Henry Golde: Oral History Transcript

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Henry Golde

Name: Henry Golde (1929 –)

Birth Place: Plock, Poland

Arrived in Wisconsin: 1954, Milwaukee

Project Name: Oral Histories: Wisconsin Survivors of the Holocaust

Biography: Henry Golde was born in Plock, Poland, on May 5, 1929, the younger son of a Polish father and a Lithuanian mother. When the Germans occupied Plock in September 1939, Henry's family was ordered into a ten-block area of the city designated as the Jewish ghetto.

The ghetto was liquidated in early 1940. The Golde family was transported to the city of Chmielnik and again forced to live in a ghetto. After six months, 11-year-old Henry was selected for forced labor at the munitions factory at Skarzysko-Kamienna, Poland. His parents and brother were gassed at Treblinka.

In the fall of 1943, the Germans shipped Henry to a slave labor camp at Czestochowa, Poland. After three months, he was deported to Buchenwald. He was there for a brief period before being transferred to a munitions factory at Colditz, Germany. Shortly before the end of the war, the slave laborers at Colditz were force-marched to Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia. The Russian army liberated the city on May 1, 1945.

Henry remained at Theresienstadt with 300 other children until June 1945 when the British government airlifted them to Windermere, England. With the help of Jewish organizations in Britain, the children were housed in hostels and taught technical trades. Henry became a tailor. His wife, whom he married in 1948, was also a tailor.

The Goldes immigrated to the U.S. in 1952. Henry worked as a tailor, cab driver, and salesman in New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio before arriving in Milwaukee in 1954. He held a variety of jobs during the 1960s. In 1972 he bought a tavern in Merrill, Wisconsin and ran it for five years. Henry remained involved with the Merrill community, lectured on the Holocaust, and served on the boards of many local organizations. He moved to Neenah in the 1980s. As of January 2009, Henry was living in Appleton.

Audio Summary:

Below are the highlights of each tape. It is not a complete list of all topics discussed.

Tape 1, Side 1

- Early childhood in Plock, Poland
- Family background in Russia
- Jewish cultural life in Plock
- Underlying anti-Semitism of Gentiles

Tape 1, Side 2

- Family's religious life in Plock
- Increasing anti-Semitism after 1935
- Henry's secular and religious education
- Relations between Jews and Gentiles in Plock

Tape 2, Side 1

- Outbreak of war and Nazi occupation of Plock
- Persecution of Polish Jews
- Creation of Plock Ghetto
- Sneaking out for food

Tape 2, Side 2

- Liquidation of the Plock Ghetto, 1940
- Family’s deportation to Mlawa and Chmielnik labor camps
- Murder of parents and only sibling
- Henry's transport to Skarzysko-Kamienna labor camp

Tape 3, Side 1

- Brutality at Skarzysko-Kamienna
- Manufacturing artillery shells
- Sadism of guards and officials
- Cruel boss murdered by underground

Tape 3, Side 2

- Henry hospitalized with typhoid
- Hiding among corpses to escape being shot
- Transfer to Czestochowa, Poland, and Buchenwald, 1943
- Conditions at Buchenwald

Tape 4, Side 1

- Camp life at Buchenwald and Colditz
- Death march to Theresienstadt, April 1945
- Imprisonment in dungeon
- Rescue by the Russian army

Tape 4, Side 2

- Fate of his family
- Transport to England, June 1945
- Life in Windermere and London
- Becomes a tailor

Tape 5, Side 1
- First marriage
- Immigration to the U.S., fall 1952
- Moving around the U.S., 1952–1962
- Move to Milwaukee

Tape 5, Side 2
- Business ventures in Wisconsin and around the U.S.
- Operating a tavern in Merrill, Wisconsin, 1972–1977
- Thoughts on anti-Semitism in the U.S.
- Second marriage and children

Tape 6, Side 1
- Henry's children and family life
- Community work in northern Wisconsin
- Attitudes toward American culture and politics
- Lecturing about the Holocaust

Tape 6, Side 2
- Attitudes toward religion and intermarriage
- A typical day in his life, 1980
- Thoughts on being a Jew in northern Wisconsin
- Anti-Semitism in the U.S.

Tape 7, Side 1 (no Side 2)
- Thoughts on American politics
- Feelings toward Germany and Germans
- Reflections on speaking out about the Holocaust

About the Interview Process:

The interview was conducted by Sara Leuchter during two sessions at the Golde home in Merrill, Wisconsin, on October 1 and 2, 1980. The first session lasted three and one-half hours and the second, three hours.

Henry comes across as an extremely pleasant man with a wonderful accent that contains a trace of his years in England.

The interview is particularly useful for its child's-eye view of the Nazi horrors, though teachers should note that it contains many vivid descriptions of barbaric cruelty, which may not be suitable for younger students.

Audio and Transcript Details:

Interview Dates
- Oct 1, 1980; Oct 2, 1980

Interview Location
- Golde home, Merrill, Wisconsin

Interviewer
- Archivist Sara Leuchter

Original Sound Recording Format
- 7 qty. 60-minute audio cassette tapes

Length of Interviews

- 2 interviews, total approximately 6.5 hours

Transcript Length

- 107 pages

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Transcript

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Key

SL Sara Leuchter, Wisconsin Historical Society archivist
HG Henry Golde, Holocaust survivor

TAPE 1, SIDE 1

SL: We're beginning with some, some family questions, I'd like your date of birth and your place of birth, and the names of your parents and if you can recall their dates and places of birth also.

HG: Well, first of all I guess you know my name. I was born May 5th, 1929, in a place called Plock, Poland. Plock is approximately 100 kilometers west of Warsaw. It's a small provincial town. My father was born in Plock. My mother was born in Vilna, which is *Litvak*, it would be Lithuania, but she was under the Russian then occupation when, most of her childhood and so on and uh....

SL: What were the names of your parents?

HG: My father's name was Felix, and my mother's name was Gina.

SL: And her maiden name?

HG: Her maiden name is Kagen.

SL: Do you recall when they were born or at least the years?

HG: Well both of… That's a very good question. Oh, I can say that when I was born they must have been in their early forties.

SL: Do you recall the names of your grandparents on either side?

HG: No, I don't.

SL: Do you have any idea of where your grandparents came from?

HG: Well my grandparents apparently, the family comes from Plock and the surrounding areas. So the family tree comes, begins in that area of Poland.

SL: Do you have any recollections of your grandparents at all? Were any of them alive when you were young?

HG: No, no. They both died long time before I was born.

SL: What was your father's occupation?

HG: My father was a barber by trade. He owned his own store and he had four people working for him.

SL: And did your mother work at all other than in the home?

HG: No.

SL: Was this a typical setup in Plock that the woman would stay at home?

HG: Absolutely. I can't remember any woman working unless they were helping their husbands in business and so on. But as for going out to work there were very few women that would do that.

SL: Do you have any special recollections of your parents, really pleasant memories of them?

HG: Oh, absolutely. Most of it I would say is family discussions and my father telling us about the Russian Revolution and my mother's college days in Russia. She did go to college. I guess she spent about three years in Russian college. And to me, even though I was a little boy, it was very interesting to hear, and that's when I learned about Communism at a very early age.

SL: What would they talk to you about as far as Communism goes?

HG: Well, they were against it, there's no doubt about it. They went through experiences— my father was dragged out of the house because he— he was in the Czar's army when the First World War broke out, and that's where he met my mother. And they got married in Lithuania. And then when the Revolution came about, naturally he took off his uniform, and he was telling us when the Bolsheviks came and dragged him out of the house. He was ready to be shot and so on because he was in the Czarist Army. And in the army— while he was in the army, apparently he was a courier of some kind, and then a personal barber to some big shot officer. And therefore, the Bolsheviks knew about it, and they tried to

kill most of the people that had any influence or whatever you call in the Russian Czarist government and anybody that had anything to do with the czars.

SL: Was he living in Lithuania at that time?

HG: At that time he was living in Lithuania. And apparently, he got to the army when Russia overrun Poland, and then the war started against the Germans. And Poland was torn apart between Germany and Russia and that's when he was taken into the Russian army. And then, with the army, apparently he was fighting in Lithuania. And that's where he met my mother, and then he stayed there until the end of the war and the beginning of the Russian revolution. So what happened to them, and my mother remembers too, the anti-Semitism in Lithuania and the Russians themselves. They had very bad experiences, and they related to us. And there was a lot of Russian books which at the earlier age I read, like Dostoyevski and a little bit of Tolstoy and so on. So I was acquainted with Russia and Communism.

SL: Did you have any brothers or sisters? Do you have any brothers or sisters?

HG: I had one older brother.

SL: And what was his name?

HG: His name was Marcus.

SL: And do you recall his date of birth or at least the year?

HG: Well, he was four years older than I was. So how old would he be?

SL: He was born in 1925, and you were born in 1929.

HG: 1929, yes, then he was born in 1925.

SL: Were you very close?

HG: Yes, oh yes, absolutely. My brother and I were very close. The oldest brother, there was a third one, but apparently he died as a baby.

SL: He died before you were born?

HG: Before either one of us was born. He would have been the oldest one. I suppose he would have been about ten years older than we were. My brother was quite an intelligent individual. He went to what in Poland was called a *gymnasium* at the time, which is the equivalent to high school or early college here, or prep school.

SL: What prompted your parents to leave Lithuania?

HG: Well, it was very apparent that my father was born in Plock, and he knew everybody there, and the family was there, and he figured that that's where they would like to settle, and my mother went along with it. And I think that— I had a feeling that my mother had a real hard time to get adjusted to the Polish way, because the culture itself was a little bit different than the Russian and Lithuanian. But, supposedly she got adjusted. My mother was a very religious person and she came from a very religious family and background, and my father wasn't. And I guess maybe that that was kind of a situation where they had to get adjusted to each other and their environment.

SL: I'd like to go back a minute to your brother. Do you have any special memories of something that you did together anything that stands out that you recall especially about things that you did together?

HG: Well, my brother and I, it was more or less like a typical older-younger brother relation. Like I told you before, he was a very intelligent and a very intellectual individual, and he was taking me more or less under his wing. But there was always this kind of, "I'm the older brother," you know, "and you're a kid" and so on. But, yes, sometimes he would take me swimming and go to play soccer and different things that we did together, which I really enjoyed.

SL: Were there any other family members of your immediate family living in Plock?

HG: Yes, I had two aunts and quite a few cousins. The husbands died, apparently. When— as long as I can remember they were alone, but they had a lot of children, and that's why I said there's quite a few cousins.

SL: Were there any families—any members of your family living close by?

HG: The closest family was probably in Warsaw. We had quite a bit of family in Warsaw. And from my mother's side, naturally were in Vilna, in Lithuania.

SL: Were you in contact with them quite a bit? Did you visit them at all?

HG: No, I didn't visit them, but I remember a couple of cousins coming down to visit us.

SL: Did you have any family or close friends in the United States prior to the outbreak of the war?

HG: Yes, there was my father's sister that lived here, and on my mother's side, there's my cousin, which was my mother's sister's son. That's the only relatives that I had here in the United States.

SL: Do you recall any flow of letters from the relatives in the United States trying to get your family to come to this country before the war?

HG: Oh, absolutely. As a matter of fact, my father's sister wanted him and the family to come over to United States. As a matter of fact, they made out all the papers and they had everything including the visa and my father changed his mind and he decided not to go.

SL: And when was this do you remember, was this before the war still?

HG: Yes, I would say that that was in 1935...'36. My father's feeling on it was, I suppose, he was established, and he had a good business going, and he feared language barrier and so on and he figured he's much better off and the family staying back home.

SL: Could you describe to me what you remember about your home and the immediate area in which you lived?

HG: Oh yes, very vivid memories I have. Even though that I was very young, my memory is very good of the surrounding areas and even the people in town. I remember a lot of people in our town, because Plock is a small provincial town, approximately ten thousand population. There were two thousand Jews that lived there, which was a high percentage of Jews in a small town. Plock itself is a beautiful little town, which lays right on the Vistula [River]. The town itself sits on a big mountain, and around the mountain there was a park and if you look at the picture of the town looking up from the Vistula, you see a very majestic church, which was actually— was a cathedral, Catholic cathedral, and it was very, very nice

and picturesque. And the park was beautiful because it went all along that mountain that the town was built on. The town itself was very clean, laid out nicely. It had its business area and it had the houses where people lived in— actually, everybody lived in apartment houses; there was no private homes like you will see it here in the United States. It was typical European. The city itself had three different parks and different squares. Streets were nicely kept, and there wasn't any dirt roads: they were all either cobblestones or asphalt, which was something new at the time. But the town itself was very progressive. There were three gymnasiums there, which was what you would call like a prep school, and people were mostly intellectuals. There was small industry; there were three machine shops, which employed quite a few hundreds of people. Two of them belonged to the Jews; one was Christian. And it was quite an industrious little town, where people had— life was pretty good, I would say, as a whole for Christians and Jews. There were also two regiments of Polish armies stationed in Plock. One was artillery, the other one was cavalry, and we had a lot of military parades, which was very cumbersome and so on. It wasn't mechanized like our army here, but they looked very beautiful on the horses and so on. I remember the times that we used to go out and there were concerts in the parks and different doings where everybody enjoyed it. There were three sports clubs— there were two Jewish sports clubs and one Christian— and most of the Jewish young men belonged to it. They were more social than sports clubs. There were also quite a number of what you would call maybe political Zionist organizations, where a lot of young people belonged to that, too. And there was always something to do in the town. Even if people would walk out and promenade town the streets, and there were quite a few broadways, what you would call here in the United States, where people would walk and watch the store windows and so on. And, of course, weekends most of the people would spend just walking around the parks, which I think was very relaxing and enjoyable.

SL: Could you tell me a little bit about the home that you lived in? Was it a place that you had remained for many years?

HG: As far as I can remember, since I suppose, until the beginning of the war, after the Polish-German war finished, I lived in one apartment. It was a big building, approximately eight families that lived in the building. And then in the same courtyard there were three other buildings. So all in all, in the whole complex, there must have been about twenty or twenty-five families. Our apartment was a three-room apartment, which was very typical— one bedroom, one living room, and a kitchen. It was a cold apartment. We had kind of an oven, a tile oven, that went from the floor to the ceiling, which covered the whole wall, and it was fired by coal, and that was the only heat that you would have in the house. And of course, the same thing with cooking— there was a wood and coal stove in the kitchen, built right into the room, where all the cooking was done. And of course, that gave out heat too, so that was the extent of the apartment.

SL: Where did you and your brother sleep?

HG: Well, I slept in the same room with my parents, and my brother slept on a sort of a [put-you-up/pull-out] couch in the living room.

SL: Did you do any traveling in the countryside while you were a youngster?

HG: Not really. The only time that I did any traveling was in a summer, the Jewish school— because we did have a Jewish public school, which I would like to talk about at a little later on. But the school itself, which was run by different Jewish organizations, would have a camp and was not far from town— I would say about forty, fifty miles— in a forest where they would take all the kids that wanted to go. It cost some money to be sent there, but apparently whoever could— whatever anybody could afford, that's what they paid for a child to go for two weeks on a summer vacation. I remember that camp because I went twice to it. But that was the extent of my traveling, at the time.

SL: What type of neighborhood did you live in? Was it particularly Jewish, or was it a mixed neighborhood?

HG: No, that was a very mixed neighborhood. The majority of the Jews lived in one long block, which was called *Siroka Ulica*, which means Wide Street, and the story went that years and years ago during the Russian occupation of Poland that street was a Jewish ghetto. As a matter of fact, I still remember

where the— I was shown by the couple of grown-ups where the gates were hanging and they still had the big hinges and so on, and that's where there was concentration of most of the Jews. There were a few Christians living there on that particular street, but most of it was Jewish. We lived practically on the outskirts of town among Christians. In our particular area I would say there was about ten families among all the other Christians.

SL: Was your father's business close by to where you lived?

HG: Yes, it was in the same block— I would say oh about a couple of houses away.

SL: Was the barber trade something that few Jews were employed in? Was it unusual for your father to be in that kind of business?

HG: No, not at all, not at all. Because I remember that in Plock itself, we had six or seven barber shops and quite a few young people in the trade itself. So it wasn't unusual. As a matter of fact, some people think, well, the Jews are the business people, you know, and they go into the business, where you can make money. But it wasn't so. In Poland you found Jews in every walks of life. We had carpenters in Plock and garbage collectors and practically in every trade that there was.

SL: Did your father service both Jews and non-Jews?

HG: Yes. I would say that the majority of his trade was non-Jews. My father, actually, besides being a barber, he was kind of a doctor himself, because at that time a lot of people believed in— what you would call it— some of them believed in witchcraft, but my father used to pull teeth— of when a farmer came in and he had a toothache he went to a barber, and my father would pull his tooth out. Or if somebody had a very bad cold, he would come into the house and use some kind of a— well, they looked like whiskey shot glasses— and you'd smear the back of a person's back with alcohol and then you'd put the light into the glass and that glass would stick to the skin and it stays there for a while and makes a real brown mark and then you take them off, and that's supposed to take out the bad blood or whatever you call it, you know, and everybody believed in it. And I tell you quite frankly— sometimes it

worked. So that's what my father was doing—and a few different things. A barber was more than a barber back home. It was a kind of a doctor.

SL: Did he ever experience hostility from his non-Jewish patrons?

HG: No, I think my father was a very liked person. He had a lot of Christian friends that used to come into the shop and, as a matter of fact, we visited quite a few of them and so on. He had a very good rapport with Christians, and so did I. I had Christian friends, too, besides the Jewish kids that I associated with. But the hostility was there. I felt that before the war, especially since 1935— up till 1935, the man that ran the country was Marshal [Józef] Piłsudski; things went very good for the Jews, because he did believe in the Jews. As a matter of fact, somebody even said that his wife was Jewish, but I don't know how true that is. However, when he was fighting for Polish independence he had a lot of Jewish comrades that fought with him and he always felt very strong about the Jews and everything went fine, but when he died, as a matter of fact, that a lot of Christians were saying, "Well, your grandfather died— now watch out." And that's exactly what happened. Because the man that took over from him, which was his right hand, his name was [Edward] Rydz-Śmigły, apparently he was a very well-known anti-Semite and things started to happen and things started getting tough for the Jews.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1

TAPE 1, SIDE 2

SL: To interject a few questions, before we get back to the anti-Semitism… First of all, you mentioned that your mother came from a religious family and your father not so much. How would you characterize the type of religious life that you had as a child?

HG: Well to be quite frank about it, I didn't have much of a religious upbringing because, well, you know, before the war, in a Jewish life, usually the man is the master of the house. The woman is there to cook and take care of the kids, and so on. But the man that makes all the important decisions, and the way he lives his life, that's the way the family is going to follow. And that may be that — there was problems between my wife -- my mother -- and my father because of the religion. Because, like I told you before, my mother came from a very religious family. And as a matter of fact, my grandfather, from what I understand, was a rabbi and she tried to persuade my father to be more religious, but apparently to no avail. Therefore, I didn't have no too much of a Jewish education. I did go to *Cheder*[1] for about maybe six months, and I didn't like it. My father told me, "You don't have to go anymore." However, I learned not only in school, but I had a tutor—a private tutor which taught me and a few other Jewish children the Jewish history and some of the Jewish works, you know, and so on. So I'm well acquainted with the Jewish bible and the Old Testament and so on. But going in deeper, as far as religion is concerned, no, I did not have any upbringing in that respect.

SL: Did you have any traditions in the home?

HG: Yes, my mother would keep a kosher home. She would light candles on Sabbath, she wouldn't cook on Sabbath, and so on. And my father would go along with that, but that's as far as it went.

SL: Were any of your cousins in town strictly non-religious?

HG: You could say that.

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[1]A Jewish school for children.

SL: Was this different than the majority of the Jewish population in Plock, or were many of them more or less assimilated into a Polish— into a less Jewish atmosphere?

HG: I would say that the assimilation was there. Most of the people had the same kind of a thinking as my father. Sure, was there was a lot of very, very Orthodox people, the Hasidim, and we had three different synagogues and *shtibls*,[2] what they called, where the very, very Orthodox would go and pray, and so on. You could see the kids with the side locks and the special garbs that they used to wear and so on. But most of the Jews would make fun of them and so on. Because it was kind of a progressive town, where the culture was more or less Polish than Jewish.

