David P. Boder Interviews Jürgen Bassfreund; September 20, 1946; München, Germany

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- David Boder: [In English] This is Spool 9-137B—the beginning of the interview with Jürgen

Bassfreund, or as it's given "I Did Not Interview the Dead," Jorn Gastfreund. Boder.

- David Boder: Munich, Germany, September the 20th, 1946. The spool is at nine minutes. The interviewee is Mr. Jürgen Bassfreund, twenty-two years old.
- David Boder: [In German] Now, Jürgen, will you please tell me where were you born?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: I was born on the thirtieth, ninth, '23 in Bernjastel on the Mosel.
- David Boder: What does that mean on the thirtieth, ninth? The thirtieth of September?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: The thirtieth of September.
- David Boder: And what year?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: 1923.
- David Boder: Yes, and where?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: In Bernjastel on the Mosel; that is near Trier.
- David Boder: Then you are a German subject?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Oh yes, yes. I am a German citizen.
- David Boder: Will you then tell me what happened to you from the time Hitler came to power? Who were your parents?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: My father was a doctor of medicine, Manfred Bassfreund.
- David Boder: Where?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Also in Bernjastel. And my father had died a year before Hitler came to power, that is in the year of 1932.
- David Boder: 1932. How old were you then?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: I was eight years old when my father died.
- David Boder: And what was your mother doing? What was your mother's occupation?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: My mother had no profession. We lived from the money that my father has earned—our inheritance, and in the year 1933 we moved to Trier.
- David Boder: Trier?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes. That is about forty kilometers from Bernjastel.
- David Boder: Near what big city is Bernjastel?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Bernjastel is near Trier.
- David Boder: Trier is near what?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Trier belongs to the Rhine province of Koblenz.
- David Boder: Is that now in the American zone?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: No, that is in the French zone. It was very near to France. Very near to Luxembourg. I visited there twice.
- David Boder: Now tell me, Jürgen, how were things with you in the time of Hitler, before the war started?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: I was then admitted as the only Jewish child to the Gymnasium in Trier. And already then a certain military routine was adopted by the teachers in dealing with the children. When the teacher would enter in the morning he would greet the children at the door with "Heil Hitler," and the children had to respond with "Heil Hitler." Of course, I as a Jew did not do it.
- David Boder: You did not do it, or you were not permitted to do it?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: I was not permitted to do it. And, of course, I wouldn't have done it.
- David Boder: What do you mean of course? How old were you then?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: I knew already from my father that Hitler was coming to power. He himself broke up quite a few meetings. He threatened people with boycott, that the Jews will not trade with them, and since that region lives mainly from the sale of wine, many were impressed by his threats and would not permit the meetings to take place. In those times it was still possible, but after 1933 that would have been an impossibility.
- David Boder: What do you mean the meetings would not take place? To what meetings are you referring?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: The Nazi meetings, the aggression propaganda.

- David Boder: And these meetings were not permitted by other Germans?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes, because my father told them that the Jews will not trade with them, and since all these people trade in wine and the Jews were trading with these farmers a great deal, he threatened that he will tell them not to trade with them anymore if they should tolerate in their midst Nazi influence and Nazi propaganda.
- David Boder: And of course as you say, after 1933 that was not possible any more.
- Jürgen Bassfreund: After 1933 that was impossible. One knew that if one permits himself to say one word he will get into a concentration camp, or would be detained in some other way and everybody was very much afraid, and at any rate one could not dare to be conspicuous.
- David Boder: And in what year did your father die?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: He died in 1932.
- David Boder: And so you came to Trier. Now tell me how were you accepted in the Gymnasium as the only Jew?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Well, in those times a certain Jewish quota was still in force and a few could still be admitted to the Gymnasium and I don't know how large the quota was. At any rate it was so distributed over the three schools that I still could be admitted.
- David Boder: Did you have to pass an examination?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: I beg your pardon? Oh no, the regulations were such that if one had graduated from the elementary school one could be admitted directly to the Gymnasium and since my mother had in mind that I should become a physician I had to choose a humanistic curriculum such as Latin and the other subjects, you know. Already then things were very bad. One constantly was driven into conflicts with the Germans because the anti-Semitic propaganda was very intense, and of course, life became very hard. After a year I did not want to go anymore to such a school, and so I started pleading with my mother to send me to a Jewish school. My mother moved to Cologne. Here there was still a Jewish Real-gymnasium. And so we moved from Trier to Cologne and there I went to school.
- David Boder: Now tell me was that a Jewish Real-gymnasium from previous times? Was that Real-gymnasium already a Jewish School before Hitler?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes, yes, that was a Jewish Gymnasium already before Hitler's time.
- David Boder: And they permitted it to continue?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes, for the time being they permitted it to continue. How long it continued to exist I, of course, don't know.
- David Boder: Now tell me, how long were you in the Gymnasium in Cologne?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: I continued at the Gymnasium in Cologne until 1936.
- David Boder: How many grades did you go through?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: I went through to the fourth grade and from there I found myself in Coburg, in a Jewish boarding school.
- David Boder: Why did you leave Cologne?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Well, in Cologne we studied only French and English and I wanted very much to study Latin as well. And in Cologne one could not do that, and besides a Jewish boarding school had much more to offer. There we lead a Jewish life, and in general it was better there.
- David Boder: How many children did your parents have?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Well, besides me I have a sister who lives in England. She managed to get over to England shortly before the war, in 1939.
- David Boder: But at that time your sister was still over there.
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes, at that time my sister was still here.
- David Boder: Well, where did she go to school?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: My sister also went to the same school.
- David Boder: The boarding school?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: No, to the Gymnasium. That was a coeducational school, for girls and boys.

And afterwards my sister was transferred to a school of domestic science, a Jewish school.

