

George Rosenberg Interview

February 10, 2000

Today is February 10th, the year 2000. We're at the home of Mr. George Rosenberg, Olathe, Kansas, 16513 West 133rd Street. We're going to do an interview for the Holocaust project on this date. Mr. Rosenberg, what was your name at birth?

My name at birth was Guenther Rosenberg.

Can you spell your first name, please?

That's G-U-E-N-T-H-E-R.

All right. And where were you born?

I was born in Hamburg, Germany.

Hamburg, Germany? Okay. What do you know about the circumstances of your birth? Were you born in a hospital? Were you born at home? Do you know what the situation was?

To the best of my knowledge, I was born in the Berman's Clinic that specialized in family and prenatal care, things of that nature.

Do you know were there doctors and nurses?

I don't know the doctor and nurses.

Or midwives or...?

I have no recollection of that.

Okay. What were your parents' names?

Parent's name was... father's name was Julius Rosenberg and he was originally born also in Germany. He came out of a small town called Bad Hersfeld, which was near Fulda in Germany. My mother was born ... her name was Lilly Rosenberg. Her maiden name was Rosenthal and she was born in Furth, Germany. And, best of my knowledge, they were married, I guess, in the year 1918 or '19.

In the year '18?

'19... 1918 or 1919.

1919? Okay. Do you know what the roles were of your mother and father? How they interacted as far as...?

Well, my father was basically a merchant here and his brothers were in the import/export business. And they had a lot of successful business over the years. My mother was a professional singer, and, although, really reacted, it's pretty hard to tell. My mother passed away as a young woman when I was seven years old so I have little recollection in that particular point.

She passed away before the war years? Before it actually started?

Before the war, yes, in 1935.

Was it hard to make ends meet... I mean, not make ends meet but...

Well, from a practical point, in those days we were not, you know, since, as I had indicated earlier, my father was in the import/export business and they had a lot of good business. It was financially very sound until actually the Nazi regime came around. They were able to turn acts of business that they had done in the past.

Did you have brothers and sisters?

I had two brothers.

What were their names and ages?

The name of my oldest brother was Helmuth, which is spelled H-E-L-M-U-T-H and he was born in 1921. My next older brother was Erich. That's E-R-I-C-H and he was born in 1924.

Okay. Sisters?

No sisters.

What kind of a neighborhood did you live in? What kind of...

I would say we probably lived in a fairly affluent neighborhood. I mean, it was a well-maintained neighborhood. I mean the city of Hamburg was always however well maintained area, at least the area that I am familiar with.

Okay. You have the typical shops, the everyday shops everybody, I mean...?

Yeah. You had the... we really lived really close to, you know... I'm sure German cities were probably not quite like you probably see in Eastern Europe simply because the population are somewhat more spread out but, you know, you still live within, in most cases fairly close to a synagogue or a temple.

What was the inside of your home like? What kind of furnishings...

Rather elaborate, I think. You know, we had a big home. I mean big apartment and we always had maid services in those days, which was, I guess, you know, when you have two people working, one as a professional singer, there was probably not a lot of time devoted to household chores or anything of that nature.

Did your family own land or take vacations, regular vacations, anywhere? If so, where did go?

I'm not sure they took regular vacations. I mean, occasionally we might have gone on vacation. I only can really think of one time that we went on vacation, Bavaria, but that's really the only recollection I have.

What kind of foods did you eat ... did you or your family eat? What was the traditional type foods?

Traditional German food. I mean nothing unusual, I think. You know, nothing elaborate. You know, we did not... you know we did not maintain a kosher household but we did not eat pork.

Did you have any favorite things that you like to eat? Anything standing out?

I was a very poor eater as a child. [Laughing] I don't remember too many favorites.

Okay. Was your family politically active?

Not that I'm aware of.

Okay. How old were you when the war broke out?

Uh... World War...?

In 1939?

In 1939, I was 14.

14? Okay. What was your birth date?

October 21st, 1925.

Can you describe the schools that you attended?

School ... the early years I attended a private school, which was primarily, relatively small classes until, I guess, this was no longer permitted that Jewish people were not permitted to attend private schools. I had a Jewish high school in the city that was attended, obviously, by all the Jewish eligible students.

What kind of area did that take you in? How far out did they go ... did kids go?

The school was basically, as I had indicated, we did not live that far away from the school. So that was relatively close ... walking distance. And people, you know, I think... In those days, people did a lot more walking than we do today.

Berlin being a good size city ...

Hamburg.

Oh, Hamburg. I'm sorry.

[laughing]

Did children from other smaller towns come in to that school?

Not that I'm aware of.

Or did they have their own ...