SL: What kind of identity did you have? How did you see yourself? Did you identify more with the Polish side of you? Or did you see yourself as a Jew or as a Polish Jew? Do you recall any feeling that you had toward identity?

HG: Well, that's where the anti-Semitism comes in. As long as I can remember, even preschool, before 1935, I remember very distinctly when Marshall Piłsudski[3] died. They showed the whole funeral procession and everything that went on when he died in the movies. By the way, we had two movie houses which was very progressive you know for a small town, and that was free, and I think I've seen that funeral about six times, because it was free. And it was a special treat if you were allowed to go to see a movie. And I've seen quite a few silent movies at the time.

SL: Did you see American movies or Polish movies?

HG: Mostly was American movies, yes.

SL: Were there any Polish movies at all?

HG: There were a couple of Polish movies and a Russian movie and a German movie and all of that, but the majority was, I would say, movies from Hollywood. I remember Harry Lloyd, you know I've seen these, and then Charlie Chaplin, and a few others in the silent movies.

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[2]Small Hasidic houses of prayer.

[3]First president of the Polish republic established in 1918.

But since I can remember, when Piłsudski died, when anti-Semitism started to flourish, I found out that I was different than the other kids. And I asked my father that question, "Why am I different? They tell me I'm different— I'm a Jew. What's a Jew?" I didn't even know at the time what a Jew, what a Christian was, and so on. And he did explain to me at length why and what and so on. Still, in my own mind, I couldn't understand, because as far as I'm concerned I have the same two eyes and one nose and two ears. And I didn't look any different— I was blonde and blue-eyed and I wasn't any different than a Christian kid. "Why am I different?" "Well, you are one of the chosen people." I said, "Well, if I'm so chosen, how come that they always gang up on me and beat up on me? Why -- What did I do wrong? I didn't do anything different than the Christian kids." My brother had to defend me and so on, and they sent me to a Jewish school. I went to a Jewish public school and it was very apparent that the Christians didn't want any Jewish kids in their schools; therefore, we had a Jewish public school in Plock, and that's where I attended. My brother went to a Polish gymnasium, which was a Christian gymnasium, because we did have for a while a Jewish gymnasium, but apparently it was so expensive that the Jews could not keep it up and they had to close it, and apparently they, the Christian Poles, didn't have a choice but to accept Jewish students into gymnasium. However, the public school was strictly for Jewish kids. And instead of going Saturday, where the Christians would go to school on Saturdays, from Monday through Saturday, six days a week, we used to go to school on Sunday. And I remember very distinctly that every Sunday I had to sneak out of school— most of us had to sneak out of school— because gangs of Christian kids would be laying for us and beat us up. Or I had to wait for my brother, you know, my older brother, to come in and take me home or I would get a beating. So those things happened and I knew I was different. If you ask me where I can identify myself with, Polish, Christian, Jew, or with the Jewish element, I would say I had mixed emotions, because I did have Christian friends and I also had Jewish friends. I could not speak Yiddish, I didn't understand Yiddish, I was strictly Polish. As a matter of fact, if my father and mother fought and they didn't want us to understand, they talked Yiddish. And they did not insist that we do learn Yiddish.

SL: Did they teach in the Polish language in the Jewish schools?

HG: Yes, oh, absolutely.

SL: Even in the Jewish schools they wouldn't teach in Yiddish?

HG: Yes - No, no, it was strictly Polish. There was only one hour of Jewish history, and that was the only thing that the Jewish school would teach; otherwise you had the same thing.

SL: You said that then the Jewish school was taught in Polish. Was it enforced at all by some sort of Polish legislation that you had to— even though it was a Jewish school there were certain subjects that you to learn under a Polish system?

HG: Oh, absolutely. What the government set up in the system it wasn't any different than from a Christian school to a Jewish school; however, it was more or less like segregation, but it was exactly the same thing. The standards were the same and I think that the teachers were more or less on the same standard as in a Christian school.

SL: Was it privately funded? Did your parents have to pay to send you there?

HG: Well, I believe that a very small amount had to be paid to, for any schooling when you went to gymnasium, then naturally it cost more money, and not everybody could afford and it wasn't enforced, it wasn't by law, that anybody get any education at all. But a small portion would have to be paid by parents, yes, in either school.

SL: Now how old were you when you began to attend school?

HG: I was five years old.

SL: And did you go immediately to a Jewish school or did you spend any time at all in a Christian Polish school?

HG: No, I went strictly to the Jewish school.

SL: You mentioned the fact that you did have Gentile friends, how was this possible if you were mainly with Jews in a school situation?

HG: Just simply neighborhood kids that, who lived together and those were the kids that I used to associate with. And the ones that used to beat me up on the way home were the ones that didn't know me—you know and that's what happened. But I remember very distinctly where I was defended by my Christian friends, you know, many times when they'd seen that other kids would beat up on me and so on.

SL: Did you belong to any Zionist youth groups when you were a child?

HG: Not a Zionist group, but I belonged to Maccabee, which was a sports club.

SL: Do you recall what types of activities you did there?

HG: Mostly sports. I played soccer and gymnastics and that kind of thing. We had our own gymnasium, the club had, which was very well equipped. They had a social club there, too, but that was more or less for the grownups, not for kids.

SL: Did you parents belong to the social, where —did they partake of the social activities there?

HG: No, no. I remember my cousin, which was much older than I was, belonged to that club and belonged to the social club, but my parents did not, no.

SL: Were girls allowed to join the sports part?

HG: Absolutely. There was men and women.

SL: Now we can finally get back to speaking about anti-Semitism. You mentioned that you did notice that things changed after 1935, how drastic a change was it?

HG: It was very, very clear and very obvious. When Pilsudski died, a lot of radical groups came out from the woodwork, and they started intimidating Jews. As a matter of fact, they went as far as the church itself started discriminating against the Jews. There was one priest in particular that used to travel throughout the country and preach against the Jews and every time he would leave and you would be more or less a small pogrom on Jews, where Jewish windows were smashed in the stores and some apartments where Jews lived and Jews with beards that they caught in the streets they used to beat up and so on. So like I said, things started to happen. I -- towards the time when they started talking about the war, it was so bad that all kinds of demonstrations by Christian students against the Jews happened

practically every week. Newspapers openly preached against the Jews. They would put out blacklists of all the people that would trade with Jews. Pickets, student pickets were stationed at Jewish stores at various times and wouldn't allow Christians to go into Jewish stores. Signs appeared in parks, "Jews and dogs not allowed." Some Jewish couples on the Sabbath when they walked in the park were beaten up and so on. As a matter of fact, I even remember a Jewish farmer was murdered and his whole family before the war and the police didn't even investigate the murder. So things were getting really tough and the anti-Semitism was very dominant.

SL: Did your family suffer through the law banning the kosher or the ritual slaughtering of meat? Was that something that affected your family?

HG: No. I don't think so.

SL: I know it was in evidence in Warsaw at that time.

HG: Yes, we did have a slaughterhouse you know where kosher meat was prepared, and my mother would go there. As a matter of fact, sometimes I even taken a chicken to be slaughtered by *schochet*, which was what you called the rabbi who performed the kosher rituals of animals.

SL: That was not, shut down in your memory, do you recall?

HG: No, no, it didn't. But of course I did hear about it and that this did happen in various places and the Christians were making a lot of hullabaloo of it. But in our town apparently that did not happen.

SL: Was your father's store a target for any of this picketing?

HG: Not himself. I don't remember him being picketed, but surrounding stores were.

SL: Did he begin to lose some of his non-Jewish customers? Was there a marked change in the attitude of them?

HG: I wouldn't say that. The clientele that he had was good, they were his friends, and they always came in. As a matter of fact, even after the outbreak of the war or after the war, the same customers would come back even you know when he was working at home. Or he would go to Christian homes and cut their hair and so on to make a living. So the rapport that he had with the Christian clientele was very

good and I couldn't say that every Christian was anti-Semite, because that wouldn't be a fair statement. But the majority were.

SL: Do you recall any discussions in your house concerning how you were to live with a growing anti-Semitism? Was it something that you just figured you would ride out because it was a way of life?

HG: Well, yes. I think the thinking of, I would say, most of the Jews, especially the older Jews, was turn the other cheek, you know— "That's the way of life, the Jews are supposed to suffer and you can't do nothing about it, and make the best of it." However, I detected the younger group of Jews that didn't feel that way and we had quite a few clashes in town among the youth where they wouldn't stand for it.

SL: What would they do in retaliation?

HG: Well, there were big fights and so on. So who was the winner, you can't tell, but they decided not to stand for it and they fought back, and, of course, quite a few Jewish boys wound up in jail and so on because the Christians didn't get arrested even though they started, but the Jews were always at blame. As a matter of fact, we had a Jewish hospital where Jews were not accepted in Christian hospital. So the Jews decided to open up their own hospital. It was supported solely by the Jews. It had doctors and nurses and all-Jewish staff.

SL: So even though in Plock with the relative progressiveness and probably a greater deal of assimilation into Polish culture than many other cities, when it came to calling a spade a spade you were a Jew, and there was no, it wasn't to the degree to which you had assimilation, but it was the fact that you were a Jew and, and that was…

HG: Oh there's no doubt, no doubt about it. As a matter of fact I feel that I was born into hate and bigotry and so on. This is very true. I grew up in it.

SL: You were quite young at the time, but can you remember any kind of feelings that you had as anti-Semitism grew worse?

HG: Well all I could think of was that I am no different that anybody else. I am the same. To me it didn't matter, a Jew, a Christian, whoever it was, a person is a person and that's the way I felt, and I still feel

the same way today. I am not different and somebody else is not different than I am. And I had that feeling then and I still have it today.

SL: What news did you have then about the worsening conditions in Germany?

HG: Well, actually I didn't know much of what was happening in Germany, the only thing— as far as the Jews were concerned and so on— but the thing that I heard mostly was that the war is coming, that Hitler come into power, and as a matter of fact, quite a few times, the Jews were listening to the radio, listening to some of the speeches that he gave, where nobody could understand a word he was saying because he screamed most of the time, which probably he didn't even know himself what he was saying. But anyways the Jews listened and a lot of Christian Poles listened, too, and they're afraid of what might happen. And then the border skirmishes and -- between Poland and Germany, that went on for years and the discrepancy of Danzig[4] was very evident. Everybody knew that something's going to happen. And I remember distinctly a lot of Christians saying, "You just wait till Hitler comes. Then he's going to show you Jews what this is all about." So then from that kind of a statement that I heard, that I realized that Hitler hated Jews.

SL: Do you recall your parents ever discussing the Jewish situation in Germany?

HG: No, I couldn't say I did.

SL: Do you remember hearing about Kristallnacht?

HG: No, I didn't hear about that either till later on.

SL: Do you think that the Jews in Plock took Hitler's threats against them seriously, or did they call him a madman?

HG: Well, I think everybody felt he was a madman and nothing's going to happen and so on. But it was proven wrong.

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[4]Before the Second World War, the Polish and German governments struggled over the control of this city, which is now known as Gdansk, Poland.

SL: {Requests to change the tape since she wants to switch topics and move on to discussion about the war.}

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 2

TAPE 2, SIDE 1

SL: As a fact, there were border skirmishes going on and certainly the question of Danzig was something that was being discussed for a conference. Do you recall if there was any indication that Germany was going to invade Poland before it actually happened?

HG: Yes. Yes, there was talk, and, as a matter of fact, they were mobilizing the young men prior to the outbreak of war because they knew then that Poland is going to be attacked. But, of course, the Polish patriotism said, "We won't give one button. We'll fight Hitler and they won't take one inch of our land," and so on. Well, they were proven wrong, too. But there was a lot of talk about the war before it started. As a matter of fact, in 1938, the whole year, the biggest topic was what's going to happen and how Germany's going to react, and is Hitler going to attack or not, and so on.

SL: What do you recall of the actual day [of the invasion] on September 1, 1939?

HG: Well, it started first thing in the morning. We heard a plane come over the town and the first bomb fell, and it fell on the army barrack, and we knew then that we were in a war. And then I don't remember who held a speech that said that the war was declared, that Poland declared war against Germany. Germany never did declare war against Poland— they just smashed in, and that was the end of it. But that day I remember was a big, big chaos in town. People were running around, they didn't know what they were doing. The army pulled out that night and I remember them marching out and the horses and people throwing flowers at them. And they looked real proper and pompous and so on. And only a few days later we saw the same army all beaten and scarred, running back, not knowing where they were going. And a week later the— not a week later, I would say three days later the Germans marched in.

HG: However, before they did march in, a rumor started that— first of all, we heard broadcasts of what was happening on the front, and we heard the next day that the Polish front was smashed, and the Germans are marching into Poland. And that was not very far from Plock, because Mlawa was the first front between Germany and Poland, and that's where the first fight started. And Plock was only about

100, 150 kilometers from Mlawa, so we knew that the war was coming our way. And a rumor was started that the front is gonna be Plock; therefore, a panic was started and say leave town, and the majority of the people did. As it happened, we went as far as between Warsaw and Plock, which was about fifty kilometers from Plock, and we stayed in a little village [Gabin] until the end of the [Polish-German] war. So what happened? Plock was taken without a shot. There was no front, and if people would realize that Plock could not have been defended, because it was on a plain— on the other side of Plock— Plock was sitting on a mountain. Well, how could you defend that town, you know the army would have been driven into the river. Therefore, naturally, they didn't even try to defend the town. But where we were, there was a movement of the troops— the troops were all pushing for Warsaw, and that's where they figured they were going to make their big stand, is in Warsaw. And the bombing started. The Germans bombed the movement of the troops, and we were bombed for three days, that little village, where there was a whole movement of the Polish, remnants of the Polish army, let me put it that way. They bombed us until there was nothing left, and I remember we were sitting in a cellar, a whole bunch of people, in a farmer's house. The house was gone, it was bombed, and we saved our lives by being underground, in a cellar.

SL: Do you recall the name of that village?

HG: Gabin, the name of it was Gabin, which was well known as a summer resort it was in a forest, beautiful forest.

SL: How did you get to there? Did you go on foot?

HG: We walked. We walked a whole night and part of the next day.

SL: With baggage? Or did you try to get out of town as soon as you could?

HG: Yes, with baggage. We took the most necessities, some clothing and so on. But we carried everything on our backs.

SL: When you left, was there an intent to return to your house?

HG: Yes. We hoped that we were gonna return back to town— no doubt about it. Everybody felt that way.

SL: So you weren't trying to flee the army, but rather to flee what you expected to be a major battle in Plock?

HG: That's right. That's exactly what it was, and that was the thinking of the people, that as soon as the fighting will stop that everybody will return home.

SL: Was there any talk at all in your family of your continuing to go east to escape the Germans?

HG: No. It wasn't that as much as deciding, shall we go to Warsaw and join the family that my father had or return home. And finally the decision was made to go back home.

SL: The fear of what would happen to you as Jews in the hands of the Germans was not great enough to make you keep running?

HG: No, not at all. That happened afterwards.

SL: You mentioned that you stayed till the end of the war. I am assuming that you mean the end of the fight between the Poles and the Germans?

HG: That's right.

SL: That was just a few weeks?

HG: Yes, yes.

SL: How did you get back to Plock?

HG: Yes, we came back by foot when the Germans marched in. The first few days it wasn't bad at all, and people started coming back from all over because when we left town, some people went to one little village, some other people went to another village, and quite a few Jewish people got killed in the bombing. But most of them did return. Some of them did go to Warsaw and stayed in Warsaw.

SL: What was the town [Plock] like when you returned to it? How did you find it?

HG: It was more or less deserted because the Christians took off, too. So there was no looting or anything like that— it was very deserted. The people that stayed behind were more or less taking care of livestock and so on, but like the Christian neighbors— we must have had two or three chickens you know, and the neighbor fed them and so on, took them to his own place, and when we returned, he

returned them. So it wasn't as, I would say, well, you left town and then things happened, and people started looting homes and so on— no, that did not happen.

SL: Your house wasn't occupied?

HG: No, no.

SL: What happened in the course of time and how long was it before the Germans really occupied in force?

HG: Well, they occupied it right away; however, the Wehrmacht, which was the army that marched into our town and the majority of Poland, were not bad at all. They were interested in fighting, getting over with the war and they didn't have no time for anybody and they didn't bother with anybody. And the thinking was, in the beginning, that the Germans are not as bad as everybody pictured that they would be, and they were not bad. But only because they were interested in fighting you know and so on that they didn't behave bad. But just about a week after the end of the German-Polish war, that we started seeing different uniforms, different army, German police, and the black uniforms, which was the Gestapo, and then things started to happen.

SL: Could you elaborate for me exactly what happened when the Gestapo moved into the town? What happed to your family??

HG: Well, it happened to all the Jews in Plock. First of all, immediately they started putting down laws and they told the Jews — all the Jews would have to be registered, even including children, and everybody did. Then an order came out that all the Jews will wear yellow badges in front and back to be identified as Jews. A Jew will go off the sidewalk when a German walks by and bow to him. The Jews had no rights. Schools were closed and all other good stuff that happened.

SL: When did it finally happen that they instructed you to move into the ghetto? Did they build an actual ghetto area?

HG: No, they did not build a ghetto, because they had more or less a built-in ghetto as I told you before on that one block where years and years ago there was a Jewish ghetto. That's where the biggest

concentration of Jews was and that's where they ordered all the Jews in that particular block to move into.

SL: So you left your house and moved into that area?

HG: Well, we lived in our apartment I would say about a month or two after the end of the [Polish-German] war. At first the order was to close all the Jewish stores and they took all the merchandise and everything else and the Jews were out of business. And then what they had in Plock, and there was a lot of them, which they called the Volksdeutsch. The Volksdeutsch was the one that lived in Poland but he was a German national, and those were the ones that served as interpreters, as informers, for the Germans and they wore swastikas on their arms for identification and they were the most ruthless people that I came across and they would start going into Jewish homes and help them selves to everything. Jewish homes were looted by them, including some of the Germans in uniform.

Jews had no rights whatsoever. Rations were given out to the Jews. Jews were not allowed to go into either Polish or German stores, which even some of the Polish stores were confiscated by the Germans. The most larger stores were confiscated from the Poles and the Jews were not allowed in there. I was kind of a cocky kid. I did not wear a yellow badge and because I felt nobody would recognize me. I would go into German stores, I would go into Polish stores and buy all kinds of supplies. I was more or less like a runner for a lot of neighbors because I did have blonde hair and blue eyes and I felt that they wouldn't recognize me and I refused to wear yellow badges. And one day I was caught because one Polish Christian recognized me when I went to a dairy, where they were selling milk, to buy milk and she recognized me and I was standing right in front. There were lines for everything, wherever you went there were lines to buy anything. And I was right in front of the line when a Polish woman pointed out to the German that was selling the milk, you know, "He's a Jew." So she grabbed the pot from me, the container that I had for the milk, and tipped it back into the big container and she told me to get out. And I was lucky that she just told me to get out because if she would have grabbed me and taken me

into the German headquarters I would be a dead duck because not wearing a yellow badge identifying as a Jew was a penalty of death. So I was quite lucky.

HG: But then the order came out that all the Jews with all their possessions and furniture will move into that particular street and it's going to be a Jewish ghetto. And that was only a few months after the end of the Polish-German war that the order came and then we had to move in with other families. Each family had one room that they were allocated. We had *Judenrat*, what they call the Jewish government, that was formed by the Germans and they were the ones that were allocating rooms for Jewish families. And things were very cramped, but somehow everybody fit in that particular block. It wasn't a closed ghetto, we didn't have a wall. But if you — leaving the ghetto by the Jew was a penalty of death. Everything was a penalty of death. If you didn't take off your hat to a German, he had the right to shoot you. So, everything -- Jews had no rights whatsoever. Everything was a penalty of death, and a lot of people died. But you know what happened, right in the beginning when the Gestapo moved in and they closed the schools, and they started to arrest all the intellectuals in town, and those people were never seen again.

SL: Only Jewish intellectuals or Polish ones as well?