- David Boder: To a Jewish school of domestic science. Well, continue. And did you complete the course of the Gymnasium in that boarding school?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: No. That time one could not graduate any more. At least it was very difficult. And since my mother was very apprehensive because Cologne was noted for its anti-Semitic mood she took me back to Coburg.
- David Boder: Was that in Gotha?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Oh, it was the Coburg, famous I think on account of the Hitler Putsch.
- David Boder: Was that near Munich?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Oh well, it is located not far from Eisenach in Franconia between Nuremberg and Eisenach.
- David Boder: Well, what happened to you afterwards?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: I was transferred from that school. I was already in the sixth grade and we moved to Berlin and I started to attend a trade school.
- David Boder: A Jewish school?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: A Jewish trade school.
- David Boder: Who maintained such a school?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: This trade school was supported by the Jewish community of Berlin. Since I always was interested in photography I took at the same time a course in photography which was also operated by the Jewish community in Berlin. In 1941 I was forcibly taken from school and was compelled to work in a factory. That was already the military labor service into which the Jews also were taken. I was assigned to a factory where I was working at shells and my mother was also working there, punching shells. In those times one could not escape work. It was compulsory and if one would try to avoid it, it was considered sabotage and one was consequently arrested, or, as it happened to many, one just disappeared.
- David Boder: Now tell me then what happened to your sister? Was she too working at the factory?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: No. Fortunately my sister managed to get over to England in 1939. That was arranged by my mother and wrote to England to a children's hospital and my sister was accepted as a baby nurse. My sister is two years older than I.
- David Boder: And she is now in England?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes, my sister is still in England?
- David Boder: And where is your mother?[long pause]
- Jürgen Bassfreund: My mother apparently is not alive any more. On the 27th of February, 1943 we were all at once taken away from work. I worked at that time on the railroad and the Hitler guard packed us into a truck and we were all driven to a distribution camp.
- David Boder: We will come to that later. From what year did you and your mother work in a factory?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: That started in 1941.
- David Boder: So in 1941 you and your mother started working in the factory. Did they pay for the work?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes, a little. The women were getting forty pfennigs an hour and I—I was still considered a juvenile—got something like forty-three or forty-four pfennigs an hour.
- David Boder: And you lived at home?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: I still lived at home.
- David Boder: You had an apartment. How big was your apartment?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: We had an apartment of three rooms. Three rooms and a kitchen. The situation became more and more acute and it started with the order to wear the Jewish star. It became dangerous to walk on the streets. Nazi agents, Gestapo agents would arrest Jews on the streets. For instance, I had a friend who worked with me. His father was arrested one evening. It was said that an attempt was made on a Nazi installation and these Jews—I think there were five hundred of

them, as far as I can remember—were all shot in the SS armory in Lichterfelde. And the relatives of these people were forcibly dragged away. They called it that time "evacuation." Only later we get to know what that really meant.

- David Boder: Didn't you know the truth at that time?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: No. And I have the impression that even the Jewish Community Council did not know because, even later when I was arrested, they supplied us with soap and pieces of clothing, since we were taken from work and we had nothing with us except the things on our body. And so the Jewish Community Council supplied us with some things and I think that if they had known where we were going they, of course, wouldn't have done that for us.
- David Boder: Well, possibly. Well, let's not discuss it . . . But as you say, the Jewish Community Council knew—well, they supplied you with a few things. Well, why were you picked up and taken away from your work?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Oh, that time they took everybody and it was a great "action." In Berlin nearly all Jews were at once arrested. Some forty Jews who worked nearby in the station were taken. We just didn't know what all at once what happened to us. All at once we were surrounded by the Elite Guard. We were trampled and kicked, loaded into trucks.
- David Boder: And where were you sent then?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: We were taken to a distribution camp which was just a building of the Jewish community. There they had mattresses and we had to spend there under guard three-four days. And again came the trucks, and again the guard took us to a far-outlying railroad depot. We were moved into railroad cars. The cars were locked and we were forewarned that if any one person should escape from the car the whole carload would be shot.
- David Boder: Now, wait a moment. Did your mother know you were arrested?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: No—I don't know. I myself don't know whether my mother was arrested.
- David Boder: I am asking whether your mother knew at the time that you were arrested.
- David Boder: No, because since that time I haven't seen my mother any more.
- David Boder: So from that time you haven't seen your mother any more?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: No.
- David Boder: No let's see. Where were you sent from this outlying railroad station? What was the name of that station?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: This was the freight station on Butlitz street and that time mostly Russian prisoners were shipped through that station. It was a railroad station on the far outskirts of Berlin located across the street from a big Thyssen war plant.
- David Boder: Well. And how many people were loaded into one railroad car?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: At that time we were about fifty people to a car. Women, men and children all together. The doors were locked. We left at about five o'clock in the afternoon and next evening about half past ten we arrived in Auschwitz.
- David Boder: Did they feed you?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Well, the Jewish Community Council had supplied us with bread and a container of water.
- David Boder: So the Jewish community knew that you were sent away?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Of course the Jewish Community Council knew.
- David Boder: Why is that so "of course"?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes, they knew that when we were put on trains we were going to be sent away. They only didn't know where we were being sent to.
- David Boder: And so the Jewish Community supplied you with food. What did they give you?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Well, they gave us that time six slices of bread with margarine and cheese.
- David Boder: That was all. What did you drink?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: In each car they placed a can with water. A large vessel, and the cars were locked.

