

MEMOIRS OF  
MAX STEINMETZ



NARRATOR: Max Steinmetz

I came from Rumania, Transylvania. It was a very small, typical European town, mostly farming area, no industry, oh, maybe twenty-five thousand people.

Q. So, it was more of a city?

A. No, not really. The cities were much larger in those days. It was mostly an agricultural type community, peasants, mostly Russian Orthodox, some Catholics, a few protestants, and a very few Jews. The town was run by the Rumanian authorities. We had a mayor who was supposedly elected by democratic process, but he wasn't. The Jews were mostly in commerce and retail, so to speak, like soft goods, dry goods. Some were in the meat business, packaging, but mostly in the retail business. Jews couldn't own land above a certain size. You see you could only own land if you had less than, let's say, five acres or so. So they, therefore, couldn't possibly be involved in agriculture because they just didn't own any land. But they could own their homes, but not any land that amounted to any size at all. This was in the 1930's.

Q. Were there any jobs that they could not hold?

A. No, we had a quota as far as universities were concerned. It was a six percent quota. If you were a Jew after the six percent, you couldn't possibly enter a university. As far as jobs, I don't believe there were any Jews in government, again, above a certain rank in the military or above a certain status in the civilian part of the

government. They could only reach up to a point, and that was it; they couldn't go any further. Now that was legally. But, illegally, we had what we call bakshish. The Arabs use it a lot; it's payola. Do you know what payola is?

Q. No.

A. Well, some years ago in this country we had a scandal with the disc jockeys playing certain records more than they played others, and they investigated that. I think it was in the late '50's, and they found out that some of the DJ's would favor some records over others because they got kickbacks. And they called it payola, and we called it bakshish. It's exactly the same thing. So, in other words, if you had a lot of money, you could pay your way. You could get into the University; you were not among the six percent. It was really a very, very corrupt government from the top, all the way down. Well, I grew up in a very strict Orthodox home, extremely. Today I belong to the Reform temple. As a matter of fact, I have flip-flopped from one extreme to the other. We were very Orthodox. I wore a cap, Yarmulkah, probably until I was fourteen years old, and I had earlocks. And I had to go to the synagogue every morning to say my prayers, and the same thing at night. In other words, very, very Orthodox. My grandfather had a long typical beard you see in some of the oil paintings or drawings of the old Jewish men with the long beards. As a matter of fact, I have a painting at home that a friend of ours painted in New York



because of that. It was a very Orthodox home, strictly kosher. We didn't work on Saturdays, holidays or we didn't write on Saturdays or holidays. But the whole community was like that, the whole community. As a matter of fact, we had nothing but Orthodox Jews. I attended a Yeshiva up until I was about thirteen or fourteen years of age, then I rebelled. Yes, I went to public school and also parochial schools which were the Jewish schools and engineering school after the war in Germany. I had to go to the Jewish school before and after public school. I went every morning from around six o'clock to seven-thirty. It was within walking distance. We came home and had breakfast and went to public school until two o'clock, then we went back to Jewish school and stayed until five-thirty or six o'clock that evening, six days a week with the exception of Saturday. Sunday, we went to Jewish school all day long because there was no public school on Sunday. Saturday, only part in the afternoon because we had to go to services in the morning. We came home and had a typical Sabbath dinner and back to Hebrew school until five o'clock or so. There were no restrictions on the Jews in public schools, but they let us know we were Jewish every possible occasion. Did I feel any discrimination as far as being Jewish? Oh, maybe so, but not to the extent where it hurt. In other words, if there was a holiday, a national holiday, we had to attend church services rather than synagogue. For instance, we had our Fourth of July; it happened to be in June. Well,

