to the Gypsy music.**

Did your brothers go with you, or did you have different crowds?

**My older brother had his own clique. And to tell you the truth, I was always envious, because he, he was able to be a Boy Scout. He was a Boy Scout. But by the time I reached that age, Jews were not accepted. I always envied that. He wore that uniform, and paraded, and that I remember. By the time I got to be that age....**

And what age did you have to be to get into the boy scouts?

**I don't...twelve maybe.**

Twelve? Ok. Tell me a little bit...you said that you grew up in an Orthodox home. Was...did you live in a community that was primarily Jewish? Or did your father's...

**No. I asked, as a matter of fact. There were about 10,000 Jews.**

And so your father's...

**There were about ten percent.**

Your father's restaurant was in...served the greater community.

**Yeah. It...but not Jews.**

Didn't...he didn't serve the Jews.

**Not really. It was really a drinking place. I remember why I... you know, we had heavy winters there. That's another thing I remember. We had a lot of snow, for six months it snowed. And we used to walk to school, you know, two kilometers, and boots and I remember very few people owned cars those days, and the mode of transfer was the fiacre, a horse and carriage, and in the winter it was a sleigh. And the guy who rode that, he always stopped by. You know it was cold, stopped by for a drink. And then I asked him, I remember his name, Chaki, I used to call him Chaky-Botchy. And so he let me, when he got a ride, he let me tie my sled and I went for a ride. That I remember that very well.**

How wonderful.

**But that was before the war.**

And what about your younger brother? What was...

**My younger brother was three years younger and so he was even younger than that. What happened that, you see, I left right after the war, in '46, and...**

And how old were you then?

**Fourteen.**

Fourteen.

**Fourteen. And my family stayed behind. I went to Budapest, and we can talk about that later maybe. And then to Paris. And so in 1950, I was in Paris when my parents.... I don't know if you know but between 1950 and 1952, some people said that because, because... Oh, what was her name? The foreign minister woman who was Jewish. I forget. I will remember. [Note: Here he is referring to Ana Pauker.] They opened the doors. They let the Jews emigrate to Israel. And they emigrated to Israel in 1950. And I remember that, well I visited them, then, many times in Israel, when they lived in a tent, at first. My father lost his business before the war, in '39, probably.**

Let's back up a little bit, and go back to when you were talking about when you were younger and you had memories of going to school. And I'd like to get a little bit of information about your neighborhood. You said you walked two kilometers to school....

**Just to school, yeah.**

And your father's store, was it near your home? You said you lived in the center of town.

**Yes. We lived in the same...in the same building. It was a large apartment building.**

Oh, and your father's business was on the ground floor of the building.

**On the ground floor. There were many little businesses on the corner.**

What were some of your neighbors like? Was it a Jewish apartment building?

**No, but there were seven Jewish families. And an interesting thing happened. We went back, and as I said, eight years ago, nine years ago. We went back and the neighbor, there was this old lady who - not Jewish - who moved in because we had a larger apartment, when we were thrown out. And she remembered how my mother**

**made me practice four hours a day, and all that. And she brought back memories. I remembered her very well.**

Well, tell me about your apartment. What was your home like?

**Well, it was a two-room apartment, and I remember, the early years were happy. We were together. Father worked hard and I hardly saw him, because he always got up early and left and came home, came home late. *Shabbat* was very nice, because we were religious. And he always transferred his business to his manager.**

So his business was open on *Shabbat*. He just didn't have to deal with it.

**It was open, but he didn't.... And then he took it back on *motza-ai Shabbat*, on Saturday night. And um...**

What do you remember about your mother's life when you were young? With your father gone so much, managing the business?

**Well, especially when in '41, he was taken to a labor camp, and I remember that's why I always respected and I admired my mother. Those days, anyway women were the strength of the family. And how she supported us, how we survived through black market, I remember, and, you know, father was deported, and here we were, three young boys and....**

Did your mother work outside the home, or was she...?

**She didn't work per se, in those days, women didn't work, but she somehow she managed through the black market, I remember. Everything was rationed. Each thing was...Schick blades, you know, those razors. And so we would stand in line and get some, or cigarettes. And then she would sell them, you know, because everything was rationed. I don't know how, but that's, that's how she survived.**

You said that your mother lost all of her family.

**In Hungary.**

In Hungary. Did you have any cousins, aunts, uncles, anyone at all around you when you were growing up? Do you remember grandparents?

**Yeah. Father's father had two brothers in Arad.**

What were their names?

**One was Samuel and the other one was Bela.**

Bela?

**Bela. And my grandparents lived in a village not far from Arad.**

Your father's parents.

**My father's.... My mother's parents I never met. My father's parents and then during the war, they came in. And I remember grandfather and my grandmother. Now we know she had Alzheimer's, in those days, we didn't know... She died during the war. My grandfather lived with us, and....**

Do you remember how old you were when your grandparents moved to Arad?

**I must have been seven, eight.**

So they...

**I would say, in....**

Prior to that, did you spend much time with them? Did the families...?

**We did occasionally. It wasn't that far. We took the train.**

What do you remember about the train rides?

**I guess it was fun. It was just a getaway, and I remember well, I remember better the times, well I was older, too. And when my father escaped, and we went into hiding. Well, then in, what was that in...in '41, we had to leave the apartment, and we had to move into the ghetto.**

What were your earliest memories of antisemitism?

**Well, [unclear] we couldn't walk on certain streets, we couldn't walk on cer...we didn't have to wear...I checked that with my brother, because I wasn't sure. I didn't trust my memory. We didn't have to wear the yellow star.**

How old were you when you first remember that you were being treated differently because you were....

**I remember that in seven, eight. Seven, eight, nine.**

So, around the time that your grandparents had to move.

**Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.**

You said you didn't have to wear the yellow star?

**No, we didn't have the yellow star, but we had to move out. And we had to move into a ghetto, a certain area where Jews had to move in. And, we were thrown out of the schools, so there was a Jewish school formed, because there were about 10,000 Jews those days.**

Did your...?

**Majority were not Orthodox. There was an Orthodox, and then Neologue as they called now. It was a kind of a Conservative, Reformed, that...there was no Reformed per se, but the Neologue was as close to the Reformed.**

Before you had - were forced to move out of your home, do you remember how your neighbors treated you? Were - did you feel any tension or were you aware of anything...

**No.**

...at that point of your life with your neighbors?

**No, no. At that point, no. I had my friends, of course, most of my friends were Jewish. My best friend was a Jewish boy who also played the violin. And my teacher, my first teacher lived in the same building. Incidentally, when we went back, I lost track of him for forty years. Forty years later, when, when I went back, I didn't know that he was alive. We didn't have anybody in Arad any more. And checking in at the hotel, I checked the telephone directory, and his name was listed. I called, and he came over in five minutes and so he took me over to his house, I met his wife, it was a very emotional.... He cried all night.**

How wonderful.

**He knew a lot about me.**

He did?

**But you see, he couldn't correspond because for him to get a letter from America, right away was suspicious. So, but forty years later, I saw my first teacher.**

How wonderful. Tell me a little bit about your religious education. Did you go to...

**I went to *cheder*, which was...**

Spell that for me.

**H-e-d-e-r [sic *cheder*]. Which was the Jewish school. I started....**

That was your everyday school. Or that was separate from....



**No, that was not. I think it was after school.**

After school? Ok.

**I should have checked that out, but I think that was after school, because I went to regular school before the war. And even after the war, there was a Jewish school that was formed. And it was a regular school.**

Did you go there every day?

**Every day. And then to the *cheder*, for Jewish, for Jewish education. Studied the *Mishna* and the *Parsha*, and was prepared for my *Bar Mitzvah*.**

What did you do when you weren't in school or at the *cheder*? What did you do for fun?

**I practiced the violin.**

Fun with the violin.

**Oh, yeah. My mother said, that was long before, I don't know if you are familiar with the Suzuki school. But it was long before Suzuki. And my mother was not a musician, sat and did her sewing, anything, and darning socks, I remember those days, they did that. And she was just sitting. It was just the fact that I had her attention. She made me practice three, four hours a day. And it wasn't easy, because I saw...I saw there was a big courtyard in the apartment house, and I remember when I saw my friends, playing outside soccer, and all that, I would have rather played, too, than practiced. But she made me practice. So, that was my childhood. You know, it's...I really didn't have a childhood like my children had.**

How old were you when you got your first violin and started the practicing?

**About six and a half. Finally. I wanted earlier, but....**

It was a long year and a half waiting, it sounds like.

**Yeah, yeah.**

You said about four, four and a half?

**We couldn't afford it, and then this violinist who, who went to the Liszt Academy of Music that I attended after the war. Then he came back for vacations. He tested my ear, I remember, and he started me on the violin.**

Are there any special memories you have of family rituals or traditions that...?

***Seder* was always a lovely thing. And High Holidays. And...**

What did your family do for *Seder* or the High Holidays?

**For *Seder*, my father always brought home somebody, somebody who didn't have a *Seder*. We always had a guest or two. Was traditional. And that I always remember, I always learned something new. I remember we didn't have to say the night ... This is the only night in the year that we didn't have to say the night prayers. Maybe because I was a little *shikur*.**

Wait a minute. Say that again. Maybe you were a little what?

***Shikur*, which means a little drunk, because...**

Ok.

**You know we drank the wine, and that was a *mitzvah*, then.**

Even as a child, you were....

**Oh, you have to, have to. And now with our children, we never say that. "Oh, you have to."**

You drink grape juice.

**What?**

No? Don't the little ones get the grape juice instead of the wine now? No, ok.

**I think it was....**

We only got grape juice.

**But maybe so. I don't know. I think...I don't know whether we had grape juice.**

And were there other children at your *Seder*, or was it just the three of you.

**No, I think it was the three of us. I remember my younger brother saying the *MaNishtana*. That I remember very well. And father always had something new to tell us.**

You mentioned that you lived...your apartment, your home was a two-room home. Is that kitchen and bedroom, or kitchen living room area and bedroom and where did everybody...?

**No, I think we had two rooms. That's before the war. And then where we moved in, there was only one room. There was no bathroom. We had to go out.**

Was there electricity when you moved into the ghetto? Was there any electricity?

**There was electricity, yeah.**

Was there running water, just no bathroom?

**Water was also, but there was no bathroom.**

But in your home before you were moved to the ghetto, you had electricity?

**Oh, we had one bathroom. And then, you know, then the Germans came in. Of course, my father lost his business. And then in...**

Do you remember how that came to be? Was there something leading up to it?

**It was all that uncertain.... Well, all Jews lost businesses.**

But was it something that happened...do you recall if it was something that happened overnight? Were you aware of things changing in the community around you at that time? Or do you...

**It must have been in '39 or '40. Around *Kristallnacht*, it must have happened. I was seven or eight. I didn't comprehend the situation that well. And then...**

What about after your family was moved into the ghetto? I mean, at such a young age, to...As you said, the level of comprehension would be a little bit different. Once you were moved into the ghetto, do you recall how your recognition and understanding of the situation changed?

**Well, then we started the Jewish school, so that we had...I had my friends, the Jewish friends. But I remember, as I said, having uh, being forced to...not to...we couldn't go in, through certain streets. We had to walk on the other side, always, I remember. And we were harassed and beaten up, I remember that well, too. And then, my father was taken to a labor camp and then what saved us....**

How old were you?

**Well, it was '41. So I was about nine, ten.**

And after your father was taken to the labor camp...

**Mother. How she worked and to... how to...on *Shabbat*, I mean ...for years, then we didn't have meat or, you know, black bread and all. But somehow for *Shabbat* we had a meal and I don't know how she did that.**

Were your father's parents still with you at this point, when you were moved into the ghetto, were you all kept together? Were you able to stay together?

**My grandmother was already departed - died, but my grandfather lived with us. Not all the time. He stayed with his older son, too, Sandor. And I don't know what... I don't think he stayed with us all the time. But I remember well how he loved to drink hot tea and I remember that very well. Always had a sugar in his mouth. And mother always told me that she would prepare a bath - there was no shower - a bath and it was never hot enough. It was hot! She couldn't even put her hand in the bathtub and it was, it was never hot enough. [laughing] I remember things like that, you know? I mean it was so many years ago.**

Now you mentioned that...

**And they have told me, I was so young. But what saved us is...that's how we survived is that.... It seemed like the Hungarian side, on my mother's side, the Final Solution started you know in '44, between '44 and '45. And most Jews were deported and died in concentration camps. The Romanians left the Axis powers in August 23, '44. And that last year, that's how, then. But then the Germans broke through the border and that's when they killed a lot of Jews. We escaped. I remember the caravan that we went into the villages and sometimes you could bribe Romanians. Father escaped from labor camp and then we all went, I remember that caravan. Mother sat on the how do you call it...whatever, you know... There were the horses. I don't think some could afford horses. And then we men, you know, and the boys, pulled, and we went, I don't know, twenty, thirty kilometers. Sometimes we slept in a different, a different barn, because they were afraid. Because I said the Germans and the Hungarians broke through the border. We lived near the Hungarian border. And that's when they killed all the Jews.**

Did you - did you lose family at that point in time? Did you have...