- David Boder: What kind of cars were they?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: The usual cars for transport.
- David Boder: They were freight cars?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes, freight cars.
- David Boder: Did you have a toilet?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: No, we had no toilet and during the day it became a very acute problem, because due to the excitement many people had to use the toilet but there wasn't any. We had a kind of a dish pan in the car and it was very uncomfortable and the air became bad.
- David Boder: And there were women and children and men altogether.
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Women and children and men altogether.
- David Boder: You say there were fifty of you at the railroad station, at work. Were all the people in the car arrested there?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: No, by that time there were all kinds of people in the railroad cars. The men were compelled to give the addresses of their wives because they presumably had to know where they were going and then the women were fetched from the homes by the police. And now I have forgotten something that I consider very important. Before being sent away we had to sign affidavits that we have to leave Germany on account of our disloyalty and hostility to Germany.
- David Boder: And that you had to sign?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: That we had to sign.
- David Boder: Your mother worked with you at the factory.
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes, but afterwards I was sent to the railroad.
- David Boder: Oh, you were sent to work on the railroad.
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes, I was sent to the railroad and my mother remained working in the factory.
- David Boder: And that is why your mother was not taken from the factory when you were taken.
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Still there was an "action" on that day and all working Jews were taken away. I think that happened all over Berlin.
- David Boder: And so you arrived in Auschwitz? Well, what happened there?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: In Auschwitz we were disembarked from the cars.
- David Boder: The whole train?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: The whole train. We were a thousand people.
- David Boder: Well, how do you happen to know the number?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Well, there was such a rumor, and moreover seeing the number of people standing before each car one can estimate that there were a thousand people.
- David Boder: Go on.
- Jürgen Bassfreund: And we were driven out of the cars by SS men who in addition to their firearms were armed with walking sticks and they just started clubbing us and the women were compelled to go over to one side and the men to the other side and we were separated. There were screams and wails which were terrible to listen to and which one cannot describe. I shall never forget those screams.
- David Boder: Why did they start screaming? Were these women the wives of the men?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Oh, certainly. There were many couples, and then it was so that the men had the children in their arms and the women were compelled to take the children from the men. In the crowd and in the dark they were unable to find their wives, and that is why the screams were so terrible, and possibly the people had a premonition of what is going to happen to them. Well, I was among the men and an SS man asked me whether I was in good health, and I replied "yes," so he told me that I must go to the "other" side. And on the other side there stood old and feeble men and mostly women and children and all kind of elderly people. Much later we learned that these women and elderly people were taken to be gassed. It also appeared strange to me.
- David Boder: Did you go over to the other side?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: I went to the right side. I couldn't understand what it all meant. I looked around

and I saw the turrets all manned by guards, SS guards with machine guns and at a distance I saw great fires. I didn't know what that was. Only later I learned that these were crematories of Auschwitz and all these masses of people were gassed and burned.

- David Boder: So you were put on the "other" side as a weak person?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: No, I was assigned to the side where the workers were located.
- David Boder: But the SS man said you were not strong enough.
- Jürgen Bassfreund: No, he asked me whether I was in good health. I said "yes" and then I had to go to the right side where the ones fit for work were lined up. And then we were loaded on big trucks and taken to Buna. You see Buna is an auxiliary concentration camp of Auschwitz and is located about seven kilometers away from Auschwitz. At that time the I. G. Farben planned to install there a factory of synthetic rubber and gasoline, and we were assigned to this work. First of all, that night when we arrived we were again beaten and then we had to stand there until five in the morning.
- David Boder: Why were you beaten?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Why? Most people didn't know why. There was a so-called trusty who was one of the first prisoners of the lager. He was a professional criminal.
- David Boder: Was that a Jew?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: No, that was not a Jew. And he beat the people indiscriminately. For example, I still remember that the father of one of my friends was pushed by him towards an open stove and he burned a big hole into his legs.
- David Boder: Was that a hot stove?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes.
- David Boder: In what month was that?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: That was in February. Then we were led to the bathing room. There we had to bathe with ice cold water and they cut our hair. That was done by prisoners.
- David Boder: How did they cut your hair?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: With a shearing machine, very short.
- David Boder: From the whole body?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: From the whole body. We were submitted to what they called a delousing process. They cut our hair, we were rubbed with kerosene, we had to take a cold shower, we had to walk naked across the yard, and take another cold shower and again we went naked across the yard and then we were given a damp shirt that came just from the laundry. It was all wet, and we were given the prisoner's coat and pants and pull-over [he uses the English term].
- David Boder: Was it a warm one?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: That differed. Some of them were thin, some were heavy. That depended on how lucky a fellow was.
- David Boder: Were the things new?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: No, the things were all worn and they were taken from the previous transport as was customary in general in Auschwitz. The things belonged to those who were taken to the gas chambers and the like. You see we had to leave all our things at the station.
- David Boder: And the things the Community Council had given you?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Oh yes, we had to leave them too at the station. Nobody was permitted to take anything with him. There were people who were not sent away by surprise, who were found at home. They were permitted to take with them their things, but of course they never saw their things again because the things were all taken away and if somebody would try to take something with him he was beaten in addition, and it was advisable to run away from the things as soon as possible before an SS man could notice anything.
- David Boder: Did you have any money with you?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes, I had some money with me. Of course, it wasn't much. I had fifty marks. I also had a ring on my finger and that was taken off immediately by an SS man. And so when I was

sent to the lager we had to register. We were tattooed with the Auschwitz numbers. I was given the number 106,377.

- David Boder: Now let me read that, there is a one, zero,
- Jürgen Bassfreund: 106,377.
- David Boder: 77, and what does that triangle mean?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: The triangle was added later and that means a Jew.
- David Boder: How much later?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: That was done three months after I arrived to the lager. It possibly was done for precaution, or they wanted to be sure who was a Jew and who wasn't a Jew, because the Polish prisoners and the foreign workers were also tattooed and so they wanted to mark the Jews distinctly.
- David Boder: So the Polish and foreign workers were also tattooed?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: And so were we, and later we were marked with the triangle to know that we were Jews. And then we were sent to work, already the next morning. Many attempted to commit suicide. They would run out of the formation and would be shot. Their number was then written on their stomach with an indelible pencil and later these people were picked up by a truck.
- David Boder: What were they writing on their stomachs?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: The same number that they had on their arms, with an indelible pencil, and then the people were loaded on trucks and transported to the crematories. I was assigned to a gang that was in charge of carrying cement. We had to work without stopping even if somebody's pants would slide down and of course the pants were not fitting well. In most cases people had pants that were too big for them. Others had pants that were too tight for them. We couldn't pull up our pants and there was always a capo who would beat us with an iron rod as soon as one would make an attempt to rest or to interrupt the work. And at twelve o'clock noon we were given a soup, water with some kind of leaves in it, I don't know what it was. It appeared impossible to eat and we had to eat the soup standing up. Barely had we eaten our soup, and the "dinner hour" was over, because it was a big crew. There were about eight hundred people and we had to proceed with our work.
- David Boder: And in what year was that?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: It was in 1943, in February.
- David Boder: And where did you go from Auschwitz?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: At first I was in the auxiliary lager [Buna] and in June I was transferred to the main Auschwitz lager.
- David Boder: In 1943.
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes, in June, 1943, I was transferred to the main lager of Auschwitz. And in this main lager of Auschwitz one was near to everything. One knew what was going on, while in the auxiliary lager we knew nothing. We knew that people were taken away in trucks. We were told they were taken to other lagers. But nobody knew exactly what was happening to them. Only later in Auschwitz I learned how these things were proceeding. For instance, people were sick. They were in the sick-barracks. Their names were taken down supposedly because they were to be given more bread, on account of their poor state of health. That was not so. The next day they would be loaded on trucks and taken to the gas chambers. There they were gassed and the next day the clothing that these people were wearing was already back in the laundry. It was in this manner that I recognized the clothes of one of my colleagues who came with me from Berlin. His number was marked on the clothes.
- David Boder: So where did you go from Buna?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: From Buna I came to Auschwitz, the main lager. We were transferred that time by truck. We were seven people altogether, and we were taken for the simple reason that they asserted I was too weak. We came into the so-called sick people's building and we were told that we should try to get out of there as quick as possible so that we should not get into the gas chambers, because fortnightly transports were taken from Auschwitz. Sometimes even oftener.

