

## Fred Platner: Oral History Transcript

www.wisconsinhistory.org/HolocaustSurvivors/Platner.asp

**Name:** Fred Platner (1917–1988)

**Birth Place:** Amsterdam, Holland

**Arrived in Wisconsin:** 1951, Madison

**Project Name:** Oral Histories: Wisconsin Survivors of the Holocaust



Fred Platner

**Biography:** Fred Platner was born in Amsterdam, Holland, on August 4, 1917. His family moved during his childhood to Chemnitz, Germany, and later to Bielsko-Biala, Poland. The latter city was one of the first to be invaded by the German army in September 1939. Fred was assigned to forced labor but escaped and found his way to the Russian lines. In late 1940, he and other ex-Poles were arrested by Soviet authorities and shipped to Siberia.

Fred spent nearly a year in a Siberian labor camp until the Germans attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941. After traveling for a year in Russia, Fred arrived in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, in Central Asia. He worked as a truck driver for a Russian army camp until the end of hostilities in Europe in 1945.

After the war, he worked in displaced persons camps between 1947 and 1950 in Austria and Germany. Before leaving for the United States, Fred returned to Poland as well as to his hometown in Germany.

He found only a handful of surviving relatives and a cold reception by former friends.

In late 1951, Fred and his wife, Ruth von Lange, settled in Madison, Wisconsin. The next year they relocated to Wausau, where he rose to become vice president of the Wausau Steel Corporation. The Platners had three daughters and divorced in 1974. Fred died in 1988.



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

### Tape 1, Side 1

- Family background
- Hard times in Chemnitz, Germany
- Childhood in Chemnitz during the 1920s

### Tape 1, Side 2

- Recollections of Fred's extended family
- Jewish community in Chemnitz
- Comparing religious services in Germany and Wisconsin

#### Tape 2, Side 1

- Family moves to Bielsko-Biala, Poland, 1937
- Travels in Czechoslovakia and Poland, 1937-1938
- Family's religious practices, 1930s

#### Tape 2, Side 2

- Fred's secular education
- Anti-Semitism in Germany and Poland
- He identifies more strongly as a Jew than with any nationality

#### Tape 3, Side 1

- Recalling the rise of the Nazi Party during the 1930s
- His reaction to the Nuremberg laws and other anti-Semitic measures
- Knowledge of early concentration camps and the desire to emigrate

#### Tape 3, Side 2

- 1936 Olympics
- Outbreak of war, September 1939
- Assignment to forced labor near the Russian border

#### Tape 4, Side 1

- Fred escapes and takes refuge among Russians, 1940
- Refugee life in Lwow (Lviv), Ukraine
- Shipped to Siberia, late 1940

#### Tape 4, Side 2

- Conditions in Siberian forced labor camp
- Fred is injured and relieved of work
- Release from Siberian labor camp, July 1941

#### Tape 5, Side 1

- Religious life in the Siberian camp
- Fred travels to Bashkiria and Uzbekistan
- Settling in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 1942

#### Tape 5, Side 2

- Life and work in Tashkent
- Friends among Russian Army officers
- Contacts within Soviet secret police

#### Tape 6, Side 1

- Fred leaves Tashkent, spring 1945
- Searching for surviving relatives in Poland and Germany
- Working at displaced persons camps, 1945-1947

#### Tape 6, Side 2

- More about displaced persons camps in Steyr, Hamburg, and Bergen-Belsen
- Work, social, and religious life in displaced persons camps
- Returning to Chemnitz, Germany, after the war

#### Tape 7, Side 1

- Fred leaves Hamburg for the U.S., December 1951
- Trip sponsored by Madison Jewish Welfare Committee
- Early friends and kindnesses in Madison, Wisconsin

#### Tape 7, Side 2

- Friendship with Rabbi Swarsensky
- First job as a delivery driver
- Fred starts his own business

#### Tape 8, Side 1

- Business affairs in Madison, 1952
- Fred experiences no anti-Semitism in Madison
- Family moves to Wausau, Wisconsin

#### Tape 8, Side 2

- First months in Wausau, 1952-1953
- Fred's early business affairs in Wausau
- Accepting a position at Wausau Steel

#### Tape 9, Side 1

- Jewish community in Wausau
- Anti-Semitism in Wausau
- Fred's children and grandchildren

#### Tape 9, Side 2

- Family life and parenting
- Children's friends and social life
- Thoughts on challenges facing young Americans

#### Tape 10, Side 1

- Attitudes of American Jews and non-Jews toward the Holocaust
- Feelings about intermarriage, incidents of anti-Semitism
- His family's religious life and education in Wausau

#### Tape 10, Side 2

- Reactions to media depictions of the Holocaust
- Thoughts on American culture and politics
- Feelings about neo-Nazi demonstrations in the U.S.

#### Tape 11, Side 1

- Reflections on current refugees in U.S.
- Thoughts on anti-Semitism in the U.S.
- Importance of educating people about the Holocaust

## About the

### Interview Process:

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The interview was conducted by archivist Jean Loeb Lettofsky on October 1, 2, and 22, 1980. The three sessions totaled more than nine hours.

Fred described his childhood and his unusual experiences in the Soviet Union in graphic detail. Early in the interview he was overcome with emotion. He collected himself, and later in the interview he speaks with ease and great animation.

## Audio and Transcript Details:

### Interview Dates

- Oct 1, 1980; Oct 2, 1980; Oct 22, 1980

### Interview Location

- Platner home, Wausau, Wisconsin and a nearby hotel

### Interviewer

- Archivist Jean Loeb Lettofsky

### Original Sound Recording Format

- 10 qty. 60-minute audio cassette tapes

### Length of Interviews

- 3 interviews, total approximately 10 hours

### Transcript Length

- 221 pages

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## Transcript

The following transcript is from the collections of the Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. It is an unedited, firsthand account of the Nazi persecution of the Jews before and during World War II. Portions of this interview may not be suitable for younger or more sensitive audiences. It is unlawful to republish this text without written permission from the Wisconsin Historical Society, except for nonprofit educational use.

### Key

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JL Jean Loeb Lettovsky, Wisconsin Historical Society archivist  
FP Fred Platner, Holocaust survivor

#### TAPE 1, SIDE 1

JL: Let's begin with your family background and your date and place of birth, names of your parents, their dates and places of birth and, if possible, names of grandparents and dates and places of birth.

FP: Okay. All I can give you is my date. I don't know my parents' birthdates or my grandparents'. I was born on August 4, 1917, in Amsterdam, which is Holland. That's all I know.

JL: What were your parents' names?

FP: My parents names? My father's name was Moses or Moishe, and my mother's name Miriam. My mother's name, maiden name was Wolf.

JL: And the grandparents?

FP: And my grandparents, I never met my grandparents. I imagine their name was Wolf on my mother's side and my father's side was Platner. My father actually was a khasid.<sup>1</sup> He came from Bochnia, [Poland], that I know. My mother came from Wishnitze, in Poland.

JL: That's where they were both born, in Bochnia?

FP: Yes.

JL: Do you happen to know where your grandparents were born?

FP: No, I don't.

JL: Do you have – you said you did not know the grandparents, neither side?

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<sup>1</sup> A Hasid.

FP: No, neither side.

JL: Do you have any special recollections of some good things that happened with your parents, type of relationship you had with your parents? Can you describe it?

FP: We had a very good relationship with our parents. In particular, I had better relationship with my mother than with my father, but I imagine this seems to be normal with boys. My parents were Orthodox in a way, but also that kind of liberal in their thinking. So we used to do a lot of things together with my parents, just like being together on weekends and spending a lot of time with them, sitting with them around tables and have a discussion, for instance. Not only we have our own -- my brothers around, but we always had visitors, especially on Shabbes<sup>2</sup> and weekends and also on holidays. There was never in our house just the family. There was always somebody there. There was the mishpokhe,<sup>3</sup> family or some friends. And so we were allowed to speak up say what we thought and we had a long discussion going. And also the relationship, which I think was so nice with our parents, is that we all had a very close feeling, being a close feeling, a feeling of being together and doing things together and being able to express ourselves. The times that when I think back today, I wonder what has happened to family life, since in my family — even though today with my family I have a very close relationship with my children, and keep the communication always open — but I, comparatively to what I remember used to be, still there's no comparison. It might surely be the reason. For at that time we had no cause to travel around, no airplanes to fly away which we all have today. And so it becomes you live farther away as far as distances and we don't see each other so much that we talk by phone or you write a letter and maybe once a year you see each other. It's not the same thing, you know. It's different. My father, you know, was not -- I know my father — when you have so many boys, you know, at times you get aggravated. You reach out, and having so many boys, we did a lot of things, break things around, tear things down. So my father used to once in a while get very angry, and the first one who came close to him would get the

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<sup>2</sup> Yiddish for 'Sabbath'.

<sup>3</sup> Yiddish for 'family'.

necessary punishment. But this is, as I say, we were you know -- amazingly that we as children care very much about our parents. When we became of age, fourteen or fifteen, and my parents never had a vacation before, we told our parents they have to go away on vacation and we, I remember we took over the business. I was fourteen years old and my oldest brother was sixteen, the other one is fifteen and I stopped skipping school to stay at home to work so they could go on a vacation, we just made them go on vacation. Then also we had to go visit them on vacation, you know. They said, "You have to come and see us, seeing that we're going away for three weeks." But it was some kind of a really nice, neat relationship, that everybody cared for everyone — your parents cared for children, the children care for the parents, which I find not anymore today. I think all of it must be that we are such a moving generation. Everything and everybody can move any place by yourself, you fly or you travel and you go away, and this we didn't have. So you stuck more home and they had a nice little family relationship at that time.

JL: You said that you took over the business. What was the business?

FP: My father was in the, what do you call it -- junk business. Just like we have now. Except in handling steel but he only had scrap, mostly textile stuff. We all had to help, especially in the 1930s, depression time when things were really tough. I remember that my mother, whatever she had in jewelry, she would take it away to the pawn house and get some money so she could feed us. Margarine, at that time, nobody thought about margarine and it was below the — you would eat butter but you couldn't afford anything else, so bread and margarine was a very good deal. So we had potatoes and some shmaltz herring that you could hang up in the middle of the room and everybody look at it. But in the 1930s, it was really tough and the only way we could do it — we have all the help. We all went out. I worked very young, I worked when I was thirteen years old, and I didn't mind at all. Since actually, I think it did me some good. If I look back I think what I had to go through later in my years, I was somehow prepared to take things on my own, you know, and be able to go through life. Maybe easier than other people who had it maybe easy and didn't have to go through this kind of tough work and trying to push your parents to go on

vacation, take over business place and work hard, and become more responsible. I know that some of my friends who did not have to go through this, when it came, to run away from home and be under pressure, there was not a one who really fell on the wayside. They could not take it emotionally, you know, the distress and those other — losing the beautiful home and the beautiful services and getting their food in the bed or something, your coffee. So I believe this is truly a part of it which helped me going through this period of Nazi time and running around and being in camps and whatever. Because I think I was mentally and physically better prepared to take punishment.

JL: By the way, did your mother help in the business?

FP: No. My mother was the busiest woman I ever seen in my life and just prepared food for such a big family. She was working not only eight hours, I think she was working twenty-four hours a day. There was never an end to it. We were all boys and the boys were rough, you know. They couldn't afford to buy new clothes all the time so she had to fix all this stuff, you know, sew on the buttons, fix the pants and the shirts and wash and laundry. It isn't like it is today, machines you didn't know. It was washing by hand the laundry. I remember the first machine my mother got was a washing machine, the first one which came out, which was a wooden washing machine with electric motor in it.

JL: What year was that?

FP: That must have been in the 1930s sometimes. But I remember, the first washing machine they could afford to buy, they bought it. I always remember my mother, constantly [washing] I mean. There was washing just about every day, only by hand. We had a special washhouse. All you did in there was wash the laundry. Big kettle, you know, with fire underneath, you would boil the laundry, and wash it and soak it. It was a big process, of doing laundry. We used to help my mother with laundry. She couldn't do it herself. We have good experience. And we used to have help at times in the house. My mother used to have help in the house. But not all the time, when we could afford we would have somebody to help her with the cooking and cleaning and washing dishes and whatever, you know. But when times were rough, we couldn't afford it, so she had to do herself, and we all had to pitch in. I look at things today, dishes: I

go and eat and everything on one plate. At that time, that didn't exist in Europe, you know. Everything had a separate plate, you know. You had about five, six different dishes. In Jewish houses, particularly when it comes to Shabbes, you have a vorspeise<sup>4</sup> and you have soup and then you have vegetables and you have chicken, and other meat, and everything had to be on a separate plate, you know. So everybody had five, six, seven plates. They had compote, a glass of tea afterwards, so you can imagine when you have ten or twelve people around the table you're talking about a lot of dishes, plus utensils for cooking. So it was mountains and mountains of dishes, it's like being a big restaurant and washing dishes. I was really amazed when I came to this country and I remember the first time I was invited to a party and everybody took a plate and then they picked up everything on one plate — fish and pickles and Jell-O and everything on one plate. I thought that I'm going to throw up, seeing all this mixed food on one plate [laughs]. I guess you get used to it.

JL: You've talked a lot about your big family. How many were there?

FP: Eight brothers, and my parents is ten, and if somebody used to work in the house, we had eleven. Plus we always had guests, at least two or three and sometimes four people sitting at a table. So we really had a large table to sit down and eat. And, as I say, every time on weekdays we also had people. On the weekdays, everybody came, some came earlier, some later, except at night, so somehow it worked out. People came Shabbes, like Friday night, and Shabbes noon and Sundays everybody were home and any yontef,<sup>5</sup> Sukkos<sup>6</sup> or Shvues<sup>7</sup> or Pesach or whatever, Rosh Hashanah, you know, any yontef, you know, there were lots of people there who sat and eat. I remember Pesach used to come, my mother used to go out and buy eggs, not by the dozens, you, but she bought it in cases, in big wooden crates, a few hundred [at] a time. And a crate of oranges and a crate of this — all bought in big amounts. You go out to the market and buy it. You don't buy in a store. We had to take a truck and pick it all up and bring it

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<sup>4</sup> German for appetizer.

<sup>5</sup> Yiddish for holiday.

<sup>6</sup> Yiddish for the holiday known in Hebrew as Sukkoth.

<sup>7</sup> Yiddish for the holiday known in Hebrew as Shabuoth.

in. You know you have so many -- what could we eat on Pesach? Boiled eggs were on the stove all the time, twenty-four hours a day, just to feed us hungry boys. When I look back, I can't understand how my mother managed to do all this kind of work and prepare food. We're not [just] talking about preparing food. So many different types of foods you know. You keep on going. I just can't understand it. Even looking back today I -- people talk about being in a house and then cooking, preparing food. It's nothing compared what it used to be. Everything had to be done from scratch. No cans, no frozen food or nothing, everything is there, you start from scratch and prepare it, and cook it, and that's what you have to eat.

JL: I want to tax your memory. Can you tell me the names of all your brothers and their dates and places of birth?

FP: No, I can't. I know a few of them, you know. My oldest brother is Pinchas, or Paul. He was born in 1915. And sometimes in February. I don't know what date. He passed away in concentration camp. My next brother is Leo, and he lives in Israel. And he was born September 1, 1916 [inaudible]. Then comes myself. You want my date in there too? We have that, you don't need it. Then after this comes Isi [Izidore], called Itsrek. He was born 1919, September 15, I believe. He's alive and he lives in Germany, in Hanover. Then comes Noach [Nathan], who does not live anymore. And he was born, let's see, two years latter in 1921. I don't know the exact date. He is not alive anymore. Then comes Henry, which is Heinie. And wait a second that's a mistake. Heinie was [inaudible], that was Noach. Noach was born after, let's see, Noach...anyway it was Noach it wasn't Heinie, Heinie is younger. Heinie was born in -- wait I made a mistake the one that is Heinie is Noach, then comes Heinie.

JL: So Heinie is not alive anymore?

FP: Noach is not alive anymore. Heinie is. Noach...Heinie is living in Israel. Heinie was born in 1927 and he's in Israel. Then I have the youngest one, which came very late, is Max who was born about ten years later, must be 1937, no it can't be lets see I was -- must have been 1936, and he isn't alive. It was in concentration camp that this occurred. He was the first child that she lost. Did I miss any?

JL: I think we've got them all.

FP: Got them all, okay [laughs].

JL: You talked about working together in business with your brothers and doing things at home. Do you have any other special recollections, special things that you did with your brothers?

FP: We did belong to a Zionist youth organization, you know. We used to go out to meetings and go out for hikes and have meetings, it was Mizrahi.<sup>8</sup> Recollections about my parents you mean?

JL: Brothers.

FP: Even though we had fights once in a while, but we had very good times since we used to do all those things together, as brothers do. As I said, we used to belong to the same organization. We used to go out and work for Kerenkayemet<sup>9</sup> and collect money for this. We spent most of our free time actually together. Depends on different ages, you know. My older brother used together, and we spent a lot of time arguing or discussing things and everybody had a little bit different opinion and this is just typified, really, the Jewish life. Everybody knows better than the other one. But it was all done in a nice way. We did not really become angry. We discussed and get angry for a while and then everything was fine again.

JL: For example?

FP: We even used to dance together. We had no girls so we used to learn how to dance together at home. That was fun. We also used to play all kinds of games. We used to have a circus of our own at our house. See in our house we had a backyard where our father had the business and then farther back we had a garden, which was like a terrace, and we were allowed to have our own circus there. So we could spend our free time, especially the summer when there was no school, preparing ourselves for operating the circus. We'd go out and sell tickets so we'd make some money to buy candies for a penny or two and everybody we could invite, so our Gentile friends, we were all workers, and some of them we accepted into help us in circus work with us if they were good enough to perform and do some tricks. And then

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<sup>8</sup> A Zionist youth group.

<sup>9</sup> The Jewish National Fund.

also our neighbors would invite all the families to come and sell them tickets and we used to have very good shows there. I know that I must have been about six years old when I tried to perform, to spit fire out of my mouth. And some older boy showed me how to do it. Of course, this was dangerous. All I had was a stick and I had some cotton turn around on top of this stick and they put some alcohol on there see. So we would light it up and then I would take some alcohol in my mouth, you know, and just come out and then somebody would say what I would be doing — "Here comes [sounds like "Feiveldich"]," and so I would blow alcohol on the fire and there would come a big flame out of my mouth. I was such a big sensation when I did it, I got so excited that I made in my pants. I got all wet, just from the excitement [laughs]. I'll never forget it. There I was standing, and all of my parents and all those people, my neighbors, and I was standing there looking at myself. I was so embarrassed [laughs]. But it didn't take long and we took it away. I know that then it got out of style. Everybody had seen our show and nobody wanted to buy tickets anymore since you couldn't go on to something new. So my parents said, "What are you going to do now?" I said, "Well, we're going to have a theater." They said, "All right, so you have to find somebody who can teach you what to say and how to perform." So we had one older person who came. He about twenty -eight, I call him older person. He was helping us to put up a stage, with some wooden boards and a little horse underneath and we put up a little frame and tried to put up some drapes in front, so we could open up. But everything was open otherwise. So we started to perform you know. We boys had the most wonderful voices. You know, sing[ing voices]. We didn't know how to sing, but you know, his parents don't tell him that. Everything we did was a great thing and wonderful. We were performing, you know, and I remember one day I was up there in the front stage, you know, and the whole thing collapsed. The whole stage. I was sliding down on the stage and right on my parents' lap and that finished that one. Said "No more. No more shows. Now you're going to build up a good stage, not like this [laughs]." We did a lot of those things, which kept us busy when we had nothing else to do, you know. It's really nice. We had really good times, you know, enjoying ourselves. My father was a person who didn't believe that you can to have any — sometime when we go to movies, we kids on Sundays, or

buy some candies. We were allowed only so much for candies a week, a little tiny allowance you know. But we didn't come we didn't come up with the money for movies and so on, that's when we used to have the circus and theater. When we got out of this then we had to go to my father and said, "You have to help us." He always had some kind of a job available for us. "Well, first you have to do this or do this." I'll never forget that every Sunday when we didn't have no shows anymore, I'd talk to my father and said, "Now, give us money to go." And when he had nothing else to think about what to do, he would say "Comb my hair," and he had no hair. He was bald. Or, "Tickle my feet" or something [laughs]. We'd have to scrub the floors, so [he would say] "Scrub the floors" or something. He always found something. But how much can you find? So one Sunday we came to him and he said, "Let's see, I'd like to have some goat milk." Listen, what the hell? Is he meshuggenah? He wants goat's milk? Where am I going to get goat milk from? "Bring me that goat milk I give you money for the movies." So our neighbors in the backyard, the other neighbor had a goat there and we got in the corner and this is "Oh! You know they have a goat over there. Let's go over there. We get some milk from the goat." The three of us ran up there, myself and Leo and the oldest one, Pinchas, you know, climbed over the fence, and then we try to get some milk. He said to me, "You go and milk the goat." My older brother was holding the goat on the front, you know, and then the other one on the back on the tail and the poor goat. [sounds like "Rachmon"] has made so much noise I couldn't get no milk out of it. So the neighbor lady heard it and she came running up and from far away she's started yelling at us and we all got scared, you know, and you jump over the fence and tore up our clothes and fell down. Our garden was in terraces so we started rolling down the terrace, not running down but rolling down. You know, at the last terrace we're all lying flat The lady kept yelling except she was not going to see us lying flat until she finally quiet down then we went down to house. When we came into the house there's my mother standing looking at us, dirty, torn up, you know. I was even bleeding. I had scratches on the hands and she started. She said, "What are you doing? What did you do again? Look what you did to your clothes! Look at you!" We said, "Dad, he wanted us to get him goat milk so we could go to the movie." She said, "What?" She said, "What are you

doing?" Started yelling. All of a sudden she said "Ah! Better be quiet. I talk to him later when I get those kids out. Come on," she said, "I give you the money. Get out of the house." She gave us the money and went to the movies so she could have a fight with our dad [laughs]. But...

JL: I'm afraid I'm going to have to stop you turn the tape over again.

FP: Okay.

**END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1**

**TAPE 1, SIDE 2**

JL: It seems that we forgot one brother before.

FP: Okay. How much do you have? Pinchas, Leo, we have myself but we don't count this one, then we have and Isi, Izidor in Hannover that's five, then Noach, then Heinie,

JL: Is Heinie [inaudible]?

FP: Heinie yeah. We have six.

JL: Beryl?

FP: Beryl [inaudible] Leo. Let's go back and so myself and Izitch. I'm missing one, it's Beryl. Beryl is also a younger brother he comes after Heinie.

JL: We have Max?

FP: We have Max, yeah. I know. And there's one missing there somewhere. There's Pinchas, and there's Leo, and then come I, then come Itzak, then comes Max, okay.

JL: Then Heinrich and Noach and Beryl.

JL: When was Beryl born?

FP: Beryl must have been born, let's see in 1917 it's Itzak, the other one was 1920, must be in 1923 was Beryl's. [Inaudible.]

JL: 1923. What happened to him?

FP: He died in concentration camp. The youngest ones are the ones that are first one to go. Actually my mother. Actually, the way I found out is afterwards when I met people who came out of concentration camp who told me what had happened to my family and that the younger children were taken away from my mother and thrown in a fire which I imagine must have been one of the most toughest things to see for a mother. And my one brother, who lives in Israel, which is Heinie, who has been with his brother... with his mother in concentration camp. Who has seen all those things, who was the oldest of them except for Pinchas, who was the older, but he was separate from them. Who my mother saved by giving him her

working card in the morning. They had an Appell<sup>10</sup> and telling him to stand on his toes. This is when my mother went to the gas chambers. And he stayed alive. And he went to work. You see, he did not have a working card, you see, in other words was too young. He stayed alive and, you can imagine, the mental, the emotional problem he developed, feeling guilty that he is alive and his mother is dead. When I came the first time to Israel and I saw him the first time after he was back out of concentration camp and now he had settled in Israel and I hadn't seen him since 1939 and that was the first time I came to Israel, I believe it was in 1954. So I mean I hadn't seen him for fifteen-some years. And he had had already two operations on his stomach for ulcers. And they had already put in him some other stomach to able to live and chew and eat. He at that time was married, he's still married, and his wife used to talked to me that I should at least talk to him maybe he will talk to me, then he always used to speak about the brother he loves most, which was me, it's supposed to be me. I got a chance to sit together with him and talk to him and told him, "Tell me what happened in concentration camp." He said, "No, I don't talk about it." I told him, "I know, I heard about from other people, and if you don't talk, I will talk. I will tell you what happened. I think you can't have any guilt feeling, that there's no way you could know. Nor does it guarantee that Mother would have been alive if he wouldn't have taken her card. Besides, you did not know what was going on. Nobody knew." I said, "That's just the way I imagine it's supposed to be and that's the way maybe also Mother wanted it to be. I'm sure that after what she went through and saw the young children be burned in fire, she wouldn't be able to accept a long time and keep on going. At least she tried to save you, the only child she could save, you know, and she wanted you to be alive and healthy and safe, not to be a cripple for life you know. That wasn't her idea. She wanted you to save your life, not to go around and have operation after operation. You have now a young family, you have two children. That's a new life, you know, so you must — I know I can talk to you and it's hard to forget things like this and I myself have my problems forgetting things and I have ulcers. But to a point, I tried to keep on living and to make the best out, you know, of life. Just to hang on to the old things is not the answer.

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<sup>10</sup> German for roll call.

It's very hard for your family to live with you, too. I mean don't forget you have a family. They all love you and they want you to be alive and healthy so you can see your children growing up and have naches<sup>11</sup> and enjoy them. But if you don't, your not going to see them growing up. So what do you achieve?" And he said -- we both started crying. I'm going to cry now, but that was very emotional [sighs] and sometimes it's good to cry [sighs], to get it out. [Sobs] Anyway, he can never forget it, it's impossible. As much as you try, not to forget it, but much as you try to live and tell yourself, you know, what's past is past and you have to keep on living. And it's really hard [sobs]. Dreams, nightmares, it seems never to end [sighs].

JL: Would you like to stop for a while?

FP: Yeah, I think. [Pause in interview.]

JL: Did you have relatives living nearby you as a child?

FP: Well, when they were living in Germany in Chemnitz, yes, we had quite a bit of our family living there. So it seemed, too, that a family member would follow to the cities where other families were living and anybody [who] came into this country, especially from Poland, would come first mostly to our place to start out. And also families who moved there like we had in Chemnitz, I had an uncle and aunt and they had three children. Their name was Petzenbaum.

JL: Whose side were they?

FP: That is from my mother's side, was a sister of my mother. But she might have married a Petzenbaum, so she was a Wolf. They're all, except for one who lives now in New York who went to concentration camp, but the rest of them were all passed in concentration camp and never came out. Then we had an aunt living with us. Her name was [Sotje] Hollaender and her husband had passed away and she had three children. She actually was living, after her husband passed away, in our house.

JL: She related at all to you?

FP: She's a sister of my mother.

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<sup>11</sup> Hebrew and Yiddish for 'joy'.

JL: She's not related to Deutschkron<sup>12</sup> in any way?

FP: No, no, no.

JL: Her maiden name, her stepfather's name was Hollaender?

FP: Her stepfather? I didn't know that. Maybe who knows. You never know. Her name was Hollaender from [sounds like "Hazsland"] and she was married twice and she had some children from Markuszover, which luckily she...

JL: Children from where?

FP: From her other husband. His name was Markuszover. One husband died then she married again, and her husband died, too, so she had some kids were Hollaenders and some were Markuszovers. She was very fortunate. She got out from Germany. She was in concentration camp but she was under American citizen. Somehow, her oldest son, who was living in Holland at that time, got her papers as American citizen and they left Germany as an American citizen. I don't know what they had to pay for that. She ended up going to Israel at that time with the rest of her family and this is why her family, except for her, she passed away, and the older son who used to live in Holland, also passed away in the meantime, but she was also able when the war came to Holland to go away to the Holland colonies and he came back after the war and went back in the business and his wife still lives in Amsterdam today. Then also we have in Chemnitz many Jewish friends, you know. Not relatives but friends. Then I had an uncle whose name was Wolf which was a brother of my mother. He came later on, who married. He left Germany in 1933. He went to Israel very early, was the first one to leave. His wife got beaten up by some Nazis and he did and they immediately left for Israel. Had a tough time there. They're still alive in Israel, of course they're very old, and every time I go there it's the first time I see them and I still write once in a while letters to them, you know. It's very nice. Amazingly, my uncle, who is Azar Moishe, still goes out — he has a little business there — he goes out every day and he must be about at least seventy-eight and does his things and comes home. This is one reason I'd like to go to Israel. My family, whatever's left over is in

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<sup>12</sup> Eva Deutschkron, a survivor living in Madison who was also interviewed.

Israel except for my brother in Germany. Then we also had a cousin who was a Wolf too who came over from the Wolf family and he came very late to Germany and he started going into business and even this cousin, he passed away, too, now.

JL: Okay, now how long had the family been residing in Germany? Or was it originally from Poland?

FP: Originally we are from Poland, from [sounds like "Belicha"]. As far as I know, I came to Germany with my parents in 1919 and lived in Germany until I left, which was by the end of 1936, and then kept on moving.

JL: What made your family first of all go to Holland and then to Germany?

FP: As far as I could find out and I know, is that my father didn't want to fight in the war and he left to Holland.

JL: World War I?

FP: World War I, yes. Although I know [sounds like "he had been"] drafted. So he run away and went to Holland. That's why I was born there in 1917.

JL: How long was the family in Holland?

FP: I imagine for two years three years.

JL: What was the reason for going to Chemnitz?

FP: Since there was a family in Chemnitz, who moved to Chemnitz, so they moved to Chemnitz to be together with the family.

JL: Was there a feeling of going back to their homeland?

FP: No. I believe at that time there was a more a mix-up [inaudible] down there. It changed hands, there was Austria and then on to Poland, and kept going back and forth and I imagine the memories must have been of another family there and they moved there to be together with the other family.

JL: So who was left in Krakow? Was anyone left in Krakow?

FP: They had family in Poland, yes. I know that since there's a Platner who used to lived in [sounds like "Bielchka"] who was an uncle and my father had cousins there. Which is still -- one lives in Israel now, a

Platner, and I have met those when I came to Poland, you know, in 1938 and 1939. My mother had a brother living in Krakow, a Wolf. An aunt and two children and the whole family disappeared there, too.

JL: So that is indeed where they did go to Holland from.

FP: Yes, right.

JL: Did you have any family or close friends in the United State prior to the war?

FP: No.

JL: We did talk quite a bit about your immediate family life in Chemnitz. Could you tell me a bit about your immediate community surroundings in Chemnitz?

FP: In Chemnitz?

JL: Yes. I assume that's where most of your memories are from as a child.

FP: Well, the community surroundings...

JL: Physical surrounding, what it looked like, the types of friends you had.

FP: I had a lot of friends. Besides having my Jewish friends and belong to organization, that's right there, also I had many Gentile friends which whom I grew up, all our neighbors, did all kinds of things with them growing up, going for walks and playing games. You had very friendly neighbors which were living there, Gentile neighbors, in our neighborhood.

JL: You had a good relationship with them?

FP: We had very good relationship with all our neighbors, yes. Never any problems. The same people used to come to us and watch our small circus and theater and they were very happy to pay their couple pennies to see us. We made even very good relationship with police department, I know that. Used to come in, stop in, and say hello. I know used to come in special on Pesach since they liked to have that kosher wine and the matzo. So the police department was one thing who would pick up matzos and buy them from us. They wanted to have some of the kosher wine and some matzo. So matzo was one big thing. All our friends got matzo on Pesach. It was like a tradition [laughs].

JL: The non-Jews?

FP: Non-Jews, yes. So, no, we had very very good relationship with all our Gentile neighborhood. There was also a lot of Jewish people in town. It was a Jewish community and we had — I did belong to a more Orthodox shul,<sup>13</sup> but they had a big synagogue there which people, the German Jews mostly, belonged to. There was kind of division between the Polish and the German Jews, which I didn't feel at all as a boy but I heard about it. So that the German Jews in Germany — it was not that they were not Reformed at all, it was religious synagogue except they were more modern maybe than the Polish Jewish people who came to our shul.

JL: I'm sorry I misunderstood. Which one did your family belong to?

FP: To the Orthodox.

JL: Which was?

FP: Was mostly Polish people. There were some German Jews there, very few, most of them were Polish Jews. Which thinking about it today, I used to go to both. Once in a while I used to go to synagogue but mostly I on services I would go to Polish shul. I liked the Polish shul, but maybe I grew up this way. But that's really not the reason. The more I think back about it, the feeling I got going into a shul and listen to somebody standing up there and saying the prayers, what you call a bet tfile,<sup>14</sup> he would know what he was saying. Even if you wouldn't understand the Hebrew, you still could feel it. It were something which goes from his heart and on his mind and it was there, you know. It was a complete different type of services as we have it today, particularly in Wausau. The Wausau services completely leave me cold since it's mostly English reading. We don't have a cantor. We have a girl who will sing on High Holidays a few parts, but, even those few parts are more with her singing voice and there's no feeling in there. When they come to [Une]saneh Tokeh — mi bamayin mi b'cherev<sup>15</sup> there's nothing. It's just an English reading and there's nothing there to make feeling. Growing up under the circumstances — I don't think people

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<sup>13</sup> Yiddish for synagogue.

<sup>14</sup> Yiddish or Hebrew for 'house of prayer'.

<sup>15</sup> The name of and a few words of a prayer.

understand it they say, “Oh, it's such a nice service.” I said, “Yes that's a nice service.” What am I going to say, you know? You know, it's nice to them. They read their English and but then I say, “What are you getting out of the service? What's it tell you? Most of what you have said today speaks about that you have to have compassion, you have to help your fellow man, you have to understand it, you know. You can't just think about yourself. What are we doing really? Why do we going to the services? Why do we repeat ourselves a hundred times a day and saying the same things which you don't do?” To me, that doesn't make any sense. Well, I don't know people want to be told this, but I can't help it. This is the way I am and I think it's — talking about religion, you know, I will have always my religion. I'm Jewish, I'm going to be Jewish, and I just feel there isn't enough done. But the meaning of religion, that's passed by. It's more becoming you belong and you belong socially and we go to all kind of social events, whatever happens, you know, and that's what people want. The religious purpose, the religious feeling [inaudible], what religion means, is not there. I imagine that's true with most of the religions. It doesn't make a difference what religions you take but I always feel that the Jewish religion, having gone through so much in many lifetimes, pogroms and Holocaust, and even today with the state of Israel, I feel the Jewish people have a duty to at least be religious, what I call religion. Have religious feelings, what it tells us to do. I believe that everyone has a duty as long you're alive to fulfill those duties as far as you can. Or part of the duties, but just to be associated, to be a member of a congregation, to me that doesn't mean nothing and this is why I fail and whenever I fail I feel kind of left out. I feel like, “Why is only me?” you know “Why do I have to tell that to you?”

JL: There's no one else at all?

FP: I don't know, there might be some, there might be more, but I'm saying in Wausau I don't know how many more there are. I don't think there's no one else, but being in Wausau I sometimes have that feeling that — you know, whatever it is, I'm in a very, very minority and so there's some people who feel like there's no question about it. There better be otherwise we'll just give up completely.

JL: I'm afraid this is ending again.

FP: Okay.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 2

## TAPE 2, SIDE 1

JL: On the pre-interview you told me that you moved to several other cities before the beginning of the war.

Could you tell me about them and the dates when you were there, what you did there?

FP: You mean after I came back after the war?

JL: No, after you left Chemnitz.

FP: Oh, when I left Chemnitz, okay. I left Germany -- first of all, we tried to get out of Germany. We tried to get somewhere to go so we could — there was no place. So as things got more tougher, we know we had to leave Germany. I left for Yugoslavia. The reason I went to Yugoslavia, somebody said in Yugoslavia there's a way that you can get for little money papers on the black market to bring your whole family there. They can live there. Now, I imagine Yugoslavia wasn't the best place to pick but you had to pick some place and there was no place else where to go. We did not want to go to Poland. So I went to Yugoslavia. And I went to Zagreb and I stayed there for several weeks. I made connection with other Jewish people who were over there and a few other people who can buy you papers and I had meetings with those. But the price they wanted for our whole family, for each person, was so high that there was no way we could afford to do those things.

JL: When was that?

FP: That was in 1937. Okay, now I stayed there for several weeks and until I received a phone call from my older brother, from Czechoslovakia. He was in Karlsbad. He had left Germany, too. The reason he had left, the secret service of Germany were looking for him and he run away and he was afraid that they would start looking for him. They must have been looking for a reason and he went to Karlsbad. We used to go to Karlsbad quite often since it isn't far away from Chemnitz, it's just about fifty miles across the border. He called me up, he said to me, "I'm in Karlsbad." I didn't know. He says, "Yes, I'm in Karlsbad and I want you to come here to Karlsbad since I'm afraid the Germans who are looking for me are going to come and pick me up and I want to have somebody be with me to attack [with] me." So immediately I went from there to Karlsbad. There I stayed with my brother for a while in Karlsbad and the Germans

used to go there and pick up people and take them back over the border to Germany. But my parents still were at that time in Germany, so were the rest of my brothers. And I remember being in Karlsbad, being in a place where we always used to eat, it was a kosher place, and a phone call came asking for my brother. On the phone was my mother and she was telling my brother to come home, that she would be very, very sick, and he should come back home. But the way she was saying it — she was crying on the phone — but what happened at that time is that the Nazis, the secret service, was in the house and they made her call up and tell him that she was very, very sick. If she wouldn't do it, then the rest of the family would be taken away so he would come back. My brother knew right away the tricks of the Germans. He said "I 'm not coming back." You know "Not only do I [not] come back but," he said, "I'm leaving Karlsbad and going to Belgium," you know. He said, "I fell in love with a girl and I'm going to get married in Belgium." Mother repeated constantly, "But I'm so sick. I want you to come back." He knew that his mother wouldn't call to come back to Germany when they are looking for him, you know, it's no question about it.

JL: Why were they looking for him? What had he done?

FP: My brother at that time — the Germans, they always had — there was no reason what they are looking for, you know. They were actually saying that he took money out from Germany. He maybe did took some money out, very possible, you know. There was no proof and I don't know. I mean when I left Germany I took some money along, too. I couldn't go to a foreign country without living there, you know. The Germans once got me, too, the year before that, for buying shoes in Czechoslovakia. Because over in Czechoslovakia I bought them and I was wearing them for a couple weeks and coming across the border he asked me if I had anything to pay duty on. I said no. So then they say "Take off your shoes." I took off my shoes and I thought, "Oh, my gosh." In there says [made in] Czechoslovakia. He says, "What's this?" I said, "Oh, I forgot about it. I was wearing the shoes for two weeks, you know. I didn't think about new shoes." But, every time they found something on a Jewish fellow, so what they did, the Germans, before

they'd let me go, there would come the Secret Service and they told me to leave the country immediately or they were going to put me in jail for this.

JL: Is that still on your record?

FP: No, no. I was fighting it then. It was the year before that. And they finally took it off, you know. But I still, you know, it was still in the record after the war that at one time I was expelled from Germany for that reason.

JL: How did you know, did you go look up a record?

FP: No, after the war I tried to get some compensation after the war and then they said, "Well, you weren't in Germany. You were expelled in 1935." "Well," I said, "I was expelled but I was it was taken off later since it was ridiculous for a pair of shoes to expel me from Germany." I just forgot the time I was wearing the old shoes. Anyway, you know, in Czechoslovakia, I stayed there for a while, and I talked to the people in Czechoslovakia, and they said, "Yes," you know, "here you can bring your whole family and live here." Czechoslovakia at that time was very democratic country it was under Benesh. They said anybody who wanted to come there could stay there and live there. But the Germans made a lot of noise, said part of this Czechoslovakia is theirs and there were a lot of Germans living there and we knew very well that it's not start taking too long before the Germans finally are going to move in and that's what happened. But before the Germans moved in, my parents had moved to Poland. They left, since they are Polish citizens, and they went to Poland.

JL: When was that?

FP: That was since 1937. They went to Poland and to figure out since there's no place where to go, couldn't get any other place, I couldn't get in Czechoslovakia. Then I told them Czechoslovakia, but it was senseless to go there. Soon the Germans are going to come there and then we're going to run again. So what they did, they actually leased that business in the house to one of their competitors, you know. They couldn't sell it and the Germans wouldn't allow you to get money out, you know. We took some money out in black ways, no question about it, and we all went to Poland. But whatever the property was, the

business, he just left with somebody. He said, "You better pay us so much a month and since we can't take it out just put it in the bank account," or whatever the deal was, I don't know. But that's -- we transferred some money out. There was always ways of doing it the black way to get money out from Germany. So, then all of a sudden in Czechoslovakia, again we got a phone call and they said, "We are now in Poland." So, okay, very good. They come into Poland. So then the boys went to Poland.

JL: Where was it in Poland?

FP: Where we were in Poland? Called Bielsko-Biala. It's not far away from the German border. The reason we moved there is that you could speak still a lot of German besides Polish and it was a nice little city, industrial city. It had two little cities together, actually, they're called Bielsko-Biala. They started renting apartment and starting over again. My father started doing the same business again, textile, you know. We all were working again the same textile business. Then came the time when all Polish citizen are thrown out from Germany across the border but we already were established there. So we went to the border and picked up some of the people who came from our city and put into our house. Even some relatives from Berlin came, an uncle and aunt and their children. So it was a while you know, [with] all them sleeping on the floor, you know, until we could reestablish them or rent an apartment and let them live. This was a time also when again, I mean I was a young man then, and I used to go out to Jewish community in Bielsko-Biala. I seem always [to] have been active and trying to help get some money to collect to get those people settled and be able to rent them apartment and find them a job or whatever or get them the first few weeks so they could live, you know. The same story again — it was very, very unpopular to go out and collect money. At that time, so it is today, too. But it didn't bother me to go. We used to belong a Jewish temple there and belong to synagogues and so we met the people in the city, Jewish people, and I would go out. I'll never forget that there was one gentleman who was very wealthy who owned several factories in this town making material for clothes and weaving which was done all automatically and very good material and I would go to him and say, "My dear friend, what's going on? So many people are pushed over the border and we try to find them apartment and we try to feed them for

time being. So could you please help us until we can establish them?" So I remember that time, you know, he gave me a hundred zloty, which is maybe forty dollars or something. After two weeks or three weeks that was gone so I tried to go back there again and I came back the second time, I said, "Well, I'm really sorry but still the people aren't settled and they're still hungry and we have to feed them and we need more money." He got very angry. He said, "I just gave you the money a few weeks ago." I said, "Hang on. Listen my dear friend," I said, "I hope you never have to go out and ask somebody, and I hope that you never have to be hungry and you are thrown out of your house and start over again." I said, "I'm not asking for this. I'm only asking you for money." I said, "To whom am I going to go? Those who don't have it? I can't go to those peoples." He said, "Okay, I'll give you once more but it's the last time. Don't come and see me anymore." What can I do? Luckily, I settled most of the people and they found work and things worked out after a while. But the reason I say this is that when the war started 1939, this man had to leave all his factories and house and run away for life. I met the same man again in 1940 in Lemberg,<sup>16</sup> when I was there with the Russians and then later when they took out the Russians in the beginning. He's the man who asked me if I could not go out and help him, some few pennies, some money. He said he had nothing to eat. I looked at him and I said "I'd try whatever I can do." I said, "I've done it before, I do it again." I said, "I'm not ashamed to ask people if somebody's in need." He looked terrible. You can imagine coming out from being millionaire and going over there and have nothing but his shirt. I don't know what happened to the man. I only know I got somewhere some money, a little bit, very little money. Nobody had anything, they're all running away from the Germans [inaudible]. He was sleeping with me, I remember, several nights in one room. He said, "Where are you going to go cheap sleeping." I said, "Come in our room. We all lay on the floor. You're going to be one more." You know, I was thinking about this and what happens to people, you know, who just don't think and forget about everything. What I'm saying is the people are so selfish, they don't feel, they don't think, or don't think it can happen to them or anybody else. I looked at this particular man, who had so much dollars worth who

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<sup>16</sup> German name for Lwow, Poland.

was afraid to give a hundred dollars or fifty dollars to feed the hungry people who had been thrown out and I always thought to myself you know, "Is it going to happen to him, too?" It just happened to him, too, and this is tragedy. There were so many other people I met over there. It's amazing who had been thrown out from wealth and all of a sudden had nothing, you know. They're in bad shape, bad shape financially and emotionally. Those are the people who really fall away very fast. They just couldn't take it. People like me we do anything to stay alive — eat potato peels or do any work or everything was available you . We used to be on the black market, too, in 1940. There was nothing else to do, there were no jobs or nothing. You tried to stay alive, you do whatever you can. Used to sell Russian watches. The Russians over there they had occupied that part of Poland. I remember some people had some old watches laying around, they wouldn't work. We sold to the Russians. Yes, I should be ashamed to say it, but what the hell? You were hungry. You didn't give a damn. You take a watch that didn't work and you make with your finger on it, tick, tick, tick, in his ears, and he says, skoro.<sup>17</sup> He would give you anything. "Look, oh, oh, oh." Watches was our biggest thing. I put it in his ear and make with the fingernail and you get the money and you run. I look at those things today and I say to myself, "How can you do things like this?" But a time when you're hungry and when you're starving, and there's so many who are with you starving, and you try to help somebody, and the only one who had the money were the Russian soldiers. They had pockets full of it. You don't care, you know. It's not a matter of thinking about your sincerity or honesty or whatever it is. It's a matter of staying alive, buy a piece of bread or whatever, a potato, you know. That's completely different.