we all gathered in the school in the morning and we all went to church, which was Russian Orthodox, because that was the majority. And we had to attend with the non-Jews, but then again, the same thing held true for the Catholics and everyone. The government controlled it, rather the church controlled the government in the same way that Italy is controlled by the Catholic church or England by the Anglican church. And we were consoled in the same manner. Yes, we had to go to church. I remember one experience where a Jewish kid wouldn't go down on his knees. We wouldn't kneel, and after the services the principal called us into his office and wanted to know why. We told him we were Jewish and it was against our religion. We had no objection against them doing it. Our religion does not allow us to kneel, but, of course, he told us it shouldn't happen again, but then it happened again. There was no problem really. Yes, we did have some but not to the point where I could say they discriminated against the Jews as far as the Jewish kids didn't have to sit in the back or we couldn't enter the schoolroom. No, we didn't have those problems. The Jewish community was very closely knit, but no, we did not have a ghetto. Some of my best friends were non-Jewish. As a matter of fact, our family was quite large and there were other kids my age, boys and girls. Remember this was before the second World War, so it did make a difference. It was very closely knit...here, if something happened to somebody the whole community suffered.



In other words, everybody felt a pain even though they might not even be related to each other. But we had to, we had no choice. We had to stick together, as I imagine some of the ethnic people here in the United States have to stick together. We did the same thing.

Concerning brothers and sisters: I had a brother and a sister and they were all killed in the war in Auschwitz. I was in Auschwitz myself. My parents were killed there, and I was a little boy just fifteen years old. And they all perished. No, my brother died in Dachau. He was with me, as a matter of fact, he died February 4, 1944. Now I was liberated May 2, 1945. I was in school when this happened. The Hungarians came in, in 1939. There was a pact among the Germans and Italians, the axis, let's see, the Germans, the Italians and the Russians whereby they took certain areas of certain countries and they divided it among themselves. Now this particular area where I was born at one time before 1914 belonged to the Austro-Hungarian empire in 1918. But they were on the wrong side of the war, the Hungarians. You see, they fought with Germany against the Allies, and they lost in 1918. But the Rumanians fought against them, so in 1918 they gave this territory to them as I suppose a gift from the Allies. So I was born in this area. So in 1939, the axis which again consisted of Germany, Italy and Russia took it back and gave it to the Hungarians, because they fought alongside the Germans in the Second World War. So the

Hungarians came in and they took over and they were very friendly with the German government. And things started to get very bad for the Jews. They picked us up and put us into a labor camp as children; that was the first thing. We used to work after school and at night for Hungarian military. We did go to school in the mornings, but at noon we had to leave for a SA which is an organization of German laborers. We had to report to the SA, and they supervised our work, and we worked in warehouses. The German troops were heading towards the Russian front, and we had to help in the bakeries. They were passing through there, and we had to help them bake bread and load it on the trucks for the refugees and so on. Not long after we were gathered all the Jews one morning at four o'clock in the morning. We had a feeling this might happen, but we didn't know for sure. If there were any important announcements in those days, the way they used to announce it, here we have radio and television, but in those days they used to have a drummer who used to go out in the street with a drum, and he used to start beating a drum and that was the signal for an announcement being made. Remember, we had no communication as we know it today, and very few people had radios. There was no radio station in the town, so the drummer who worked for the state government or the local government, he would come out on the plaza and he would drum. And then the people would gather, and he would read off today's announcement. Well, when we heard it at four o'clock



in the morning, we knew something was wrong. We couldn't understand why, and we went out there and sure enough all the Jews stuck together. And they gave us the location by six in the morning where to gather. And they told us not to take anything, just to gather, and we did. And they had some German officers there and some Hungarian police, and they told us to go back home and pack only garments that we could carry on our own or utensils. And we asked them where we are going, and they wouldn't tell us. So we showed up at six o'clock, and everybody just carried a couple of suitcases. And they took us into an old brick factory, and they told us this was going to be our home, and we simply did not know what happened. So the leaders of the Jewish community tried to find out what's happened and finally they had access to one of the German officers. It cost a lot of money to talk to him, and they spoke with us. He was a German general, and he said that they were going to eventually take us to Germany and that we would be working in factories to help win the war and that no harm would come to us. So some of us believed in it, and some didn't; and, of course, we were too young. But the young ones, we expected the worst, and we wanted to break away and escape. There was a group of us, and we could have, but our parents wouldn't hear of it. Simply no--you got to stay with us and nothing is going to happen.