I presume they had their own because, I guess, most cities probably had their own school system. I'm not sure what happened to people, you know, who were Jewish and lived in those days, you know, in lots of smaller German communities.

What were your favorite subjects and did you graduate from school?

Well, of course, the curriculum was rather strenuous with, you know, a lot of emphasis on languages: English, French, Latin, German, Hebrew. So, I guess, there was fair mingling of that ... you know, fairly, when you go to a Jewish school that a fairly good emphasis, a strong emphasis on Hebrew.

Do you now speak several languages? Are you able to speak ...

No, I do not speak really any other than English. I really don't speak any language. I never ... I haven't used German in many, many years, probably since the war years.

Did you graduate from school?

Well, no, because I, you know, when I emigrate out of Germany in 1941, I mean, I was too young to graduate from high school or any school. So my schooling was continued in the States.

All right. What kind of things did you do for fun as a youngster in Hamburg?

Well, I guess, people tended more to be out ... you know, go on outings and go on picnics and things of that nature anyway. Probably, primarily the life that centered around them, you know, when you had two brothers, you basically spend a lot of time playing with them.

Did you have any special hobbies or did you belong to any organizations?

The only hobby I had was stamp collecting.

Did you have a nice collection?

Yeah, I had a fairly nice collection.

Did you collect international stamps?

Yeah, because basically, you know, through my father's business, I did a lot of trading out for things ... German government and traded a lot of the, primarily, a lot of the British colon-, in those days, the British colonies, so there was a fair amount of interesting way of collecting stamps.

In your teenage years, what kind of things did you do in your spare time and did you have girlfriends and how did people meet one another? What kind of things... how did you...?

I think the Jewish community in Ham- ... I think in those days when I probably was old enough there probably was very little activity because, of course, you know when the Nazis came around, I don't think Jewish people really spent a lot of time on social activities in those days. There was probably highly restricted. I know of ... we had little activities in the schools, too, from that point of view.

They're busy thinking about survival probably at that point?

That's right. I think that's more a matter of survival than ... not necessarily be seen on the streets when you didn't have to be seen.

Okay. How did you get along with your parents?

As far as I know I got along well with them and my brothers. I mean, you know, there's a certain amount of ...

Had a good relationship?

Yeah, I'm sure there's certain amount of fighting between siblings all the time but it would be unusual if that doesn't happen.

Okay. Were your parents strict? Were they ... or permissive?

Yeah, we, fairly well, you know. I think there were a lot of discipline in the household, I guess. That's the way I was brought up and my kids probably don't like it, the way I was brought up because, I guess, you're ingrained with that kind of discipline.

What kind of things created tensions in the house? What kind of things did the kids do that might upset the parents?

I guess a certain amount of fighting between the siblings, you know. Kids like to play with one toy, maybe everybody wants to play with the same toy. That's probably nothing unusual.

What kind of values or standards were most important to your parents? What kind of things were they, did they expect from you?

I guess they just expected, you know, to be a good student and, you know, do the things that you, you know, most likely would expect from your children. To be obedient and do, you know, the things that they wanted you to do, and... Time we brought up an environment that I think you can be proud of in the future.

Was religious life, you know, up to that point of the war ...

Well, religious life, I guess ... A matter of attending services on, you know, holidays and ... I mean, we were members of the synagogue, and... I guess, the whole ... you know, my father and his brothers all attended basically the same synagogue. So I guess it was almost like a family reunion when holidays came around. [laughing]

Families ... you went to the same synagogue basically?

Went to the same synagogues they used to have.

Were there a lot of synagogues in the area, in the town, in the city?

There probably were, that I know of, about four or five of them, you know. Because you have to remember, it's a fairly large community and had a fairly large Jewish community too.

Right. Were your parents concerned about maintaining their Jewish identity or do they just try to fit in, you know, with the ...

Well, I think they always tried to maintain the Jewish identity because they wanted to make sure that, I guess, both my brothers and I were *bar mitzvah* so, I guess, make sure that it's a Jewish identify out there.

Were you encouraged to keep up relationships with generally all people or did you kind of stay with the Jewish population?

Well, I guess, there's a lot of restraint in those days already. So you probably stayed pretty much within your family groups than really go out with a group.

Did the children and your parents have an interest in say art and music and philosophy and that kind of thing?

Well, my mother had an interest in it. She was professional singer and I guess she had a lot of interest in music.

Did you go watch her perform?

No. I was too small in those days I mean... [laughing] I guess she was more or less a concert singer so I guess it's not necessarily that a six or seven year old particularly wants to participate in.

Did she travel? Was she in Hamburg primarily?

No, I don't think she traveled. I think she was primarily in Hamburg all the time.

How well were the Jews accepted by the general community?