**I don't think immediate family, because I think we all survived. We all left. We all left.**

Prior to, prior to having your family uprooted and moved into the ghetto, were your parents at all involved in community politics or anything of that nature?

**I don't think so.**

No?

**No, I don't remember any Jews involved. We were always...I cannot say second class citizens, but Jews were not leaders of the community. I remember, and that's how I escaped, too, is that there were very few musicians, classical musicians in Arad. And I had the good fortune that the mayor was an amateur musician. And there was a pharmacist who was an amateur violinist. I think the mayor played the**

**cello, I forget. And he introduced me to quartets. He used to take me - he was not Jewish - he used to take me to the church to listen to...I remember the first time I heard organ music and good music. And he's the one who helped me after the war to escape.**

The mayor did?

**Yeah. He befriended me and it wasn't because of political situation. It's just that there were no teachers. And I was supposed to go to Bucharest to study with Enescu. He was the national treasure, the national. But, as it happened, he already escaped, and he went to Paris. As a matter of fact, years later, I met him. I had some Master classes. So the nearest place was to go to Hungary. And the borders were open then, after the war. And I remember my mother took me to Budapest, and I got a scholarship at the Liszt Academy, and the teacher accepted me there and she went back and I've been on my own ever since.**

Let's go back for a minute. You said that your time really was spent in school and the *cheder* and practicing.

**And practicing the violin. That's all.**

What about friends? Did you have friends?

**I had one good friend, I remember. And we used to play chess. That was the hobby, and coming home from the synagogue on Saturday, I used to play chess with my brothers. And with him. And he also played the violin. I remember that, but otherwise....**

What was his name?

**Finar Tommy. Finar was his last name.**

Tommy Finar.

**Tommy, Tommy. Just like my younger brother was Tommy. I remember his father was a jeweler, and I think they went to South America. I lost track of him, but I think they went to South America.**

Did they...

**He was my rich friend, my wealthy friend. He had a bicycle; I always wanted a bicycle, so he would come over so he could let me ride.**

When you moved, when your family was moved into the ghetto, was his family moved into the ghetto at the same time? Were you able to stay together at that point?

**I don't remember that, no. We went to the school together, but you know the atmosphere was such that we weren't free. You worried. I know my mother worried always.**

What kind of things did you do with your parents, did you do as a family? You mentioned that you would take trips to the country to see your grandparents.

**Everything centered around the synagogue, frankly. But otherwise, you know, mother, mother cooked, washed, cleaned. That was....**

What kind of things did she cook? What are your memories of her....

**Oh, she was a wonderful cook. And what was I remember even in Israel, later, see, that's what I remember mostly.**

Well, let's, let's start to move ahead a little bit here. How long were you in, was your family in the ghetto?

**We were there until '44.**

And what precipitated your escaping? What was going on in the country around you?

**Well, then...Well, the Romanians left the Germans, you know, the Axis powers in August... August 23, in '44, so....**

Do you remember in the days leading up to when you were leaving, was there planning? Were there things going on to get ready or was it something that happened suddenly?

**From the ghetto?**

Yeah. Do you recall?

**I don't think we ever...We moved back. We never got back the original apartment. We moved to another place because, on Blumarel, I remember, the street was called. Now Gypsies live there. We went to see where the Gypsies live there when we went back.**

So after you escaped from the ghetto, you went back into Arad.

**We went back into Arad. We were...the ghetto was in Arad, but in the outskirts.**

I see, ok.

**In the outskirts.**

So you stayed in your community.

**We were able to move back, but it was all around the synagogue. Jews lived around the synagogue. It was because it was walking distance. As I said, my parents were *Shomer Shabbos*. They, on *Shabbos* everything stopped. And so we walked to the synagogue and everything centered around the holidays, *Shabbat*. As I said, we were kosher, and....**

Were you ever...I mean you mentioned how much you respected your mother and your father. Were there things that you recall growing up, either in your apartment or in Arad or in your ghetto apartment. Were there anything - any issues or anything that you remember that caused tension in the family or was it pretty cohesive?

**There was always tension.**

There was always tension.

**Because it was a question of survival.**

From your earliest memories.

**I think we were in, even in the ghetto, constant bombing. You see, and the Americans...**

What about going back before the ghetto?

**Before the ghetto, I remember happy days.**

Just happy.

**It was tranquil. It was a town. It was normal. It was normal. We were poor, really, I mean we were, it's....**

Did you take vacations other than your trips on the train to visit family?

**I don't remember ever taking vacations, except going to [unclear] homes now and then to visit my grandparents. And that was seldom. Even the train ride, I mean, that was a luxury that I don't think...and father always worked, I remember him always working.**

When you...forgive me for asking you to repeat this, because I think we already discussed this. You said that your father had escaped from the labor camp at one point.

**In '43.**

In '43. Where were you, your brothers and your mother at that time? Were you - you were still in the ghetto at that point.

**Oh, sure.**

And how did you meet up with your father again? How did you find...?

**He came home, and then we left. Because that's when the Germans, the Nazis, and the Hungarians, which were even worse, in many ways, as you know, probably about, the Final Solution, broke through the border. And fortunately we escaped.**

So as soon as your father came home....

**We escaped.**

....you left.

**And during that time. And then the Russians pushed the Germans back, and then we went back.**

Were there people that helped you escape, or was it just the general community coming together?

**I mean it was the general. I remember, as I told you, the caravan. I don't remember how father arranged it. He probably just, I don't think he bought that, that carriage, you know, but I remember, mother said - and we put whatever belongings we could take.**

And where did you go?

**Farms. I remember farms. Sometimes they were afraid, too. You could bribe Romanians. And we, we slept with animals in barns. I remember one place, we stayed longer, and there was a shepherd. He befriended me, and I used to go out with the sheep and with the cows. And I remember he made me a lasso, and I remember that's how we survived. And then when we went back father got back his business, then the Russians took it away.**

How long were you going from place to place before you went back to Arad?

**In '43 until '44 or so.**

Just about a year?

**Yeah. Until the Romanians left the Germans, and so we experienced a certain freedom, but eventually, you know, Jews couldn't afford... or at least not my parents.**



When you went back for that one year period, before you had to leave again, did you, did you have any sense of normalcy in your life or was it still the upheaval, and feeling like you were waiting to move again all the time? Always getting ready to....

**But it was always. And then first the Anglo...the English bombed us. And I remember when father was in a labor camp and we always used to go.... They bombed the railway stations and the center of town, and he was always...that's why they took the Jews that were in the labor camp there, they had to go right away and clean streets and the railway stations and.... Romania was rich in oilfields which belongs to Hung - to Russia now, north. But we were near the Hungarian border.**

What was your sense of..., with such a sense of turmoil, were people wanting to get out? Did they... Do you recall feeling a sense, of people feeling a need to get away from what was going on in the community? From trying to find someplace safe? Or did they feel more like...?

**Sure, you had that. But you couldn't.... I remember, there was a *shaliach* from Israel.**

I'm sorry. Say that word again.

**What do you call that? Person they send out, you know, to recruit young people. That was in Romania, too. It was during the war in 1943 or '44. And one of my cousins - he was older, wasn't he? I remember, we were all members of *Trumpeldor*. Of a, it was a Zionist, it was underground.**

And what was the name of it?

**I think Joseph Trumpeldor.**

Can you spell that for me?

***Trumpeldor* was one of the Begin partners, you know. And we all met. It was in the underground, you know, it was all secret, because it was not allowed. But that I remember, on Saturdays we used to meet after synagogue and sing and talk about Palestine, and I remember one day there was this man from Palestine and several escaped with him. And one of my cousins who lives in Israel now....**

One of your, one of your uncles on your father's side....

**One of...no, a cousin, so it was Samuel's son. His older brother's son. He had what - two sons and two daughters and Latzi was his name. He is retired now. He taught at...he came... he got his degree in Engineering at Princeton, so when I was already in New York I saw him. And then he went back. He taught for many years at the University of Be'er Sheva.**

Oh. How old was when he went to Palestine then?

**Must have been nineteen or, you know, that was the age. They didn't take eight-year-olds. But he must have been, because he was older than my brother. So he must have been at least seventeen or eighteen.**

So this is...

**And he just left. And how, you know, it would have happened. I mean, you know, not many instances.**

But this is...the visitors, the people who would come and talk to you about Zionism and moving to Palestine, this was when you had just moved into the ghetto, it sounds like.

**Oh yeah. That was during the war. But somehow, there was this feeling of Zionism and arranged this *kevtzot*, as they called - *kevtzah* - that were little cadres of when we met, we sang Hebrew songs and talked about Palestine...**

Do you recall, do you know anything...

**...and I remember that well.**

... about what your parents thought of Zionism and moving to Jerusalem?

**No, this was for children. I don't remember. Parents, it was a question of survival. Father was not home, and mother had to take care of us, and feed us, and I don't... And as I said, you know, as I said, she did that, a little bit in black market. I still.... But she wasn't the only one. I mean, women in those days had to take care of the children. And most families had several children and the husbands were gone.**

So in '44. Was '44 when your family finally picked up and left?

**No. They left in '50.**

In '50.

**Stayed behind. Father got back his business. But then, when the Russians, the Russians took it away.**

What happened then?

**In '50, in '50 they opened the door, and most Jews were able, unless they were in military or they had some political ...**

So the government allowed you to leave.

**Yeah. So my brother left - my two brothers. First my older brother, who started medical school in Romania.**

I'm sorry, he started what?

**Medical school.**

So he had already started medical school?

**First year. He finished in Cluj, which was not far from Arad. There wasn't any...in Arad there was no university.**

So what was the name of the city again?

**C-l-u-j.**

Cluj, ok.

**Cluj. Or in Hungarian Kolozsvár. I don't know whether you heard that.**

No.

**See, most people talked Romanian, in school it was Romanian, but at home, we all spoke Hungarian.**

Oh, that's a good question. You spoke two languages at home.

**Not too very....**

Did you speak any other languages besides Romanian and Hungarian?

**I took French, also high school. And during the war, we had to learn German. After the war, we had to learn Russian. And so....**

What about your parents? Did they speak other languages, too?

**German, Yiddish. But Hungarians, had always problems learning another language. It was very difficult. My mother lived in Israel, but then again, there were so many Hungarian Jews and they had their friends there, and they always spoke Hungarian and we would even grocery store, it was owned and they lived in Petach Tikvah. And so their circle was Hungarian. They had Hungarian newspapers, it was a *shtetl* just like back uh, back in Arad.**

So it was 1950 then, when your family....

**In '50. I was in Paris already.**

Tell me when - tell me about how you ended up in Paris.

**Well, in '46, I went to Budapest - well late '45, I think it was in '46.**

How old were you then?

**'46, I was fourteen. I was born in November, so.**

And you were sent off there by yourself?

**No, mother took me. Those days the border...after the war, the border was still open.**

It was?

**So, you could go to Hungary. I was promised through the mayor that I will get a ...when it was discovered that Enesco already left, so the nearest place to send me was through the king to...King Michael was still there. And it was decided that the nearest place...my talent was recognized, I guess, that the nearest place would be Hungary. So, I was promised a passport, but it hasn't arrived. And the school year started. So that's the early fall, my mother took me by train to Budapest. I had an uncle there, a cousin of my mother's, first cousin, who survived. And I lived with him.**

Your mother left you there with him then, and went home.

**Just left. And I got a full scholarship, and I started even at that time, teaching, and I've been on my own ever since. They couldn't help me financially. And....**

How did you maintain contact with your family at that point?

**Wrote. Those days, I wrote probably at least twice a week. Letters. We still do once a week.**

And were you able to go back and visit or were they able to come to you to visit?

**When I went back, in the meantime, the passport arrived. And we tried....So I had to go back.**

To get the passport.

**And I was arrested.**

Trying to get back in.

**Trying to get in. And I was in jail then I remember in the middle of the night. Father came and so the postmaster I remember was able to bribe, uh bribe the guard. And they let me go. I had the passport which had the Russian stamp in it which...but it was valid for one year for Hungary. And I just left right away.**

What did you use to bribe them with?

**Money. I mean I don't know how much, but I know they were able to.... That was with the farmers too. Fortunately, most Romanians, the Jews survived because they were able to bribe Romanians. Hungarians, you couldn't. And the few Hungarian Jews who came, who crossed the border into Romania survived. But who would have known, then. Nobody.**

So, if you were arrested, coming back in to get your passport, and you left immediately afterwards....

**They took me to jail, and I remember I escaped. It was at night. And I went - it was arranged with the postmaster because my family didn't have a telephone. The neighbor had a telephone. And I remember I, I ran away at night and asked if I - I forget - I asked if I could call and I called the neighbor...**

[Break in interview as tape ends and starts next side]

**I wish you would have interviewed my brother because he has a fantastic memory, but of course he stayed behind. He stayed until 1950 and those four or five years made a difference and he was three years older.**

Yeah, so your parents took a taxi and they were able to come and see.