HG: Christians and Jews. Like, they arrested the principal of high schools, principals of all the other schools, the judge, lawyers, and so on— whoever they figured that are intellectuals. And apparently their thinking was, if we take away the leaders, the people will follow and will not up rise or anything like that.

SL: Was this anti-Jewish legislation in full swing and, especially when the order came to the Jews to move into the Ghetto, was there any resistance? Not armed, of course, but outspokenness by the non-Jewish community? Did they ever raise their voices because of what was happening to the Jews?

HG: Oh no, not at all, just the opposite. They were laughing at the Jews. I mentioned that before, the anti-Semitism was very strong in Poland. They had something against the Jews, I don't know what. But anyway, the Poles were never satisfied with Jews. They figured if a Jew was rich then he was making a living off the poor Poles. If a Jew was poor, he was that dumb dirty Jew. So no matter what, the Jews

were no good. I've been called a few choice words like — few choice names like "Christ killer" and so on, you know so. That's the way they felt. And they felt, "Well, now the Jews are getting their just deserves." For what, I don't know, but that was kind of a feeling of the Christians in Poland about the Jews. They're going to get it. But they didn't realize that they got it too.

SL: Do you recall what the total Jewish population was in Plock?

HG: Yes, approximately 2,000.

SL: Out of 10,000, so that was quite large.

HG: Oh yes, yes. That was a big percentage of Jews.

SL: And so they were trying to push 2,000 Jews into a one-block area?

HG: Well, it was one block, ten blocks long. Let's say, for instance, one avenue, ten blocks long. And I would say ten people to a room, that's what they crammed in. We — like I said, we had the Jewish *Gemeinde*,[5] which was the Jewish government, and they even formed a Jewish police inside the ghetto.

SL: Was this the same thing as what was known as the *Judenrat*?[6]

HG: The *Judenrat*, yes. I was thinking that, but that word I couldn't come up with that. The Jewish *Gemeinde* wasn't what that was called. Yes.

SL: […] What was the feeling of the ordinary Jew toward the members of the *Judenrat*? Have you got any good information about that?

HG: Well, it wasn't hate. It was resentment. Resentment would be the better word. And same thing with the Jewish police, where some of them pushed the authority on the others. They felt they are the law you know and you better do the way they tell you. They even had a prison that they put people for breaking the law. If there was a curfew and somebody walked out, he was arrested by the Jewish police, and taken in to jail. Big deal. But they actually didn't have no power. No power whatsoever, because there was a quite a few times, I remember where the whole Jewish police were taken to the German

[5]German for 'community'.

[6]German for 'Jewish Council', a body made up of Jews which administered a ghetto for the Nazis.

headquarters and I guess they got a good beating you know just to stay in line. They come back with their tails between their legs.

SL: What kind of food were you eating living there in the ghetto?

HG: The Germans gave out rations. You were allowed something like a loaf of bread. It wasn't too bad yet. Maybe a loaf of bread or two loaf of breads — it depends how large the family was, you know — a week. And we had a soup kitchen where the soup was pretty good, so it wasn't bad. There was no luxuries, and the only time that you had luxuries if you got out and bought some stuff in the German stores or Polish stores. And that's where I come in, and I had quite a little enterprise going on the side because a lot of neighbors knew that I was going out and buying and they would pay me for doing it. So….

SL: How did you manage to sneak out without being caught by the police, either German or Jewish?

HG: Well, they all knew me. Somehow the Jewish police never bothered me even though that they all knew me. And a cousin of mine was assistant chief of the police. And I was arrested once by him, too, because I didn't wear a yellow badge. And I was really mad about that because I figured that I'm supposed to have a pull instead of being convicted. But he explained to me afterwards, you know, that it was good for me, and I better wear a yellow badge because of what might happen to me, and one day did happen. While I was playing with Jewish kids in a courtyard, and they all wore yellow badges and I didn't. And two Germans walked into the courtyard and they saw us all. One was a *Volksdeutsch*[7] with a Swastika emblem on each arm, and the other was a German policeman, and when they walked into a courtyard and when we spotted them we started running you know in different directions. He spotted me and he pulled out his gun and screamed,"Halt." Well I suppose I could have escaped, but I thought better of it and I stopped. And they grabbed me and they asked me if I was Jewish, and I pretended I wasn't. I couldn't understand what they were saying to me. And he was — the *Volksdeutsch* was interpreting. He was talking to me in Polish. He wanted me to admit that I was

[7]A Polish-born person of German ethnic identity.

Jewish and I insisted I wasn't. I was smacked around quite a bit and I still wouldn't admit that I was Jewish. The only thing that I feel saved me was that they were going somewhere; they didn't have the time to take me with. But he asked me what my name was, where I lived. I gave him some fictitious name and address because I was a sharp kid at the time. They told me that I have to report to the police station — police headquarters at such-and-such a time that night and I said I would and they let me go. And I never did go. So I saved myself.

SL: I'm going to have to turn the tape.

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE 1

TAPE 2, SIDE 2

SL: In the Plock ghetto, was there any labor that the older members of the community, people of your father's age, were doing?

HG: Yes. First of all, they opened up, and the Jews were allowed to have sort of co-ops. Let's say, for instance, my father and all the other Jewish fathers were put together and they opened a shop where they only took care of the Jews. And so was with other businesses. There weren't that many businesses that could be operating in the ghetto but tradesmen usually worked together and helped the others. So that's the only work that we had. Of course the young men were detailed by the *Judenrat* to work in the German barracks and so on for the Germans. And those were some frightening experiences that the people had, because they did all kinds of labor there, and they were beaten up, and some of them never come back too. So — but that was the only extent of work that we had in the ghetto.

SL: Was there visible death in the ghetto? Did you start seeing it at an alarming rate?

HG: No, no, not at all. As a matter of fact, everybody had enough to eat; there was no starvation whatsoever back then. Conditions were not really that bad, not bad at all. As a matter of fact they, the Germans, brought in some Jews from surrounding areas to settle them with us. But those people had it worse than what we had because we had still our belongings and some money. Those people that come in from the surrounding areas, they lost everything and they had to be taken in by the community. They were treated very well, but they didn't have anything. Everything was taken away from them.

SL: How long then did you live in the ghetto situation, and what happened to make it change?

HG: Well, we lived there for around six months, until the end of the year, and that was 1939, the end of 1939, and it must have been the beginning of 1940 when we were taken out, when the ghetto was liquidated. There was a talk beforehand that they will liquidate the ghetto and most of the people would await and prepare themselves for it, like you wouldn't take off your clothes to go to bed, you wore three suits on top of each other because they were afraid that in the middle of the night they're going to come and take us away. So everybody expected this because the rumor started. Then one day the

order came, and the Jewish Judenrat gave out a signed kind of a proclamation that the ghetto is not going to be evacuated and everybody can relax and so on. And two nights later they came and took us all out.

SL: Everybody in the ghetto?

HG: Yes.

SL: What did they put you in?

HG: Well, I remember that night very, very well because we were chased out by the German soldiers, outside, in the middle of the street. We saw trucks lined up and they were beating everybody and pushing everybody on top of the trucks. They were taking everything that people carried and we were left with nothing, just thrown on those trucks and we traveled to outside Mlawa and that's where I seen the first concentration camp. And the reception we got was tremendous because the guards stood in kind of a line on both sides of the gate with sticks and chasing everybody off the trucks and beating everybody over their heads and back and so on. And we were thrown into a barracks, which apparently was horse barns or whatever, and some straw was thrown on the floor and that's where we stayed. The next day they — everybody had to — they had a building where the Germans lived and everybody had to go through that building and they would ask everybody if anybody had any valuables or money and so on that they had to give it up. And if they would find anything on the person [he or she would] then be shot. So the Jews gave up all the belongings that they had, all the money and I never seen so many diamonds and money and so on in one pile that I've seen there. They took everything away from people. And then of course we went through a search, too. And we stayed in that camp for a week.

SL: Did they feed you at all?

HG: Conditions were very bad. Yes, they once a day they would come in with soup. A lot of people wouldn't, didn't even want to go out because they give you the soup and at the same time you got a beating because there was one that was giving out soup and three of them were standing with sticks and beating everybody over the head. But when you really get hungry you know you don't mind a beating.

People would go out and get the food. Sanitary conditions were atrocious. The men and women and children and all they had behind the barrack was a big hole in the ground and that's where you had to go to relieve yourself. It was just terrible.

SL: How many people do you estimate were in that barrack?

HG: Well, there were three barracks all total where we had two thousand people.

SL: So the entire population of the ghetto?

HG: Yes. Yes.

SL: Was there any labor or anything going on.

HG: No.

SL: It was just a holding area?

HG: Just a holding camp, yes.

SL: What happened once the week was up? What happened next?

HG: Well, then they marched us out and they put us on the train, which was quite nice— it was like a passenger train. And one group went to one place; another group went another day to another place. We traveled for about a day-and-a-half and we arrived in Chmielnik, which was called Galicia, in Poland. The other group arrived at Piotrkow, which was in different part of Poland. When we arrived in Chmielnik we realized that that town was practically a whole Jewish town. There was very, very few Christians that lived in that town, mostly Jews. They put us in a synagogue which was converted into a kind of a holding place and then the *Judenrat* assigned places to stay for the people. We wind up with another family in two rooms that we live together. And we lived there another six months, I would say. But conditions were much, much worse in that town than it was back home in Plock. The food was very, very scarce. We also had a soup kitchen but that's about all. Bread we had, oh I'd say one piece of bread a day, and that was the extent of the food. And the soup wasn't as good anymore as it was back home. So, we start getting quite hard up. My father started working in a barber shop with two other barbers from home, but they didn't have much business because people didn't have the money

to pay for it. So, they could hardly make expenses, because the store had to be paid for and so on. So it didn't work out too good, and he couldn't make any money at all. And then the family decided, because we didn't have too much food and practically starving, that I was a young boy, and quite often young boys were traveling to different villages and start working on Polish farms.

HG: And they decided I should go, too, and I did. And I worked on different farms in the summer. And for my labor, once a month I would get twenty-five pounds of potatoes so I could take home to the family.

SL: Were you allowed out of this town by the Germans or did you have to sneak out?

HG: Well, you had to sneak out. You couldn't travel because you had to have travel papers. And if you didn't have travel papers and if they caught you, you know, that was punishable by death, too. But like I said before, I was kind of a cocky kid. You know I wasn't afraid of anything, and it didn't bother me at all to go out of town. And I did, and I found work. And work was very, very hard on the farm. I must have been twelve years old, and I worked as a farm hand. I wasn't used to it, and it was hard. I was what you would call a cowboy today. I took care of six cows. But in Poland on a farm, it wasn't like it is in United States, where the cows are being just let out on a grazing area you know where they can roam around wherever they want to go. In Poland, every piece of land was cultivated. And they had every piece of ground, something grew. The only piece that the farmer would leave would be maybe a ten-foot strip of land quite long and that was set aside for cows to graze. Well, of course, if you have corn on one side and potatoes on the other side, the cows wouldn't stay in the middle and eat grass. They would go for the potatoes. They would go for the corn. So I had quite a job. All day long I would run around and chase those cows so they wouldn't go and eat up the potatoes or the corn. So at the end of the day I was so tired you know that all I could do is just lie down in the straw and go to sleep. So it wasn't easy.

SL: Were you traveling back and forth quite a bit? Or would you stay there a couple of weeks at a time on a certain farm?

HG: I would stay a whole month at a time. And then after a month, they would allow me to go for a couple of days home, and I would take the twenty-five pounds of potatoes. And, of course, they'd give me food too while I was staying there.

SL: Did they know you were Jewish?

HG: Oh yes, they did.

SL: And that wasn't an issue?

HG: Well, little remarks were made. They called me names and all that, but as a whole it wasn't too bad.

SL: They never threatened to turn you in?

HG: No, no, no because, let's face it, I did the work for them. You know they needed me just as much as I needed them, because that made their jobs much easier, so there was not that kind of feeling. However, after a couple of months, there was a talk about the Germans coming in, you know, and taking the Jews away. And the farmer talked to me and he says, "Well, if you want to stay here you're quite welcome." He was a real nice guy. "But," he says, "the talk is that the town is going to be liquidated. You know they're going to relocate you somewhere in Russia, and if you want to go and be with your family, you're quite welcome." And I decided to go back home. I remember distinctly he gave me twenty-five pounds of potatoes and, I think, a loaf of bread, and wished me luck. And I went back home.

HG: Shortly after that, when the order came from the Germans that all the Jews would have to report the next day and all the young men and women going to be sent to work. But everybody had to report and everybody reported to the market square, which was right in the middle of town. And I was one of them. Somehow I got separated from my family. And there was no registration or anything like that. They just made a selection and started pushing people around and they were telling people to go left and right. The people that were going to the left they told them to go home. The others were just pushed up on trucks which were waiting and were taken away. And it was kind of a situation with me where they didn't take little boys, and I was still little. They wanted young men and women that can

work. And one German, when my turn came, one German told me to go to the left and he pushed me away, he says, "You go home." And as he pushed me, another German just grabbed me and pushed me up on a truck, and that's apparently that's where I saved my life because we were taken to concentration camp and the rest of the town later on we found out that they were taken to Treblinka and that's where they all died.

SL: So do you think, even though you were separated from your parents, that, for example, your brother might have been old enough to be chosen for work?

HG: Absolutely. The only thing is that I didn't tell you is that my brother, at the time, was working out of town in what they called a work camp. They were building roads and stuff like that and they were taking all young Jewish men to that camp and my brother was one of them. They used to come home weekends you know. They stayed in that camp for a whole week, and they got food in there and so on, and they worked and the work was very hard, from what I understand. But, at the time of the selection, when it happened, my brother was working in that camp, and then the story came that when they took the whole town, they brought all the people from that camp into town and they all went together. So that's what happened.

SL: How many people do you estimate they transported with you to labor?

HG: Oh, I would say that at the time it must have been oh at least between three and five thousand men and women.

SL: Were you all taken to the same place?

HG: Yes.

SL: And where was that?

HG: We were taken to Skarzysko-Kamienna, which was one of the largest, which was the largest munitions factory in Poland. There were three different departments in that particular camp, in that factory—there was Camp A, Camp B, and Camp C, which the Germans called. And they were all approximately ten miles apart and the whole complex was surrounded by a forest.

SL: Could you describe the munitions plant and its three different camps?

HG: Yes, Camp A was more or less a reception area and it was the biggest complex in Skarzysko. Where everybody that arrived in that factory went to Camp A. And then they assigned people to different ones which would be Camp B and Camp C and some people stayed in Camp A. I stayed in Camp A for approximately two or three days, where there was like a holding area where they registered everybody and decided where they're going to go. And I was assigned to go to Camp B. And I feel that that was the worst one. Although they claimed that Camp C was "the" worst. However, my experiences were worse in Camp B than they were in Camp C, and I was in all three of them. When we arrived in Camp B, I knew a few people from my hometown that arrived there before, because the first that arrived there in that factory, in those camps, were the people from Radom, which wasn't very far from Skarzysko. And there was some people from Plock that lived in Radom and they were the ones that were taken to Skarzysko. And I think that we were the second transport that come in to that particular camp since they start taking Jews into work in that munitions factory. But the whole camp had approximately six barracks and a outhouse in the corner of camp and there was a headquarters where the Jewish commandant and Jewish police lived – they had Jewish police there, too – lived in. So all and all the whole complex must have had approximately eight or nine barracks. Women had separate barracks and the men had separate barracks. The people that were there before us must have been there for approximately six months, and you could tell right away they weren't the only people that were there. Conditions were not good at all. There wasn't much food, the work was very hard, and the beatings and the uncertainty was great. The next day after arrival, we were chased out, outside in the square, and the German bosses would come in and pick the people that they wanted to work in their departments. And I was put in a department where they were manufacturing blank rifle bullets. The work wasn't hard there, and I was put on a machine that was cutting out felt to be put in the bullet, so makes it — the powder wouldn't explode like a regular bullet would. And I was working on that particular machine, and as I said the work wasn't very hard, but I started experiencing hunger, and I think that when you're

hungry, you know, your mind is not as keen as it should be. All you can think is about food, and you think mostly about survival. And it was getting progressively worse. Every month the bosses would take everybody outside, and they would have a selection what you call — they would select people to be eliminated, and practically every month a new transport of people would be coming in from different parts of Poland and even some from Germany. Therefore, we knew that we're going to work until we can't work anymore, and then we're going to die, because they always had replacements. And when you see the replacements, you could see that when they came from home, the difference in the people that were in camp for a while and the newcomers that came. The funny thing about people is, my feeling is that if you take a person and you don't give him any food, you keep him hungry, you don't give him any clothes, you keep him cold, and you beat him, then you have an animal, and people virtually become animals. The only concern of people was survival and how to get your stomach full.

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE 2

TAPE 3, SIDE 1

SL: You were talking about survival. I would like to continue, if I did not interrupt you too badly.

HG: That's all right. And the worst thing that happens to a person in that instance, he loses self-respect, and that's exactly what happened to the majority of the people. Some of them even lost their minds. Looking from the psychological point of view, it seemed to me that the stronger, the bigger the person was, the faster that he fell. Like you're talking about the meek will inherit the earth. To me this is very true. The survival of the person that was skinny all his life, didn't eat much— the survival of that person was much greater than the person that was big, well fed, and strong. And I've seen people, men as tall as trees, that fell like a limb. And they couldn't take it. They couldn't take the hunger, they couldn't take the beatings, they couldn't take the cold, no clothing, and the uncertainty. And the uncertainty, I think that was the worst thing that can happen to a person. You didn't know from one moment to the other what's going to happen. Life was very cheap. A person was alive one minute, the next minute he was shot, killed, beaten up, beaten to death, torn apart by dogs, and so on. Life was very, very cheap, and that's the way the Germans liked it. That particular camp was governed by the Jewish police and so on. The Germans did not stay in the camp; they were on the outside. But the life inside of the camp was just as bad without the Germans being right there than if they would be. The Jewish police was — I don't know, you take a person in that situation, and you give them a little power, and he becomes the same as the oppressor himself. There were some policemen that were not bad, but there were a lot of them that were ruthless. In particular, one man, who was the commandant of the police, his name was Jamolov. He was a scrawny little guy, glasses. Their identification of being a policeman was hats and armbands which said Jewish Police, and sticks or rubber hoses that they carried with them. And they would beat people for any little pretense. That particular man, from what I understand, as the story goes, that he came from Radom and he was a Hasidic scholar. What made the man the way he was, and the way he behaved, is a mystery to me. Because a person like that, that believes in God so strong, that he comes more or less a fanatical man in his own religion, that he could behave like a — the

worse Nazi, is beyond me. Maybe a psychiatrist could answer that. I don't know. But he went from one extreme to the other. To him, another person was like a piece of dirt.

And there were others like him that would beat people, and do all kinds of things that would degrade them and so on. Especially women. They cut their hair off and they looked like men, they looked like scarecrows, and they would get beaten up by the Jewish police just as bad as the man for no reason at all. If they wanted a little more soup, where they were distributing soup and there was some left, and they were going to give everybody a little bit, and the [sounds like: *bekey*] started and the Jewish police with their sticks and rubber hoses would beat them half senseless. And that's what happens when the conditions are the way they were then, when a person becomes an animal and loses self-respect, that is willing to get a beating and get beaten half senseless just to get a little bit of soup. And I'm happy to say that I never become that way. I would have rather gone hungry and not get that little bit more soup, than get beaten up. Because I figure, "There's tomorrow, you know and if they're going to beat me up today, maybe something going to happen to me, I'm not going to exist." Because if you stayed in the barracks for two days, you were a dead duck because the Jewish police would report you to the Germans and the Germans would come, take you out, take you into the forest, and shoot you. We had a hospital there— which they called a hospital! It was a barrack. When somebody got sick that's where they put them. And if they had enough sick, then the Germans would come and take everybody out and take them in the forest and shoot them. Then a transport from Krakow arrived and a doctor and his son arrived with that transport and they put them in what they call a dispensary. Of course, he didn't have no medicine; he didn't have no tools for his trade, or anything to heal the people with. But he was called a doctor. If you were sick and you went to him, he couldn't do absolutely nothing for you. The only thing they did if — and typhoid fever was on a rampage — and what they did, the doctor would come and diagnose that you had typhoid fever, and they would take you out and put you in that barrack. Either you died or if you didn't die the Germans would come and take you away. The filth was just terrible in camp. In the barracks you had cots – I mean bunks where everybody slept on straw.