Well, I guess, Hamburg being somewhat of an international city, I think the Jews probably were more secure in that city, if we can say that's a good definition of it. But, I think that's probably less aggressiveness of the Nazis by not being that visible.

They kind of blended in a little there?

Because Hamburg was a, you know, very international city. It was in those days. You know, had a big harbor, a lot of foreign visitors come in to the city and I'm sure they did not really want to stir up too much. That's too visible to the general public.

Okay. Did you experience any antisemitism that you recall?

I'm sure there was a certain amount of it because, I guess, you know, everybody was actually required to, you know, wear the armband with the J on it. So, I mean, there's no question that people looked down on you.

So, before the war you were 14 at the war's break. You were a student. So, did you have a job? Were you doing any kind of part-time work at that age?

No. I did not do any part-time. No.

When and how did you first become aware of the Nazi problem or Nazi presence?

I guess probably the first really event was Crystal Night when they destroyed the synagogues. And, oddly enough, sometimes there's certain events in your life that stand out. For some particular reason, I had to be in school early the following morning and the Jewish high school was next door to the synagogue. So obviously this was, it was very obvious that they had destroyed, broken windows and the damage, although, the damage visibly was probably rather nebulous. There was probably a lot of other cities the damage would be worse, much larger. In fact, it was my understanding that, because of the international flavor of the city, that the local police protected actually the German ... one of the synagogues so there could be no damage being done to them, which was probably rather unusual.

Yeah, I've never heard that.

No, but that actually had happened. I mean there was some damage but ... because the police station was almost next door to it and they really didn't want to have any breakage of glass or anything of that nature around.

That would affect them. Was *Kristallnacht* pretty much widespread through Germany and like that or was it ...

Well, my understanding is obviously it was much wider spread in smaller communities. I think it was probably a lot more damage done.

As an organized ...

Much more organized in the smaller cities because I think probably the Hitler, or the Hitler's henchmen probably were lot stronger in smaller communities than in the bigger cities.

Do you remember the first day of the occupation?

Well, the first day of occupation ... you're talking about the occupation of Poland, I assume? It was ... remember, that was 1939? I mean, I don't know what you heard on the news. It really did not ... really aff-...

That wouldn't apply to your location?

It didn't affect ... no, it didn't affect anybody in your location. Of course, I think the other event of *Kristallnacht* was that, I guess, the following day, German Gestapo came around and I guess they took most of the male members of the families and they, they were shipped off to a camp and, I mean, that happened in the case of my

father. Fortunately, my oldest brother and my other brother and myself, we were spared from that ordeal.

How were you spared, do you remember?

They just did not ...

Just didn't come out ...

They did not make any effort to say, "You have to come with us." I mean, you know, there were no "ifs" or "buts." They really didn't give you a lot of time; although, my father was a veteran of World War I and was wounded. I mean they were in fact very apologetic, but they said, "You have to come with us and we really don't like to do this but we really have no choice in that matter." So the people acted somewhat more in a gently manner than you would really anticipate. I'm sure a lot of people ...

Some one ... their records almost ... decent.

They were, like I said, were somewhat apologetic which you don't really find too much. But I mean, lets, you know, I'm sure they had their orders and had to round up everybody who was required to go to a camp.

How did you find out about things that were going on in other parts of Europe like Poland - radio, newspaper?

Radio.

People just talking?

Yeah, radio, newspaper, I'm sure, you know. When you had the opportunity, I'm sure everybody had the same opportunity to, you know, listen to the radio or read the newspaper.

Do you remember some things that you heard?

Not really, other than, you know, other than it was obvious they were short-lived aggression was [unclear] from the German because it didn't take long for them to occupy Poland.

Did your parents respond to the take-over in Poland? Did they prepare ...

Not really.

... to leave any, anything like ...

No, I mean, we always made a effort because, for some reason, out of my family or the greater family, primarily my father's brother, they all were already out of Germany. They already had left. So, primarily, my father and my two brothers and I were really the only ones out of the family who still remained.

And they left because ...?

Well, because of the German aggression.

Because of what was going on?

What was going on during all the years and, I mean, they had opportunities to emigrate out of Germany, but it became lot more difficult, I guess. My father part of the family to get out of Germany. You know, attempts were made but, you know, nothing really materialized.

That maybe because of the business too?

Not necessarily the business, I think. I'm not sure what the reasons were. I mean, we all know there were children transports going into England and then somehow, you know, you get on the list. But, you know, you even if you were on the list, sometime there was only so many people they were able to transfer to out of Germany into different countries. Unfortunately, we were not one of those that either were selected or qualified. I'm not sure how they selected the people.

You're in Germany. Do you remember the *Kristallnacht*? Are you familiar with the Nuremberg race laws and the book burnings and the boycott?