**I remember both mother and father came and bribed the guard and they let me go.**

So you were able to see your parents and then you left?

**That's right. But I don't know how because they already signed me in and I had to stand, go in front of a judge and when I explained the situation - I'm sure father had to bribe even the judge. Cause he made a joke. Twenty years in prison, I will never forget that, then my heart stopped, the my . . . but then he told my father that he leave right away, because I had the passport so I could tell that I came back to pickup the passport. So I left right away and then back to Budapest - continue my studies, stayed there until '48 when they closed the border.**

Between this time, when you went back to get your passport in '48 were you able to see your family again between?

**No, I didn't see them until 1950. The summer of 1950 when I went to Israel to see them. Oh, it was dangerous. I could have never... You see for instance, my passport**

expired. My visa expired. The passport expired. It was valid, as I said only for Hungary, for one year and, I remember I played at the Consulate. The cultural counsel befriended me, I played at some, you know festival, I don't know, May 1st or some celebration. And they knew that I was studying music and I asked for - I applied for an extension of the visa and I never got it. And the Counsel told me - they didn't refuse it but it will never be granted. So... and my parents told me if I come back I will never be able to leave again. So I never went back and an interesting story happened there, in Budapest. And I will be forever grateful and as matter of fact, the older son still is alive, is a few years older than I am. Must be in his seventies now. Lives in Brooklyn, and we been exchanging cards - on *Rosh Hash-*, on New Years - and I just heard from him again and I will be forever grateful because his father was the president of the Orthodox community in Budapest. And they befriended me. I spent many holidays, and at that time I was very religious. I was still religious.

Were you going to regular school at that time too or were you . . .

Well at the academy, then by that time I was in the music academy and graduated high school, and so, through him in '48 when they closed the border and he saved many Jews. He, through him he arranged that, as I say they wouldn't extend my passport, he arranged it, I think through the American Joint Distribution Committee, was the representative in Budapest. I got, he arranged a visa to Paris and also, you know many, many people escaped with altogether false passports. My passport was valid with the Russian stamp, but it was good only for Hungary and for one year. So they falsified it. They extended it five years and for the whole world, I remember. And so they, and they obtained visa and an airplane ticket from Prague to Paris. That was in December '48. And with a group of black hats, agents, Jews there was, I'm sure ten or twelve of us - they took the train to the border to the Czech border and then it was pre-arranged that we cross the border. And I remember it was heavy snow, and the planes didn't take off for ten days, we were snow bound in Prague and we lived just vis-à-vis the, vis-à-vis the old *shul*, the old synagogue. We were there last year as a matter of fact. And I went to pray there every morning [unclear] and until the weather lifted, and it was my first, first flight. It was on Sabena, I remember, and, you know it was snowing, and I will never forget, the plane rose and sunshine. And that was the freedom to arrive in Paris. And I remember there was somebody from the Joint Distribution Committee waiting for me. I had a room and so that's how I completed my studies in Paris. That's, that's the next chapter, but. . . .

Where did you live - when you got to Paris, where did you?

Near the conservatory

Did you live with other students or did you live with a family?

**No. There was no dormitory, so they, they got me a room with a family. Non-Jewish family. And but then I moved, and I found another room because, you know I had a little problem practicing. You know not everybody likes scales and everything. [laughing] I had that problem in New York too when I came out, because Julliard, I did my graduate work at Julliard, and they didn't have a dorm and I could never have afforded that either.**

Were you doing anything at this point in your life besides practicing?

**That's all I had, that's all I did. School and, you know, but it was always fine...**

What about religious studies at this point in your life?

**By that time I practiced, but uh, practiced Judaism, in Budapest especially, I was still, I was able to.**

What did you do to meet people? How did you meet people?

**I never had the time.**

You really were...

**I practiced...**

... single minded.

**... I mean I always practiced six, eight hours. Those days you practiced. I remember when, I mean I tell my students, those days especially, you know Jewish kids were practicing, like Perlman, but now it's the Asians. My best students are Oriental, Japanese and... You know I taught 32 years at UMKC, and I think I had one or two Jewish students. They don't what practicing means. They want quick money. Those days mothers saw to it that there was, you know there was this motivation. And I knew already that that's what I wanted to do.**

You attribute your mother to being the influence?

**Oh yeah - she was. And that was before Suzuki. You know, you know about Suzuki?**

Isn't it repetition and practice?

**Well sure, Twinkle Twinkle and all that, and copy teachers, but it's a game and there was no Suzuki then it was scales already and discipline and, but, and my mother sat for hours. And just the fact that I had her there and her attention and that was the Suzuki method also, involving one of, one of the parents, and usually it was the mother.**

Let me digress a minute here and go back to when you were young and you had gotten your first violin and you were focusing on your practicing and watching your friends play outside the window. What were your brothers doing while your mother was with you helping you focus on your practicing?

**They were normal, they had a normal life.**

They went on and . . . .

**Yeah, Tomi, my younger brother played always. And my older brother was with his friends or doing homework. And his studies, my mother saw to it that we were good students, you know. She was very intelligent and just unselfish especially when my father was not home. And even when father was home, he was always in the business. Left early in the morning when we were still asleep and the only time really, that's why I went, you asked me, I always went after school to see him and...**

OK . . .Let's go back to Paris again. How long were you in Paris, two years?

**I was from '48 to January '53.**

'Til 53?

**Um-hmm.**

OK . . .and during that time period . . .

**I had got my permit. I graduated from the Conservatory. I also got a full scholarship there.**

What was the name of the conservatory?

**It was the National Conservatory.**

National Conservatory of Arts?

**Conservatoire National de Musique.**

de Musique. Ok - thank you.

**I have my diploma in there if you.. So that's the National Conservatory. If you got accepted it was like at the Lizst Academy, that was the National Academy of Music. It's, I was the youngest, and in Budapest, too. And if you were accepted, it was free.**

And where, during this time frame, was the rest of your family. What was going on with them?



**Still in, still in Romania.**

And you were still able to keep in touch via letters?

**Yes, via our letters. We wrote at least once a week. I have all the letters and I wrote even in . . .**

You still have them?

**Oh yeah. I kept all letters.**

And what was going on with your family?

**I have my mother's last letter on my desk.**

Do you really?

**But down in the basement I have boxes of boxes [unclear]. Now, when my mother died, my father lived, moved in with my older brother. [Unclear] and he died when he was 81. It was his 81st birthday. He wasn't alone.**

When was that?

**That was in '79.**

And when did your mother die?

**Mother died in '68, she was 64. She was born in 1904. I brought them out, we got married in '63 and my mother was sick already but I brought them out to visit. We didn't live here; we lived in, I rented a house in Prairie Village.**

Tell me about when your parents left? Where did they . . .

**In '50, well when I went, I went in the summer. They escaped in June I think. They were still in a tent. It's not like now you know. The Russians came there was an apartment waiting. Those days it was in Afula. Atil, where was that, Atila I think - I forget the name of that, near Haifa, from the boat they were taken to, in this tent. I remember, I went, I saved up to take the, twice I went from Paris - in '50 and '51. One year on the *Kedma*, and one year on the *Negba*, I forget on which one, a small boat that from Marseilles to Haifa. And uh...**

So you, during the time you were in Paris you were able to go to visit your family?

**I saw them two summers. And the first time they were in, they arrived I just two weeks or three weeks before or maybe even a month. My brother went a few weeks earlier, and he was at the University continuing his medical school at the Hebrew**

University in Jerusalem so he couldn't help them. I remember how painful it was. First of all they left with nothing. Not that they had that much, but you weren't able to take anything. And so father, I remember, in that heat, it was in the summer, 100, 120 outside and it was on the *kvish*, you know, on the road, it was just liberation you know. And right after the war and all the construction, they paid well but poor guy, early in the morning he went, you know, he had no *métier*, because he was a restaurateur and so one of his brother-in-laws, Layosh, I remember was a contractor for a group of people who worked on the roads. And early in the morning until about 2:00 in that heat, he came home, I remember how he was dehydrated. I remember that, I will never forget that. He drank by the gallon, you know, the water. He was so dehydrated and I couldn't help. I had nothing. Those were pain--, those were painful years and to cool off they watered the tent. You know, they then stand in line for ice and

[Phone rings] You need to get that?

No, they leave a message. . . so ah. . . those were, those were . . .but the second year when I went back they already, father got a job in a textile factory and that's why I, one, one thing that I, I, it's painful to my younger brother. Never was able to go to college. He had to work. And he went through four wars, he was, you know in the army, he was drafted and he went through four wars. Had a heart attack young and then he had a second heart attack. He died when he was 59. Even through those years he was still home, and not married. Then mother became sick. Then mother died in '68. In '65 I brought them over with my younger brother. My older brother served his residency in New York once he finished medical school. So I visited him in New York. And he came to see me. It was years. But in '40 and '41 I went back. [sic – meant to say '50 and '51] In '41 [sic - meant to say '51] they already had the room. I [unclear] how bad it was that mother at first wanted to just go back.

How long . . . excuse me . . . After you went to visit your family the second time and you went back to Paris again, how much longer were you in Paris before you left?

That is '51. I left, I applied for a visa and they didn't... You know, I was stateless. I had a stateless passport by that time. They couldn't send me back to Romania. So I applied and I was accepted at Julliard. I wanted to study, continue my graduate studies with Galamian, who was the famous . . .

I'm sorry, what's the name?

Galamian, Ivan Galamian. G A L A M I A N – He was greatest teachers. He was the teacher of Itzhak Perlman, Zuckerman, and Michael Rabin and, so, I mean he had a reputation. So that was my dream. And in Paris I started working, I taught and I don't know how much you want to know. Because I ah . . .

Yeah, tell me about teaching. How did you . . .

I started teaching and I didn't even know and, you know. And I remember on Tuesday night at a good meal because I, as it happened, Madame Feldman was her name. Maurice Feldman was the only Jew on the Supreme Court in Paris. His wife was a amateur pianist. And through my teacher through the conservatory, I forget, she got in touch with me and on Tuesdays I got a free meal and some, some token fee. But she couldn't wait to eat so we could play, I played sonatas with her; she loved to play chamber music, so I had a good meal once a week. Because um, and then, I started teaching and I coached. I coached two amateurs, two amateur quartets. I played. I remember one was very good. The second violin was a doctor, the violist was a paper manufacturer with a lovely home, and the cellist was a retired colonel. And I remember once a week, I remember once a week, Monday night, I forget, they hired me to play chamber music and then for a few extra bucks, that was long before Suzuki, the people, we always played at that manufacturer's home near l' Etiole, do you know Paris at all?

Un uh, I'm afraid I don't.

It was a lovely home. And, and so they hired me to come twenty minutes or half hour earlier and they had a little girl, four, or three or four or five, I forget and I, you know, not, not, not talented at all, but I'm sure he did it so I make a few extra Francs. And that was long before Suzuki. I remember the struggle. She couldn't count, she didn't read. The struggle I had, but that's when I started teaching. I love to teach and I learned. And then when I got to New York, but let me finish that. So I, when I graduated with the Premier Prix, which is the highest award in Paris from the Conservatory, I wanted to do my graduate work with Galamian at Julliard. And I remember I applied, but they didn't, it was the same situation like in Romania, in Budapest. They didn't deny decline, but they didn't grant me because they had no guarantee that I will come back. Where can they send me back? It would have been a student visa, you see. They couldn't send me back to Romania, it was communist. So, I waited. I wanted to start because I graduated in June; I think school is longer than or later than here, and I didn't get the visa. And I remember I became concertmaster of a chamber orchestra so I started already my professional career. And I remember, it was around Christmas, and I have a cousin in Brussels and that, that developed, but anyway. They came to hear me. I had a solo, the Four Seasons that I played at the *Gaveau*, and that was a big success. And unbeknownst to me, he was a representative of Procter and Gamble in the Benelux countries, you know, in Belgium, Belgium, France and Luxembourg I believe or Holland. Holland, Belgium, he was Dutch. And his wife was my cousin, first cousin. She's still alive; he died. She was, she is much older. My father's sister daughter. She is now . . .

What was your father's sister name?

**Hermina.**

Hermina.

**...and who escaped, who left before the war.**

Did you have any family members at all that ended up in the camps?

**Well on my mother's side. On my father's side one, he sent me the affidavit, as a matter of fact, one, the smart one ran away from home. The brother, Charles, came to America.**

One of your father's brothers?

**Brothers . . .before the war. But then he didn't show a sign for years until after the war.**

So nobody knew where he was?