There was no covers, was no pillows, nothing. You slept in your clothes in the winter because you're afraid to get cold. The only heating was a pot-bellied stove in the middle of the barrack. When somebody stole some wood in the factory or something, then we had a fire, otherwise it was freezing. And the only warmth that they had, if you huddled together and they kept warm that way. But nobody would get undressed. The lice were eating you up alive. Once a month you were allowed to go to take a shower. And we had to walk to Camp A to go to the showers. That means a ten-mile walk. Ten mile there and ten miles back. A lot of people were too weak to walk and those people hardly ever took a shower. There was no hot water in the washroom, it was only cold. And in the winter you were afraid to wash up because there was nothing to wipe yourself with therefore you would walk out in the cold winter, and freeze to death. When I came from home I had on me a jacket, a set of underwear, socks, a pair of shoes, and that's all. And soon, that clothes fell apart. First of all my underwear fell apart. And I would say for approximately four years I never wore any underwear. And of course, the socks fell apart, and the shoes, and I received a pair of wooden shoes. And then one day when I was walking around with my rear end sticking out, they give me a paper suit. Now, the German people were very, very resourceful people. And they were always experimenting with things, coming out with new stuff. We had ersatz coffee, which was a substance that was made out of beets, which you couldn't drink. And because there was no hot water and they were giving out this coffee— as much as you wanted, because nobody would drink it— first thing in the morning you know a lot of people would wash themselves in it, because that was warm. And then they came up with paper suits. Well a paper suit was like, if you could stand it up, it would stand by itself. It was stiff. You looked like a robot walking around. When it rained and it got wet, it got completely soggy. And then, of course, it frayed out. The seams would fray out and you looked like an American Indian in a full dress. And they didn't last too long. I would say about six month and the whole thing would fall apart. So I would say every year, they would give out new suits, new paper suits, and they were not very practical. Then one day, apparently

from one of the Jewish transports, they brought some clothes in you know, and I was lucky enough to get a jacket and a pair of pants that didn't fit me, but this was much better than the paper suit.

SL: Did you manage to make any friends, I mean anyone with whom you had any kind of close contact with during this time?

HG: Yes. As a matter of fact, right after I arrived at Camp B, I befriended a boy approximately my age. He was from Lodz, but he came together on the same transport with me from Chmielnik. And being that we were the same age and he didn't speak Yiddish and neither did I, we kind of fit in together. And we stayed together and were kind of friends. And not long after they chased us out first thing in the morning, and they made a selection,[8] because apparently somebody escaped. And the order was if anybody escapes, that fifty people will be taken out and shot. And we were standing together when the Germans come in and the German commandant was picking out people at random – fifty people. He came in front of us. We were standing together, and he pointed a finger at one of us. Neither one of us moved because we didn't know which one he meant. And as we stood there, he came over and he grabbed my friend and he pulled him out, and that's the last time I've seen him. That was one of my friends that were taken out and shot. Of course, I befriended a few others. I always liked to stick with kids of my own age, but there weren't that many. But there were a few, and I had quite a few different friends.

SL: You mentioned then that you moved into Camp C for a time. What kind of work was going on there?

HG: Well, that was also a munitions factory but that came after, much later.

SL: How long did you remain in the B section?

HG: Oh, it must have been a year. And I worked in different departments in Camp B, and quite a few different stories that I had that were quite hair-raising, the experiences that I went through. Like I said, in the first department that I worked for, the work wasn't very hard. However, soon, and that was in 1942, when the war wasn't too good, going too good for the Germans, you know, and they decided that

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[8]Of people to be killed.

they don't need any more blank bullets. Therefore, they closed the department. The German boss that I worked for — actually there was two of them — the top man's name was Krause and his partner was Pavloski. He was a big, huge German man, approximately thirty-five, with a wife. And that man wasn't too bad. As a matter of fact, he liked me a little bit. Sometimes when he was watching the Jewish policeman giving out soup, you know he ordered him to give me extra ration and so on. I don't know why he liked me. Maybe because I was blond and reminded him of a German kid — and blue-eyed. But his wife was another story. When they closed the department, they gave her a department of her own to dismantle all the blank bullets. And she picked a few women and kids and there were about thirty of us. She picked them from every department in the factory and that was her own. And we worked strictly night shift. And she was ruthless. For any pretense— if a box wasn't standing straight, before we start work in the evening, we got a beating. She wouldn't beat anybody, but she had the Jewish policeman beat everybody. And one day one of the boys, said that he pleaded with her. He told her that he had a boil on his backside, so she told him to take his pants off and he did. He showed her, and he did, so she told the policeman to hit him on the other side. Every morning— because we worked twelve hours a day or night — every morning before we went home we had to wait till she comes in and when she did it was a well-known fact that we were taken back and get a beating before we go home. And apparently she was — somebody said that, back in Germany, she was a prostitute and she had a hysterectomy or whatever it was, and she couldn't have any kids, and that's why she was taking out on all the kids. And we worked for her for approximately three months till we finished with all the bullets that had to be dismantled. And I was assigned to a different factory. And I was going from bad to worse and worse and worse and worse. And I wind up in a factory and I worked for a boss called Leidig and he was the most ruthless man there was. They were manufacturing there two millimeter shells for artillery. And I was put in that department and they put me on a machine that was cutting those things to size. But it wasn't automatic. You had to do everything, and any slip that you made — and you had to be perfect at it otherwise the bullet wouldn't fit. And they put me on that

machine. And I didn't know nothing about the machine and I didn't know nothing about machinery or making tools or anything and I'm supposed to be an expert. And every hour on the hour, the inspector, the Polish inspector— because they had Poles working there, too— would come in. And he had kind of a guide that he would test every bullet to see if it's done right. And every hour on the hour we were taken out and beaten up because he found one maybe among hundreds that didn't fit. And I knew that if I'm going to stay there long enough, that I won't live too long, because you couldn't take that, every hour to get a beating and still survive. Then one day, the big boss Leidig decided to build himself a swimming pool. And how was he going to make that swimming pool is to have a bunch of Jews dig a hole in the ground by hand. And that's exactly what they did and I was one of them that was picked because according to his overseer, I wasn't good on the machine. And I wasn't. I couldn't work that. And they assigned me to work in that swimming pool. In the beginning, it wasn't too bad, because the hole wasn't deep enough. But when the hole was getting deeper, and we had to – like one man was loading wheelbarrows, and there was a plank that was going from the bottom of the hole to the top, and you had to push the wheelbarrow up. I think even today, under the best conditions, a man would have a hard job to do that, and he expect me to do that. And one day he spotted me where I went halfway and I tipped over the wheelbarrow, and I couldn't go on. He was there with his Polish girlfriend who was supposed to have been his secretary. And he called me over and he started screaming at me. The more he screamed at me, the more confused I got. And he was beating me and so on. And I could see the girl that was standing with him, his girlfriend, was pleading with him. He should leave me alone, that I was a young kid, and he should leave me alone. And he wouldn't. He kept on and on and on. He told me to go back to work and he was watching me. And every time that would happen he would call me over and scream some more, till finally the overseer told me, he says, "You start loading, and the other guy is going to push the wheelbarrow." But he spotted that, and he said, "No, he's going to wheel those wheelbarrows up the hill." And the whole day I got so badly beaten up that I thought, "Well, maybe I'll get through the day, but I'll never make another day." Finally the evening came and we went

home. And I figured well – I feared the next day because I knew what was going to happen. I went to sleep. I think I cried myself to sleep. But the next morning there was a big commotion when we woke up. The night shift came home and everybody was all excited and I found out what happened. We heard Leidig is dead. They killed him. The Partisans[9] killed him. And what they found out afterwards, what happened, was that the girlfriend, the Polish girlfriend that worked for him, was with the underground, and that night they got him on the highway when he was driving into town with his girlfriend, you know. They grabbed him and they riddled him with bullets and they hung his body on a tree, you know. And I never forget. You know, I still wonder, did that have anything to do with me? Was that the last straw that that girl, you know—and apparently she had a reason why she worked for him, because she probably was getting all kinds of plans from him and so on— did she push this thing because of the incident with me and what he was doing with me that pushed her on that particular night you know to have him killed? Of course that's a mystery.

END OF TAPE 3, SIDE 1

[9]The Polish resistance forces.

TAPE 3, SIDE 2

SL: What caused you to move from Camp B into Camp C, and what did that really mean?

HG: Ok. After that incident with the boss called Leidig, they disbanded the idea of a swimming pool. And I was put back in the same factory where I started from. I said to myself, "Here we go again. I'm back at the same machine doing the same thing." And as it happened, one day when I was working, I had a little accident where a piece of hot steel hit me in an ankle. At first it didn't bother me, and I wasn't worried about it and I forgot about it. But then as the days went by, it was getting worse and worse. And finally I had a big hole in my flesh to the point where you could see the bone, the ankle bone, and I went to the doctor. And the doctor couldn't do nothing for me. But he said, "The only thing you can do, if you want to save your leg"— because it was getting festered and pus was coming out of it— "the only thing you can do, and it might help, is urinate on it." And I did. And I thought it was getting better, but I walked everyday to work because I knew if I wouldn't, if you stay back and you're sick, either they're going to put you in the hospital or they're going to come and take you in the forest and shoot you. And one day, I couldn't walk on it anymore. And I stayed back in the barracks and I was getting a high fever. And they called the doctor in and the doctor diagnosed that I had typhoid fever and they took me out and put me in the hospital barrack. And I stayed there for two or three days. Now, the way typhoid fever works, it's you getting a very high fever till it comes to a crisis, to a point where the fever goes so high that either that fever breaks, or you died. It blows your mind. And apparently, that day I was going through the crisis, because I was half-conscious and I was just burning up with fever. All I wanted to do is just drink and the orderly there was just bringing the people water. The barrack was full of people with typhoid fever. And sure enough, the same day the Germans came to take everybody out. So the German commandant was walking together with the Jewish commandant and they were taking everybody out. And then they came to me and he asked the Jewish commandant—and I was half conscious but I heard the whole conversation— he says, "What about this kid?" And the Jewish commandant says, "Well, he's better already. He's going out of here tomorrow, so why don't you leave

him alone?" And he left me. And I was the only one left from the whole barrack, and there must have been about a hundred people laying in that barrack. And sure enough, the next night the fever broke, and miraculously, maybe because of the fever, that my ankle got better. It just, somehow it drew out the infection. And I was getting better and better, and after approximately a week staying there in the hospital, I was released and went back to the barracks. The next day we were brought back to work. And the boss that took over from that Leidig came out and looked at all of us. And all of us were the same one -– we looked the same and we felt the same. Everyone was sick or crippled or whatever. And he looked at all of us and he says, "You're not going to work. You're going to Palestine," he said. And he pointed to the sky. Which meant only one way, you know: you're going to die. "So you go back to the barracks." So the Jewish policemen took us back to the barracks and we stayed there for a couple of days and there was approximately a hundred people. We were half dead. That one day, we're taken out and we were marched to Camp C, and everybody knew what that meant: that we were going to be taken to the forest and shot. Luck, as it might be, when we arrived there they lined us up and a couple of German overseers, German bosses came out and they selected about twenty-five for work and I was one of them. The rest of them were taken to the forest and shot. And I was put in the department where they were making hundred-pound artillery shells. They put me with another man— a *man*, and I was still a young boy— to pick up a shell and put on the table where there were women on both sides of a narrow table. And you put those shells on the table and they were cleaning them with rags dipped in gasoline. I'll never forget— "No way am I going to work here and survive too long, if I have to lift those things." I was still weak from the typhoid fever and so on. And without any food, practically any, I didn't think I was going to survive too long. However, they had a lot of German soldiers that got wounded in the war where they lost limbs. Some of them didn't have a leg; some of them didn't have an arm and so on. And there was a young man – a young German officer without a hand and they were paroling the factories, just walking up and down. They weren't doing nothing, but apparently they put them in the factory so they do something for their war efforts you know and they felt that they're not

useless completely. And he walked by and he saw me working there, lifting those things, and he called me over to the side. And he asked me my name and I told him, "My name is Henry." But he said, "No, you're not Henry. You're Joseph." So I'm a Joseph. He asked me how old I am, and I told him. And he says, "Come with me." He says, "Have you got a container?" I said yes, because we always walked around with our containers for soup. And that was the only possessions that everybody had was that container for soup. I said, "Yes." He said, "Take it. Come with me." And he took me down to the kitchen and he told them to give me a full container of soup. That was the first time in the last three years that I've seen a full pot full of soup, all mine. I couldn't understand it. But he got to like me. But at the same token, that particular man was the most ruthless man that there was in camp. Because apparently, because of the loss of his hand, of his arm, he was taking it out on everybody. He was beating Jews senseless for no reason at all. However, he liked me. I was his Jew. And a lot of Germans were that way. They hated the Jews with passion, but they liked one Jew and you could not do anything against his Jew. And apparently I was his Jew. And from that time on he wouldn't let anybody touch me or any harm come to me. As a matter of fact, I remember that incident where the Jewish policeman come in and he was upset for one reason or another you know and he was hitting everybody while giving out soup. And when he came to me he spilled the soup. Instead of putting it in my container, he spilled it all over the floor and then he smacked me in the face because he blamed me for not holding the container right. As it happened, that German officer seen it, and he walked over to that policeman. And in front of everybody, he smacked him right in the face. He says, "You're going to touch that kid again, and I'll kill you." And from then on, you know, that policeman and I were very good friends.

SL: How did you get deported to Czestochowa? And why were you selected to leave the munitions plant?

HG: Well, the whole camp was evacuated. You see, what was happening is the Russian front was moving into Poland and it was getting closer and closer to Skarzysko and they decided to evacuate the camp. And what happened was — and that's a story in itself, too, because the German commandant come into camp and he chased everybody out in the camp square and he told everybody that he's going to

make a registration, that the camp is going to be evacuated. And the weak ones are gonna ride on the train and the strong ones are going to march. He didn't tell us when/where we were going or anything like that. And the next day he came and everybody had to line up and he looked at everybody, made check marks at your name. Nobody knew what it meant, and he says the next day we're going to be evacuated. He came the next day, and they chased everybody out again and the German commandant started calling the names out. And when I saw the people that he was calling up I knew those people that are gonna ride are not gonna ride very far, because they were weak, they were the old ones, and so on. And then when he came – when he called my name, I didn't appear. But the point was where I knew that something is happening is because he wasn't waiting for anybody to show up, he was calling out the names and soon as he had fifty people, they were marched outside of camp right away. And I said, no, those people are not gonna ride. What do I do? I knew that he's not gonna end at that because people were getting smarter. They knew what it meant, and he had less and less people that were showing up. I said, I have to hide, but where do you hide? They're going to look in the barracks and under the barrack and everything else. And then it dawned on me. There was a hospital barrack in the corner of the camp and when somebody died in camp or in the hospital they would take the body out and throw it behind the barrack on a pile and when the pile was big then they would come with a truck and load the bodies on the truck and take them away for burial, I suppose. And I said, "That's the place to hide. They're never going to look there that day." And I started moving out of the ranks and there was still a big chaos because the Jewish police were chasing everybody out from the barracks still, and I circled around and I found myself behind that hospital barracks and I seen a big pile of bodies and I laid down among the bodies and I laid there a whole day, and that's how I saved my life. I heard the shots; I heard the screaming, and dogs barking, and so on. When it got quiet at the end of the day, it was getting dark, I got out and I joined everybody else, and I realized then that half of the camp was gone. And the men that were left— men and women, actually— were telling the story of what happened, how they were taking everybody and shooting them on the spot. A daughter and a

mother you know— they wanted to take the mother, and the daughter wouldn't let her go, and they shot them both on the spot. The most terrifying things that happened that day. But the next day came and the Germans came again and they marched everybody out and they put us on the railroad station where they brought in the people from Camp A and B and they put everybody on the train and two days later we arrived in Czestochowa.

SL: Was it also a camp? Wasn't a ghetto there? What was there?

HG: That was a camp. Actually, there was two camps there, and I was in both of them. One was a munitions factory, and the other one was a steel mill.

SL: Was it basically the same day-to day type of life, with the labor and the beatings all the time, that you had at the first munitions camp?

HG: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. The only thing is that in Czestochowa the conditions were not as bad as they were in Skarzysko-Kamienna. Especially, I was assigned to the steel mill. The work was very hard. However, the Germans stayed away from the camp completely. And very, very seldom that you seen the Germans. There was only one guard in front of the camp and that was it.

SL: Do you recall what time of year it was or when it was exactly that you got to Czestochowa?

HG: I guess it was this time of the year, approximately fall.

SL: Was that in 1942 or 1943?

HG: That was in 1943 already, yes.

SL: And how long were you there?

HG: Oh, approximately three months.

SL: Did you tell me before that from there you went to Buchenwald?

HG: Right.

SL: How did you get to Buchenwald? Were you selected for transport?

HG: Well, it happened exactly the same as what happened in Skarzysko. Apparently the front was moving again and the Russians were getting close and they got us out. They put everybody, both camps, on a train in closed boxcars and they taken us to Buchenwald.

SL: Buchenwald then was really quite different from what you had been used to for the last 2 years as far as particular labor camps. Buchenwald was so different from that. You told me that you were in Buchenwald for five months or so. What did you do during that time and how different were things?

HG: Well, in Buchenwald, at that time, there was no work. Buchenwald actually was a political concentration camp where you found people from different nationalities for different reasons. There was a lot of Germans, Communist Germans, murderers, different kind of prisoners. There was a lot of gypsies, there were German Jews, there were Frenchmen, there were Poles, and there was also a small [number of] American prisoners-of-war, and there was also a English prisoner-of-war camp. And of course their conditions were completely different from ours. And each nationality, each crime, in Buchenwald was marked different, like German Communists would wear red badges on their uniforms, and their uniforms were well known to be the pajama-type kind of clothing. When I got to Buchenwald, there was no work whatsoever. The only time that the Germans would come into camp was to count the people. And they did that twice a day. You died of boredom. And you seen people and that's the first place that I've seen the walking dead. And you would ask yourself "what were the walking dead?" They were the people that were dead, they looked like skeletons, but apparently their body didn't lie down yet. Their minds were gone. They wandered around blindly. They actually were dead, but they still walked around. Buchenwald was worse, as far as I'm concerned, than any other work camp because at least when you were working you might forget a little bit about all the other troubles like food, hunger, and cold, and so on. When you're not doing anything, you might die from boredom. And you think more of the things that are essential to survive and that's why a lot of people died. And there, also, I've seen what they called the Bitch of Buchenwald, Madam Koch. She was the one that was the wife of the commandant, that was walking around among the prisoners, and when she found the ones

with the most tattoos on their bodies, she would have them killed and rot the skin, and make lamp shades out of them. When the Germans used to come in to count the people twice a day, they would come in with dogs. When they counted and somebody was missing, they would go into the barracks and find him, they would throw him outside. Some people would fall asleep and not get up or some were too weak to get up, and they would throw that person to the dogs. I've seen people being killed by the dogs that were trained to kill. There was also very, very little food and there was nothing to do. But you know, the most interesting thing that happened when we arrived there, first of all, what we've seen, first of all we heard the dogs bark. When they opened train — the doors on the trains, we knew we were in Buchenwald, and there was a big sign on the front gate which said, "Arbeit Macht Frei," which means work makes you free. And when we marched in the band was playing, a band of inmates, and everything was done nice and proper, and we had to march. Then there was a big chimney in a corner of the camp, and that was a huge camp, there were thousands and thousands of people, and there was a big chimney and on top of that chimney it says, "The only way out of here is through this chimney." And we knew that was a crematorium. And also there was gas chambers there, too. When we arrived, there were different prisoners that were walking around among the newcomers, the new transports, and asking— and there was two men in particular— asking people who was a Jewish policeman, who was overseer, who was acting bad towards other Jews, and naturally they were pointed out and they were given a death sentence by a committee of prisoners, and most of those who did any atrocities died there. Either they reported themselves to be put in the gas chambers or they found them hanging themselves and so on. They beat them half senseless and all that.