JL: Let me, I'm sorry I have to ask a mundane question again. Just let me get the dates straight here. Now you said you were in Czechoslovakia around when in 1937?

FP: Until the end of 1937.

JL: Until the end of 1937. Were you there for a year?

FP: No, no, just several weeks.

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<sup>17</sup> Russian for 'quickly'.

JL: Do you remember about when you went to Poland? At when?

FP: Again, by the end of 1937 I went to Poland. It wouldn't in 1938. 1938 is when all the Polish people got thrown out over the Polish border from Germany.

JL: Okay. Now I'd like to go on to your pre-war religious life. We talked a bit about synagogues. What kind of attendance did you put in at synagogues?

FP: Well, I put in a really regular attendance, every Shabbes. Not Friday night, since it was too far to go. Sometimes Friday nights. But every Shabbes, or Saturday, and every holiday, no question about it. Whatever holiday it was — Sukkos or Shvues or Simkhes-Toyre<sup>18</sup> or whatever, any holiday I would go to services. There was no question about it.

JL: The family?

FP: And the family too, yes. Sure, the whole family did.

JL: What about keeping traditions in the home?

FP: Well, we had a very traditional home. You would always light the candles for Friday night. Shabbes you couldn't light the candles for Friday night. It was a very traditional home in every aspect, like Yom Kippur you would shlep kapures<sup>19</sup> you know, and then for Pesach we had special dishes. After Pesach you'd put them away in the attic and then you bring them down, you know. There was no way that you could mix dishes, you know. And everything was koshered: the stove was koshered for Pesach you know, and it was strictly kosher home. There was no way you could eat butter with meat or anything like this, I mean [inaudible] [laughs] it was a strictly kosher home. Even though it was strictly kosher and it was Orthodox, my parents would respect people who were not that Orthodox. So did I, too, you know. It's not that we were very friendly with all the other people who did not believe in those religious things, but with us it was very, very important for our house to be this way. Shabbes, the morning, you would not eat. They called it

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<sup>18</sup> Yiddish name for the holiday known in Hebrew as Simhat Torah.

<sup>19</sup> Yiddish pronunciation of Hebrew Kapparot, a Yom Kippur scapegoat ceremony involving twirling a chicken around one's head while reciting an incantation, then slaughtering the chicken and giving it to the poor.

ubaysning.<sup>20</sup> You don't eat bread or butter but you eat a piece of cake with a cup of coffee, so you shouldn't eat before you have gone to shacharit.<sup>21</sup> But us young kids, my mother used to bake a lot of cakes, and who ever got up first would eat the most cake, the best cake. We didn't wait that long, but so they called it ubaysning — just eat a little bit, but we ate like young boys.

JL: As long as you don't eat bread.

FP: Yes, that's right, yes. It's different if you eat cake, yes [laughs].

JL: What type of religious education did you have?

FP: Well I used to go to Talmud Torah<sup>22</sup> which we had in town.

JL: After school?

FP: After school just about every day. I missed once in a while but just about every day until I became bar mitzvahed and then that thing just about settled. I had also on Shabbes at times in the afternoon we had a melamed<sup>23</sup> come into our house who would read with us Chumash<sup>24</sup> and make us translate the Chumash.

JL: Into German?

FP: Into German, yes. I'll never forget him, he was really a very nice old man. His name was Weiner and he used to be very strict with us, you know.

JL: All of you together, all eight of you?

FP: No, no. Different age groups. But used to have usually two or three in the same. I had two of them together and then he would take the next one and then take the next one. He kept for hours busy there, you know. We were happy the next one came so we could get out there. But usually Shabbes, you know, my parents used to, afternoon it was time to go and rest, menukhe. You lie down, rest up for a while, and

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<sup>20</sup> Variant form of iberbaysn, Yiddish for to snack, with the English suffix "-ing" added.

<sup>21</sup> Morning services.

<sup>22</sup> Elementary school for religious studies.

<sup>23</sup> A teacher of religious education.

<sup>24</sup> The Pentateuch.

sleep. Later, I tell you the truth, when I got older I didn't mind at all. I didn't mind lying after a big heavy meal lie down, lie down for an hour and just rest up. It was very nice. But that's what they did when we were younger so they had to learn the Chumash, a little bit Midrashim,<sup>25</sup> and he pounded into our head. He was very, very strict. Don't forget that he used to go to the same shul like we did and he used to tell us boys, "When it comes to [sounds like "dikhenen"], when the kohenim<sup>26</sup> and look down and bench,<sup>27</sup> he said, "You cannot look at them. You look away." My father used to take a tallis<sup>28</sup> and put around us, hide us. I could never understand why and I said to him, "Melamed," I said, "What is it? Why can't you look at it?" He said, [speaks in Yiddish briefly] "I tell you, if you look once, you can get blind in one eye. If you look the second time, you're going to get blind in the other eye [laughs]." I'll never forget it, he's telling the story and I had to laugh so hard. "And then when you look the third time, you get blind in both eyes! [laughs]" So that I really had to laugh. But, I still don't know why you're supposed not to look.

JL: I'll tell you later.

FP: Okay [laughs].

JL: You told a little about the melamed. Could you tell me a bit about your Talmud Torah?

FP: Talmud Torah, we used to go to Talmud Torah. Again, we'd take Hebrew lessons and Hebrew writing and Hebrew reading. That's about the Talmud Torah that we did. We took some Jewish history, from the Bible which we learned there. And we couldn't really do that much and after work you could only go for about an hour. By the time you come from school to Talmud Torah, you take one hour and then you're ready to go home. But what we mostly learned in Talmud Torah is just — it was set up for this — to learn Hebrew and learn to write it and to read it and possibly to speak it. Besides this we also at Talmud Torah, I used to also organize Jewish things for young people, you know — some activities, even some plays or songs, different Hebrew songs, you know, and we had an hour for singing sometimes and then we had the next

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<sup>25</sup> Rabbinic commentaries on the Bible.

<sup>26</sup> Hebrew and Yiddish for priests, or those men who can by tradition trace their ancestry to Aaron, the first high priest.

<sup>27</sup> Yiddish for bless or offer a benediction after a meal, offered when possible by the kohenim.

<sup>28</sup> Prayer shawl.

day you an hour for Hebrew and next day you had an hour for history and you took some homework home which you were supposed to do. And home besides the homework from your school, so you really didn't have much time and you know, there were no cars. I remember the street cars but couldn't afford them. But used to walk mostly, to school, every time to school, only walk. We walked to Talmud Torah which was at least a half an hour, sometimes forty minutes to walk up to school, and the same way to go back. We had to walk very fast to make that in forty minutes one way, so you kept going and then you come home and you do your homework. Sometimes the day passes by very fast, but this is where we got most of our Hebrew education besides having the melamed in the house.

JL: What age did you begin?

FP: With school actually. The school age.

JL: At six?

FP: At school age at the age of six.

JL: Rather than going on to the next question, I better stop here.

FP: Okay.

**END OF TAPE 2, SIDE 1**

## TAPE 2, SIDE 2

JL: Were any members of your family non-religious?

FP: No. None of them.

JL: Now a little bit about your secular education. At what age did you enter secular school?

FP: I entered school when I was five years old, and I had eight years of just school, which is grade school. I went later three years to a technical school.

JL: This is all in Chemnitz?

FP: All in Chemnitz, yes. Actually, when I came out of school I was about fourteen years old and going to technical school. In the technical school they only go in the afternoon for a couple of hours, twice or three times a week.

JL: So that was five and three, five years and three years?

FP: Yes. So I did not go to any college at all, and the reason I didn't go to college is — besides it was very hard for Jewish people get into college anyway, couldn't get in there. My older brother went to college but he only went for a couple years then he was thrown out. Besides, at that time really nobody was thinking so much about college. [We were] thinking to get out of the country and where to go. We also were too much involved emotionally to think about schooling, since by that time, the Nazis are there already and you had too many problems already in grade school with the kids you used to go with.

JL: Why type of problems?

FP: Well, it started -- the first time I actually knew that I was — not that I was Jewish — but [that I] would be called as a Jew, was before even Hitler came to power when all of a sudden somebody called me "dirty Jew." At that time I was pretty young, you know. It was before the 1930s even. The [Nazi] Party didn't exist. I couldn't understand it. I come home — I'll never forget this since my mother, you know, was very disturbed — and I said to my mother, "They called me a dirty Jew," schmutzige Jude, which is dirty Jew. I couldn't understand it. I said to my mother, "What is it? Look at this. I washed this morning. I'm clean, you know. I'm not dirty." What did I know, you know? My mother looked at me and my father was there

and they looked at me and they said, "Well, don't worry about it." We discussed it, you know. "Some dumb kids, you know, who really don't know. They must have heard it at the home from somebody. They don't even know what it means. You shouldn't worry about it. You know, It does not mean that you're dirty. It just means you're different, you know, from the other ones, and but — all our German friends. We have all good German friends. There's just a few, you know, so just don't be bothered by it, you know." But I was bothered by it and I still didn't know what the hell it really means, you know. And as things went on, things got worse, you know. At that time I still had German, my friends who would help me, you know, when things got rougher all of a sudden. People would start trying to push me and beat me up, you know, and when I had German friends who were on my side, it wasn't so bad and we would just fight on the way home, you know, fight things out, you know. Then I start coming home, you know, and saying, "What's going on now? Not only I [got] called "dirty Jewish," schmutzige Jude, but now all of a sudden they started beating me up." And again my parents said, "Don't worry about it. It's some bad people, you know, who don't know any different. They're not intelligent," and all that. "German people are intelligent; you know, most of them know better. They wouldn't do something like this, you know." As time went on, then all of a sudden the Hitler came up and they had a revolution and then we found out that there were not only dumb Germans, but many intelligent Germans, who started beating Jewish people, communists and whatever, but at that time I was old already and started to understand what was going on in a way. They were completely different in their thinking and philosophy and whatever. Whatever happened all of a sudden, you know, as my good friends, you know, one of the other ones, I lost him. I'll never forget, one came to me once and said, "I'm sorry, you know, but I cannot be anymore your friend." I said, "Why? Why can't you be my friend anymore?" He said, "See all my other German friends belong to the Hitler Youths, okay, and once you belong to the Hitler Youths you cannot have any Jewish friends. I have to make a choice. Do I want to lose all my German friends or want to be your friend? If I am not becoming a Hitler Youth then I'm against the German government. I'm going to end up be beaten up, and I'm a German." So, I said, "Do what you have to do." But I felt very bad, and one after the other one

of my German friends who went into school and who were fighting battles [along] with me when I was called "dirty Jewish," all ran away from me, joining the Hitler Youths, or being afraid to be seen with me, you know. Then his friends would call him "Jewish-lover" or something and they would beat him up, too, you know. So it became more and more this bad thing about being seen with Jews, you know, or be a friend with a Jew. As things developed, it got worse and worse and worse, you know. So at time of revolution we had a German SS man, SS on their sleeve, really black uniforms, the one who wear them was tough as one and the one who would wear the closest one to Hitler, like a security police. And I know one of them came in his uniform and stayed in our house to protect us at the time of the revolution. Everything was free, everybody could go anyplace, pull everybody out, beat them up.

JL: Do you mean the time of the putsch?

FP: At the time of the revolution, when Hitler came out and they had a revolution. Everything was wide open. Was no police anymore, there was nothing, everybody could run around, if you'd hate somebody, you just pull them out and beat them up and there was nothing you can complain about it. And a lot of people were taken out and beaten up and that's why this particular German came to our house and he stayed with us for several days, didn't go home. Anybody, somebody knocked against the window or door he would open up, he said, "Go away, I am here," you know. "I take care of those Jews." But he was a even a guy who was in a higher rank, he was an officer, he had a uniform and everything. We knew him for many, many years, you know. So he knew us so well that he wanted protect us. I remember, I used to talk to him and I say — what the hell, at the time that it happened, I was almost fifteen years old — I'd say to him, "What are you doing? One way you march around the street and you sing the song, "When the blood will run the knife, the Jewish blood goes running on the knife then it would be good." And here you come and you protect us. Why?" "Well," he said, "I know you and your parents for many years. We are good friends." He said, "You are different. I won't let anything happen to you." So, I said, "Why are we different. We're Jewish. He says, "Yes, but you're different. The one we don't like is the other Jews, those dirty Jews." So I said to him, "What do you mean the other ones? You mean my uncle who lives a few

blocks away from here with my aunt and my cousins?" I said, "The problem is that you want to kill my aunt, my uncle, and my cousins and my other friends. Then the one who's maybe at my uncle's house, he is there to protect my uncle, he's going to come to the apartment house and going to kill us because for him we are the dirty Jews and he didn't know us, okay? You don't know the other Jews. How can you say they're dirty Jews?" Well, He said, you know, "Ah, that's what our Führer says. I belong to the Party, you know. We want to live as a German race. We want bring the German race back to glory and take back our colonies. We want to be the main race in the whole world, a clean race, who's going to lead the world." And this is[inaudible], at that time we were glad somebody who was our house so nobody could come and beat us up and so those things went always and then the Germans said, "Now that's enough, you know. The revolution is over. Now everybody goes back to normal." The German government said, "We will take care of those people, whoever they are, Communists or Jews, who we think are bad. Look, we take care of them, you know. You guys can't run around in the street." The reason this actually happened is that anybody who looked Jewish, if he was American or French or any other country, many people were living in Germany, you know foreigners, they would grab them and beat them up. You're not going to question. How would they know they're Jewish or not? They look Jewish, they beat them up. They were crazy. They're running around like wild people, that's what you have when things happen and revolutions or anything in any city where things get out of hand, you know. No way you can control it anymore. Then, sure, the foreign consulates started complaining to the German government, "You're taking all those people, beating up our people. Some aren't even Jewish, they're French," whatever they are. So the government had to make a stop to it, tell everybody, "No more anybody's allowed to take anybody out of the house or beat anybody up on the street. We are the one. The government is going to take care of it." Because they need the foreign people. Germany had nothing without the foreign countries. They that knew if they wanted to build a military force, they had to have rubber and gas and oil and all those things, copper, which had to come from foreign countries. Germany had nothing, natural resources. So they better starting watching out what they are doing. The Jewish people are one thing but

playing around with the foreigners, you know, that was something else. That's why I think that the foreign countries had so much power in their hand that controlled the German Nazis, when the beginning was, if all they would have said, "Hey, from us you're not going to get any copper or zinc or lead or whatever you need or rubber or anything else. You'll never be able to build an army if you're going to do those kind of things." What was more important is the corporation wanted to make money and they didn't care who, in the process of making money, is going to get killed or what's going to happen to the whole world. The thing was making money. And I'm not saying that is — I don't care what nationality they are or what religious beliefs they had. I don't think that Jewish corporations are any better or Muslim or Catholic or whatever they are, I think people are out to make money and don't think at this particular time what really is going to happen. We still do the same things today, besides the point, I'm sick about it. It's true that's the way the world is built, but I was thinking about Iran and Iraq. Iran who has all the American airplanes and destructive artillery and whatever they have for missiles, and Iraq who has the Russian equipment, you know. Everybody supplies them to stay alive and bring up politics and make money and supply them with weapons. Now, if the Russians wouldn't have given weapons or sold to Iraq and America hadn't sold weapons and airplanes to Iran, all they could do is go out and beat each other with a stick. There wouldn't be this bloody fighting, you know, just this bomb and kill people in unnecessary way. It's hard to understand. I say, sure, "Iraq has weapons, Iran has some weapons. Iran has weapons, Iraq must have weapons." But if nobody would do those things, not build any weapons, you wouldn't have those problems. Or war in the world I guess. That's nothing new. As I say before, that's what Hitler had to build all his — he had nothing, had to build up all his war machinery. They had nothing, you know. They had no oil, they had no iron even or nothing. Some iron, but all the other items had to come from foreign imports. Everybody gave him this stuff, you know. You know, they built up his whole machinery and they must have realized what — he was saying what he's going to do all the time. Didn't people believe him or what. It's true, you know. He had his Mein Kampf, his book was out long, long before, he was starting the reality what he wanted to do and how he's going to do it. This is one of the problems I think that never is

get solved in this world or any other world, I don't know, if people would realize, you know, that it's not just that you make money. You have to realize how you make your money and how you're out to destroy yourself and the whole world with it, you know. What do you achieve at the end? And I always -- some people say, "Well, you can't help it. You have industry and you have to keep it going and you have to keep people at work and having jobs." I personally don't believe in it. I personally believe that there must be other ways of producing besides making tanks and missiles and atomic weapons. What I see, as far as I'm concerned, I think we keep it going like this it's going to be the end of the world anyway. Anybody has to push the wrong button and the whole thing is going to fly up in the air. I was saying that somebody is saying, "Well, what are we going to do with all the industry?" Well, what are you going to do? What it says in the Bible. Make plowshares. That there's a world of hungry people who will be happy to get equipment so they can work their fields. You can make millions and millions of equipment machine to work fields so they can feed the hungry. I said, "The war brings nothing good. War equipment is a waste of money. If you put it in and it's going to be destroyed." Said, "Put this money into some equipment where you can help the world and the people. There must be ways of doing it. There must be [ways of] of changing it." "Yes, but who is the one that's going to pay for giving it to the people?" I said, "Who's the one who pays for making airplanes and tanks and ammunition they do now to kill people? It brings nothing in return absolutely nothing. That gives you nothing. Why can we invest money in tanks and in airplanes and in big bombs and I don't know what else, but cannot invest the same money to build material which will help people to survive instead of killing them?" Well, this is the question and I asked everybody the same question. I have never had an answer yet. It just isn't done. Everybody wants to be the powerful, the strong one. And it's -- I look at mankind and I sometimes think, "What happened? What happened to God? He gave us brains to think, you know. If there are such like a God in this world, why isn't He doing something about it to give them the right seykhl."<sup>29</sup> You know, do something about it." Just saying in our books, you know, "beat the swords into plowshares" doesn't mean anything. Nobody's doing it anyway.

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<sup>29</sup> Yiddish and Hebrew for 'common sense'.

Maybe that's what they meant by doing it, I don't know. Maybe some smart guy has thought that a long time ago, you know. No, really, truly. But has never come to be. So what do you do? That's the whole damn thing and I think that's one of my biggest problems today in life is and I have problems. I cannot live with this thing and keep on going. It's something bothers me. I try to get away from it because I know I can talk and talk and I cannot change it. As long as I live — I want to live, I want to be happy and I want to be healthy and so on. In a way I go along with it, but the other way I constantly have to think about it, and I'm really disturbed when I can see no way there's ever going to be a change. When I look back in history it has existed, existed forever and ever, it's always the same struggle. Everybody wants to swallow up everybody else. It's an unbelievable struggle. The fight is constantly on. I'm in business today and I know what's going on. Like today when business is lower you have all the competition in the world, everybody wants to sell and stay alive. But I'm the one, when our company says, "Well let's be competitive" [to respond] "But don't go out to fight. Don't fight a war about it like many people do, you know." They just fighting wars against each other and everybody tries to get the other one out of there and him in there. I said, "We don't need this." I said, "If we keep on giving our best price, we can do it. Satisfy our customer and give him the right materials. You might lose a few and gain a few, but you're going to stay alive and you're going to be there to live for the future to come." So there's no reason to fight each other constantly, which is senseless. This is what the whole world should be all about, you know. Find out we can live together without doing all that fighting and wars, you know. If people ever learn, I think it's going to be wonderful life. I mean I look for the future generation, for myself. I'm getting to the point — I'm still going to live a few years, I hope, you know — but I say, I can live out my years, you know. I'm going to live it. I could just forget about everything else and just enjoy and have a good time. I have the necessary financial things. I can do, I can travel, I can do. I can just forget about it and worry about nothing, you know. And sometimes I think about it, you know, and I talk to myself and I say, "Fred, what are you doing? How many years are you going to live? How long can you fight and talk, you know, and get aggravated. Just take it easy." I wish it would be that easy a solution, you know, for me since it's

not, you know. This is my problem. It's not an easy solution for me. I think you can't change your character yourself. That's the way you are and that's the way it's going to be.

JL: I'm sorry that I'm going to have to pull you back again. Just – you were talking about anti-Semitism and then about being rejected by your German friends. Were there any other Jewish friends around or were one of few, or the only one?

FP: What do you mean? Jewish friends?

JL: In the school.

FP: In the public school, I was the only one.

JL: Only one. In your class?

FP: In my class in particular. There were different Jewish children in the school but not in the same class.

JL: So you were truly in the minority?

FP: Yes, right.

JL: You mentioned Mizrahi before. Did you belong to any other political or social clubs? You or your family?

FP: No, that's the only one.

JL: Now, since the family lived both in Poland and in Germany, what kind of identification did you have with the community? Did you feel you were more Jewish or more German and or Polish?

FP: Well, when you're talking about identity, you're talking about — really nothing in particular with Jewish. But we did not particular say we are Polish Jewish. We sure were German Jews, since my father did belong to different organizations which they are with Germans Jews and Polish Jews but those were things like charitable organizations where they did things together for whatever the cause or what was needed. I personally had no particular feeling of being Polish Jew or German Jew or...

JL: What I'm specifically getting at is what group did you and your family feel it owed more allegiance to? To the Jews or to the Germans or the Poles depending on... allegiance.

FP: Oh, you're talking about allegiance. The Jews. Yes, no question about it.

JL: So you defined yourselves as Jews rather than as German or Polish.

FP: Yes.

JL: What languages did you speak at home?

FP: German and Yiddish.

JL: Yiddish too. And the German began when you moved to Germany? The speaking German?

FP: Well, I was a baby so.

JL: Did your parents...?

FP: My parents must have spoken German before, I imagine, because we used to live in Austria, too, at times when Poland was Austria.

JL: Your parents spoke at home, then in Chemnitz, they spoke German?

FP: Both German and Yiddish.

JL: And Yiddish. And to each other, what did they speak?

FP: German and Yiddish, depends what mood they're in.

JL: They were equally comfortable?

FP: Yes, equally comfortable, yes.

JL: Let's see if there's a little time on this tape yet. What kinds of comparisons, if any, did your parents make between their acceptance that they enjoyed as Jews in Germany and in Poland? Comparisons between how they were accepted as Jews in Poland and Germany? Did you hear anything?

FP: I never heard them talk about comparisons of acceptance in Poland and Germany. I knew that my parents used to talk about Polish anti-Semitism, which had existed there for a long time. I've never been in Poland before until I got there later on. And [they talked about] pogroms which had happened in Poland, but they really did not draw a comparison between the Germans and the Polish people. I must – I would think that my parents must have figured that with German being more intellectuals, maybe that's one reason they moved to Germany, not to have the children grow up in Poland, where there has been at times very anti-Semitic movements. I would say that must have been one of the reasons my parents went to Germany.

JL: Okay, I think we'll have to stop the tape there.

FP: Okay.

**END OF TAPE 2, SIDE 1**

### TAPE 3, SIDE 1

JL: Today I'd like to ask you about any incidents of anti-Semitism you experienced outside of school, because yesterday we talked about anti-Semitism in school.

FP: Outside of school, when I was growing up. Let's see, you're talking about outside of school in the beginning of the 1930s. I really [don't] remember much except what bothered me very much was the marching on the streets of the members of the Nazi Party and singing their songs, which were anti-Jewish, and songs which I think I explained yesterday where "the blood will run off the knife, Jewish blood, and life will be good in Germany." Otherwise, I really haven't been that much in contact as a child to experience much about it except for younger kids, which I had the same kids actually I used to go to school with, and those were my friends, so this would be the same type of experience as I had in school.

JL: Now after Hitler came into power, even before, there was...

FP: Yes there was anti-[Semitism]. Sure, no question about it.

JL: What kind of reaction was there in your town to such things, for example, as the assassination of Walter Rathenau<sup>30</sup>?

FP: Yes, very early. I was young and I remember about it and, like everything else as has happened, it's always the Jewish faults and it happened. It was very, very exciting experience, but as exciting, everybody worried about it, what's going to happen next. You were more scared than anything else. I really don't remember exactly what happened but surely here and there, people often try to use this for a good excuse to beat up a few people like, simple excuses to hurt somebody, you know, particular Jewish people. It was a easy way out. But this is about all I remember about it.

JL: What did you know about the book burnings in Berlin in 1933?

FP: What did I know about it?

JL: Yes.

FP: Well I know about a book burning...

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<sup>30</sup> German Jewish statesman and industrialist who was assassinated by rightists in 1922.

JL: Did you know at the time, when you were in Chemnitz? What did you hear about the book burnings in Berlin?

FP: Well, we heard about a book burning in Berlin, you know. We heard books were taken out and put in big piles and they were burned. I do not remember, it came at a time it was also together with Crystal Night?<sup>31</sup>

JL: No, it was in 1933.

FP: So, really I don't know that much about it, but we heard about it, you know, that books were taken out and burned, you know.

JL: What was the reaction?

FP: The reaction of what?

JL: In your town.

FP: I tell you, the reaction in my town, you talking about the Jewish people or what? I don't know the reaction was the Gentile people. Like again, you know, Jewish people were afraid what's going to happen next. They always think, "What's going to happen next?" you know. Also, again, and even the Jewish people at that time, as far as I can remember, could not comprehend that their good German friends which they had, intelligent and educated and so on, could do those things. It was always put up then to the people who are not intellect and who are rough and, you know, who are not well-educated. So I think Jewish people, also Germans, tried to find excuse for those who did those things. "Those were not really the Germans we know."

JL: I also want to ask you about the reaction to the Nuremberg laws<sup>32</sup> in 1935. Was it a similar reaction?

FP: Now the Nuremberg laws, talking about the reaction of people I know of people I know, the reaction was that it wasn't so much law as the worry about with whom can you go home, with whom can you talk, and

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<sup>31</sup> Kristallnacht, the November 1938 pogrom in which mobs, with government support, attacked Jews and looted and destroyed synagogues and Jewish homes and businesses throughout Germany and Austria.

<sup>32</sup> Laws passed in September 1935 which forbade marriage or sexual intercourse between Jews and "Aryans," and which officially reduced Jews to a lower level of citizenship rights.

not to get in troubles. And the German just tried — for any reason they could find to put pressure on the Jewish people, you know, and have some reason to put them away or put them in jail or whatever. Every time they made new laws, it was supposedly kept the German race clean. It became more difficult, particular for younger people. We had all friends which were not Jewish friends but they were boys and girls and I remember that most younger people, Jewish younger people, were very confused. What to do and be very afraid to whom to talk and became to the point that if younger people wanted to go out, wanted to go out dancing or go out with some girls, which at that point had to leave the country, as we did. We used to go quite often on weekends to Czechoslovakia just to be able to mix with boys and girls and go out and have a good time. It was more than anything else it was a kind of feelings that all of a sudden you're not allowed to speak anymore to other sex or if you would speak with other sex they could get you and put you away. It was a time when — I tell you the truth, I feel that at this time it didn't matter anymore, since we have already had gone through so much and really everybody was feeling that they had — not everybody, I would say most of the people — felt that they had to leave this country anyway sooner or later. It was just so much a question how do you get out and who wants to. Where can you go?

JL: What did you know of greulnachrichten ?

FP: When you say by greulnachrichten, what did they mean as greulnachrichten, I don't know.

JL:, Reports about atrocities against Jews that were leaking out to the United States. Atrocities in Germany that were leaking out to the United States.

FP: I know nothing in particular about those particular nachrichten<sup>33</sup> what they send out. I have no idea who sent it out, but I'm sure they went out all over the world. There were so many foreigners in Germany who did see what was going on and they must have reported to the outside and I'm sure there's also Jewish organizations who did organize reports to the outside. Personally, I don't know much about what was reported and how it was reported. I couldn't tell you.

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<sup>33</sup> German for 'reports'.

JL: Okay, now let me ask you about...After all of these growing anti-Semitic things that happened which was foreshadowing the beginning of rise of Hitler, how did the family and the town react when he was appointed chancellor in 1933?

FP: Well, if you're talking about the German people, I think most of the German people believed that he was like a god. I heard many Germans say when he spoke, is that he speaks like God.

JL: You mean non-Jews?

FP: Non-Jews, they were non-Jews, yes. And also when he came to power it was a time of depression, a time of tremendous unemployment. People had been out of jobs for years, standing in lines to get some hot water or soup and bread to feed themselves and their families. And Hitler was the one who promised them that he would bring them back to work, give them jobs and on top of it, that Germany would be one of those countries who would be leading the world instead of being the underdog and taking back all those colonies which were taken away from them in the First World War and so on and so on. So he really promised the Germans what they were looking for. It was jobs and food, you know, to feed their family. So after that depression I believe anybody who would come out with big promises, as mostly people come out with big promises, would be accepted by the people who are looking forward, for like looking for a messiah to come to help them out.

JL: What about the Jews?

FP: The Jews had no choice in the matter in the first place, the Jews in Germany. They were not looking forward for Hitler. But I'm quite sure that some Jews who were in business did not mind at all somebody to come up and develop business so there they could have the profits of reestablishing more business and more work in the country. Now, as far as I understood, I heard that there were Jewish capitalists, some of them, who gave money to Hitler. Through his program and his party. It might sound very ridiculous but again, like I mentioned yesterday, when it comes to money people forget everything else. Money is a very bad thing, I mean it ruins people's thinking and feeling and I don't know what you can do about it. The Jewish people otherwise were very much afraid what would happen when Hitler comes to

power and they knew their principles. But also I remember that we couldn't believe that Germany would be such a country. Growing up with the Germans and going to German schools and having all those good friends and nobody ever could think about it that the German people would come to point where they could kill and destroy other human beings. So since the Jewish people had no choice in there, I'm sure they did not work for Hitler, but many of them did not work for communism either, since they didn't like that, so it was a matter of thinking, "Right, it might be right-wing saying that it might be a little bit tough, but they're never going to do what he says. The Germans are just not going to allow this." I think you have the same thing in the United States: "The Americans are never going to allow something like this."

JL: Well let me ask you – I'm specifically interested in the Jewish community – now you had kultusgemeinde<sup>34</sup> in Chemnitz.

FP: Yes.

JL: What was the official role of gemeinde?<sup>35</sup> How did they deal with people's concerns? Did they appease the people or support their fears? How did they deal with [it]?

FP: I really don't know how they dealt with it as a gemeinde. I would say they would more be appeasing to the people and there was no other reason but there was no sense in becoming very over-excited about it since you had no way of changing it. I remember that after Hitler came to power, that they had meetings at our house, many Jewish families we knew, to organize people to go to Israel. And we had people there from different Jewish organizations to help us to establish. They were ready to buy trucks and move by trucks like caravan to Israel. And what happened actually is that they said to us, "This is fine and good, but if you're going to come with a caravan with a lot of people and children, the English will never let you in since you have to have an affidavit to get in there." And so I know that the committee contacted even the English and see if we could establish such a thing and just they figured that Jewish people who

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<sup>34</sup> German for religious community.

<sup>35</sup> German for community.

wanted to go from our particular city would all move in one place in Israel and start building up their own little kibbutz, you know.

JL: What was the committee called?

FP: It had no name. It was just established at our house and then the families came together and we sat and discussed it, what should be done and what should be taken along and how they would leave Germany.

JL: What year was that?

FP: That was, well, 1933.

JL: It was that early?

FP: Oh, yes, yes sure. I remember that the members of Jabotinsky's party who said to us, "If nothing else, you have to fight our way in," you know. But the families decided with all their little children, that if there are no way of given they're sure not going to fight their way in. That's impossible. They wanted to find a legal way to get there and it just didn't work out. And I remember there was so many meetings at our house, weeks after weeks and after months and after months, and [in] the end, the whole thing fell apart. And nobody I know of at this meeting, except one of my uncle who went to Israel with his wife — he's the only one who got there.

JL: Is this your uncle...

FP: My uncle [Azar Moishe] Wolf who is now in Israel. He's about seventy-eight years old, I mentioned him before. So people have tried, some of them had tried to get out. I would say that mostly they're not German Jews but more the Jews who had come from Poland or so on, and some German Jews, no question about it. The German Jews believed — they would say actually, [inaudible] "You'll have to worry about it. The Germans in the beginning of the revolution have taken care of the people they felt they want to take care of, they didn't like, or they were bad. Now the rest of them, you can live in peace," you know, and nothing was going to happen to you. Many people thought, you know, that if it doesn't hurt you, particularly somebody else, it wasn't so bad, as long as it came to your own body. But, as I say, we tried to get any place, but out of the country. We didn't want to go to Poland, because we figured Poland was

anti-Semitic and we didn't know what was going to happen to them. We tried to get far away. We tried to get to the United States, but we had no sponsors and we had no family there. We tried to get any place until it finally got so late, you know. I mean 1936, 1937, and it got tougher and tougher that we had to go any place that would take us. That's why I ended up in Poland. But I particular tried to get us out of — I would get somewhere and then later I could bring my family over and I tried to get to South America. I thought I could maybe see, since I was born, if I could go into Holland to get to the Holland colonies, and no way, absolutely nothing. And I know that my cousin whom I had in Holland, I talked to him and he said he would try to get me some papers or passport or something which would be on the black market to get me out of there at least so I had one good start to get out of there and I don't know why it always had to be me, but, it seems to be. I had to be the one. And would I had not been that young in 1932, 1933, by the time I got of age so somebody would give me a false passport. You know, to be twenty years old or nineteen years old. You know, I would have been out I'm sure earlier from Germany. It was a chance then. The funniest thing is, I heard about it, I don't know how true it is, but in 1939, when I was on the Polish-Russian occupied side, I got a message — somehow there were messages sent through papers and through people, it's amazing how those things worked — that my cousin in Holland had a passport for me [to] go to Holland colonies. And there was no way I could move at that time. I had no money and nothing to get out of there, from Poland through Germany to Holland. And besides, I didn't want to try it. I was afraid to see the Germans again. But, in little ways, things were done by private people. It wasn't really an effort done by countries or in a big way, not even by the United States. I must say the English saved some people. They saved some children at least which taken out to England and some other countries did some work. But as a whole, I think people didn't care, and people don't care today. You know, it was the Jewish people way far away, you know. And maybe all the people did not know, just like the Germans. We didn't even believe that there would be such a thing like concentration camps and people would be gassed or killed in such a unbelievable manner in inhumane manner. Nobody could even think about it. I would have never thought about it, growing up in Germany.

JL: Did you have any knowledge, though, of the early concentration camps that were established in the early '30s? The supposed work camps? Did you know about those?

FP: Well, it was work camps. I don't think they were that bad, I don't know. They weren't extermination camps.

JL: What did you know about these early camps?

FP: We only knew that people were taken away into camps.

JL: Did you know about the brutality?

FP: No, no, we didn't know that, no. All we knew, we heard about some Jewish people, yes, who were badly beaten up and came very, very sick home or didn't come home at all. We heard about those cases. But they were very isolated cases. It wasn't a mass deal and...

JL: So you didn't see the threat?

FP: You did see the threat. That's why you tried to get out of the country.

JL: In that specific sense, as you say isolated?

FP: Well, they were isolated cases, I'm saying, and you did see the threat, and you imagine that sooner or later it's going to catch up to you. If you would be put in for some reason, whatever reason they wanted, you had no way to go to court, you know, and sue them. We had no rights. So you knew that eventually that could happen to you and you tried — I mean at least we tried, and many I know in our city tried — to leave this country, to go somewhere else. But, as I said, nobody, nobody cared or wanted us. There was no place where to go. And those who didn't want to leave Germany, fine. But those even who wanted to leave Germany and tried for years to get out of there, had no chance to get out. And nobody, nobody who really cared. There was an affidavit. If you had a very rich uncle in the United States and you were on the list and if your number came up in two or three years, only so many people allowed to come to this country. Well, if you were lucky your number came up before you got caught or beaten up. Then you're lucky. You moved out. But if you didn't have a rich uncle and you didn't have an affidavit and your number was coming through in the next five years, that may have been too late. So you ended up — this

is the big problem. And I don't want to go into things, but I'm seeing the same thing today. It's true when the Cubans came in here and a million people started to go, "We don't want those people here. They're taking away our jobs," and I imagine the same thing happened in Germany. Nobody cared. And so there are some Cubans coming, and there are some who are gangsters maybe in the group. I have no doubt about it, but how can you say a whole people that are no good, "We don't want them." It wasn't even at that time that anybody knew how many people who are intelligent and who can go out and do bad things come to this country. But maybe the idea was that, "Don't let any more people in this country, you know. Protect us, you know." I guess people who haven't gone through this maybe don't understand it. But when you have gone through yourself, and you know what happened to people though already this. Once before, several times before, I said people just don't care. It keeps on going and going and going. So it's mostly that we are all, seems to be, very selfish people. We care to protect ourselves. And we really, in the end, don't do it. We don't even protect ourselves. If it catches up with them today, it will catch up with us later. And if it doesn't catch up this fast, it will catch up with our children. But somewhere it will catch up with us and so.

JL: Let me quickly before this tape ends ask you about the Zionistic activities. This was your – you mentioned this committee that met in your home, what was the makeup of the people mostly? Mostly Germans or...

FP: They were mixed. Germans and Polish Jews. They were all mixed, yes. It was very strong at the Hitler time and when Hitler came to power it became really strong and people all of a sudden wanted to have some place to go and talk and get together and find out what to do. So the Zionist movement become very, very strong at that time. Besides, that time was the year to get money from people, too, for the purpose, but, which we were unable to do before then. So there were a lot of meetings, not only in our house, but there were city meetings. We had big meetings, everybody would come together and they had people speak to them. I know that Joachim Prinz<sup>36</sup> used to come and speak. And there were different

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<sup>36</sup> German-born US rabbi who was active in Zionist circles.

parties — Agudas Yisroel<sup>37</sup> and the Mizrachi and the Revizenist<sup>38</sup> parties and the left-wing parties. From all over they all came to speak, and everybody wanted to first of all get the people to follow their line, and then the next one is to find a way, you know, how to get out of this country. And I'm sure they all tried, but were not successful in doing anything. Sure, they had connection with all the foreign countries and all the parties which have been in foreign countries, but they have been very unsuccessful to establish anything, to take those people out of Germany.

JL: What specifically -- was your orientation still Mizrachi?

FP: Yes, my orientation was Mizrachi. You can call it the middle line.

JL: Okay. Another quick question. Were you still in Germany 1936 Olympics?

FP: No. I just left. It's up? Okay.

JL: I think I'm going to turn the tape off here.

**END OF TAPE 3, SIDE 1**

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<sup>37</sup> Yiddish pronunciation of the Hebrew name Agudat Israel, an international organization dedicated to religious Orthodoxy and the traditions of East European Jewish life.

<sup>38</sup> Yiddish for Revisionist, referring to a particularly militant Zionism.

## TAPE 3, SIDE 2

JL: So you say that you weren't in Germany during the 1936 Olympics. What was your reaction when all the anti-Semitic notices were temporarily removed? Was it relief, how did you feel things were going to be after that?

FP: Well, it wasn't really a relief, when the news [came] that the German government did turn off and on the propaganda whenever it was for them economical or political-wise to do so. We knew that really nothing would change. It was just a matter of time, that with the Olympic it was a good time to take the signs down. Since there were so many foreigners there, it would make a better picture and the foreigner would say, "Hey, it's really not what they say," you know, They don't see any signs in Germany, you know, so it can't be true. The Germans were not only not dummies, they knew how to confuse everybody, or try to make it look that they were not as bad as they are told to be. So that's nothing, it's not only once. I remember every time they had some foreign people coming to town, there was a change of climate and a change of signs when it was important for them to do so. And that's just the way you handled the whole situation — off and on; on and off, whatever they had to do. Anytime they had some foreigners coming who were important people I imagine, they just would turn the signs around so they wouldn't see all the bad things. Okay, that's actually what happened. It had no significance for the people living in Germany and had significance for the people who came to Germany I imagine.

JL: What news did you have of the growing storm clouds in Europe, such as German aggression, the Anschluss for example, and Sudetenland/Czechoslovakia? What did you know about that?

FP: Well, we were not in Germany anymore when they had the Anschluss.

JL: So being outside, what did you hear?

FP: What did I hear? I personally knew that the Germans would keep us moving all the time. I think most people did think so, as we knew the aggressiveness of the German. We knew that they had put all their money into machinery, like war equipment, and had to be used to get more money, since the Germans didn't have any money. I mean, everything they could get from somebody was spent on equipment, and

so you have to use this equipment to make it pay. They were the next country, to get what the next country had. So that was actually I think Hitler's reason, also to try to get the Jewish capital, you know, to bolster his equipment and war machinery and when they run out of all this kind of money he had to keep it moving. And I knew that the German had to keep on moving. Not that I really cared so much about the Germans in a foreign country, but for the only reason, first of all, he has promised them there would be the big German race which controlled the whole world and he, being crazy enough, really believed in it and I'm sure many other Germans believed in it since they were very successful in taking over Austria and they were very successful in taking over Czechoslovakia. They always successful to talk people in like Poland, at that time — "Go with us and we'll give you a part of Czechoslovakia," which the dumb Polish people followed. And then at the same time they had agreement to trade food, give food to Germany and the German would give them equipment and machinery, which never happened. The Polish would sell them food and then when they wanted equipment and machinery the Germans said, "It's coming." They were coming with their tanks and airplanes and they pay them back for the food they got. I do not know. The same happened later on with Russia, you know. The enemies on the right and the left, who all of a sudden became good friends, the march into Poland. And we knew very well, too, and I knew, how long is that going to last? It's impossible. The Germans would take advantage wherever they can, which they did. The amazing thing about it is that people believed the Germans, or said they believed them. When they came to Czechoslovakia — Czechoslovakia had friendship pacts with just about every country: with the French, with the English, with the Russians, with the Polish — and everybody is supposed to protect them in time of a war. When the war came, so the first thing happened, when [British Prime Minister Neville] Chamberlain went to Munich and he signed up and he gave away Czechoslovakia to Germany. They always can give away somebody else's, it doesn't hurt them. And he was saying, "We have solved the problem. Now Hitler will get part, only part of Czechoslovakia, and there will be peace. And we have solved the world problems." I was thinking about it, when I talk to people today, I'll say, "What does it mean when you have some kind of an agreement with a country? You said you're going to help them in

time of stress or when a danger comes. It only means nothing as long as this is on paper, and if comes into reality, as it never happened in history." Every time a country felt they didn't like anymore the contract they would just throw it out. Or somebody else comes to run a government, he says, "I don't care what he said. I don't want it." And the whole agreement is out. And it's so easy to give away somebody else's' country and land, you know, since it doesn't hurt you. Really has nothing changed. It's the same thing today. If it comes to economics or politic-wise, if you feel this country is not any more necessary to protect, you just say good-bye and you go to the next country. So really, writing those agreements to a point are worthless. This is one of the big problems I imagine they have at times. I don't say you always should stick to agreements and if you see agreements are bad after a few years there's no sense holding on to it. But to a point, I mean, you have no right to give away the other country. Say, "All right," like they said with Hitler, "let him have Czechoslovakia, you know. At least we're not going to have a war, you know." It wasn't the answer, they knew very well. I'm sure they must have known that Hitler would not be satisfied with a little piece of Czechoslovakia. It didn't make any sense.

JL: Now so here you were, having left Germany. How did you get the news from Germany, of what Germans were doing?

FP: Newspaper and radio.

JL: It was all in the newspaper?

FP: Sure, yes.

JL: Did you get any news directly from people you knew in Germany?

FP: No. All connections with German people stopped completely when we left Germany. We had no close cousins or anything else.

JL: Any German Jews?