**He married a non-Jewish. That's right. But when I came out, so my cousin who used to come because he represented Proctor and Gamble, every December he used to come for the managerial meeting in Cincinnati. So that's how I established this contact with Uncle Charlie, because I needed an affidavit. And they sent me, but I still didn't get the visa, but that December when I played that solo, my cousins love music, and so they came and unbeknownst to me they invited the [U.S.] Counsel to the concert. And it was a nice success. I remember after the concert they came back stage. And the Counsel said "come and see me on Monday." I remember that was Thursday night or Friday, I forget. It was on Christmas time. And I went on Monday, and I remember we went to the, and the consulate was overlooking Madeleine. It is a lovely place in Paris. And you know you see the obelisk and, you know, the Étoile and I remember he went to the window and on the same dossier - I had my dossier that they didn't grant my visa he said, you still want to go to graduate school to Julliard? I said "sure, that's my dream." And then he said, "well are you going to come back?" I said sure! I mean I didn't lie, what did I know that how if things would work out. And so he gave me the visa.**

You answered well. [laughing]

**So I got my visa that's why I was able to leave in January and start second semester at Julliard. . . in '53.**

And how old were you at this point.

21.

So 1953 was when you moved to the United States?

**Exactly, I went to New York. And I stayed in New York, I started at Julliard two years. In '54 I spent a lovely summer... ah well, in New York, let me tell you how I survived in New York. I, through the placement bureau I got, you know my parents**

**couldn't help me at all, I have been on my own since 14. So through the placement bureau, another student of Galamian's, we shared a job at Concert Hall, that's when the LP started to being produced. The concert hall society, those red labels, I don't know. . .**

Actually I still have some from my grandparents . . .Yeah.

**I was the one who checked them because we shared the job, four hours each at concert hall working with the engineer, splicing. Oh I learned a lot, because there was some, you have no idea there was sometimes three hundred, four hundred splice. Not like today you know, they can change and alter. But those days, you know there was... So I worked, they wanted a musician to, to, to work with them. So I worked four hours. I remember I made \$25.00 a week. I got a room on 122nd, those days Julliard was at 122nd Street near, near the Jewish Seminary, [unclear] well let me finish my story. And I paid \$11.25 for a room and there were six rooms and we shared a bathroom and a kitchenette. And then I had a room with a family and that didn't work out either. Because they . . .**

How did you find this family?

**Through the son of Kahen-Frankl. Through the, through the people who helped me escape from Hungary who was the, *Rosh HaKol*, the president of the, of the community. They bought a farm in Lakewood, New Jersey but the two sons lived in Brooklyn. He was waiting for me and . . . we corresponded.**

So you had maintained . . .

**Oh yes, today . . .still today.**

Wonderful!

**And still today, because I'll be grateful forever. Then he waited at the ... So also through my cousin, because they used to come and she didn't like to fly, so they used to come on the Queen Elizabeth or Liberte or the big French boat. He arranged it that I got a ticket, free ticket and I had to play twice, the gala night and I earned, you know to pay off. I mean - grateful for them, too, for that.**

So you worked your way across the ocean?

**And Moses... Moses and - Tsuni was his nickname. I call him Tsuni but his real name is Moses Kahan-Frankl and so then...**

Say the last name for me again . . .

**Moses**

Moses was the last name?

**No, the first name. The last name was Kahan-Frankl.**

Kahan Frankl.

**Kahan-Frankl, with a hyphen. Kahan. K A H A N – F R A N K L – was a well-known family, respected family, very religious. She was a poet . . .**

Where are they today?

**Pardon?**

Where is he today?

**They died. The parents. I'm talking about the parents . . . the father.**

The father that helped you.

**They have two sons older than I was. They loved music. Religious as they were. The mother was religious, she wore a wig. But she loved poetry, she loved poetry, loved music - was unusual family. They had their own synagogue [unclear]. And they took me, I mean many holidays I was invited. And I, and as I say I never accepted anything financially because I supported myself, but what I am forever grateful that I, that they helped me escape. And they arranged it through the American Joint Distribution Committee, so I don't want to repeat myself. So anyway, in New York I made twenty-five dollars, my room cost eleven twenty-five, I tried to tell this to my children, but they don't want to hear this. And I don't want them to have to go through this. So, anyway and I remember the first Christmas, I got a five-dollar bonus. I paid \$11.25 for my room and I practiced. I mean you know, I worked for, I mean I didn't have a life now that I think back. It was practicing. If I had a date, it was only on Saturday night, and we went out. And I remember those days you could spend ninety-five cents, you could . . .**

How did you, how did you if you had an occasional date on Saturday night and you were practicing all the time, and working, and going to school where did you meet people?

**At Julliard.**

You met . . .

**Oh sure, I mean, the orchestra. I was concert master for two years already there. It was I hear . . .**

So you took an occasional night off?

Saturday night occasionally, not every Saturday night. But I might to go to movie or uh, you know. Concerts I couldn't afford but besides Julliard I always was the first to stand in line because we always got, in Budapest also, there was an organ box reserved for students. And there was a limited amount of.. and so I, I just above the orchestra I mean at Julliard, too. The philharmonic sent over some tickets or the Met and I remember way up but I couldn't afford tickets so I was always the first or the second one standing in line. If I could take off. But during the week I couldn't because I worked four hours. It took a half hour to go, you know distances in New York, and to come back and I had classes, orchestra, rehearsals, chamber music, I mean I was a full time student. So I had to work late and practice late. And but, where I first stayed for two months, I am sure not later because it was an old man now that I think it was, he couldn't stand music. And he couldn't stand my practicing . . . I mean who would like to hear scales and *etudes* and things? But I met his son, and I think it's still there. He owned, it was called Tie City on Times Square.

Say the name again.

**Tie City.**

Tie City?

**It was a little booth...**

[laughing] I think I do remember it.

**... and sold ties. Tie City. It was just a room.**

Last Christmas time there was a Tie City that was still there.

**I think it's still there, I haven't been to New York now for several years. But last time it was, he was younger, his son. And so he used to come, and it was busy and I remember, wage was a dollar and a quarter per hour, and he used to come to watch so that nobody steals and re-arrange ties because I was always afraid of my fingers. So I picked up three, four dollars, and I took the subway or the bus, and I worked for three, four hours. So I survived on thirty dollars a week. I remember the first Christmas I got the five dollar bonus, and then started recordings and, through my chamber music coach and Arthur Winograd was the original founder of the Julliard String Quartet, the cellist. He left - was the first one to leave the quartet and formed an orchestra and he became a conductor.**

Tell me his name again

**Winograd, Arthur Winograd. W-I-N-O-G-R-A-D. I brought - when I taught at the Conservatory, I brought him a couple of times for a master class.**

How long after you moved to New York did you meet your wife?

**Well, that's, that's an interesting story. I didn't meet her in New York. But when I was at Julliard, she's five years younger, she was at Barnard, and we used to, I used to go many *Shabbat* to the Theological Seminary for services. Sometimes I even ate lunch there. She was there but we didn't know each other. But she came to the concerts, she loves music, she loved music. And she still has programs, I was concert master then and I remember several . . .**

She knew who you were?

**No, she didn't.**

No? OK . . .

**That time not. But when I came back - do you know Rose Levine?**

I don't think so

**As a matter of fact yesterday there was this Harmony concert at Beth Shalom. She will be honored seventy years and that's the good part, she's my mother-in-law.**

Oh, okay.

**So... [laughing] So, if you want to know how I met Carla, from Barnard, she graduated from Barnard, she went to Radcliffe. I met her in '59 when she just finished her masters.**

So you had already been in New York for six years I guess at that point.

**Well no. I came here in '55. I graduated Julliard in '55.**

In '55?

**I was at Julliard from '53 to '55.**

Oh, okay.

**I graduated in May I think or June, I forget. And in April I got this call. The concertmaster position in Kansas City of the old Kansas City Philharmonic...**

Philharmonic, sure.

**... was open. And those days if it important position like that became vacant they always called Galamian, my teacher. And I was one, one of the several he**



recommended. That's the first position I ever took. But the first job was earlier, but let me finish this story here.

Okay.

Now I remember, these things I remember. In April I got the call and I thought this audition, I didn't even know where Kansas City was. And two days later they called me. I got the position, I was twenty-three. I was the youngest concertmaster for a major orchestra. So Galamian said "go for a year, it will be good experience."

Go for a year . . .

Yeah . . .

Good advice.

I got two hundred dollars a week! That was my first pay. I [unclear] was a fortune. That besides, the year before, in '54, I got a full scholarship to attend Tanglewood. Have you heard of the summer festival at Tanglewood?

Yes. Oh yeah.

That was one of the loveliest summers. And I was concertmaster there too, and I won a Heifetz prize. And Heifetz was there and Kreisler.

Spell that for me please, Heifetz.

Heifetz?

Yeah.

H-E-I-F-E-T-Z, Jascha Heifetz who was the greatest violinist of that time. That was before Perlman. And Kreisler, Fritz Kreisler was there and I met them. I remember Madame Koussevitsky - there was a Piatagorsky prize for cellists and a Koussevitsky prize for conductors, and Madame Koussevitsky - Koussevitsky died, he was for many years the conductor of the Boston Symphony, and you know Tanglewood was the summer festival of the Boston Symphony. So when I won the Heifetz prize I played a solo, the *Chausson Poeme*, with the orchestra. And next day I got an offer from the Boston Pops and I accepted. Two days later Joseph Levine, who was the conductor of the American Ballet Theatre, I don't know if you heard they were here just a few weeks ago, as a matter of fact we went. And they were looking for a concertmaster and he heard me play the *Chausson Poeme* and they just scheduled it for that fall with Nora Kaye, as prima ballerina, who was then married to Isaac Stern. It's a small world.

It is a small world and I'll tell you about some of the connections later, but go ahead.

**So I called Galamian and he said take this. So they let me out. I never auditioned. He just heard me and so I accepted. That was my first professional contract in America. That was also two hundred dollars a week.**

And how long were you there?

**I was for twenty weeks. And then I went back to Julliard, you know, so I was able to continue. And then in April, I graduated in May and in April I got this call and I got this offer, and Galamian said, go for a year.**

So you moved to Kansas City to work at the Philharmonic?

**I came to Kansas City and I was concertmaster of the Philharmonic and that, that was in '50 - probably '55. In '59, I don't know if you remember Abe Meth, probably not. He was the ritual director at Beth Shalom, Hungarian. And he was an amateur violinist and he called me. I went to services to Beth Shalom. Do I talk too much?**

Not at all . . . no. You're doing great!

**He asked me if I would play a program for Hanukkah, he planned a Hannukah festival. So I said sure. You know the word *besheret*?**

Oh yeah, meant to be.

**Meant to be. I said sure I would love to, but I check my book and I was free, but my pianist, as it happen was on sabbatical. Walter Cook, who was my accompanist for eighteen years who was the chairman, but by that time I taught already at the Conservatory also.**

What year are we looking at, are we talking about?

**'59**

'59 . . . Okay.

**And I said, you know, I need a pianist, and I knew they didn't have much money, so I said my accompanist is on sabbatical and was in California. And he said "Oh I have just the right, right person for you!" That's how I met Rose. And I remember Hanukkah was at Christmas time, and the second rehearsal I went to, to her house to rehearse. Carla opened the door. And she was home, she just finished her master's and she was starting on her PhD at Harvard. So we met four years before we got married. We got married in '63 when she finished. 'Cause I knew she, and even then she - the last thing she wanted to come back to Kansas City. So I knew that, if I . . . .**

So between the time that you met in 1959 . . .

**I went to, her birthday is the day before mine . . .**

When's your birthday?

**November 9 and mine is November 10.**

Happy Birthday!

**So I used to... Thank you. And we used to call each other. I used to call her a few minutes before so we could wish each other. One summer we met in Europe. And the year before we married she went to Israel, she stayed with my parents. I knew this is the girl I, but she was dating somebody else. I was dating somebody else, last thing she wanted to come back to Kansas City. She got an offer in Chicago at a University, she was just cleared for the foreign service, she's a Middle East specialist.**

Oh.

**She teaches at UMKC, Middle East and Medieval history. So anyway she opened the door. So she came to the concert and that was the first date afterward. It's thanks to Abe Meth.**

How did you meet him, was it just we're going to the?

**From Beth Shalom, and he used to come to symphony concerts, you know, and he was Hungarian. I remember I went several times for dinner to their home.**

When you moved to Kansas City, did you, did you already know anybody here ...

**Nobody...**

...in the Jewish Community or did you just show up at one of the synagogues and settle in?

**Well that happened. Nobody in those days, you know. Clubs were restricted. I didn't know about all those things. I remember Schwieger, Hans Schwieger was the conductor then. I was with the old philharmonic for twelve years. And then I resigned and accepted a professorship at UMKC, well that's, that's a long story. And, but I remember I got, he used to take me out, he had no children, was German. And I don't know whether you want to hear all this...**

Un huh . . .