- David Boder: What did they tell you to do?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: I was told [he doesn't say whether by prisoners or by guards] that I should report as soon as possible for work in order to escape being gassed. I acted accordingly. I immediately reported that I feel well again and that I want to return to work. And on the strength of that report they released me from the sick-barracks and I was assigned to a carpenter shop. This carpentry shop was located between Auschwitz and Birkenau. And Birkenau was the camp where the crematories were located. In the beginning we worked nights and soon my friends and I would climb up at twelve at night into the upper story of the carpenter shop and from there we could see how the fires were burning, since the crematories were not of sufficient capacity . . . [spool ends in mid-sentence]
- David Boder: [In English] Munich, September the 20th, 1946 in a transient camp of UNRRA in the Funkenkaserne. We continue with the interview of Jürgen Bassfreund, which we started on Spool 137, interrupted by the songs of the Mennonites, and now from . . . and now from eighteen minutes of Spool 138 we begin again.
- David Boder: [In German] And so, Jürgen, at first you have been doing construction work. Is that so? And then you were transferred to a fishery. [He apparently made the remark about the fishery while the spools were being changed.]
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes.
- David Boder: For some time you were weak and then you were afraid that on account of this weakness you may be killed; and so you returned to work.
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes.
- David Boder: Go ahead.
- Jürgen Bassfreund: And so in September, 1942, around the time when Italy capitulated, and the Fascist system had broken down, the anger of the Nazis became very great and immediately they assembled a large transport to be gassed, and to this transport I also was assigned. But I extricated myself by a trick. The transport had to leave after the daily appell—which usually occurred in the evening—that is after work when a count was taken daily to see whether some people had disappeared, have gone astray or have run away. And when these reports—as they were called in the concentration camp—were transmitted to the "Obersturmführer", the commander of the lager, I simply marched off to work instead of the gas killing for which I was assigned.
- David Boder: At night?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes, I worked at night in the fishery; they had a day shift and a night shift.
- David Boder: But to what were you assigned? What were you told you were assigned for?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Well, they told me that a transport is being formed for weak people to go to another lager where there is lighter work. But that was incorrect. At my bunk—we had three-level-high bunks—at my bunk there was a cross mark made with chalk—that this bed—well, meaning that I am occupying this bed, and that I am being assigned for this transport. I saved myself by going that night to work. When I returned next morning to the lager this whole transport was already gas-killed [vergast] and their clothing was already back for the laundry according to custom. In this way I had saved my life because otherwise I too would have been on this transport.
- David Boder: Did the people at work know that you did not belong there anymore?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Of course, it was known, but I did it in collusion with the capo.
- David Boder: You mean the capo knew about it?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes, the capo knew about it, and I—
- David Boder: Was the capo a Jew?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: No, the capo was not a Jew. The capo was a German. He even was a professional criminal [BVer] But at times he showed some very good traits. And . . .
- David Boder: Did you give him something for it?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: No, I gave him nothing. I couldn't give him anything because I was not in a position to do so—because I always belonged to the lower strata in the lager—because there were

in the lager, exactly like outside, also different strata. Here were the capos and the block elders who had everything in abundance, you see? Because they did chicanery and betrayed us to the SS as it happened in many cases. And then there were the others, the block clerks, who were with them "under the same blanket," and they, of course, had a good life. And then there was a stratum of workers to which we belonged who in effect lived only from what was given to them, which was that piece of bread—those two slices of dry bread and the soup. That was all—

- David Boder: Go ahead.
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Now I want to tell you how afterwards, when the armies of the Russians were already approaching, we were transported from Auschwitz to Dachau, and that is interesting because this was the greatest torture of all we had undergone in the lager. We were accustomed to a lot, but this was the worst and probably most of the people have lost their lives.
- David Boder: From Auschwitz to Dachau?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: From Auschwitz to Dachau.
- David Boder: Will you please tell us about this trip in all the details?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes, I will narrate it with all the details. And so, on the 18th of January . . .
- David Boder: What year?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: 1945. We saw already the flare bombs going off at the front. You see the front was not far from us. You see Cracow was within sixty kilometers from us and rumors trickled through that the Russians were already in Cracow. Now, all at once, we were all put to transport. In the morning a transport had left already. We still had to work during the day, and we returned in the evening to the lager. We were the last ones to go to transport. It was very cold that day. We were given some food to take with us and then sent on the march. We first marched through the night, for hours.
- David Boder: That was in January?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes. And arrived in Pless. En route many, many people were shot who could not keep up. Those who stopped, everyone who would fall on the road, was shot, no difference whether it was a man or a woman. You see, we left after the women, and we overtook them, and we saw en route many dead bodies of women lying on the ground. We marched at night and we had to rest during the day, so that the people should not see us being led through, and evenings when it was dark we marched on again.
- David Boder: That was in January?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes, it was in January. It snowed; it was very cold. It was a real snowstorm; one couldn't keep his eyes open.
- David Boder: What kind of clothing did you wear?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: We had nothing else but our usual clothes. Many had very bad shoes. You see it was this way. Those who left first were able to pick out better things but we who went with the last transport, got only things that were left over. That is, we could take them. There was no more order in the lager. The SS was in retreat. Everything was being evacuated. The stables of the SS, the precious saddle horses, all were en route already, and we marched through Pless and arrived in a small town in Silesia called Loslau and there we were "wagonized" [put into railroad cars] We departed to Gross-Rosen. That was also a well-known concentration camp, in which there were very many professional criminals. And there we remained.
- David Boder: Near what city is Gross-Rosen?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Gross-Rosen is apparently near Breslau. I don't know exactly but it is somewhere in that district, and we got into that lager. We were shoved into barracks. There was an immense crowd of people. One couldn't sleep nights. We were simply all sitting up and leaning against each other, and when one just barely moved or made an attempt to walk around, there appeared immediately a BVer with a big club and began to strike indiscriminately into the crowd. It was terrible. And then the second day we were told that a transport is getting ready. I quickly volunteered for it because I thought that it can't be worse than in this lager. We were getting very