Sure. Yeah, I mean, I was, you know ... You have to remember I was rather young. I mean, a lot of these things are not all that familiar with some of the other people that you probably have interviewed over the time.

But, you remember ... I mean, some of this ...

Some of it, yeah, I was real familiar with or you have heard about it later on.

You had to wear the armbands?

Yeah, you were required to wear the armband. And you were limited, but you could go shopping, I think. I think that was probably ... I'm not sure what was even...

They closed the schools also?

No. The Jewish schools remained open.

Oh, they did? Okay.

The Jewish schools, until I emigrated from Germany, I, you know, I went to school every day.

Okay. You had your, did you have property confiscated or destroyed by the Germans?

Well, I guess, everybody had property confiscated because, I think, every family was required to turn over to the Germans all their silver and gold and I guess that we're not exempt from that situation either.

Did, were there any non-Jewish people that helped you? You say some of the soldiers were somewhat, you know, apologetic?

No, they were ... well, I mean, they were ... I don't think they really helped anybody but they left you pretty much alone. I mean, they didn't ... I'm sure they didn't go out of their way to do anything for anybody, but I guess...

Your neighbors and people just didn't cause trouble for you?

No. No. We lived in apartment building. I'm not aware that anybody caused any particular problem.

Were you ever deported to a concentration camp?

No.

Anyone in your family that you know of?

Yeah, my brothers.

Your brothers were? Both brothers?

Yeah.

Okay. Do you, can you explain the events that led up to that?

No, because I was no longer in Germany at that particular time.

You had emigrated?

I had emigrated out of Germany.

Okay, and where did you go?

I left Germany in 1941, which was already during the time that Germany had invaded France and Belgium and, and the Low Countries. And... The way to come out of Germany, in those days, was there was a group of people who met in Berlin and we were escorted to get on a railroad car that was attached to a train that went from Berlin to Paris. And from Paris, we moved on into Spain. And once we got in to Spain, we were permitted to get off the car and spend the night in a hotel in San Sebastian, Spain. And from there, the following day, we were moved on to Portugal to find passage to the United States. That was probably a rather unusual situation because in 1941, by that time, anybody get out of Germany was almost impossible. And I was fortunate enough because I came over on the student visa so I did not have to wait for the quota and I guess that was part of, unfortunately, part of the big problem. People couldn't get out of Germany because, you know, the quota that was set up by the American government did not permit anybody else to bypass a quota.

So, you came directly, you came directly ... you wound up in the United States after ...

I ended coming directly to the United States. In due time, I spent about a month in Portugal because it was determined ... I'm not sure there was a requirement by the German government - you used to have, you probably were required to indicate that you had passage to get to the United States. I was booked on a steamer that didn't even exist. So I spend a month in Portugal until they could find new passage for me to get over to the States.

It was like false identification or ...

I have no idea if it was done deliberately or if this was just a mistake. But, I actually had a ticket and it says, you know, such and such a steamer sailing from Portugal, from Lisbon on such and such a day, and that, that didn't happen. And I guess one of the Jewish organizations in Lisbon and took care of trying to find passage for me to get over the States.

So you left before your brothers?

Yeah, I left in 1941. My brothers still stayed in Germany when I left. They were not, because they were older, they could not get a student visa and they were not able to get out.

Do you know any of the events that led to them being taken? Did your father go with them?

No, my father had passed away in 1941 before I left Germany. Father, 194-... I think it was '41 or 1940, but, you know, he was already gone when I left Germany. After he passed away, or even before he passed away, I, you know, there was ... I spent because, I guess, for financial reasons, my father really couldn't support the

whole family. I lived in a Jewish orphanage in Germany. Which was still maintained, you know. Was pretty much left alone by anybody.

Have you tried to check on the fate of your brothers? How did you trace ...

Well, the German government has published a book. They told you exactly when and where they were deported to.

And that's how you found out what ...

That's how I found out because beforehand it was almost impossible to find out, I mean... During the war years, when I was in service, you know, I tried to make efforts through the American Red Cross to find out and they, they had no way of checking. Eventually, the German government published actually a book with the dates and all the people, where they went to.

Where did your brothers wind up? Where did they go?

One of my brothers ended up in, in Riga, in Latvia. I guess the other brother ended up in, I think it was in Theresienstadt.

So, you got passage to the United States. You were there, you were in the United States through the war years?

Correct.

From 1941 on?

From 1941 on.

So you weren't actually ... you weren't liberated, as such?

No.

Except you were free?

Yeah, I was free. I was ready to ... I was fortunate to, basically to say, escape from, you know, from the Nazi regime.

So did you have family here ... other family members in the United States?

Yeah, I have quite a bit of family.

What kind ... how were they related?