Q. Had anyone heard about what had been going on?

A. We heard, but you always believe that it's not



going to happen to you. Yes, we heard what happened in Poland and in Czechoslovakia. We also heard what happened in Germany. We knew what happened in Russia to the Jews and Lithuania and Estonia, and so on, but it won't happen to us, because after all, why? We simply didn't believe it. But then again the same thing happened, so we were in this brick factory, oh, I suppose, almost a year. It was a huge, very huge, complex of buildings where they have no walls, just a roof. But they have different levels of floors where they were making brick and the bricks have to dry. Remember they didn't have modern machinery; brick was made by hand. It was made out of mud, clay and straw. The straw is what kept the bricks together. So they used to carry these bricks up on these platforms or levels and put them down there and they would dry in the sun like for a week or so. And what they did to us, they were not building any brick any more, something had taken its place, and so they assigned each family to part of this platform. They said okay, like if there was five in a family they would say this is your space about twelve by fourteen. So they give you a blanket and you divided this platform into five or six little rooms and that was it. There were no bathrooms, or nothing. You just sleep out on the board or you sat up all night. The women mostly, naturally sat up and cried all night. No, we couldn't bring any food, because we could only bring what we could carry ourselves. And the food, they told us they would serve us food, which



they did, but it was mostly uneatable. But after you had it for a week, it was eatable. After you had it for a week, you would eat anything, but for the first few days we didn't eat anything, and they kept us there. And then the German SS came in, and they picked up all the Jewish leadership or Jewish people who were prominent, such as businessmen, that were rather big businessmen, in a sense, people who owned quite a few stores or warehouses or what have you, factories, and so on. And they wanted their money, their diamonds, gold and so on. Of course, in the beginning, no one would tell them we had any, but by the time they finished up with each individual everybody gave them everything. As a matter of fact, they told them they had more than they actually had because they did them very much harm. They beat them; they pulled fingernails out. It's unbelievable the things they did. So after that, that was almost a year, they just rounded us up and took us to the railroad station and put us in railroad cars. It was the ones they moved animals in, if you've ever seen cattle cars, and they just filled up. If there was room enough for forty people, they would put sixty in there, who were on top of each other. There was not enough room to sit down; we were all standing up. If one of us sat down, two of them had to get up. There was absolutely no room; they made no provision for sanitary things at all, absolutely none. They gave us each a loaf of bread and gave us each some water and put us in these cattle cars, and they took off. And we



kept asking where are we going, and they said well you'll see when you get there. And we got there a few days later. As a matter of fact, we got to just outside of Czechoslovakia, and we got into Prague, which is the capital, and stopped outside the city, and the train pulled up and they stopped and they let us out for a few minutes. And some of us already realized what was happening, and we took off, but they captured us. They saw us. See, we were running in the snow, and they just followed us. We didn't have enough sense to know that they could capture us, but we were to the point that nothing really mattered. And they brought us back, and they didn't punish us, which we couldn't figure out why. They just put us back, and told us never again to do it, which we couldn't understand why. I suppose they didn't want to make an example right there in front of everybody else because they kept telling us nothing was going to happen. So, a few days later they took us to Auschwitz, and this is where they separated us. There was a doctor by the name of Mengele. As a matter of fact, I think they say he is somewhere in Argentina or Brazil or somewhere. As a matter of fact, I saw him. He was standing right there when we arrived. He was the man in charge of separating the able bodies from the non-able bodies. In other words, they needed people working in their factories building roads, railroad tracks, factories, and so on. So the young and the able-bodied had to go to the right; women, children and elderly people went to the left, which was right into the



gas chambers. My brother, who was a year younger than I, and I, we went to the right. My sister, she was only seven years old, I think, and my parents, they went to the left, and I never...that was it.