FP: After we left, we had one family in Germany, of German Jews, who was in a mixed marriage. But they used to belong to the Jewish synagogue and their son used to belong, at one time, to the Jewish sports club, Bar Kochba, and he was a football player in there. But when the Hitler time came — and his

mother was not Jewish — somehow the whole thing changed. Now I remember, in 1936, he was about my age. In 1936, just about when I started leaving Germany, he became connected with the Hitler Youth, through his mother came from a big Germany family or something, and I was so really amazed about it. All of a sudden he became an enemy. And that's really unbelievable. But I guess the parents must have figured it could save the child if he became a real German, you know. But what happened actually, I had contact with them to the point that we wrote them a couple times from Poland and they wrote us in Poland. At the time, I remember I got a message when the war broke out in Poland, he was on the front lines. That's how Germans always took care of those characters, half-Jews that wanted to be Germans, I imagine. And he was killed, and amazing like it sounds, the father wrote a letter to us to say kaddish<sup>39</sup> for him. Can you imagine that? That's really a sad story.

JL: What do you yourself remember about September 1, 1939?

FP: Well we were in Poland and the war started out. We were very close to the German border, you know, and within two days the German moved into our town. A lot of Jewish people left and run away from the Germans.

JL: That was the 3<sup>rd</sup> or so?

FP: Yes, that's when the Germans came in. But immediately Jewish people started running away before the Germans came in. We heard the Germans were moving very fast. Now my father left and one of my brothers left, too. Those two left from home, the older brother and my father.

JL: Where'd they go?

FP: They just moved like everybody else, running away from the Germans, going far away. But my mother and all the rest of us stayed home since there were nowhere for them to run. I mean there Germans bombing all the highways and there was a mass of those people were killed just walking on the streets and highways. So we decided to stay home since my mother had the younger kids, all those little kids and we said, "We're all going to stay together." My father and my oldest brother were the ones who run

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<sup>39</sup> A prayer of praise to God, referring here to the tradition of reciting the prayer in mourning.

for their life and then they figured that the German catch up with them since my father who was the head of the family and my brother who they're looking once before, that he had moved money out from Germany and then they said my father moved money out from Germany so that at first they're going to get them, you know, when they come in. So they run away. The rest of us, we said, "Ma, there's no sense of running. Might as well stay here and see what happens. And where are we going to run? We're going to run today, tomorrow so Germans are going to pick us up somewhere else." So second day they came in. It's really amazing. I remember used to watch out of the window. Watch the German airplane fly in bombing runs. You didn't care. You just look out the window, said "Here are the bombs falling down." And then the next day, the Germans came in the second day, and the third day already they came to our apartment. You see how Germans are organized. There were a lot of Germans living in that occupied territory. They had all the names on lists, all the Jewish people, and all the people, I imagine, who they didn't like, and they came already the third day. The people who came are the people who are living in this town. They already had a Nazi band around their arms you know, the [sounds like "kreimhomachas"]. They came, knocked on the door — this was Germans — and they said, "Come with us."

JL: All of you?

FP: No, no, they only took out from fifteen years up, you know. They called them men. Not little kids, not my mother, just the ones to work. So they took us, all the Jewish people, out to work. They called from fifteen to fifty-five. They would go to work and work for the German army, which was there then.

JL: Were was it? Around your town?

FP: Yes, in town, yes, in Bielsko-Biala. Well, they had an army, you know. We working just for the German army. We were taken into work and then put back into schools. We slept in schools. We were not allowed to go home. They have taken over the schools. That's where we slept. And then every morning so many people would go there, this place, and some — they made up people to go different places.

JL: What kind of work did you do?

FP: Anything that had to be done — moving food or cleaning out the horse manure or anything, you know. Anything the German army had to do for work, we would do. That's why we were sent to different places at times. Sometimes two or three days the same place or one day here, one day there, you know, they split us up in different amount of people and took us there and brought us back at night to the school.

JL: So it was all these men between fifteen and fifty-five? No women?

FP: Right. No, no women, no, no. But then the mothers and wives were allowed to come once in a while to see us, but only really on the outside, not on inside the school, you know. There was a fence around and they would see us and say hello and then they'd go again.

JL: So you were actually fenced into that area?

FP: Yes, right.

JL: And you did whatever work you did in that area?

FP: Whatever had to be done, not in that area, no. We were taken out from the school area. Taken to German military places where the German military were staying. Where they had their places to stay.

JL: So they were not in that same area?

FP: No, no, no, no. It was just schools that were fenced in. They were taken every morning from there, taken to places where we work, and then brought back to the school at night to sleep there.

JL: How were you taken? Were you marched out?

FP: We marched or they took us in trucks. They took us there.

JL: How did they treat you?

FP: Huh? It depends what division you got in and what part of the army you got in and who was the guy who was the supervisor. If you would have worked for the SS, you were in trouble. Besides work you got a lot of beating. And some used to play games with the people, regular games. They would say now, "Everybody stands, two sides, and then, you know, let's play games." One had to go through and everybody has to beat him up. They Jewish people had to beat him up, you know. And if you didn't do it, then you had to move through. You'd be beaten up. Then when it comes to point that you really fall

down, then you're weak, and then they just threw water over you and you'd get up again. You know, they played really funny games, very cruel games. You know, one place I used to work — we also used to dig trenches for the German army, this is in the city, trenches. And at one place I had to haul away stones, you know. It was all stones, took them out, and then we took them in wheel barrows in hand wheel barrows, and then move them away in piles and then dump them out. The Germans would just say, "Go faster! Go faster! Go faster!" And, "How fast can you go?" After a time you collapse. And when you'd collapse, he would just give you a good smack over your back and say, "Get up." They were those people already at that time who were very, very cruel people. But I also had place I used to come. I remember one place I used to go. They took me out a place where they used to pick up food for the army, was a central part, it was out of the city, about ten or fifteen miles. We drove by a truck. I was chosen to go along with the truck to pick up the food and load the food. When I got to the place where I was supposed to load the food up there were a couple guys who started playing around with me. And the man under whom I was sent there with, the German army officer, came to the guys and said, "Now, don't you touch him. He's under my supervision and he is here to load the food and not for you guys to play around with him." And they start looking at him and said, "Well, he's a damn Jew." And he said, "That is none of your business. He is under my command and I don't want you to touch him," you know. So there were times when you found somebody who had feeling, you know, a soul, you know. And he was really nice to me, you know. I load up his truck, I sit with him in the truck. We didn't talk much, you know, but you could see that he, you know, said he wanted to talk about, you know, where I came from and so on and on. He said "I know sometimes, you know, there's some rough people, you know. They really shouldn't do that, you know." You had Germans and — but the problem always was if you used to come to some part of the army and when you had two or three rough guys who liked to play with you, most of them would keep on helping them or stand on the sideline and say nothing. The guys were afraid to say something, too, you know. There were very few who, like this one particular guy, would say, "Hey, don't you touch him. This is my fellow who works for me." And that went on for several weeks until we got transferred out of the city.

JL: [Inaudible.] Was there any resistance there? Did anyone try to run away?

FP: No. I don't think anybody tried to run away. Not that I know, anyway. Not at this particular time.

JL: What did you think would happen? What were your thoughts as this was going on, this work?

FP: I really didn't have any thoughts at this particular time. It was a kind -- for the time being, I think all I wanted was to stay alive and see what's going to happen. Everybody had to hope that something is going to happen sometimes, you know. When you go through years of misery and you come out from a country and you establish yourself in another country and you live there for a year or two and all of a sudden you're back in the same misery again — Germans who have move have taken Austria, they have taken Czechoslovakia, now they're taking Poland and, "What's going to be next, and where are you going to be safe, where are you going. Just anything, you hope for some miracle to happen. I personally believed that God up there looks at those things and some miracle is going to happen, is going to swallow up all the Germans, you know, and we're going to stay here and be free, you know. I think in times like this you believe more in miracles and hopes than in anything else. You have nothing else to look for. You have no choice. And you still want to stay alive and you try to stay alive, and at this particular time, especially when the family was living in town, nobody thought he's going to run away from the Germans. They were afraid if you run away from the Germans, what's going to happen to the rest of the family, your wife and children or, like in my case, or my younger brothers and mother.

JL: How many of your brothers were working with you?

FP: Let's see...one, two, three of us.

JL: Was there a chance – you've just told me how you felt -- did you have a chance to get together with your brothers and talk about what was going on?

FP: No. We didn't. We talked about what was going on, but usually we talking about where we work in this particular area and how much beating we got. We found somebody was nice and let us just work, you know. This was our talk and this...we only stayed there for about six weeks total, you know. We thought

maybe one day you get back to home, you know and stay home with your family and still go to work everyday. But we didn't worry too much about the work, you know. That was not a problem.

JL: What kind of information was your mother able to share with you when she was allowed to visit you?

FP: Well, all we really cared [about at]at this particular time was that they would have food to eat, you know, and be healthy and wait [for] what's going to happen in the future. We never gave up hope, as I say, that something's going to happen. You live with hope, which is really the only thing you can have at a particular time like this.

JL: Okay, you were beginning to tell me that was over after six weeks. And then, what happened after that?

FP: The Germans established again the Jewish committee, city committee, whatever you call, Council.<sup>40</sup> And then they would speak to Jewish Council, it was easy for them to do, and they would organize and they would say, "We want all the Jewish men from this age to be taken out of the city and to be taken some place where they're going to build a special town for Jewish people to live in. Their families will follow later," you know, their wives or children or their mother and little children or grandfather, whatever they had, they will follow there to this town which they are starting building. That's what they were talking to us about. And so the Jewish committee had set up all the lists with all the names. They had us anyway, it doesn't make any difference if that had [a list] or not. We were allowed to go home to pick up some things, some clothes that should take along, you know. And so we did – no, we were not allowed to go home. Our wives or mothers had to bring the stuff to school. They did that and then I saw my mother the last time and before we left on our trip, so-called, to build this camp for our family to follow.

JL: Did you believe them?

FP: I didn't. That's why I run away from them. But anyway, they took us away from there to a place close to the Russian Polish occupied territory.

JL: How did you get there?

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<sup>40</sup> A governing body of the Jewish community appointed by German authorities which was responsible for the enforcement of Nazi orders, including deportations.

FP: By train. I had a little pack along.

JL: Excuse me, by passenger train?

FP: Yes, by passenger train they took us there. So, then we came there and were told, "Here's that land and here's where you're going to work. And here's where you're going to build that camp for your family."

JL: Do you know where that site was?

FP: No, I don't. It must have been close to Lublin. And so they started working there and laying on the bare ground and it was in fall. It was cold, you know. Nothing to cover with except your own little stuff you had. You freeze to death. In the daytime, besides working, you know, you get a lot of beating, and food: just about nothing. And so we figured out, "How long are we going to last here, you know? We're never going to see our family. It's impossible under the circumstances. We're going to die before we see our family and build this camp."

JL: Were you doing actual construction?

FP: Well, we started digging, you know. We didn't get too far. First of all, they had us put up a fence. It was the first thing. It was taking a long time anyways, so we'll worked on this one first. To fence is it. And we decided — several of us talked, especially my brothers, and I had an uncle there, too — and we said, "We have to do something about it. We're never going to see our family again. We're going to die before this, from starvation or sickness, you know. Winter's coming on and we're sleeping outside on the ground."

JL: I still missed -- what is it, November by then?

FP: Yes. And so we have to do something about it. The only one we can do is, as long as you don't have the fence around us, at night we're going to get up and start running. So they had Germans sitting there with the guns, but it was going to happen at night, you know, and they're going to have a couple machine guns and there aren't that many Germans there. Two Germans watched us. We'd just keep on running. They were in the woods not too far away. We decided, "Just keep running in the woods and see if we get

away. What do we have to lose?" And as we are working we are not allowed to speak to each other, but somehow this went around — "Tonight is the night when we're going to get out."

JL: How many people were there?

FP: One gets up -- I would say about three or four hundred people at least.

JL: And they all knew about it?

FP: Yes, all knew about it. Just by whispering. And we were very careful in the beginning not to make a big thing about it and tell everybody about it. We were afraid somebody might be a big guy and tell the Germans, you know, about it. So we also consider this, "Should we tell everybody or should we just tell part of them?" And we figured if everybody got up and run, maybe everybody is going to run anyway. But somehow my uncle said, "We can't do that, you know. If we're going to run, you know, everybody should know that we're going to run." But we said, "How are you going to know everybody's going to know, you know? We can't just try to get the message around." And I really don't know how everybody knew. We just got the message around talking to people. "We're going to get up and run." So...

JL: Sorry, I've got to stop the tape.

**END OF TAPE 3, SIDE 2**

## TAPE 4, SIDE 1

FP: Well anyway, that particular night, this is only after a few days, we got up and we started running into the woods. Nobody looked back. Everybody's running for their life. And by the time the Germans started shooting with the machine guns and the dog — I don't know if they caught anybody and anybody fell down. I wouldn't know the difference. And as I say, when you run for your life you keep on running, you don't look back [to see] who's getting killed or not. Besides you couldn't have changed anything anyway looking back. So we run into the woods and it's amazingly that with that many, a few hundred people, you know, and everybody runs in different directions, finally after a couple days you start making connections with other people in the woods again. It was very dangerous in the woods. You couldn't move at daytime since the Germans had patrols trying to find us in the woods and the Polish people who were living in that territory, we were afraid they're not the best friends of the Jewish people. Even so, you know, being under control. So we had to be very careful moving and there was times, some people still had a little pack with them, you know, grabbing and running, maybe a shirt or two, they would have Polish snipers firing out at daytime from the woods at us. So we tried to move mostly at night. You can imagine move at night was very dangerous since we didn't know if we're going back to the Germans or where we going, you know. This is why it took us quite a while, about three or four days just, and we went only into what they call niemannsland, nobody's land, the buffer zone between the Russians and the Germans. This was only a few miles but it took us days to get through there and we had to be very careful which way you were going. But finally, I remember, the third day we connected with a lot of other people in the woods. And we took all the people and with people who got kind of sick and hurt in their feet or whatever, in the middle, and then the stronger people got big sticks from the trees and they would march on the outside, and started finally moving the daytime, when it was light, over to the Russian part of the side. Since we are attacked by Polish who are in the woods — and I don't know who they were, you know — by gunshots. To protect ourselves we said the only thing we're going to do — we had our meetings — and we said, "What are we going to do?" We said the stronger ones going to form on the sides and the

back with their sticks, and if anybody starts shooting, just make a lot of noise and run into the woods.

Run in where the shooting comes from. They're discouraging from keep on shooting, you know. We had to do something about it and that's what we did. It worked fantastic, just running in the woods with sticks, you know. It worked.

JL: What did you do in the woods for nourishment?

FP: Well, we had very little food to eat, that's for sure. I really don't know what we ate, but we stopped at several places where there were Polish settled farms. I think we had some food along, since before we left — we only stayed there three or four days — before we left the camps, all the wives and mothers came and brought us some food, you know. Maybe they had nothing themselves, but they gave it to us. And lucky we had it there. The Germans gave us just about nothing. So we still had a few pieces of bread left I remember and stuff. And you can live with very little if you have to. It's amazing. With how, if I think back, I don't even remember eating going through the woods, you know. You were so full of fear, afraid to be caught by the German, that would be the end of it, so you don't even feel any hunger. If you feel any hunger you forget about it. And there was little food we had, whatever was available, I imagine we just spared with everybody else that had some food. And it's dry all it was, it wouldn't make any difference, you chew on it until it gets soft.

JL: Where did you get this food from?

FP: From when we left our city, which we had taken food along to camp.

JL: But there, how long were you there that whole period?

FP: In camp?

JL: When you were taken to build the camp. How long were you there?

FP: Where now?

JL: [Inaudible]

FP: Only there three or four days, that's all.

JL: That's all. I see, you were only in that area for three or four days?

FP: Yes, right. They had nothing built yet. We were supposed to start building something, build a fence.

JL: I see. So you got out of there very quickly.

FP: Very quickly, yes. We decided it was the only change to stay alive and we're going to run. And that's what we did. Okay now, finally coming over to the Russian side, we were not the only ones running away from the Germans, so the Russians knew very well, they looked at us and —

JL: How many of you arrived together?

FP: We come to the Russians we split up again on the Russian border. We were one time fifty or sixty. We figured we should not move over [the border] in big troops like this. We had a better chance in dividing ourselves and trying, each five or four, to get over the border.

JL: Before you divided how many were you?

FP: About sixty people at one point. We started out with us four brothers together with my uncle and then as we kept on moving on we found more and more people in the woods and we kept on, for safety, going together.

JL: What, did they all come from your town at that point or had they been gathered from different places?

FP: No, the ones we met were all from our town.

JL: So the ones that had been taken to build that camp were all from your town?

FP: They were all from our town.

JL: They were not gathered from different [inaudible].

FP: No. I imagine the next ones [were] going to come from places, a different city. They started building more camps than one. Anyway, the idea was to get over there. So we finally got over there and the Russian caught up with us and then when we got to the Russians and they put us in a big hall, you know, and then we found some of our people in the big hall again, you know, who also have gone over there. Soon there were questions and we registered our names, but they have seen so many going through. We told them what it's all about and they knew it already. They kept us for couple days and they give us some

food — some bread and water and food. I remember that that's the first thing, I finally got some food again. And they said, "Okay, you can now go into the Polish-occupied territory and find a place to live."

JL: Where -- at what point on the border did you cross over?

FP: I don't know exactly what point. I don't know. I couldn't tell you. I didn't know Poland myself so well. I hadn't been there that long. But from there it wasn't far to Lwow, to Lemberg. And we went into Lumberg. If you asked me before...

JL: So you were detained before. When you were put up by the Russians before Lemberg?

FP: Yes, on the borderline, yes.

JL: Where there -- did you notice other groups crossing the border? [Inaudible.]

FP: Oh, sure. We met also people at the particular hall [in which] the Russians put us the first few days.

JL: Not just from your place?

FP: Not just from our [town]. Other people too.

JL: Did you exchange stories with these people?

FP: Oh, yes, sure, we talked about it.

JL: What were these conversations like?

FP: Well the conversation was only, you know, "We all tried to run away from the Germans to find a place where we can live," you know And we all heard the same stories, you know, wherever the Germans came they would pick up the Jewish people, you know, and organizing them for work. And everybody who was there was for some reason run away from the Germans. We also found some Communist there, Polish Jewish Communists, who had run away from the Germans, being afraid, their being Communists, you know. Even so, at this particular time the Russians, the right and left, went together to fight the war against the Polish, but that doesn't mean anything.

JL: But this was still all men also?

FP: Men, mostly men.

JL: Mostly. So there were some women?

FP: They had meet some ladies that were there at the hall, but very few.

JL: Would you know where they had come from?

FP: Also from Poland, yes.

JL: Why were they running?

FP: For the same thing run away from the Germans, you know. They were mostly younger. Not all the ladies were with family. I imagine there were younger ladies without their family, you know, or just by themselves, or with their husbands who run away from there. But it was mostly men, the majority of men who run away, who were there.

JL: So when did you get to Lwow?

FP: I don't exactly know.

JL: About. Not the date [inaudible] the year [inaudible].

FP: Well 1939.

JL: It was 1939.

FP: Yeah, sure.

JL: It was...

FP: The end of '39 about.

JL: Winter.

FP: Winter, yes. And coming to Lwow, to Lemberg, is like coming to a city with a lot of people who had run away from the Germans before the war as they were running, moving before the Germans came in. They already started running away and they got over there maybe in time, you know. And then also, maybe right after the war when the Germans came in, still try to run away and get away from the Germans and run over there for whatever reason, political reasons or being afraid being Jewish and so on. Also amazingly, we found over there a lot of people who had come from Austria and from Czechoslovakia and the countries which were taken over by Germans before and somehow they went to Poland. When the war started out, they surely were running away from the Germans, keep on running and running. So if

they were not killed on the way running, then they finally ended up over there. Their situation surely was incredible over there, since it was at wartime. I mean, wartime everything stops since they have nothing organized anymore and there is no work forces and there is no food and there is no — it becomes a very, very disorganized thing and everybody tries to do as good as one can to stay alive and find a place where to sleep. So sleeping was the thing you had to pay for. So how could you pay for it when you didn't have anything to pay for it? Except if you had a shirt, you could sell it or something. Again was the business: you start with the Russians. Whatever you have you sell them. And then you pay a small amount to lay on the floor somewhere. There was so many people, you know. You could buy yourself a space and lay with twenty-five people on the floor, and [with] this you were very lucky, you know. That would be your sleeping quarter.

JL: What were they, big halls? The public places?

FP: No, there's no more public places for sleeping. As I say, nothing was organized. You come into the city and you talk to other people what they're doing and they're saying, "There's some places left at this house where you could maybe fall asleep there," you know. This is how you start organizing yourself. And since there are so many people there who are on the same space as you are and then you find out how they make a living. So they say, "Well, if you have something to sell you can sell to the Russians. There's a market there and the Russians come there and they buy anything you have. And if you don't have nothing then you have to go and steal something to be able to sell it so you have something to eat. Or you go into black market dealing and wheeling." Anything to stay alive you would do. There were no jobs.

JL: What did you do? Yourself?

FP: That's exactly what I did. I remember watches we didn't have and the Germans had taken those away from us before we left. At first when we got there so-called building the camp, the first they took was our — I remember, if you had a pen, you know, anything. If you have gold in your mouth they take this out of you that time already. They didn't wait until the concentration camp came. Those soldiers were all out to take whatever they could. Watches, everybody had a watch was taken away. They'd say, "You didn't need

it when you work — a watch." Bam. So we had very little. But I remember we had a family in Lemberg, okay, whom we helped at a time when they was running out from Germany and they came to our town and they supplied them with food and apartment. Somehow they moved to Lemberg later on and we knew them, we knew their address. The first thing I heard about it, I contact them. And they were very happy to see us. So they said, you know, "Well, you can stay at our house," but we said, "No, we really don't want this," you know, since they had a lot of people already there, you know. [We] said, "We are young. We can find a place where to stay." But they're the first ones who helped us. I remember they gave us some money and so on. And we went out on our own. There was two families there. There was another family there from Chemnitz who had lived there. There was only the older man with his daughter. Now, he had a lot of room and we started living in his house. After a while we heard about him. We didn't even know he was living there but this family said, "Oh, there's so and so, Mr. Schnitzel, he lives there and he's from Chemnitz." So we saw him, you know, after sleeping a few days in a room, and then we went to his house. We slept on the floor there, too. But he was living there and he had — I remember, I'll never forget — the first time he made us some — and he had a kosher house — and he made some soup meat. He was cooking it, boiling it and gave us. I'll never forget, the first time we got a little piece of meat, boiled meat and after a long time and it was like eating, I don't know, the best of the best, you know. And I know there was a lot of fat on there and he cooked it out, he boiled it into the soup for me. He had that greasy fat on there, the boiled meat with fat. But if I looked today at fat like dos iz nisht gut.<sup>41</sup> But at that time, it tasted like it would be the best thing in the world. I guess the body must have needed it or something and it just was outstanding, you know. So from there on, we had established a place where to stay. There was food, you could beg once in a while, and we'd go out and do all kinds of things. I used to buy tobacco in the black market — I don't know how we got the beginning of it — and make cigarettes, roll them up in paper. Cigarettes is always a big deal. It's really amazing. People don't care as much about food, but to have a cigarette to smoke, they give away anything. It's just unbelievable.

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<sup>41</sup> Yiddish for "that is not good."

JL: We meaning you were still together with your brothers and uncle?

FP: Yes, right, yes, at that time. And also my father had run away. Was in Bialystok. And somebody, like [inaudible] had heard about somebody about my father who was in Bialystok. Funny how those things go on. So [we] immediately send a message, somebody went to Bialystok, that we are in Lwow. And then my father came over there. But my older brother did not get away. My older brother stayed and they got him, the Germans. See they both run away. But somehow my father got farther than my brother. I don't know what happened, I can't remember the story. I think they went both to Krakow, from our [town] to Krakow, and my brother had fallen in love with a cousin he had, a girl. For a long time they were, you know, but this cousin was married. It was just about impossible at this time. You didn't think about it. Then my brother stayed there and my father kept on running. So, this is the oldest brother who didn't come out of concentration camp. So he married the cousin in concentration camp. And they both ended up in the concentration camp. They both were killed. So anyway, that's the love story of my oldest brother. So [inaudible] as I say, we made it. Anything we could do, as I told you before. Somebody had an old watch, like a not-working watch, we used to take it out to the Russians and make our tricks and get a lot of money for it. We stopped there for a long, long time, you know. It was a messy thing since there was no way — and then came the time when the Russians decided that all those people who had come from the German-occupied Polish territory should register or must register. We for a while didn't want to register. We just said, "We're not going to do it."

JL: Register meaning to take on Russian citizenship?

FP: Yes. You could take Russian citizenship or return back to the territory you came from in occupied Polish territory. And so we talked about back and forth, "What are we going to do?" you know. So we finally registered, and registered not to become a Russian citizen, but we said that they have a right to stay here until there's actually a peace settlement or peace treaty signed whereby we can return to our own home land. Now the Russians had all our addresses and names and they knew exactly where we were living so those who became Russian citizen, most of them that were moving into Russia, younger people had

moved to the Finnish war line, front, they were fighting the first war in Finland. I think they tried out our weapons between the Germans and the Russians. See who had better weapons. And those young people on the front line, it was a good time to get rid of them. We didn't know how to speak Russian and didn't know how to shoot a weapon. I imagine having so many people there and no work for them, nothing to do, it wasn't the Russian way of system having people running around, and black market, and they didn't know who was a spy, who's not a spy, you know. They had to try to clean up the place there of all those people. In a way, I could understand it, you know and then the other way, I said, "They have no right to do this," because we had a right under international law you know, and all this bullshit. So, what they did with all the smart guys who registered that they would return to their homeland after the war [when] the peace treaty [was] signed, you know, they just picked us up from our homes at night and put us into boxcars and shipped us out to Siberia.

JL: So they didn't go for your idea that you just wanted to [inaudible]?

FP: No, no, they had their own ideas.

JL: Let me ask you how long were you in Lwow altogether?

FP: For about a year.

JL: Till the end of 1940?

FP: 1940, around, not quite to the end. About a year.

JL: Okay. How did you feel about being under a Russian administration for that period?

FP: We really were not. When you say Russian administration, I wouldn't call it Russian administration. We didn't feel anything like Russian administration as there was nothing organized. You didn't have a job, you didn't have any work, you didn't get any money, you had nothing, you know. It was a wide open thing. It wasn't anything where you say, like Russians say now, you can register for job and you can work, you know. That wasn't available. It's hard to understand, but it was disorganized place where the people who used to live there originally, some had jobs, most of them didn't either since in a time of the war everything was disturbed. Railroads were bombed and factories were bombed and it was people run

away back and forth and there was no more organization to keep people on work on jobs. So even those people who did live there, who had living quarters there and lived there for years, you know, citizens that part of Poland, most of those people had no jobs.

JL: What you were saying to me before, that some people did accept Soviet citizenship and that some were sent to the front. Of any of your friends that accepted the Russian offer, if they lived what do you know about their experiences after?

FP: I know that some people who took citizenship and went to Russia and returned to that part of Poland after a couple months were — I only can talk about those who returned, I don't know those who did not return — were very unhappy about the situation in Russia since even people who had been in the Communist Party were unhappy then. They expected particular good treatment, which they did not get. And the reason some returned, especially married couples, is that they had maybe a child or two children and they were told, and this is the Russian system, that the children go to a place that children will be in play and the mother has to go to work and if the mother does not work then they wouldn't get enough money to live on. If somebody got sick, it wasn't like being sick in Poland, [where] if you had temperature you could just be sick and stay home. Even if you have a temperature and be sick you had to go to work until a doctor will write you a good excuse. So they were very unhappy with the situation in Russia which they were not used to. They used to live in a more democratic, free country where you can do — you don't like the job today, go and try to find another job.

JL: It was okay for them just to return?

FP: They had a tough time to return. I think it was a struggle. No, they returned illegal, they didn't return legal. They couldn't legally return; illegal they returned. But people do a lot of things in stress, you know, which is understandable, you know. People just were not used to this kind of programs, you know, where you [were] programmed into the economy of a country and you're supposed to do what you're told to do, not what you want to do. If they put you on a job you better stay on that job. If you don't like the job, that's too bad, you know, particular at that time. I don't know how things are today in Russia. So this is

from people who went there, some of whom came back. Not all of them, some of them. I'm sure many of them who eventually settled with their family stayed there.

JL: But you didn't hear anything?

FP: No, no.

JL: So you say you were arrested at night, put into a boxcar. Was this with your brothers and your uncle?

FP: Yes. Not my uncle, no. No, my uncle had a relative in the mother's hometown which he went over there to live with, with which actually he lived from childhood on in Poland.

JL: Is this the same uncle who lived with you?

FP: Yes, yes. He went over there and they said they going to take him. He was an older man and he could live with them and didn't have to worry about food or anything else. It was his own family. My uncle, called [Elkan] Ackerhalt, his wife was my mother's sister, okay, that was our relationship. But he was related on the other side to the other people. I wasn't related. I don't remember the town, but he went over there to live with them so he wouldn't have to worry about where to sleep and food and everything else, which was fine. And so actually they got us three brothers out of there at night.

JL: They -- who is [they]?

FP: The Russians.

JL: Before you were on your way to Siberia, did you try to escape?

FP: No. It was very hard. You couldn't escape, I think. You were put in boxcars and those doors were only opened up a little bit, a tiny slot so you could do your necessary physical things you had to do. And sanitary things were terrible. You can imagine. In this boxcar and they had everything, they had men and women, everyone was in one big boxcar. They had two layers. They had a layer of straw on the bottom and then had wooden planks in the middle and layer with straw on top. So you had a first and second floor and it took us a long time to get there since, I imagine, the Russians are not -- at a that time didn't have too many railroad lines and what were most important would go first and we would always tend to be pushed away on the side and sit there. Again, you're talking about food at that time, I don't know how

many times we got food into the railroad car. There were times they stopped and were delivering food to us but all we ever got was bread and water. That was our food for weeks. It took us weeks to get to Siberia. And as I say, some people got sick. I remember they took some people out of one station when all the people got very sick. I don't know what happened to them. And the rest of it, it's a nightmare, you know. The unbelievable sanitary — you can imagine. There was no water to wash, nothing. You stay in your clothes and sleep in your clothes. After a while, the lice start eating you up, you know, and we just were picking each other, you know, and trying to get them off and threw them through the doors and...

JL: Sorry, I'm going to have to stop you again.

**END OF TAPE 4, SIDE 1**

## TAPE 4, SIDE 2

FP: So it took us several weeks to get there to Siberia. Once we got there, thankfully, we actually felt it was heaven — putting in barrack and had water to wash and a fireplace where we could make a fire in the barrack. And to me, anyway, and I think to most of the people coming out from a boxcar for several weeks, it seemed like Siberia is heaven all of a sudden. And so being there, it's, "Ah, we're all going to have to go to work in the woods."

JL: Before you got there, let me ask, were you told where you were being sent?

FP: No.

JL: What were your speculations?

FP: Well, we didn't speculate anything. We really didn't even know where we're going. I didn't speculate anything. I didn't know and I particular didn't care. It came to the point where I couldn't do nothing about it and "Whatever's going to happen is going to happen. Let's see it." I tell you I didn't care at this particular time and you're getting up from this and have nowhere to wash and have no toilets and have no food, you really -- any place is going to be better, you know, than it is laying in a boxcar.

JL: Were there guards with you?

FP: Oh, yes, sure.

JL: How did they treat you?

FP: They didn't have anything to treat us, really, since we didn't go outside or we didn't —

JL: Compared to the Germans.

FP: Compared to the Germans, I guess that really was to watch us that we didn't run away from them and stayed there. I mean that's their duty, but I don't think anybody ever tried to run away so there was no beating or anything and no reason for it. They'd just watch us that we didn't run away and get out of the boxcars if there was no chance.

JL: So then the train never stopped anywhere?

FP: The train stopped, sure, quite often when they put them on the sideline. I remember a couple times when they had opened the door and we could go out and walk, you know, and they just would watch us for a short period, yes.

JL: So you never stayed over at a transit camp?

FP: No.

JL: You started telling me — so how long did it take you to get to Siberia?

FP: Several weeks. Three or four weeks.

JL: This was the fall of 1940?

FP: Yes, right.

JL: Do you remember the name of the camp?

FP: I don't. I only know it was in the Omskaya Oblast<sup>42</sup> and I think they called it Yalutorovsk, Omskaya Oblast. It was in the woods, it's not a particular place. I don't even know how far it was away from Omska, from any other place.

JL: What type of work did you do there?

FP: We worked in the woods. There were all kinds of different work. Like I worked particular in a sawmill and there we would make railroad ties and lumber for any purpose, you know. And other people used to work in the woods just cutting down trees. But that's where I was designated for, to go to a sawmill everyday in the morning, which was a few kilometer away from there, and walk back at night. And we would get paid for this work and for this money we got paid, we had a canteen there where we can buy our food. But it was figured out in a such a manner that you really had to work hard to stay alive. The food we got was mostly some soup, some bread. I remember once a week they had meat, a little piece of meat, if you could afford to buy it. You had to be a good worker to be able to make enough money to do that. This is what drove you to working harder, to get the incentive so you could buy a piece of meat. But it didn't bother me to work at all, it just bothered me when it got wintertime and it got cold that we didn't have any

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<sup>42</sup> Omska Region, Siberia.

clothes that we preferred for this kind of a cold weather. Going to work in winter time with this rapid falling snow in Siberia, it took us sometimes hours to get to work, very exhausted since the one in the front would have to make the first step in the snow.

JL: You walked to work?

FP: Yes.

JL: How far away was it?

FP: Well it was several kilometers. I would say about two to three miles.

JL: Every day?

FP: Every day back and forth. And so we would have to leave very early in the morning when it was dark and we usually come home when it's dark, winter time, since winter time there are not that many hours with light. We also had to protect ourselves in winter time from the wolves in the woods, which were howling away. But we used to always go in groups at least of eight or ten to a particular job and we tried to exchange people. The front one who makes the first step in the big snow would go for a while then the next one would step into this. Then second one goes to the front, then the second one goes in front, so it makes the first step so it wasn't so hard. The hardest one to do was get the first step in the snow and then get out.

JL: Who organized all of this?

FP: We organized it ourselves, you know.

JL: So you had no guards going to work with you?

FP: No, didn't need them. Where are you going to run in the dark in the woods? Some people tried to run away but they catch up with them very fast.

JL: What do they do to them?

FP: Just brought them back to camp and put them in a special place by themselves for a while, a few days without food, and then they let them out back to work. What can they do with them? I didn't even think about trying to run away in Siberia. Where would I run into Russia? It was a war besides. Not the Russian

war time, that was later, but the whole Siberian area was an area of people who would be sent there, not only us but all the Russian people for some reason had failed to be the right citizens and they were sent there.

JL: So in your particular camp and workplace what population was there?

FP: Only people who were coming from Germany originally. We had run away from the Germans. Nobody else except the few, the few Russian people who were there to watch us. A Kommando<sup>43</sup> and a few people to watch us.

JL: No non-Jews?

FP: No, all Jewish people. Married couples, singles.

JL: So there were men and women?

FP: There were married couples.

JL: Were the married couples able to stay together?

FP: Yes, they had a barrack for married couples and they had barrack for singles, yes.

JL: Were there any Soviet Jews there that you know of?

FP: No, not there.

JL: Did you have opportunity to meet any other Jews besides German Jews?

FP: Yes, Polish Jews. We were all together.

JL: What kind of contact were you able to have with them?

FP: We were free after work. I mean, even at work we could talk and sit together at our lunch break when we had it. Or even going to work, coming back, or at night, we had time to sit and talk. It wasn't a camp you weren't allowed to talk or something like that.

JL: It was not like in a prison?

FP: No, no, no.

JL: So what was the general treatment?

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<sup>43</sup> German for "detachment."

FP: Well, I imagine in a prison you can talk. But you were just in Siberia in the woods. The general treatment wasn't bad at all. We were not treated badly. The only thing was that you had to work very hard to be able to stay alive to have your food, which is fine. But the problem was when you had some people were sick and if you are sick you would not get any food if you didn't have the money to pay for it. So they had made no allowances for anything. So the allowance had to be made between us, again, to try and collect some money for those who are sick so we could feed them and, you know, take away a little bit from us, which we didn't have too much, but still enough to feed somebody else. We also were allowed to write letters from there, which we did. I wrote a letter to Israel to my cousin. I got a package through the Red Cross in Siberia. And I got two blankets, to Siberia, through the Red Cross. It was amazing. And some other people got packages of food through the Red Cross who also had relatives in foreign countries and they somehow came through. Some of them came and some didn't, but some did.

JL: And clothing? Did some people send clothing?

FP: Yes. I got one package from my cousin who was in Israel, it was Esther, who said she sent several packages, you know, tried to get through Red Cross to me, but I only got one. I'm lucky I got one, you know. I imagine then maybe next one you send later, maybe you get five times a war or something, I don't know.

JL: You started talking about clothing earlier. The Russians gave you whatever clothing there was?

FP: No, no. The Russians didn't give you any clothing. There was the same story: the Russian would like to buy clothing and if you had anything left of your clothing when you were taken out from home and taken to boxcars and you took it along, you had a good chance to trade with the Russian people who are living in Siberia who were free to move around [inaudible]. They used to come to our camp and trade with the people if they had a shirt or a blouse or a pants they wanted and would give them — they had a cow there and they would give them some milk, or for so many weeks bring, you know, you milk. They were really pretty honest people, I think. People when they serious become very honest. I really believe that.

There's something about poor people, there's more honesty and integrity in poor people than there is in rich people, so. Whatever this brings up I don't know.

JL: So the contact you had with Russians was just basically for needs?

FP: For the needs, right. And also the contact we had, there was several Russians working with us in the sawmill, yes. Especially those who were running the mechanical part. The sawmill was run by steam so they had to have water steam tank there and the heat and operated, you know, and the saw, which was operated by a Russian, you know, until we learned how to do it ourselves.

JL: So you had a chance to chat with them?

FP: Oh, yes, sure. We talked to the Russians.

JL: What did you talk about? Did you talk about anything but work?

FP: Well, it was just about work.

JL: There was no chance to talk about the war's progress?

FP: We talked about things, yes. We didn't have much time to talk to them. With work, we had to work anyway and then there would just be Russians there. But I remember we used to talk about how poorly it was that we didn't have enough food to eat, you know, and so on. The Russian who used to work with me said, "That is nothing." He was sent for some reason there, Siberia too, to work there, and he said, "See, all the food, the reason we have the problems — we know want to conquer the world, become all Communists," you know, "and the food is all put away in case of war that our families will not have to suffer and our children. See they will have the food in case of war." Well, the first day the war broke out, after three days we had nothing, there was no food whatsoever. And I was thinking about it you know — everything stopped, transportation, you know, everything. War times, people don't really know what it means in America, you know. I'm always amazed about it. The people are so naive since they never have gone through anything like this. Everything stops. Electricity stopped. Now we just had a big storm not so long ago in Wisconsin and the electricity stopped and had to throw away all the food, everything was

refrigerated. From the freezer everything had to go to the dump. People had no refrigerators anymore, no freezers anymore and here without refrigerator and freezers we are done [laughs].

JL: [inaudible] So generally there was lumber work. Was there any work other work available for people?

FP: No, this was only work in the woods.

JL: Yesterday you started to tell me you had an accident at the sawmill. What happened?

FP: Actually, after the war started between Germany and the Russians, they took away some of those workers and put them in the army, the Russian workers. There stayed a very few there, but those who were mechanical, who were running the saws and so on, like the sawmill has a wagon where you throw on the wood and then you run it through the saw, back and forth, and get different shapes out of what you want. You keep turning around the wood. I was working next to him on putting this wood on the wagon, he was running it back and forth, so they decided I was the one who should know most about how to run the saw. Which was true. So I did run the machine and then they were very happy with me. I knew exactly how to cut down, what pieces comes out best. But one thing I did not do is — and again, the more you produced the more you would earn the more you could buy food — and I wanted to make more money to be able to get not only for myself, but we had a lot of sick people, you know, and — camp is amazing. It seemed there were some people who would refuse to help, even if they had tsores.<sup>44</sup> And it's amazing, I'll bring this up again: the people who were able to take more things out with them, who had the most things. They had a couple suits and a few shirts and all kinds of things to trade into food. Those who had nothing would spare that little nothing. Those that have more would refuse to give anything. It's just unbelievable. But this is the way it was. And again, I was always the one who had to go around, collect money. So I said, "No, if I'm going to work hard, I'm going to have money. I don't have to ask them so many questions. I just give it." So this is what happened, except this machine was run by steam. The wagon would run back and forth automatically. It was connected to a belt and whenever you had to do some adjusting of the big saw blades, which the wagon would run into, you're supposed to pull the string

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<sup>44</sup> Yiddish for 'troubles' or 'difficulties'.

which would ring a bell in the building where they had the steam machine to shut off the steam so it would stop running the saw blade. It as a whole process. But it takes quite a while, and again when you're done with adjusting you ring again. And if it's not rightly adjusted, you have to stop it again, since you can't cut crooked boards. So I thought, "No, I don't always have stop that saw," you know. I bet you've never seen a saw, but it's a big, big saw blade and on both sides in the front and then it goes in and has sides adjusted so it goes one way or the other way, you just move the bolt, and you have a big screw with holes to the sides and you have to loosen them up and set them for back or forth and then tie them up again. But the wrenches they had were so old and so worn out from all this adjusting. So I said, "I'm not going to ring. I adjusted the ring before, didn't adjust it right, so I'm not going to ring again, you know. I do this without any problem." So I bent down, took the wrench, and I'm going to loosen up, and I flew off this wrench. It, you know, just came out of the socket and I flew with my hand into the saw, you know, and it just goes bzzzhhp. I didn't feel nothing, you know. That saw went a very fast speed. Absolutely feel nothing. You can see, here, it went right straight here the saw. My brother was working next to me, I put him on my place — my right hand man. And I was just stunned, nothing. No blood came out, nothing. And my brother looked at me and he grabbed me. He said, "Sit down. Sit down." "What do you want from me?" I was shocked. From the shock in the first few seconds there was no blood coming out, you know, nothing. Blood came out much later while I was sitting down. Finally went zzzhhh, coming out. But that's from the shock, you know. I guess the system of shock it just stayed there for a while. And there was a Russian there who was watching us was from our camp. He always came down with us and then watched us all day. And we knew him very well, we had worked together a long time, and talked to him.

JL: What language did you talk?

FP: We started talking Russian with him, yes. It was the first thing I learned in Russian, a few words anyway. For better or worse, we could talk whenever we could. And he was very excited about it. He -- [for] some reason we got very good along with him, you know, and he immediately tore off my brother's shirt, you

know, and put it around there and he said, "Hold your arm up and put something around here," you know. And he took me in his, he had a buggy there with a horse and he said, "I'm going to take you to a hospital," you know. There was no nurse or nothing. And I know we're going up in the buggy for at least another couple hours until we got to water, some kind of a. Then he had to call somebody over to take us over across the water on a what you call this...

JL: A ferry?

FP: Ferry. And the funny thing was the ferry wasn't there and you had to wait and he made a lot of noise, you know and I got — he looked at me all the time and I got weaker and weaker and weaker, you know, a lot of blood loss, a lot of blood loss. It was all red, the whole cotton shirt was all red.

JL: Were you feeling pain by then?

FP: No, I wasn't feeling pain, I just felt kind of weak, weak. Anyhow, he said, "Don't move it, just leave it there. Don't worry about the red," you know. "That's maybe going to stop the bleeding. The more it sucks in, it's going to stop it." Anyway, he finally got me to the hospital, you know, and across the water and finally got me there and I remember I really was weak and he took me in and immediately put me under, you know. And I remember when I was under they had to pull this off and that was painful. When they tried to pull off all that shirt, you know. Oh! And he said to me, you know, "This guy is still awake. I thought you put him under." He said, "Give him other doses," you know, and he sent the gas up real high at that time, adjusting the gas and breathing. You count to ten. They couldn't get me down even when I was weak. And he said, "That's impossible. Give him some more." So they gave me some more gas and finally put me under. Then I got up it was again bandaged up, you know, and they kept me in the hospital for a day and then they said, "There is somebody on their way who will take you back. You got a nurse in your camp who will have to do the bandages." And he told me, "You lost your two fingers," you know, "we saved the other ones. We stitched over so we didn't have to take it off." So actually besides the loss I think they're all gone anyway, you know.