Uncles, aunts, cousins. You know, there was a fairly large family on my father's side. Most of them had immigrated to the States in the meantime before me.

Did you come in through New York harbor?

Yeah.

Did you go through Ellis Island?

In New York through Ellis Island.

You were processed through there?

Best of my knowledge I probably.... You know, I don't remember exactly everything. [laughs] You know, I would think a lot of it was processed on the boat where they really didn't, you know, where you really didn't go on the island in those days, because they probably didn't have too many immigrants any more.

Right, or not at that point?

Not in 1941.

Not at that time, right. When you came to the United States, where did you go first? What kind of ...

Well, the original plan was that when I came to the States that I was supposed to be placed, to live with a family in Albany, New York. And as it turned out to be this is not the way it ended up. I had a cousin of mine who lived maybe about 30 miles or 40 miles north of Albany and I stayed in, with her in a small town called Greenwich, New York. It's a little community of about maybe five or six thousand people. And I attended high school there. And I was with them maybe about a ... with her and her father, he was a old gentleman, and I lived with them for about a year and a half when we heard about a family who were interested of having somebody live them who's, was not too far away. So, I spent probably the next year or year and a half living with them until I got drafted in to the U.S. Army. That was in 1944.

So, you're about 18 when you're drafted?

I was 18 when I was drafted.

Were you a citizen at that time?

No, I was not. I became a citizen after being three months in the army.

Oh, I didn't know they did that.

Which was... Oh, yeah. That was automatically, it was almost a contingent citizenship papers if you did not get a honorable discharge, they, you know, would not necessarily give you your citizenship papers.

That's interesting. So you were in pretty good shape then?

Yeah, I was, you know, in good health obviously, you know. I guess like everybody else, I had no choice to being drafted. Or you couldn't, or you did not want to evade the draft, let's put this way, that's one thing you did not want to do.

Did you speak English then?

Yes, I spoke English.

Okay. What duties did you have in the service and how long were you in and what rank?

I was in the service for approximately little better than two years. I was drafted, was trained as a basic infantry training and after came out of basic camp, you got time to assign to infantry division. They found I had some difficulty with my eyes and I was transferred again and I ended up as a interpreter in the prisoner of war camp, which was in North Carolina, which maintained approximately fifteen to eighteen thousand German prisoners of war. Obviously, very ...

That's kind of ironic, isn't it?

It's somewhat ironic because ...

The turn around.

...and, you know, that's a history in itself because part of to be assigned to a German prisoner of war camp as interpreter, you had to be cleared by army intelligence and also by the F.B.I. because part of what we were charged with as interpreters trying to seek out German prisoners who could be classified as war criminals. So, part of our process, almost on a daily basis of time, talk to prisoners in trying to find out some of the backgrounds and trying to determine, you know, if there's any possibilities. And, I mean, you know, we watch very closely, obviously, anybody who was a member of the German elite troops and try and find out what had happened. And then, you know, and a lot of these people were always curious because they always were asking why somebody would speak the German that well...

That good?

... and, of course, our standard answer and one, we were not ever permitted to tell them what our background was because that was none of their business. Certainly,

we, you would never disclose that you were Jewish either so I guess that's one of the things you had to be very careful of.

So, you couldn't get very personal?

Definitely not personal.

Strictly business?

It was strictly business and it was very interesting to see because it's amazing how many of the German prisoners of war in this country had relatives in this country and probably unknownst to a lot of people, the German prisoner of war were permitted to have their relatives visit them. However, it was required at all times when they had a visitor, always American personnel had to be present, somebody who could speak and understand their language. So, we had to be ... there were many occasions that, I wouldn't say many, but there were a few occasions where relatives tried to bribe us because they wanted to give German prisoner of war certain articles which were not permitted to have. And, I mean, our instructions were to, obviously the next day or the same day, notify the Federal Bureau of Investigation and they were no longer permitted to have any of those people coming back to visit them.

Oh. Kind of keep a hold on them?

Right. We also ... all mails that came to the German prisoner of war was censored by us so we had to read all the mail that went in and out. I mean, there are probably long stories that can be told what happened on a daily basis in the prisoner of war camp and we ... The camp that I was assigned to was, maybe, I'm not sure maybe the only camp, there might have been another camp also, kept prisoners of war who were of non-German origin, because the German army seems to, in the sweep through Europe it's amazing how many people, for some reason or another, were members of the German army, voluntarily or involuntarily. And you found a great many Czechs and Poles and Yugoslavs. You name them probably from every country in Europe, there probably was some member who was interned in the United States. And oddly enough, we talked to one German prisoner of war who claimed he came from Holland and he claimed he was Jewish and he joined the German army just to, not to avoid being executed or being shipped to a camp. I mean, a lot of these things you probably never find or read anyplace because that, there's no history of that.