Q. You were aware?

A. Not at the moment, we didn't know. We knew, this was about ten o'clock in the morning when we got there, and in the afternoon we were aware of it because we could smell. We smelled something we didn't know what it was, but it smelled like flesh, burning flesh. And we kept asking questions. They took us into the camp, which was a gypsy camp. You see, the Germans collected the gypsies at one time in Germany and put them in the concentration camps. But there were not many of them, and so we went into the gypsy camp and we were told that yes they were burning...but we simply couldn't believe that. We couldn't possibly believe it. But then we heard rumors that somebody saw my mother and somebody saw my father a week later, but that wasn't correct. Nobody saw anybody, but after we'd been there for a while, we realized what they were doing. Fortunately, I was transferred from there. We went to a place where Hitler wrote his book, Mein Kampf. He was in a prison there, and he wrote his book. And I was there for some time. As a matter of fact, my brother died there. And after that they walked us to Dachau, which is outside Munich, oh, somewhere around sixty or seventy miles. This was in early spring, this was in March, which in



Germany is wintertime, especially in the Alps, snow on the ground. But we were barefooted. It didn't really matter. We had no shoes. I had no shoes for over a year. I used to take a towel and wrap it around my legs and take some wire and secure it together but that was everybody. I was no exception. As a matter of fact, I was one of the fortunate ones to get out. I saw a father and son being hung because he took his towel and made shoes out of it. Just exactly what I did, but they caught him and made an example out of him when we came home from work that night. And they called us all into the courtyard and they told us they were going to hang him tonight and they told us why. In some of the camps, the camps that I was in, were Jews only. In Auschwitz there were Polish people, some Russians, some German political prisoners, some French and gypsies. But most of the gypsies were killed at that time. Only the males were left, and they were in charge of our camp. The gypsies acted as their supervisors, their sergeants, over us. Rather than have a German come in and beat us, they had a gypsy do the dirty work, and, in turn, they spared the gypsy's life. But they also had Jewish people do that, believe it or not. As a matter of fact, in one of the camps, there was somebody that I knew from back home, and he became a very ruthless man that he wasn't before. He became extremely ruthless and conditions made him like he was, although I condemn that. I saw him after the war, and I wouldn't talk to him because of that, and he kept saying why,



why, and I said why didn't the rest of them do that. Many of us didn't want to get involved in that, but it was his nature, and he wanted to do it. So many of the Jews, just to save their own lives, became their collaborators, their helpers, and yes, some of them saved their lives because of that. So finally they marched us to Dachau. Actually what happened, the American troops came into Hapsburg in Munich, and Himmler said they would not catch us alive. There were approximately twenty-five or thirty guards with the Jewish people at that time, at that particular camp. They would not take us alive, so they marched us from Dachau to a place not far from Innsbruck. And we got there. Oh, I think it was May first, and I escaped that night. All of us started going in different directions. They were already in a big disarray, the Germans. The American troops were only about forty-five miles in back of us, and they threw their arms and started running. So we just started running ourselves, and started running in different directions. So I broke away and, as a matter of fact, I knocked on a door, and there was a German lady. And we had uniforms, prison uniforms, white with a blue stripe, like, like a zebra-type outfit with big numbers, whatever our numbers were. And I went in there, and she asked me if I was a prisoner, and I said yes. And she wanted to know what nationality, and I told her I was Hungarian. I was afraid to tell her I was Jewish, because I was afraid that she was going to turn me back to the SS. She said, are you a



political prisoner, and I said yes. So she said okay, I'll keep you here. We'll hide you, which she did. And, as a matter of fact, they took me into the bathroom and they filled up the tub with hot water, which is the first time I had a bath in I don't know how many years. I'll be honest with you, we had showers, but we never had a hot bath. And they fed me, and I was there until the following afternoon and the SS came. They were gathering us back up, and she took me down to the basement and told me to lay down on the floor. And she covered me with some boards and some mattresses on top of me, and so on. She was afraid that some of the dogs might come in, police dogs, so they might sniff me out, but they didn't come in. So they left, and the following day the American troops came in, and I was a free man again. It took me four weeks before I believed it. I just simply couldn't believe it.