little food, a very thin watery soup, and even the customary turnips were often missing, and a piece of bread. Then we were sent away. It leaked out that this transport was going to Dachau. We stepped forward, we were given a plate of soup, and accompanied by SS we were sent to the station and were loaded into wagons. They were in part gondolas, in part closed cars. We thought that the closed cars were better, but later it resulted that we were worse off . . .

- David Boder: [In English] Alright, continue.
- Jürgen Bassfreund: [In German] We were standing at the cars and soon the SS drove us into the cars, 120 people into each car. It was just impossible—
- David Boder: You, yourself, were in a closed car?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes, in a closed car. The doors were shut. We had no food with us, and now we tried to sit down. When eighty people sat down the others had no place where to stand, and there were many people who were very tired. It was not possible otherwise; one stood "over" another. We trampled on other people's fingers, and these people, of course, resisted and were striking at others, and so a panic ensued. It was so terrible that people went crazy during the trip and soon we had the first death among us. And we didn't know where to put the dead—on the floor they were taking up space—because they had to lie stretched out. And there it occurred to us—we had a blanket with us, so we wrapped the dead man into the blanket, and there were two iron bars in the car and so we tied him on above us.
- David Boder: Like a hammock?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes, like in a hammock. But soon we understood that that won't do because we had more and more dead due to the heat in the car, and the bodies began to smell. And that is how we were travelling. There were the German troop transports retreating from the front because the front was receding, and they had to retreat further. All the tracks were blocked and we had to stand for days to let the troop transports through first, and at night one could not see a thing. And one was beaten and trampled. In my case it was so that my trousers, my prisoner's trousers, were torn longwise and I couldn't wear my trousers any more. And I remained in my underpants. And so without any nourishment, without a drop of water, and there was snow outside, the SS gave us nothing. And we—there was a mass of insane and dead people in the car and after continuous travelling for five days we arrived in Regensburg. And it was already night and the SS opened the doors and said if we throw out the dead bodies we shall get some food. And so I myself, together with a friend, removed twenty-five dead bodies from this car and laid them outside in the snow, you see? And then we were given a piece of bread and a little beaker of soup. The Red Cross had there their feeding point so we had to line up before the cars and each was given some, car after car.
- David Boder: Where did you get the beakers from?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: The beakers—they were supplied by the Red Cross. They were such paper beakers that were given to us. And after we had eaten it . . .
- David Boder: Oh, was that the German Red Cross?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes, that was the German Red Cross. After we have consumed it, we had to get back into the cars and so I was in my underpants and in the snow. I had no more socks on, and I don't know what the people there may have thought—those sisters [nurses] but at any rate we traveled on.
- David Boder: Couldn't you get yourself another pair of pants?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: No, that was impossible unless I would have taken them from a dead man. But one was so exhausted from the long trip, if one hasn't eaten anything for five days and nights. I have been standing all the way during this trip and I saved my life only because I had fastened to the car a piece of rope and held on tight. It was indeed utterly impossible. For instance, a friend of mine who withstood all these years in Auschwitz, went insane during the trip and attempted to attack us with a knife and four of us, even five, had to hold him, otherwise he would have killed somebody. It was decidedly a panic. We always were afraid of the night because at night we

couldn't see when one approached the other. The whole car was in a tumult, and we heard later when we arrived in Dachau that in the open cars it was the same. At least there they had air, but part of the people froze [to death]. And when we arrived in Dachau there were more dead bodies than survivors. It were the younger people who withstood it. In Dachau itself I was altogether three weeks. I still want to tell you that in Dachau raged at my time the great epidemic of spotted typhus, and entire barracks were dying out. In the morning the dead were put on hay-carts, one with the head on this side, the other with the feet on this side—loaded on the hay wagons and driven for cremation. I don't know today, myself, how the epidemic of spotted typhus had spared us, because around our barracks, in front and on the sides there were barracks with spotted typhus—it was terrible. Most of the people have tried to wash themselves as often as possible during the day to escape this epidemic because there were swarms of lice at that time in Dachau. And three weeks later, after we marched past the commandant of the lager of Dachau, he made the selection, who goes to transport and who remains in the block of invalids. And I myself chose to go to transport.