It's interesting.

We were also the camp where, and I'm sure that's not very well known either, where we probably had around 120 prisoners of war who came out of a region in Russia called the Volga region where the language spoken is actually German. And we had the pleasure all the time of foreign delegations coming into our camp and

interview these people. And many of these people, especially the Russians, they had indicated if they ever get hold of any of them, they would execute every one of them. So, we obviously reported that wherever, we would report, we try to report this to, those people probably never were sent back to the original country. And many of the, not many, but there were some Czechs or some Poles who actually their foreign delegations found they were actually traitors and some of these people, many were shipped back to England to the government-in-exile, they were actually executed by them as being traitors. But there's a long history out there like that. I'm sure, I'm not sure those archives of the United States government are ever going to be opened to some of the history that it has really evolved over the years.

Uh-huh. There's so many of little things, little stories, individual stories and you'll never hear it.

That's right.

You're married at the present time?

Yes. Well, I just got remarried about a month ago ... less than a month ago.

All right. Congratulations.

Thank you. My prior wife passed away about in July of '98. That's really the reason for moving from St. Louis to here.

I see. You were in St. Louis?

I lived in St. Louis for about 40 years.

Okay. Now, let's go back. You came to New York and where did you go from there? We'll just follow through from there.

I lived in New York and I lived in small town of, as indicated earlier, in Greenwich, New York. And lived there for about a year and a half and then moved with, to the family that they lived on a farm outside of town called Hudson Falls, New York. I went to high school in both of these communities. I ...

You graduated high school?

I did not graduated high school before I got inducted in service. I ... After the war, after I was discharged from the army and I spent all my time in the States because we were restricted, really, where we could be transferred to because of the great need of interpreters in this country so we were pretty much set wherever we were. After being discharged, I moved to New York City and attended, completed my high school education there and then attended college in New York.

Okay. Where did you go to college?

I went to college at New York University School of Commerce.

Commerce?

And graduated with a degree in 1949.

Like a business degree?

Business degree, degree in accounting, a B.S. in accounting.

Very good. Okay. From there, what happened to you? What did you do?

I stayed in New York until ... let's see, I graduated in 1949. I went to work part-time while attending school, worked full-time after I completed college because I wanted to get in to the accounting profession, which was almost impossible to find a job in New York City right after the war because with the high degree of people that graduated from school. Somebody had advertised in *New York Times* for a position in St. Louis and they interviewed me and that's how I ended up in St. Louis.

Okay. In an accounting position?

I accepted accounting position. I worked for a firm, for that particular firm, for about nine years. I went to, into industry as an in-house accountant for about five or six years and continued to do part-time work for another CPA firm and I decided to go back to another CPA firm for which I worked almost 20 years. After I left there, I joined another firm as a partner. Was in partnership for about 13 years and retired from the firm last January, a year ago, in 1999. And oddly enough, many of my clients who I've served for many, many years have followed me and I still practice today, so.

Oh, on your own?

Yeah, on my own.

Individual?

Yeah.

Great. Great. They must have trusted you?

Well, I mean, it's something, you know... in today's times you don't find that much loyalty any more with people. They don't really care. They want to ... You know, you can go from one place to another place, you know, but all of these people, you know, I've done for so many years and they really didn't want anybody else.

If you do a good job and they trust you, that's important.

Well, then they trust you. And I also have some kind of a relationship with a firm here in town to take up some of my excess burden and sometimes helping them out because of my expertise of all the years that they can't, you know, can't find.

Consulting? Uh-huh.

Consulting or, you know, doing work that they really don't have anybody on staff to do for them, so, or they don't have enough time.

I'm going to end this side 1 of the tape.

Sure.

Side 2 or Side B of this taping of Mr. George Rosenberg, February 10th, year 2000. Okay, you said you're in St. Louis at this time of your life doing accounting work?

Right. I moved to St. Louis in 1951 and have lived in the city until January of 1999.

Okay. And you retired at that time?

I retired from the firm, which I was a partner of.

[Phone rings and interview briefly pauses then restarts.]

Can you tell me how you came about meeting your wife and circumstances and what happened after that?

I met my wife probably in the early '50's, I guess. In those days, a number of the Temples or congregations, you know, were quite active of having young adult groups and I met my wife at one of these groups, and I guess we ...

Where was this now?

This was in St. Louis.

In St. Louis?

Right.

All right.

And my wife was a native St. Louisian and she had lived there all her life, of course. We got married in 1956.

Okay. So you had been in the United States for several years.

By that time I was in the States quite a number of years.

You'd become pretty well accustomed to things going on here?

Sure.

You had a mastery of English at that time ... by that time?