Q. Where did you go from there?

A. We stayed there for a while and they put us in a big military hospital. We were all sick, dysentery and other things, dehydrated completely. And I was just as tall as I am now (over six feet tall); and I weighed eighty pounds. And they had orderlies from the American army plus doctors. And then the Red Cross came; and they just kept us under surveillance, I think it was about six weeks. We gained some weight, and we gained our strength back, and then we were on our own. We could go wherever we pleased. I didn't want to



go back home, because the Russians were there, so I went into a DP camp, a displaced persons camp. And I was there for a very short time and then I went back to school in a place right on the Austro-German border, in a technical school. They had an engineering school there. And in 1948, I applied for an American visa. I didn't want to stay there, there was no question. There was a question whether I would go to Israel, which didn't exist at that time, it was Palestine, or whether I would go to the United States. But I had some relatives in New York, and some of my friends came out, and they wrote me and said this is where you ought to come, you would like it. So I decided to come; and my visa was approved immediately. I had no problems, and I just came over. I had nothing to take; I had absolutely nothing. We lost everything, everything we had at home, property, our house. Everything was taken away, all your bank savings, everything, period. And there was no need going back. Some of my cousins and uncles went back, and today they live in Israel, and they went back and they couldn't get anything. They robbed them, not necessarily the Germans, but the people back home, the non-Jews, took whatever I guess they could. So I got a visa. Each country was allowed so many people. They had a quota, so many people per year per month, and, fortunately, I fell into that quota. They allowed...and I don't remember exactly how many per month...but I was within the quota in those days. One of my cousins in New York, who was in the manufacturing



business, he had to guarantee that for two years, I wouldn't become a burden to the United States. And that still holds true today. If you bring somebody over from Europe or anybody from any country, you must guarantee them. That's for the first three years. They must not become a burden, such as becoming sick or dependent on social security or welfare. I think that's part of the immigration law, and I'm quite sure it still holds true. So my cousin signed this document.

Q. Did he send you some money?

A. No, I worked my way across. I worked on a boat; I worked in the kitchen. The AJDC, American Jewish Distribution Committee, was very active in those days. I don't think they are any more. Today they are part of the UJA; they were very active, so were the HIAS, the Hebrew Immigration Aid Society. The HIAS is still active today, but the AJDC practically out. They still help in Israel, but not much. What they did for us...they made all the arrangements for us. I had to take a train to Bremen, and I was supposed to board a boat. And they were helping with the arrangements. They would get all the papers together for me, and they would supply me with enough money and food to get to the boat, they supplied military boats. Now, you could either work or make some arrangements to pay back later. And I imagine if you didn't have any money, you could still come over, I suppose. I didn't know anybody in that situation, so I worked my way through. I worked downstairs in the kitchen.



It took us eight to ten days to come over here.

Concerning Zionism: well, I had, we had a discussion yesterday about Zionism, and I'm a strong believer in Zionism. I just feel that the Jewish people have to have a place to go to. That's all there is to it, just as much as the French or the British. I don't know whether the Americans fall into the same category, because this is a mish-mash, a melting pot. But the Irish and the Italians, oh, there's no question about it. In fact, I was one as a young kid. I belonged to the same party that Mr. Begin belongs to when I was a kid. So, yes, I'm a greater believer. I belong to the organization.

Q. What did you think about America before you got here?

A. I didn't know enough about America. I had dreams about America. My imagination...I did know that you had freedom here which we didn't have, and that was enough for me.