**He was the conductor, and he auditioned me, and he kind of took me in. You know as concertmaster, you have a very close relationship with the conductor. And worked hours on bowings, and he wanted to know, why this, why that, you know, down bow, up bow, all those things. You know that's one of the functions, responsibilities of the concertmaster so that they all go well. And I remember when I came, Schwieger knew that I was Jewish and he said "you know strange, in Kansas City where the elite of cultural society in every city is Jews. The only Jew on the board was Rabbi Mayerberg, and he was an honorary member. Years later Miriam Lerner, and then Rheta Sosland, and then Dick Stern, Norman Kahn, but when I first came there was no Jew on the, on the board. But I met the Uhlmanns. I started playing at the Coffee Concerts at the Jewish Community Center. In fact, how the circle, the cycle goes back, now I'm going to do the Beethoven cycle at the Jewish Community Center...**

Are you really . . .

**... the ten Beethoven sonatas.**

How wonderful!

**I'm giving [unclear] concerts already. I play for festivals. So anyway, that's another story. But all I remember the old Mr. Uhlmann, and I didn't belong anywhere, and I wasn't anymore as religious, I must say. I had to work on Saturdays. I had concerts, and you know symphony was always Friday, Saturday. I do what - I still put on *Tefillin*, but I wasn't then that religious. Incidentally, when we got married in '65 - now I'm jumping - Carla doesn't come from a very religious family either. Her mother more than her ... but they didn't have a kosher home. But when we decided to invite my parents, I knew they wouldn't come. So that's when we changed *milchig* and *fleishig*, so since then we have a kosher home and our kids went to the Hebrew Academy. So anyway, I jump. Where was I?**

I was asking you about meeting Abe and your introduction to the Jewish community.

**Oh, so Abe . . . so anyway that's an interesting story too. And that also kept me in Kansas City. Because Mr. Uhlmann, and they invited me. I didn't know anybody and I was one of the few Jews in the Orchestra. Mr. Uhlmann invited me for dinner. I remember I met then Trish and Marvin. He just died - Marvin Rich. That's the Uhlmann family. Trish is the Paul uh, Paul's daughter.**

I knew one of his sons, I didn't know that.

**He just died. And so I remember he said "How can you play with Schwieger, he was a Nazi." And you know I was 23, what did I, you know, and I always spoke up, I would, you know, I went through all that I went through. One of those days when Schwieger, after a rehearsal used to, I didn't have a car then. I lived downtown and he used to take me, he lived on 63<sup>rd</sup> Street, Mission Hills, not far at all. And we used**

to work for hours, and I spent hundreds of hours on bowings because conductors do that, especially the first years. And I remember I asked him once, and then we used to pickup some *chazerai* at the [unclear] delicatessen, you know. That's when, you know on Oak Street, I don't know whether it's still there, I don't think so. Are you a Kansas Citian?

Yeah, I was... I grew up here, yeah.

So and then he would take me home and then we would eat a sandwich and then we would work. And one day I asked Mr. Schwieger, "I must ask you this." I heard that you were a Nazi and you know I am Jewish. So he said, and it happened, that his wife's father was dying. He met Mary in Fort Wayne. Before coming to Kansas City, he conducted the Fort Wayne symphony. And he said, and I remember, Mary was in Fort Wayne, visiting her father. And Schwieger said, "Tibor, if there's one person I love in this world it's Mary. But she shouldn't come home if that's true. And it was [unclear] to them because it's a fascinating story. I mean it doesn't have anything to do with this but that's what kept me here because that's what got me closer to [unclear]."

So he was telling you that it wasn't true?

And he proceed to tell me the story. He admitted his brother was an actor, Walter. I remember that well, that was back in '50s, was a famous actor. Was a Nazi and his father was a Nazi. He fell in love with a Jewish woman. Elizabeth. And against the parent's approval they got married.

[Tape ends and interview resumes.]

Proceeded to tell me, that yes, Walter and my father were Nazis. But I met this, I fell in love with Elizabeth, I remember her name, Rosenberg, I think, was born in Holland. Met, and he was co-repetiteur, Assistant Conductor of the Cologne Symphony, currently, you know, of the Cologne Symphony in Germany. And they got married against his family's wishes. And then when Hitler started, you know, in the late '30s, when Hitler came into power, they started boycotting his concerts. And Elizabeth, not to stand in his career's way, left him. Divorced, they divorced, and I don't know whether went back to Holland, but ended up in New York. Schwieger continued with success until he realized he can't live without her. He left Germany. Couldn't come to America, but via Japan, came to New York. By that time. And he told me the story, he showed me, the Uhlmanns showed me the newspaper article. "Schwieger—Nazi." Came to America, he was arrested, and deported like so many collaborators of the Nazis. Well, as it turned out, that while they were separated, there was a man in New York, who fell in love with Elizabeth.

I'm so disappointed.

What? And they didn't get married.

Oh, okay.

**But, when Schwieger came back, I guess out of jealousy, he perpetrated this, this, this story that Hans was a, Hans Schwieger was a collaborator, a Nazi. And on that, there was an article in the *New York Times*, I remember the Uhlmanns showed me, and he was deported. Elizabeth, then, she supported herself as a waitress, and I don't know, hired a lawyer. And I don't know how many months he was in this camp, when it was proven, the truth came out. And then he came, and so he was let, uh, he was let out. He was freed, went to New York, and the night they remarried, and the night they were going out to celebrate, she died of a brain hemorrhage. I mean, you know, when he told me this story, how can you not be moved and that brought us closer together. And that's what made me decide. Because I was ready to leave. But I refuse to go to Germany, or you know. So how, how can you not be moved?**

Yeah.

**So then his career started. He got a job in Fort Wayne, that's where he met Mary, who was from Fort Wayne. And then he got a job in Kansas City. So I stayed with him for twelve years. And them um...**

You said you were living downtown at this time. To be working so closely with somebody who is German and who you are hearing rumors that he had been a Nazi. Were you experiencing any antisemitism outside of....

**It's hard to say because I was a concertmaster. I was accepted. I mean, to tell you the truth, that came out later.**

Well I mean but in everyday kind of existence. I mean just coming and going and shopping.

**No, not in America. Not in New York. I mean there were so many Jews. But, there were no Jews on the Board, and....**

What about here in Kansas City?

**In Kansas City, well you know, because I was concertmaster, I was accepted. But those days, I played at the Jewish community--you at the Coffee Concerts at the Jewish Community Center with Norman Hollander before I formed my own quartet. What I remember, as concertmaster, Schwieger would take me out. He was a member of Carriage Club, and River Club. I remember he took me, and Dale Thompson, you know those presidents then couldn't care less about music. They were all soc - it was always a social business. And I remember Dale Thompson, the banker, was then president when I first came. And then Miller Nichols became and Ernie, Ernie... He was the head of Jack Henry's. Ernie, oh, I loved...he was a very**

nice man. He always sent me a tie at Christmas. Ernie Dick. They were all society. High society. I cared... I wasn't married yet, anyway. But he took me to the River Club, and the next thing, it was my first year in Kansas City, I get a letter from the River Club, offering an associate, a free associate membership. By that time, I found out that Jews were not accepted. So I refused. I wrote a letter. And another interesting thing...

So they didn't know that you were Jewish, then. They just assumed.

They didn't know that I was Jewish. I was concertmaster, so that was an important position, and you know... And I started concertizing, and winning prizes, and.... But the next story, then, when I left. And by that time, with years, things have changed. But if you read, not too long ago, when Tom Watson, you know he married Linda, and now they are divorced. But at the ...that was what, fifteen years ago when there was this front page, we get the *New York Times* every day. So I remember that front-page article. He resigned from the Carriage Club.

Carriage Club, sure.

So anyway, I remember after twelve years, in '60...by that time, I was married. In '67. In '67 - '55, '67, twelve years, I accepted a professorship. I got bored with the orchestra, and then Carla became pregnant. And we toured, I just, I don't know. So I love to teach.

How old were you when your first child was born?

I was married when I was 31, in '63, and Ellie was born, Danielle, Ellie was born in '67.

Ellie is your oldest?

That's her nickname. Danielle.

Danielle, okay? And how many other children do you have and how old are they?

I have twins.

Oh.

Yes, I have three, three daughters. Ellie went to Columbia in New York. And after graduation - she was always interested in theater and movies. In fact she started a business at a fine arts heater. And even in her...she went for a year or two to the Hebrew Academy and then she transferred to Pem Day and I remember she even in her junior year she taught a course on Hitchcock. So, she went to Columbia in New York. She graduated, she got a job, as associate producer in a small production company, worked there for five years. Then she moved to California. And she

**worked at the San Francisco Film Festival. She was program director. Then making very little. Hopping from one festival - Hawaii, and, you know, New York festival and the Mill Valley festival. And then she got interested in the other side, so now she's back at UCLA in law school. And I think she wants to enter entertainment law or intellectual ..., she just got an offer for next summer. For the first time, she will make money. [laughing] So anyway, and then I...**

I can see the pride in your face! [laughing]

**She just got it yesterday, or the day before yesterday.**

And what is her twin's name?

**Mirra was named after my...[sound of a door] Oh, Carla is home. Um, Mirra is named after my mother. She died by then. And Serena is named after another friend, so Mirra and Serena.**

And the twin girls were born in '60...

**They were born in '70.**

I'm sorry?

**'70.**

1970.

**'70. Danielle was born, Ellie was born in '67. We got married in '63. So Mirra just got her doctorate. In fact, she called this week was she got her license. She is married, and she is pregnant.**

Congratulations, how wonderful.

**Yeah! So I have three daughters.**

Do you have any grandchildren yet? Besides the one on the way?

**Not yet. Yeah, the one on the way. So that's the good news.**

Tell me a little bit about when you and your wife were married. You said that at that point in time, you started, you decided together that you would have a kosher home. so your, so your family could come.

**We got married in '63, and we brought over my parents and Tomi was single. My older brother was already married.**



He wasn't able to come for....

**Well, he was already married. He already was practicing, you see. He was here in '66 and '67, no, '56-'57, '56 or '57-'58 served his residency in New York. So I went to see him, and in the meantime, I was even drafted. I forgot to tell you that. Well, in New York....**

Where did you serve? Where were you?

**Fort Leonard Wood. [laughing] And at Julliard, see, to be able to accept this position. [directing a statement to his wife Carla.] Sweetheart, come say hello.**

Carla: Oh, hi. How are you?

[Interview stops and then resumes.]

I'm curious. Do you talk about the past? Is this something that...this is something that is near and dear to you.

Carla: Yeah. He does. Um-hmm. Sure.

**Yeah. Especially at my age now, you know. It comes back more.**

Do you talk to your children about your history, and growing up and all that?

**Yeah, I don't know.**

Carla: When they ask. Un-huh. Sure.

**I don't know whether they wanted to know....**

Carla: They do. They ask. Don't you remember when Gabi was here they actually videotaped part of you.

**That's right, that's right. When my older brother was here.**

Carla: Ellie was very interested, remember? And she wanted to video and we did that.

Now we'll have more for you.

Carla: That's good.

We'll get you copies of the tape.

Carla: That's good. Well, go ahead. Did you get something to drink or anything?

Yeah.

Carla: Good! Okay. Go ahead.

Okay. Well, now I want to hear more about the early years of your marriage. Where did you all live when you got married?

**In Prairie Village. I...because of practicing and all that. I rented a house. It was \$125 and house was there on 69<sup>th</sup> Terrace. Right when we got married, we lived in Prairie Village. And that was in '63. The owner...**

Carla: I'm glad you remembered when.

**Pardon?**

Carla: I'm glad you remembered when. [laughing]

[laughing] The year rolled off his tongue quite readily.

**We lived in Prairie Village and as a matter of fact, we stayed there until '67, when Carla was pregnant. And can you imagine the owner divorced and moved to Seattle. It's interesting. So in a letter, I told her, I wrote to her, I called her, I forget, that we are going to buy a house. And we bought this house. That we are looking for a house, that my wife was pregnant, and all that. So she lowered the rent. Have you ever heard of anything like that? She...**

Not recently, no.

**So the last year, she lowered to \$110, because she didn't want us.... So anyway, that's an interesting thing, too.**

So your first home was just....

**Oh, not far from here.**

Not far from here. Less than a mile, probably.

**But our closest friends then, I don't know if you knew Dr. Kent. Bela Kent.**

Bela Kent? Actually, he delivered me.

**He delivered. He was...and his wife is, now he died, you know.**

Yeah.

**But he was Carla's... He delivered our kids, too. And they live just two blocks from here. We spent every *Seder* first night there. Even before Carla had met me. One of the first people I met.**

How did you meet him?

**There's a little Hungarian colony and I met them. And so even before we got married and then afterwards and even with the kids until Bela was alive. We went for the first *Seder*. And we held the second one here.**

How long were you in your first home?

**From '50...when I met Carla, I was already living there. It must have been '57 until '67.**

And then you moved here?

**Then we moved. I just rented that house. So when my parents came, we lived there. It was just barely furnished, you know. I didn't have much then. And Carla even with a PhD, she.... There was no Middle East department. Anyway, she, the last thing she wanted to come back anyway, and when she decided to propose....**

Yeah? Tell me.