END OF TAPE 3, SIDE 2

TAPE 4, SIDE 1

SL: As far as your life in Buchenwald, were you treated the same as the rest of the inmates— as soon as you got there you were given striped prison clothing and then you just became part of the camp like everybody else?

HG: Yes, absolutely. We went through delousing and the whole ball of wax. We were given the famous uniforms that the inmates wore.

SL: Did you ever run into anyone that you knew?

HG: Yes, I did. There was always, in every camp I found somebody that I knew. Very strange, but it did happen to me. And I also befriended a lot of people, too, in different camps. But life in Buchenwald, was to me, it was really, really bad from the standpoint of the boredom. If nothing else killed you the boredom did. If hunger didn't kill you, the boredom did, because there was no work. You didn't do nothing. You just wandered around doing nothing.

SL: Was there much smuggling going on that you were aware of?

HG: Not in Buchenwald, no. Not at all. I haven't seen any of it.

SL: What about any talk of resistance?

HG: That was unheard of. I never heard it in any camp, of resistance. People accepted the fate and that was it. "You live today and to hell with tomorrow" — this kind of thinking. You always had it in the back of the mind you will never come out of this alive, that before the end of the war, they're gonna kill you. But somehow, the saying goes, where there's life, there's hope. And you hung on to the dear life which didn't mean a plug nickel, you know every minute of the day and night. And I feel for five years I faced death, because that's exactly what it was. Because I've seen people living today, living one minute, and die the next minute for no reason at all. Buchenwald, like I told you, the sign on the chimney said, "The only way out of here is through the chimney." And you got kind of used to the sign. You got kind of used to this saying, yes, it's true— there's no way out of here. But I was lucky again. Being a couple of months there an order came that such and such people to report for work, that were going to be

evacuated to a different camp, and I was one of them. And apparently, the people that worked in Camp C in Skarzysko-Kamienna were the ones that were picked to go to a different factory, and we were put on a train again and we arrived in Leipzig— actually, it was a suburb of Leipzig, [Colditz], where they had a factory that were manufacturing the parts for the flying bombs that the Germans had that they were sending to England. They were very dreaded piece of equipment that the Germans devised, which the British at the time or even the Americans didn't have no answer for. And in that particular factory they only were doing one part of it. They even had, they were making different parts in different places so nobody got wise. I don't know where they assembled the whole thing together, but the Jews didn't do that apparently. And we were working on that. Life in that camp, the name of it was Colditz — wasn't bad, and I was put in to work in the kitchen, which was fantastic. I was peeling potatoes. Now I got food. I had more food there than I ever seen anywhere else, you know, for four years. We had plenty of soup and we were smuggling potatoes out, you know selling them, exchanging them for bread with people. It was very strange how, where you don't have no money, but people looking at food you know "Which is better? What can I get more out of it. Is it bread, is it a piece of bread, or three or four potatoes?" And we would exchange. Maybe I would get a piece of bread and in exchange I'd give the man three or four potatoes that I would steal in the kitchen. And because I had enough potatoes there in the kitchen, therefore you know I had appetite for bread. So and I just kind of…. And things were really looking up. And being a few months there, and that was the beginning of 1945. But things were not going too good for Germany. The front already was in Germany, and one day they chased us outside. And they told us that the camp is gonna be taken over by the Americans. That we were gonna be liberated the next day. And you can imagine the happiness, the disbelief that we were gonna be free. As luck goes, that was the day when President Roosevelt died [April 12, 1945], and in his honor the Americans stopped for twenty-four hours and the front didn't move, and the same night the Germans decided to take out the camp and took all the prisoners out. But in that camp we also had Russians and Poles and Jews, gypsies, and so on. They took everybody together, because we were

separated. The Jews were separated in one barrack, the Russians were in their own, the Poles were in their own, and so on. But they put us all together and we started to march. We didn't know where we were going, but apparently the order came that all the prisoners have to be out of Germany because the Germans feared what might happen if we survived, that they're gonna massacre all the Germans. So we started marching. They gave us two portions of bread, and we started marching at dawn. Well, a Jew always thought of tomorrow, that tomorrow I'm gonna be hungry, so they ate a piece of bread now, and they figure they're going to have another piece for tomorrow. The Russians didn't feel that way. When they got their ration of bread, they ate it right away you know, and they knew that the Jews had the bread because the Jew always thinks of tomorrow, and when they put us the next day or the next night, when we arrived in some forest, and they found an opening and the Germans put us all in that opening there in the forest, surrounded by guards, and everybody was together, like the Russians and the Jews and the gypsies and so on, the Russians started attacking the Jews trying to take away the bread. Therefore I, instead of being robbed by the Russians, I ate my bread, and I finished it off, too. And from then on everybody was hungry. I've seen on that march things were so bad, that I've seen Russians and everybody that died along the way because a lot of people died. There were two thousand men that left that camp. When we arrived in Theresienstadt two weeks later, there was only a few hundred left. Anybody that stopped or died at night, the Russians would be cutting their ears and making a fire and cooking it and eat it. When we marched there, the guards, and in particular one of them, and he was an old man, old SS man, he was the last one. He was behind everybody, and people were getting weaker and weaker and one day couldn't walk anymore, he would take out his gun and shoot them. One day, when they put us on the side to rest up, we've seen this old German guard bringing one Jew with him and he asked another guard to lend him a bullet. He said he shot fifteen and he ran out of bullets, and he was the only man that he didn't kill and he borrowed a bullet from another guard and he shot him. Well, we wandered around for practically two weeks. Everywhere we went the front was there and the soldiers told the guards, you know, "You can't go any further, because

here are the Americans." When we went the other way, they stopped us there and they say, "The British are on this side. You can't go here, you have to go back." And the only reason that some of us were left alive from that march was because the German commandant and all these guards knew that if they would kill us all now they would have to go on the front and fight, and they're not about to fight now. So as long as they had few hundred, they had a legitimate excuse not to fight. They knew the war was finished, it was done, and they wanted to survive too.

SL: Did you get anything else to eat?

HG: There was a couple of times that they put us on a farm and they got some potatoes from a farmer and they cooked them up and we got something. But basically for two weeks we had either water and, well, there was, when we started those pieces of bread and then some potatoes that we got on the way and that was the whole nourishment for two weeks. When we got to Czechoslovakia, as far as I'm concerned, the Czechs are the nicest people in Europe. They're not anti-Semitic at all. They liked the Jews and on the way when we were going through towns or we were going through villages, some women would throw out and throw out a few potatoes or whatever they had to help us out.

But when we were still going through Germany, they put us in a farm that was right inside some town. And there was a big gate that they closed behind us and the gate had steel bars on top. And people were coming over to the gates and staring at us. So we figured maybe they'll give us some food or something you know so we're all standing by the gate. And one woman asked me, she says to me, "You are little boy. What crime did you commit?" And it just came out of me, I don't know why I said it. I said, "I killed my father and mother." And she just become frantic and she run away. And it was a well-known fact that an order was given by the front runner that they have dangerous criminals coming through town, that nobody should come out in the street. And when we went through German towns, the towns were completely deserted. In some towns, the young kids would stand in the street and spit at everybody as we walked by. But finally we arrived into Theresienstadt and that was an experience in itself because I couldn't believe my eyes. There was a whole town that was a Jewish town. How did that

happen? We thought that all the Jews in Europe, wherever the Germans were, found the same fate. And here is a complete town and there's a restaurant and you see a bank and everything that you would see in a normal town. And there's Jews there. Couldn't believe it. But then afterwards we found out what Theresienstadt was all about. The Germans made this as a model town where they would keep Jews and if the Red Cross would inquire about the Jews, of what's happening, they would show them Theresienstadt and say, "See how we treat our Jews. So it's not true what they're saying what we did with the Jews. There's an example." But then, of course, we found out later on that from Theresienstadt, every time they would bring in a transport, another transport would get out of there and taken to Auschwitz, and they were doing the same atrocities to the Jews in Theresienstadt as they did in every camp or town that Germans were in. We were put in dungeons because Theresienstadt was an old fortress— it looked like a medieval fortress. It was completely surrounded by walls that were at ground level and there was grass growing on top of the walls. It was a fortress. And inside of those walls were bunkers, were like dungeons, and that's where they put us. And we stayed there for practically a month until one day the Russians came and liberated us.

SL: When you were in Theresienstadt, were you receiving rations? Did they feed you?

HG: Very little, very little at the time. And we couldn't understand why, because we seen in the streets Jews speaking German, and we were kept in the dungeons and the rations were very, very meager. There was no work or nothing, we just sat there.

SL: You knew by then that liberation was pretty certain?

HG: Well, yes, definitely. We knew that the war is coming to an end. The only thing is that everybody thought you know that before the end is going to come they're going to finish us all off. That was the thinking, and it wasn't very far from the truth because we found out later that the German commandant of Theresienstadt contacted Red Cross in Switzerland and let out the secret, and he told them if you give me a free passage to Switzerland, I will tell you what's going to happen with all the Jews in Theresienstadt. Because all the crematoria were built and the gas chambers were built, and by a

certain time all the Jews were supposed been gassed and cremated. And therefore the Red Cross got in touch with the Russian command and the Russians were pushing for Prague, which is the capital of Czechoslovakia, and instead of going to Prague, when they found out what was going to happen, they made a detour and took Theresienstadt first and then pushed for Prague, and we got liberated.

SL: So you were liberated by the Russians?

HG: By the Russians, yes.

SL: What can you remember about that day?

HG: Oh, yes, that was quite a day. We were looking out the windows, it was like from the dungeons and we could see what you would call here a Polish flat, that you looked up and you could see the level of the street and on the outside of this— there were barracks on top but we were in the dungeons, apparently army barracks that were built two stories high, you know, and were built out of brick and stone and so on and we were at the bottom. There was a big gate in the barracks and a courtyard inside. On the outside there were two Czech policemen that were guarding that particular barrack, where nobody could get in or out. And then all of a sudden you seen a jeep pulling in and pulled right in front of the barrack gate and we seen two Russian officers get out and talking to the Czech guards and he asked them if there's any prisoners inside and apparently the Czechs told them “yes.” So he says, "Open the gates." And the Czechs opened the gates and they pulled into the courtyard with the jeep and started screaming, "Everybody get out." And all the prisoners start pouring out from the dungeons and converging on the Russians, you know, and they picked them up and they carried them on their shoulders and the happiness was something that, well, I can't even describe. It was something very, very dramatic and the Russians told us, "You can go anywhere you want. You are free." Everybody poured out into town and out of town. There was just pandemonium.

SL: Were you able to get into town and get some food and clothing right away?

HG: Oh yes. First of all, there was a lot of looting and stealing done you know because the prisoners got out and went into surrounding towns and— the part where Theresienstadt was, was Sudetenland.

Sudetenland was German actually, but it was Czech before the war, it was part of Czechoslovakia. When the Germans come in, they took it over. But they had a lot of Volksdeutsch living there, which they were German nationals, and therefore when they let the prisoners out you know that's where they went. They went to the villages, you know, the German villages, and looted and stole. So there was plenty to eat and they were giving out clothing and rations. The Russians were fantastic in the beginning. They helped the sick because right after the liberation the dysentery was just fantastic. You see, people started eating fast and their stomachs were shrunk, and before they turn around they were dying of dysentery. There was a lot of people that died right after the war because they started eating like animals and they couldn't [digest]. What happened to me was kind of a— right after the liberation, maybe two or three days later, I got in kind of a melancholy state where I would lie down on the bed and sleep, not think— I don't know what it was. But maybe that saved my life, too, because I didn't eat right away. I could care less. I could care less about the surroundings, nothing. And I was in that way for two or three weeks til I snapped out of it— then I was all right. And then things started changing as far as the Russians were concerned, you know because it wasn't anymore a matter of, "Hey, you're free. We're happy the war is ended, you know, and you're liberated, and you can do what you want." Now they came around and said, "We liberated you— now you owe us something." And they sent in from different camps, and there was a lot in Theresienstadt, there was a lot of kids like myself, and the Russians put us in a children's home. It was very comfortable, it was a nice house, nice building. And we were getting special privileges, a lot of clothing, and so on. The Russians started to come around to us and wanted us to go to Russia. Well the thinking was that you take a young kid and you make a good Communist out of him, and they worked on us for quite a while. However, there was a Jewish doctor that came into Theresienstadt, a Czech Jewish doctor, and he came into the children's home and he wanted to talk to us. And he says, "I have connections in England to the British government. Would you kids like to go England?" And everybody said, “Yes.” And apparently the Russians allowed

the British to come in to talk to us. And all three hundred of us, there wasn't one that went to Russia. All three hundred of us went to England.

END OF TAPE 4, SIDE 1

TAPE 4, SIDE 2

SL: Before you left to go to London, did you have any way of tracing what had happened to the rest of your family? Was it something that you were able to do?

HG: Well, yes, the Red Cross started compiling all the data and the information about all the people in Europe, and especially the Jews. And I did make quite a few inquiries, especially after I got to England, and found out the fate of my family and apparently the others, too.

SL: Did you have any contact with your aunt and cousins in the United States after the war?

HG: Not at first, because I didn't have no addresses. I didn't know — all I knew that my aunt lived in, somewhere in New York, from what my father told me when I was still a kid. And that's about all I knew. I also knew that there should be a cousin on my mother's side here in United States, but I didn't even know where he was or if he was still alive. And I didn't even know his age.

SL: Did you at any time before you left Europe, feel that you wanted to remain in Europe?

HG: No, definitely not. I didn't want to stay in Europe because of what happened. As a matter of fact, the Polish government tried to romance the victims, all the Jews. And they sent out delegations to different camps and one of them came to Theresienstadt and was asking the people to come back to Poland and free passage and so on. A lot of them did go, but I had no desire whatsoever to go back, because of the memories or whatever in my past. And I didn't see no future whatsoever back in Poland. Therefore, I decided like the others did. And all three hundred of us kids decided to go to England. And we spent a month in Prague, which was really enjoyable because, I think I mentioned before, that the Czech people were really wonderful. And we were wearing badges signifying that we were in concentration camps. And anywhere you went, on a bus or movie house or even restaurants, they didn't have much food, but still you could get something to eat. Everything was given to us free. And they were just wonderful.

SL: When you were in Prague, where were you staying?

HG: We were staying in a hotel, one of the downtown hotels, and accommodations were very good. The government, the Czech government, apparently assigned that hotel specifically for all the victims of concentration camps. And they had the food for the people. It was free; anybody could come in and get fed and housed and so on.

SL: What were the ages, an average I guess or a range of ages, of the kids that were with you on your way to Britain? How young was the youngest?

HG: Fourteen, between fourteen and sixteen.

SL: Did you ever find out what happened to many children that went there?

HG: I do not get the question.

SL: Did you ever talk with those kids about what experiences they had gone through? How they managed to survive?

HG: Well, it was more like the same story that I had. They went through the same concentration camps and so on. But however there were few kids that came to Theresienstadt, they heard of the children's home and that the kids were housed in Theresienstadt and they had good conditions and so on, and there were a few kids that were hidden, like in Poland, you know, by monasteries and so on, and after the war they decided that they want to be Jews again, because they had lived as Christians. And they arrived at Theresienstadt and they went along with us.

SL: Were there an equal number of girls and boys?

HG: No. Majority was boys. I don't know why, but apparently the Germans felt — the Nazis — that boys were stronger for work, and they kept mostly boys rather than girls.

SL: Were the majority of the kids there Polish or did they represent larger geographical --

HG: Well, mostly were Polish, the Polish were the biggest majority. Then we had a few German kids and a few Hungarian. That's the only three nationalities, actually, that we had.

SL: Were you forced to communicate in German with them?

HG: Well, actually no. The sentiment against Germans and the German language was so strong after the war in Czechoslovakia that I had a couple of German friends the kids that were with us that were Jewish, but they only spoke German, and it was a very strange experience because whenever we went, they had to keep their mouths shut, you know, not to give out that they are Germans because they were, you know, afraid of what the people might think or what they might do.

SL: Did you ever, during you time that you remained in Europe before you went to London, run into anyone that could give you any information about your family?

HG: Not really. Not really. I met a lot of people that I knew back home in Plock, but they were in concentration camps too, in different parts, therefore they didn't know anything either of what happened to their families or mine. All I know that from all the reports of what happened to Chmielnik, the town that I was taken from, and what the Nazis did with the rest of town — we found out after the war – that they were taken to Treblinka, and that was an extermination camp, was well known.

SL: The child transport that you went on to London— that was sponsored by the British government?

HG: It was with the association of the Jewish organization— I think it comes back to Jewish -- United Jewish Appeal and Hadassah and those organizations that actually financed the thing.

SL: How did you make the trip?

HG: They sent six, yes there were six jets… no not jets I'm sorry, they were bombers, big bombers, at that time didn't have jets. Actually, there were Australians, Australian crews that were flying those planes. And it was very strange because they put us wherever they could— it wasn't a passenger plane or anything like that, and that's the way we got over to England.

SL: Do you recall when it was? When you arrived in England?

HG: Do I recall?

SL: Do you recall what day it was, what time of the year?

HG: It was sometime in May, May or June, I would say. It was beginning of summer, I would say. And we arrived in Windermere, England. Windermere is, was cold, part of north of England, it's on the border of

Scotland, and that used to be— during the war they had a— what do you call those—monoplanes or factory-- planes that take off from water and land on water, I can't come up with it, but that's what they had. It was like kind of a camp where the workers lived, but conditions were absolutely beautiful. It was a beautiful area, part of England, and each one – that there were barracks — each one had his own room, and we had a mess hall, and so on. Conditions were just beautiful. We got new clothing from the British government, and we stayed they like — it was like a summer camp, put it this way.

SL: You didn't do much during the day except take it easy?

HG: Yes. It mostly was playing. We played soccer and did all kinds of activities and so on. But it was all organized, but it was well organized, and we had a lot of counselors that came down from London and Manchester, I guess. They acquainted us with the English culture. We had quite a few classes, as far as kind of an orientation type of thing. And I really appreciate those people because they did a fantastic job.

SL: Did they at any time indicate what was going to happen to you after you spent an initial recuperation time?

HG: Yes. We were told that different Jewish organizations in England will take us under their wing, and we have a choice where we want to go. And different places were like London, Manchester, Liverpool, and one group would go to Scotland. And of course, like I said, we had a choice, and I decided to go to London. And London had three different what you call 'hostels' for different Zionist organizations, and well after the summer the kids were, kind of, taken to different parts, and they had their own decision to make where they want to go and where they want to stay. Opportunities as far as the British government was concerned were fantastic, because you could do absolutely anything you wanted, and with the Jewish organizations that were helping the kids to get established. And actually, when it comes right down to it, if you are an alien in England, you don't have a working permit, you can't work, you can't support yourself; however, as far as the government was concerned, they waived this whole thing,

because we were the first, actually, the first victims that arrived in England after the war. So all the restrictions were waived and we could do absolutely anything we wanted to.

SL: Did the people that you met ask you about your experiences, did they show a compassion for what you had just gone through, or was it just not spoken of?

HG: Oh, definitely. The compassion was very, very deep wherever we went. And we were kind of put on a pedestal. I don't know if it was most probably a lot of pity and so on, but I couldn't say enough about the British people, the way they treated us. They were just fantastic.

SL: And they never asked you for anything in return?

HG: No.

SL: Once you got to London, then, where did you settle?

HG: Well, I settled in north of London. And ironic to say, which I didn't realize at the time, the hostel that I got into was run by Adassa Israel,[10] which is ultra, ultra-Orthodox organization. And I didn't know what this was all about. And then I realized in a very, very short time that I didn't fit in there at all, with my religious background and my feeling as far as a religion is concerned. But the organization itself treated us very, very well. And the only thing is, that they insisted and were trying to push their religion on us. Where most of the kids that were from the very religious background, they fit right in it, I didn't. I was kind of an outcast. And therefore I asked for a transfer and I got it where — organization called Hashomer Hatsa'ir, which was a Zionist liberal movement, had another hostel. And that's where I wound up.