Q. Were there any restrictions after the war as far as being Jewish in Europe?

A. Oh, no, definitely not. In fact, to the contrary. Many of the Jewish people that stayed behind became very successful. Extremely so, because they were trying to make up for what happened which I don't think you ever can, whether financially or morally. Yes, I think they tried very hard to make up by giving them money, I suppose, but I wasn't

interested. There's no way some people can make up for others' losses. There's no way. In New York, my cousin met me, and it was in August, and it was extremely hot. And they were very kind to me. As a matter of fact, they took me to the Catskills, which I thought was very nice, for two weeks, which I thought was absolutely beautiful. But I was lost. I couldn't speak any English at all, though some people spoke German there. They did help. But I was young, and I felt real good. And it so happened the people that owned the hotel were Hungarian Jews, and they spoke Hungarian, and I spoke Hungarian. As far as they were concerned, it was fine. But as far as the young people were concerned, I was completely lost. You know they didn't speak any German or Hebrew or Yiddish or Polish or some language that I spoke, just English and that's something I didn't speak. Although I thought it was beautiful and I enjoyed it very much, I came back to New York, and they wanted me to stay with them, which I didn't want to do. I wanted to go to school, but I also had to support myself. I was eighteen, and I went out on some job...I met a friend of mine. We used to meet at the HIAS, same organization I mentioned a while ago. They had a building downtown in New York, and this is where all the newcomers used to meet at night. We needed each other's company, so we used to take subways or buses and go to HIAS. Some were happy, and some weren't. Some wanted to go back, as a matter of fact. But I don't know if anybody did go back,



but they did want to go back. And we used to ask each other, well, what are you doing, and somebody said he's working in a handbag factory. He said they were hiring "greenhorns", which is a person that has no knowledge, no background. And one other advantage they had was that they didn't have to pay us as much money as they would union members, and they took pretty good advantage of us. I went over there, and they hired me, twenty-five dollars a week, which was a lot of money to me in those days. At nights, I would go to school in New York, first night school, and then I started going in the afternoons. I was there for two years...no, not quite, maybe a year and a half. And I had a friend in Denver, Colorado, and he called me up one day and he said this is the place to go. I said what's Denver, Colorado, and he said, oh, it's so beautiful, the mountains, it's like back home. We used to live in a very similar area. We had the Carpathian Mountains. He said you will feel at home. I said that's awfully far, and I didn't want to go. He said, well come on out here, you'll see. So I had some money saved, and I went to Denver, Colorado. I took a train, and it took me about four days to get there. I fell in love with the city, absolutely in love with it. I started looking for a job. Back home we were in the shoe business, and I had a little background, not much, but I liked it. I saw it all my life when I was a kid, and we were in the business. I applied to work in a shoe store, and they told me they would like me to go to school and learn

English, although I spoke a little bit at the time. I said, well, I'm doing that, I enrolled yesterday. They said, oh, fine, so they hired me. I worked in the day and went to school at night. I was there for about four years, then I was transferred. The company I was working for transferred me to Albuquerque, New Mexico, and I was there for one year. They transferred me to Birmingham, Alabama, and I met my wife here, and so this is it.

Concerning Jewishness: as far as religion was concerned, I felt very little. I'm a traditionalist rather than a religious person. In other words, at home we set a typical Jewish table on Friday nights with the candles and everything, strictly because of tradition rather than religion. Now, it may be confusing to some people, but to me, it's not. I fast on Yom Kippur, but I only go to Temple maybe two or three times a year. Unfortunately, my wife tries to get me to go more often. Oh, maybe, I go a couple of times a year. Yes, the holidays, we don't work, the family is together on holidays. I grew up in that atmosphere, and I'd like to continue in that atmosphere. Again, as I say, I'm not a religious person at all. As a matter of fact, I have my doubts about a lot of things. Yes, I do want my kids to grow up in a Jewish traditional home.