- David Boder: And what was this transport?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: The transport went to a lager called Mühldorf. Mühldorf is a locality near Rosenheim. It is seventy-eight kilometers from Munich in upper Bavaria. When we arrived in Mühldorf we saw a lager of the kind we have not seen in Auschwitz. It really was not a lager at all. There were only round paper tents—the so-called Finnish tents. And most of the blocks lay half underground. Water was available at this lager only every four or five days. We were guarded by SS and at work by the Organization Tot [Death]. These were . . .
- David Boder: The Organization Tot? Who were they?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes. They were men in brown uniforms with swastika arm bands and did as much chicanery as the SS. There was not difference.
- David Boder: And what kind of work were you doing there?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: There we had to carry cement. There was some construction going on—they intended to build an airport. At this airport the work was proceeding in three shifts. And the people received—after the Russians had occupied large districts of Germany—like upper Silesia and others—naturally there came about another reduction in rations. We were then given only one loaf of bread for eight people and that was of course very little. We were given one slice of bread a day per person.
- David Boder: Where was that bread baked?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: The bread was baked in Mühldorf, in part by bakers and I believe there was also a bakery in the lager. And I remember that during an air attack this bread depot was set afire and for four days we didn't get any bread at all, just three or four boiled potatoes. I still remember that. And the conditions in Mühldorf were catastrophic. People were covered with lice. We received no underwear to change. The people who arrived at the lager from as far as Warsaw did not receive for months fresh underwear. There were no towels. If one wanted to wash himself he had to dry himself with his only shirt. And it was very difficult to keep clean because in the lugging of cement one would get completely white, and it was very difficult to endure, since water was available only once in four or five days. Typhus began to rage on a large scale, and I was also struck.
- David Boder: Was it spotted typhus or intestinal typhus?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Spotted typhus, from lice, from those clothes lice. And I was lying for four or five days with spotted typhus. We were lying there two in one bed—we had no undershirts. We were lying naked in the beds—it was very cold at that time but we knew already that the end will come soon, because daily we saw numerous American planes and one did not hear anymore the shooting of the Germans. The defense was not active anymore. And with longing we were expecting daily, the advent of liberation. And the 2nd of May we could hear already the shooting. Some people were telling that the SS had gone, but I myself was unable to know it because I was lying in fever. At any rate I know that on the 2nd of May, all at once in the morning, the first

American entered the lager.

- David Boder: In what lager was it?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: In Mühldorf. Mühldorf at Ampfing. And two hours after we were loaded into automobiles of the Red Cross and transported to Ampfing; that is a little place next to this lager. We were placed in the houses of the Organization Tot and were well taken care of.
- David Boder: Right next to the lager?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: And we were given food and it was very good . . . [ends abruptly]
- David Boder: [In English] With exception of a half a sentence, this record is complete—we simply let this spool overrun that time in the Funkenkaserne. Eh, one has to check up whether the next spool has the ending of it—there is a previous spool that has Jürgen Bassfreund's story. Whether we have gone over to another one, I will have to check. This final remark was made December the 13, 1946 at my home, while analyzing the records. December 13, 1946. It's a remark made in Chicago, not in Munich.
- Herman Barnett: Spool 29— . . . Spool 139, recording starts in about one minute. Spool 139, recording starts in about one minute. This is Hermann Barnett.
- David Boder: Spool 139, continuation of Spool 138 and 137. We have Jürgen Bassfreund continuing his report. Munich, September the 20th, 1946. Rather late in the evening at the camp for displaced people . . . managed by the UNRRA.
- David Boder: [In German] And so you contracted typhus and after liberation you were removed by the Red Cross to another hospital.
- Jürgen Bassfreund: And there we were very well taken care of. The Americans cared for us very, very well. The medical treatment was excellent. We were given blood transfusions. I weighed at the time I was liberated from the camp sixty-four pounds [could he mean sixty-four kilograms?].Boder's question reveals the general lack of awareness of the conditions within the camps that existed at the time. Sixty-four kilograms (about 140 pounds) would have been an impossible weight for anyone who had spent as much time in the camps as Bassfreund.[1] We were given glucose injections and vitamin tablets. They cared for us very well. We got very good food. And fourteen days after getting up, I suffered a relapse and had to go to bed again. But now it was an entirely different story. While in the lager we didn't receive any medicine or any means for prevention of disease, here spotted typhus was treated altogether differently. We were given tablets, we were examined by the physician three, four times a day, our temperature was being measured, and so it was no wonder that we soon recuperated, and I may say in general that, of the people who were liberated by the Americans only a few died afterwards. There were, of course, some special cases. There were people so weak that no help could do them any good, but as a rule most of us got well and after about three months in this hospital we were discharged.
- David Boder: Would you please give me a more detailed description of the hospital conditions in the lager before liberation. You had typhus.
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes.
- David Boder: Describe the room in which you were lying and so on.
- Jürgen Bassfreund: We were lying in a round tent, and in this tent the beds were mounted in three levels one over the other. We were lying two in each bed. And it was very unpleasant. For example, if one would die he could not be removed before twenty-four hours had elapsed because the block trusty wanted, of course, to get the bread ration and the soup which was allotted to this person, and for this reason the dead person would be reported dead only twenty-four hours later so that his ration would still be allotted. And so we had to lie all that time in bed together with the dead person.
- David Boder: You said we. Did that really happen to you personally?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes. That happened once to me personally, when I had to lie in bed a whole day with a dead Frenchman. And he died that time from intestinal typhus, from diarrhea, and I had to lie with him a whole day.

- David Boder: And on what level was your bunk?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: We were on the middle level. And that was a very gruesome situation. Especially at night. First of all the dead men were badly emaciated and they look terrible. In most cases they would soil themselves at the moment of death and that was not a very aesthetic event. I saw such cases very frequently in the lager, in the sick-barracks. People who died from phlegmonous, suppurative wounds, with their beds ever-flowing with pus, lying together with somebody whose illness was possibly more benign, who had possibly just a small wound, and would now become infected. And that was the situation in the lager. And sometimes a physician would happen to make a round in the morning. He would come without any drugs or instruments. With plain scissors large suppurative wounds would be opened and with the same scissors without previously cleaning them he would attend another patient who had possibly just a small wound. Bandages were almost non-existent. The bandages were of paper and they would last a maximum of an hour. There were no tablets at all at the end.
- David Boder: To what kind of tablets are you referring?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Remedies against fever such as aspirin and the like. We did not have such things at all and the more we were surrounded [by the Allied troops] the more catastrophical the situation became. At the end things became totally disorganized in the lager. The conditions became so catastrophic that we were not given any more food. The SS got busy with their getaway, trying to escape before the Americans arrived. A special German police was put on the watch towers and then the stores of supplies were looted by the prisoners.
- David Boder: You mean when the Germans departed?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes, when the SS departed, while the Americans had not yet arrived.
- David Boder: What did you do with the loot?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Well, they ate it. People were completely famished and a piece of bread was a great delicacy. These famished people could loot something from the remaining stores, but we the sick were unable to get up and we got nothing.
- David Boder: Now tell me, how long did that interim situation last?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: From the time that the SS departed until the arrival of the Americans? I couldn't tell you that exactly because I was lying sick with fever. According to my estimates it must have been a day or two.
- David Boder: Did a physician remain with you?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes, there were some Jewish doctors, so called doctors-prisoners. They remained there. The Nazis intended to drag away "on transport" all those who were able to walk at all so that they should not fall into American hands. I recently met here at the Funkenkaserne a friend who was there with me. He told me that they went through an awful lot. They were embarked into trains and the SS told them they may run away because the Americans were already near, and while they were running they started to shoot them in the back and they were again rounded up, again embarked in railroad cars and driven away for some distance. Then the SS fled and the Americans didn't know who were on the train and there was still a dive bomber attack that cost the lives of a large number of prisoners and from all I heard it was a catastrophic event. At first it was ordered that the sick be shot, but then the lager commander got scared, because at this "late" hour he was afraid to comply with the order, and we simply remained lying there.
- David Boder: And so after the relapse you remained in the American hospital for about three months, and what happened then?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: After three months we had to leave that lager. We came to Munich and from Munich we tried to get home. We provided ourselves with passports from the military government. For instance I formerly lived in Berlin, and I wanted to return to Berlin to see whether my parents, whether my mother was still alive, but I finally refrained from doing so because it was very complicated and the means of communication were bad. So I remained in Bavaria.
- David Boder: Now tell me, what do you know about your mother?