SL: How long did you stay with them in that hostel?

HG: Oh, for about 2 years, no I would say about a year-and-a-half.

SL: What were the accommodations like?

HG: Well, it was a big building, a big house that housed approximately forty, fifty kids. I would say about three boys or three girls stayed in one room and there was a communal dining room and one bathroom

[10]Mr. Gordon is probably referring to Adath Yisroel, an organization of Orthodox congregations in England.

which everybody fought over all the time. So, their accommodations actually were not ideal, but I guess from what we went through the war, this was a haven.

SL: Did you at that time attend school during the day?

HG: No. For the first few months we didn't do nothing. School was available. As a matter of fact, instead of sending us to school, what they tried to do is having couple of teachers come into the hostel and try to teach us English, basically English. And most of the kids attended the classes. I kind of didn't have the patience so to sit in the classroom. And I attend those classes very seldom I attended them.

SL: So did you walk around the streets?

HG: Yes. I wanted to see London, because to me that was very interesting and I did. I've seen all the historical sites and I got to know London very well, listen to people talk, and started to read newspapers and books in English, and somehow the language came to me in a very short time. But in the beginning was very tough.

SL: Again on your wandering through the city and if you were by yourself and you were not marked as a refugee… Once people realized, I suppose through the language differences, that you probably were a refugee, were you received kindly even by strangers in stores -- ?

HG: Oh, absolutely, absolutely. Like I said before, the British were wonderful. If they recognized that you couldn't speak English, they went all out to help and so on. I couldn't say at any time that I was, that I detected any rudeness on the part of the people, let's put it this way.

SL: What happened after that year at the hostel?

HG: Well I decided that I had to go to work and learn a trade because that was the going thing, or to go to school. And I said before I didn't have the patience for school, therefore, I learned tailoring. I was taken in into a particular tailor who had a small factory and that was also arranged by the Jewish appeal. There was a specific organization which I can't put my finger on it right now which helped us every step of the way to get us settled.

SL: Was it the HIAS?[11]

HG: Well, HIAS was involved in it, too, because when I came over to United States from England, HIAS was a body which helped me to come over here — with money and with a passage and settling down in the United States.

SL: Did you get any help from the Joint Distribution Committee?[12]

HG: The Joint was involved in it too, definitely.

SL: And the last organization I can suggest because of the technical aspect is ORT.[13]

HG: ORT, yes, very, very much so.

SL: They were then involved in your learning a technical trade?

HG: Right, right.

SL: Were you taken in as an apprentice with the tailor?

HG: Well before, actually before I become a tailor— it just dawned on me— I joined the Navy, the British Navy. It was called Jewish Marine League. We were being trained, and we had our own ship, too. We were trained to become seamen. However, at that time, when I joined the Navy— it was a part of the British Navy— the idea was to train us. That was the time when the fighting started in Palestine. And the idea of the Jewish Marine League was that after the training that we were all going to go and fight for the liberation of Palestine. However the British frowned on it and after two years they disbanded it.

SL: Was this a full-time training?

HG: Yes, yes. I lived onboard ship.

SL: When was this, was this after that first year in the hostile?

HG: Yes, yes.

SL: How is it possible that the British Navy allowed you to join? Had you gotten some sort of citizenship?

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[11] The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, a Jewish refugee and immigration organization.

[12] The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, a Jewish relief agency.

[13] Any one of a number of Jewish educational organizations known informally by these initials, which stand for Organization for Rehabilitation through Training.

HG: No. Well, that's just it. Like I told you before, that all the rules and regulations were waived as far as the kids were concerned. And therefore, they allowed us. Like I said, we could have joined the armed forces too if you wanted to go to the army or the air force and so on because the British have the rule, if you are foreigner you're not allowed in the armed forces. And that rule was waived, and we were allowed to go in into this training, Navy training.

SL: Where did you live once you started to settle into the tailoring trade?

HG: I always lived on the north of London. Well, then I met my wife, and we start talking about marriage. And she was in the tailoring trade, too. She was working for a tailor, and I decided that this will be a good idea if I learn that trade, too. And I did. And until I came over to United States, I was in different places, and at that time I was master tailor and did pretty good in that trade.

END OF TAPE 4, SIDE 2

TAPE 5, SIDE 1

SL: Well you mentioned that you met your wife as a result of tailoring, or was she part of the — had she been part of the child's transport from Europe? How is it that you did meet her?

HG: Well, we had a couple of social clubs, which mostly compiled of our own kids that came over from Theresienstadt. It was also a sports club and a social club. And then we met a lot of young people, same as we were, that came over from Germany and Austria just at the beginning of the war. When Hitler marched in, Jewish organizations went down there and picked as many kids as they could. And my wife was one of them. Her and two sisters of hers came over to England on one of the transports.

SL: Before the war?

HG: It was beginning of the war, well, after Hitler come into and took over Austria. And it was very apparent that the Jews were not treated very well after Hitler marched in, and therefore the parents of those kids decided, you know, to contact some of the Jewish organizations abroad. And there was one man in particular, a doctor, and it skips my mind as far as his name is concerned, but he was instrumental on going down by himself and picking up all those kids. And he actually saved a couple of thousand of them.

SL: What was your wife's name?

HG: Mali.

SL: What was her maiden name?

HG: Lipshitz.

SL: Do you recall her date of birth and place of birth?

HG: Well, she was born in Vienna. As far as her age, she was approximately two years younger than I was.

SL: And do you recall what she was doing in London during the war years?

HG: Well, at first she went to school. And they also lived in hostels like we did and the kids went to school. As a matter of fact, they had a secondary school there and they attended that. And after that those kids went into different trades. And my wife started working as a tailoress.

SL: Did she lose her parents?

HG: Yes. She came from a big family. There was six or seven kids. And just three sisters, and they were the youngest ones in the family, that were brought over to England.

SL: And she never had then any contact with her family?

HG: No, no.

SL: When were you married?

HG: I was married in 1948. Yes.

SL: Do you recall the date? The month?

HG: I'm very bad as far as dates are concerned. I don't remember anniversaries or anything like that.

SL: How long did you remain in England before you came to the United States?

HG: Well, I came over to United States in 1952.

SL: Were you a tailor then — had you established yourself and were you earning a living as a tailor after you went through the training period?

HG: Oh, yes. Yes.

SL: Both you and your wife?

HG: Yes, we both worked as tailors and we made a comfortable living. Conditions were not too good in England after the war. Everything was on rations and so on but you could live comfortably. And we did make a nice living.

SL: What prompted you then to decide to come to the United States?

HG: Well, there were quite a few factors involved in it. First of all, England is a wonderful country, and you can live very nicely, and the pace is not maybe as fast as it is in the United States; however, though the opportunities to become somebody in business or in a trade are very slim because English tradition is such that if you are in business, it's traditionally, you know, that the family will carry on and so on. To open up a business for yourself, starting from scratch, was impossibility at the time, and I figured there was no future in England. But then, of course, I learned when I was a kid in school in history about the

United States. To me this country appealed very much, not only because of the opportunities and, as the saying goes, that you find gold in the streets of New York, or anything like that. What this country stood for appealed to me very much— land of the free, the freedom of speech, the freedom of religion, and so on. And that's why I decided that this is the future for us.

SL: I recall that you told me in the preliminary interview that your wife had some relatives in the United States.

HG: Yes, she had a couple of uncles and aunts and they were instrumental because we had to have sponsors and they sent papers for us. However, I came here on a Polish quota because at that time, I don't know how it is today, but at that time there were quotas from different countries that this government allowed to come in. And we came here on a Polish quota.

SL: When did you decide that you wanted to leave England? Do you remember when it was?

HG: Oh, we were — right after we got married, we decided that that's what we're gonna do. But it took a long time before all the red tape and the papers came through. And finally in 1952, we got our visa and we came over here.

SL: Did you at any time up to 1952, get in contact with your relatives in the United States or was it not until you got here?

HG: No, not until I got here. Because I did try through the Jewish organizations, because they compiled all data about us and our families and so on and they tried to trace your families. But it was very hard if you didn't have an immediate family here. It was very hard to trace. And therefore, they tried but they didn't find anybody. And I had to do it myself when I came over here to the United States.

SL: Do you recall what month it was that you left England?

HG: It was in the fall [1952].

SL: How did you make the trip?

HG: By ship. That was a luxury liner that was converted into kind of a troopship that was transporting troops. And on that boat there was a lot of Canadian soldiers and so on that were coming over, coming back from England, and then, of course, there was a lot of passengers, too.

SL: Did you have to finance your own way?

HG: No. That was arranged also by the Jewish committee, and when we arrived here we were picked up by the HIAS, a representative of the HIAS, and he brought us into a shelter in New York where there was a lot of people from all over Europe, in that particular shelter, they were all refugees. But this was just an initial stay here, because we did have sponsors, and because of the red tape, I suppose, because they did pay for our passage, that we had to go in there and go through the whole business of red tape, and that's why we had to stay for about a week or two in that shelter.

SL: How long did the trip take from London to New York?

HG: A week.

SL: Do you recall having any specific feelings when you saw the Statue of Liberty?

HG: Oh, yes! We did not arrive at Ellis Island like the refugees did. We docked right at the harbor in New York and going through customs we were treated the same as any other passenger that would be coming over here. And it was, it was quite a sight when I'd seen the skyline of New York and the Statue of Liberty. I can't explain the feeling, but it made me feel so far removed from where I came from, the war, and I had a feeling of safety where I did not have it in England, and maybe because of the closeness of being in Europe, to what happened there during the war. You know, maybe I felt that I cannot be touched here by another war. The memory was still fresh, you know, of the Nazis and so on, and the nightmares that I had after the war of what happened, but that feeling left me when we arrived in New York.

SL: What were your first impressions of New York City?

HG: Terrible.

SL: Why is that?

HG: Well, I was used to being in England, especially in London, where London was just as big as New York, you know, and the friendliness of people, when you stop somebody in the street and you ask them for directions they would stop and be very helpful. Or if you ask the policeman for directions he practically took you by the hand and got you where you wanted to go and those were the British bobbies. But in New York I found people very unfriendly. Nobody had time for anything or anybody. And I even recall an incident, and I was looking for my family at that time because at first when we arrived in New York I didn't have no work and I had plenty of time on my hands, and so I decided to start looking and I went from one organization the other. All I had was a name of my aunt and I knew the name was Silver and, okay, so they give me half a dozen names of Silver and there were different addresses, and I was on Canal Street. Well, Canal Street in New York is a long block between the East River and the Hudson River and I took a walk and I'm looking for this particular address that I had on a slip of paper and I'm coming close to the river and I don't find the address. So I see a policeman in the middle of the street directing the traffic and I figure, "Well, maybe he can help me out." So I walked over to him and I say, "Excuse me, officer"— I was very polite— "could you direct me to this address?" And I showed him the piece of paper with the address, and he looked at it and he says, "In the middle of the Hudson River." And well, at that time I could see how friendly he was towards me. And I asked him then, "Could you tell me how to get there?" And all he could say is, "Very funny, very funny." This kind of an attitude, you know— very, very unfriendly. When they said “well there's gold in streets of New York,” you know I found this just the opposite.

SL: You didn't arrive in Wisconsin until 1954?

HG: Right.

SL: What did you do during those two years before you got here?

HG: Well, at first I started working in tailoring. I worked down in the garment center, in the sweatshops what they called. I didn't like it at all because I was used to tailoring that was done in England, where you took your time and you did the garment and everything was done mostly by hand and you were very

proud of the garment that you turn out. But over here in New York, I found that there was no pride in anything. It was just a matter of having a job and getting paid for it and everything was piece-work. The more you made — the more you worked on a particular phase of the garment the more money you made. And it came to the point where you were eating lunch, you were working because you wanted to make the money. And you didn't want to go to the bathroom because you might lose 25¢, this kind of thing. And to me there was no — nothing at all, there was no pride in it, and I feel that if I'm doing something and if I have a goal of doing anything, then I feel that I have to be proud of what I turn out. And there was no such thing in the garment industry. And when they call it sweatshops, that's exactly what it is. They're sweatshops. There's hundreds of people being cramped in, in one big floor in maybe a thirteen-story high building and nobody has time for anything. It was just work, work, work. There's no air conditioning or nothing. In the summer you sweat like a pig and you keep on working because you have to make the money and if you do not work fast you do not make it.

SL: So then what did you do once you finished working there?

HG: Well, I decided to drive a cab. In New York, I heard about this cab driving, which was very interesting, and this really appealed to me. At that time, I had a driver's license, and I could afford to buy myself a little secondhand car. And so I figured, "Well, I know how to drive. I'll try cab driving." And I did. I got a license and I got a job driving a cab in New York. And to me that was very, very interesting.

SL: How long were you a driver?

HG: Well, how long was it, two years? Yes, I suppose it was two years.

SL: Did you have any passengers who detected your foreign accident and eventually got into a conversation about where you had come from?

HG: Oh, yes, yes, there was a lot of cases where I had very interesting people in my cab. Especially celebrities and actors. The one that really impressed me was Paul Newman and that was just before he made the movie, *Exodus*. And I got him in the cab, he was playing a role in the theater, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. And I picked him up after the show and took him home, and we got into a discussion. And he

was so excited about the part, like a little kid. Of course, at that time he wasn't as well known; he wasn't the superstar as we know him today. But he was so excited about the role, because I think he is Jewish, and to him this was the greatest role that he will ever play. And then we got into it and I told him who I was and where I was and I had a very, very interesting conversation with him. And he was only one out of many, many different personalities that I did have in my cab.

SL: What happened to you after you stopped driving a cab?

HG: Well, why I stopped driving a cab, first of all I have to tell you that. I was held up three times, and after the third time, I figured, "This is not for me." Even though I did enjoy driving and so on, however, I was held up once with a gun and twice with a knife. And the third time I said, "That's it. I'm not going to risk my life for this." And as it happened, some friends of mine here in the United States— because a lot of the three hundred kids came over to United States before me. And there were three brothers that we were together in Theresienstadt, settled in Youngstown, Ohio, and they started this precut homes business. And they made very, very well. And I met him in New York one day. We had a little gathering with all our friends because we did keep in touch with all the kids. And they asked me to come down and work for them as a salesman. And they asked me to come down and look around and if I like it I can have a job. And I thought that was a very good opportunity for me, and they send me a plane ticket, and I went down to Youngstown and looked around and I liked it and stayed. And I worked for them for two years as a salesman. I worked in Pittsburgh and Cincinnati, Youngstown, and then finally they give me my own office in Milwaukee. That's how I got here to Wisconsin.

SL: I'd like to start to ask you about your years in Wisconsin, especially the early years in Milwaukee. You got here because you opened a branch of their precut homes?

HG: Right.

SL: Where did you live when you first came to Milwaukee?

HG: Well I lived in an apartment. I took an apartment. I have to tell you this, when I started with that company back in Youngstown and then they assigned me to an office in Pittsburgh, they pressed me

very hard, because I left the family back in New York. At that time I had two children. And they wanted me to bring the family, relocate in Pittsburgh. And eventually we did. I brought my wife and kids down and we had a nice apartment and everything went fine. Then I was transferred to Cincinnati, and we had to move again. Well the office was on the outskirts of Cincinnati. It actually was in Middletown, Ohio. And we found an apartment in Middletown, Ohio and my wife didn't like it at all. She didn't like my work; she didn't like the area; she didn't make friends too well. Of course all her friends were back in New York and she wanted to go back to New York. And I said, "No, we're going to stay here." And she says, "Well, if you stay here, then I'm going back." So we agreed that she will go back for a while and see how it's going to work out, and she did. So she moved back to New York.

But then shortly after I got that office here in Milwaukee. And when she found out that I had my own office, I'm a manager, and making pretty good, she wanted to come to Milwaukee. And I brought them down. But when I arrived in Milwaukee, I lived in a small apartment that I rented for myself and on Layton Avenue by the airport. And I stayed there till my family arrived, then I found another, bigger apartment north of Milwaukee. And that's where we moved in. It was very comfortable, very expensive, and but apparently if you make money, you know, you don't think of those things, as far as expense is concerned.

SL: Where was that located?

HG: Silver Springs and 76th Street. Well, needless to say my wife didn't like Milwaukee, either, and that's why problems started to mount up as far as our marriage was concerned and finally we decided, you know, the best thing would be to get a divorce. And that's what happened.

SL: What year were you divorced?

HG: I wish you wouldn't ask me about dates.

SL: Alright, I think you told me in the pre-interview that it was 1964. Does that sound right?

HG: That’s approximately, I would say that time.

SL: I’m going to have to turn the tape over.

HG: Go ahead.

END OF TAPE 5, SIDE 1

TAPE 5, SIDE 2

SL: Up until the time that you and your wife were divorced, did you keep that job as a manager for the precut homes, or did you have any other jobs?

HG: Well, shortly before the divorce, I left the company and went into business on my own with a partner in Delavan, Wisconsin.

SL: Did you move to Delavan?

HG: Yes. When the divorce was final, I lived in Delavan.

SL: How long did you remain in Delavan?

HG: Oh, for approximately a year-and-a-half. The business was going very well the first year. And it was the same business as I was in before also, building and selling precut homes. And I got along with my partner and we did pretty good the first year. But then the next year, as luck has it, the money market went down badly. We couldn't get no financing and so on, and we lost everything that we made the first year. So I had to leave and find myself another job. And as it happened that the same company that I left, my friends from Ohio, asked me to come back and work for them again. And I did. I went not as a manager but as a salesman again and we got into a discrepancy over money and I left them again. And then I found a job, an outfit out of Baltimore, and they were starting in the business of land development in Florida. And they asked me to work for them, and I did, and as far as I'm concerned, the most interesting job that I ever had because it meant traveling all over the United States. I was put on what they call the account executive team that traveled throughout United States. And to me, that was very interesting, because I've seen the country and I worked for them for five years.

SL: Were you based in Milwaukee?

HG: Well yes, my base was Milwaukee; however, I traveled all over. I frequented Florida, practically for two years I was there once a week at least, flying. It was a big company, they owned their own planes, own jets for bringing the people from all over the country down to Florida to show them land development and selling. So it was very, very interesting. It was also run by two brothers. Their name was Rosen,

they were Jewish, and they built practically an empire. It was a fantastic success story I've ever seen. They were in cosmetics back in Baltimore in the 1950s and they did such a good job in advertising their product, it was called Charles Antell Plus, something like that, and it was plastered all TV and radio and newspapers and so on. And apparently they give the competition such headaches that one of the big ones came along and bought them out for a million dollars just to dump the product off the market. And with that million dollars they started this land development in Florida. And when they sold that company— it was in 1964 or 1965, maybe 1967— they got 500 million dollars for it. So that was a success story that I've ever seen.

SL: Once they sold the company, were you out of a job?

HG: Well, not right off the bat. They sold the company to GAC Corporation, which was a conglomerate and their methods of running the business were quite different from the Gulf American Corporation, which I worked for. And things started to happen. Actually, at first I got a promotion. I was national speaker for them, where they would send me to a particular place just to speak about the product and so on in front of people. And then I was put in charge of a team that was going around and opening up new offices, hiring men, and training them in sales. And that was very interesting, but then things starting to happen. They started putting in their own people. They started replacing everybody. All the top echelon in the company was let go. And they put their own people in instead of them. And then, when it came to pay, as far as commissions were concerned, well I was supposed to get a percentage of every sale of every salesman that I trained and I didn't get a nickel and that was time to quit. And I left the company.

SL: What did you do after that?

HG: Well, at that time we — I was married again, to my wife, to my present wife, and we lived in Wind Lake, which is about 15 miles from Milwaukee, in Racine County. And the place was right on the lake. We bought an old house and I remodeled it. And we lived in it for four years. And then we decided, when the house was all remodeled, we sold it and came here to Merrill.

SL: What year did you move to Merrill?

HG: In 1974…'74 or was it '75? We lived here 8 years.

SL: 1972, I thought.

HG: 1972, maybe, yes, yes your right.

SL: You told me in the pre-interview that you also did numerous — you had a lot of different jobs here also in Merrill, one of them being you ran a bar?