**'Cause I knew if I proposed, she will say no. So, she came home, then she finished.**

So how did you get her to propose?

**Well, that's also, uh....an interesting story. We dated. She used to come home, or as I said, we met once in Europe. In Israel she stayed with my parents. She went for her first trip to Israel before we got married. So she met them. And I used to go to Boston. She used to come home for Christmas breaks. But she was working on her Ph.D. And as the last thing, you know as I told you, she got an offer in Chicago, and she was cleared for the Foreign Service. She was gone for ten years. I knew, I was there at Christmas '58, and she didn't know. But Harvard used to have those cheap flights. And there was no Middle East department. I introduced her to Ernest Manheim. I don't know if you know Dr. Manheim. He just celebrated his 99th birthday. They were my bridge partners. He was Chairman of the Sociology department. Also Hungarian born. His wife was also a Ph.D. He had two Ph.D.s. Played the violin. Composed. Spoke Hungarian. Knew Bartok and then, you know, fantastic. Steel memory. But he's 99. But he will make a hundred. We just made a recording. So anyway. I introduced Carla and we started dating when she came back. And I know that influenced her, too. It must have. Ernest just came back from a Fulbright from Iran and you know Carla earned her Ph.D. in Middle East studies. Arabic and so...and so when we got married, oh, well, she came back in April, when she finished her dissertation. End of April, beginning of May, I**

forget. We started dating then. Seriously. And I remember she had to go back for commencement was that June 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup>? I really don't know. Her mother's birthday was May 20<sup>th</sup>. And I took her out for dinner. Well, when she came back, she came by bus, which also comes from her mother's family. So I was waiting for her, middle of the night and took her home. And then we dated. And then I remember on her mother's birthday. In the meantime, Rose, we established a very nice ... with Rose. Not so much with her father, necessarily, but with Rose. I loved her, from when she used to come to all the symphony concerts. And she used to come backstage, "guess who Carla is dating," and I felt like saying, "well, guess who I am dating." You know, but she kept making cookies for me and all that. And through Beth Shalom. You know, by that time, I got involved with, I'm a *Gabbai* at Beth Shalom. So we started dating. And on May the 20<sup>th</sup>, as it happened, I had a cousin, a cousin of my mother's, on my mother's side, who escaped before the war. Teddy Ulmer. Lived in Los Angeles. Was an engineer.

So, say the name once again. Teddy Ulmer.

Ulmer. Teddy Ulmer. U-l-m-e-r. Lived in Los Angeles. And I saw him on a , on a tour when we had a tour in California. And as a matter of fact, he came for a holiday when Carla was pregnant. By that time we were married, but that goes way back. In '63, May the 20<sup>th</sup>. As it happened, it was her mother's birthday. And she had a choir rehearsal. And I took her out for dinner and we came back. We only lived in Prairie Village. And the phone rings, and Teddy called and said, "Tibor, Gary -he had two sons - Gary's getting married on June - I forgot the date, June 2<sup>nd</sup> or was around the same weekend - we'd very much like, I hope you can come." And I remember I mumbled and fumbled for twenty minutes. Oh, in the meantime, I was...I tried to tell you, in December, when I visited her at Harvard, in Boston, when she was in class, I walked around and I saw this, I found out about this cheap charter flight to Iran. I figured if I can't, you know, I knew this was the girl I would have liked to marry. That if there was no Middle East department or Ernest Manheim, she was introduced later, and she started, and, but uh... At least let me take her for a honeymoon to the Middle East. So I signed up.

You signed up for a trip for your honeymoon,

**Two,**

before

**before.**

you knew if there...ok.

**See, so I had two tickets for three months honeymoon.**

Oh my. Yeah?

**Three months. But at the same time, I got a ticket for Hawaii, too. For myself, in case she said no. [laughing]**

Very practical.

**So, so back to the story. May the 20<sup>th</sup>, after dinner, I took her to Colony's. That was my favorite place. And Mister Ginsburg, the family. You know Colony's, that steak house?**

Yeah, yeah.

**That was my favorite. The old place, when it was the Ambassador on Broadway. Marilyn Maye used to sing there. I used to take dates there. And he was always...I never had to stand in line, and it was, and you know. It's.... So any more, it's his son, Bob. And he looks just like his father.**

Does he?

**Yeah. And now we don't.... Of course, steaks are no good for you anymore, so...**

Different times.

**Chicken, we are, you know, we don't eat any pork or anything. But at home, we have kosher. So anyway, we went to Colony's, and I think we went to a movie afterwards. And came home and the phone rings, and Teddy calls, and says, "Tibor, I would like you to come to Gary's wedding June the 2<sup>nd</sup>." I thought, June the 2nd, and I knew...and that was May the 20<sup>th</sup>. I knew if we got married, it has to be...my family was in Europe, I mean, in Israel. So, I didn't want them to have the expense for a big wedding. But if we got married, it has to be right away, because...**

You were leaving.

**Because she had to go back to, she had to go back to commencement. So we came back, and honestly, for twenty minutes, I'm fumbling and mumbling, and I was sweating and trying, I couldn't say that I'm also planning to get married because there was no date planned.**

[laughing] And nobody else knew about it yet.

**And nobody else knew about it then. And what I said, "Well I don't think I can come." And I hanged... after twenty minutes. And then I remembered she comes over, "Shall we get married?" So she proposed.**

The time....

**So that...that was...exactly. So we had no engagement.**

And what did she say when you told her about your plans?

**So we went.... So we went over. Well, I didn't tell her about that. I don't say nothing.**

Oh. You thought you'd scare her?

**We went over. And her mother came home from, from the choir rehearsal. She already had a bottle of champagne in the icebox, so that was the engagement. And we got married ten days later.**

But your parents did come.

**No.**

They did not.

**They couldn't come. Sent a telegram. I mean, mother was not well anymore. And, and to come from Israel. So I had nobody from my side. My best friend, Dr. Blender, was my best man. We had a small wedding.**

What about your uncle in New York? Did you maintain contact with him after...?

**Oh, he had died already.**

He had died already?

**He had died already. And so, and Teddy was in California at the other wedding. So we had a small wedding. Just...in Rabbi Hadas's study, and then I remember we had dinner with her parents and her uncle, who lived here. Her uncle died, but her aunt. And just twelve of us, I think. My best man and his wife and Cantor Rothblatt and his wife, and then we left. We went to Boston for the... then her best friend came in, and Jane was a Ph.D. and teaches at Hunter College. Lovely girl. So we went back to Boston, and afterwards, we left on our honeymoon.**

I'm curious. Did you have music at your wedding celebration?

**Not at the wedding celebration, but what happened, while we were gone, it was of course in the newspaper. And I didn't want any fuss, but of course, as concert master, I....**

Why? Why didn't you want any fuss?

**I don't know. I didn't, I didn't want her parents to go through any expense. That was it. You know. But while we were gone, then it was in the newspaper. Presents**

started coming in. So three months later, when we came back, her parents arranged a big...big reception at Beth Shalom, 500 people were there. And then we had a string quartet, and three of my colleagues played, and so that was very nice. That was very nice. And her mother used to, wherever we...and so we went to Iran. I was the first classical musician to play on Teheran TV. That was still during the Shah.

How did that happen?

Carla had the...as a matter of fact, I pub...didn't publish a book, but I was one of.... The cultural attaché at the, at the American Embassy in Teheran was an acquaintance of Carla's from Harvard, I think. And what was his name? I forget. Well, anyway, there was a book that came out. And I was the orchestra musician. Isaac Stern was the soloist for this, published by the Voice of America. Do you want to see it?

Sure.

[Tibor gets up to retrieve the book then the interview resumes.]

**Forum lecture. And Copland, Aaron Copland is the composer. And here are some....and "The Orchestra Musician in the, in the Community."**

Concert master of the Kansas City Philharmonic Orchestra and founder and first violinist of the Klausner String Quartet. You were twenty-three years old when you were appointed to the position in Kansas City.

**That I have. This you can take this by you and this, this, please.**

Wonderful.

**And so it was an interview, and it's all interviews.**

What's the name of the book? It's The American Symphony Orchestra.

**The American Symphony Orchestra. And I'm in it somewhere in there. Let's see...**

When was this published? Do you recall?

**Copland. Abravanel, who was, do you remember, who was in the Utah Symphony? Eric Leinsdorf, Walter Piston, Joseph Krips. And Howard Hanson. Stokowsky, Martin Bookspan was a, you know on those Live From, Live From Lincoln Center. He is, I thought, Isaac Stern was ..., I guess not.**

Let's see. Copland, hum.

**So anyway, he was then in Teheran. What was his name? I forget. And he arranged it.**

Um hmm. What kind of a...

**I was the first classical musician. And I remember Carla watched. It was a live performance. And it was just the year, when.... You remember that old movie with Gary Cooper, High Noon?**

Uh, huh.

**That classic. Carla tells me when I was playing around on the strings, when I heard something, I forget. The camera, you know, they were not used to classical violinists. So there was this shot from my legs up, you know. Just like, you remember that shot with High Noon? Gary Cooper's...[laugh].**

Yes. Bigger than life.

**Bigger than life.**

Yeah. What kind of a response did you get from the Iranian people for those nights?

**Big. And Carla knew one of her classmates. Not only classmates, I think roommates at Harvard, was Iranian. So I think that's the connection. And she went back. Now she's in New York, but then the Shah was still there, then. Her father was a good....**

This was in...

**This was in '63.**

'63. Right after you were married. Okay.

**Yeah. That's during that three months. We went to Teheran. We always ended up in Israel. And especially those summers before the kids came along. We gave ourselves...and my mother was not well. So we always ended up, I always worked, saved enough to, uh, for the summer. And once we went around the world. We went to...I had a tour in Japan, and we ended up in Hong Kong, coming back, and by [unclear], and we ended up in Israel. We always ended up in Israel to see my parents, family. So anyway, that's... [chuckling]**

Such a wonderful smile on your face. I love listening to this. You'd had to do....

**You seem like...I made you a copy, if you care.**

Yeah, I will.



**That's my career.**

Ok. You mentioned that when, you know, you would go off and go on tours, what happened? Was Carla able to come with you?

**No, no.**

So you were separated a lot in the early years.

**So...Yeah.**

How much traveling did you have to do?

**I remember that long three-week tour. And you are too young to remember that, that was in '64 or '65 or '66. That was uh, that was the first sign that I should leave the Philharmonic. The second one was when we were the only orchestra that didn't match the Ford Grant--that million-dollar grant that the committee was denied. I saw the hand....**

For the symphony. It's had problems, you know?

**So I saw the handwriting on the wall, and then sure enough, they went bankrupt not too long after. So I was out fortunately.**

That would have been the early, very early...was it the late 60's or early 70's when the...?

**That was 70's, late 70's.**

Oh, it was the late 70's?

**Yeah. 'Cause then, so I left in '67. And it was the late '70's, and then when the symphony was formed, and Kemper and company, you know, put up the money. And they asked me to, was when? '81 to come back as concertmaster and I just stayed. There was a rapprochement with the university, too, between the opera and the ballet. So I stayed with them until this year. I retired this, this May. But anyway, that tour did me in, because there were two buses always. The travel, then one overturned. I don't know if you remember that. And several of the...I thank God I was on the other bus. But several musicians were hurt, and the instruments and all. So we ran into bad weather in Walla, Walla, Washington.**

[laughing] Of course. I don't know...was this, was it wintertime?

**It was wintertime.**

I was going to say I don't know anybody who's traveled to Washington State in the wintertime that hasn't had some travel problems.

**Oh, really? Well, what did I know. We always used to play bridge. I love to play bridge, that's my hobby.**

So, now that you're retired, what's retirement...?

**I'm not really retired. Retired from the...**

You're retired from...

**...from the symphony, but I do, I still teach now, and now I can...now I accept the students I want to. And I am making a CD and I'm doing the Beethoven series, and last night we played, or Saturday night we played....**

Saturday night. Oh, I wanted to go. I missed that, yeah.

**It was a good program. I wish you could have come. And I played at a Festival, and I played a fund raising...I'm glad to get involved with the Jewish Community Center, so....**

Now, tell me. You said one of your daughters is in California.

**And the other one is in Maine.**

In Maine.

**The one who is pregnant. She just got her license. And....**

Her license for...

**She's a psychologist. She got her doctorate from Michigan. [sic - her undergraduate degree was from Michigan.] Her doctorate from Chicago. But she'd met Todd, my son-in-law in Michigan. He has an Engineering degree, but didn't like it. He likes to teach math and so he got a job at Hyde School. I don't know if you are familiar? It's...**

Hyde?

**Hyde. H-y-d-e. But they have now. It's a very...it's a private school for special students. And they have now a school in California, they are just opening one in Washington...**

And what city is this in?

**It was on "20/20." In Bath, Maine. It was on 20/20 or Dateline they tried to cover a couple of years ago.**

Is this...this is one of the private schools. I do remember seeing something on one of the news magazine programs.