Q. Do your children go to Sunday School?

A. Of yes, as a matter of fact, my son was bar-mitzvahed here in Birmingham. As a matter of fact, he used to



help out on Saturdays at the Reform temple after he had been bar-mitzvahed, reading the Torah. He reads Hebrew and everything. I have a fourteen year old daughter, who is in Sunday School; she goes on Sunday. Oh yes, as a matter of fact, if there is a program on television, something that has to do with Judaism, it is a must in our house. You have to sit down, whether you like it or not. Or if they commemorate something, the establishment of Israel, or the Holocaust or something, my kids have to go to the Jewish Community Center and sit through it, the ceremonies. They are the only kids there, but it's something...they go. They know it's something I expect them to do, and they do it. Maybe out of respect to me, I don't know, but they do it. We talk about it. They know my situation. They know what happened to me, and they ask me a lot of questions. Of course, they just can't comprehend; they can't conceive. Why, they keep asking, why? You know, it's hard to explain. Dave is fourteen or fifteen, but Steve is twenty. It's no problem with him. He was in Israel last year for two months, so there's no problem at all. But the little ones...but we are going to take them next year to Israel. Maybe that's going to help, and well, of course, they learn quite a bit in Sunday School. Surprisingly enough, the Reform Temple is very pro-Israeli. Not all Reform temples are, but this one happens to be. Rabbi Grafman takes groups to Israel. And Bamberger is very pro-Israeli, too. So that helps. It helps as far as the children are concerned.

Q. A few more questions. When you were in New York, did you have time for entertainment?

A. We attended the Yiddish theater. As a matter of fact, my friends and I had a group, there were boys and girls. We knew each other from back home, and many of them still live in New York. I see them when I go to New York. We attended the Yiddish theater, and we attended some other ethnic theaters, such as German or Hungarian, because we understood it. We didn't understand English, so we couldn't possibly attend an English speaking theater, but, of course, today is different.

Q. When did you become an American citizen?

A. I became an American citizen in, I think, it was 1954. I was in New Mexico, a very picturesque place.

Q. You rebelled?

A. I think I did, when I was thirteen, or maybe twelve. A lot of things bothered me that I could not understand. But you couldn't ask questions. We grew up in such an atmosphere where we as children didn't have the freedom to ask why. But yes, my children should ask me why. I'm a great believer in that. They need to know. But when I was growing up, it was oh, it's not for you to ask. We just followed orders, we were told to do it, and that's it. I didn't agree; I definitely didn't agree with it. Again, there was absolutely no question about it; you just followed your orders. Now it has nothing to do with how old you are; that



was a typical European Jewish upbringing in each home. As a matter of fact, you might think you were living in the Arab countries where the women had very little say-so. They were different; they didn't cover their faces, but in affairs you would think they were living in an Arab country. The male was the dominant person.

Q. Did girls go to school over there?

A. Girls did go to school, when you talk about public school. They were obligated, sure, like the boys were. As far as Hebrew school is concerned, some read Hebrew, some didn't. That was a matter of teaching them at home, and the only reason they didn't go is because they wouldn't mix the boys with the girls. They were segregated, you see. They had girls schools, yes, but not every girl went to Hebrew school. Every boy did. They had to to be called to the Torah. But the girls weren't allowed to be called to the Torah.

Concerning family life: well, they are definitely not as close here as they were over there, but then again we didn't question anything. For instance, if there was a Jewish holiday, the family would get together no matter what, whether you were in school or even if you were in the army. You could buy your way out for a few days, or if you were overseas or in another country, you always came home for the holidays. And here it isn't necessarily so. Now I would like for my daughters when they go off to school, I would certainly like them to come home. I know it can be done, and I like the

family together. But now I don't think you have the closeness not in the immediate family but such as in the cousins and uncles and aunts here as you have in Europe. We were much closer. Cousins in Europe were like brothers or sisters, and here I don't think so. As a matter of fact, I know it isn't so.

Q. It's more the nuclear family?

A. That's right. As a matter of fact, sometimes they don't hear from each other in years. I suppose, maybe every New Year, Rosh Hashanah, they send out a card or something. But, no, I don't think they are, not at all.