HG: Oh, yes. That was the first venture that we had here in Merrill. We sold the house and we made a real nice profit on the sale of the house and we decided, well, that we should go into our business. I had a very bad taste working for everybody else, and we figured, "It's time to get into your own business." But, of course, the money that we had, we were very limited as far as buying into a business or opening up a new business or anything like that. Therefore, we started looking at different possibilities. What could we get into? And finally we came up with an idea of buying a tavern and that's exactly what we did. We scouted around all over north of Wisconsin because we didn't like actually the big city life as it was, and most of my life I spent in big cities. I figured it would be real nice to settle down in a small town. And being that I – in my travels with the Gulf American Corporation, I traveled throughout every little town in state of Wisconsin; I knew a little bit about Merrill. I liked the town before and, therefore, we came out here and we looked around, talked to realtors and we found a tavern here in town and we purchased it.

SL: And how long did you have it?

HG: We ran it for five years before we sold it. And we sold it because it was quite a good going business, but a tavern business is not very easy, and the thing was getting under my skin and so was my wife's. It's very hard work. You're tied to it, and the abuse that you have to take from different people, you know when they're intoxicated and so on. I felt I don't want to spend the rest of my life in that kind of a business. And, especially, our youngest son was getting to the age where we felt we didn't have no family life in the tavern because, when I worked my wife was in the apartment upstairs, and then vice a versa. And the kid was just well – we did take care of him and so on, but we felt that he didn't get the attention that he deserved, that any child would deserve. And that's why we decided to sell.

SL: What was the name of the tavern?

HG: It was Golde's Music Bar.

SL: And where was it located?

HG: It was located in the Sixth Ward, which is considered, in Merrill, the worst part. They used to call it – there's quite a history behind the Sixth Ward. They used to call it "The Bloody Six" because apparently, during the logging years in that era, all the loggers that used to work in the woods would come down on weekends when they got paid and the first stop they made was the Sixth Ward. And, naturally, they got quite rambunctious and the fights and so on were very well known and police was being called all the time into the Sixth Ward to break up fights. There were three taverns in the Sixth Ward itself. When you're talking about the Sixth Ward, there's a very small part of Merrill. Naturally, the city is divided in different wards, but we're living in the First Ward, and if somebody asked me where I live, I said, "I live on Center Avenue." But if I would live on Foster Avenue, if somebody asked me where I live, I would say the Sixth Ward. So the Sixth Ward is a very dominant place in Merrill. But, like I said, the rest of the city kind of looks down on the Sixth Ward. However, I found that the people were very nice in the Sixth Ward and were no different or lower-classed than anybody else in town. And I kind of become a Sixth Warder, as they called themselves, you know. And I was elected president of the Sixth Ward Business Association and I've become a very proud Sixth Warder, as it was called.

SL: After the tavern business then what type of employment did you have?

HG: Well when we sold the tavern, my wife came up with an idea of opening up a specialty clothing store for large sizes. And we found a store downtown and we opened up and called it Golde's Added Dimensions. And I at the time, I thought that was a very good idea and my wife did pretty good in it, but things didn't work out. Because in a small town, you start a business like that, where Wausau is close to Merrill where they have a big shopping area, the majority of people do go and shop in Wausau. When she opened up the business, she was the only one in the whole area that had that type of business. But with the advertising that we did on the special sizes and so on, big sizes, other

shopkeepers got the same idea and in Wausau you find now three or four stores that are what we had – what we started here in Merrill. Therefore, the business did not work out. However, before the business went down the drain, we went down to Green Bay. We opened up another store like that which was doing pretty good. It was doing much better than the Merrill store was doing. However, we came to the point where the store in Green Bay couldn't carry this one, too, and finally we had to close the business.

SL: And currently what are you doing?

HG: Well currently I'm doing alterations and tailoring for the time being. I'm right in the middle of different things that I might get into.

SL: I would like to go back to just some questions again about Milwaukee and about the early years since you did spend a lot of time there before you came to Merrill. Did you ever encounter any anti-Semitism when you were in Milwaukee?

HG: In Milwaukee, not at all. No, not at all. The people I dealt with, and I was associating myself with mostly Christian people. You know I did not have any Jewish friends in Milwaukee, so most of my friends and associates were Christians and I didn't find no anti-Semitism at all.

SL: What about in Merrill, have you encountered any [anti-Semitism]?

HG: Well, that's the same thing in Merrill. I do not find that over here, not at all. I'm being considered an equal. Yes, everybody knows that I am Jewish and I have no secret about it because I am speaking out about it and I'm proud of being Jewish. And people respect that, and not once did I hear any anti-Semitic slur in Merrill.

SL: When you came to Milwaukee, did you encounter any problems that would be associated with new immigrants?

HG: I met a lot of immigrants there, I met quite a few. As a matter of fact once, before I was divorced, we went to a couple of dances or social gatherings and I met a lot of refugees from different parts of

Europe. And they have an association and so on, but I felt that I had absolutely nothing in common with them.

SL: Did you ever feel that you were being taken advantage of because you were new to the area?

HG: In Wisconsin? No. But I think I've been taken advantage back in New York because I was a newcomer. And I could say that [I was taken advantage of] by Jews. Because they felt, especially the first job that I got in tailoring, the boss that give me the job and he felt so sorry for me because I was a refugee that just came over from Europe and I couldn't get a job because I did not belong to the union and I didn't have no money to pay for a union book, and he says, "Well, I'll take you in and give you a job." And for that he paid me half of what he paid the others. And when I ask him, "Well, why can't I get more money like everybody else?" because I'm doing the same work as anybody else, and he threw up in my face, "Hey, you're a refugee. You just came over from the other side." He says, "When I came here in the 1920s, I was working for nothing, too." This kind of thinking. And to me that was taking advantage of somebody. Even when we moved to Brooklyn and we lived in a Jewish neighborhood, you know, everybody would refer to me as "the refugee," even though I spoke English. They could hardly speak English, but I was the refugee that just came over and they were better than I was— this kind of thing. But when it came to the Christian versus Jews, the people that I did associate with always took me on the equal basis. I never found at one time that I was being degraded or taking a lower class because I was Jewish or because people knew that I was a refugee and I came over from Europe.

SL: Did you get any help from the Jewish community in Milwaukee when you settled here?

HG: No. Actually, I didn't need no help. When I got to Milwaukee, I didn't need no financial help, or any other help for that matter. I think I got Americanized very fast. You know, I was very independent and I traveled through quite a number of different states and I worked in different states. Therefore, I didn't need no help.

SL: Now you moved to Merrill in '72 and then you lived for awhile above the tavern. When did you move into your present residence?

HG: Well when we sold the tavern, we started to look for a house to buy. And we rented a house on the west side of town for approximately three or four months. And we were looking around to find a house to buy. And we found this house about six months later, after we left the tavern.

SL: What's the address here?

HG: 305 North Center Avenue.

SL: Ok I wanted to ask you to clarify just a little about your present marital status. What is the name of your current wife?

HG: My wife's name is Marie. Her maiden name was Roethke. And we have a son. Of course my wife got a daughter and son. And I have a daughter and a son. So it's kind of a mine, hers, and ours family.

SL: Is your wife a native of Wisconsin?

HG: Yes, she was born in Milwaukee.

SL: Are you going to tell me what year she was born? Do you know?

HG: Here you go again.

SL: Or is she much older or younger than you are?

HG: She's also two years younger than I am.

SL: Where did you meet her?

HG: Well it was a short time after I opened up the business here in Milwaukee that I hired her as a secretary. And she'd been a secretary for me for quite a while and we got friendly and started going out together and after my divorce, got married.

SL: When did you get married, what year?

HG: Okay, my son is eleven, and we were married two years before he was born so . . .

SL: So that makes it 1967.

HG: Yeah, something like that. I don't think all those dates are going to jive, but…

SL: That’s alright we’re just trying to get some genealogical material for...

HG: Yes, you might be a statistician, I am not!

SL: Ok, I'd like to ask you a little bit about your children since we've been mentioning them but I haven't gotten — I need more concrete information on them. You and your first wife had two children.

HG: Right.

SL: What are their names, and if you can possibly tell me approximately when they were born and where they were born?

HG: My son Joe was born in London, England. He is now thirty years old. My daughter is twenty-five and her name is Gina. And she lives in Studio City, California, because after the divorce, my ex-wife decided to settle down in California. My daughter loves the place and she didn't want to come back to Wisconsin, so therefore...

SL: What is she doing in California?

HG: Well, I call her a professional student. She's going to college. And she didn't make up her mind yet what she going to do. However, she's been mostly involved in medicine and she might become a practical nurse, but then of course she was talking about dentistry. I got a sneaky hunch that she might decide to go to medical school, which I'm very proud of her. She's got very, very good marks in school, and if she wants to go to school, I won't stay in her way.

SL: And what about your son, where is he presently?

HG: My son is in Madison. He's in business, very successful business. He's the owner of Natural Habitat, which is, I think, one of the largest, if not the largest, waterbed stores in Madison.

SL: And is he married?

HG: He is married, yes.

SL: Does he have any children?

HG: No, they do not.

SL: And you and your present wife also have a son.

HG: Right.

SL: What is his name?

HG: His name is Mark…Marcus.

SL: Where was he born?

HG: He was born in Milwaukee.

SL: And he's 11 right now.

HG: He's 11.

SL: So he's in…what is he in sixth grade, seventh grade?

HG: Yes, he's in sixth grade.

SL: Here in Merrill?

HG: Yes.

SL: Ok, looks like a good time to turn the tape around.

HG: You're running out of tape?

SL: Yeah.

END OF TAPE 5, SIDE 2

TAPE 6, SIDE 1

SL: I'd like to ask you the attitudinal questions that we ask everybody. You are somewhat of a different case because you have two children who probably did not spend a lot of years with you because if you were divorced in the early '60s they were still fairly young and they hadn't grown up with you and with your way of life as much as Mark has because he's probably just about the same age that your children were when you left them. We ask questions about your family, about your children, and if it seems that something happened one way with your older children and things are different now, maybe you could tell me the differences. I'll ask you in a general way about them and if it seems that you want to clarify what you did with whom that might help us because there are two, you know, different sets of circumstances here. First of all, do you speak English in the home?

HG: Absolutely.

SL: Did you and your first wife ever communicate in any other language in front of your children?

HG: No.

SL: Do your children know any other languages, other than English?

HG: No.

SL: How much do your children know about your Holocaust experiences?

HG: Not much because, until now, I never spoke about it. They knew where I came from, but they never knew my history.

SL: Because of your involvement lately in with the community, do you think that Mark knows more about your experiences than your older children did at his age?

HG: Yes, definitely.

SL: How do you think they've responded to what they know?

HG: My kids? What they know about Holocaust?

SL: No, what they know about your own experiences. Have they shown you any reaction to what they know you went through?

HG: Are you talking about Mark, or are you talking about Joe and Gina?

SL: Is it different for them? Has it been noticeably different, how they reacted, what you told them?

HG: Well, I don't know. Actually, it was very vague what I did tell them, or what my wife told my kids about our past, and what happened during the war, because we didn't speak much about it at home. It was — I'm sure that it was in the back of our minds all the time, but that was something that wasn't mentioned. Also, very vague if it was mentioned.

SL: Do you think your children may have faced problems in school because of your unusual background?

HG: I don't think so.

SL: Do you think that, because you have a limited extended family and that they had no grandparents or first cousins, that that was a problem for them?

HG: I don't think so.

SL: In comparison to other families, do you see your family as being closer than other American families?

HG: No.

SL: Do you see yourself as a more concerned parent?

HG: Maybe I feel like, in my own mind, that I am a concerned parent, but other people might not feel that way.

SL: Do you feel that you might have more concern directly as a result of what happened to you?

HG: There's no doubt about it. I am more concerned maybe you— in my own estimation, in my own mind, I'm taking my own kids for granted. I am more concerned about all the kids in schools and what's happening in the United States, what's happening all over the world, you know. To me, this is a bigger concern than actually my own children. Because, and maybe I'm wrong in that respect, and I wish that in the past I would have been closer with my children than I actually was. But I don't know, maybe you call it idealist, or whatever you might call me. I was always concerned for people as a whole, not as individuals.

SL: When your children were young— and you still have one young child— what were your greatest concerns for them?

HG: Well as far as I'm concerned about the kids, that they should grow up to be good people, good citizens. When my children were growing up, that was the time of Vietnam scene and the drug scene and so on, and that bothered me to no end. And my kids went through it and I was worried. To tell you quite frankly, I was very much worried how they're going to grow up and what's going to happen with them. But, knock on wood, they came out of it very well.

SL: Right now, who are your closest friends, are most of them Jewish or non-Jewish?

HG: No, we are living here in strictly Christian community, and I think I'm the only real Jew in this town. Therefore, all my friends are Christians.

SL: When you were in Milwaukee, you did mention that you met other survivors, have you remained close with any of those people in Milwaukee?

HG: No, not at all, because— I think I told you before— I found out real fast that I had absolutely nothing in common with them. The feeling that I get, or I got at the time, was that most of the survivors were people where they were only interested in one thing: is how much money they're going to make and the business that they are in. That was the extent of even the social life, you know. When they got together, all you could hear is business and so on. And I felt that there's more to life than just business and making money. To me money, today, is secondary. I'm having a financial hard time right now, however, I don't think that this is the most important thing in life. I think your involvement in the community is more important to me than money.

SL: Do you belong to any organizations of survivors or a *landsmannschaft*?[14]

HG: No. I did belong to the Plocki Association[15] in New York while I lived there, and I attended a few meetings. However, it was called a "young men association" and the youngest one there must have

[14] Association of people from one region or town.

[15] Association of people from Plock.

been about sixty years old, and I was still a young man! Therefore, we didn't have nothing in common there either. The only thing is that some of the survivors, which I met in New York from my hometown, those were the ones that I went down to see actually, and converse and talk about old times and hometown and so on.

SL: I see I've got a question here that I did specifically write down for you. And it is, "Tell me about your community involvement." So why don't you do that.

HG: Well, that's quite a broad subject. When we arrived here in Merrill, shortly after that I start getting involved in community activities. And after a year being in the tavern and being a businessman, I was elected president of the Sixth Ward Business Association. And also, I was involved in the Tavern League. I was a vice-president of Lincoln County Tavern Association. And one of my accomplishments, which I'm very, very proud of, is that I initiated the Tree of Hope, which I called. This was something that we did at Christmas time. My wife and I came up with that idea. That it was, is we were going to put up a Christmas tree, there's a fire house in the Sixth Ward, and right next to it. And we're gonna put on bulbs, different colored ones, and for donation between a dollar and five dollars and ten dollars and twenty-five dollars, we would light those lights. All the proceeds would go to the ARC Association, which is Association for Retarded Citizens, which we have one center here and one in Tomahawk. This is my favorite charity, and I initiated that drive, which is well known. As a matter of fact, I received quite a few different awards from the state and also from the local chapter of ARC Association. And this became an annual thing which is still going in the Sixth Ward.

SL: How much money have you been able to raise in that?

HG: Well, the first year I raised a thousand dollars in a very short time. It was like two or three weeks before Christmas, that's when we started. In three weeks I got approximately a thousand dollars. The next year, I vowed that I'm gonna double the amount, and I did, because we raised over two thousand dollars. Right now, they're raising about between a thousand and two thousand dollars. That was one of the things. Then some people urged me to run for the County Board

SL: Board of Supervisors?

HG: Yes, Board of Supervisors, and I did. I was elected to represent the Sixth Ward on the County Board. I spent there two years, and my accomplishments on the county board were quite numerous. I served on different committees. One of them were social service and welfare, which I initiated a few different programs which are good for the county. And one is work relief program. I did that single-handedly. I traveled, with the blessings of Lincoln County, to Milwaukee, and learned about the program in the newspaper when I've seen an article written. That was quite an extensive investigation with the local DA and different states and so on. And I did initiate the program, which is still going and saving a lot of money for the county and I wish it would be statewide. But this is one of the things that I did. There were quite a few. I was also on the Law Enforcement Committee, which takes care of the Sheriff's Department, and there were quite a few changes made that I'm responsible for. I was a force for two years on the County Board. Then I belong to the Lions Club and the Eagles Club and now the Optimist Club. And then of course, I serve on different committees like Executive Board of Merrill Development Corporation, which is a nonprofit organization that promotes industry in Merrill. It's quite a company — well, corporation — that does things here. We did bring in industry, you know. We're always looking out to bring in industry and a better life for people. I'm also the chairman of Merrill on the Move Committee, which promotes good will in Merrill. And once a year, we have an award dinner, where we pick a man or a woman of the year, this kind of awards, and business of the year and organization and so on. I also served on the executive board of Community Action, which is CAP, and on a regional level here. And I was responsible at the time of bringing Community Action into Merrill. They are the ones that do variety of services to the low-income families in the area. Like winterizing homes, food stamps, helping farmers and so on. And I really believe that that organization is doing a very, very good job in communities all over the country.

SL: Now I understand that you also do some public speaking about your Holocaust experiences?

HG: Yes. It's a matter of fact, I spoke – I had a half an hour show on TV here a year ago. And actually how it started somebody…are you running out of tape?

SL: No, it's so dark in here now that I have a hard time looking at seeing the counter.

HG: Shall I put on the light?

SL: Yeah, do you mind. I'm sorry.

HG: No, that's alright.

SL: There's a little counter here that I have to keep track of.

HG: Oh.

SL: Yeah, thank you that's fine.

HG: Where was I?

SL: You were talking…I asked you about the public speaking that you're doing.

HG: Oh, yes, it was just before D-Day date, two years ago, that one of the friends over here that I know suggested to the news director of Merrill radio station that maybe it would be a good idea for him to contact me, and maybe I would like to make a statement, because he told him that I did spend time in concentration camps. And he didn't know how I would react towards it and if I would do it. However, he did call me and I said, "Yes, that's a very good idea," because my feeling was that it's time that I speak up.

That led to different things, and the news director from Channel 9 TV station in Wausau contacted me and asked me if I would give him an interview. And I said, "Yes." And they came down here and taped it in the house here. Tape just a small part on the nightly news. Because that was the day of — the time when they were showing a Patton movie on TV. And so he did that and then he asked me if I would be interested of doing a half an hour show with him on TV, because he had his own program called *Community '78* at the time or *… '79*. Now it's *Community '80*. It's a half-an-hour show where he's got a broad spectrum of different people from different walks of life that he interviews and so on. I said, and, "Yes, that would be a good idea," and I made a tape that show. And the first question that

that man asked me was, "How come that it's thirty years after the war that now you're telling us your story?" And I thought that was a very excellent question, because my feeling is that I didn't speak-up up till now because right after the war it was fresh in everybody's mind. A lot of books were written, movies were made, and so on. It was fresh in people's mind. But now, it's thirty years after the war and the world is forgetting it. And what I see what's happening in the world is frightening me. And especially now with the economy the way it's going in the United States, radical groups coming out of the woodwork. You hear the Ku Klux Klan are getting stronger and stronger. Right here in our own neighborhood outside of Wausau, we have an outfit called Posse Comitatus. It's a very radical group that walking around with a Bible in one hand and a gun strapped to their hips, and spreading hate and so on, taking the law in their own hands. And I felt that this is the time that I should tell my story. And I feel if I will tell my story, and others like myself, over and over again and to anybody that wants to listen to it, I feel that maybe, maybe, that will never happen again.

SL: What do you think are the feelings of American-born Jews that you've talked to about the Holocaust?

HG: Well, I get mixed reaction. I got a feeling that a lot of American Jews, born Jews over here, have the same feeling as the Germans might be feeling right now. "Hey, I don't want to know any more about it, you know. I've had it. I've heard of it, and let's forget it." That kind of a feeling. Then you find some people that are very sympathetic. They're very aware of what happened, and they are concerned that, "Hey, this can happen anywhere. It can happen right here, and we have to prevent that." But I found that, especially in the small communities like Wausau, that the Jews live in kind of a seclusion. They do get together and they have a communal kind of a life. However, they keep their identity on a very low key. And to me this is ridiculous, because I am not ashamed of what I am. I am not afraid to say who I am and what I am and where I came from. Why should any other Jew be afraid or feel that maybe he's not as equal or whatever? That kind of a feeling I find in small communities.