JL: No feeling left?

FP: The fingers were gone. They fell off the saw, just pieces as far as I remember. So anyway, [inaudible] he said, "We usually wouldn't let you go home the first day, but we got so many people from the front coming, you know, who have to go into the hospital. We don't have any room for private citizens, you know, for you. So you go back to camp, you know, and you don't work." He said, "You can't work anyway for a while." And that was just shortly before — it was a war time before we are released from camp and I went back to work. It was shortly before we were released from camp, the first agreement where Churchill and Roosevelt and Stalin came together at the same time. They came together. They agreed that Jews should be released from camp. So I know I was in camp about only a week after this happened to me and then we are told you could go out of camp. So that's how I got out of camp with my bandages around and whatever I had.

JL: And when did you leave?

FP: It was 1941. 31<sup>st</sup> of August.

JL: Let me just have a couple more questions.

FP: I remember this date because I'll never forget [laughs].

JL: Sure. A couple more questions about Siberia. So the housing conditions were barracks were hardly warm?

FP: We had big fireplaces in there. As long as we make our own wood we could fire it up, you know.

JL: Were the barracks clean?

FP: Well we had to clean them ourselves. We kept them clean. No one would clean them for us.

JL: What kind of war news were you able to get while you were in Siberia?

FP: What do you mean?

JL: Before the war broke out, before Russia was?

FP: We didn't get any news.

JL: The progress of the war?

FP: There was no news. People used to talk but there was no news. No one really knew about it. We had no radios, we had nothing. No newspaper.

JL: Were there any cultural activities there?

FP: Well, the only culture activities we would do ourselves and there wasn't much of it and I think most the people after work are very tired and already have to go lay down to sleep.

JL: At the camp, did the Russians prepare anything?

FP: No, no.

JL: So there was no cinema?

FP: No, nothing.

JL: Were you able to have contact with women at all?

FP: Yes, sure.

JL: What were your thoughts while you were there for a year

FP: In Siberia?

JL: Yes.

FP: Again, I thought about a time when there will be some kind of a peace and treaty that we can return in our home, and I felt very much safe in Siberia except if I wouldn't have died for the starvation or the sickness or be eaten up by the mosquitoes in summer time, there was not a problem, you know. I could survive and wait for the time. We almost looked for the time when there was going to be a peace and we'd be able to return, you know. There used to be Russians to come to our camp who came from the government to question us about how we are satisfied or we had any particular needs for anything, you know. They came asked us these things once in a while, and then we asked them, you know, "How long we're going to be staying here?" They said, "We don't know, but there's a war going on," and at that time there was no war going on. But he said, you know, "We'll let you know if there is something new or you can return. You can't return anyway — the Germans are there," and so on. But they used to come once in a while. They used to come the Red Cross committee coming to watch over us and they came with

some Russians asked us questions. And it's funny [what] people will ask for. You know what we used to ask for? Well, we didn't complain too much about the food but the people asked for toilet paper and for cigarettes [laughs]. That's pretty interesting. And clothing, yes.

JL: Were you ever in the situation where you had to be tried for anything by the Russians?

FP: Yes, but this was later on, not in camp. That's when I got out of camp later.

JL: Before you were sent to Uzbekistan?

FP: After we were released from camp, we went into Russia to work. We tried to find work.

JL: I want to get to that. Did the refugees protest against their plight by staging demonstrations at all?

FP: No. We did not protest in this way, but protested only for not having enough food and clothing. But we had no choice, there was nothing we could do in Siberia but go to work and try to earn as much money so you could buy at least the food you needed, since they told us very loud if you're not going to go to work, you're not going to eat. Simple like this.

JL: There were no, for example, not to comply with camp rules because you wanted more food.

FP: The only thing we did not comply with is when there comes a Jewish holiday, which they told us we had no holiday in Russia and we had to go to work. But we refused. That's the only time when we demonstrated our unity and had services without having prayer books, and that's something interesting too. They requested prayer books from the Russians. There were not prayer books. But some people brought some little books along, you know. They had them. Very orthodox people had little books and so they had one or two books so the one who would be standing up in front and you would be amazed that, it comes Rosh Hashana or Yom Kippur and nobody would go to work. Absolutely nobody. There was really unity there. To the point that we were told that anybody who would not go to work would be put away in a strict restricted place, you know, where they just put people when you wouldn't listen to them. But since there was such a unity the barrack that was picked was the barrack that I was living in there. They were all men's barracks. And that's where the service was held and they put by the entrance they put all the strong guys and on the other side was the one who would perform the services.

JL: [Inaudible.]

FP: Yes.

END OF TAPE 4, SIDE 2

## TAPE 5, SIDE 1

JL: One more question about Siberia. Do you remember any interesting episodes or facts about camp life that you remember?

FP: Well, the only what you call interesting episodes — we tried to do the best we could to stay alive actually, and there wasn't too much interesting episodes, except for...what I remember is only that I always believed that everybody gets paid for his good and bad deeds. When I say paid I don't mean monetary-wise or anything else, but somehow it haunts you at one time or other one and there's something in life. This is what I saw partly in camp and some people who were able to get some packages through Red Cross and who were not able to bring themselves to share with other people anything. Who -- in camp I have seen that even at the time when everybody was down, even at that time there still were some people who could not bring themselves to share. I'm talking about Jewish people in camp which always was very amazing to me. Luckily, there were only a few of them. Most of the people were very nice and tried to share and help. But also, I remember in camp there was a time when we — I don't know, call myself a wise man or something — but before the war started we used to get bread which was very heavy and wet. It got wetter so after the war started since I think we were on a ration system then and you would get so much bread on your card and to be able to fulfill the normal bread it just got soaked. Instead of having half a pound of bread you got a quarter pound of bread. The rest was all water and you couldn't eat it, it was so soaked inside that it was like clay, you know. That's impossible. So I suggested to all the people to cut it and dry it. Since it was summer time, we didn't have any -- we just put it outside in the sun and would dry it and make toast. Actually it was very good. Then when we left the camp finally we had some toast, everybody had a few bags of toast to take along on the road to keep us going. But otherwise, in camp besides these holidays when we had — one particular holiday was Rosh Hashana, yes, I remember very well since I told you before, that we had the balkoyreh,<sup>45</sup> which was the one who was leading the services who had a book to read from, the only one. The rest just stand there and we are

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<sup>45</sup> Yiddish pronunciation of Hebrew balkoreh, meaning a person leading the reading in a religious service.

involved emotionally. You can imagine, very much so, what they went through and where they were. The rest of them was what we call the hard core, strong young guys who would stand by the door in case we had the one commander of the camp come in. And he came in with his helper and he wanted to go up to the front to see who was the leader and they wouldn't let him go through. He pulled his gun, he said, "If you don't go through, I shoot." We said, "We don't care what you do, you're not going to go through here. You have to shoot all of us before you go through there." He argued back and forth that he only wanted to see who was up in front, the leader. He didn't care about us, you know. And we know if he would see the leader that was the first guy they would pull out and put him away somewhere. And so we didn't let him go and he was there about ten minutes and he finally turned around and put his revolver back and then went out and nothing happened. We just kept on having our services. That's the only time I remember we really refused to go to work. And somehow it worked. So, that's about you know.

JL: Okay. You did start to tell me before about the Anglo-Soviet Agreement and that August 31<sup>st</sup> you were able to leave the camp. What made you decide to go to Uzbekistan?

FP: Well, first of all, we tried to get to someplace where we figured there would be some food. At least food from the trees. We could pick it ourselves if we had to.

JL: Who's we?

FP: People who were living there in Siberia. I would say everybody had this opinion. And get out from the cold. We had no clothing. In wintertime it was terrible. We used to freeze up our fingers and arms and we'd watch each other. When you get white, you rub them in the snow and get them alive again. And constantly we had to watch each other. You would freeze up your fingers and your nose and your ears and you just didn't have any clothes, and other parts of your body. So everybody wanted to get out from this. Besides, being in [Siberia during] summertime [was] impossible. The mosquitoes would eat you up in summertime and it's from all the accumulation of snow in the woods. It was like a swamp all summer, you know, and so you get an amount of mosquitoes big like flies. So to get away from there, you wanted to go somewhere where it was warm. First of all you didn't need any clothing, you didn't have to worry

about it. Also you figured there must be some trees that has apples and oranges and anything, you know, to see a piece of fruit again which you haven't seen for a long time. This was the reason for trying to get there, where it was. So when we left the camp finally, and nobody had any money or anything, but it was written in our papers that — each one got a paper with name on there — that that's the reason we are released. We were allowed to go into Russia, any place where we wanted to stay and live. It was all fine and good, except there was a wartime going on and in from Siberia into deeper Russia there was only one railroad line, which was completely taken for military purposes, not for people, get them on trains. Even [if we] could [be] allowed to use a train free of charge, to the next, we couldn't back and forth farther into Russia.

JL: What kind of papers did you carry with you?

FP: We had a piece of paper with our name in there and it stated that we were released under the agreement between Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin, in Yalta on this particular day and that we're free, have a right to live in Russia until a time will come that we can return to homes. Be released from the camps.

JL: With your nationality on there, too?

FP: Yes, yes, the name, nationality and everything on there. I think even we had fingerprints on there.

JL: The fact that you were Jews, was that on there, too?

FP: I don't remember if it was saying Jewish. I thought I still had that paper somewhere and I couldn't find it, then I wanted preserved it, you know, the freedom from camp.

JL: Excuse me – I don't -- why do you think that you got released with that agreement being made? Because there was a war, did they not know what to do with you?

FP: No, I think the concern of Churchill were to get those people out from camp, from Siberian camps, and they figured if they get them out from camps it would be easier to survive in other parts of Russia, you know. This I guess was the motivation of Roosevelt and Churchill, who knew, I'm sure, had information about all those many people who were put in different camps in Siberia and maybe other states too. They actually thought they're going to do us a good deed. Also they had established points in capitol cities of

different states in Russia, when you got there with your paper you would receive some kind of a help, a ration. Now I know that we received, several times — like I got a pair of shoes at one point, I got a blanket at other point, and other point I got some milk powder and chocolate bars, you know. But they would again stamp on your paper on the back so you could not come back all the time, ask them for things. But they had set up American points where American people were who would give you something when you presented your paper. Since they did not -- I don't think that Churchill even, and Roosevelt, realized what a war means. They just have never been in a war and so many people don't realize when the war started the Russians immediately totally went for the ration cards and the only way you could get a card to receive food was you had to be registered in a particular city or town, wherever, and then you would pick up every month your cards for your system. But since we came out from camp, we are not registered any place and we are owed for weeks. As I say, luckily we had some toast along and I don't know how we. We stole some foods from the cows and wherever we could steal some on the fields, we would eat it. We used to eat, I remember, corn pressed, after the oil is pressed out, the corn seeds were pressed into crates and then they were fed to cows. And we used to steal this, which was like stone, and chew on it. That thing was very healthy, it was the seeds of the corn, and it kept us alive, things like this kept us alive. Or anytime we found some garbage somewhere, you know, eat potato peels, which was the best thing to have.

JL: This was on the way to...?

FP: That's on the way to freedom, out from camps. But I say I don't think the American and the English really realize what it means in a wartime to get out from camps when there's really no facilities or trains to move you. That we had -- the only way to move us was jumping on the railroad cars which were all used for military purposes. We didn't care, you know. And those railroad trains were all with Russian army who watched them, you know. There were always convoys going along with the trains. But they have seen those people in all the stations, you know. There must have been so many camps, so many people were released, that if they come to a station there would nobody would be able to go on the trains. So you'd

wait. You'd move ahead a little bit. You wait, then train starts moving and then you run and you hang on and you try to hang on up there on top of the boxcar or whatever. And there's no question about it, those who were more stronger and younger had a better chance than those who were older and sick. And a lot of people from out from freedom from Siberia, they died on their way out to freedom since there was no way, you know. I'm sure that the intention was very good but they had no idea there was no trains available, there was no food for them on the road, and it would take weeks and weeks to get out from there. Until they got to the major capitol city where you could get — what did they get? Maybe a pair of shoes or a shirt or just a few chocolate balls which will not keep them alive. But I guess living in England or living in the United States, whoever heard about things like this, or knew about catastrophic things like this that people really suffer? And so we -- I told you I just had come out after my operation, this was about a week later when we were released from camp. I'm amazed about it and always say there must be something about willpower and strength which no doctors or no medicine can heal. That is my opinion. First, I had no bandages. All dirty bandages I had on, and I used to wear them for a long time and for weeks and every once in a while I started bleeding a little bit but just kept on going. We came first to the city of Ufa, this is the capitol city of Bashkiria.<sup>46</sup> We finally got there. It was very cold there so there we made our first stop and tried to find jobs which we found, jobs. I had found a job with my brothers to heat some – it was a big house which was, only people who living there were all officers of the Communist Party, a big apartment house, and they needed people to take care of the central heating system which was in the basement. Big monstrous furnaces with steam heat which you had to constantly feed with coal and take out the ashes and that was our job. And you also had a canteen there where all the people would eat. We were not allowed to eat there, but we had met all the Russian girls and they here and there would smuggle something out for us, some leftover food, or it was food that would be thrown away. And besides we had a lot of potato peels stuff from the kitchen and once in a while they snuck down a little bit of flour for us and we'd make our own pancakes on that beautiful big furnace, you know. We just stick

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<sup>46</sup> The Bashkir Autonomous SSR.

them on there and the heat and they make us some nice pancake, you know. But everything was just beautiful, you know. Same as our potato peel, you know, you just stick them on there and roast them and eat them. And we used to sleep there. We put some stuff on top of those big water tanks, it was warm, you know, and then just lay on top there and sleep there. You can imagine how kind of dusty it was and dirty but somehow — and then later it came spring and that heating system stopped, you know. In a way they wouldn't need that much work down there any more. They only needed one furnace to burn instead of four or five, you know. They have all those big tanks there.

JL: Spring of 1942?

FP: Spring 1942, yes. We finally got out and found jobs, you can imagine, driving trucks for the city. Because people went into the army and we had those cistern trucks where you go and clean out all the septic tanks. They had no system of sewer, you know. Everything was septic tanks. And we got that job and were hauling out this from schools and hospitals and office buildings and no private homes. They also had private homes. We were not allowed to take anything from there, just from governments. We were saving also the gas — it was a wartime. And we got paid for this and then we could spend the money. We could buy whatever was available, you know, which wasn't much. But we still didn't get a ration card. We had to be on our own, even though working. We were able to buy -- but in Russia there's a black market, always, which they don't call it black market. They call it flea market. But a farmer which he has on his own, like his own little goat or own little cow, he can bring to the market and sell. It was unbelievable the prices for a glass of milk. You had to give a week of salary away, you know. But at least you could buy this. And I called it black market, but you could buy anything that you could not get otherwise: meat and milk and butter and homemade bread, and if you had the money. So I imagine only the very rich, rich people who could afford it would go there and buy something, or probably very little. But that's legal. Even today it's still legal, was legal at that time.

JL: Where did you sleep during all this, in the springtime?

FP: We had -- we rented a little room somewhere by a Russian. We all slept in one room and it was sometimes very cold but I remember that huddling together one next to the other — there wasn't much room anyway — we just would stick one next to the other one, a body of warmth, and keep warm. This is where we spend some of our time until we finally decided to keep on going and get to Uzbekistan where it was really warm since the best possibility to stay alive is that we keep on moving. But at least for the time being it gave us time where we could buy our food and get strong again, you know and work for a while and then keep on moving. Talking about my fingers when I got into the furnace job, and it was ashes and dirt, you know, and I worked there all the time and somehow I healed up and I didn't never have an infection, you know, and this is what always amazes me. I think this the strength, the willpower, the mentality you develop under circumstances, you know, is better than any medication, you know. You just have the strong willpower that it's going to work and you'll have no problems, you know, and you're not going to have any infections. Anyway, somehow it works with me, I don't know how it works with anybody else. Even today, I said I refuse to take medication, you know. How many times I have a tooth pulled or something and my doctor says, "Well you're going to have a lot of pain. You take these pills I give you now and you got your prescription, go to the drug store and pick up some more." And I just take his pills, I don't even have an argument with him. I never take it and I have a little bit of pain after it goes away. I never took aspirin in my life, never once. [Inaudible] few can believe that. I had once in a while a headache, so I said, "It's going to go away," and it did go away. Maybe twenty minutes or a half an hour, it's gone away. So I never had any use for it, you know. I'm so much against medication, if it's not absolutely necessary. Sometimes it is necessary, you have to take it. But if it isn't absolutely necessary and I see people taking all this medication for diets and for headaches and for the water and for this and for this. I don't believe in that. I think it's very bad for you, simple like this, you know. [Laughs] So, that's my story.

JL: Now when did you get to Uzbekistan finally?

FP: Well, we got in Uzbekistan in 1942.

JL: In summer?

FP: Yes, summertime. We got there, and we got to Tashkent.

JL: How did you finally [get there]? Was it by foot?

FP: No, mostly by train. Hung on from one train to the other one and finally got there. And the difficulty also was that as we went on, you know, from station, but you always meet some people you have seen before, you know, and many Russian people there, too, run away from the Germans. They came farther back and find a place where to settle. I imagine for them was the same reason. It was somewhere warm, and they had lost their houses and everything else and in Russia it wasn't so easy to find living quarters. It's just not available. So you find not only us, many from camps laying on the road, but also many of the Russian people were sitting at the station waiting for transportation. If there was any transportation open they were preferred before we came, you know. Really, just the movement to try to get to Tashkent was something else, you know, since you meet people that you have seen before. This again comes connections — before [I said] I believed that somehow the way you live, the way you make your lifestyle, somehow that's how you pay yourself in the future. It haunts you at some point or another. I think I told you once before about the two brothers who were in a camp who had clothing and suits and were trading with the Russians, they wouldn't give anything to anybody, who then later coming out from camp still had a package to take along with them. One brother got very sick on the road, he ended up in some hospital so the other brother ran away from him, he was afraid he might have to give away the last jacket for his brother they get him medication. And he having the package that that time it was danger to have anything when people would just kill for anything. They're hungry and — well, a lot of people on the road, and danger. So one station he was killed. He just stuck a knife into his package and the other brother came out alive from the hospital and was looking for him. Asked where his brother was who run away from him with the package, you know. But he was very, very sick, too, and I'm sure he died very shortly, too, afterwards, you know. And so would they have stuck together, maybe they both would have made it. So everybody wanted to have the most out of it, you know. It's terrible stories. I know a man who got

packages in camp who married a girl there, then became a son-in-law to some older people who were also in camp, and he had all that food and he would not allow his wife to give anything to the older people, which is terrible, who we have to help out, you know, they couldn't work hard and so on. And I was really upset and sad about it. What could you do? You couldn't make him do it. And same story again. He got out of camp and he ended up in Tashkent and he just was gone, got killed. That he was. And the whole family, all these old people went through all that time and came back after the war. Isn't that something? It's unbelievable, you know. I think about it so many times. They were the nicest people you ever met, they were such nice people, you know. And they made it through, all this time. They got on trains, they got moved somehow, they got to Tashkent, and after the war they made it back, and they came to Europe again, you know. I can't believe it sometimes, you know. And he was that young guy, strong and everything and he's the first one was gone. It's unbelievable, you know. For one like me who has seen so many cases, you know, of what happened to people and you really sometimes wonder if it's the strength people have, the emotional and moral strength to go through things and come out of it smelling good and some people who just don't have it, who are afraid, they can't make it, so that's why they are gassed. They hold on to all the goodies they have and everything goes wrong for them. Next [laughs].

JL: Did you know – what did you know of other people from the camp? Where did they scatter to?

FP: Oh, all over. Many, many came to Uzbekistan. Anyplace that was warm, not just to Uzbekistan. But many went over there, tried to get where it's warm. Some stayed maybe in other states but most of them tried to get to a place where it was warm. There were many where I was [in Tashkent]. The problem was that when you came finally, like we came to Tashkent, nobody wanted to give us a job, even though there were signs all over the place, "We need workers," you know. But giving a job means they had to give us ration cards for food and the city would not give us any. They said, "We don't have enough for our own citizens. Russians come here from" — and they have to give them that don't have enough food. So they didn't want us guys to be around, even so we could work and do some jobs for them and get some food. I

-- at one point then we went to the outskirts. We went to the mayor of the city and he said, "Now, you go to the small towns. That's where you can get registered. You cannot live in the big city anyways. You have to go." [We replied,] "That doesn't say so on our papers anyplace." [He said], "Yes, but, go to the small towns." We went to the small towns, and then that guy over there was a commander, a Russian. He said, "No, we have too many people, you know. We can't register you. We don't have any food. So it went back and forth." I remember when I went back to Tashkent, there was a bunch of us. My father went along and my two brothers and a whole bunch of other people, and it really looked like all torn up and dirty. We had no place where to sleep, we were sleeping outside, you know, moving around. And I had nothing to lose. I went back to Tashkent. I said, "You have to move in." There was a Mayor and then there was a commander of the city and the building of the commander they wouldn't let us in, he was the military commander. They also had military standing outside and they said, "You cannot talk to me, talk only to the Mayor, okay." So I said, "We have to go back. We have to do whatever we can. We're going to die anyway. We have nothing to lose. If they shoot us running into the commander's building, and we're going to do that, we have nothing to lose at this point." I think that's ridiculous. Went back to Tashkent and we came to that building and I said, "You guys, you know, just try like you want to run into the building so those two who are in front of the building going to run after you, you know. I will then run in there, you know. Don't worry about me, you know." That's what happened. I run in there, you know. They were holding the other ones back from running in there, those two soldiers outside, and I went to the door that said Commander and just opened the door and run in there, you know, and there he was sitting. They both jumped up and pulled a gun and they looked at me, you know, tall and dirty. "Who the hell?" But I have nothing. They looked at me then he sat down and said, "What do you want?" Then I started telling him my story. I said, "Here's my papers. You released us from camps to die on the streets." I said, "There's a war going on" — my Russian was very bad — "there's a war going on, there's signs all over the place, 'You need help.'" I said, "There are so many men." I think I had twelve or fifteen outside. I said, "We're going to die away very soon if you cannot give them a ration card. And the only way we can

have a ration card if we register in some city and nobody wants us and thereby we cannot work." I said, "What are you doing to your own country? You need that. You need to have a people who have to work in the background, who can help the army." And he looked at me — I think he was Jewish, too, the commander — and he said, "Now, what do you say nobody wants you?" And I told him, "The big city says, 'We can't have you.' They send you to small towns. The small town says they don't have any ration cards, they don't have any food, none." So he said, "Where did you come from now? Where was the last point you stopped in?" I told him a small town a few miles away from there. I said, "We don't mind that walked into the city and get a job there and go back there if that's what we have to do." He said to me, "How many of you are there?" I told him a number, twelve, fifteen. He said, "Why don't you just wait a second." [He] Told the other guy, "Can you give me some paper?" He started writing and put a stamp on there and closed the envelope, wrote on there to go to this commander in this city, you know. "Just," he said, "go to this guy there where you just came from and give him this letter." I said, "So what's going to happen?" "Just go there and give him the letter and don't worry, and take all your people along."

JL: What was the name of the that town?

FP: Tashkent.

JL: No, the little one.

FP: I really don't know. It was close to Tashkent. Anyway that's, I said, "Oh!" I came out, I said, "Hey, I think we have it made. I think we should go back there and shouldn't worry about it. I bet you he's going to make something us there." [Inaudible] I remember when I came into that little office in the small town and the guy says, "What are you doing here again?"

JL: [Inaudible.]

FP: Oh.

**END OF TAPE 5, SIDE 1**

**TAPE 5, SIDE 2**

FP: Well start when I got to this camp.

JL: Yes, you got to the small town.

FP: That place...

JL: It's on.

FP: Well so I got back to the small town where the commander over there and I came in and he said, "What are you doing here again? I told you not to stay in this town. I couldn't take you." I said, "Just a second. I got a letter for you." He took the letter, he opened it up, he read it, and he looked at me kind of mad. He said, "Okay, give me all your names." So I told him all our names and he wrote them all down and he gave us ration cards, made them out, and we went to start to work in the city of Tashkent, just walked back and forth.

JL: What did you do?

FP: I first started working in a place where what they were doing, it was like health department. We had trucks and we used to drive around and disinfect houses and apartments where they had sicknesses. There were a lot of them there in Tashkent. This was our job, just going in and spraying these apartments or houses.

JL: All of you did that?

FP: No, just two of us. Some others had other jobs, like one of my brothers was working in a company which was distribution center for different things, you know, just trucking around stuff. Some other people worked in stores where they had prepared for get food in bags for families, in warehouses. So they had all kinds of different jobs all of us needed. But I and one of my brothers, then we only — what happened also is my father was there and my two other brothers, four of us. My father was sick, and my father really didn't work. He stayed at home. He had a lot of problems with all kinds of things. So my other brother had other job and two of us had this job. So we worked there for quite a while and we got our ration cards so it was wonderful, whatever the little we got on a ration card, but at least we had food to stay alive, had

a place to go home and sleep. We had to pay an apartment with some Russian people. There was only one room, we slept on the floor but we had some covering on there and so on, it was warm there. It was no problem.

JL: You lived in the small town and into work in Tashkent?

FP: In the small town. Used to walk everyday to work, which was very healthy to do [laughs]. We didn't need any clothing any more, which was fantastic. We could go naked if I wanted to [laughs]. I mean we couldn't but that was the big problem in Siberia. So it went on fine. After a while I got very sick myself. From all the bad food we were eating, my stomach, I had a lot of problems with my stomach. So it came to the point that I had the diarrhea so badly and I couldn't stop it. If I would eat, which was very bad food, we couldn't afford much it goes right through my stomach. It could hold nothing in there. I went to the doctor, which is a clinic, a state clinic, and he said, "I can't do nothing for you. You just have to be careful what you eat." I said, "How can I be careful? What is there? What can I eat? The bread I get is like water, and even I toast it it's not good for my stomach seems to me. And the other food I eat, which is mostly raw vegetables or something, it just seems to be like my stomach can't take it." The one I needed would be some white toast and maybe some milk or something that I should have, you know, to settle my stomach. I said, "How can I afford it? Only way I can get milk is go on the black market. Glass of milk is like my whole week or two weeks of wages I get," you know. "Well," he said, "I can't help it. That's what you have to do." So then people helped me put money together and helped me maybe once a week get glass of milk, you know. That was a big deal. But I kept getting worse and I got very weak and I lost a lot of weight. I was all bones and skin. And here is when I got in trouble with the Russian government. I got so weak that all of a sudden I couldn't see at night, for deficiency of vitamins, I imagine all it was. I had met some Russian girls who were very nice and they were working there, too, and every time it got dark I was out, you know, they had to lead me around, you know, until it got light again. And anybody knows what means blind since I have some experience of it and it definitely wasn't a pleasant one. Besides I got weaker and weaker. What happened [is] I didn't go to work, I couldn't just get out of bed one morning I

was so weak and my brother said, "Whatever happens, you stay in bed," you know. So did the girls say, "Stay in bed until you get some more strength." The funny thing is, the girls went out and got some chicken liver for me. I don't know how they got it, they must have stole some chickens or something. Somebody got chicken liver, and they were feeding me chicken liver. Just they put on the hot ashes and then I would eat them, not too much overcooked. And there must have been a lot of vitamin Bs in or vitamin A, what I just needed and it's unbelievable. They came to me and fed me at night chicken livers, for two nights and the third day I could see again at night. Just unbelievable. That's how much I must have been down in my system, you know, necessary vitamins I needed. That's unbelievable. With the iron — just liver, chicken liver. But the second time I missed two days of work since I just couldn't get out of bed I was so weak. So I was told in the office if I had an excuse from the doctor. I said, "I don't. I went there and he said he can do nothing for me. The reason he could [do] nothing for me [was] I had no temperature. The only reason you can stay, when you have high temperature he'll give you an excuse to stay out from work. Since I didn't have this they put me in court, the labor court, and I had to come before two judges who judged me and they said, "There are people fighting on the front and getting killed and you missing two days of work." I said, "The reason I missed two days of work, I couldn't stand on my feet. I would have died maybe in those two days. I wouldn't have rested up." I said, "And if those girls wouldn't have helped me with some kind of food so I could see again, and I finally getting back to my strength again so I can keep on working for you, without it you wouldn't have me anyway."

JL: Was all of this in Russian?

FP: Yes. I said, it's good that I could speak [it]. I explained to them. They said, "You're living in a different country. No worker can miss a job, we don't care if you're foreign or not, without excuse from a doctor. So you miss two days, we'll deduct 25 percent of your wages from now on for the next two years. Will it happen again, we'll deduct 35 percent. We'll it happen again, you might end up in Siberia." So I had to say nothing. But then how I got out of it is really funny, how I got out of the 25 percent they were going to deduct from my wages. All of a sudden the city government decided that the army who had an army

camp by Tashkent not far away from there, where they were training soldiers and soldiers come back to rest up and then go back to the front. I wish I remember that name. I don't remember that name any more. [The city decided] that they needed some help, needed some people to work for that camp. They didn't have enough people to work there. They wanted people like us to come to that camp so the city would take the people from different jobs and send them over there. The army came first, you know. And I was chosen together with my brother to go over there and work there, which also was on the salary but we had to work in that military camp. And something I didn't tell them when I came over there that I owed 25 percent to the government and they didn't get the message so I got my wages paid [laughs]. Actually, not only us, but several of those Polish people who had been there had been chosen to go into the military camp and work there. Some were electricians, some were carpenters; us, they took us truck drivers over there and knew how to drive a truck. I never had a Russian license but it wasn't needed. It was a wartime. They needed people to be a trucker over there and it was like you couldn't change it. Government tells you what to do, that's what you do. That's it, you know. I and one of my brothers went over there, but in the meantime, as this period happened, that few months in between, one of my brothers was — you see, they sell to the Polish army in Russia, see. You ever heard about it? My oldest brother, he went to a special camp there you had to go and had to be registered and they would check us out, our health. With me, the problem was I had no fingers. My other brother didn't want. They didn't want too many Jewish people anyway. There was big anti-Semitism at that time, when everybody was in service, even at that time, even in Russia. The Polish officers, you know, were, some of them, very bad. We came to that particular military camp, which was Russia, where everybody has to go to register and they're check them out if you can join the army so you could fight the Germans, that the Russians are allowed. But the night I was in that camp, they were beaten up that night by Polish people. It's unbelievable. We complained to the main officers up early the next morning and they say they're going to look into it, and they never did. But anyway, one of my brothers went in the Polish army, my oldest brother, and he could take along, if he had a wife or father. This is my father came out from Russia with

my brother and my father came to Iran. From there they went out to Iran, and my father passed away in Iran. He was a very sick man, you know, and he's buried in Iran, yes. But then there were two of us left in Russia, and we worked the rest of our time up in that military camp, and we made many, many friends with the people who worked there, the Jewish people and the Russian peoples. We did very well there so to say, since they started going against the Russian officers in cahoots. The main guy that was running the camp -- there was a big office where this was the officer who would run the whole camp, see that they have, food for the army and then electricity and whatever they needed, you know, everything else. And we ran the supply, bringing stuff from Tashkent to the camp, driving back and forth. I had to come into dealing and wheeling with the Russians since even so we had our norm set for receiving gasoline from the particular point, everything is government. You know, you get your norm set and the norm for food and the norms for this, some you didn't get so you started dealing. If you had too much, you'd give somebody else something, you'd get this in return. And I had to take -- besides having this camp, they had a big piece of farmland where they had workers working it. We had our own food and stuff, which you would collect and bring it into camp so it could feed the camp, the army and so on. So I would deal with those guys who had the gas, again, who are living in the city who needed food. I would bring a bag of rice and a bag of this and a bag of this, and so we would get our gas, maybe a little bit more gasoline so we can have more gasoline to run. So it was kind of a dealing setup which you did. Since I, my officer, who was the highest one, had a little pickup truck which was given to him to drive around on camp it was a big camp — from place to place, I was his private chauffeur. It was a very old pickup truck. But he needed his pickup truck also to have some fun, to go out and see some Russian girls and have a good time at night. So I was, he selected me as his private chauffeur. I was the one who would spend a lot of time driving around at night and having parties, you know, and go to big parties and things. So I was accepted.

JL: You went to those things?

FP: Yes. Most of them I was allowed to come along, except if he had this private stay with some girl at night, which I couldn't be in there. But otherwise I was there with the parties. I learned all the tricks in Russia, you know. I was told what to do, you know, and how to get food from the canteen director when we'd go out at night. So we get us a couple bottles of vodka and they give us some meat we can take along since, you know, we had to have all this stuff if we go to the parties. And so the director of the canteen where everybody was eating — in camp you give your ration card to the canteen director and you get your three meals there. So you're supposed to get everything there. You pay for it, but, you know, that's how he would collect his food for the canteen. But we would take all the best stuff and then he had to buy for us on the black market. Only black market you could buy couple bottles of vodka and some wine and stuff, which was very, very expensive. We had to trade them some meat and stuff, you know, and sell this.

JL: Was it the true black market or [inaudible]?

FP: Well that's the same black market, same free black market, that's where you would buy everything and trade. But a lot of food I would call black market. It's not coming from a private source, it was coming from food which belongs to the court system that should be fed to the workers, was taken out from the canteen and then sold on the market so he could buy vodka and stuff for his officer who wanted to have a big party. And at one particular time, the workers got very very upset, said they didn't have any meat for months, you know, and very little food, like a little bit borsht water, green leaves sitting around there, and a piece of bread. They wanted to stop working, and Russia, stop working, they didn't allow it, especially at wartime. But they sent a delegation to the my officer, the high officer, and telling him that they're hungry, they cannot work, they are weaker and weaker, they haven't seen a piece of meat for a long time, and this man collects all his cards, director of that canteen, and something has to be done otherwise, you know, it just can't keep on going like this. He accepted them and talked to them and said, "Don't worry about it. Tomorrow at lunch time I will be there and I will speak to that — I will see to it that you get better food and more food." As he was ending up and I was there, too, you know, he chose me to be in there, too. I always had been right with him and I know what was going on. But what can I do but be quiet? All I

need is trouble. So he, called me Frederica, you know Frederick, said, "Frederick, you stay here." So I stayed there. I said, "what do you want." He said, "I'm going to speak tomorrow, you know, and come there tomorrow for lunch and you better go on and tell him that I'm going to be there, you know. And all the same time, we want to go out tonight, you know. Tell him what I need tonight. I want to get all ready. You pick it up for the party." That's where it all goes. So I went over there, I told him what happened and he had a meeting and he's going to be there but the same time get me a couple bottles of vodka and some meat and some bread and all this." And next day he came. He was Russian. He was not Jewish, he was just well... He came in, had his big boots on, you know, and he had a officer stick in his hand he was clapping against his boots. He came and looked at the people that had lunch there and he said, "Clean up that table." They cleaned up the table and he jumped on top of the table in the middle of the dining hall, you know. He said, "Where is that director of this place?" That guy came out and he said, "What's going on here? Where is all the food going? Those people are complaining they haven't got any good food for months." He said, "They can't work like this. They're tired of it. What's going here? Who's getting all that food? What's wrong?" Yelling around. "In our society, you know, we have to feed those people, you know. This is a working society." A big speech. And then he said, "I'll warn you right now. You're running this canteen. If this food does not get any better, they'd chop your head off. Out you go, somebody else takes your job." And everybody was clapping. And I thought to myself, "What a bullshit." [Laughs] But this is how things were run up in Russia, you know. It's just unbelievable, you know. I've seen all those things going on. Amazingly, I was honored once for [being] the best worker, you know. Every month you have a Party meeting, the workers come together and then the one who are the good workers they call us the [sounds like "khanevetz"], which means the outstanding worker, he's done more produce than he should according to the norm he's set for him. The reason I produced more than anybody else was that I was working private truck at night and we didn't have gas, we only got so much gas allowed for the pickup truck, but I needed all those these parties at night, so sometimes we had to go to Tashkent which was quite a ways, what, thirty miles away to go there to see his girlfriends, you know. So we drive every

night. And what did we do with the gas? If you didn't have one, they allowed you so much to drive around in camp with the little pickup truck. So we had to make a report out, how many trips you made, where we'd go, a government thing, everything written down on paper. And he was my main officer who would sign the reports that they were okay. He could sign, another officer also could sign. So he said to me, "Well, you're only allowed so much gas. All the other gas has to go on the machine, which cleans out our toilets," you know, big tanks and the soldiers go in there and so you have to clean them up. He said, "Besides having a truck to haul food, I'm going to give you a truck where you're going to clean out also the tanks, the septic tanks. So whatever we use for the pickup truck you will have to use on the septic tank. Drive so many trips." It's just trips going in camp and outside and dump in the fields and so on. So I figured out how many we should have, you know. I had three trucks. I had truck in the daytime to work to haul supplies from the city, also the daytime drive around with my officer with a pickup truck, and then I had that truck which would clean out the septic tanks. So after a while I had unbelievable record. I was working day and night. Came to the party meeting, they called my name. I don't know what was going on. I just thought something wrong. They said, "Come up here." And they were saying, "I want to show you, there's a man. This man has produced 175 percent, you know. 75 over above and above anybody, the best work they do." And he was calling my record, how many tanks I took out from this. I'm just sitting, couldn't even smile [laughs]. I was praised for the outstanding worker since I made all these false records. Oh, it's really something to beware of, I tell you. Papers. You can put everything on paper.

JL: So tell me you were there -- how long were you in Uzbekistan?

FP: Until 1945, the end of the war, yes.

JL: What kind of religious activities did you participate in?

FP: Really nothing, religion activities. We had no religion activities at all.

JL: Besides those evening parties, what types of social, cultural and then political activities did you participate in?

FP: The political activities only were our meetings every month where we come and listen to their stories, whatever they have to say. We also had, cultural-wise, since it was a military camp, they used to send there most outstanding performance, you know, like Russian dancers, you know, and Russian singers. So we had a chance to see some very good performances there in that military camp, there's no doubt about it. If I think back, I have never seen any such good performances any more. It was outstanding, you know. They brought Bolshoi theater there and they always showed the best. The best of the best used to come there and perform for the soldiers. They came back from fighting the war, they stopped a few weeks, and just give them the best they possibly could to entertain them, you know, and make a good mood to go back and fight again.

JL: I'm sorry, I may have missed this. Now where were you living this whole time still?

FP: In the camp. We had a little cabin. We were living in the camp. Yes, sure.

JL: Who were your friends?

FP: Who were my friends? Russian officers; even Russian officers from the NKVD, which is the national, you know, secret service police in Russia; some officer who used to work there in camp and I met many friends, those Russians who used to come back just for a few weeks and then return to their front lines. So there were also some Russian girls some had transfers, and no question about the workers who used to work there, you know. So I really had a lot of people I knew and was friendly with in that time. And I talked with a lot of Russian — I had to be very careful what I was saying since it's kind of dangerous. I couldn't open my mouth as big as I do here and tell everybody what I think, you know [laughs]. You have to be very, very careful. It's amazing, after the final, came again a meeting came again Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin, the same thing [happened]. Now all those people who had been released from camps and had those kinds of papers should be able to register, go back home.

JL: When was that?

FP: Just right after the war, with Potsdam.

JL: That was Yalta.

FP: No I think it was Potsdam. Well, Yalta was the first one that they really had. They had come twice there together. It could be Yalta. But this was the one that came right after the war — not right after the war, a few weeks later — where they came together and said that we had to be able to register to go now finally back to our home. But this all was fine and good. I remember when the war was over with and one of my good friends from the NKVD, which is the secret service, the real sort of police in Russia, they had plant outside of camp, a munitions plant outside the camp which was underground, the smoke always come out from underground. When the war was over a couple weeks and that smoke kept on coming out from there, I said to him, "What is it? The war is over with. Why are you still working under ground making ammunition." And he says to me, "Sure, no, it doesn't make any difference. The Russian. You know that the thing is to have Communism all over the world and until we have established that we are not going to rest. That smoke is going to come up." Now I couldn't say nothing about that. I just thought very quiet about it. But the same guy, after it was known that we could leave the camp, we had to register to leave the camp, this Russian, the same guy, picked me up at home at two o'clock in the morning in my cabin. Very cold, knock on the door, open up and said, "Oh, hi, hi, how are you?" He said, "You need to talk to me. Come with me." I said, "Where am I going? Going drinking in the middle of the night?" He says, "Nope." He said, "You're coming with me into the office." I said, "What the hell am I doing there?" He says, "Don't ask any questions. Just get dressed and go." Very cold. I thought, "Ah, have I done something wrong?" So as we are going I said, "Why am I going there? Please answer me. Tell me why I'm going there." "I don't know," he said. "You're supposed to come down. I'm told to pick you up and take you there." I got there and he sat me down in a room and I quietly sat there about an hour-and-a-half just by myself, made me shake to think what the hell is going on. Then they called me in, and I knew the main guy there, was also a officer, we also happened to have time together at parties, you know. All those big shots used to come together. You ending?

JL: I think it is now.

FP: Yes, okay.

END OF TAPE 5, SIDE 2

## TAPE 6, SIDE 1

FP: Ready? Coming into the room where those secret service guys were sitting, it seems to be like having them all there, nobody seemed to know me any more, you know. They were all very cold like they had never seen me before, and they started questioning me. Said, why did I register to go back home? I must not like Communism. And I told them, "I like Communism, I like everything what's going on, but I have left my whole family at home. I want to see what's going on, see who's alive, and I could not live in this country without knowing or trying to find my family." I just could not live like this. So he said to me, "There's nobody alive. The Germans killed them all." I said, "That is fine for you to say, but that's not good for my conscience. I have to go back and make sure it is this way. When I later find, I can return to Russia. Or," I said, "who tells you there's not going to be Communism in Europe?" So they looked at me, [and said,] "Yes, but you talked to some people about us, about our things that we do in Russia, and you complained about a lot of things." I said, "I didn't." I said "You tell me who told you this and I want to see this person in front of me so I can defend myself. Just telling me I told somebody doesn't mean anything to me." He says, "We don't have to do anything like this. I don't have to confront you with anybody. We'll not tell you who said it, to whom you said it, nothing. We know about you." I said, "Sure you know about me. I've been here since I came over the border [laughs]. Sure you know about me." [They said,] "You can go!" Okay, I go. Two o'clock the next night again the guy comes picks me up. Again the same story. He doesn't talk to me. Cold like I've never seen him before. Takes me there again. I sat down for an hour. Questioning again. [They said,] "You said this and this," and I don't remember if I ever said this or this or this. [They accused] that I was saying that the officers Communist party leaders have it good and the poor worker is suffering and this. Well, isn't it true [laughs]? But I doubt if it were true — they knew that I knew all those things. I used to be in all those parties. I used to take him to all those places, you know. I knew what [in] the black market they did. I know they themselves they used to do black market.

JL: They complained to you, so you didn't really do it?

FP: No, I was very careful what I was saying. I might have slipped at one time. I don't know, you never know, you know. I had been very careful not to drink much with the Russians, since I know they're very dangerous people to be with. But here I was, they know it, all those years, you know, I had — not only this, I used to truck loads of stuff, trucked to their homes in town, their private homes, to their wives and family. Food and stuff they used to stole away from the army and I had to take the tank there. They knew I knew all those things. So I was really, you know, afraid they're just going to make a case out of me and put me away. I just said, "You know better than this." I said "I never talked to anybody about it and I have nothing to say about it." I said, "I must go home." I said "I must see my family. I must find them." They said, "There's nobody alive." I said, "Whatever's going to happen later on that's going to happen, you know. There's no reason you can keep me here. I just never do that." And they [said], "Yes, I remember, there's a girl you used to go with and she is one of our secret agents and told us all about you." And she was. I didn't know that. I used to go with a Russian girl. And at the time, didn't know that [laughs]. But I think, you know, I always used to be very careful what I said, you know. I would never involve myself in politics but all these girls used to be at the parties. I guess all this, you know, they didn't know if they should let me go or not. I don't know. Finally they let me go. I was very happy. I thought, "I'm never going to get out of here," since I knew all their tricks and business they are doing and they kind of thought, "Hey, better keep that guy here. Don't let him go out and tell everybody what's going on." But I finally left, but there was time, you know, when I thought it's amazing, you know, how things change. I thought to myself at that time, "My best friends in Germany became my enemies, now my best friends in Russia have become my enemies. So what is going on with my life [laughs]?"

JL: Were there any Jewish officers there?

FP: There was a Jewish fellow there, yes. But he was not NKVD, he was just an officer, and he had tsores. They called him all kinds of names, too, even in Russian army.