- Jürgen Bassfreund: I really know nothing about my mother. I know that she did not return from the concentration camp.
- David Boder: Do you know that she was sent away?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes. That I know.
- David Boder: Who told you that?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: That was told to me by a Jewish girl who had a Christian mother who was also in the distribution lager and has seen my mother, and then was liberated because her mother was a Christian and she was not considered full Jewish, which saved her from deportation.
- David Boder: Did you try to write to Berlin or to contact any organizations?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes, of course, I contacted the Jewish community in Berlin since the present director of the Community Council was a former prisoner, who was together with me in the lager. Then I was informed that my mother neither has arrived there nor was she in any way registered there and one would have to assume that she is not alive anymore; because I am pretty sure that if my mother would have been alive she would not have left a stone unturned to find me. At least my sister in England would have received some word from her.
- David Boder: Do you correspond with your sister.
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes. I correspond with my sister, and my sister has written to me—of course at the beginning she did not know my address. It took a long time before we found each other.
- David Boder: Did you know the address of you sister?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes, I knew her old address, but things have changed since then. My sister had entered service with the English army and was sent to London and my letters which I sent to Newcastle came back undelivered. Subsequently, I made the acquaintance of an American soldier who had relatives in Newcastle and he re-established our contact. He found out that my sister wasn't there any more, that she was in London. Then I found my sister in London.
- David Boder: Have you seen her?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: No. I had no chance to see her.
- David Boder: You were unable to go to London?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: No, I could not go.
- David Boder: And you are leaving now without having seen your sister?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: I am going now to America and my sister has written to me that it is better for me to go to America because as she writes, things are very hard for her in spite that she has become a British citizen; and the conditions of immigration are not good, and it is harder to get into England than into the United States.
- David Boder: And so, you made contact with your sister. Tell me now, where were you since your discharge from the hospital until you arrived here in the UNRRA distribution camp.
- Jürgen Bassfreund: I left immediately for Fürth. In Fürth I had an aunt who was a teacher and I hoped she still might be alive. But then I was informed by eye-witnesses that she was shot in Riga.
- David Boder: In Riga? How did she get to Riga?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: My aunt was sent to Riga already in 1941. It was one of these deportation transports and shortly after in Riga the people were shot, mostly elderly people and the like and my aunt was among them. That I was told. And so I did not find my aunt. I was eager to remain in the American zone of occupation and so I remained in Fürth. Through the efforts of the Jewish community I was given a room, and from there I wrote to my relatives in America and picked up again my contacts. And I was fortunate to receive an affidavit from my uncle, and am able to stay here at the Funkenkaserne while waiting for the opportunity to embark. I decided that it may be the right thing to learn something while waiting because during these years of constant change one had to chance to apply himself to anything, and I took a job as an operator in a motion picture house.
- David Boder: What kind of motion picture house?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: A motion picture house for civilians that belonged to a Jew who was also in a concentration camp.

- David Boder: Where was that?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: In Fürth, and there I learned the job. I thought of course that it is better if one is able to do something so he should not have to depend on his relatives, so that he be able to support himself if only in a modest way.
- David Boder: Now tell me, how did you find your relatives. Did you know their addresses?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: No, of course they escaped my memory, but my sister has written to me from England and then I wrote myself. My sister also gave me the address of an old friend of hers who already in 1936 or 1937 emigrated to the United States and who was now employed in Frankfurt in the information control division, and her sister who also was here in the army of occupation went to my relatives, and described my situation.
- David Boder: You mean upon their return to America?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes. And she apparently took some necessary steps. At any rate, shortly after her arrival [in the U.S.] I received word from Frankfurt through the HIAS [Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, a Jewish-American immigrant aid service] that an affidavit has arrived for me, and four or five weeks later I was called to the Funkenkaserne.
- David Boder: Who summoned you to the Funkenkaserne?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: The UNRRA headquarters.
- David Boder: The UNRRA headquarters, so they got word that you are able to go to America?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes. It happened this way. I went through an examination of the CIC—the Counter-Intelligence-Corps. And one is being examined and one has to fill out a questionnaire whether one is not politically objectionable; after these formalities referring to immigration the papers are sent to the Consulate and the Consul notifies the Funkenkaserne, to summon the person to this camp.
- David Boder: They called you from Fürth. How far is Fürth from here?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Well, I couldn't tell you exactly in kilometers, but by train it is about three hours.
- David Boder: And who took care of your travel expenses? From Fürth to Munich?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Well, that I paid for myself from the money I earned in the motion picture house.
- David Boder: And you have an uncle in Atlanta. What is he doing there?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: My uncle is a florist. He has a garden and a flower shop.
- David Boder: And you are going directly to him?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes. Well, I first want to visit my cousin in New York.
- David Boder: What is he doing there?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: My cousin works for the Jewish telegraph agency and he is about ten years with them; and it is of course obvious that passing through New York I should visit him.
- David Boder: Do you know already some English?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes. I learned a bit during this time. We had courses. There were some Americans who were greatly interested in us.
- David Boder: Where?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: In Fürth there was among others a teacher who worked at the courthouse in Nuremberg. You see Fürth is a suburb of Nuremberg and he would manage to find time in the evening to teach us English and we diligently studied there. So far I don't know very much but at any rate I know the fundamentals and that is much better than . . .
- David Boder: Did you have any contact after your liberation with real Germans?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes. I had contacts with Christians and I must tell you that these people have almost no understanding for our situation. When you tell some people that you are coming from a concentration camp they say, "Well my relatives were killed by bombs and that is just as bad." And then there are others who say that they didn't know what was going on in the concentration camps and if they would have known they couldn't say anything anyway, because they would have been

afraid that they themselves could be taken to concentration camps. There are quite divergent viewpoints. I must tell you, however, that one hears but very rarely an admission on part of the Germans that these things were wrong.