**Yeah. That was a couple of years ago. And it's very, we went there for graduation last year. And so he's Dean of Students, and I think they are grooming him to become headmaster. That's what his ambition is to become headmaster.**

So you'll be travelling to Maine some in the near future.

**I know. So...**

And where is, where's your third daughter? She's here in Kansas City.

**She's home now. She went to KU. And after graduation, she went to Chicago when her twin was there. And she went to chef's school. She worked at Napoleon's for a year and a half...**

Oh really?

**...but it was too...she's petite, she got the short end of the deal, and she came back. It was hard, getting up at 4:30. You know, she had to be there at 6 and on her feet and making very little, and no raise, no benefits. So now, she's working for Blue Shield, Blue Cross and....**

As a chef.

**No.**

Out of that line, now.

**No, in the office now. Yeah. But she caters occasionally.**

Oh, does she? Well, that's good to know.

**Yeah. She catered for the Jewish Commun...for the Federation, for a singles, they had a party.**

Which one? I missed it. [laughing]

**That was months ago, two months ago. Singles party. Her name is Serena, Serena Klausner.**

Ok.

**There were seventy-five people.**

I don't know.

**You know David Sosland?**

I know the name, but I don't know him, no.

**I think through him. They were classmates of the Hebrew Academy, and he is involved with the Single's Club.**

You said that you do talk to your kids some about your, your history, your growing up, and your family's experiences?

**Used to. Used to more. In the early days.**

Do you recall when they first asked you questions, or how that may have come about?

**Seder nights, probably. Through the Kents. You know Bori, Mrs. Kent, is an Auschwitz survivor. Now that Bela died, she comes here every Friday night. I pick her up. She comes for dinner. She's alone now. Two sons are gone. They are both doctors, but one is in California and the other one is in Texas. And so she comes here. And we always used to talk. I don't know whether they really asked questions, per se. I don't know whether...they read a lot. You know, they read a lot. I mean we made a point. I always depended on Carla, you know. She was...I worked so hard. I had four jobs, then. You know, to send two, three kids in college through college....**

You mentioned that one of your daughters went to Hyman Brand. Did all of your children?

**The twins finished Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy.**

They did.

**Ellie didn't finish.**

So part of their...

**Ellie is one of the founding class. Ellie was...Jeffrey Sosland, and...it was a small class. And that's one of the reasons, too, why she didn't. By the time that the twins went, it was a larger class. There was no social life then. It was back, you know, in the 70's. And I was also a founder, on the committee.**

But with their education through Hyman Brand, at least nowadays, the Holocaust is part of the curriculum. Was any... do you recall any of that?

**I don't...I don't think so. I don't think so. Not at the early days. Probably they showed movies of .... But there are so many people, you know. Even, even, you know, like Barbara Kent, who is a survivor of Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen. Thank God I was saved, we were saved that.**

Did your belief or your feelings about God change through the process of going through what you did with your family?

**No. No. On the contrary, you know, I, we had all the things we needed.... See, we had books, you know, and there was a man who survived, and he's more religious now than he was before. And, uh, the contrary. I always...religion meant a lot to me. You know, I am a *Gabbai* at Beth Shalom, and I belong to a library *minyán*, and to *Hayurah*,, and study with Rabbi Margolies Saturday mornings, and with Rabbi Friedman on Mondays. No, religion always meant a lot to me.**

What about your children?

**They are kosher. But as it happens, two are vegetarian. [laughing] But they won't eat meat parts. Danielle - Ellie, and Mirra are...and Todd is completely vegetarian. Not even chicken.**

When we were talking a lot earlier about languages, and you mentioned that you grew up speaking Hungarian and Romanian, and that later you learned French...

**German.**

And German. When did you learn English?

**When I came.**

You didn't speak any English...

**I didn't say a word.**

... until set foot in New York?

**My cousin, I remember my cousin when he, in Brussels, he as he...they used to come, you know, every year to Cincinnati. So I remember it was a quick, you know, I got the visa in, in December, and I left in, in January. So I took a crash...Berlitz crash course. And I remember Carel taught me. "Hello," "how do you do?" And when he will tell you, and I remember he always spoke French. He said, when they tell you "Oh, I'll call you", you know they will not call you. Don't believe anything. I remember that. [laughing]**

That's universal and timeless. [laughing]

**Absolutely. I remember that very well.**

But to come here, and start studying at Julliard immediately. Was it the language of music that was the bridge?

**And my teacher Galamian was, his French was better than... he was Russian. We always spoke French. And terms of music are French.**

Right.

**His French was more better than English. Wagener, was my Elements teacher, was Dutch. He used to take me. He lived there, next to Claremont Avenue in New York, next to Julliard, and he befriended me. I didn't speak English. A few words. And he used to take me for walks and talk to me. And Schubart, Mark Schubart, the dean, I mean how it's *bersert*. His mother was French. His French is.... So all my teachers spoke French. Then, it's through Mark Schubart that I told you to join the union in '54 to be able to even audition. Through him, Senator Lehman, who was then senator in New York introduced a personal bill, so that I could get my green card. And, but the trouble is, once you applied for citizenship, that was after, after Korea, before Vietnam, there was still draft. Six months later, I was drafted. I was here already as concertmaster, and....**

How long were you in the Army?

**Well, I was drafted. And the lawyer from the Philharmonic arranged it. They withdrew the draft notice, and that's when the five and a half years, six months reserve deal came about. So I went in for six final...**

So you were able to, "voluntarily"....

**Exactly. So they withdrew and they arranged it so I went in for six months after the season ended. Those days, even New York Philharmonic season wasn't a fifty-two week season. So I went in in May, and got out in October.**

And what year was this?

**In '57.**

'57.

**In '57. And then I was in until six.... That was your.... See, I could be your grandfather. So I was in, I was in for six months. I remember basic training and was a big article in *The Star* reporter came out and watched me, you know. So the captain was the company commander was an amateur musician, a clarinetist. And he knew I was a...and the sergeant, too, knew I was worried about my fingers, so that was in the paper, too. So, they uh...the sergeant always shut.... You know, they**

couldn't show favorites, but, favoritism, but he came and he picked up the grenade, and he threw it just as if he were teaching me how to do it. And who the hell cared? It was raining and I have to fire, you know, and you couldn't even see the...you know, I couldn't care whether I had a bull's eye or what not, because I was.... So they made me a clerk typist after. But I had to go through with eight weeks of basic training. And then they made me a clerk typist. And then in reserves I joined a medical outfit, the 35<sup>th</sup> Division. And I became a dental assistant for five and a half years. [laughing] So...

[laughing] What an interesting difference.

**I learned, I learned a lot. so, um...**

What, tell me when, when did you become a citizen?

**Then I became a citizen, you see, five years later. It took me still, during the war, you became automatically a citizen if you served in the Army during the big war, during the Second World War. But, I still had to wait five years. And I became a citizen in '62.**

The year before you got married.

**The year before I got married. In fact, I have a picture the year...the day I come to the judge. You want to see it?**

Yeah.

**That was a big day.**

I guess one of the things I'd like to ask, and again, since you were able to leave, and you personally were not part of...

**Persecution, or deported or....**

Beyond, I mean beyond at age fourteen when you left the ghetto and you were able to get over to Hungary. What was it like coming to America? What did you think of America when you came here?

**You see, I mean I...that's, that's funny. You know, I mean, I didn't have a childhood. That's why I grew up so fast, because I was on my own, so...and my childhood was just before the war, when, when, you know. And I always practiced. And I never played. And persecuted, I mean on my parents, and having gone through the hardships was a test of survival. Hiding, and father was deported. So, anyway, when I came to America, I mean it was freedom, but again it was hard work because it was my studies, my practicing, and I lived on \$25 a week.**

Did you have any sense of...different feeling of safety or security or...?

**Oh, as a Jew, I didn't have to worry about...I mean, at that time, I thought everybody was Jewish in New York.**

Really?

Sure.

Ok.

**My circles were...well except.... Well at Julliard, there were a lot of students, that was before the, the, the Asian...influx, you know. Before they...and I remember the first summer. I came in January, and the first summer, I met this pianist in Paris, Tanya Gould. Tanya Gould was her name. She was a pianist, and she was a staff pianist at Crystal Lake Summer Resort, upstate New York in the Adirondacks. And it was interesting. I didn't know that. I was naïve or I didn't know that but as it happened, that place, I go and I got, I forget how much, \$25 a week, was everything else so that was a lot of money then. And I played. I was hired as a member of the social staff. I remember we had four shows a week. Wednesday night was theater, and after the first week, they fired the manager. So they made me the stage manager. I got an extra \$5 or \$10 a week. I forget. And Cruc...we produced on Wednesday nights Crucible, and Twelfth Night. Ho, Ho, Malvoleo. I didn't see any of it. But, they always made fun. And it was by a lake, and you know I remember, I mean I saw Shakespeare in Hungarian. Or French, later. So anyway, and then Friday night was concert night. I played d'Artagnan. They had actors on Wednesday. And then Saturday night was a mish-mash. And then, Sunday night the new guests came and then we all did something. And so that was my first summer. And I earned a little bit, and I saved and it was America. You know, it didn't matter how you earned it, as long as you earned it. Whether you were a shoemaker, or whether, whether you were a musician, it's...it didn't matter. Then, the second summer, when I went to Tanglewood, that opened. And I won the Heifetz Prize, and the American Ballet Theater, one thing led to another. And so, I was lucky. But it was through violin, it's through my music.**

Do you have any sense or feelings about how, I mean today in America, with everything else the world is such a larger, or I guess such a smaller place now. Do you have a feeling about the average American sense of freedom and responsibility for America at this point considering what you went through to get here?

**One thing I never understood. And having served in the Army, too, and I remember when I became a citizen. The last question again, I fumbled and mumbled—it took me five minutes when you have to pass an exam. And the last question was “What's number one privilege of an American citizen?” And I, you know, I was fumbling and mumbling and freedom of press, freedom of religion, freedom...all those freedoms that we didn't have back in Romania, you know? And**



the judge just kept nodding and it took me for an eternity: “the Freedom to Vote.” I never understood how few people, how few people, vote. And I make it a point, my students and always, we always vote, and my kids, and I never understood that. And the Nixons. You know, I was, I was in Europe. And I was, I was, for the last several years they’ve been flying me to Switzerland. And I have Master classes, and I was there in Europe during Nixon’s...before the resignation. Oh, they laughed, you know. I mean, and that only in America something could happen. Or Clinton. It’s the same situation now. I mean, it would have never happen anywhere. That many things that.... And the lack of respect for arts and support that.... You know, in Europe, practically every community has a, has a, has a subsidized orchestra. Or a, you know, series. And respect for teachers. That’s, in Europe, you know, to be a...in America, it’s money, you know, it’s.... High Society is money. It’s the Halls, it’s, it’s the Kempers, it’s...you know. So much so that I always, you know, I was in Israel so many times then, because of the family, too. And Carla also felt that way. But then the last thing they need there is a Middle East specialist. And....but there.... We took a sabbatical there. And I spent six months, that's the longest time that I spent in Israel, and I had two tours in *kibbutzim*, and, solos and several broadcasts on Kol Israel. And, and I would have, I would have liked to stay.

Yeah.

And so I [unclear] the Rubin Academy.

Do you see that happening? Do you see that happening later in your retirement?

No. No because I went to Jerusalem, which would have been the place, and they had the Rubin Academy [unclear]. And, and they didn’t have a string program. They had to....

[doorbell rings and Tibor excuses himself to answer the door.]

I would have loved to stay in Israel. There is such feeling, there, you know. Of course, my family was there, but there the Rubin Academy. So...and the other Rubin Academy in Jerusalem, a lovely place, lovely place. But they didn’t have a string program. So I said, “What? Why is it that, you know, you send, of course, it’s not far to go, but why the talents like Shlomo Mintz?” And I used to sit in lessons, when he was...I don’t know if you know Schlomo Mintz was one of the young, following Zuckerman, you know. Now he turned conductor. He was a great talent. And I used to sit in, I knew the teacher, and sat in lessons during my sabbatical. But he always had to go to the Rubin Academy in Tel Aviv. I said, “Why not Jerusalem?” They had ballet, dancing, and they had everything but the string program. Had they had the foresight, if they, had they offered me a position then, I would have stayed in Israel. But they didn’t, the Rubin Academy. You know, the last thing they needed was musicians, and Russians started coming, you know all those artists, musicians from Russia...

What year was this that you spent your six months there?

**Right after the Yom Kippur War in '74. It was a sad time, too.**

That's when I was there for the first time.

**Really?**

Yeah.

**I remember burials and when we stayed in my, my, my family.... My mother was already, had died. So my father stayed, lived with my older brother in Bene Beraq. And Tomi, my younger brother lived in Holon. And so we had an apartment in Bene Beraq to be near my family. And I remember I used to see those, you know, they...practically every day.**

Your whole family was able to go for the six months. With you?