JL: What were your relations with the local Jews?

FP: With the Russian Jews, a very good relationship. Wherever there were Russian Jews I had a very good relationship. I think actually that the Russian Jews were looking forward to get together with some other Jews with whom they could speak very openly and tell them about all their problems. I felt sorry for them more than — I didn't feel sorry for myself but I felt sorry for Russian people who grew up there who were Communist, grew up in Communist system, but still they're not accepted as equal citizens. They would call them Jews just like I heard in Germany the Jews. And it was really amazing to me. In a system like this there still was this backlash from a long, long time ago and so whenever they had pogroms in Russia but still there were Russian people, intelligent Russians — I'm not talking about the poor guy, the worker. Not so much the worker but the officers in the army, you know, who at a party, they'd get drunk, they use all kinds of bad words to call the Jew a bad guy, you know. It's really amazing. I'm just saying, I always thought by myself nothing is perfect, you know. I'm sure there must be some other people, you know. This guy was married with a Russian girl. But he was in the army, an officer, and truly, I used to have quite a few talks with him and he complained to me about it, you know. He was really sad about it. He was really a nice fellow. And I imagine a guy like him, if he ever got to Europe, he would never come back. He would stay in Europe, disappear. And there are many who have done this. I imagine they got out to Europe and finally said good-bye.

JL: Were you able to establish a close relationship with any of the local Jews and find out what they were thinking?

FP: Well, the first relationship I had with a Jewish fellow was when I came to work in the city of Ufa in that big apartment house, okay. He was the manager of the apartment house. The first thing he told me was if you want to live in this country, you have to become a Party member, he called and it is, and you get a book, your party book, they call that the parnuse buch.<sup>47</sup> No, he told me in Yiddish, panuse buch. I was really amazed about it. And I said to him, "What do you mean?" "Well," he said, "that's the way it is."

JL: Did he mean a ration book?

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<sup>47</sup> Yiddish for 'subsistence book'.

FP: No, a parnose buch is [when] you're a member of the Communist Party, you get a little book, your membership with your pictures in there. Then you got it made. Then you can live in Russia. Okay? He was a very nice fellow. See he had to organize that there was always enough coal for the big officers' house, that they would never be cold. Again, that was a war time. There wasn't enough coal. We used to go out, it was at the place where they would bring all the coal, okay. Each had a pile. There was a pile for the hospital, there's a pile for the office for the state, a pile for the officers for this — everybody had their pile which was marked with coal. There you'd drive up in the truck, you load it up and then you bring it to the furnaces and you heat the furnaces with. But if you want to stay a big makher<sup>48</sup> like he is, then you had to take care of several houses that are heated, all the big officers are living there, you better make sure you always have enough coal [that] they never freeze, so you have enough heat there in the house. When we'd go out, he said, "Now, we're going out tonight and pick up a load in the truck, but I'm going to come along with you then our supplies are going to last a little longer. What I'm going to do..." They had a guard there, like an army guard, he was always in uniform, a helmet, communist things on there. He said, "When I'm going to go there and talk to the guard, you drive in and you take coal from any pile but ours." He said, "If there's any sign he wants to go down there, I'm just going to keep on talking so loudly you're going to hear me from far away. Then you better run away from that pile, so he doesn't see you." He used to steal from hospital piles and everything else so that they keep that big officer's house [supplied with coal]. I said, "What the hell are you doing with that? They're poor sick people. They maybe need it more than you do." He said, "Hey, if I'm not going to supply them with coal, I'm going to be in a hell of a shape." He said, "I'm losing my job. They're going to throw me out of here. They don't understand nothing. All they want to know is that I heat that house where those big officers are living."

JL: This was all still back before...?

FP: In the war, yes, that was in Ufa. I'm saying there are so many things, you know, I had to find out, learn about the unbelievable crookedness, you know. It didn't make any difference who it was, you know,

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<sup>48</sup> Yiddish for a big shot, a person with important contacts.

everybody wanted to save their job somehow, which was a good job, and they didn't care where they took it from, you know.

JL: Now after Uzbekistan, so you finally left in spring of 1945?

FP: Yes, right.

JL: What contact did you have with surviving family in Europe after the war?

FP: With surviving family after the war? They came back to Poland by railroad transport from Russia together.

JL: You and your brother?

FP: Yes, I and my bother. Other brother had left for the army in England, ended up in Israel. Since they were stationed in Israel, they were fighting in Africa. I did not know who was alive, but I went — at that time already they had at the Jewish community in Krakow established when I came quite a while later after the war, a few months later.

JL: Like summer of 1945?

FP: Yes. In this particular community one of my far related family was one of the main makhers there. His name was Wolf. So we were told to go there, that they had already set up a registration for people to register who came out from concentration camps, who had to come back from Russia. And I had to go to the end of the register and then in those list they would try to find your relatives, old friends, whoever you're looking for. So we did this. Also to get some help from the I was really amazed to find that this particular man who was sitting there was one of my far relatives, Wolf. But I also find out that some of my further cousins are living in Krakow. Like Janek Platner, they were registered, and his wife. This is my first relatives I met in Krakow. Again I went to their house, there they had an apartment. I visited with them and ate there a couple times. From their house I wanted to go back to Germany, so we went to Katowice, which was close to the German border.

JL: How long did you stay in Poland?

FP: A few months, traveled back and forth. And I got some money from my cousin, I remember that. Not from my cousin, from that Wolf. He gave me a few dollars when first I came. And until I then left from

there, I told them I wanted to go back to Germany and I got to the Jewish Agency,<sup>49</sup> who did not take us to Germany but took us from there through Czechoslovakia to Austria. That's my first experience in displaced person camp in Austria.

JL: Before you there, is there anything outstanding about your journey back to Poland?

FP: Well, the only outstanding thing, I was very happy again to be free, not to be worried about what I'm saying and that I would be able now to try to find at least those few who are still alive, which I still was searching for. I found out that one of my cousins who used to live with me in the same city in Germany was in Germany. He come out from concentration camp. I did not know one of my brothers was come out from concentration camp. I found it out later when I came to Germany. But it was a feeling that you hope that, you know, that this thing is going to pass over us and when I found out about my family, about nobody alive, hardly anybody except I didn't know that my brother was alive. I didn't know about my brother who was in Israel who had been in the army.

JL: You didn't?

FP: No. I found out about him later, too, through writing through my uncle I had in Israel. I told you my uncle left early and my cousin I had in Israel. They told me then when we could finally connect with letters writing back and forth and I had finally a mailing address and know where I'm going to be. Till we got connected and we wrote letters back and forth, and he said, "Your brother" — he didn't say "your brother." The reason they didn't say that is to say, "We have -- I don't know if you remember Leo Finkelstein who is now in Israel who has served in the English army in Africa."

JL: So they changed the name?

FP: Since he deserted the England army in Israel after the war. After the war he wasn't in the English army. You know the Israelis so he deserted. He went in a kibbutz, but under a wrong name.

JL: But you didn't know that?

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<sup>49</sup> International body which is the head of the World Zionist Organization.

FP: I didn't know that, no. But my cousin wrote me [asking] if I remember Leo was his name, Leo Finkelstein — who used to be there, and used to live in Germany, and then he went into later into the English army. "He is living now in Israel," you know. I wanted to know anything about Leo who went in the army, and if he was in Israel. I wanted to know something. That's what answer came back, said, "We don't know nothing about your brother" — that was in for censorship — "but we know about Leo." And also Finkelstein used to be one of the names of our family, you know. One of the family was a born Finklestein so I made the connection right there and I said, "Okay, uh huh." And then they were telling me that he was living now in a kibbutz, you know. So I figured that was Leo since I asked her that question and I understood they couldn't just tell me that was my brother since they were looking for him since he was a deserter. So this is how I made connection. And then from Steyer I went back to Germany, again with the transport, since I try to come back and end up in displaced person camp in Bergen-Belsen.

JL: I'm sorry I just...Now the rest of your family? Your father went to Iran?

FP: Yes.

JL: And your mother?

FP: My mother, in concentration camp.

JL: Which concentration camp?

FP: In Auschwitz.

JL: And the other bothers, the older brothers?

FP: All in Auschwitz.

JL: Did you meet anybody else in Poland besides the people you mentioned?

FP: I met people in Poland...

JL: Did you meet former neighbors, people you knew from before?

FP: No, except for my few families I told you about.

JL: Non-Jews, did you meet non-Jews?

FP: No. I met non-Jews in Poland after the war but none are the people I know. We really didn't go back to the city I was living, I went to Katowice, which is a complete different city. I didn't go back to the city I was living before, you know, Bielsko-Biala since before when I was young I didn't go back there at all. My mind was set to go back. Finally I end back in Germany. This was my whole thinking to get back. The reason I only wanted to go back, I wanted to see what happened to our house and our business and I figured if anybody came back from those people who used to live in Germany then, sure, I'd move back to Germany. See I wanted more information.

JL: Were you considering starting life again in Germany?

FP: No. I wanted to go back. I thought if I find any people who used to live in Germany they all would come back to Germany. Besides, I had nothing in Poland particular to stay for. And to start, I figure also to start to make a living again, no question about it, to get back to normal life I would have to start out somewhere, and to start out in Germany was the easiest for me. I know the language good and I know the country and so on. And also I would find more people whom I know. That was not easy to go back to Germany and also Poland. The reason I found out one of my cousins was living in Hanover, they come out of concentration camp. Petzenbaum. I found out that he was in Hanover and we communicated with him by mail. That's why I wanted to go to Hanover, to meet my cousin, who was the only one I knew who was in concentration camp who came out alive who has been with his family and my family and who really know what happened, you know. He knows who would be alive, you know. Besides, I hadn't seen him for quite a few years. It was the only really live relative I knew who went through the horror of concentration camp, you know. Except the one I had in Israel and the brother who was in the army. So my point was to go to get to my cousin and then talk to him and see what he knew about it.

JL: Okay. Were there any refugees in Uzbekistan, specifically Tashkent that you knew who decided to remain in the Soviet Union?

FP: Not that I know of. No, I don't think so.

JL: Now, you left Poland, and you went?

FP: Let me go back. The reason also I wanted to leave was not only for political reason. [I was] maybe really convinced the Russian secret service was [a threat to me]. Not only do I have to go look for my family but I cannot live any more here since I have malaria and even the Russian doctors tell me I have to change climates.

JL: Did you have it?

FP: Oh yes. Very bad malaria. I only lost it for leaving the country.

JL: Did you have to promise them that you would come back?

FP: No, I promised them nothing. I didn't promise them anything. I promised you [inaudible][laughs].

JL: Okay, so then you left, you were in Katowice?

FP: Yes.

JL: From Krakow you went to Katowice?

FP: Yes. From Katowice, there's a Jewish Agency who got us into trains, again boxcars, and took us through — actually the Jewish Agency was very active at that time and they tried to bring people to Israel more than anything else. But it also was there to help those people who need help. With them a transport through Czechoslovakia and I don't know why they had to be quiet in the boxcars. They had controls, like Russian controls, in Czechoslovakia and they came to the boxcars. They said, 'Be quiet. Don't make any noise.' I don't know why. They moved us through.

JL: Who else was with you?

FP: Huh?

JL: Who were the people that were with you?

FP: Well, it just organized from Jewish Agency. I imagine they were most Jewish people who maybe came from Israel, wherever they came from, or the country, you know, who organized moving Jewish people, you know, closer to having them move them to Israel, you know, just like I did later on when I was in Germany. They helped a lot of people moving around, get them on boats and ship them out, whenever they get to Israel they always came back.

JL: So the Jewish Agency sent you to Austria?

FP: Yes.

JL: To Steyer?

FP: To Steyer, yes.

JL: When was that?

FP: 1946.

JL: Beginning or end?

FP: That was around [the] beginning [of] 1946. There, again, in camp I worked for the — the camp was run by Americans mostly. They were the one to overrun on the camps. I think I always felt like doing something, I wouldn't be sitting around. I became again a truck driver for them and would drive necessary food and whatever they needed from the city, some places, and also move people around in trucks. They constantly moved men, like we used to have a lot of children, we would take the children camps for vacation and I used to truck them to camps and bring them back and I bring lots of people. Some people came, some people left, some people had papers to immigrate. They were constantly moving there.

JL: How long were you in Steyer?

FP: Oh, for about six months.

JL: And then why did you move on to Bergen-Belsen camp?

FP: Well, I didn't move onto Bergen-Belsen. I wanted to get to Germany and I asked the Jewish Agency to moved me to Germany. I said I wanted to see my cousin there who came out from concentration camp and find out more and more what happened to my family. Then there was a transport where they moved, for some reason, I don't know why, they transported back and forth. I have no idea what the reason for it was. But I imagine they moved other people to Germany and from there put them on boats and try to get them over to Israel. I moved on one of those transports, by army truck again. They had American trucks. Actually the American moved them, it wasn't Jewish Agency. At that time Americans moved us over the

border to Germany and the first place they put us, put us in displaced person camp. Where would you go you? You had no place where to go, so you had housing and food. And from there on, and later on, I worked in Bergen-Belsen, also again for the Americans. At that time I worked for the AJDC.<sup>50</sup> They were again, these are Americans again running the camp. But the AJDC was the one who really was working on this camp.

JL: Okay. How long were you in Bergen-Belsen camp?

FP: For several months again. Until I could establish myself in Hanover. I found a place where to live there.

JL: You did go to Hanover?

FP: I did go to Hanover. But I didn't stay there too long since I had a job with the AJDC. So I stayed living in camp but worked for the AJDC traveling around from camp to camp and city to city, driving.

JL: You were still staying at Bergen-Belsen?

FP: Still at Bergen-Belsen. But as I say, I was working as a driver and was driving mostly officers from the AJDC to the hospitals, to different camps, to different cities. Every city, already in Germany had set up a Jewish community where several people already were living in the cities and more people tried to move out into cities and start life better than that what was in displaced person camp. It was very bad for people to come out from one concentration camp and go into displaced person camp. It was kind of demoralizing for the people since they got food, plenty, and they gave them culture activities like movies or had a dance once in a while, but it's all they had to do. There was no other lifestyle for them but just sitting around and sleeping and eating and go to movie or go around outside and do games or something. But this was not what people wanted to do. They want to start a life again, a normal life. So Bergen-Belsen, you know, it didn't bother me much since I was working on the outside, but it was very hard for those who had to live on the inside. And there seemed to be no hope for them. To go to Israel was just about impossible. Those who tried to get there were always pushed back. Any other countries didn't show much interest even after the war to get those people who have gone through so much hardship, those

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<sup>50</sup> American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, a relief agency.

few who stayed alive, to take them out so we could settle somewhere and start a new life. People registered to go out. Very few got moved at a time, like Canada used to take maybe twenty-five people who were carpenters or had some kind of knowledge or some kind of a trade.

JL: I have to stop again.

**END OF TAPE 6, SIDE 1**

## TAPE 6, SIDE 2

FP: So, it seems that I always had it, one could say, easier than anybody else, seemed to be that I always was able to establish myself with some higher people up so I could have an easier life. The same happened also in Bergen-Belsen. I became very friendly with a lot of American and English officers. I again was invited to their parties and I could have all the food I wanted. I had plenty of food I could take along and give away to other people who didn't have so much. I got very much involved with some officers who used to go to visit sick people in hospital. I'm talking about Jewish people who had been sick and had been taken out to German hospitals, not only being involved, but also emotionally involved. In many cases where there were just one left over, whatever it was, they were the only one of the family and had nobody to come to see them or visit them. Later on from Bergen-Belsen I moved to Hamburg with the AJDC since their headquarter was established in Hamburg for the English-occupied zone. I started to live in Hamburg.

JL: You did tell me in the pre-interview that you were in the DP camp also in Hamburg or you went directly to...?

FP: No, I was in a children home in Blankenese.

JL: And you lived in the children's home.

FP: Yes. Blankenese is like a suburb of Hamburg.

JL: I see. So you lived in the Bergen-Belsen camp until?

FP: Until I moved out with AJDC.

JL: When was the date? About. No the date, tell me.

FP: I do not exact date I think the end of 1947.

JL: And then you went to Blankenese?

FP: I went to Blankenese and I worked for AJDC in the office of AJDC in Hamburg. But I had a room in the children home in Blankenese, where the children home was [called the] Warburg Home, which was given after the war to the Jewish Agency and the AJDC to use as a children home. Mostly for children

who had been found after the war parentless or one parent left over who needed to be put back to health and learning the necessary Hebrew language and then later to be transported over to Israel. I spent quite a while there, a couple years actually there.

JL: When did you leave?

FP: About 1950, the beginning of 1950. It's amazingly is that I have met some children afterwards and they still remember me playing with them. It was a very emotional time for me, too, and I felt very much for those children who had no family. Some of them had no family at all. And I used my time, what ever free time I had, to spend with them. But if I look back at it I think it was one of my most — I would say just about best time of life to have a chance to be a part of them or be with them and to make them enjoy life again and have a good time. To the point at times I got very obnoxious. I remember a case when a young man came from England to teach them Hebrew who, I think, didn't understand what happened to those children and who was so strict with them. To the point, like I remember when it was the malamud, if they were not just sitting quiet he would take out his little stick and hit them over the fingers or pulling on their hair. The children complained very much about him. So I talked to him and he told me that he is the teacher and he has to get those kids organized so they become civilized people. What was, was, but it's different now and I could not agree with him at all. We had big arguments about it that he had no understanding for what those children went through and it was not the time to be disciplined. Had to show them love and understanding and that he would achieve much more if he would do that. But since the children complained so much and they figured out a way how to get rid of the teacher, I got in cahoots with all those kids. We actually scared him out of there. As I think back I don't feel bad about it at all, I think I feel very good about it [laughs]. I organized those kids at night. We took our white sheets off from our beds and we covered ourselves up in ghosts. The teachers are living in a separate house, not where the children are living. I said to them, "It gets so dark at night we're just going to go over there and climb up the stairs and then knock at the door, when he opens the door we're all going to go in with our white sheets. And if that doesn't work the first time, we're going to keep on doing it until he's going to

leave town." And that's exactly what we did. [Laughs] Scared him so much that he couldn't stand it anymore and he left town. Looking back at this, I will say, I think I felt I had to do something and those children were really upset with him. I felt they didn't have to be upset anymore and it was time for them to show that you can love them, understand them, and tell them what they're doing. I told him what teacher tries to do is teach them a language and they're going to go to Israel. They can speak it. But I thought he could teach them without being such a strict man that you have to keep on — they had enough the beatings and the force and they didn't need any more. Anyway, what I did over there, I think I spent some of my best years, I believe. Anytime it was a holiday, it was a Hanukkah or the Purim or Pesach or whatever, and since children had changed, they came stayed there for several months and new ones came. I always had a very good relation with all the children and I always used to like being part of it. I don't know if I had lost my senses, but I felt like I'd become young again and a part of little children. I don't know, I think I still feel this way today. I have much better relationship with younger people than I have with people my age. Put up the next question. I talk too much, you know [laughs].

JL: You talked about Steyer and Bergen-Belsen camps. Where they essentially the same?

FP: Essentially they're the same, yes.

JL: Can you tell me a little bit about a physical description of the camps?

FP: Steyer was more like a — they had a big industrial plant with big places where people would sleep, fifty in one big hall, and the married couples had a little place in between, you know. They had a little privacy. But that's as far as it went with privacy. [When] it was winter time we used to have a couple stoves built in there which you would just put in some wood and you heat the place. There were no facilities for toilets that were there were all closed up. Pipes weren't working, I guess, and whatever happened in wartime, so you had those outhouses to go to, which was not so bad. Except the outhouse in winter time used to accumulate and all of a sudden you were slipping on crap that would come out through the hole. It would be growing, raise up higher and higher. Where Bergen-Belsen, again, had regular — like little apartments. It was taken over from the German army who used to live there, so two, three guys would

have one room and then it was a family, you know, you would have your own room like. More like you have in a motel: you're dealing with a long building, all those rooms. Everybody had a room to live in so you didn't have to be crunched together, fifty or sixty people in one large room. That's about the only difference.

JL: You were talking a little bit before about food. How plentiful was food it?

FP: I don't know. I think there was enough food to eat. Everybody would pick up his rations anyway at a particular point. They wouldn't bring it to you. You pick up your own food. It wasn't the best food, it wasn't like you know -- in Bergen-Belsen, some people had a little, maybe already some pots and pans, that they could boil something, cook something. But mostly was canned food which came from the United States. There was canned meat and canned margarine and canned butter and canned cheese. Where else would it come from you know? For us, I mean for me, I would say it was very good food when I hadn't seen that kind of food for a long long time. So it was a blessing, so to say. We didn't see much in vegetables or fruit particular, except what came, again, in cans, you know, it just wasn't available. But the same style of food you had at both camps, you know. And they had clothing. You could pick out some clothes that fit you, you know. It wasn't new, it was mostly used clothing, you know, but who cares? It didn't make any difference. I know when I started in Steyer back to work and I got paid for my work, my first payment was three cigarettes a day, my pay, and which at that time was a tremendous value since to buy cigarettes you only could get them on the black market and we had to pay a fortune for it.

JL: What else did you get on the black market?

FP: Well, at that time at Steyer I did not get particular anything on the black market. Then again, I used to drive around with the officers. Officers always had better food, somehow. They had their own kitchen and they had people who would cook for them, you know, and prepare food, regular meals. When I drove with them they usually took along food, prepared sandwiches on the road, and then when we came to some place we would get a hot meal in their kitchen. As I say, I always somehow had it better than most of the people. Somehow or other it always worked out with me, I don't know why but I feel that I always was a

preferred person who had a better chance than anybody else. I didn't mind it at all, not that I mind it. But I remember the first time in Steyer, and I'm never going to forget it in my life, somebody told me in town — we were a little bit out of town, that camp — but in town there was a toilet which you could go there and you put in a dime pay a dime — like a dime here, whatever it was — and you opened the door and it was heated and it had the flushing water. You could pull and the water would flush. And it was a heated place. In the winter time, you know, it was so cold to go out on the outside toilet, you know, in winter. Well, I never forget. I went down there and put in the money in there and I sat in there maybe for forty-five minutes [laughs] just enjoying again after so many years sitting in a warm toilet, you know, and be able to flush it. That I'll never forget. I thought it must be heaven after so many years — first Siberia, then come through Poland, and that camp and Steyer, sitting outside and freezing everything off and here I go again, after so many years, finally again pay so you can sit in a warm bathroom [laughs]. This is what you can enjoy after so many years. And you really don't think about it. Little things what you have which all of a sudden mean so much to you. It's really funny but it does. Then a little story I remember in Bergen-Belsen. In Bergen-Belsen you had a little room and everything worked fine for me again since I started working right away at the ADJC.

JL: Let me ask you more about the types of things that went on in the DP camps. How did the social life function?

FP: Well, people socialized, they had nothing else to do. I mean, they were some parties, you know, we had people get together at the movies, or they had a dance organized or it came a holiday, you know, and they would organize some services and some people would just have services in their rooms, you know, or you had that big hall where they used to dance and they would have this for services. And also there were a lot of meetings, you know. People would come from different organizations, you know, speak about it, and people came from the Jewish Agency and speak about Israel, you know, and try everything else to get you to Israel, to come and speak about Zionism and those things were available, you know, if you wanted to be there and do those things. But what was not available for them was just starting your

life, you know, all by themselves, and become responsible for the things they were doing right. Somebody did everything for them, you know. Actually, I think probably a lot of Jewish people after the war said they had something coming. For years they were given everything and you don't have to work for it. You get it, you get it, you know. I imagine some people, after you left camps or from 1950 and 1951, after so many years, they expected the same thing to happen wherever they go. That everybody's just going to bring it to the house and give it to them or they have just to go there and pick it up so they don't have to work for it, you know. I'm sure that provided a lot of problems later on for some of the people, you know. Didn't provide any problems for me. I always was too proud to take anything without earning it and I felt that this is not my type of being, you know, and I just refuse. Okay. I talk to much you have so many tapes.

JL: What kinds of social did you manage to have at the [inaudible] in the DP camps?

FP: Whenever was something going on, if I had a chance, I would go. If it was a meeting or it was a movie house or it was a dance. And I met a lot of people. I would say I met men and women. I was very much all involved in a social life of the AJDC, and when they had a party I was there. I loved to dance. I enjoy myself dancing all my life. I still dance like crazy. So I used to go when there was a service and I had a chance to go, I used to go to services. Any functions they had and I had a chance to go, I would just take it in. And thereby you meet a lot of people. Meet men, you might meet women, and you socialize. That was my social status besides driving around. I socialized with a lot of sick people, too.

JL: Who organized the religious life?

FP: Well they had rabbis in camp. You also had, in any camp, they had Jewish people who were running the camp. Every time you have some people come together you get a president and a vice-president. Besides the AJDC they were the ones who were responsible, you know, for running the camp. A cultural section organized all those things.

JL: And where did rabbis come from?

FP: Same thing. Most of them came from concentration camps or came back.

JL: In the two camps, where was the origin of most of the population? Do you remember.

FP: The origin. I think they were from all over. They came from Hungaria and Yugoslavia, from Poland and from Germany and from Czechoslovakia. A mixture of people.

JL: Do you have any memories of a geto politsiant<sup>51</sup> having been found, discovered within the population of the DP camp?

FP: Say that again?

JL: Sometimes a geto politsiant or a kapo<sup>52</sup> was discovered among the population in the DP camp and was dealt with. Were you ever a witness to such a thing?

FP: No.

JL: Okay. Can you tell me something about the camp committees?

FP: Yes, I can tell you about the camp committee. We had to deal with them. I don't know, I believe that the camp committees who, some of them, tried their best. I'll say it again, I think some people got very demoralized through the years. Again you had these camp committees who tried to do, to make the best out of affairs and get rich from whatever they could do in camp, like selling some of the food through the black market and trading it in for cameras and then sell the cameras. All kinds of deals going on, which I found out. Not only between the committees in camp — they were also between the Americans and the English who were there. Some of them — not all of them, but some of them — tried to make a fortune as long as they could under the conditions, you know. And it was possible to do so after the war when money wasn't an object. Dollars were. With dollars you could get anything. But food was the biggest object — either food or cigarettes or candies. You could do anything you wanted, you know. So this had a reality after the war, so you can go to diamonds and dollar bills but no German marks, you know. I think some people do become just plain crooked, if you want to call it that. The time was right for them. It was easy to do without any problem. They had no problems with the German police, or anything else. Some just took advantage of it.

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<sup>51</sup> Yiddish for ghetto policeman, a Jewish inmate of the ghetto who served the Nazis as a police officer.

<sup>52</sup> A concentration camp inmate chosen by the SS as a functionary.

JL: What were your feelings about being back in Germany?

FP: I went back to Germany -- the first thing I did, actually, when I came back to Germany, I went back to my hometown, which at that time was under East Germany. And I thought I should go back and see who was still alive in that city from the whole Jewish community, who came back, and what happened to our house and our business. It was actually first thing I did [when] I went back to Germany to my town, Chemnitz and find out there's no more Chemnitz. It was Karl Marx City there. I came into Chemnitz, and I went to the city hall to find out if there are some Jewish people in this town, you know. And they said "Yes, there is a Jewish community, eine jüdische gemeinde. And this guy is the forstandt of the gemeinde," which is the leader of the community. So I got his address and I went out to him. There was that guy and I didn't remember him but he remembered me. I was a child, but he knew us and the family and he came out from mixed marriage, too, and he survived all the time in that city. Did work for the Germans in the plants from time to time, but was protected by the one man who was the main guy in the secret service in that city when I was living there, who hated everybody else, as I said. But he protected him and kept him alive. And after the war, when the Russians came in, they put this guy in jail. Then he called on this man to witness for him that he didn't do anything, that he protected him all through the war and kept him alive. So they kept a couple people alive in case something goes wrong, they would have some witnesses that they didn't do anything wrong. Those are the reasons that the other one was dead and couldn't speak, but they had alive people who they saved all through the years and they came out to be alive, just fine. And he was telling me the story how he was kept alive while still around, and I said, "Well, how could you witness something like this? You know what happened to most of the Jewish people in town. Even before the war what he did to Jewish people," you know. He was the one who came out to the houses and they put him in jail and beating him up. He said, "I'm sure they didn't know about it." And he wasn't there anymore, they took him away anyway. I'm sure there are many other witnesses against him besides him speaking for them, you know. He said, "I can only say what he did to me. I couldn't tell them what he did to anybody else." Anyway I found then there were a few

families back in Germany in that particular city. And I went to my house, back to my house. One of our German friends who took over the business, which my father lended to him and the house, which never worked. After we left the Germans sold it and he bought it from the German government, you know. And this is something else, is so emotional, coming to your own house where you grow up and you see all your family all of a sudden there playing around. And I went through the city. Every corner, every place. You grew up there, you know, you have so many experiences there. I was walking around like in a dream, you know, and nobody there I know. The people I knew — the German we lended the house. I come into the house and here he comes and he looks at me and he said, "You are still alive?" One out of ten coming through here he asks me if I'm still alive. He thought I was a ghost. He said, "What are you doing here?" I said, "Well I just came back after the war. I came back to my town to see who was here, say hello to my friends, you know, see who's still alive, what happened to them, what happened to our house and our business." He says, "You haven't a house. You have no business. I bought that from the German government. Besides, you know, now they have Communist Russians. Took it away from me." So I said, "Okay, really, I didn't want anything from you. I just wanted to come look at the house. Do you mind if I go out in our garden?" We had a big garden in the back with apples. I picked a couple apples. I said, "I'm really hungry for apples." He said, "No, we need it for ourselves. You can have no apples, anything." That really shocked me. He used to be one of our good friends. We trust him with the business and the house and everything else. Even after all this, I come back one out of — I thought he was he's going to grab me and kiss me and hug me and say, "Can I help you? Can I do something for you." It was one of the parts which really hurt me, you know. I think I told you once before, I said, "After this war when we come back, after this killing and unnecessary bombing and children" — Germans too, crippled — everybody would be happy to see each other and kiss and hug and say, "Let's be friends. Forget what happened." Here I come back, you know, and he even tells me, "What I'm doing here?" and "I can't give you any two apples or three applies." After all this, that's really a terrible — when I say sometimes I really feel like I give up on humanity, you know. I feel that at times when it gets me, when I have change it, you know. It isn't all that

bad. There are some good people, some wonderful people. You just see once in a while the bad people.

There are many, many wonderful and good people. So you have a question?

JL: No, I was just looking to see if it's ending.

FP: Also, I come back to my city, I visit some lady who used to work in our house for many, many years and they were still living in the same place. Very old people. I'll never forget it, you know. I came up to their house and they were both still alive, you know, and she immediately as I came in, the woman, took me in her arms. She was crying like a baby and she couldn't believe her eyes, you know, and she started crying, you know. She was the one immediately asked, "Who else is alive? What's happened to your mother or your father or — ?" Crying and crying. I started crying. After all this she is the one who said, "Oh, we haven't got much, you know, it's after the war, but you got to eat something," you know. I got a piece of bread, some milk, you know. That made me feel good again to see somebody you know. Then she was telling me, she said, "I worked, my husband worked. We saved all our lives because we thought we could have something when we get old. We went through two wars," she said. "The first war lost all our savings. The money went to nursing. They had inflation, they started a new German mark. All the savings we had then, we were younger then, went out. We had nothing. We worked again till we got very, very old, so now we have some savings in the bank so we have something when we get old. Same thing again. So," she said, "we also have in a way suffered but not as much as you have."

**END OF TAPE 6, SIDE 1**

## TAPE 7, SIDE 1

JL: In our last session together we were just ending the discussion about your activities in the DP camp in Blakenese. Just wanted to ask you one more thing. During the time you were in Germany, what kind of contact did you have with Germans?

FP: Really not too much of contact, since I was mostly with Jewish people together and I worked for the AJDC with Jewish people and Jewish home for Jewish children. So I really didn't have much contact with Germans at all. Very little. I knew some Germans whom I talked to, but not really become friendly or associate with at all since I just wasn't ready to associate with the Germans after all what I'd been through.

JL: Now, one final question on the DP camps. You did work you told me. What kind of remuneration did you get for your work?

FP: It went on. In the beginning it was very little, like cigarettes as a pay, and then as years went on later on we got regular pay, which wasn't too much but something which helped us buying some necessary food which we had to have. Also I had a very good relationship with all the Americans and English who were there who already had the English had the NAAFI<sup>53</sup> and the Americans had the PX. And when they went shopping I would go shopping with them. That little money I had, I had to buy something from the PX since this was about the only place where you could buy things after the war. There was nothing available in stores in Germany. So what money I usually had I spent it on mostly candy bars. And food, I never was hungry since, like [at] the children's home, I had plenty food and I was eating there which was all come from the United States and mostly was canned food. It was kosher food, which was not available at all in Germany. Hardly any food, but kosher food on top of it. And so, as the years went on, 1948, 1949, 1950, you know, then we'd have regular pay. And again, mostly it was done in cigarettes. So then, for a packet you would two cartons or three cartons or four cartons a week which you would sell them at black market and buy something else. It's like you're trading. Until they established the new German mark. Then it was

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<sup>53</sup> British military slang for the canteen.

a complete different story then things were normalized. I only know that when I left Germany, I remember I had saved up about eighty dollars or \$100. And you were not allowed to take that out from Germany. The Germans wouldn't allow you to take any money out, any dollars. So, I know I smuggled it out when I left.

JL: How did you do that?

FP: Well, my wife was pregnant and she was wearing a corset at that time and we stuck it into the corset sticks, around the sticks, and stuck it in there. And I'll never forget when I came to the United States, we came to New York, and then again, the AJDC put us on a train to Madison. But my wife, she was real tired, and really she was in her eighth month, and she wanted to sleep. We tried to get to sleep but you had to pay for it since the tickets weren't for sleeper. So my wife had to go in the bathroom and take off her corset and pull out the dollar bills so we could pay for the sleeper [laughs]. But that's how we got finally to Madison.

JL: Before we go back to Madison let me ask you what kind of contact did you have any family members after the war while you were still in Europe? Was there anyone?

FP: No, no one.

JL: If I understood correctly, you told me that you stayed in Hamburg until 1951. Why did you decide to stay that long?

FP: I didn't really decide on it. It was a matter of you had to register to become eligible to go to the United States and the immigration started very late. I mean, it was the whole problem since nobody wanted even those people are living in displaced person camps. Till finally the United States opened up some quotas to get some more people out, you know, using up the quota for several years. So our time came to leave when I was simply called by the immigration to leave. That's when I left.

JL: Okay, but I understood that after you finished at Blankenese you lived in Hamburg for a year. What did you do in that year?

FP: Right, just about a year. I was working for AJDC.

JL: Now at that time I would assume you were among Germans, or did you still continue just to be...

FP: No, actually I was living in a house where downstairs was the old school. I think you saw some pictures, the ORT.<sup>54</sup> They had rooms in a house where they had their school and I was living upstairs in an apartment. Actually one room, not an apartment, you know. Again, those were rooms were given to people like us, you know, to live there. But that's for only a few months I was living in this apartment. Most of the time I spend in Blankenese.

JL: Okay. And then you decided to leave because your?

FP: I wanted to leave Germany, yes.

JL: Okay, then you left from what German port?

FP: I first went to Bremen. From there we left by plane to the United States. A lot of people went from there by boat. It was a kind of a point, a camp again, where the people would come, they would let them check them out and put them on boats. But with us, actually, the doctor decided there at the camp that we had to fly. And actually we were taken back to Hamburg and flew from Hamburg, by airline to the United States.

JL: Did someone help you finance for the trip, the AJDC or..?

FP: The trip was financed. I think it was between the AJDC and UNRRA who financed the trips.

JL: When was it? Do you remember the date of departure?

FP: No. It was late, it was in wintertime.

JL: Of 1951?

FP: Yes, I think it was December 1951. It was in wintertime. When we came to Madison was a lot of snow there. I'm sure it was December 1951. Don't know the exact date.

JL: Who traveled with you?

FP: My wife.

JL: Any other people?

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<sup>54</sup> Organization for Rehabilitation through Training.

FP: And some other people, yes. But they were not just displaced persons in the airplane. It was just a German airplane.

JL: A commercial airplane. Can you describe your feelings upon arriving in New York?

FP: I arrived in New York, there immediately were people there who picked us up from the airport, you know, and told us that we are to go to Madison, which was sponsored by the Jewish Welfare Committee in Madison since we could not stay in New York. Our first thought was to stay in New York since we heard about New York and we heard about a lot of people went to New York. But since we were told we couldn't, and they wouldn't let us get out from the — they took us immediately to the railroad station, and they said you cannot go into New York. They had the tickets ready to go on the train.

JL: This was the JDC?

FP: Yes. They took us immediately to the station and put us on the train and we left for Madison. And really at this particular time my feelings — I was looking forward what's going to happen, you know, what I'm going to do. I knew I wanted to start a new life coming into a country with complete new life without knowing the language. I was actually looking forward to going to Madison to finally settle and start a complete new life, you know. And coming to Madison, which Rabbi [Manfred] Swarsensky who was on the Jewish Welfare Committee, who spoke German, who came to the railroad station. He picked us up, he came and said, in German, "Ah! Schön! Gut! Willkommen!"<sup>55</sup> So I said to him, "How do you know it's us when so many people come out of the train? He said, "Look at your coat, that's how we can see it. Europeans! Americans don't look like you [laughs]." So, I said, "Okay." "Besides I was told your wife was pregnant. I can see she is pregnant [laughs]." He was just funny.

JL: Why specifically Wisconsin, was that just the place you were told you'd be going to?

FP: Yes, you see everybody had to have a sponsor. You couldn't leave Germany without having a sponsor. Even though they opened the quotas, but they had somebody to guarantee a housing and jobs. That's usually what happens when you want to bring somebody in, you have to give a guarantee. So I imagine

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<sup>55</sup> German for "Ah! Beautiful! Good! Welcome!"

the Jewish communities have sponsored, every city has to sponsored so many people, so our sponsor was Madison. It could have been New York or Chicago, then we would have ended up in different city. Or Minneapolis or wherever, or Milwaukee. But our sponsor was stated in Madison so we had to go to Madison. Those who guaranteed our housing and jobs and living quarters and whatever to bring somebody in.

JL: Who were the other people besides Rabbi Swarsensky who welcomed you?

FP: Swarsensky is the one who was at the station and picked us up and took us to Broom Street and there was a house which was owned by the Sweets.<sup>56</sup> When we came to Broom Street then the Sweets<sup>57</sup> came to see us. What's the other name? Our sponsor was the Sweets and a very active lady in Madison. Very active lady in Madison too. I can't remember her name.

JL: Mrs. Mack?

FP: Mrs. Mack, too. Yes, the Macks right, and some other family. They used to have a dry cleaning store on State Street.

JL: Edith Rubenstein.

FP: Rubenstein, right, right. What's her first name?

JL: Edith.

FP: Edith sure, Edith was very active.

JL: [Inaudible.]

FP: At that time sure, right. They were really active. Those are the ones really. She was one of our sponsors and I remember the first time I went to a party, she invited people for us to meet, and had a party at her house. We get acquainted with people in town.

JL: You lived on Broom Street?

FP: Yes.

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<sup>56</sup> The house was actually purchased by Joseph Rothschild, for the purpose of housing new immigrants.

<sup>57</sup> Joe and Alma Sweet.

JL: And how long did you live there?

FP: Not too long since I got out of there very fast. Maybe two months.

JL: And then?

FP: Then I moved to East Johnson Street and I was living on East Johnson. Very nice apartment upstairs.

Under the roof but that's all I could afford. I wanted to be independent and by myself. Besides we had a baby, my wife had a baby there. Living at Broom Street was not — I was fine since we had apartment with four bedrooms. You had four families, you know, and some family already had two or three children, so it was like standing in line to go to the kitchen, standing in line to go to the bathroom. It was not the best way of living. So as soon as I had a job, I got out of there and found an apartment.

JL: Who were the other families in?

FP: You mean?

JL: At Broom Street.

FP: Good question. One was...I should remember them, too. Right now I don't have it back there. Think it will come back to me.

JL: What do you remember about your first impressions of Madison?

FP: The first impression: snow [laughs]. The first impression of Madison is that I couldn't believe I opened my eyes. First of all I liked the reception committee who came, you know. People were interested in us and trying to help us, and I felt very good about it. Then the next thing was that I could go to the store and buy anything I wanted in big amounts. And I know that I used to buy oranges by the bags and eat them by the bags until finally my whole skin broke out from having too much acid in the system. But I didn't have any orange for such a long time, you know, so you overdo those things, you know. But I remember this very well, I couldn't believe it, go in the store and just pick up this and pick up this and pick up this and just fill up, you know, and take it home and eat whatever you like when you want to eat. I hadn't had this for many, many years, even after the war, you know. The food I had after the war even was food usually what you had in the canteens or where you were eating there. You would eat what was put in

front of you and that was it. But you hadn't had a choice to go out and pick what you want to eat and as much as you wanted to eat and just take it, you know. You pay for it, you don't take it, but you pay for it. And the prices I couldn't believe — cheap, you know. I thought America was the Gan Eden.<sup>58</sup> Everything is here and plentiful and cheap. Complete different life. I really felt good. I felt really that, well, my only problem was my speaking language, but I felt very good. I felt, "Here's a new life. I'm free, you know. I'm free to start. I don't have to worry any more about what's going to happen. My kids are going to grow up in a country of freedom, you know, and nobody is going to ever hate us any more or discriminate against us." I had a very wonderful feeling, you know, of being again a human being, you know, and can start over a new life, a complete new life. And I made very fast friends in Madison, especially with younger people who used to go to university, like the Cohns<sup>59</sup> and that and the Ticktins,<sup>60</sup> very good friends with the Cohns and Ticktins, and the Portnoys. I don't think you ever met the Portnoys. The Portnoys, they're now in Florida. He's a professor at the university there. So we had met young people and started having a nice group of people together and was a very nice atmosphere. Nobody had much though, and even not having much, we had really good times together. When you used to go out somewhere together and park and have a little picnic, everybody puts little things together, you know. And we used to have party at home. You buy a bottle of liquor cheap as possible and everybody puts in a few cents and buy one bottle together, you know. It felt like, you know, the greatest thing in the world, you know. But just having good times, sitting together and doing things together and speaking, doing games or whatever, you know. When I think back about, I would say my first year in Madison, the only year I was in Madison, it's one of my nicest memories I have of the United States, since there was a group of people who really had feeling for each other. You could tell them about everything and everybody understood everybody. You were liked for what you are and not what you're supposed to be. And it was really nice. I always think so many

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<sup>58</sup> Hebrew for 'Garden of Eden'.

<sup>59</sup> Jake and Ateret Cohn.

<sup>60</sup> Rabbi Max and Esther Ticktin.

times back how beautiful it was, having nothing, and being a tough time actually, but I think life at that time was so much nicer as later when I had everything and didn't have the people to be with. People who really had different feelings and different thoughts about life and you felt like be by yourself, you know. You have really nobody who feels like you or think like you. And I thought about it and constantly I think about it, it was unbelievable time. Everybody was standing with you and trying to help you and trying to understand you and do things with you. And you would do things then to them. It didn't matter, you know. It was just wonderful, you know. People together. I really miss it since, I really haven't — I have friends, but it isn't this kind of a really friend where you think when you're really in trouble there's somebody who's there, you know. You really have somebody. It's not just a friend, you say a friend, you know. Somebody you feel is there, you know. You can depend on it, you know. If it's good or bad the friend's going to be there, you know, to be with you. We're not talking about financial help but just to be with you with yours or to help you get over that particular time or point.

JL: What specific special acts of kindness can you tell me about?

FP: They were willing, acts of kindness -- they would come, like the Ticktins would come to the house, you know, just come visit with us. You know, you're in a fun country. And the Cohns would come and visit with us and bring along a piece of cake, we all sit down, talk and have the cake, it's good that we could talk, and have a cup of coffee, spend time together, you know. It's just you had a feeling that somebody, you know, wants to be with you and wants to spend time with you and wants to help you to get over the time so you get adjusted and learn the language, you know. It's a feeling that people really were there to be with you, spend time with you and as hard as it must have been, especially with me with my English, you know, the complications, you know. But I could speak Yiddish so that helped, you know. Esther spoke German and the Cohns spoke Yiddish. It was, you know, a good setup.

JL: How did you learn English?