- David Boder: As far as you understand it, what do the Germans expect in the future? How do the Germans appraise the whole situation?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: That is hard to tell. The Germans believe that the Americans will build them up again. For instance I have heard quite often the opinion: "Well, you are a Jew; you are going now to America; see to it that the Jews from America should come here and revive our trade." And these are their naive and childish views. At least a large part of them think so. And they cannot understand that Germany now doesn't mean anything to us in spite of the fact that we are born there. It is clear that in a country where one has been deprived of everything—first of his parents, a loss that is of course irreparable, if one has lost them, one cannot have any sentiment for such a country.
- David Boder: Now tell me to the best of your knowledge: did some German Jews return, did some German Jews return and take up residence and resumed doing business here or have taken up their trade?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: I can tell you that there are only very, very few who resumed their trade or for example have opened up again their motion picture houses. The percentage of such people is very small. And most of them with whom I have talked say they are doing it only temporarily. Only in order to be able to support themselves here and they are trying to get away from here as soon as possible.
- David Boder: Now tell me, for example, the man in whose picture house you were working, where was he during the war?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: He too was in a concentration camp.
- David Boder: And who had that movie house during that time?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: The theater belonged to a former Nazi and it was taken away from him. Because that man was for such a long time in a concentration camp he was given this movie house by the American military government and by the communication service.
- David Boder: You mean they returned it to him.
- Jürgen Bassfreund: No, it did not belong to him before. He lived before in Breslau. He subsequently came to Bavaria and here they gave him this movie house.
- David Boder: Then it was not his theater.
- Jürgen Bassfreund: No, it was not his theater.
- David Boder: Then how come they gave it to him?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: That I really don't know.
- David Boder: Then this motion picture house wasn't taken away from him at one time.
- Jürgen Bassfreund: No.
- David Boder: They simply gave him this motion picture house so that he will be able to make a living?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: They gave theaters not only to Jews. They gave some to the Gentiles too. There was in Fürth for instance a lady who lived for a number of years in America and she worked for a time as an interpreter with the military government and she too got a motion picture house, at least as a trustee as they call it.
- David Boder: As a manager?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes.
- David Boder: Is she an American woman or a German?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: No, she is a German woman.
- David Boder: And how do other people get their businesses back? Have some professional people started to practice? Some lawyers, physicians?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Well, as far as I know the situation I wouldn't be able to name you a single one.

It is possible that there are some in Munich but in our city it was not the case.

- David Boder: Did the Jewish community come back into existence? For instance did they open the synagogues?
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Oh, yes. In Fürth they reopened the synagogue and the American chaplains were especially instrumental in this activity. The rabbis of the American army have contributed a lot through gifts of money. They did not spare any effort to make it possible that Hebrew books came back again, also the Torah scrolls were again placed in the synagogues.
- David Boder: Well, you are now almost an American.
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Unfortunately, not altogether yet.
- David Boder: Well, you soon will be across. Let me give you some good advice. Don't let anybody tell you that education is expensive in America. There are expensive schools and average priced schools and there are free schools. There are courses by correspondence. Young people study, older people study, and you will find a way. It might be good for you, upon arrival in America, after having taken a rest, after having looked around a bit, that you go to a place where they give vocational advice.
- Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes.
- David Boder: Psychological and occupational advice. And they may find something for you to do that you may learn without difficulty. There are such places, and the ORT is also active in America and your relatives probably will assist you, and if you work hard and get accustomed to the life there, things will be all right. And so I thank you indeed, Jürgen. I suppose you will arrive in America before I shall return. I will give you my address. Drop me a line sometimes, telling me how you have managed to arrange things for yourself.
- Jürgen Bassfreund: I wish to thank you first of all for giving me the opportunity to talk about my experiences in the lager so that people should get a picture of that which has really happened. What I have told you are only isolated incidents, and I can tell it with a clean conscience that nothing is exaggerated. On the contrary one cannot describe these things the way it really happened.
- David Boder: [In English] This concludes the interview with Jürgen Bassfreund, which starts on Spool 137, was interrupted somehow, and completes here twenty minutes of Spool 139. Munich, the 20th of September 1946—in late in the evening at the displaced persons camp, where about counted five thousand people are . . . live as transients and are expecting transportation to a list of countries that covers practically the whole geography. Hm, only tonight, coming in I saw a group of people waiting at the gate, kind of a group of inter-departmental football, where a organization knowing that the camp is totally overfilled and that there is a menace of possible "revolt" of the . . . —"revolt" in quotation marks of course—of the inhabitants. New crowds are coming in, the so-called infiltrees; people are now running away from Poland or from other zones coming to the blessed American zone. An Illinois Institute of Technology wire recording.
- David Boder: Chicago, November 1st, 1949. This is a duplicated spool for the Library of the Public Health Service. The spool is cut here because it concludes the study of Jürgen Bassfreund, and begins the new interview with Captain Zeplit, which we shall rewind on a new spool, number 9-139B. David P. Boder.

1. Boder's question reveals the general lack of awareness of the conditions within the camps that existed at the time. Sixty-four kilograms (about 140 pounds) would have been an impossible weight for anyone who had spent as much time in the camps as Bassfreund.

- **Contributors to this text:**
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- *English translation* : David P. Boder
- *Footnotes* : Eben E. English

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