SL: What have been the reaction of the non-Jews that you've told about your Holocaust experiences?

HG: Their reaction has been fantastic. People approaching me and give me a lot of credit of what I'm doing. They're very sympathetic, too, of what happened and they have the same feeling— "Hey, we Americans cannot allow for that to happen again," this kind of a feeling. I have all different reactions. Like I got a bunch of phone calls after they read the story in the paper, after I was speaking in front of a group and the reporter wrote the nice story about it. And people called me up and say, "Hey, I read this in the paper. Great. You're doing a good job. Keep on doing it. You know, we need this." Especially people are very happy that I'm speaking to the kids in schools, because they are our future generation, you know and we should be concerned about how the kids feel about it. And they should be aware of what happened and what's happening.

SL: Can you give me an example of the reaction that the kids have had?

HG: That is most heartwarming to me, because the best reaction I get from the kids. I'll give you a for instance. Every school, and I talked to every elementary school here in Merrill and there's six different schools in the Merrill area, I talked for an hour. Now anybody, any teacher will tell you that the span of attention of a child of eleven and twelve years old is fifteen minutes. I talked for an hour and then opened up for questions and answers, and I stood there another hour. And if the teachers would allow this thing, and because we did prearrange this, that I said, "Well, I'll talk for an hour, and then maybe for another half an hour will be questions and answers," I would have stayed there a whole day and they were asking me questions, and they're very intelligent questions: "Why this thing happened," "why did Hitler pick on Jews," and so on. And there's a lot of answers that I don't have, but I'm trying to explain as best as I can. And their reaction was fantastic. I'm being stopped by kids in the street that I don't even recognize, say, "Hey, Mr. Golde, how are you today?", you know, this kind of a thing. Therefore, I think that I leave an impression with them of what I tell them. And to me, this is great!

SL: I'm gonna have to turn the tape over.

HG: Go ahead.

END OF TAPE 6, SIDE 1

TAPE 6, SIDE 2

SL: I'd like to ask you about your religious life. And again, if things were different when you were in Milwaukee, you might indicate to me that things changed for you one way or another. First of all, do you attend synagogue regularly?

HG: No, I do not.

SL: Did you attend in Milwaukee?

HG: No. Yes, couple of times on the High Holidays, but that's about all.

SL: Do you observe any traditions in the home?

HG: No, I do not.

SL: Did your children receive religious school education?

HG: Yes, my son was Bar Mitzvah.

SL: Where was he Bar Mitzvah?

HG: In Milwaukee.

SL: How do you think that your feelings about religion have changed since your Holocaust experiences?

HG: Well, I think I told you before that back home in Poland, I lived in kind of a non-religious atmosphere. I couldn't speak Yiddish and until I got to camp, where I had to learn real fast because, not only that the Nazis were after you, but the Jews kind of slighted you when you spoke just Polish and you couldn't speak Yiddish. Therefore, I had to learn real fast, you know, the Yiddish language. And, but what I've seen in camps, and the atrocities that were committed to humanity by humans, completely turned me off religion. If I look down the history, I can see every war as being a religious war, because of religion. I feel that religion got its place in society, there's no doubt about it, because it teaches morality and goodness and so on. But I feel that religion is torn apart in so many different places where each religion today being practiced claims that they are the true religion, and all other religions are wrong. And that's why I feel that Communism is so strong in the world today, because their religions are so far apart. And until they decide that there's only one God, and everybody that believes in God is a same equal,

Communism is going to flourish. And so far, even though they have a ecumenical council, and things got a little better to the point where religions can at least sit down and discuss common goals, they are still very, very far apart. And therefore, I am turned off by religion. To me, religion, in my own estimation is— I live by the Ten Commandments. If I'm a good person, if I love thy neighbor in every and true sense of the word, I am a religious person. I don't have to go to a synagogue. I don't have to go to church. I don't have to pay my dues or money being levied on me or the preacher will tell me how much money I'm going to give to church or synagogue. I don't have to do that at all. I think if there is a God, then in His eyes, if I'm a good man, I am just as religious as anybody else.

SL: One of the questions that we ask everyone is: How would you feel if your children married non-Jews?

HG: I think this is the same thing what I just told you. I feel that a religion shouldn't enter at all into the picture. I feel that if two people are in love, or for any other reason that they want to get married, religion should not stand in the way. And intermarriages today are more and more predominant than they were before. The superstition is kind of leaving the new generation that is now in the marriage age.

SL: Your present wife is not Jewish, and that means under Jewish law your son is not Jewish either. Is he aware though of a Jewish type of heritage at all?

HG: Absolutely. He considers himself Jewish

SL: Oh he does.

HG: And my wife even considers herself Jewish. Not in a sense of tradition or the religion itself, but it's something in you. Like I feel, I'm a Jew, I was born a Jew, for one reason or another, and I'm going to die a Jew. I'm not going to change my religion. I'm still a Jew, even though I don't practice Judaism. But I'm very proud to be of what I am, and so does my family. And my son feels the same way, and so does my wife.

SL: I'll turn away from that line of questioning and dig into some personal things about your life and what you do on an everyday type of basis. Could you describe to me a typical day right now?

HG: Right now my wife says, if there's no meeting, I'm not happy. That's her estimation of me. But no, I get up first thing in the morning. My wife works for the police department. She's a meter maid and secretary in the office. We get approximately six o'clock in the morning, make coffee and wake you up and we sit down and read the newspapers, discuss various things before she goes to work. We send my son to school. And then, what I'm doing now is alterations and tailoring. People bring some stuff and I work most of the day. However, if there's any meetings or if I have to go here or there I do because I am free and I don't have to punch a clock, so my days can vary. I don't have actually a typical day you know because I don't know from one minute to another what I'm going to do.

SL: What would you typically do, if possible, on a weekend when you have your family to do things with?

HG: Well, weekends vary too. We do a lot of discussing between myself and my wife. My son is into music. And you know he's eleven years old, he plays all kinds of instruments. And my wife plays the accordion, so apparently he got that inheritance from her. We help him with that. He's got band practice or my wife plays with him. However, most of the time we do discuss various things. It could be politics or law or community, whatever you have. Usually on Sundays we watch football. I also enjoy during the summer— and my wife does, too— we have local teams that play slow-pitch. And we really enjoy going out in the evenings to watch various teams play. And it's kind of a close-knit community where everybody knows everybody and you know each other and you go down to the ball game and, actually, you're having a good fun, being among people and talking and discussing things and this kind of nature. So, weekends can vary. We don't travel too much. But in the summer, we get together with neighbors. And we have a quite a group of neighbors here, you know, that we do things together, like picnics, or we'll go to one's house and do different things, or play cards and all that.

SL: Besides your community involvement, do you have any other hobbies or special interests?

HG: Well, my hobby is actually fixing houses, remodeling houses. And I did that for a living and also as a hobby. I really enjoy doing that and my wife enjoys doing that. And we did remodel a couple of houses

and we did a lot of remodeling here in our own home. And now we're thinking again of going into it— buying an old home and remodel it and resell it.

SL: What types of materials do you like to read?

HG: Well to be quite honest about it— I don't know why and I wonder myself— but I read a lot of stories about war. War material is most interesting to me. My favorite writer is Leon Uris. I think he portrayed the Second World War and what happened to the Jews, you know — fantastic. I read a lot of books on the war and the Holocaust, but I think Leon Uris did the most fantastic job there is.

SL: Other than Uris' works, what has your reaction been to books you have read on the Holocaust?

HG: Very true. Some people might think that they're far-fetched, but being that I did have the experience, I can document this thing as being true. And I can appreciate it more because I did go through it, and I know what is fiction, what is truth. And most of it, what I find in the books that's been written, is the truth.

SL: What newspapers and magazines do you receive here in your house?

HG: Well first of all, we have the Wausau-Merrill *Daily Herald*. Read that everyday. Then, we have *Shopper's Guide* here from Merrill. And ever so often I'll pick up the *Chicago Tribune*. Back in London I used to read *London Times*, but it got so big, you know, that nobody could read that thing. The same thing with *New York Times*; it's like a Bible. But that actually is the extent of it. Sometimes I read *Milwaukee Journal* and *Sentinel*.

SL: Do you get any magazines?

HG: Most of that I did subscribe, but now I can't afford. I did get *U.S. News and World*. I think that's one of the best magazines there is in the country, as far as the world affairs and business and so on.

SL: Did you watch the television program *Holocaust*?

HG: Yes, I did.

SL: What was your reaction to it?

HG: I think it was very well done. I heard a lot of criticism about it, but to me it was very well documented, very well portrayed. All the actors in it were fabulous. It's very hard to make a movie I guess and have a broader spectrum than what they did in *Holocaust*, but I think what they tried to do, and what they portrayed, was done very, very well. Some Jews will disagree with me, but I think it was done very well.

SL: Did people become more interested in your own experiences after that television program?

HG: Oh yes. Oh yes. Quite a bit. You know I hear remarks all the time you know wherever I go. "Did you watch the movie, you know? What do you think of it? When are you going to tell me your story? Because I'm very interested to listen to it," and so on.

SL: You mentioned that you did quite a bit of traveling in Wisconsin because of your association with the business in selling land in Florida. Was there any particular part of Wisconsin that you liked more than any other?

HG: Oh, this part of Wisconsin.

SL: And why?

HG: I think that the northern part of Wisconsin is beautiful. It's such a relaxed atmosphere. The land is just gorgeous. You got lakes and rivers and hills and trees and forests. It's beautiful. [Temporarily stopped interview to answer ringing phone]

SL: How much does this part of Wisconsin remind you of your native home?

HG: Well, you know, it's a funny thing that you should ask that question because Merrill reminds me very much of my own hometown. Merrill is called a city of parks, and I think Plock, where I come from, considered itself the same way— the city of parks. We have so many different parks. Especially being that it's a small town and if you have three or four different parks, and you got flowers all over and so on you know, this shows up more than if you find maybe a hundred parks in a big city, they get lost. In a small town, you know, it's very predominant.

SL: How satisfied are you with the cultural climate in Merrill?

HG: It's very good. Maybe it's limited to some extent, where we do not have the theater per se like you would have in New York. There's no Broadway. There's only one movie house. However, I think that the social life in Merrill is much greater and better than it is in a big city because everybody knows each other. We do have concerts in the high school, different plays that the students put on, which in my estimations are outstanding. We got sports events here and so on. Therefore, I think that the cultural life in Merrill is just as good or even better than in a big city, because in a big city it kind of gets lost. It's all commercialized and so on. Where the culture here is more true, true to life, and so on.

SL: How much happier would you have been living in an area of greater Jewish population?

HG: I wouldn't be happier at all because I don't feel that anybody is any different. I treat a Jew or a Gentile the same way. I look at personalities. When I look for a friend, if I befriend somebody, it's not because of his religion, of his background. It's what we have in common and how friendly he is with me. That's the way I estimate the person. Religion does not enter the picture.

SL: How do you feel about living in Wisconsin with its high percentage of ethnic Germans?

HG: Well, let me put it this way. Merrill and the surrounding area is predominantly German. I get along with those people. I do not have any animosities against Germans. There's nothing wrong. I feel that people are people no matter who they are, what they are.

SL: What effort have you made to acquaint yourself with Wisconsin history?

HG: Well, I did quite a bit of study when I was on the county board, where I had the opportunities of learning about the history, about the government of Wisconsin, and so on. Therefore, I think that I have a broad spectrum of Wisconsin history.

SL: Now here's a question that you'll probably be able to answer with much more fervor than a lot of other people: How do you feel that you have contributed to the Wisconsin community?

HG: Oh, I think my involvement in a community is my contribution to Wisconsin. I am involved in politics. I have a good rapport with our State Senator, with our State Representative; they're good friends of mine. And we do discuss different things that should be done, as far as I'm concerned, for the good of the

people. And in that respect I feel that I contributed a lot because, not only that I worked as a County Board Supervisor helping this county here, Lincoln County, but I feel by being involved with other politics and other politicians, and running campaigns for different people that running for public offices, I think I contributed quite a bit for the welfare of Wisconsin.

SL: Do you feel an obligation to Wisconsin for giving you an opportunity to become a member of its community?

HG: I feel I owe an obligation not only to Wisconsin, but to the whole United States for what they did for me, and the treatment that I got here, and the equality that I find here. Yes, I feel that I owe a lot to state of Wisconsin because I feel this is my home. I love this state and I'll be the first one to stick up for it.

SL: What was your reaction when the American Nazi Party planned to march in Milwaukee?

HG: I was outraged. My feeling on it is that democracy sometimes goes overboard. The freedom of speech is fine to an extent. But sometimes it goes overboard. I don't think that those radical groups should be allowed. Because the thought of people is, like, "Well, they're only a small group, a bunch of lunatics that got together. Why, nobody will listen to them," and so on. But if you look in the Third Reich, how Hitler come into power, he started as a small radical group you know, and look what happened. And the same thing can happen in this country. Like I said, the freedom of speech that we have in this country, which is wonderful as far as I'm concerned, sometimes goes overboard. And those groups should not be allowed to march and hold assembly. They shouldn't be protected by police, and so on. I don't think they should be given permit even to march.

SL: I think it's about time for me to turn the tape over again.

END OF TAPE 6, SIDE 2

TAPE 7, SIDE 1

SL: How satisfactory do you find the American system of government?

HG: Let me put it this way. I feel that United States is democracy at its best. I've been in the different parts, where in democratic countries like England and now Germany and practically the free world, and I find that United States is the best system. It's not perfect, but it's still the best. Somebody asked me, "What do you find are the greatest assets that this country has?" And there are many, many, many assets as far as I'm concerned. I'm very proud to be an American. And I can find a lot of good in this country. Then, of course, I find a lot of faults too. But democracy as a whole is the best government there is and always will be, until we find something better, which I don't think we will. I think this is the best system.

SL: How do you feel about the prominence of Jews in American society?

HG: How do I find the prominence?

SL: How do you feel about?

HG: Oh. Well, somehow, I feel kind of inner pride when I think of the contribution that the Jews did, not only in this country, but all over the world. When you're talking about Einstein or you're talking about Jonas Salk or other Jews, you know, that are too numerous to mention, I feel very, very proud.

SL: Do you see a danger at all, a threat, that people can use that as a excuse by saying there are so many Jews in important positions?

HG: No, I don't think so. No, definitely not.

SL: What do you see are the most important issues facing America today?

HG: Well today, now we're talking about current politics. I think inflation is a very dangerous thing, and the economy is the most important thing. And I think that the government failed miserably, the present government, as far as stopping inflation and bringing the economy to what it should be. This is a very, very dangerous times that we're going through in United States. Because not only about the people not having jobs and economic situation, but in times like that, when I feel radical groups come up and become strong, because people like to blame somebody for maybe their own downfalls. And those are

dangerous times. And we should be watching out and the government and the law should be on guard not to let this thing go out of hand. When I watch the news on TV and when the commentator is telling the people that a big religious group is sticking their nose into politics, to me this is very dangerous. It's…this country has been based on separation of religion and state, and what they're trying to do is to combine this thing together. And this is very dangerous and it's wrong. And I think one of the assets that this country has, and it's so great, is that you do have separation of church and the government…religion and the government, I should say.

SL: To what extent do you believe there is anti-Semitism in the United States?

HG: It's not any different than anywhere else. It's…there is a lot of anti-Semitism, there's no doubt about it. But I don't think that United States has any more anti-Semitism than any other country in the world. And I attribute that, anti-Semitism, to ignorance. People don't know. I'll give you a for instance. Even right here in Merrill— and I'm not talking anti-Semitism, but I'm talking about the feelings about the Blacks— there's not one Black family in this town. There are people that never traveled out of this town, but they hate "Niggers." And to me this is ignorance because they never encountered a Black person. And this is because people putting labels on races and other people. And maybe that's why I am trying to speak up and teach people and make them aware that they are wrong in their thinking.

SL: How secure do you feel as a Jew in America?

HG: Well, let me put it this way. I am more secure here in the United States than I would be in Europe. Maybe because it was so close to what happened to me during the Second World War and my family and my friends and all the Jews. And I'm so far removed from it being in the United States. But I always feel, and why I'm speaking out on the subject of Holocaust and my story, is because it's always in the back of my mind you know that this could happen right here, too, if people are not educated about it. And I'm very happy that they come out with a movie like the *Holocaust*. Or the other night, they came out with this *Playing for Time*, showing people what happened. Even some people don't believe in it, and don't believe that this thing happened. At least we're showing them, the country's

showing them, that this did happen. And that, as far as I'm concerned, is a deterrent against anti-Semitism and against bigotry as a whole.

SL: What are your feelings about Germany and present-day Germans?

HG: The only thing that I might have against Germany and Germans, as they are today, is number one that very little emphasis was put on the Second World War and the Holocaust as far as the German government is concerned. You know there's very little that is in Germany history books about it and the Germans want to forget it. This might be very well, and maybe they should forget about it, but the children should be aware. The new generation always should be aware of what happened. And if you do repeat it in history books, and if you do talk about it, I feel that the new generation will not allow that to happen again. Another thing that I might have against the Germans, that they did not put a lot of emphasis on catching their war criminals. And when I see Germans, Nazis, big Nazis in South America, living the life of Riley, and not making any secrets about them being Germans you know, and having this memorable time by having all kinds of gala affairs, portraying their swastikas and their Nazi uniforms and so on you know. If this is allowed, and the German government is going along with this, that's what I have against them. They could be doing something about it.

SL: Have you at any time received restitution?

HG: Yes, I received $1200. That was way back in New York, when I arrived in New York, when Germany started giving out restitution. So by the time we had a private lawyer, a whole group of us you know, by the time he collected the money, what I got I think was about six or seven hundred dollars and that was all.

SL: Have you ever returned to Poland?

HG: No, I didn't.

SL: Do you have any desire to?

HG: Well, yes, I would like to see my hometown before I die. Only once. And only out of curiosity to see what happened, how it is today, how it differs from yesterday to today, that's all.

SL: Have you ever been to Israel?

HG: No. I would love to go there.

SL: Do you think it's easier for you to talk about your experiences now than it may have been five years ago?

HG: Absolutely.

SL: Why so?

HG: I don't know. But because I am, I got into speaking out on my experiences two years ago, I feel every day that I speak about it, easier and easier. It was very painful right after the war. I did have a lot of nightmares and it went on for years. I never told anybody. I kept it inside. And I feel much better now speaking up about it than when I kept it inside of me. There was something that was holding me back, and I'm very happy that it did come out.

SL: How do you feel about the increasing awareness in this country concerning the Holocaust?

HG: How do I feel about it? I feel great.

SL: How do you feel about the fact that part of the funding for this project came from the federal government?

HG: Well, that's one project that I think is well worth the money that they're spending on. Because it makes people aware of what happened. And I think it's going to be beneficial for people, where sometimes I see some of the programs that they fund that there's nothing absolutely for the masses to gain from. I think this is fantastic!

SL: Why do you feel that it is important to participate in an oral history project such as this on the Holocaust?

HG: Because I feel that if you speak up about it and you make people aware of what happened, it might not ever happen again. Because I got a feeling, the way the world is going, and it's going towards destruction, that a thing like that can happen again. And therefore, I wish that every Holocaust survivor should speak out and tell their story. I know some of them can't and won't, but I wish that a lot of them would like I am doing, to make people aware. And like I told you before, I'll speak to anybody and tell

my story to anybody time and time again. I feel the more we speak about it, the less chance it is for it to happen again.

SL: Is there anything additional you'd like to contribute that we didn't touch on?

HG: Well, I could sit with you here for a month and talk about it and still wouldn't tell you my whole story. But I think that we touched on the important parts. You have the outline of my story, of what happened, and I'm satisfied. And I cannot think of anything right now. Maybe later on it will come to me, and it will be too late. But that's what happens.

SL: I want to thank you very much for your willingness to share the information. I feel of course, I wouldn't be doing this if I didn't feel it were very important, but I'm glad that you realize the importance of it, too. Thank you very much.

HG: Well, I thank you.

END OF TAPE 7, SIDE 1

END OF TRANSCRIPT