Oh, yes. You had to have. You could hardly practice in my profession without being a mastery of English.

Okay. In your experiences here in the United States, did you encounter antisemitism as such, or, even during the war years when you were still here in the United States?

Yeah, I mean there might have been a certain leaning to it in the army. You know, in basic training, I'm sure ...

That there was some?

I guess Jewish people always looked upon as a minority and I guess, you know, maybe get certain privileges because they took off on Jewish holidays when everybody else had to do other things but I guess ... You really didn't hear much about this thing. You know, you pretty much minded your own business. And I guess, sometimes that was the best way, to mind your own business. You really didn't have that close, you know you really didn't find too many Jewish people in the same unit that you were in so I guess we were pretty much isolated and from that point of view.

It was pretty well spread out. I mean they didn't put the Jewish people together?

No, there was absolutely no ... I mean, you know, you were just one of the numbers, you know, and just happened to be whatever religion you were you were. I mean, it didn't, didn't make any difference. I mean, there were anything, obviously in those days, that were segregated as far as black and white is concerned but ...

So what year were you married?

I got married in 1956.

'56? Okay. And you were married how long?

I was married for 48, for 42 years.

42 years? Okay. How did you come to the Kansas City area?

Well, I came to Kansas City after my wife had passed away since my son was living here. They wanted me to move closer to them and I made the determination since it was time for me to retire anyway and the firm really wanted me to retire, so I figured that was a good time to break away and move here and that's how I came to Kansas City.

Okay. So you haven't been here very long?

No, I lived here just about a year.

Just a year or so. Okay. How do you like it?

Kansas City's a nice city.

Had you traveled to ... you probably traveled to Kansas City from St. Louis ...

I had traveled earlier. In my early accounting years, we used to have clients in Kansas City and St. Joseph, Missouri so I've been around this city, probably more the downtown area than the suburban area.

Okay.

And Kansas City's somewhat unique. I mean, I guess, things that you might not see in a lot of other cities because, I guess, the way, you know, particularly this community, everything is so close that you probably don't realize, you know.

Uh-huh. The highways are ... it's close to the highways ...

Highways, all the stores around. You know when you look at people wouldn't believe that grocery stores, you have half a dozen grocery stores within five minutes or less than five minutes of your house. I mean that's not, that's a very unusual situation.

What was your wife's name?

Marlene.

Marlene?

Yeah.

Okay. And, so you've remarried?

I remarried about a month ago ... not quite a month.

And your current wife's name is?

Janetta.

Janetta?

Yeah.

All right.

And she just moved here, obviously. She's not from Kansas City.

Where was she from? Where did she live?

She was originally from Reno.

Reno, Nevada?

Yeah.

Okay. So she's getting used to ... well, the snow hasn't been that bad.

No. No. She had plenty of snow in Reno too. So I guess Reno is not isolated from snow either. Reno is not necessarily the warm climate when you think about Las Vegas.

How many children have you had?

I have, I have two children, a son and a daughter.

Okay.

Son is married and lives here in town and I have three children [sic: grandchildren] from a prior marriage ... her prior marriage ... and one child out of their current marriage so they have a total of four children.

Okay. Are the children familiar with your history? Your personal history?

Probably very little I would think.

Have you discussed some things with them?

Well, I'm sure occasionally, you know... I mean, my children probably more than, I mean... If you're talking about my children, yes, they know a certain amount. Grandchildren probably know very little, which is nothing unusual in this day and age. My daughter still lives in St. Louis.

Okay. Were they born in St. Louis?

Yeah.

Were your son and daughter born in St. Louis?

Yeah.

Okay. What kind of hobbies, what kind of things do you like to do now, today?

Well, it's took me a long time to really get myself adjusted and it seems like, as I have indicated, you know, many of my clients followed me. My time's been pretty much occupied still working and not really time be semi-retired. That didn't really quite work so well.

You didn't really retire, did you?

No, I didn't really retire.

So you're doing tax work?

I do tax work, accounting work, and, you know, and basically everything that's, you know, do certain amount of consulting. Still travel back and forth between here and St. Louis from time to time.

You still have family there to visit?

Yeah, and, you know, it's a good way to keep active. I mean, I'm sure you have seen many people out there who are very inactive and, you know, unfortunately, they wither away rather quickly which is not really a good indication. So, I mean, the more active you are, the better off you are. I think, good, bad, or indifferent, maybe you work pretty hard but it's, you know, also, hopefully gives you opportunity, you know, to do some traveling and things of that nature.

Do you exercise? Do you ...

No. I'm not one much for exercising. I mean, you do a limited amount of walking but not, not a lot ... maybe not as much as I should.

Your... Do the Holocaust memories that you have impede your life, your daily interaction or anything like that?