**Oh, yeah. The kids were, oh yeah, they went to the twins... no, Ellie went to... no Mirra and Serena.... Serena went to kindergarten with Mirra. To speak Hebrew.**

[Tibor walked away from recorder to tend to something and interview stops then resumes.]

**So...**

So this was when your children learned?

**Ellie went to Kita Aleph first, first class, and she came back with Hebrew, you know, really with a Israeli, Israeli accent. Still have tapes of that. And then they went to the Hebrew Academy. In '74 they were four, the twins, and Ellie was seven. Well no. Seven, seven. The first grade.**

How often do you go back to Israel to see your brother now?

**Now, now we met...now that he's alone. You know, he lost his wife. I mean, the family's there, but he's alone, he felt that it's better for him to get away, so I went, I went for the twins'.... There is another set of twins, one of his daughter's family, went to the *bar mitzvah*, and so now...and he came here, and now for the last several years, we met in Europe. Since then, they have been flying me to Switzerland - flying us. And so after I finished work, he joined us for *Shabbat*, and then we rented a car. Last year, we went to Prague. This year, we went to Italy for a week. Rented a car, and just and...he's kosher, so....**

And is your brother your only...?

**Now just the only one.**

Only member of your immediate family?

**So we call each other every Sunday. We alternate calling, and we still write, all these years, you know, over forty years. And my mother, mother was the writer, every week, all those years. My mother while we were separated, and then father would always add a few lines. And then when mother died, then we alternated. One week, Tomi wrote, one week Gabi wrote. Then, Tomi died. And so....**

How old was your younger brother when he died?

**Fifty-nine.**

Oh, that's right. You mentioned he had heart problems.

**Yeah, he had ...young when he had his first heart attack. You know, he went through four wars, young, and he had a difficult time.**

Were your parents still alive when he died?

**No, no. He died two days before...my father died in, in '79? '79. Or '80. He was eighty-one. And, in fact there was a surprise 80th birthday party, and I am forever grateful that I flew over.**

Oh, how wonderful.

**Carla couldn't come, but I flew over. It was the last time I saw him. And...Tomi died two days before his *yahrzeit* after *Sukkot*. And Tomi died, he was fifty-nine. Today he would be, today he would be sixty-five. So six years ago, six years ago, six years already.**

What about your mother? You mentioned she was pretty young when she died, too. She was sixty-four?

**She was sixty-four. She was, she was sick. And I remember I talked to my doctor, he is Gus Eisemann, I don't know if you know him.**

Oh, yeah, he was my grandmother's physician before she died several years ago, yeah.

**He is my doctor and he is a good friend, too. He always comes to my concerts. Anyway, we talk to him about the family, and always wants to know about that. And that is why he's concerned about my cholesterol. [laughing] And mother had problems. Those years, I remember when I went, the doctor gave her that Phenacetin and codeine that developed kidney problems.**

So it was her....

**It was new, and they stopped, now you can't even...they discontinued, but....**

Well, tell me what it was again that she was given?

**Phenacetin. It was a kind of a...**

It was a medication?

**It's a medication, and...**

But the side effects are what eventually caused the problem?

**Side effects are what caused the kidney problems. But it took time, and you know, it just was one of the side effects. All medicine, but that was known...now you can't, they discontinued it, but she was one of the victims.**

The time frame, that your children, that you had the six months in Israel, were you able to spend, were your children able to spend a lot of time with your parents at that point?

**Oh, yeah.**

Well tell me, are there any special stories that stand out about your children with your parents?

**Oh, *Shabbat* was what we lived for. But, we were always together. We were always together.**

Tell me about your *Shabbats*. What was?

**I mean in Bena Beraq, *Shabbat* is really lovely. Everything stops. It's a day of rest. And you know, it's an Orthodox community. As a matter of fact, so much so, that one year, Carla and I went through the American Professors for Peace in the Middle East. I don't know whether it still exists. That was when my parents, when my mother was still alive. One of the early years, must have been in the early '60's, or when my mother was still alive, too. You know, they locked, they chained the streets so you couldn't come in, so we took the bus back, I don't know, for *Shabbat*. I don't know where they dropped. You know, we went on tour, and conferences with Aba Eban, and Shimon Peres, and I don't, you know...and all this stuff things. It was a perfect tour, you know. She enjoyed it very much. And I did, too. But for *Shabbat*, we always left the group and went back to Bene Beraq to be with the family. 'Cause I remember we had to get off at the *kvish* and walk to the house, because we couldn't take a taxi, because no car could go in. So, you know, everything stopped. I always envied that. Everything stopped. Everything closed, and we went to *shul* in the morning, and then Hedy, was Gabi's—my brother's wife,**

and she loved to cook, you know, Hungarian style. That's, that's, she learned also. Like Carla learned from my mother, too. Just watching, because you know there was no such thing as a cookbook. You know, a pinch of this, a pinch of that, and you know, she was a wonderful cook. In those days, they took...cooked.

Right.

And there was no more joy for her than to watch us, watch us eat. And if you didn't take thirds, you didn't enjoy it. It wasn't seconds, it's...so, for instance for my birthday, Carla made, I love the rice dish. I love rice to begin with. There is that chicken with rice, you know, that I love. And *lerakot krumpli* - it's, it's not good for you, you know, I love.... You know, that's what the Hungarian, you know, me like Gabi says, "If there is no potato, it's not a dinner." And... [laughing] And Gus wanted me to, to lose ten pounds. I lost eight pounds, so.

Wonderful.

Yeah, yeah. And so...that's why. And the bread is not so good. So we get the *Challah* on *Shabbat* and I'm the only one finishing, you know....

So was any of that, do you think, can you relate any of those experiences when your children were that young, to...?

Very little. Because Ellie even in California, goes to, goes to the synagogue. It's not an orthodox *shul*, but the *Jewishkeit* is there. The *Yiddishkeit* is there. And they saw it at home, and that's all you can do. But that's what makes me, and makes us happy, is that it's still there.

Ok.

And they go to the synagogue, and...and they went to, you know, the Hebrew Academy. And I'm sure that instilled that, and it will last forever. They went to Camp Ramah, and as a matter of fact, to work off the tuition, Carla and I went for four weeks. I formed an orchestra, to work off...I went five years, to Camp Ramah in Wisconsin.

Really?

I started an orchestra there, and taught, to work off the tuition. So the kids went every summer to Camp Ramah.

What a wonderful opportunity for all of you.

Sure. I loved that. It was all Jewish, and then you know, as Rabbi Soloff used to say, "I make every tree sing," because I put every tree, there was some, you know, it was all outdoors, and I made them practice, and you know, there's a limit as to

**what...but we always had a concert before *Shabbat*. There were some nice talent. I was the first one to form an orchestra. We couldn't go back afterwards.**

Let me ask you, with your first grandchild on its way, what do you want your grandchild to know of you, about your life? What was, what's been most important to you in your life?

**To be remembered? *Mensch*. [laughing] I mean, if I, you know, it's through music, I mean, you know, it's like the other night. It was at the Atonement Church, but it was a standing ovation, and I mean, music, if...it was my life, ever since, you know. I never did anything else. It was always making music, and the quartet, and teaching, and soloing and orchestra and...**

Do your children share your love of music?

**They all do. And they all played standard violin, with a student of mine. You know, Suzuki. But it didn't work, you know. It's like doctors don't like to treat their own family. It's the fact that I knew better, so they switched to piano and they all studied with their grandmother. And Ellie...Mirra called the other day, their subscription and with the, with the approach of the delivery, they won't be able to go into Portland. Because they live in Bath, and the nearest place is Portland. Not too far, about forty-five minutes, but, and they have this subscription, so they wanted to, they were able to get credit for the tickets, they had some chamber music so she called, what should she, what should they go to? And Ellie also calls. Through UCLA, they have this wonderful, I played at UCLA before she was there. As a matter of fact, we had a concert in the Schoenberg Auditorium and, she calls now regularly. They can go and listen to the junk, too, but, but they came to all my concerts. And that's all you can do. And so it's... So they like classical music.**

I think we've covered just about everything I can think of. Is there anything that I haven't asked you about?

**A number of them. A number....**

Or are you on overload now?

**I don't know what... [laughing]**

You don't remember what you've told me.

**I've probably bored you. I know I've bored you with ... I jumped from one thing to the other because Carla says that I just don't follow things.**

No, no, no. That's ok. The transcriptionist is the one that's going to get to have fun with all that.

**I don't know how much, uh... You know, it's, it's, I was... Gabi should tell you. See, I got dates from him when I got this note from Jean.**

Well tell me, tell me what your brother shared with you.

**Like we went into the ghetto in '43. Dates I didn't remember. My father went into the labor camp in August '41.**

Tell me again, when he was in...

**When we went into hiding, when we went into hiding in Sărvârşin. I forgot that it was Sărvârşin. And that was...**

That's when you were telling me that you had crossed the border in Hungary and were...?

**That's was where, yeah, and that's where the king had a summer place. And, uh, that's how I got my passport. That's how... And then the Jewish school when we were expelled from the regular school. And then I was in Hungarian [sic – Hungary] with her.**

That was when you were...

**So I wrote it...**

You were six or seven around then when you were...?

**No. In '41 I was 9, 9 already when we were expelled from the regular school. I did not even realize that we were able to go to the regular Romanian school until '41. And, and we were expelled in '41. You see, it was a little bit more lenient there than obviously than in Hungary or Poland or uh...**

So you really didn't feel... Did your, did your, or did your brother mention anything about any sense of what the impending... What was impending with the Nazis coming to power. Was...

**Well, all I remember, you know, I was 4, 5, 6 and, you know, I already played the violin. That what therapy is today, also. That was my, my, you know, this was my escape. That was my peace really. And that's what Gus, to... You know, he's what, 77 and he's starting on - he hasn't accepted a new - but I talked him into, he didn't have a hobby either. So he, he is taking cello lessons now. Gus Eisemann, you know.**

How wonderful!

**And I remember Ed Smith, who died in that, you know?**

Yeah, yeah.

**He also was a good friend and he came to all my concerts. The Sosland's have a privately funded series that, Klausner and Friends series, that I've been playing through the year and they always came. And Ed was what, 67, when I talked him into starting the piano. He never had. Gus played cello when he was young and he had a cello. He always loved the cello.**

So he's coming back home to something.

**Exactly. Now he practices and then, you know, tells me that he.. and Gus tells me too. Some days 20 minutes, but I told him, every day.**

Something.

**That's the most important thing. Twenty minutes is better than... And then twice a week he can practice an hour. But can you imagine? I mean, that's therapy. The piano's therapy. It's better than drinking or smoking. That's why I never discourage anybody at any age. So you want concert [unclear] in the country. You will enjoy it more because you don't have to make a living. For me practicing was always, or rehearsal was always, it was never fun.**

It wasn't?

**It was fun, I mean no. It was always work. It was what I mean... ever since I, except in Arad. When the pharmacist and the mayor took me in when I could hardly read but they needed me and I started playing chamber music, it was fun. There was no concert to work for. It was just enjoyment.**

So when you do your, you're working on your recordings now. Is this...

**I mean, it's a whole uh, work.**

This is work.

**It's stress. It's pressure. People don't realize that. I'm playing my scales at 5:30 in the morning just to stay in shape.**

So what do you do for fun?

**Play bridge.**

Ok.

**Walk. I love to walk now and now I can go out twice a day. Except today I didn't.**

Me and the weather.



**I go out early and Carla comes now too. I used to go out early because I, all those years - for 32 years I taught at the university plus the symphony. You know, when I went to... three kids were in college at the same time. I mean, it was over \$50,000 a year. I mean, my whole symphony check went there. I mean, I didn't realize that. Now the first thing that I will do when my grandchild, God willing, will be born is start a, a college fund. And I told Mirra already start it now.**

Yeah.

**Even if it's \$100 a month or uh... It's because that hit me. I mean today, college, you know, when Mirra went to graduate school, or Ellie now, she took out a loan. I didn't, she is really uh... I am blessed. Carla and the kids - I didn't even know, but with both of us working, of course they didn't qualify for scholarships. But Ellie, when she decided last year to go back to law school, she told Carla, she showed her a list of all the things that we gave her all those years when she was at Columbia. And after graduation she never asked for anything. She got a job right away. She was out for eight years or so, then she decided to go back. And you know how much it is now to go to college. And, but never... she never asked. So she, she wants to pay us back. Well, I hope, God willing we won't need it, but just the fact that she kept track. She's gonna show me what she showed Carla of all the things that we did for her and that's, that's, you know, that's ... And with Mirra, um, I mean, it's just the same. It's, it's... And Serena is working. It doesn't mean... she is not making much. Now she is trying to save enough so she wants to move out.**

Starting over, yeah.

**She wants to move out. [laughing]**

It's tough to change from something that...

**I mean the future. You know, sure. She was gone all these years. And so, but for me that's ... family meant a, meant a - music and family. That's what's uh...**

Ok.

**And religion. Talking about that, that's what kept me going.**

Ok. Well, I think that's a good place to end. Thank you very much.