FP: I learned English, I went to the technical school in Madison and they had a class in English. I took that at night several times. The rest of it, I had to work and I just learned mostly by myself, you know. My wife

knew English so she helped me a little bit. She spoke English, she learned English in Germany. It was mostly through doing it, reading and writing and speaking it. Then I really didn't go to much schooling about it. I know I took once private lessons when I came to Wausau from an old lady at night, also after work. A German lady. Took several lessons from her and that helped me, no question about it. I don't know, once it came to me it wasn't that tough. I could just master it, you know. I'm sure I'm missing many, many, many English words which I never learned and I really have never gone into it and spent more time and go really to learn it, you know. When I read sometimes things, I don't understand what it means, you know. It's just nothing, you know. But I try to pick up a bit, as much as I can and learn more, you know, as time goes along. And as I was saying, you know, even when I retire, I never have to worry about it. I'm always going to be busy. If nothing else I go to school, you know. It's true: nothing ever bothers me. And people worry about what they're going to do when they are retired and what are they going to do with their life. I don't worry about it because I'm always going to have something to do with my life, and if I like said I even can become a volunteer and work for some cause, you know, I like to do. There's many things I can do in my life, even when I'm sixty-five or seventy. I don't count myself in old, never, you know. I have this feeling that I'm always still young, you know. Even now I'm sixty-three, just, you know, but I go swimming every night and I go dancing disco and I do all the crazy things. And I water-ski and I downhill ski and. And it's never my idea, you know, people will say to me, "How long can you do it? You're sixty-three years old, take it easy," you know. So why should I take it easy? I take it easy when I get sick or I break a leg. Then I cannot help it. But as long as I feel like doing things, I'm just going to do it. This is why I never feel that I ever have any problems, except if sickness should get me. But if I live to whatever age I will do whatever I can, if you want me to go on one foot I'm still going to do whatever I can do on one foot, you know [laughs]. By that time disco might not be there any more, might be some other dance, so I'll learn some other dances.

JL: Let me ask you – back to a new immigrant. What specific problems did you face there in Madison as new immigrants?

FP: It's only the language problem. I had no other problems. I had all the help I could ask for, from students, from people who were there who tried to help us. I say again it's just really amazing and unbelievable and I felt very good about the warm reception and people really were out to help, you know. Those people were help, the rest of them I don't know. [Inaudible.] Swarsensky was one of them who was very helpful. Well, he wanted us also to become a member of his congregation.<sup>61</sup>

JL: Did you?

FP: No. I went once to his service and I told him I didn't like his services since they are all English, completely English. And he was telling me, he said, "Well, you're used to the old, you know, religious things, Orthodox." And he said "I grew up in Germany already as a Reform Jew and now that I came to the United States," he said "I'm Reform." Then he asked me, "Do you eat pork?" I said, "No." He said, "I do. I don't mind." I said, "If you like it, fine. I just don't." Even so we had a very good relationship, I think. Manfred, I called him Manfred. I used to say, "Manfred, you do what you want, I do what I want." We used to have a lot of things that we used to talk together. He spoke German, so whom do I go and talk to? It was really nice. And I met his mother who is living at that time right at the house, invite us to dinner. They were really nice, warm people. And even though we are completely fought about our religion thing but it had nothing to do with it, you know. And he would invite me in at temple to come and whenever there was something going he would make sure to call me up. He said, "Hey, there's something going on, come to temple. It has nothing to do with the services [laughs]."

JL: Where did you go for services?

FP: It was Conservative.

JL: Was it [inaudible]?

FP: No, Conservative.

JL: Beth...

FP: Beth Israel,

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<sup>61</sup> Congregation Beth El.

JL: Already?

FP: Yes, right. No, they still had the Orthodox there at that time when I came, but then a year later I think or two years later it was dissolved.

JL: I think we're going to have to stop.

**END OF TAPE 7, SIDE 1**

## TAPE 7, SIDE 2

JL: You mentioned that when you moved to Johnson you had a job. What kind of job did you have?

FP: When I moved where?

JL: To Johnson Street. You said that you had a job.

FP: Yes, I had a job. I think that I told you that I got myself a driver's license.

JL: I don't think we recorded that.

FP: Anyway, being in Madison we were told that the Jewish Welfare Committee is going to give us ten dollars a week to live on, and since we had the free so-called apartment, one other room in this apartment with the three other families. I wasn't one to take it, since we had a few dollars left which we had hidden away. And I said, "I have a few dollars and I don't need your ten dollars. I came here to work and not to sit around and get charity or welfare." I said, "I don't want charity." So I was told by Jake Cohn, who was our advisor, he said, "You can't speak the language and so many are American unemployed. How are we going to find a job for you? So just take it easy, we'll find a job later on, whatever it's going to be, washing dishes or whatever you can do. But in the meantime, you know, take the ten dollars so you have some money to live on." And I refused. I went out immediately, out to look for a job in the snow. That's why I remember the snow so well, since I wasn't dressed American-like, I was dressed with European-like, with little shoes on there, you know, and stumbling through the snow. I get really wet and soaked and cold. And I had a winter coat on, you know, a European type of winter coat, and I used to go from place to place, just talked my language until I found somebody who would understand me, speak German, and I found people who spoke German. And I came to a company, it was a moving company, and the guy's a German and he says, "Where are you coming from?" I told him I came from Germany and he got very interested and took me to his office, we started to talk about it and I told him that my wife is pregnant, is going to have a baby soon, and I have to have a job to be able to rent an apartment and pay for the doctor bills and whatever. And I told him I wouldn't want to take any charity from anybody, I want to earn it myself. I'm a stubborn person. So he says, "Okay, why don't you come to work tomorrow morning." He

said, "Before you come to work, I got some rubber boots here. You can't go around like this. You're going to be sick. Take my rubber boots and wear them when you come to work." So he gave me some old rubber boots and I'll never forget, it's really nice [of] people to think this way. So I came to work and I started helping the people to move furniture. It was a moving company. We would pick up furniture in the house and deliver furniture.

JL: What company was it?

FP: It was a big company, I don't remember any more. I think it was Allied Moving Company in Madison. So that was all fine and good, but when I came into his office I was so cold, I was freezing so bad, that I never took my gloves off and he didn't see that I was missing two fingers, and besides he was too much interested in my story and my plight. I couldn't speak their language. When those guys would say "pick up," I would set down. When they said "set down," I'd pick it up. When they say "right," I'd go to the left. Everything went wrong. Besides going up the step holding the furniture in my hand, it would slip out of my right hand since I only had those two fingers to hold onto furniture. And I would smash up the walls or scratch the furniture. So I guess after three days he called me into the office. In the morning he said, "Come to my office." I came in and he speaks to me in his German language, "Show me your hand," and I showed him. I took off my glove and I showed him. "Oh," he said, "I didn't know that," you know. "[At] first, [when] somebody complained to me it was the language. You couldn't understand what they are saying and the furniture fell out of your hand, you know. But then they start telling me you're missing fingers and you can't hold onto it." He said, "I got so many complaints. Not only from the workers who are upset. They're not going to work anymore with you. You're dangerous to them. When you set the furniture down, somebody's going to get hurt. And also the customers," he said, "scratches on the furniture, on the walls. I have an insurance company but they have to limit what they going to pay for it and it's really my fault I didn't look at you right." So he said, "I can't keep you any longer [at] this job." I said, "What can I do then? What kind of job can I get? I have to have a job." And he said, "I don't know. You have to find a job where you don't have to lift heavy things." So I asked then if I could become maybe a driver. He said,

"Our drivers also help unload and loading and but maybe city deliveries of small packages or something like this, deliver, maybe then. I don't know right now," he said. "But for the time being, we already made out your check. Here's your check. I'm very sorry, you know, I tried to help you. It just didn't work out, it's not for you. Try to find another job." But I remember I got some \$27.50 for those three days, great at that time. And I was most proudest guy in the world. Even though I lost my job, when I went home and I called up Jake Cohn and I told him, "You see, in three days I made as much as you want to give me in three weeks," I said. I was really high that I was able to make so much money in three days. And I told him, I said, you know, "The guy might give me a job as a driver if I get a driver's license. Can you help me to go there where they give driver's license?" So Jake Cohn, in his nice way said, "Gedreyenish in kop,"<sup>62</sup> you can't speak the language. You have to take a written test," you know. So I told him, "I have a German driver's license. Doesn't that help?" He said, "No, you still have to go through the test. Somebody else tried before you and it didn't work out. Why don't you just rest up until we find you other job?" I couldn't rest and since my wife spoke English I said to her — and she sticking out, ninth month — I said to her, "You find out. Look in the telephone book where that place is, you know. I asked people and they said it's the Motor Vehicle Department." So my wife looked up the address and I went to the Motor Vehicle Department in Madison and when I came in I looked around, you know, and I could already read, you know, where it says there "license." I went, talked my German to somebody and somebody who just understands me and I knew it was "driver's license." They sent me to other window and I finally got to a place where there was a guy who spoke German. And so I told him my story about the job I had and I lost on account of my fingers and he promised me a job if I have a driver's license and I got a German driver's license, I never had an accident in my life. And I told him my wife was in ninth month and I need apartment rent and I don't want to take any charity or welfare, I want to make it on my own. And he listened to the whole story, you know, and then he said, "Okay, you have to go through a test." He gave me the papers, the book, you know. "Go home and study this. He said, "Come back in three days and

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<sup>62</sup> Yiddish for 'foolish person'.

come to my window right away and then we talk about it." So now I had this book and immediate I call again Jake. I think he was my counselor. Jake had his hands full, he still talks about it. So I called Jake. "I got a book here." He said, "What book." "Learn how, you know, get a license." He said, "Where did you go?" I told him where I went to. He said, "You really are impossible." I said, "I need somebody to help me translate. Do you have somebody who can help me?" He said, "Yes, I think I have a girl at the university who has said she will help somebody who needs help. She's from Holland. She speaks German," he said. "I'll ask her if she wants to come."

JL: Who was the girl?

FP: I don't remember anymore who was the girl.

JL: Was it DeLevie?

FP: No, not DeLevie. No, it was a girl from Holland. Anyway, the girl came after school and would sit with me for two, three hours, you know, and we studied the book and then I keep on studying it at night. I read at night. I really didn't sleep anyway, I was too nervous. And after three days I went back to the guy. So I come in there and I look at him and he says "okay," speaks his German language and he said, "Here's this form. You see over there where the people are sitting? Sit down and write in the answers." So I take the paper and go in there and I read and I read and study. I answer maybe two questions. And I just couldn't make out, even so after three days and night studying it, you know. And people would come, they finished up and go back, and new people come and they go and I sit there. He looks at me and I look at him. I sat there for about two hours at least trying to make it, and I finally gave up. And I get back to his window and he said, "How are you coming along?" I said, "Here it is. I only answered two questions. The technical question is hard for me really to do this thing after three days." He said, "You have to." I said, "It will take me a long time. I have to have a job. I can't get another job. I have to have something which I can handle with my hand." I said, "Can't you ask me in German? I answer the question and you write in the answer." He said, "No, I can't write nothing in, I can't do that." I said, "But I have my German driver's license," you know, He said, "Okay, you have one dollar?" I said, "Yes, I brought along a dollar."

He said, "Give me the dollar and just wait a second," and he gave me a temporary license. He said, "Then we mail you the driver's license later on, okay?" So I had a temporary driver's license. There again, I went home and I was so — "Ha, I have a driver's license!" Then I went out to look for a job again, since I had a driver's license. I went back to the same place and he said, "No, we just can't do that." And then my wife was reading the paper, we bought a paper and looked in all those "wanted, wanted," and all of a sudden there was an ad in there: "Wanted: truck driver, City Delivery." And I called up Jake, "Jake, I read in the paper they wanted someone to do delivery. I can't talk to the guy." He said, "Your wife can talk." "No," I said, "her English is not that good. Why don't you call him up and explain the situation and see maybe I can get a job?" So Jake calls me back and said, "I don't know what's the matter with you. You're lucky. He needs so badly a driver he'll even take you. But the pay," he said, "is very low. It's \$25 a week and there's no hour limits. That means you have to work as many hours as it takes to finish the job." I said, "Well, I don't care. I, you know, want to go and do something. If that's how it is, that's how it is." So I went to work for the City Delivery. They had one fellow with me who had all the list where to go — pick up this here, leave this here. I remember for driving out of Madison, all of a sudden there was a sign going and I didn't know. He was yelling at me, "Stop, stop!" I didn't know "stop." [Laughs] He's pulling at me, pulling at me, and he's talking to me and I finally understood he wanted me to go on the side and stop the car. There was an ambulance coming or the police or I don't know.

JL: Didn't you know the meaning of a siren from Germany?

FP: I just it didn't hit me right away, so I thought, you know — anyway, that was the first time. It worked out all right. We kept on working. I think we started at seven o'clock in the morning and [were] supposed to work till 5:00, but we never finished — 6:00, 7:00, 8:00 everyday. Then he wanted me to work these other days, six days and then Sundays at \$25 a week. So I started to know a little more English and I know the word "overtime." I'll never forget. I had a lot of chutzpah.<sup>63</sup> I worked there for about a couple weeks, you know, and it just kept on — more hours, more hours and more hours. And I was talking with

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<sup>63</sup> Hebrew and Yiddish for 'arrogance', 'gall', or 'nerve'.

the guy who sits with me and he paid this guy overtime. Yes, he paid them overtime. I didn't, I got twenty-five bucks a week.

JL: Was it a full-time job?

FP: Yes, well he said forty hours. That's why he was looking for drivers: nobody wanted to work there I guess, so he took anybody just to drive the truck. It was a little truck. Anyway, I worked there for several weeks and then I figured — I had rented an apartment, that's when I rented an apartment. It cost me ninety dollars a month and I know I could never make it to pay at that time ninety dollars, way up under the roof. I could never make it earning \$100 a month and paying ninety dollars rent. So after a month's time I called again Jake and said, "You have to talk to the man. I can't make it for that money. I can hardly, since I rented an apartment." He said, "Well, what do you want me to do?" I said, "Call him up and tell him I have to have overtime. Pay me more after so many hours. Ask him how many hours I really have to work for the twenty-five dollars. Was it forty, fifty or sixty? I want to know. Maybe I can find other job. I work less hours there, I find a second job and I can make some extra money. But this way I never know. I come home at 8:00, at 9:00, at 10:00, I don't know, you know, when I'm finished so I can't find another job."

So Jake called him and he said, "Okay, he agrees to give you thirty dollars a week if you will have no limitation on hours." I said "Jake, that's not going to be enough to make a living on. I still have to find a second job so I have to know when I'm finished, okay?" "Well," he said, "I don't know what's the problem with you. Why don't you just take ten dollars?" I said, "I don't want ten dollars. I have now an apartment, I have to pay rent. I don't want this." So Jake had to help me out. Jake calls him up again. He said, "He wants to talk to you." "To me?" I said, "What can I talk to him? What conversation?" "He wants to talk to you." So the next time I go to work go to the office and talk to him. I understood a little bit. No overtime. I said, "I want overtime." He says, "No. I'll give you five dollars more with no limit of time. And if you work another two months, maybe the other five dollars." And I said, "No. I can't make a living. Ninety dollars rent and having heating, you know, \$120 a month, it's impossible." I said, "I have no furniture, I have

nothing. And my wife just had the baby, you know. You have to buy diapers, you have to buy this, it's impossible. I know people are nice and want to help us, you know, but I want to be on my own." So, back and forth, and I went back home and I told Jake, you know, how much I can understand [of] what he's saying. I said, "He's not going to pay me overtime." I wanted to call and tell him that I'm going to work exactly from 7:00 in the morning till 5:00 in the afternoon, then I'm leaving since I have to look for a second job." [Jake] says, "I can tell him, you know. I don't know if it's going to help. So let's just call him up." I says, "I cannot really talk to the man. So he knows what's all about." So he called him up and told him. So I come to work next day. [At] 5:00 I go out. They have radios and they call you, "Go there, there, there." So he called me at night to go different places. I finally end up coming home by 6:30 with the truck. So I told, "I'm not going to do it anymore. If it happens tomorrow again," I said, "I'm going to leave the truck sitting in the middle of town since I have to I'll look for another job." Next day, 5:00, 5:30, 6:00, 6:30 they keep on calling, "Go there. Go there." I remember, [at] 6:30 I got so mad these people just, you know — he knew that I told him 5:00. I left the truck sit in the middle of the city at 6:30. They told us -- he said that's the last call, 5:30. We got to 6:30, another call. And I said, "No more." I gave the guy the key, I left the truck, left it in the middle of the city, and I went home. I come home, Jake calls me up. He said, "What are you doing leaving that truck middle of the city, they are way out on the east side, then you leave it sit there in the middle of the city and give him the key and you leave your job? That's not the way you do it." I said, "Jake, I've told him so many times 5:00. I've take till 5:30, till 6:00, till 6:30. I told him this day, when he called in, he said it's the last trip and by 6:30 when we finish the trip they call again for other trip." I said, "There's nothing else I can do. I can't stay with him, I know, but I have to go out and find other job. It just isn't possible. I can't do it." That's what I did. I went around looking for other job. It took me about three weeks and I got a job with General Beverage, driving trucks. And then I got paid, I remember I started out at ninety-five cents an hour plus overtime, as a driver. And I first had to worked a couple weeks at warehouse, I had to stuff those package and put together for the trucks, some in different direction. Then I went on a truck. And I remember Mr. [Max] Weinstein called me to the office

and said, "How are you going to go out on the road when you have to go [through] a whole big part of Wisconsin [to] deliver?" you know, I said, "I can read. I got a map, I look at it, you know. I go on the highway and I go to cities and I deliver." And by that time I kept on speaking a little bit better, you know, English — what I call better English. And he said, "You can't even read" you know. I said, "Yes, I can read. Give me a list," you know. Wines is all the same, anyway, and whiskeys and I start reading it down. I guess he figured, when he came from the old country, nobody could read. You know, I'm still from the old country. He says, "Okay,, you're accepted." And I worked at General Beverage. I had a second job which I used to work. Since I couldn't make enough money, I used to work at Kroger's bakery, a second job at night. Not for long, but six weeks. It was good, I made some extra money, you know, trying to get ahead, buying us some furniture. Sewing machine, that's what I bought, a sewing machine so my wife could do some sewing for clothes. It's still here. It's amazing, how long it's around, this Singer sewing machine. I'll never forget the bakery. See, this is really something, it's unbelievable. I don't know if you know how people work in a bakery, but any assembly line — it's like an assembly line. And also again had those problems with my fingers. So they used to -- first they put me by the bread section, where the bread dough comes out from the machine and you grab the dough and you put them on a big plate. But they were big wagons where we had those big greasy plates, you know, there where you pull out a plate, set it done, put the bread on there, put it on the wagon. When the wagon was filled, I push [it] in the oven. But, oh, greasy. All of a sudden I would have four of those doughs and it would fall out of my hand and roll onto the floor. And then the machine, you know, where the dough comes out. It comes flying out and you must grab it fast. If you don't grab it fast enough you pile up with the dough, you know. And many times, you ring the bell where they stop it. I just couldn't do it fast enough, between pulling out this thing, put the bread on there and put it in there. Dough would pile up on me, big piles of dough. This was for a while. Then they put me in a different job. Next thing was making buns. Same story. Especially on weekends they made buns for hotdogs, you know. Same thing, there was a machine shooting out those buns [laughs] you know, and you have to grab them again, you know, put them on, you know, to go in

the oven, little plates. "Shik, shik, shik" like meshuge, like crazy. And I had the same problem again. I couldn't do it fast enough. I was pretty new in there too and I always bundled up dough, you know. It would pile up and then it would pile up and then they'd have to take the whole dough out of there and put it back and make new buns. And the funniest thing — I look at the same situation today, you know, maybe that's why I have more understanding for workers — that new coffee break. You had a coffee break, five minutes, and you had to punch the clock. If you were late one minute, you deducted fifteen minutes for the break. So you can imagine if you had to go to the bathroom, with the other people in there, you had a tough time. Had to run in the bathroom, come back, your five minutes were gone. But I know when you had to go to the bathroom and you didn't have a break, they had nobody to put at your machine since you were part of the process. You would stand there [laughs] and stand there and to the foreman comes and says, "What do you have to do?" I said, "I have to go to the bathroom." "You can't, nobody can replace you. You stay there [laughs]." It's the truth. That's why I'm saying, people who work in the assembly line that must be the most boring, unbelievable job. You're a machine yourself, you know. You do the same movement all the time. Then they put me on sweet rolls. They don't know where to put me anymore [you know]. Sweet rolls come out and you have to put the glaze on top. They had different glaze for different sweet rolls, okay. "They're now running this glaze." You had this big putz there with glaze, he's supposed to take a big wooden spoon and smear it over like this. I used my hand, run over the thing, they keep on running, they stick to my hands [laughs]. What a mess! And then I decided I'm never going to eat sweet rolls anymore. I think when you work on those things you see how things are handled. You get sick of it. Then they put me in the packaging department, you know. When they're finally to the end you put them in boxes, you know. I just it drove me crazy. I quit my job after [that] and I started doing my own business.

JL: What was that?

FP: Well, that was really interesting. You know, I say that the people -- in Madison you had to take the garbage in one can and the tin can in another can and the newspaper had to be bundled. So I put it

outside. And I look at that newspaper, bundled outside and since I was working at General Beverage, next door was Sinaiko [Brothers Company] the scrap dealer. And I decided I have to go into Sinaiko to find if paper has any value. I saw people bringing paper there, paper bales there. So I go on to Sinaika and I said, "How much do you pay for newspaper?" "Oh," he said, "we pay a dollar." A dollar at that time, a penny a pound. There are a hundred pounds and I in my head figure, "That's unbelievable. I'm going to make a fortune." I was driving for General Beverage already a truck, and so I gave up the job, decided I just couldn't spare it anymore, it was too much. I went to the guy who used to be fixing our truck for General Beverage, was at G and C Garage on Regent Street, I think. Whatever. I used to go there to bring our trucks there. They had to grease and oil change them and pick them up. I said to him, "I'd like to buy a little truck." He said, "I got a panel [truck] here at G and C, it's old." He knew me already. I could hardly speak English, you know. He'd talk to me, he knew where I came from and so on. He said, "What do you want it for." I said, "I have no transportation, you know. I can't afford a car, and I'd like to have a little truck [so] that I can haul stuff and make some extra money." And I said, "Yes, just a panel truck, G and C." He said, "Give me sixty dollars and you can have it," you know I said, "I don't have sixty dollars. What about I give you ten dollars, you know, and then I'll pay you up each month?" He said, "Not for sixty dollars, that's so cheap already, I give [that price as a] present to you. I know you, I know you haven't got any money. But you're only giving me ten dollars for six months, you know — I might as well give it to you for nothing." I said, "That's a good idea [laughs]." I said, "I couldn't do that." "I'll tell you what I'll do," he said. "Can you come up with twenty dollars?" I said, "What happens when I come up with twenty dollars?" "Well, if you come up with twenty dollars this month and twenty dollars next month, I'll let you have it for forty bucks. Less bookkeeping, you know, and I want to help you out. I see you're a really nice guy, you know, I like you. You're really ambitious." I said, "It's a deal." I come up with twenty bucks. I bought that panel truck. So then I had the panel truck so I would go out at night and check garbage, put the garbage out, which street were picked up Monday, which are Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday so I would know exactly, since I had to go to job in the morning and I had to be there 8:00 at General

Beverage. I'd wake up at 5:00 and know exactly which part of city to go to pick up the paper early in the morning. So I had it all lined up, all the streets and so on, and I start running around, get up at 4:00 in the morning and 5:00 on the truck and all the morning I just threw all the paper in my panel truck. And then I talked with Sinaiko. I told him I worked next door, "How can I deliver the paper to you since I'm at work? I drive out of town, we usually come home 6:00 at night. 5:00 you are closed." He said, "There's always somebody here at 7:00 in the morning who opens up the gates. I can tell the man to weigh you, okay? You're going to have to unload it yourself, but that's all I can do." I said, "That's fine, doesn't bother me, you know. The man knows where to unload it and I unload it." That's what I did. So by 7:00 when I was through with my route, I'd drive in Sinaiko, weigh up my paper, back up to the paper baler, dump it all out, you know, and leave in time to work, you know, even in time — I used to have a cup of coffee. But I started making a fortune of money. I used to make twelve dollars a day, fifteen dollars a day.

JL: [Inaudible.]

FP: Yes.

**END OF TAPE 7, SIDE 1**

## TAPE 8, SIDE 1

FP: [Inaudible.]

JL: So you made quite a bit of money with the newspapers.

FP: I made more money with newspaper with two hours in the mornings than the pay in my all-day job at General Beverage. Since I used to load up the truck, sometimes I had as much as 1500, 1600, 2,000 pounds. That's twenty bucks. Depends how much I had. But I ended up over the week making about a hundred dollars. Was twice as much I made with General Beverage and just only in two hours in the morning.

JL: And didn't people ask you what you were doing or why you were out?

FP: Early in the morning very few people saw what I was doing, you know. It was just the paper, nobody cared. And yet the city didn't care either, you know, since they had less to take away, it was the city's job. This went on fine for a while and then I was telling my friends what I was doing and thought it was the greatest thing. You know, "That guy came here, he has nothing to begin with, he has those ideas," you know. Runs out and -- I know that everybody started saving that paper for me. The Macks had an apartment house and he was also one of my sponsors, somehow that works out well. When he heard about it he got crazy. He said, "Well now how are you got those ideas? I got all those apartment houses, you know. We leave it down for you special in the basement, you know. You can pick it up, you know, whenever you have time. We tell the people to leave it there and not to carry it out on the street." And what happened later on is after a few weeks — at that time they had all those Jewish peddlers, there were peddlers for newspaper and whatever, iron and so on and, you know, they come every morning. When they come in the morning there was a bunch of paper always laying under the baler, you know, and after a while people must have started talking to people who work there and the people who bring the peddler there, and asked the guy who weighs in, the old guy, "Who's the guy?" He said, "Well, that guy who can't speak any English comes every morning and there's a full load and he dumps it up and he weighs it out." So all of a sudden, finally somebody must have seen it early in the morning. It took about

five, six, seven weeks, something like this. I'd go out five o'clock in the morning, I see one truck on the other corner picking up paper. I got around to the next corner, there's other truck over there picking up paper and everybody was rushing, most of them they were rushing, by mistake they kicked over garbage cans, you know. Everybody was such in a hurry to get more paper [laughs]. Then all of a sudden there was a notice in the newspaper, it said all these things you put out on the street like newspaper and everything else is property of the city. Nobody has a right to pick it up. The reason they did, they had a lot of problems. They tipped over the garbage over the whole street, you know. Everybody was running like crazy. I used to do the same thing — run, run, run till we get more paper. So I said to my wife, "Okay, I'm not interested in this. Everything's going to be fined, this law and order and so on. I don't like it so that's out. Let them have it." I said, "I have to have the truck, I have to make a living. I'm going to go to all the stations and try to buy their old batteries, you know, service stations where they change batteries. And also then I still had some of my friends who said, "The paper is reserved for you. Nobody else gets it. We keep it in the house." Then they would call me up when they have paper, you know. I had some paper on the side anyway, but not as much I used to have. So I decided, "Since this isn't enough, I'm going to go during my free time to the stations, you know, and talk to the people and buy their batteries."

JL: Were you still working at General Beverage?

FP: Yes. But I was so used to big money now that General Beverage was small money. What happened, not only this, I used to go on the road with General Beverage. I went on the road for General Beverage because I used to go to all those taverns, you know. They had all those cardboard boxes and cardboard was higher-priced than newspaper. Was about sixteen-hundredths. I don't know exactly how much, but cardboard was very high paid for. I said to the fellows, you know, "What do you do with your empty boxes?" They threw them up in the garbage. I said, "Don't throw them out any more. When I come deliver the whiskey and wine I pick up the empty boxes." "Okay, that's fine." So I used to come home, I used to unload all the whiskey and wine and then threw in the empty boxes into the truck which belonged to General Beverage. As I came back, I would throw it in my truck at night. Then in the morning I'd deliver it

to Sinaiko. That went very good until Mr. Weinstein was told what was going on and he got very upset. He said to me, "I understand you have a second job besides what you're doing here." I said, "Yes, I handle paper. I do that early in the morning or after work, whatever." He said, "Don't you make enough money here?" I said, "No." I said, "Why, you want to give me a raise?" He says, "No," he said, "you newcomers are something else. You're never happy. When I came to this country, I worked for two dollars a week or five dollars a week. You're making fifty dollars; you're not happy." I said, "What you did, you did; what I am doing, I am doing. I don't see why it should bother you that I make the extra money after work or before work." I said, "I do my job. I think I do my job better than anybody else. I never come back with cases. I always deliver. If the bar isn't open, I find someone next door who will take it. Or if the Elk's Club isn't open, I find somebody who's next to the Elk's Club who will take it and sign the slip. I have never brought anything back the opposite way. I bring you back new orders. And when I go into a bar I say, 'Have you forgotten something to order?' and I bring you back new orders. He doesn't have to wait for the salesman to come in two weeks." So he had more selling of wine and liquor. "Yes, okay, that's fine and good," he said, "but I still don't want you to have two jobs." I said, "Why not?" He said, "You must be too tired to work at General Beverage." I said, "No, I'm not too tired. I can take it." So I said, "If you want to pay me more money, this way I can make up for the difference, that's fine. I take it easy." So he got upset and he said, "You'll have to make up your mind. You have to give up your business or you have to work here. One of those things." I said, "If you ask me right now, I make more money with less hours over there. I will have to give up the job." "No," he said, "now wait a second." I said, "I can't wait." Did you interview Fritz, what's his name, in Madison, also with General Beverage, who also came from Germany...

JL: Arm?

FP: Yes, right, Arm. He was the manager in the warehouse at General Beverage. He never could take a vacation since they had no person to replace him. He get all the orders together and ship them out. And he suggested that he would take a vacation, that Fred Platner was able to handle the warehouse. And I

know already talk was going on. Fritz had taught me to do that job. And I told Fritz that I would do the job, under one condition: if I have overtime — I worked in twelve other towns and more than 40 hours — that General Beverage would pay me the same amount of hours as I make on the road, [then] I will do it. Otherwise I can't. And I knew already — Fritz already talked to me about it — he's going to talk to Weinstein because he finally wants to take a vacation without being called back. So I knew that he's not going to lay me off right away. I knew what was going on. And that's why I said, "Wait a second." And then he called me a few days later and said, "I understand Fritz talked to you, that he thinks that you can do the warehouse and he can go on vacation." He hadn't had vacation for years. So I said, "Yes, but I was thinking you might have a problem with me." He said, "What's the problem?" I said, "I understand you don't allow Fritz or any truck driver to pick up coffee or donuts for break and I think those guys all work very hard in the morning when they're loading the trucks and they're entitled to five minutes, a cup of coffee, and a break." I said, "I don't have breakfast in the morning. I need my cup of coffee and a donut, and you might not like that." "No," he said, "I don't allow anybody to have any breaks in my place." I said, "Okay," I said, "if you want me to work the warehouse, would you allow me to have a cup of coffee? If you say no, I don't want the job." I said, "I can go out on the road and you don't know. You pay me for the hours but I stop somewhere to have a cup of coffee." I told him myself. "So does everybody else. You're better off let them have it here instead of driving out in his truck and stop somewhere in a restaurant, have to wait until he gets served. Here somebody picks it up for everybody and brings it up, we all have a break, and we're all done with it." [Weinstein replied,] "You are not going to change my — ." I said, "Okay, then I'm not going to work. I can go out on the road." "Okay," he said, "if you just going to do it, cup of coffee up there when they all load the trucks, you can have a cup of coffee. Then we have some time anyway." I said, "Okay." So I took up Fritz's job when Fritz went on vacation. So the first day I told the driver — the old driver had to help load it. The driver said, "Anybody who wants coffee and donuts, give me the money, he's going to pick it up for all us." I went out to get it. He must have seen me coming back with the donuts and coffee. He comes up, everybody's sitting there having coffee and donuts. He

looks at me, I thought he was going to eat me up, you know. I was only gone for five minutes. We went back to work, finished the job. He didn't say a damn word. Just came out, looked mad, turned around, went down there. So every morning we used to do that, have our five minutes break [laughs]. And so then after a few days, you know — and everything went really fast and smooth, fine — he comes up a few days and says to me, "Would you like to have the job as warehouse manager?" I said, "Me? Fritz is on vacation. He's going to come back in two weeks. That's his job, that's not my job." "Yes, you know, Fritz has a bad back and he can hardly lift any more cases." And he did, from lifting all those cases over the years, he had a bad back. And he really had trouble with his back. I said, "So you want me to have a bad back then you're going to throw me out and put somebody else in my place?" I said, "No, Fritz is my friend. The bad back he got from your work here lifting all those heavy cases, so why should I take away his job?" "Ah," he said, "you're going to make more money as a warehouse manager." I said, "No, I don't want to make any more money. But let me tell you right now, when I come out after this job I want a raise." My wages were always going up. So Fritz came back in two weeks and took over his job. I never told him about it. I didn't want to aggravate him, you know. But I thought it was so lousy. Then I was really mad. When Fritz came back the first day I went in and said, "All right, Fritz is back, I want a twenty-cents raise." He said, "Ah! Chutzpah! A thousand!" He started telling me, you know, "I tell you one thing, if you're going to leave this job, never come to the Welfare Committee. I'm the chairman of the Welfare Committee. Never going to give you a penny." I said, "First of all, let me remind you, I never took a penny. I never want that penny. And from the beginning when you wanted to give me money I refused to take it, and I won't." I said, "I can make it on my own." So he says, "Okay, I'll let you know." So two weeks go by, I said, "What's with that raise." "I will give you a nickel, five cents." I said, "No," I said, "it's twenty cents or nothing [laughs]." "So," he said, "I'm going to Florida now. You know, you really just give me tough time." I said, "Go gezundheit to Florida but I need my twenty cents." He says, "Well, I'm going to talk to my son from Florida, I'll let them know what to do." So he goes to Florida. So I go down to what's his name...the son, he had two sons...

JL: Lawrence?

FP: Lawrence. I went to [Weinstein's son] Lawrence. I said, "Lawrence, your father said he's going to let me know, he calls already from Florida about the business about giving me that raise, you know, twenty cents more money." He said, "Well, I talked to my father. He didn't say nothing." I said, "Talk to him again, you know" So next day I come, he says, "My father said he's going to come back in two weeks then he's going to fix you up." He said, "Why don't you wait for two weeks?" "Okay," I said, "two weeks, the wall doesn't go down." So he comes back from Florida, it was three weeks, and the first day he comes back and everyone says, "Hi, how are you? How was Florida? Was it nice? You're looking good — sunshine." And, "Where's my raise [laughs]?" He said, "You still, you know, have the chutzpah to ask for the raise." I said, "Hey, you told me you were going to go to Florida, you'd let me know. I waited three weeks." I said, "You don't have to get excited. If you don't want to give it to me I'm just going to have to look for another job. Why all the excitement?" you know. And he said, "You have to wait a couple of months at least." I said, "I'm not waiting any more. Good-bye." I went out. The warehouse was upstairs. He caught me on the steps, and he started telling me the same story. "Just remember, you come to the Welfare Committee [laughs], you're not going to get a penny from us. You S.O.B." He called me names. And I was just going up the steps, you know, and I called the office downstairs and I said, "Will you get my check ready since I'm quitting and tomorrow's my last day." And that was it, I quit, my last day. But I had the recycling business for batteries going, you know, and I really got involved in my own business, picking up batteries. And I made money. I had to put some money in. I had bought a big truck to hold more batteries and I met a fellow who had a lead company in Milwaukee, Jewish fellow, Mr. Adler. Who I called him up, I said, "Hey, what about bringing battery lead to your smelter?" And he said, "Sure, anytime. We're open twenty-four hours. And the same story again: "I'm not going to be here, but unload it there, you know, and keep the slip and we send you the check the next day." And I got in the battery business. I met more people and so on and they all listened to my stories and tell me they thought it was the greatest thing how I kept

moving ahead and you know. And that is how I actually got this job in Wausau too, through talking to people.

JL: Let me back up a second. While you're doing all these jobs, and all the people you met did you experience any anti-Semitism?

FP: No, no I didn't. You mean here in the United States? No.

JL: Let me ask you, the baby was then born. When was the baby born?

FP: She was born in March 1952.

JL: And this was Miriam? Is that Mimi or Miriam?

FP: Miriam. We call her Mimi for short.

JL: Before we go on to Wausau, let me ask you, when were you naturalized?

FP: Five years later.

JL: In Wausau then?

FP: Yes. In Wausau, yes.

JL: How did you feel at that time?

FP: Well I was very excited to become an American citizen, you know. I still was not at that time and I studied a little bit so I'd be ready to answer the questions. I wanted to become a full-fledged American citizen where you have all the rights like American citizens. Since already at that time was living in Wausau and started building up a company and going out speaking to people and I always felt that to speak to people at least I should be American citizen, you know. I tell them what I felt about things and how I felt about people and about the United States. I always felt that somehow I was chosen to speak about things I feel very deeply about it and thereby, rightly or wrongly, change the opinion of other people. That's why particular I wanted to be American citizen, I become a citizen of the country, you know, and I had a passport and can go wherever I want to go and come. So it was really great feeling finally become a citizen of the country which I loved very much. That's the only country I really felt that I had freedoms, you know. Sure, nothing is perfect, never anything is perfect, but the freedom I enjoyed in this country,

you know, freedom of religion and freedom of rights to work, you know, and do whatever I wanted to do as long as it don't hurt anybody else and can work myself up, you know, to as far as I just possibly could reach, you know, to do so. Everything was wide open for me, you know. I just had to do it. I felt I could do anything if I wanted to. I could become a professor if I wanted to, you know. There was nothing to hold me back on anything. It was just up to me to do the things I wanted to do, what I cared for most.

Speaking to me was one thing, to speak to people. I was very successful in my speaking to people since I had spoken to a lot of people, in particular in the city of Wausau and churches and organizations. I was one of the main speakers of Kraft Foods at their annual Christmas party in Antigo, Wisconsin, where they had just all kinds of cities. There were four hundred people there for dinner and they invited me to speak about my life. And was many, many years ago and my English was really bad then [laughs]. And I spoke at the English Literature at a big dinner and I spoke at the Knights of Columbus in Merrill on Columbus Day.

JL: Would you talk about your life experiences in these talks?

FP: Mostly my life experiences, yes. Then I got into giving human relation awards to all the high schools on behalf of B'nai B'rith for the outstanding student who was able to conduct himself in a way that he could get along with everybody and anybody. They established a human relation award and was nobody who would do it except Fred Platner was always doing something. I'll never forget, I had three schools to go there at high school graduation time and I used to talk to schools and they would call me up and tell me what time I had to be there and sometimes I had to run so fast to make it to get to the next graduation to make the presentation of the human relation award which was given to the outstanding student who was chosen by the students and the faculty. And we just give the award.

JL: Was this in the area or did you travel to surrounding towns?

FP: Just in Wausau and D.C. Everest High School in Schofield. That's enough, three schools. But it was really amazing, you know, how I got used to it and I felt very good about it and we used to give money actually. Not to the student. We'd always gave it to the library for the purchase of books in honor of the student.

And every library had a tablet there where the plaque would go on every year with the name of the student and then also the name of the student was put into the book and the books were purchased. It was a very good way of bringing more books into the library and they just loved it, librarians, you know. And they would in return send us a list of what type of books that were bought. There usually were involved quite a few books about Jewish things. But that was the idea, getting people more acquainted with other religions and become more -- less discriminating and more educated about other things. And that was the whole reason for the human relations award, which worked out fantastic. Even at one time a Jewish fellow in town got it, you know, one of the Jewish kids in town. But always had the most wonderful letters, you know, thanking us for the honor and on behalf of the B'nai B'rith receive this award. It was a really great thing. But it was \$300 each year and then as B'nai B'rith faltered — and today we still have a B'nai B'rith, but when I came in town it was about seventy members, you know, from all over and now they have thirty-two. So it's falling down, down, down and there was just less money. We finally had to give it up, you know. There was just not this \$300 there a year to give for this award. Also, I must say that with all the other things I had to do, you know, with going to churches and speaking — there were times when they had no rabbi in town and I was the speaker for the community — it just became too much. Between B'nai B'rith and other organizations and United Jewish Appeal and more and more I was on the temple board and I was president of the temple and so it just became too much. I just couldn't handle it and I tried somebody else to take over to do the job and I just couldn't find anybody so I finally decided, you know, just to let it go. There's only so much you can do, and also I figured after so many years, now we should give award for somebody who was a bigot. There's only good people now [laughs]. Find one who is not good. And they were laughing when I said it, you know. They called me up last year, I said, "I changed my mind. People should be educated enough and love each other and live in peace and now they should make a different award for the one who's a bigot [laughs]." So anyway, let's finish this one.

JL: When did you get to Wausau?

FP: Just a year later.

JL: Just a year later. What brought you there?

FP: What brought me to Wausau, let me see...Somebody from Behr company who I met in Madison. Behr's and Sons in Rockford, Illinois. Who I met in Madison at a Jewish wedding who originally had come from Germany in the 1930s.

JL: B-e-h-r?

FP: B-e-h-r. Behr. Behr and Sons. But this guy's name wasn't Behr. I don't know the name. Anyway, I met him at this wedding and he was very interested — he had come from Germany — in what happened to me and my family, you know, and what I was doing. I was telling him what I was doing and that I was looking for a better job, something in management or, you know, anything. I said, "I could apply myself to anything. I just feel that I can do anything." "Well," he says, "your English is very bad and this. But," he said, "you never know, there are sometimes a place where they need somebody and they might call you then, see if you have interest in doing the job." But as I was traveling around with a truck for General Beverage he didn't call. But I came to Beloit, which is right in Rockford, it's like the same city. When we used to come close I used to try to call him and say, "I haven't heard from you? Have you found something for me? Maybe you have forgotten?" He said, "No, I haven't forgotten about you." But he was a very busy man, very talented. Thinking about myself, you know. I asked if I could see him he said, "No, I'm busy. I have to fly out at this — ." Whenever I came, I'd call again. And one time he said, "Come to my office." And so I got up there and he said, "There might be something coming up in Wausau. We have invested some money in Wausau and this company is closed up and there were three partners and we bought out two partners but the third one, there is Mr. [Theodor] Wallach who doesn't live in Wausau, he lives in Stanley, Wisconsin, might have to have somebody just to go up there and watch our scrap iron" — it was a big scrap company, a big [inaudible] — "and see so nobody steals it out of there. We can't give you any guarantees. If you're willing to go up there, we call up Mr. Wallach and leave for Wausau together and if you want to let him go up there for a few weeks until we move everything out of there, fine. If it works out that you get some business, fine. If it doesn't work out you might be only there for six

weeks or eight weeks." I said, "It's a challenge for me. What do you pay me?" "Well," he said, "we don't pay much, you know. It's really not a paying job. What do you think you have to have to be able to leave this in [Madison] and go over there?" "Well, if you give me a \$100 a week, I'll take a train." He said, "Don't move your family," you know.

JL: \$100 a week?

FP: I figured something might work out, you know, so I came up to Wausau. This is how I got up to Wausau.

**END OF TAPE 8, SIDE 1**

## TAPE 8, SIDE 2

JL: Okay. When you came to Wausau, where did you live?

FP: I first moved into the YMCA.

JL: Were you alone?

FP: Yes, it was very cheap and they charge very little for a room. That's all I could afford anyway since my family was living in Madison. So I stayed there all week and went home for the weekends and I came back after the weekend. Traveled back and forth.

JL: How long did this go on?