No, I don't think it really impedes, you know, your daily life. I mean, you think about it from time to time, obviously, and, I mean, it's part of what's ingrained in you, what you have observed and what you have seen, and, I mean, sometimes it's hard to describe, you know, what you have seen and what you haven't seen. You know, there's certain memory that come back to you. I have not been back to Europe, although, we are ... my wife and I are talking about going to Europe

because she has relatives over in England, and I'm trying to see if we can somehow combine a trip going into England also going back to Germany and trying, you know, to somewhat refresh your memories and saying this is where I've been and this is what has happened. I mean, you know, sometimes you can really expand on your history once you see it again, perhaps.

Yeah. Sometimes that's good, sometimes it's not too good.

Well, there's good parts and bad parts, but I mean, you know, you can't, there's certain things you can't sweep away out of your system.

How are your religious beliefs? Are they as strong as they were in the pre-war years or...

Well, religious beliefs, I guess we, as I had indicated, we belonged to a synagogue in Germany. I guess we could [unclear] but compare this to a conservative congregation. Since my first wife belonged ... my mother-in-law was a rather religious person, we belonged to orthodox synagogue in St. Louis, which I'm still a member of today. I've been on, you know, on the board. I've been an officer of the congregation for a number of years. Moving here I really have not really been affiliated with any particular congregation because my wife is not of religious background and I'm trying to find congregation that makes her feel comfortable. So, I guess it's just a matter of going to services at different synagogues or Temples and, and get a feel what makes somebody feel comfortable. I mean, as far as I'm concerned, I don't, I don't practice being an orthodox Jew. So I guess when you don't practice, it doesn't make too much difference where you attend services. As far as I'm concerned, you can go anywhere where you feel comfortable and, you know, you can pray wherever you feel, you know, makes you comfortable. It doesn't make a lot of difference.

Right. Do you have a favorite Jewish holiday?

Not particularly. I mean, you know, you go ... you know, when a lot of it, of course, past history depends, time permitting, you know like Passover always falls during the busy time of, or most of the time during the busy time of my profession so that's, you know, sometimes tedious holiday to have.

Try to work things in?

Yeah. Work some things ... you know, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. I guess they all have the, you know, they all have the place in history and, you know, what you like to do. I'm not sure there's really any particular favorite out there.

Do you carry on some traditions, religious traditions now that you carried on, that were done during your growing up?

Well...

Anything particular that stands out?

Well, you still, you know, you still trying observe, you know, the anniversary of, you know, of the departed ones. You know you try and go to services if possible or things of that nature. Still say *Kaddish*, you know, whenever you can. After my wife passed away, I probably attended services fairly regularly.

That's a long time to be married. That's great.

Sure.

What would you attribute your ability to adjust to a normal life after the war? Anything, certain things ...

Well, I guess, I mean... When you're basically a youngster, it should not be that difficult to adjust yourself to what your environment is. I guess we all learn to adjust ourselves to an environment. We're not set in certain ways that we'd say, "We have to do this." I mean, when you're 14 or 15 years old, it's fairly easy to adapt yourself wherever you are, you know. With schooling, which is different, this country than what you have been used to. You know, everything you have done is basically different but, you know, the adjustment is not so difficult to do. Once we get older it's much more difficult to adjust to new environment.

Yeah, I agree. What does being an American mean to you?

An American means, obviously, that you have a tremendous amount of freedom. That, you know, nobody's looking over your shoulder what you're doing, what you can't do. We not regimented and, you know, you can live a free life. You can go wherever you want to do. You can attend services. You don't have to be afraid that somebody looks upon, down at you because you're Jewish or anything of that nature. So, I guess, that freedom is probably one of the great things, and, obviously, freedom of speech. You know, you can express yourself anyway you want to - good, bad, or indifferent. People might not like your point of view but I guess over the years, you know, when my profession dealing with a lot of different people, you know, we all express all kinds of different views in dealing with government officials, good, bad, or indifferent. But, you know, you have to adapt yourself to that kind of environment. And fortunately, I've been fairly easy to adapt myself to those kinds of changes in life.

Good. Do you think Americans take their freedom for granted?

A lot of them take freedom for granted because I think they really have not seen the other side and, I guess, when you're brought up in an environment where you really haven't seen anything differently, then there's no reason why they shouldn't take it for granted.

It's always been there.

It's always been there. There's nobody tell them what to do and how to do. You know, as long as you obey the laws that you supposed to obey, so there's no particular reason why you shouldn't do that.

Okay. Well, thank you very much.

You're welcome.

This concludes the interview with Mr. George Rosenberg. Interviewer is Harold Edelbaum. Thank you very much. Total time was approximately one hour and twenty minutes. Thank you.