FP: That went on for several months actually, since I was not sure that I would develop some business in this town and there was no business. I was more or less like a watchdog. I had two men in the yard working there, which after a while I released them from their job. I was all by myself since they didn't produce anything. And then two weeks later they came back and apologized. They said, "Yes, you are right. We didn't produce anything. Now we want to work." So I started working with them together. What I used to do is actually work at day time and when I had time, I used to go out and visit some companies in town and get acquainted and see if I could develop some business. And it wasn't easy then to get a hold of some of those purchasing agents who didn't know me, you know. But once I got a hold of them and I got in to see somebody I had a better chance than anybody else since my language was so poor and they had to listen to me. They really had to sit down and listen to me and then they said, "Where you're coming from?" you know, "What happened?" you know. Once I got in to tell them about my life and what happened in Germany to me, then they got very interested, you know, and they wanted to know more about it. They started saying, "Why don't we get out for lunch together, you know, and then we really can sit together or tonight for dinner, you know." I really got into those people and talking about my life story and tell them what happened and so, all of a sudden, one said, "I'll give you a chance, you know. You'll buy our scrap material." At the time it was a very tiny yard, with no buildings, just a little office, wooden shack building. And I started developing some business, which was not sold in Wausau, even though

there was a scrap dealer in Wausau for many years, it was the Libman Company. It had existed for many years who had been in all the big concerns in Wausau and bought all their scrap and they know everybody from ABC. At that time it was a common thing that you take all those purchasing agents who gave you business out for dinner and dined them and wined them and invited them to parties, you know. I did not know that much about it as I found out later on and so you had a tough time to be able to — especially a new company, a newcomer who hardly can speak English and wants to open up a company and, "Does he have money?" or "What's he going to do?" But some people took it to heart and they had not sold their scrap anymore in town. They weren't satisfied with the pricing and everything else, whatever else happened. They started shipping their material to Chicago. So talking to one -- one of the first ones, I remember, was — the company is closed now — the Curtiss Company. He said, "You can have our scrap" and said, "How are you going to pay us? You know, we had a lot of problems. We're not getting the right prices. That's why we're shipping our stuff off to Chicago. We'd like to have somebody to take it off our hands so we don't have to package and ship it and all that." So I suggested to him to go by the American Metal Market paper. Whatever Chicago dealers were paying price for copper, glass, aluminum, whatever the item is, or steel and scrap iron, we will pay them the same price less so much for shipping it and handling it since somewhere we have to make money. And so we came up with a formula, how much would it be on aluminum, glass, and copper, and how much would it be on scrap iron, a ton, or a pound or so whatever. And we arrived at a formula which I suggested according to the paper, which they thought was a very wonderful idea: then we don't have no arguments about pricing. I'll never forget, and I said to them at that time, "What do you feel about three cents for us on copper, glass, aluminum" — which is bought by the pound, not by the ton like iron — "for taking it, shipping it, and handling it." And the men said to me, "That's not enough money. You're never going to make any money like this." He said, "You should have five cents." So I said, "Okay, I said three, you say five, what about four?" "No," he said, "you get five [laughs]." It cost us so much money to handle it, you know, the freight and everything else, I should get less. "But you know," he said, "you worked so hard." So my first

company I got in. Also the peddler used to come back to my new office and they liked to sit down and just talk to me, you know. And so I started developing business in this town and all of a sudden I started making money. And then I got a new company, a second company. This guy at Curtiss Company said, "I have a friend at Crestline Company, they're shipping their scrap to Chicago. I'll talk to him. And I'll let you know if you should go and see him." And then he called me the next day. "Yes, he's very interested to talk you. They would like to have somebody." So then I got a few weeks later the Crestline Company and got all their scrap. And before I knew I had three, four industrial plants in town that would pick up steadily every week our scrap. And with the small expense we had, we started making money. So then we start making money and Mr. Wallach who still owned the company in a way, because he owned the company but he owed money to Behr's in Rockford. They had given him money earlier. [Wallach] decided to keep the company open since now I started to have some business.

JL: Theodore Wallach?

FP: Theodore Wallach, yes. It's amazing since I had the unbelievable chutzpah for one year being here, it wasn't even quite a year, and started making money and started putting up our first building and I asked for a bonus after a year. I wasn't ashamed to ask for things. And Mr. Wallach said, you know, "We're putting up a building, you know, we're paying for it, and even though we're making money now, you know, give us a chance." I said, "I'll give you a chance, but I don't have a chance too otherwise what's the sense of me going out?" I was living right in town with my family. I used to take my weekends, drive out of town and see scrap fields out of town and Saturdays and Sundays, you know, take my children along, the little kid, you know, I had, looked up north and looked where there were some people and we can talk to them and buy scrap from them. They would bring it in with our trucks. So I started developing business and the company in town, who was the Libman Company, the big company, who never allowed anybody to open up in town a business. Anybody would come to town, they would raise prices and drive them out. Here came the newcomer and I met Mr. Libman at a B'nai B'rith meeting at temple and I could hardly

speaking English and he said, "Well, I don't have to worry about this grine,<sup>64</sup> they called them, "the grine guy coming." And once he found out I started having business and I didn't leave town and the problem was also that the scrappers used to come in and I had a paper hanging in my little wooden office there, where all the market prices were on there and when they come in to ask me what I pay, I said, "Here are the prices. There's so much [charged] for handling. So you don't have to ask me. If you want to come in just look at it, you know exactly what the market is." They never knew that there was such a thing, you know, and they all woke up, you know. They came in one day and the price had gone up, you know, and they looked at the prices, they went up and the next day went up again and the next day up again. They said, "They don't pay us more down at Libman." I said, "Bring it over here. You're welcome." So they started coming all to my place. I started getting a very busy business place. So they all came. They didn't go to Libman's. They found out something was wrong. They immediately sent their police car, which was Wausau, patrolling to see who was going into my yard, driving it back and forth, checking.

JL: Libman's?

FP: Libman's, yes. All of a sudden a few days later a customer comes to me, "Libman raised their prices, much higher than you." I said, "Higher than the papers?" "Yes." I said, "Okay, that's a good deal. Now you're going to make some money back. Take it. I know you want to sell over there." I said, "You sell over there. You want to sell over here, you sell over here. You know, that's a free country, you know. I came to a free country. You can do what you want but I do the same thing. I want to sell the way I want to sell. You have the same right to do the same thing." I said, "So it's up to you. Anytime you want to stop in, you want look at the paper, even don't sell to me, you're welcome to do so. So you know at least if get the best price or not." And that's what developed. People used to come by, bring me donuts, somebody brought a beer around, I'd drink it down. So it was a fine relationship. You didn't have to sell there. You would just come in and sit down and talk to me or check on the price. So when the price went down I had to go down, okay. Then our prices went up again, so Libman wanted to make back what he paid

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<sup>64</sup> Yiddish for 'green', as in greenhorn.

more and he didn't go up. Those people next day they knew, what never happened before in their lives when there was only one company in town. They come to my office, they look at the pricing, and they unload at my place. Or they go to Libman's, and the chutzpah, they go to Libman's, they look at my prices first, and they ask, "What are you paying?" They say this and this. They would turn around and come back to me. And this is really got to the point that Mr. Libman — the old man had died. The younger ones were not much into work. Just driving around, having good times, parties. They called me up — didn't call me up, they sent me over Mr. Vinny [Kolichna] of Milwaukee because Vinny was his friend to give me a warning to leave town otherwise they will drive me out of town like they drive everybody else out of town. I'll never forget, I said, "He can talk to me himself. All I made is a hundred bucks a week. I understand they are millionaires. What the hell do they want from me? Besides," I said, "if they paid regular prices, they're not going to come to me, they're going to go over there." I said, "Only time they come to me [is] if they underpay them, you know. I can stay here and they cannot drive me out of town since I have already five industrial accounts, already." I said, "I make money on those five industrial accounts more than the expense. I make a profit. I'm putting up our first building now." I said, "I don't care what he's doing. He's only going to hurt himself. I'm not moving. I am here. I'm here to stay." He said, "He said I could let you know he doesn't mind giving you the money to leave town." I said, "I'm not bought by money." I said, "People brought me over here, it's my duty to do my job. Nobody's going to buy me out for anything. I don't even want to talk about it. But maybe I should talk to him myself." It was Jerry, his name. He said, "Well, if you want to talk, call him up." So I called him up and he said to me he was sitting down. I said, "I've got Vinny here and I got your message. You want me to leave town? You want to give me \$3,000?" I said, "I am not going to walk for \$3000. I think its dishonest, I think it's unfair against people who brought me over here. I explained to Vinny that have some industrial accounts that you have lost years ago that you're never going to get back, and I make a living. And I don't need the peddlers, but I'm not going to refuse to buy from them." I said, "If you going to pay him regular price, you know, not underpay him, they're not going to come to me. They're going to stay with you. I

don't want them, you can have them. I'm not here to fight you or have a war with you." He said, "If you don't leave town I drive you out of town. If it cost me a million dollars I drive you out of town. You guy, you can't even speak English." He started yelling on the phone. I said, "You're making a big mistake. You're not driving me out at all. I am here to sit and I am going to stay here and the more you drive me the more I'm going to stay." Threw down the receiver [inaudible] I said, "Sudvenek, that's too bad that two people cannot talk together, you know, reasonable" I said, "Go back and tell him he makes a big mistake. He might have a million dollars but there's no sense to throw it away since I am not moving." So, Sudvenek came back a few days later to me and said, "I can't talk to him. He said he's going to drive you out of town or you take the money he will give you, he'll give you a little bit more if you want to deal with him, you know, if you leave town, you know. But otherwise he's going to drive you out of town." I said, "He is so wrong and I feel sorry for him. All he can do is lose his money." So he started really raising prices and we had to keep on raising price all the time because people were informed about the market. We wanted them to be. To the point that went on for about three years, that fight, you know. People at wars. I didn't fight, I didn't have to fight. I paid what the market price was, people want to give me the scrap. If they don't want to give it to me, wanted to get more money from Libman, I said that's okay. But Libman used to buy a lot of the scrap from me. You see, that's where the problem really started, he really got mad. Since the deals said, "Libman's paying ten dollars more a ton for iron than you want to pay us," and I said, "Okay. Know what I'm going to do? I tell you what I can get for you. You want to buy it from me? You don't have to go around all over the farmland. Bring your truck in here. I'll load you up as many truckloads as you want. You pay me the price, you can buy it from me and take it to Libman." That's what he did. He used to buy the scrap from me, throw it on a truck and take it to Libman and sell it to Libman and he would lose, you know. Then he found out about that. Ah, did he got mad. "Now," he said, "you're going to be out of town. I don't care if it cost me everything I have. I'll drive you out of town." I called him back and said, "Hey, if you want to buy the scrap from me you can buy it too as long as you pay me the price. I don't care who buys it, this is free enterprise. I had nothing to do with it. They came, they wanted

to buy it from me, they bought it, they turned and sold it to you. Fine. They could have sold it somewhere else. I don't care where they sell it to." That really did it and you know that after five years those people went bankrupt? They had blocks of houses in city of Wausau. They all went under the court, everything. They owed money, you wouldn't believe it. For scrap, \$30,000, \$20,000, \$10,000 to big corporations. Some of those purchasing agents were thrown out of their jobs. It was the biggest noise in town. He owed money to night clubs, five, six, eight thousand dollars to nightclubs just for parties. He hadn't paid his bills. Every time you called him he would say, "What are you calling me for? You know we are good." You know, the chutzpah. What happened actually [is] I picked up more accounts and he got very angry and people would call him for money, an aluminum company in town, he had seen people but he had deal with Libman. You deal with him for about twenty-five or thirty years, and, you know, they don't really want to change. I said, "Okay, when the time comes, maybe sometime you want to change, I'm always here. I don't expect you [to change]. I understand it," you know. Then one guy calls me up, the president of the company, there was really good money since all they had was aluminum scrap. Every week you would pick up truckload of scrap there. He was a really nice fellow. I talked to him, I took me by his home, I talked to his wife, I told them about my story, [he] invited me for dinner. But I couldn't get any business since he dealt with Libman. All of a sudden he calls me and says, "Are you ready to move into our plant?" I said, "What do you mean? What is wrong with Libman?" He said, "I've had it with this guy. We have an agreement that he takes the scrap every week, once a month we receive payment. We hadn't received payment for four months, I call him up and he yells at me that he is Libman, you know, and we know we are good. I said, 'I don't want anybody to yell at me.' e owes me the money, agreement is thirty days, it's four months now, I don't want to wait any longer. I told him he should get out of my plant." And I moved into that plant, you know, and more and more. Then other plants called me up after this. Then he started making really good money in business. The more angry he got the more he started losing on the other side. Then he went bankrupt and we bought out the whole yard. We borrowed money from the bank and with the yard we got all the accounts in Wausau. That's when we got big. Boom! It just went up in the air.

JL: Now you are...

FP: Now we're the only scrap company in town. Then we started going into the new used steel business and we had the same problem. There was a steel company in town, US Steel Company. All those people who make steel buy from US Steel. If they would sell to us they would stop buying from them. But they had a big company in town. They were big fabricators and big buyers and big sellers. And I had the same problem then. I used to buy foreign steel to be able to sell beams for housing. Then came the time, it was 1955 or 1956, when business slowed down and the steel industry was yelling, "The government has to stop the importers." At that time. They're yelling now for last twenty years, "Stop imports!" They say it takes away so many jobs for the workers. At that time had come, the most answers I had from the mills and US Steel [were] that they could not accept me as a customer, couldn't sell me any steel, because they had not enough steel and they could not therefore take me in selling steel. And I knew it was a big lie since I knew the companies had told them, you know — but when the time came that the newspapers wrote about it and they had to lay off so many people in the steelworks so you know, and then the time came. I called Milwaukee. Milwaukee was the district office. First I called Inland Steel then I called US Steel and I told them, "The time has come when you guys cannot tell me anymore you don't have any steel to sell to us since you're laying off a lot of people and you're yelling about the imports and you are the one who drive people like us to buy imports since you don't want to sell us American steel." I said, "You want the public to know really what's going on in this country?" They said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "Just look back when you wrote me those letters, you know. You don't want to sell us any American steel. We have no choice but to buy foreign steel. In the other side you tell the American public that you had to lay off the people since you have so much steel imported that people lose their job. By the same token," I said, "it's like you don't even want to sell us American steel. Now I'd like to inform the whole United States about what's going on, what lies you're telling people." And I said, "I don't mind spending money going into radio and TV and I can talk. Any newspaper," I said, "anywhere else you want me to go, and explain to people what's going on in this country." [US Steel responded,] "Oh, wait a

second, wait a second. Let us call Chicago, you know, the office, maybe now we can do something for you." I said, "You got twenty-four hours." "Give us forty-eight hours." I can get very tough. I mean I say I have a big mouth and I have been very tough with some of those steel mills. I talked to the president of US Steel himself. Took him out of a meeting. I don't take anything from anybody. First came the vice president. Some vice president said, "The president's in a meeting. He cannot talk to you. I said, "That's fine, just tell him he's going to be in the newspaper tomorrow. Twenty-four hours you have." He said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "Call your Milwaukee office, you'll find out." [He said,] "I'll call you back." I said, "You don't have to call me back. I want the president. I don't want to talk to you. I want to talk to the president." "Well, he's in a meeting, can't be disturbed." "That's just too bad." Well, I had my answers back. They didn't call me back. The Milwaukee office called back. They said, "You're in. You can have what you want." I said, "Thank you [laughs]." Anyways, go ahead. I go so long.

JL: Getting back to your family. When did your wife and child then come in the beginning to Wausau? How many months were you here without them?

FP: About six months.

JL: Now, what is your role now in the company?

FP: I'm vice-president of the company. But since, actually, you know, we grow very fast all of a sudden as I told you when that steel warehouse — this is Alderman — closed up after a few years. So all of a sudden we got all the scrap business, we got all the steel service center business in this area. So not only do I still do the hiring and so forth, firing, I'm still running the transportation department, leading all the trucks to go which direction and when and try to push more and more up. As you might have seen this morning, I tell them which trucks goes where and which direction, which way to go and I do all the buying of new steel, which is several thousand items. I don't do anything anymore in the scrap department. I left it completely up to Peter Wallach. He handles the scrap department. Except if somebody insists to talk to me. Then I will. Up to not too long ago they kept insisting they would only talk to Fred Platner because I was the one who started out here in the first place. But they got used to it, you know. Now they talk to me

only about new steel. So I still sell new steel, and many customers only want to talk to me, they're so used to it, and when they want to, naturally then I talk to them, no question about it. So I'm very much involved with anything coming up in the company, like United Way. It's Fred Platner has to run it. There's nobody else who wants to run it or wants to do it.

JL: For the company?

FP: For the company, yes. And so this is what I'm doing with the company, you know. It's more than a full time job to carry the load. I do a lot of special pricing, especially now in competitive times, you have to be very much so on the lookout. To keep your company going, you just cannot take a book and read up from it, you have to use your brains all the time — what you pay for it and how much can you get away with charging for it so you still stay alive and can keep your people in a job. That, I think, is one of the reasons we never had a layoff in all our history. Never laid off a man and we have gone through many times of slow downs in the economy. But never have we laid off anybody.

JL: How many employees do you have?

FP: Now we up to about eighty employees. And we never had a union also since — when I started building up the company and I had some problems with the board of directors. There aren't too many, just the three of us. But I always felt the best way to have good workers is to have satisfied workers. Not that they have to go out and try to get everything out of the company and sitting and arguing for months and months and months. I felt that anybody who works there is entitled to make a living except if the company has no earnings. That's it. But as long as there's an income, earnings to the company, the company can afford to supply them with what they need like good health insurance and dental insurance and pension plan. It all came slowly. You start off with nothing, but as we developed and made money in the company and started building up the company, automatically all the things which normally you try to get through unions, we had it before the union even could come to be set up. Since our health insurance is paid fully by the company. We had it for many many years. Dental insurance — is one of the first I know in Wausau who had a dental insurance free of charge to their employees. We have life

insurance for them, we have what we call sick insurance for them. If they get sick at home and cannot work for some reason, they have so much a week payments coming. And so everything possible, you know, what a person could happen to them they have some kind of insurance. That's just one of the reasons they never had a union. The union tried to come in and had three times they hold elections, each year, but they never won election so then they finally give up. Our workers felt that what they had and the wages they got in pay that they couldn't do themselves any better with a union. I imagine that's the reason we never voted a union in, they always lost out. So they tried hardly to get it. So I have nothing against unions. I must say sometimes unions are very good things to have. It's better for me, and being in business, not to have a union since I don't have a classification. So if somebody hasn't got work to do in one classification, I can put them on other jobs, thereby keep him on the job instead of sending him home or laying him off. I think that is something that you cannot do with a union shop since you have classified workers so it means if you stay on the sheer, you're just going to stay on the sheer. If there's no work to be done on the sheer you can do nothing else. This is the only problem I see with union jobs. Otherwise, no question about it.

JL: I think we've going to have to stop again.

**END OF TAPE 8, SIDE 2**

## TAPE 9, SIDE 1

JL: Okay, now after you moved out of the YMCA, where did you live in Wausau?

FP: I lived on Fifth Avenue. I had an apartment. From there I moved to Third Avenue and I had an apartment. The reason I moved to Third Avenue is all my in-laws had come from Germany. I brought them over myself after a year, guaranteeing them housing. My boss, Mr. Wallach, guaranteed them — since he had the money, had to be someone with money — guaranteed them a job. So it worked out fine but they had to have a bigger apartment, so we moved to Third Avenue. Then I moved later on to 704 Kent Street, where I'm living now. We bought a house.

JL: Where you -- after you had been received as an immigrant in Madison, were you received in any similar form in Wausau or were you just treated as a new American who was settling in?

FP: Actually, we were talking before about how people were upset about how you were accepted. I wasn't really upset but I felt that Wausau didn't show much interest in newcomers at all, as you can see with Libman who tried to drive me out of town, but that would be only one person. But, I also felt, it was really upsetting me — when I came to this town it was when the High Holidays came up and I had to join the temple and I only had been a short while in Wausau, just a few weeks. And I asked where I should go and there were two. At that time there were the Conservative and the Orthodox and I was immediately told that I had to pay dues. And I was exactly told that it was ninety dollars at one place and a little bit Conservative, and the Orthodox was seventy dollars or seventy-five dollars. Nobody at Jewish community would have asked me where I would go for services. I had to ask them, and I was told that I had to pay them before I even could enter the temple. It was upsetting to me and I told them I don't have the money but I will pay it. What upset me was that people, the first thing they thought, they were not thinking about, "Is there are Jewish person in town who needs to go to the holiday service?" The most important thing is to put him right away informed of the rate and that he has to pay it. And it always has upset me. And I'm still upset about it. And it seems to be that nothing has changed much. I understand the temple needs money, since they have to be staying alive, and pay the rabbi and keep up the building and whatever is

necessary. But I don't think it has to come to the point that this has become the most important factor of a Jewish community, of Jewish congregation, is the making the money. I'm still upset about it. I feel a congregation has to have other things in mind besides just hauling up a building and have a rabbi and need the money, which is understandable in one way but there has to be something else besides it. If that's not there then it misses the whole – it misses everything, there's nothing there for me that I can believe is religion anymore. I've been on the temple board for many, many years, been president. I've been in all about twenty years on the board, I'm finally out now, and always have been very controversial about this thing and I had times when I fought with the board. I wanted leave the board several times when there were poor families in town and when they set rates for them to pay, not recognizing that those people just can't afford it, you know. They're sort of figuring out it's only a dollar a day or fifty cents a day or maybe five dollars a week, but for some people five dollars a week is five dollars a week. For some people five dollars a week is nothing, you know. It's something which, I think that most places like this, every church and every religious group, has to have money to exist but I don't think there's really that much done in other religions. I don't know, I don't know that much about it, where you can go anytime to church. Now I can go to any church in Wausau on any high holiday and might it be Christmas or something, go in, they might hand around the pot for money. If I put something in, fine. If I don't put something in, then fine, too. But I could never go to a Jewish temple in Wausau on a High Holiday. They would stop me at the door and say, "What's your name?" you know, and tell me how much money you have to pay. This is what upsets me. It upset me to the point, last year, my mother-in-law — she's Jewish — her sister came from Paris. Two old ladies. She's eighty-three, the other one is eighty. She didn't go to high holiday, she's really hard on her legs to move. She refused, since she said you sit there, you know. And then also on top of it, she had to have a new book. They told her if she doesn't buy a new book she can't get into temple, a new prayer book. So she said, "I pay them, I never go to temple. I pay them every year my dues, now I have to buy extra book again." She said, you know, "How much do I — ?" I said, "You don't have to buy. I give you a book, just go to temple." "No," she said, "they tell me I have to buy it."

She doesn't understand. I don't go to temple. So, anyway, last year they both went on Yom Kippur to temple, in the morning. Rosh Hashana they didn't go, just Yom Kippur for a couple hours. Immediately a bill comes to her for her sister visiting to pay as a visiting member. And since she's a member, I don't remember the amount it was, dues were. They don't use any seykhl. She comes all the way from Paris to visit her old sister and she comes for two hours, you send her a bill, you know. So I get really upset about it, you know, and I said to her, "Don't pay it. They should have seykhl. They send me a bill, fine. They send it to you, an old lady. You live on what, your Social Security. They sent you a bill because your own sister came for two hours to temple. Where is the seykhl?" you know. I wrote on there, "Refuse to pay. You should have more understanding and feeling for old people. First of all, I feel that anybody who is over sixty-five, retired, lives on social income, should not pay any dues, nor should they pay for High Holiday services." I sent it back to them. They never sent a second bill. I had to go through this every time for this temple. People need a little bit of understanding of something. I could have wrote out a check for whatever it was and given it to them, you know. My dues are anyway \$1200, I don't know what they are a year, \$1300, you know. But it doesn't bother me, I can afford it, you know. What bothers me is they don't use their senses, you know. There's an old lady, her husband died, she's a member for many years, she never comes to temple, you know, she pays her dues whatever it is I don't know what it is — \$50, \$75, or \$100, whatever she paid — comes once on a high holiday, you know, Yom Kippur. It's her sister who is also eighty years come for two hours, you send right away a bill, you know. It's so senseless, you know. That's why I'm saying, the temple just has become, you know, so afraid somebody's going to come in and take the service without paying, you know. What the hell? What is it for? Isn't it a house of prayer for praying, you know? Okay, forget it. Next. Let's go on.

JL: Now you told me there was no anti-Semitism in the early years. Now at work here in Wausau did you find any hints of anti-Semitism or even in the earlier years were there any special attitudes toward you as a refugee?

FP: No, I wouldn't say any, no. I think actually maybe I'm very well accepted wherever I go. I go around and speak to schools, you know, and high schools in particular, I have spoke at universities, and wherever I came I feel people are very nice to me, you know, since I speak as a Jew and they all know that I am Jewish, you know. I know that once at Mosinee High School where they have the Comitatus.<sup>65</sup> The main group they have their seat there. I spoke at the high school and a teacher came to me and said, "I have two girls here who are the daughters of that leader from the Comitatus. Should I let them into the room?" "Well," I said, "what's the matter with you?" I said, "Why shouldn't you let them in? They said they wanted to come. Fine, that's the people you want to get in," I said. [He said,] "I just don't want to have any trouble when you're speaking." I said, "Don't worry about it, I can handle it." So they came in. Always I speak for thirty minutes and I have forty-five minutes. I leave it open fifteen minutes for asking questions. And I really hoped they would have some questions. They never opened their mouths, you know. I really hoped. They were really nice-looking girls, you know. If they don't have any questions I keep on talking and then I stop again and say "Maybe now I'll hear some questions," and they had quite a few people who asked questions, which I was very happy about. You know, this is at the seat of Comitatus. And everything went on fine and forty-five minutes later they all started clapping, you know. Then he came over to me and talked to me about a few things. And I said to the teacher, "One thing. First of all, you should never compare children to their parents, number one. I mean if the [parents] are wrong or something, you think they do wrong, don't put it on the children because they might be completely different. Maybe they really maybe not like their parents, what they are doing. But you pushing them into it, if you make them feel that you are discriminating against them since their parents are this way," you know. And he looked at me and said, "Yes, I never thought about it. You're right," you know. Alright. [Inaudible.] Next. [Inaudible.]

JL: How would you compare your status as a Jew in Wausau to being a Jew in Madison?

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<sup>65</sup> The Posse Comitatus, a right-wing, racist, and anti-Semitic organization centered in Wisconsin.

FP: Well, in Madison -- first of all I wasn't too long in Madison. In Madison I was part of a Jewish community, so am I in Wausau. But I think, since Wausau's a smaller city and there aren't as many Jewish people around who can come out to the public and speak or even want to speak to the public, my achievement in Wausau is much greater in getting into the public or communicating with the public as a whole about Jewish religion, Jewish life, discrimination, and all kinds of thoughts I feel are important to me and I would like to speak about it. I might have never had this chance maybe in Madison, where there are many more smarter people, more educated people than I am, who can come out and talk to religious groups or schools or wherever, organizations. I feel definitely that I have made a tremendous progress in this way being in Wausau and surrounding areas of Wausau, like Stevens Point even. And did I answer your question or am I babbling away?

JL: Yes. Now I'd like to ask you something about your family. What is your ex-wife's name?

FP: Ruth, R-u-t-h, Platner. She still goes by the same name. Her maiden name is von Lange. V-o-n L-a-n-g-e.

JL: When and where was she born?

FP: She was born in Germany.

JL: Do you remember her birth date?

FP: Yeah, I remember that. I should remember that at least. It's the 31st of July, 1927. She's ten years younger than I.

JL: Where did you meet?

FP: In Germany after the war.

JL: In a DP camp?

FP: No, no, we met in Hamburg. She's from Hamburg and when I came to Hamburg started working for ADJC in Hamburg I met her in Hamburg. Actually I met her at the ORT school, she took art lessons there. So that's why I met her.

JL: Okay, and when did you get married?

FP: Well, we got married in 1950. We got married just by civil, a justice of the peace. There were several reasons. First of all, we didn't have any money for any big weddings [laughs], that's number one. Number two, her mother's Jewish, her father isn't, and there was difficulties with Jewish marriages since she had to be declared [Jewish]. She could have been since her mother was Jewish, but still I think the rabbinate at that time requested that she go through studies first.

JL: Even though her mother was Jewish?

FP: Yes.

JL: Had she been brought up as a non-Jew?

FP: I imagine so. They had, I mean she knew that there was Jewish holidays and her mother used to go on High Holidays to Jewish shul, but the holidays at home — at Christmas they want Christmas. Her father did not belong to any church, but I imagine Christmas. Even some Jewish people have Christmas Day, it's a nice holiday. That's about as far. They never went to any church, never belonged to any church. She knew about Pesach. Her mother's parents were living in Hamburg, which were all Jewish people and but otherwise, you know, there wasn't much of a Jewish upbringing at home. I imagine that was one of the reasons that they requested she learn Hebrew study and so on. Well, we thought, you know, there wasn't that much time to study and do all those things and to go to the mikveh and regular rabbinical [study] and at that time, you know, the rabbinical step was located not in Hamburg, in Bergen-Belsen in a displaced person camp. They would decide if they could give them Jewish marriage or not. If it had been in Madison you just had to go to [Rabbi] Swarsensky, to Manfred, and it would have been fine, simple.

JL: I just want to go back more to your own life. But let me ask you one more question about her. How did she survive in Germany, as an Aryan?

FP: No. Actually, they moved out from Hamburg into a very small town where nobody knew them and in the beginning they were fine since her husband was a German. But then they told him he had to get divorced. And once they would have gotten divorced then they both would have been taken away, the

mother and daughter. But he refused. Instead of this, he moved out into a very small town, it's called [ sounds like "Hornsettensen"]. I was out there once. There was a couple hundred people there. They had some friends out there, they knew some German friends and they were living with them in the last part of the war. But there in that town they were not known. They were known from von Lange. Von Lange is a typical, really German name so her daughter had to go to work as a young [girl], like all young Germans had to go to work in wartime. She worked on a farm for a while, milking cows and helping with this, you know, those kind of things. In wartime everybody had to work to keep the economy going, you know, when people are fighting at the front. This is what she did. Now, I don't exactly know what happened what he did, I have no idea. I never got it straight if he was in the army or not. I don't think he was. I don't know how he got out of it, I have no idea. But I know that he refused to get divorced. He was told by the Germans to get divorced from his wife otherwise he would be in the same trouble as she is, you know, and that he refused to do. He was the real typical German what you call -- aristocrat type who was very true — once he had promised his wife he'd get marry for better and worse that was it and nobody would change that. He was really an interesting man, everybody liked him in town when he moved to town. He always gone to Hamburg, all the time. He was known in town. "He comes from Hamburg," you know. And he would sit down with people, very friendly and talk. He had a lot of friends, you know. And this nice straight German. Everybody knows when he would talk to him, you know, he knew exactly, you know, the state he was. It's amazing, you know, people used to tell me, "I saw your father-in-law." Everybody knew him in town. He was this funny-type man who would go on with the farmers [laughs].

JL: And just one more. What was your wife's occupation?

FP: She has a teaching job, she's a teacher. She taught in school here, too. She went to college here in the United States. Teaching art.

JL: Tell me something about your children. Their names and if you can remember their dates of birth.

FP: Miriam was born in March 1952, March 12, I think. Then there's Esther who was born 1955, in May, the 15<sup>th</sup> and there is Marcy who is September 1, 1958.

JL: So were Esther and Marcy born in Wausau?

FP: Yes, Mimi was born in Madison.

JL: Are any of them married?

FP: Mimi is married.

JL: What is her last name now?

FP: She is Mills is her name now. M-i-l-l-s. She's married and she's getting divorced, just right now. And she's married to a Jamaican fellow and she has a child, it's a boy and the boy's name is Adam. He's going to be one year old on February 12. My middle daughter is not married. The youngest one is married. She's married and she lives here in town. Her name is Keefe and she has a daughter which is two-and-a-half years old, Helena, and she is pregnant and she expects the other child in December. So that's all my three daughters.

JL: Where are they -- where did you way Mimi was?

FP: Mimi is right now in California. She used to live in Oakland but right now she's in Carlsbad.

JL: And where is Esther?

FP: Esther's in San Francisco.

JL: What do they do professionally?

FP: Mimi and Esther both are in the dancing profession. Mimi taught the last year-and-a-half. None of them went to college, amazingly. They wanted to go into dancing. They didn't want to go through all this extras they do in college, they wanted to just keep on dancing. So Mimi amazingly had a job for over a year-and-a-half in the public school system in Oakland where she taught dance, drama, and connected arts through the school system.

JL: What kind of dance?

FP: Well, modern dance or any dance — modern dance, African, jazz, ballet, theater, drama, you know — she was everything involved. Now since she left — she was living in Oakland — Esther took over after the job, really unbelievable. Now Esther's teaching in the public system in Oakland. So Mimi, right now, since

she left her husband, she's with the baby, she moved to Carlsbad and I imagine she's going to go into something like this again. Esther right now – Esther has always has been busy. She's not only teaching in the public system, she's also teaching at night in dance schools, and she herself is taking lessons. She is performing. She just performed last week and is performing again in two weeks, so she has a lot of rehearsals. I tell you, I don't know how they do it. That's why she's not married. She's never going to get married, she has no time.

JL: What does Marcy do?

FP: Marcy does nothing. Her husband doesn't much either. They are both into trying to change the world. So they're into -- all my daughters are vegetarians, particularly Marcy and David who are living mostly on soybean and salads and they don't even take milk or cheese. They are really strict vegetarians.

JL: And the child too?

FP: The child too, but the child drinks milk when she comes here once in a while or comes to Grandmother's house. And she also, since her husband's parents live in town, [her child] goes to their house and there also she drinks milk. She'll even eat cheese there, she tells me. But the child seems to be very bright, very bright, amazingly bright for two-and-a-half years old. She came here on Sunday to visit with the child and David to visit her grandmother next door, which is my mother-in-law. They had eaten, they came late since they don't like to eat here much except for vegetables. But I had a salad there and my granddaughter said, "I'm hungry." I told her, "Sit down and eat with me." We eat off of the same plate, my granddaughter, she likes that. And I had mushrooms in there, raw mushrooms. She said, "I don't eat raw mushrooms." I said, "Why don't you?" "No, only cooked mushrooms. Next time when I come make sure you cook the mushrooms [laughs]." I looked at her — two-and-a-half years old. "The chutzpah you have! You tell me to cook the mushrooms." Then later Marcy was in the same room and she ate with me and had pizza and stuff like this and she likes. And she ate that. She just came from big dinner, she sat down with me and ate the whole dinner again. So I said, "Marcy what's the matter with Helena? She said she only eats cooked mushroom." She said, "You know why? We go out in the woods and she wants to pick

up mushrooms and I tell her, you know, 'You just can't pick up. Some mushrooms are poisonous. You shouldn't eat them, you know. When I take them home I know what I have and then I cook it. Then you can eat it. Otherwise don't pick them up in the woods and eat it.' So what she knows is that you only can eat cooked mushrooms [laughs]." That's where it came from. I was wondering. "I don't eat raw mushrooms, only cooked mushrooms."

JL: Okay, we'll stop here.

**END OF TAPE 9, SIDE 1**

**TAPE 9, SIDE 2**

JL: What language did you speak at home when the kids were growing up?

FP: German and Jewish.

JL: Yiddish?

FP: Yes.

JL: To them? To the kids in the home?

JP: In the home? Oh, not here, here... we just spoke English and some German, very little. But the reason that we only spoke English is that I myself didn't know the language, I had to learn it. So I had to keep on speaking English.

JL: What languages do your children know?

FP: English. Some know a little Hebrew. Esther does. She went to Israel for six months.

JL: How much do your children know about your experiences?

FP: They know about my experiences. I don't know really how much they know. I never went to sit down with them and tell them in details since I felt that it might interfere with their lives and their growing up, which actually in a way I think it did. Like Esther had a lot of problems her young years with eating problems and emotional problems and one psychiatrist felt it might of been part of what she felt that she had to go to through, some of the suffering I had gone through since she is my daughter, you know, and she thought maybe by doing so take some of the load from me, you know. And so I did not ever [talk to them in detail about it], but all my kids did know since I used to speak all over places, you know, about my life experiences, not going into details. If I want to go into details it takes for hours. You can't speak no place for hours, nobody's going to listen to you so I just speak for a half an hour, that's about all you have. Sometimes I do this whole thing in ten or fifteen minutes, which you can do, you know, just give them some kind of an outlook.

JL: What problems do you feel your children may have faced in school because unusual experiences of their parents?

FP: I don't think they face any problems in the schools. I don't think they did. All my kids went through school with very good grades so the only problem they had is trying to keep them in high school the last year. I think they were all too smart and had their credits too fast completed and they're bored and sit around in school with nothing to do. Not only talking about my children but I think it was one of the problems the high schools had years ago trying to hold children there who were ready to leave and go to college just to keep them in high school. They get bored and sit around. Not only for those girls who were smart, but also children who were not smart and couldn't take the school system and weren't able to learn but hold them there and thereby they ended up running away and not finishing their high school diploma.

JL: In comparison to other families, do you think your family is closer to one another than other American families?

FP: Yes. Well, we cannot speak other. There is not a thing like -- I think in comparison yes, we are very, very close. There's something about even between my children. They themselves, they constantly talk to each other and write to each other and if anybody has a problem they will immediately go there and to help them or be there with them. Like when Marcy had a baby, her sisters came immediately, you know, to see her and help her. When Mimi had a baby, the sisters went to California to be there for a couple weeks and help her after it. And now when Marcy again is going to have a baby, I already was informed a long time ago from both my daughters they're both going to be here, you know, in December. So they're all preparing themselves, you know, a whole year to make sure they're going to be here, you know. And if any of the daughters has one problem — whatever happens in life, you get problems — the first thing they do is pick up the phone and talk to their sisters or talk to me. And I've been involved in many of their problems which come up in life, emotional problems and other problems, and which we always seem to have been able to solve with just sitting down and talking things over. And it's a good feeling, you know, that I can talk to my children about anything and everything. It's just my system. They can talk to me about anything and everything they have in their life and they're really, really close, you know. In this

respect, looking at some families — I couldn't say all families, I mean there's such a difference in families-but I have not seen in many American families such a togetherness or always being open-minded and want to help the other one to get over their problems if there's a way of doing it. They have strong, all very strong feeling about the underdogs and they always have strong feeling about helping those that need help. And I think that might be part of what I had gone through, since our communication was always wide open. Let's put it this way, there was never -- I have always felt that my children could come to me with any problem they had. If there was a problem as I told you with school, like everybody had that problem. Not Marcy the last one, but oldest one Mimi, the last year in high school she wanted to quit. She couldn't stand it anymore. She was so bored and she would come to me and told me about it and then we would sit together several times for hours and talk about it. And I listened to her what she had to tell me and I understood perfectly what she told me. I said she was 100 percent right but since I could not change the system and it would be very hard for her to go on life without having a high school diploma, even being smart, later on she would have to go back and finish it and it would be easy for her now since she is home and she has a home and she has food and she had a better chance doing it now instead of later on. And somehow it took several sessions to get over this and she finished her high school diploma. Had the same with Esther. Esther's last year in high school, I went to high school to talk to teachers and I would ask if she could get out of high school when she has no classes since she had to sit around in study rooms and libraries constantly since she had no classes. She had all the credits. And I think this is the first I remember in this town that they finally decided that kids, if they had completed all their credits and had nothing to do anymore, they would let them out next semester. She got out next semester from school. And I know I used to talk not only about this, I talked to a high school teacher about children who were not developed to the point that it could take just kind of an education and therefore fall the wayside and don't come to school and finally drop out. I know I wasn't the first one, but I was one of them who talked to the high school teachers to let those children go out and let them find a job somewhere, on a job site, and take a few hours of school and do the rest on the job site, prepare

them for the time when they get out of school so they would have some kind of a knowledge and they could earn their money instead of just running around without any education and no knowledge of any trade. I finally got two children out from high school, which they allowed me to take them into our business place and complete their high school credits in learning how to weld and how to cut steel and now I have third one in my place. The one left later on since he found a much better job, he'd become a very good welder and he got much higher pay, which is fine. But I had to give the credit so they completed their high school education and I did. And then the second child, who's really kind of mental retarded — I wouldn't call him mental, but very slow — a most wonderful nice young man, and he had some problems with his eyes which they were running to the sides. He just couldn't control it and on top of it he had a problem be called by kids all kinds of names since he wasn't that bright and smart. So he could never get through high school and I took him into our place and he started working and I'll never forget he started making his own money and earning real money and he made his high school diploma and then a year later bought his first car, you know, and had his own car. Then later he met a girl. He married one of the nicest girls, you wouldn't believe it. He had an operation on his eyes and they are fine, good shape now, you know. And he worked now with us now eight years, nine years, you know. Everybody loves him. He's one of the most nicest, pleasant fellow to be with and talk to, you know. He's not the brightest one but for the job he does he's fine. He doesn't have to be sitting up and do figures, you know. There are ways of doing it, you know, but I remember I used to go to the high school and call them and said, "My daughter has one problem, she's too smart. She's bored. And another problem you have children there who just can't make it and they don't come to school, then they become dropouts and then become a problem to society and for themselves, too. Just give them a chance." Now things have changed the last years. Every high school has what you call, they have departments now where you teach them anything like woodworking and steelworking or welding, every high school. They finally have seen the light so the child cannot become a professor but he can become a good plumber or electrician

or woodworking man or trades, anything, you know. And I'm very happy to see that it's developed in the last years and those kids have a chance.

JL: Let me go back to your children? Do you see your children overachieving in anyway to make up for what you couldn't do? Although I don't think there's much that you couldn't do [laughs].

FP: No, I don't think so.

JL: Do you see yourself as a more concerned parent than others?

FP: A more concerned human being. I wouldn't say parent in particular.

JL: When your children were young, what were your greatest concerns for them?

FP: When my children were young I spent as much time as I possibly could without, you know, losing out on my job. But I have been with them every weekend and every vacation. I never took a vacation without my children. My greatest concern for them was — I really didn't have much [concern]. I wanted them to get happy, healthy, and live a good life. To me a good life means be happy and healthy, that's all it means to me. So that's why I try to achieve for them or they themselves to achieve. So I was very active in many things, like I was very active in BBYO<sup>66</sup> and I used to be advisor for BBYO many years, especially when my children were young. I used to go out with them on conclaves and there are conclaves in town. Also wanted them to meet other Jewish people since there were not too many Jewish people in this small town. So I figured if they're more exposed to going to other cities and big conclaves with many other people they will have a better chance to meet their friends and the Jewish way of life. They also have many friends in town, you know, who are not Jewish. There are very few Jewish people the same age, you know, since you only have so many families, so many children. I wouldn't say I had concern about my children at all. I somehow was sure they could grow up and be healthy and happy people, you know. I don't think I was concerned about it really. I thought that it's going to be a normal thing, you know.

JL: What activities and sort of behavior would you forbid your children to engage in?

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<sup>66</sup> B'nai B'rith Youth Organization.

FP: Depends on what age group you're talking about. My children had a very simple setup. When the thing started with -- again, they had a very good, open communication, and my children came into the period, all of them actually, when it started with the dope, the marijuana smoking and dope, taking pills. And I always felt that if you speak very openly about it and don't hide it behind the corner. And I would just talk to my oldest daughter when they started out and said, "Now, you are going together" — and she was sixteen or seventeen — "to parties and I imagine there comes the time when everybody's passing around the grass and what do you do? You smoke them or you don't?" She said, "Well, usually I don't like it particular but I take a couple of puffs." And I said, "Well, Miriam, listen. It usually doesn't end with a couple puffs and if you don't like it you really don't have to have it." And I'd say, you know, "Drugs are not so good for you, so isn't alcohol, for your body," [inaudible] and so on. "I personally don't want you to go to those parties. But all I can is tell you about it, you know, what you shouldn't do. The rest is up to you since I'm not going to be always with you. Feel free to have the guts to say no when you feel something you don't want to do. Okay?" I always told the young people the same thing: it takes more guts to say no than to say yes. I said, "In the end, I think people will appreciate more for having guts than just keep on following all the time and do the same somebody else wants you to do. Except if you decide it's right for you or something else. But if it feel that is wrong for you, don't do it." So I think that we have very many friends of all my children, very sad story, the drugs, you know. None of my kids smoke; I'm a smoker. It's really amazing. None of them drink alcohol. I would say once in a while a drink but not at home or something else. They're vegetarian, maybe that's one of the reasons, you know. None of them went into dope. They maybe have here and there. I once tried grass, too. I puffed on it once or twice and I didn't care for it. It didn't do anything for me. None of them went into drugs and I'm really amazed about it, you know. This was the time, when they grew up it was just a time when this just started coming up. It was unbelievable. I know a good friend of my middle daughter Esther, Jewish fellow in town and a very good friend, and I actually one time said, "They're going to get together and get married or something." And he got into drugs so deep that he lost his brains, you know, and it was terrible, you know. And then he came

out from the house, they had him in institution, then he came out, and went back in institution. All the problems. And just about a year ago he shot himself. It's just unbelievable. I mean the poor guy, you know. Funny, whenever he came back, you know, to town he used to come to me to see me. He was always telling me about Esther how much I loved her things about her. I remember the first time when he was in the hospital, Esther was going to visit him and talking about it. What I'm amazed about it is that through all those things, you know, they came out the way that they came out, you know, drug-wise or something, you know. I don't know what anybody expects from children, you know. You expect a lot from children. Sometimes you expect too much, you know. I was the one who said I'm going to be the best I can, to lead them a life which I think would be the best place and let them go from there. It's the same with my Marcy, the youngest one, you know. I think she had the biggest problem when she fell into the divorce case, okay. She didn't want to stay with her mother, she didn't want to stay with me, she wanted to be by herself.

JL: When was that?

FP: Marcy...is the one...Let's see, she's married three years. She was pregnant before she got married, that's why she got married. Then she came to me. She was first in California with him, then she came back to Wausau and she said she doesn't feel good and she wants to be home, you know, and she misses family. She was telling me all her problems and she likes to be family and how we're being pulled apart. So then she came back, they fell in love and stayed here with David Keefe who was here in town, it was very simple. So then she got pregnant and she said to me, "Dad, I'm pregnant." I said, "Okay, let's sit down and talk about it. What do you want to do?" She said, "I don't know really what I want to do. I said, "Do you want to get married or do you want to have an abortion or you want to have the child?" I said, "There's only three ways you can do it. So between three things you got three options." I said, "Don't get married for the reason that you're going to have a child. That's going to be a big problem later on. Don't have an abortion since you think I want you to have an abortion. I don't. If you want the child, there's nothing wrong with having a child." I said, "You're pregnant, have the child. You're going to love the child,

I'm going to love the child, it's going to be no problem at all. You are the one really. You asking me for advice, this is my advice for you," I said. "But I cannot tell you not to get married since I don't want you later telling me that I told you so. I'm not going to tell you to get an abortion, since later you going to tell me, 'You told me to have abortion, I wanted my child.' You are old enough and since you are old enough to sleep together in bed and get pregnant, you're old enough to know what to do. I'm always here to help you. If you want an abortion, you don't have the money, I have the money. I'll pay for it, don't worry about that. If you want to have the child, there is nowhere to be, you can stay at my house until you're settled in whatever you want to do. If you want to get married, I said "Fine with me too. But you are the one who must know." So, we went back and forth. She finally got married, you know. She got married when she was six months pregnant. She couldn't make up mind if she wants to get married. She really didn't want to get married but she wanted a family life, you know. She's a very sweet child, you know. She was just in my office yesterday, you know. She never goes out or coming in or hugging me and kissing me and leaving me, it's constantly. Really warm feelings. We have this -- in our family we have these warm feelings about each other. Nobody can do anything wrong that much that you could lose the feeling for each other.

JL: She was the child that suffered the divorce? When did the divorce take place?

FP: That's about six years ago. She was still at home, she was going to high school. She's the only one who was at home. There was that her mother and her father were staying at home with her and she was living with her mother here, you know. She always liked to be have a family life. When this happened it kind of disturbed her whole ideals, you know, and so then she went to her mother's in California and then she came back. She told me how she doesn't like it out there, she wants to come back. I said, "Come back home, the house is big enough. You can't stand it there, come back home." So then she was always talking about how terrible it is, you know, "You living here and Mother living there and no more family life, no more togetherness." I said to her, you know, "I wish I could change it. There's nothing I can do about it. I can't change it. I'm the same way, I feel bad about it, too. I remember our family life, we had a good

family together, it was wonderful, you know. But there comes a time, you know, like when Mimi [was] grown, she left home. You can't keep her home, she said she had to go on her own. Esther grow up, she went to San Francisco. She wanted her dancing, she went out to do her own thing. Sure she comes back every year and to visit, that's fine. And they still love each other, you know, even though they're far away. But once you go off that's what things happen people leave. It happened. Mother and me, you know, it didn't work out and we don't hate each other, are friends. She wanted to go there, you know, and I'm going to be here. So now you are you just come out of high school, you know, and you're right in between and I understand it. It's difficult, you know. You'll get over it, you know. You'll find some way." And it is. I think, I imagine...I was talking about somebody...Go ahead.

JL: Do you think your children feel a strong sense of family responsibility greater than other children?

FP: I don't think so. You talking responsibility, what do you mean responsibility?

JL: To be responsible adults, or responsible to each other.

FP: Well, yes, that they have. I would say that is. Yes.

JL: Did you ever object to any of your children's friends?

FP: No. None of them.

JL: Okay, now let me go on to another subject. What contact do you have with surviving family members?

FP: My own you mean?

JL: Yes.

FP: Oh, yes, I have contact with the people that live in Israel and I have a cousin in New York. That's my left-over family. I go every year to Israel just about to see them. Keep in correspondence, we call once in a while, use the telephone, which is the fastest way of doing it.

JL: Well, I think I'll ask you one more question. Who are your close friends? Jewish, non-Jewish, survivors?

FP: There aren't many survivors around here, but I think I have close friends, Jewish and non-Jewish, and survivor friends, whoever, are my close friends. I don't think it makes any big difference.

JL: I think that before I ask you another question I better stop here.

**END OF TAPE 9, SIDE 2**

**TAPE 10, SIDE 1**

JL: There's been a traditional animosity among East European and West European Jews. Have you ever felt it?

FP: Yes, I have found it, yes. I personally don't believe in it. Go ahead. But there is.

JL: Do you still feel it's still there, even though you're now all American Jews?

FP: I tell you, I don't even come in contact so much anymore with this kind of a group, you know. It is there, I heard about people speaking about it, you know, German Jews and Polish Jews, but I don't think it's anymore what it used to be. I don't believe that. Being in a small town, it's not for me to say, you know.

JL: What contact do you have with American-born Jews?

FP: With American-born Jews? I have had a lot of contact through the B'nai B'rith. I used to go to meetings and I've been even the president of the Wisconsin Council of B'nai B'rith, so I met a lot of Jewish people this way, and then synagogue, or the temple in Wausau.

JL: Do you think they understand what you went through?

FP: No, I don't think they care. I mean, I wouldn't say they care, I'd say I don't think the majority. I know there might be some, but I haven't seen it.

JL: Do you belong to any organizations of survivors or landsmannschaften?

FP: No. The only one I...no.

JL: What do you think are the feelings of American-born Jews toward the Holocaust?

FP: You're talking about American born Jews. The younger generation I don't think even to know about it and they don't want to be connected with this kind of a time. And that is also the way my children are getting so into -- I always felt that when Mimi got into marrying a Jamaican or a black she felt since I was always very outspoken about no discrimination, you know, and "love your man for what he is, regardless of color," you know, but this maybe had something to do with them showing that they're really, really liberal, you know. I believe that. Coming back to American Jewish people -- I feel that American Jewish people don't want to know about it. I don't know if the older ones maybe have some kind of guilt feelings, they have nothing done about it. And I don't think they wanted to know when even things were going on or

care much about it until after the war then all of a sudden maybe they did. The younger generation want to be not connected with it, they just... When I talk about again -- I don't think the younger generation can even understand what was going on, you know. It's something. To grow up in America and try and understand, it's just about impossible, you know. Even when I think back sometimes, I can't understand what happened, really.

JL: What about non-Jews? What do you think their feelings are towards the Holocaust?

FP: Well I think since non-Jews have no direct connection with it they are more open to listen and try to find out what happened. I don't think that the older people have any guilt feeling about anything as the Jewish might have, the older people. And the younger people are not really connected with it either so they more openly want to know. It's really amazing. I get calls from high school kids who want to talk to me about what happened at that time. I just got a call a couple week ago again. I had a girl here about five months ago, wrote an essay on the Holocaust and she wanted to talk to me about it. And amazingly it seems to me that they really want to know about it, some of them want to know what really happened, you know, and why it happened. I don't find this [among] young Jewish children. But then again, I don't have that many young Jewish children here to make this kind of a statement, you know. [Inaudible.]

JL: You said that Mimi married a black. How do you feel about that, a non-Jewish black? The fact that they married non-Jews.

FP: It wasn't the best thing I wanted to see, you know. I particularly wasn't wild about it or liked about it, but if she made the choice, you know — she called me up and she told me, "I'm going to get married." She went up to the justice of the peace and got married. And I went to visit them two weeks later, you know, after they got married to meet the husband and be with them. I stayed with them a few days. I would have liked to see one of my daughters marrying a Jewish fellow to keep on the tradition. But it wasn't that I was really that disturbed that it bothered me, you know. I felt if that's what she really wanted to do and she fell in love with, that's her life. Again, that's very much open to my children. And sometimes I say to myself, maybe I left it too much open to them to develop their own lifestyle and lives. All I felt I could give

them only what I could give them and I had a Jewish home and there was a holiday and there was a Saturday and I took them to BBYO and that's all I took them, they went every summer to Jewish camp, Interloken, and the rest really would have to come from them and whatever they would do would be fine to me. They still would be my children, I would still love them and that's the way I feel today and I felt then.

JL: Is Marcy's husband Jewish?

FP: No, he's Catholic.

JL: Have you had any unpleasant experiences with non-Jews?

FP: What?

JL: Unpleasant.

FP: I have. With non-Jews, yes, I did have some unpleasant experience. Some even who were kind of anti-Semitic. Outbursts from people which I never thought could be that small in their wisdom and thoughts and still being discriminating in a way which I felt has mostly disappeared in this country and all over the world, but I'm wrong, and I've been many times wrong. One of my so-called good friends who just came to me a couple nights ago when I was in restaurant sitting in there reminding me that winter's coming up and we going every Thursday out skiing together, who at one occasion told about the bad Jews who are running this country and running all the banks and doing what they want and have all the money, which upset me very much but I know it came at a time when Wausau was picked for distribution of booklets and writings about the Jewish people just like what happened in Germany, you know — how bad those are and how they control the world and were and it's proven by this and this and this and this. And this man believed what he was reading. I confronted with him since I always confront people with everything, I don't care who they are, if they're Jewish or non-Jews. I was really upset about it when he told me this, you know. But he not realizing that I was his good friend, the Jew didn't mean anything to him, see? He maybe didn't think that far, you know. Being his good friend he forgot that I was Jewish and for this I was just his good friend, you know. But such an outburst at one time made me very upset and I told him so.

But he said to me, "You're different. You are my friend and you are different. You are not one of those Jews," you know. I told him, "I have heard that before, exactly the same story." I told him then the story about what happened in Nazi times, our family when the SS man came to protect us, that we are different. It's the other Jew around the corner he hated. He didn't even know that I was a Jew. That's the one he hated. "But since you know us, we were different and fine and now you're telling me the same story. I'm your friend, I am different, it's the one you don't know, it's the one you hate." I said, "How can you hate anybody you don't know?" And he just looked at me, you know, had nothing to say. But the funny thing, you know, it did not disturb our friendship. Every time he sees me somewhere he comes to me, I don't go to him. He always picks me out in a crowd, he comes to my table and comes and says hello. He shakes hands with me. It's really amazing, you know. That's why I say when many people I find it quite often when I go to meetings, I belong to different associations, there are those speakers come up and give a big speech and tell us about whatever the problem might be in the United States or this and this and I stand up and start pattering away my questions on them, which they don't like at times. It's not the right question you should be asking. And but I find that after all this is over it's the people who really are your friends and who are scared to say, come to you and say, shake hands, "Hey, that was really great. You told him," you know. And I think people have to speak out even with your best friend. You must let him know how you feel. Not meaning that he hasn't got a right to think different than you, you know. Don't feel that you must hate him for this, you know. I really don't. I feel if there's any way I can talk to somebody, he's complete different opinion, I want to talk to him. I might not be happy to associate with him but I'm never going to hate him for it since he's different, has a different thinking or different feeling. I believe this particular guy I talk to him, who came to me again and shake hands and reminded me that we going skiing this winter maybe has changed his mind, you know, after I opened up his eyes, you know, and told him that I heard this before and what happened.

JL: Was it last year that this happened?

FP: No, about three years ago.

JL: You were starting to talk about clubs that you're active in. What political or social clubs do you belong to?

FP: Well, I belong to the Democratic Party, number one. I'm not active in there. I belong to the Friends of Obey and I'm a member of this club.

JL: Friends of?

FP: Obey, Mr. Obey. The friends Mr. Obey. And I just talked to Obey on Sunday again. And I belong to some associations, a purchasing agents' association. We come together once a month in meetings, I belong to the steel association, I go to meetings and meet people. Besides I belong to different orders. I belong to [sounds like "Belay"] Foundation — I just got a call today to do a job. I belong to the Wausau Water Ski Club association. I'm a board member there. So I got jobs distributed all over, in all different directions, you know, to do sports, art, and other things, business. And I belong to a temple and I belong to B'nai B'rith and I actually I'm going to have a meeting in my house in November since otherwise it's going to fall apart. So I called a meeting already. I told [Rabbi] Larry [Mahrer] to put that in the announcements, he puts out the weekly bulletin. So I schedule ahead of time so I know what's going on in Wausau. I don't want to interfere with any other activities, you know. There's so few people around. So I keep very busy. I was just writing to my brother in Israel. He was writing me a letter to say, "Why do you write so little?" I was telling him, "If I don't do it after office hours when I close office, right at the office, I hardly ever do it at home." I usually go from the office around 6:00. I go swimming. That makes it 7:00. By the time I come home it's 7:30. By the time I eat and if I don't eat at home and go out and eat, when you go out and eat it's sure late and besides I have always mail at home and some other things to do, so I keep on pushing off writing letters from day to day and from week to week and from month to month. That's when you have so many things to do, you got a meeting to go and you got there to go, it becomes very — that's why I'm saying I cannot understand -- I never have enough time in my lifetime. It's true. I just don't get done with all the things I want to do.

JL: Well, you were starting to tell me you belong to the synagogue. Tell me a little about your religious life, synagogue attendance, traditions in the home.

FP: Traditions in the home right now are not much since I have no family anymore.

JL: What were they when the family was together?

FP: We had regular Friday night, you know, sitting around the table, candle and lights and make the kaddish. Every holiday — Pesach and seders. Not one seder — we had two seders. We're so used to it.

JL: Kosher?

FP: Kosher, yes. Not later any more we didn't have a kosher home. Beginning, but later that went out, too. But we had the tradition.

JL: When did it go out?

FP: It went out very fast in Wausau. It was not a kosher meat. To order out of town, it became a headache. Madison wasn't a problem since you had kosher meat there. Anyway, but all the traditional things, you know, like we even had — which we don't even have anymore in Wausau, nobody what knows when Shvues is, nobody hardly knows. Now they know when Sukkos is but Shvues I think is out completely. Seder I have even now, even when my family wasn't home. I never gave up the seder since I always have invited people to come and the last seder I had here a family from out of town, actually from Stevens Point and some students from the university and a couple from Stevens Point. Then I always had people from Wausau and the single people or people who usually wouldn't have a Passover. I try to invite them to come. We usually have a big house here and I always have a woman come in who knows and has done it when my wife was here so she knows the whole thing. She knows how to make matzo balls, how to prepare the thing. But everybody helps. I bake my own cake for Pesach. That's my tradition that I have done for so many years and it always comes out very good, I have no problem. A lot of eggs in there, a lot of sugar. But I have kept up to traditions all the time. I used to go to services. I used to be a steady service-goer too, better when my children were young. I mean there was not a service I would have missed. I still now go. I was last Friday night at services. I don't go every Friday night but I do go quite often. Since it's my only connection I really have in this town with Jewish life and I belong to Chavarah.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> A common name for local, informally organized, Jewish clubs.

We meet once a month, yes, in somebody's house. Just a few families, a few people, but I go there. I try to go [sounds like "Bashubailah"] slowed down completely and then [Rabbi] Larry [Mahrer] used to have once a month a luncheon. I used to go to those, which are starting out now again last year. Was the most boring luncheon but I kept through going and then I'm going to go again this year. I tried and tried again, but since there was really nothing. The talk used to end up about cars and this, which is a better car, and it became really a bore to me, you know. But I kept to going every month. Once a month, come together with some people, but usually end up being only four or five people. And it became really bad so. You know how things start up and then all of a sudden people disappear.

JL: You said four or five people. How large is the Jewish community?

FP: You mean in Wausau?

JL: Yes.

FP: We got some fifty families in Wausau.

JL: You draw from them?

FP: These are all from out of town. We have now some seventy members of the congregation, [counting] out-of-towners.

JL: Seventy families?

FP: Seventy families, yes. I would call a family a member.

JL: What kind of religious school education did your children have?

FP: What kind of education?

JL: Religious school.

FP: Religious school education. All they had was in Wausau—you're talking about in Wausau? [Inaudible.]

JL: Yes. What Sunday school?

FP: They had Sunday school and they had Hebrew classes, particular for the bas mitzvah.

JL: So they were all bas mitzvahed?

FP: Yes. All of them know how to read Hebrew amazingly yet, and I'm really astounded by them. But years ago, I think the bas mitzvah operations were a little bit tougher than they are today. They had to know a little bit more. They used to do a whole service at that time and a Conservative service. And now, let's see... Also I had the BBYO. They would give out services about three times a year. We had our own services from the Conservative book. No munching around. Those who absolute couldn't read would read English, but the rest of them would always do the Hebrew parts. It was really nice. Anyways...

JL: Oh, sorry. Were any of them confirmed?

FP: No, no. There's no confirmation.

JL: Now for your religious feelings. Have your feelings about religion been effected by your Holocaust experience?

FP: No, not by the Holocaust experience so much. I think my religious feelings have been effected by the way religious groups deal with religion, which has nothing to do with my personal feelings about religion. I'm talking about religious groups. To me, religion means something else than it seems that it means to most of the people who belong to a temple. My own feeling is that I can be very religious in my home, at my office, in the street, at the work, wherever I am. I don't feel that I don't have to go once a year to say kaddish for memorial services. My family is always in my heart everyday and whenever I go to service I say kaddish anyway, every time I'm there. I'm not waiting for once a year to say kaddish. I have the need for it, the feeling for it, you know. So. But my personal religious feelings have not changed at all. When I go to Israel, I'll never forget, I mean, I feel home. It's my home. It's an unbelievable feeling I get when I get to Israel. It's just there, you know. It's so different.

JL: Have you been there often?

FP: Oh yes, yes. Every year I go there to visit my family. I maybe miss sometimes, go in eighteen months, but that's the most I ever hold is eighteen months. There's something in the air, something I breathe. It's different. It's not to explain, it's just like being home, to me anyway, that's the feeling I have. It's a great feeling. You don't even have to go to temple, you know. It's just there, it's in the air. That's why I'm saying

by the religious feeling, I feel most people their religion is going to temple and cook and bake and be in a bake sale or whatever the deal is and have an auction for selling paintings and make more money. I know this is about -- that those things have to be done, you know, and you have to make money, again I'm all for it, but it's become so one-sided. To me, I don't know, I lose my feeling for organized religion, let's put it this way. But I imagine without it you wouldn't have anything, so you have to have it, so that's it.

JL: Let me just change the subject again. What kinds of things do you like to read?

FP: What kind of things I like to read? Lately I don't read much at all. The reason I don't read — I'm mostly very much bored by books and I can start a few pages and then I put it away.

JL: If you pick up a book to read, what language is it?

FP: It's an English book. I never pick up German books. I've thought about it many times since I get so bored. I read a few pages and read other few pages and what is it all about, whatever it is, a novel or whatever it is. It may be also that I'm so involved in everybody's life and so busy that novels are not really necessary for me to kill my time, you know. It might be something else because I'm very happy just to sit down sometimes and just relax, you know, "Ahhhh," you know, do nothing, you know, don't use your brain. But maybe there's also part of it, what I went through [in] my life, you know, since I have seen so much in front of my eyes and saw so much that very few things which a novel can tell me is going to make me interested to read. I mean the experiences which people have a life which are all different. Sometimes I grab a Jewish book and read about Jewish history, you know. I always use a book to prepare myself for something. When I have to have something specific to know then I take books and take notes and read them so I know what I'm talking about when I talk about a particular subject, you know. I read newspapers because I want to be informed.

JL: What newspapers do you read?

FP: Usually the Milwaukee Sentinel, the New York Times every once in a while, the Wausau paper, you know, which is a lousy paper but it's something to read.

JL: What is it called?

FP: The Wausau Record-Herald.

JL: Wausau Record-Herald. What do you receive magazines? What do you read?

FP: Well we get the Harper magazine, Time sometimes. I don't receive it, I buy it just, you know. Again, the same story: I don't find the time to read it. I get the Jewish Monthly from B'nai B'rith and I don't even get time to read it. I get the Jerusalem Post every in the mail. Every year I subscribe to it. I never get a chance even to read this. I don't find the times to read all the things what I would love to read. There just isn't enough time to do it. Okay?

JL: Out of time again.

**END OF TAPE 10, SIDE 1**

**TAPE 10, SIDE 2**

JL: Have you read any books or articles on the Holocaust?

FP: Have I read any books on the Holocaust? Yes, I did.

JL: What have your reactions to them been?

FP: The reason I read those books, again, like any other book, I want to find out experience from people, what kind of experience they had and what they write about. Like The Sunflower I read. Usually I try to stay away, you know, from too much to read about it. It's very disturbing to me. It doesn't do me much good for my inside feelings and kick at my ulcers. I saw the Holocaust completely on TV and I was very much emotionally involved to the point, particularly the first part I saw when I started crying. And then people said, "Why do you see it?" you know. I said, "I know I'm going to go into some place and the kids are going to ask me the question, 'What did you [think] of the Holocaust and what they said?' and I feel it's my duty since I go out and speak to people to know, just so I can answer their questions when it comes up." I said "I think it's important to me, I think I have a duty that I be able to speak to people so I know what I'm talking about, that's why I'm seeing it." I know what was going on and all about it and sometimes it refreshes some of my memories about what happened and I haven't been all over. I mean most of the time I wasn't in concentration camp. I was in Russia and so on. But people come up with those questions to me all the time. I like to see at least what I saw and what I can tell them about.

JL: Did people become more interested in your experiences after the airing of the program?

FP: I would say they did since I was interviewed on TV, you know. They came to my office. I have been called, I mean, constantly to schools to speak every year to mostly history classes and it mostly is down in East or West High School and Mosinee High School. I've spoken at Wausau East, that was a couple of years ago, and that was very good since they had to pick out a toy, anybody who wanted to sign up for it could come. [Doorbell rings. Tape cuts out.]

JL: Now some questions about Wisconsin. Where have you traveled in Wisconsin?

FP: All over Wisconsin really. I know Wisconsin very well. I've been to Madison, Milwaukee, and up north, the north country, Door County. I have been all over, going, you take it, you know: south, west, north, east.

JL: What part did you like most?

FP: The most part I liked is actually up in the north woods since I have a cottage up there so I like that the most. Also, I go skiing up north. So what free time I have I like to spend winter time on skis and summer time on the water on the lake.

JL: How much does Wisconsin remind you of your European home?

FP: Very much so. It's pretty much the same climate. They haven't so many lakes like we have here. There's more lakes. But climate-wise it's about the same like it feels in Germany. But otherwise the difference here is, I think it's much more beautiful here — the woods and the lakes and the water and I just love it. It's a gorgeous state. I think some people don't know that. Some people believe it's Florida. I think it's Wisconsin [laughs].

JL: How satisfied are you with the cultural climate in Wausau?

FP: I'm pretty much satisfied since there are as many things are going on in Wausau which I can't even take in. There are times when I would like to go to a larger city and see some plays, particular plays, but when it comes to concerts, plays, they bring plays to Wausau and there are concerts who come to Wausau, you have the university here who has a program, too. So you have a community theater which brings very good plays, amazingly good plays, it's not that professional but they're pretty good. So I would if -- say for myself, as much time as I have available, there's more things in Wausau than I can take. Even at the university there's always some lectures going on. Where I sometimes would like to go and don't find the time to go. Also I'm on the advisory board at the university.

JL: How much happier do you think you would have been living in area of greater Jewish population?

FP: I think it would be easier to be more -- get involved in Jewish things which is very, very hard for me to do in Wausau. Like I would love there to be more active B'nai B'rith or more active United Jewish Appeal organization, or something which has more -- where there's more interest and more activities about

Jewish things than Wausau. And the really the only activity you have in Wausau is the temple. I mean you don't get any good speakers to come here to speak to us, you know, about anything Jewish, except [Rabbi] Larry [Mahrer], you know as I said.

JL: Would you consider yourself to be a Midwesterner?

FP: I don't know what a Midwesterner is supposed to be [laughs].

JL: Small town, slow-moving, friendlier than in big cities.

FP: I would say so, yes.

JL: How do you feel about living in Wisconsin with it's high percentage of ethnic Germans?

FP: It doesn't bother me. I feel fine since there are ethnic Germans, there are ethnic Polish, there are ethnic Sweden, ethnic everything in Wisconsin.

JL: Given the choice, if you had the opportunity to leave Wisconsin, where would you go?

FP: I actually like Wisconsin. I love Wisconsin. Since I have -- I like to live here, I like the change of seasons. As I say, summertime I like to be out in the fresh air in the woods, I like swimming, I like water-skiing for activities, sports activities. And when it gets cold I swim on the inside but I go outside skiing. So I'm not going to let myself down for better conditions. I make the best out of the conditions at the particular times they are and I don't mind the seasons at all. I actually enjoy them. I like the change. I look forward to the spring to come and the grass to grow and the blossom to come on the trees. I think it's most beautiful, you know. To me it is anyway. I don't mind the fall when the leaves get all colored and beautiful and gorgeous outside. So I like the whole season. I like Wisconsin as a state to live in. And it's not as polluted as other big cities. I wouldn't want to live in a big city today, that's the truth.

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

FP: Not much of an effort.

JL: Now I'm going to ask you to be immodest. How do you feel you've contributed to Wisconsin?

FP: Well, I feel I contribute a lot, if you want to call it Wisconsin. I contribute a lot in coming here and helping to build up a company which employs now about eighty people. I have been around and speaking to a lot

of people, young people and older people, about my experiences. Not only this, I spoke to groups about social psychology. It's important to know yourself, that belonging to a group is one thing, but just blindly following a group is another thing. As I mentioned before, it's good to belong in a group and be able to speak up and say what you think you should say and not what somebody else wants you to say, and not feeling thereby that you cannot belong to the group, that you keep on standing away your way and be yourself. I have been president of a different organization. I'm still on the board of the Belay Foundation of Wausau and the Board of the Water Ski Club. I have been president of the Wisconsin Association of Purchasing Agents. I have been Toastmasters active and I could go on and on. As I told you, I spoke at banquets in Antigo at the Kraft Foods company; I spoke at churches; I have been a leader in the Jewish community in Wausau; I've been the president for several years; I've been on the board for twenty years; I'm active in B'nai B'rith; I've been the president of the Upper Wisconsin Council of B'nai B'rith. I have a long record what I did with my years of life and I think thereby have contributed to the state of Wisconsin and to the people of Wisconsin.

JL: Do you feel an obligation to Madison and/or Wausau for giving you the opportunity to start a new life?

FP: No, I don't feel obligation to Madison or to Wausau. I feel I have obligation actually to this country for giving me a chance to come here and it has let me start a new life. The U.S. obligation thing, I feel I'm obligated, not particular to the state of Wisconsin, but to mankind if you want to call this one, to continuous tried and proven myself and not to give up my ideals. I thereby hope to carry some couple people along, if it's one or two, then maybe one or two who carry other couple people along, one or two. Thereby really my hope that there will be an understanding of human beings, that we don't constantly have to hate each other and fight each other and kill each other. I'm very emotionally involved in those things. A time is going to come that people can live together in harmony, I really don't care what they are, black, white or green or what religions they are. Like this morning, Mr. [Yaqub] Karkar is Arab. He called me you see, and he invited me to his house and gives me this Middle East food which I know very well but we joke around very much. He's from Jerusalem. He was born in Jerusalem. He's a professor at the

university here, teach economics. Those are my good friends. I mean we call them good friends, they're very friendly. And along the same board, his wife is the teacher. She's a German ballet girl and she took over the ballet school in town. So here she's a German, he is my friend. Then I have one other Arab who works now in the office, you know. He says, you know, "You are my only friend, I love you," you know. I say how easy things can be getting along, how you can get along with people, you know. People were saying to me, "Oh, kill the Arab, you know, your enemy." I said, "What are you talking about? He's not my enemy. Nobody's my enemy. He's a human being. If he can't work, he's not going to work. But if he can do a job he sure is going to work here. Simple like this."

JL: Something else, what was your reaction when the American Nazi Party planned to demonstrate in Milwaukee and Skokie?

FP: Skokie. I was -- let me put it this way: I was really angry about and the reason I was angry about it was more I felt when everybody said, including my friend Larry [Mahrer] the rabbi, said, "Don't give them any chance to get in the newspapers, on the radio. Be quiet, let them march, you know. I don't believe you should go there and stop them or make a lot of noise since this really just advertise for them." Well, I don't believe that and I got very angry and even where I had to stop Larry [in the] middle in his speech. What Larry when he came to town said [was] "Every time you want to stop me in the middle of what I'm saying, somebody can do that." But try it. I tried it once [laughs]. He asked even for opinions and I immediately got up and said, "No, I don't agree with you. I was told the same thing in Germany: 'Don't worry about it. It's just a few people. Let them run around. Don't do a big deal about it.' Those few people got bigger and bigger and bigger so nobody knew anything about it." I said, "Don't let them do it. I don't give a damn if they get on TV or they get on the radio. If you're going to do nothing about it, other people are going to think, 'Hey, there are many sympathizer right now who wouldn't mind going out in the street.' They wouldn't be afraid they'd be caught by the police or somebody's going to throw a stone against them or somebody's going to yell against them. To say they're just going to come marching along — fine, sure, you're going to find next time there's going to be twice as many or three times or four times as many

marching around. And then," I said, "you're going to look around and say, 'Hey, what now?' You still going to be quiet? Don't do anything about it? Just keep on marching more and more every month, every year and just let them go like this without opening your mouth." I said, "That's where you're wrong. That's why all of us have a big mouth. I want to talk. I want to say what I feel. I don't take away their rights. If they want to march, let them march but I don't think just let them march around." There's a difference you see. I know people understand it. Everybody was talking freedom and rights and everybody has the same rights. "Yes," I said, "everybody has the same rights. But somebody goes around, marches, and says they want to kill you — what freedom is that? Freedom gets to a point. If I have the freedom to go in your house and hit you over the head, you're going to get me in court and going to put me in jail and I have no more freedom anymore. That's where the freedom ends. There's a point where freedom ends. And to me anybody goes around and says, 'Yes, I'm going to kill you, going to kill you,' then he is endangering somebody else's life. He is going to people and telling them, 'You come with me and we're going to kill.' This is no freedom anymore. I think you're taking away somebody else's rights and that's where I make the line, right there." I said, "You might not agree with me." He didn't. I got very hot under the collar and he said, "That's it. End of the speech." [Laughs.]

JL: I want to ask you now something about American – how you feel about the American system of government. How satisfactory do you find the it to be? The American system of government.

FP: I'm not completely happy with American system of government. The reason I'm not completely happy is... [Phone rings. Tape cuts out.] Nothing is perfect. I think the system of the American government is still one of the best I know in the world, but there's much to be improved if it can be improved. In particular I think there's too much corruption going on and too much storytelling which are a lot of lies, particularly, you know, in politics going on in government. There's a lot of, mostly politicians, who don't do what they really maybe sometimes think is good for the country but they do what they sometimes feel they have to do to be able to stay up there and keep their jobs and that's what I think is a very bad part I don't like. But I don't know how you can change it. If you all find always honest people, outspoken

people, who will speak what they really feel and think should be done and not only what somebody else wants them to say but it can save their skin and their jobs.

JL: What do you feel about the prominence of Jews in American Society? Politics, art, and other fields?

FP: I'm sure that Jewish people are as much involved as any other people involved, too. I don't think it's particular -- pick particularly Jewish people to be involved and whatever. I think everybody should be involved in whatever involvement is necessary for the improvement of life of people. And there's no question about it that I myself who think there has to be something like a Jewish organization watches over things which particularly are of interest of the Jewish people. Just like there has to be some people with particular interest of the Catholic people or the Italians or the Mexicans or the black people. I believe in it very strongly, particularly since they have not yet arrived at a point where they become human beings which will accept each other, you know, what you are and not what somebody wants us to be. As long as this exists you have to be involved in those things to control and be aware and watch what's going on, in this country in particular and any other country.

JL: That leads me to another question. How secure do you feel as a Jew in America?

FP: How secure? If there has something like feeling secure, I don't know. There are times when I'm very disappointed since I feel sometimes that people don't grow up or don't learn or don't want to learn or don't want to know. And that's -- I'm talking about Americans. Again, I'm not pointing out any particular kind of people, I'm talking about all people, including Jewish people. We are slow, very slow in learning and even I found that sometimes money is our most important thing. When we get money we even forget about the principles we might have had once and change over to become more interested in becoming wealthier and having more dollar bills to count. And what disturbs me mostly is that there hasn't been much change as far as I can see and it all depends on times. Should times really get very rough — and this, I think you can see, is not only in United States, in most other countries — everybody looks for a scapegoat and it seems to me it's still that the Jew is still a scapegoat. Nobody would mind, I imagine even people who call themselves my friends today, I don't know really what would happen to them if it

would be really tough for them economically and somebody would come up and say, "Now, we take everything away from Fred, you know, and hit him over the head, that no good guy. Things are going to get better for you." Would he consider then himself or me? I'm afraid, this is what always comes up in my mind, it would be him and they couldn't give a damn about me and this seems to be typical for humanity which always has proven to be this way and it still seems to exist for some people. I know there are some people. I don't doubt it, there's always exceptions. But this is what bothers me. I really don't know, looking at what happened to Germany and to my friends in Germany, how fast they could change, I wonder what would happen to all my friends in this country, how fast they could change.

JL: What do you see as the most important issues facing America today?

FP: The most important issue facing America today, I believe, is a change of wisdom in the government. I think we have to learn that we are not anymore the most strongest and powerful in the world and that they have to learn how to live with people together and not try to dictate them what to do and how to live. We have to learn that other people have their own culture and their own way of living and accept them for that. I think we should stop to interfere in other countries' politics or life and try to make investments or the way we'd like to have them so they can sell them some more goodies, and ammunition, or planes and tanks. I think we should realize that we are human beings and we should help those really who want us to help them who are in need, but not with guns and tanks but with food and whatever necessary economic help they need to put themselves on their feet. I think America has this thing about being the strongest and the most powerful one and when they mention the Americans everybody has to shake in their pants. It doesn't work anymore. I mean it's impossible. I mean with atomic bombs and atomic missiles and whatever we have now. Nobody's safe anymore. It used to be years ago when there was a war fought in Europe, if you wouldn't go to Europe and fight the war, you wouldn't know there was a war. But things have changed and I think with times changing we have to learn and understand the situations. Americans have to learn fast, I think, before it's too late. We cannot just go to countries and go in there and take out their mining goods and leave them with nothing and pull out of there and make a fortune as

we have done and still do, I'm sure. We go into countries and open up big plants and take out all their minerals they have and use them up, you know, in unbelievable speed and then leave them with nothing to starve. It can't go on like this. It has to be somewhere stopped and the sooner we realize those things the better it's going to be for the whole world concerned, including America. I think we make so many big mistakes repeatedly, repeatedly, we can't keep on repeating with our mistakes. We made a mistake in Vietnam, made a mistake in Iran, make a mistake there, make a mistake there, and really there's no end to it, you know. When are we going to start learning? [Sighs.] It's true. You look at this for years with American talk about saving energy, one little thing. Even today sometime I speak to people about energy they think I'm crazy. After all the publicity on TV, in the newspaper, and people talk about it for years, still the majority of people don't care. It just doesn't bother them. And you talk about it they think you're talking about a dumb thing. "I've heard so much about it. That's enough. I don't want to hear anymore about it. Don't tell me." They just don't want to be bothered with anything. "Don't disturb my life. It's too much work for me to turn off a button, you know, turn off a light. Don't tell me I have to have a small car, I want to ride in a big car," you know. And people are now realizing. I think it's more or less the money. Some are realizing that and they have gone along. I think they seem to be getting educated very, very slowly. I just think it's too slow. The people are grabbing and understanding what's going on. I think the majority of people don't want to pay anymore the high gas prices, too expensive, so they buy finally a small car. The funniest thing is everybody complains about government interference, government regulations, government regulations, over-regulated — but there's nothing you can do without them putting down a law or government regulations, you know. "You must do this, you must do this, you must do this." Without it, it doesn't work. It seems to be just impossible. The government, you know should raise up the prices on gas so we pay more [for] gasoline and put more taxes on to pay more. I actually think that if that's the only way to do it, you have to do it, you know. Charge them two dollars a gallon of gasoline, you know [laughs].

JL: Oh, the tape is ending again.

**END OF TAPE 10, SIDE 2**

**TAPE 11, SIDE 1**

JL: How do you feel about the refugees that are coming into the United States presently?

FP: Presently, I think the whole country, the United States is all refugees as far as I'm concerned. We're a pretty new country and we are refugees, and I think anybody who needs a land to live in, I would go for it since I myself came here not too long ago as a refugee. And I feel terrible when I hear people [say], "Right in beginning they come and take away our jobs." I don't think that is really true. Surely there are not enough jobs available, but when there are so many people already in this country, a few more is not going to hurt anybody. Besides they have a right to live like anybody else.

JL: To what extent do you believe there's anti-Semitism in America today?

FP: What extent? I'm very sensitive about it first of all. I'm more sensitive than I imagine most people would be since what I have gone through my life. I don't like it — it's simple like this. Every time I read about them and I see something on TV about it shocks me. Again I say I always hoped right after the war that there would be better understanding and the hate would be gone from people and it disturbs me all the time that his hatred never leaves, it's constantly there and repeats itself like history seems to repeat itself. And is there ever going to be an end to all this?

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

FP: Present-day Germans as far as I'm concerned, the younger generation, have been mostly very much in favor of Israel and the state of Israel. And I met Germans in Israel and they worked in a kibbutz. Even just a year ago I met Germans that worked in a kibbutz, who like kibbutz life very much. Maybe it's part of the guilt feeling of the younger generation. They want to make up again for their parents which they have done bad or where they have harmed the Jewish people and some of them feel the guilt feeling to make up for it and thereby helping actually the state of Israel in agricultural development and even [in] time of war Germans have come to Israel to work in the fields when the Israelis had to fight in the front lines. So I have nothing against Germany at all since I myself am not the person to hate. I'm not particular wild

about going to Germany since it always brings in me memories which are not the best ones, therefore I stay away from Germany.

JL: Did you receive restitution?

FP: I made an attempt at restitution but it became complicated. I still have a claim since with me it was a different case. I have really not been in concentration camp. My restitution claims were different, which I did not concern myself too much. I felt it took too much energy out of me and too much of my emotion to keep on continuing to press on to get this kind of money, and I felt I could do much better in forgetting about it and just concentrate on my life in the United States and my family and work myself up, which I did. So I did not get any restitution at all. I just stopped it completely.

JL: You said that you felt bad about being in Germany. When did you return to Germany since you came to the US? Since the original coming back?

FP: I returned once to Germany. I have a brother living in Germany, in Hanover, and about ten years ago I just stopped in there on my flight to Israel for a couple days and that was about it.

JL: What were your reactions, besides your brother being there?

FP: My brother is there and he's going to live there I imagine. I, myself, could not live there. I mean I don't feel good being in Germany, in a country in which we have suffered so much, you know, and lost so much of my family. So I don't know really how I would feel. I would be there for several weeks, you know, but I don't even have a feeling. I like to travel, you know. I have been all over and several places, but I do not feel particularly that I want to go to Germany.

JL: Were you back in Poland?

FP: No I haven't been to Poland either, no. I don't like Poland either [laughs].

JL: Do you think it's easier now for you to talk about your experiences than it was closer to the time that they happened, or even just a couple years ago?

FP: No, I don't think it ever becomes easier. I think I speak freely about it and I've been asked many times, "How come?" You know, "When you speak about it must hurt you." But I feel it's important to me enough

to let people know about what happened, hopefully that they will know that something like this shouldn't happen again you know. And I think that that's what's important about it. That's why I really speak. I can speak much more freer now than I did the first time since I've become more easier in my speech since I have repeated my talk so many times it becomes easier every time you do it and you know how to do it so you attract more people so they can listen to you. You don't need any notes and you can just wander around the classrooms back and forth and look people in their eyes and get them to be there and to listen and be interested what you have to say. But emotionally, I always get involved, more or less. Sometimes more, sometimes less, depends what kind of a mood I'm in.

JL: How do you feel about the generally increasing awareness in America concerning the Holocaust?

FP: I feel very good about it. I think people are at least becoming concerned, make an effort to let people know what happened. And I believe the only way we can learn is from if we're interested in other people and things what happened. We only can learn from experience. When I say experience, you don't really have to experience it, [but] at least you have to know about it. That would be the experience. You don't have to go through what I went through. But if we close our eyes to everything what happened in the world and we never learn anything, there's never hope. And the only way we can learn is when we find out and know about it and read about it and we can make up our mind what we're going to do with our lives and how we're going to handle the future and what we're going to do with the future and the future to come. And that's why to me it's very important and I think it's very good to see that many people are interested, they want to find out about what happened in the Holocaust, you know. And I think this is very good to see that people become interested, they want to know about it what happened. And it only happened the last few years, really. I wish it would have happened much earlier, you know, wouldn't have to wait that long.

JL: As I explained to you when we were first in contact that a good part of the funding for this project comes from the Wisconsin Humanities Committee, which is American government money. How do you feel about the fact that money for this project comes from the American government?

FP: I think it's a very important thing. You're spending money for a very worthwhile cause. If you can open people's eyes to know what was going on and what is going on, I think it's very important for people to know. And you never gain anything, the Germans really didn't gain anything, through becoming such a country which went out to kill all Jewish people. Not all the Jewish people alone. I mean they were against the left, they were against religious people, even against Catholics, and they destroyed a lot of people, even German people who got killed in the war and crippled and they were bombed out — showing actually that the best investment I think for anything is you prevent things. You need this money to prevent things before it gets in to become a big catastrophic thing which really destroys everything. So to me it's a very solid and good investment to protect humanity from those things to happen again since really even there with so many Jewish people who are killed but they also many million of other people killed — Russians and Germans and Polish and Hungarian and French. Everybody got involved. American people. If you can -- through those kind of a programs we can educate people so you hope that you prevent a holocaust again. If you really have, if you talk monetary-wise, you saved a lot of money and a lot of lives which is the most important thing.

JL: Why do you feel it's important for you to participate in an oral history documentation project on the Holocaust?

FP: I think I have something to say since I have gone through it and I hope through my experience and my speaking up here that somebody at sometime will listen to the tape and will find out what really was going on in somebody's life, and thereby they'll have a better understanding what happened. Again, I hope through this things are going to be better in the future life for humanity, for all human beings.

JL: This is the end of the formal questions that I had for you. I just would like to ask you if you had anything you would like to add.

FP: No. I think that you have done an outstanding job. You spent a lot of time with me and I really appreciate it. Even though I'm very busy in life I don't mind at all spending those hours or any hours when I think it will be of some help to somebody or to some country or whatever for betterment of understanding and

human relations. So, I'm really thankful to you for coming up, making those the trips, and spending your time and spending government money [laughs] to come up and sit with me and listen to my story. Every time I feel I can contribute to something, maybe only a little bit, I feel my time was spent worthwhile. I'm the person who can somehow make use of your friends. I go out somewhere, I don't hesitate to say hello to somebody I don't know and start going into conversation and it isn't particular about this particular subject, but any subject where you can talk about it and sit together and become friendly and develop friendships. I don't know what it is with me, but I can make very easily friends with people and it makes me feel good. People always say, "Wherever you go you start talking. You don't even know anybody." And I say, "They're human beings. Why not talk with them? You find out if you talk. You find out who they are, what they do, what they think, how they feel." I think this particular program, you know, is very good when you really want to find out how people feel today and what they think after they all went through, through a time of the Holocaust of very bad years. And I think it's a worthwhile program, you know. It really should establish something and have this on the record. I hope that I'm going to get all the tapes. I already told my children and my daughter said, "Oh, I want those tapes. I want to listen to the tapes," you know. So I told her, "You don't know how many tapes there are going to be you may get tired of listening to it." But I think there's something to it. I know when the Vietnam War was, I used to go to meetings and we used to have people speaking about Vietnam War and I was standing up and saying, "What are you doing there?" you know. They was telling us how many bombs they were throwing down every day and how many holes they were making in the ground, you know. It was unbelievable. Without saying, you can't prevent. The reason I think this should be a preventive thing, what you're doing — you can prevent things before they get out of hand. And this is my opinion, it's just what this should be all about and that's what I feel. That's why I didn't mind spending the time and hoped it will help.

JL: I really appreciate giving all the time since I were in your office [inaudible] and thank you very much.

FP: Thank you

END OF TAPE 11, SIDE 1

END OF TRANSCRIPT