

**THE WILLIAM BREMAN JEWISH HERITAGE MUSEUM
ESTHER AND HERBERT TAYLOR
JEWISH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF ATLANTA**

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INTERVIEWERS: **UNIDENTIFIED**
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DATE: **NOVEMBER 14, 2000**
LOCATION: **ATLANTA, GEORGIA**

INTERVIEW BEGINS

<Tape 1 Begins>

Herbert: I'm Herbert Kohn. [I] was born and raised in Germany. [I was] born September 27, 1926 in Frankfurt [Germany].¹ That was seventy-four years ago. My family lived in Germany for over 500 years, so my perspective of telling my story, of my experiences in the pre-Holocaust period was from somebody who lived there, experienced it as a German. My father and both of my grandfathers served in the German Army, on the German side in World War I. They were—just like I was—raised as a German, as a German Jew.

Not only that . . . I had an opportunity after I escaped from Germany in 1939 to come to this country to get back to Germany with the United States Army. As a matter of fact, I became a citizen of the United States in the army. I was back [in Germany] in 1945 before the war was over, right toward the end of the war and saw the effects of the Holocaust as an eighteen year old. Then I have travelled many times again to Germany—four, five, six times—visited the camps, even took a Federation mission tour to Dachau one time and had the opportunity therefore to see it before, during and after. I want to give you some of my reflections.

The Holocaust was the murder of nine million plus people. Six million of them were Jews.² Out of the six million, one and a half million were children under fifteen years old.³ The

¹ Frankfurt [German: Frankfurt am Main] is a central German city on the Main River. It is the largest financial center in continental Europe. Prior to World War II, Frankfurt was notable as having the largest timber-framed old town in Europe, but much of the city was destroyed during the war and rebuilt afterward. The Jewish community in Frankfurt dates back to the twelfth century.

² The Holocaust is the best documented case of genocide, yet calculating how many individuals were killed during the Holocaust and World War II as a result of Nazi policies is difficult as no single document exists which spells out how many died. To accurately estimate the extent of human losses, scholars, governmental agencies and Jewish organizations since the 1940's have relied on a variety of records including census reports, captured archives, and postwar investigations. The best and most commonly accepted estimate of Jewish victims is six million.

other three million [who] were murdered were people who didn't fit into the system also, just like the Jews didn't, into the Aryan concept that [Adolf] Hitler⁴ described very well in his book, *Mein Kampf*,⁵ which was written in 1926 while he was in prison, prior to him becoming Chancellor and head of the German government in 1933.⁶ The concept is that these people were killed not in war, not by guns, not by bombs. Thirty-five million people lost their lives in World War II.⁷ These people were murdered completely outside of the war effort. As a matter of fact, during the war effort, in spite of the war effort, Germany took time out to murder these people. This is a crime against humanity that's unmatched and can't be compared to any other crime that has been done before and since then. We have had a lot of crimes against humanity, including slavery in the United States. But this is unique. It's different.

Also, we've got to realize the concept of six million people. Six million people can be compared to the census of the state of Georgia in 1990. There were [six million two hundred thousand] people living in Georgia. That's men, women, and children, everybody. Everybody in the state of Georgia counted was [six million two hundred thousand] people. It's hard to fathom how you can wipe out that kind of a population, that many people in really a relatively short

³ Nazi Germany and its collaborators killed around 1.5 million Jewish children. Children were not specifically singled out because they were children, but because of their alleged membership in dangerous racial, biological, or political groups. Children had one of the lowest rates of survival in concentration and extermination camps. In Auschwitz-Birkenau and other killing centers, young children were immediately sent to the gas chambers. Adolescents (13-18 years old) had a greater chance of survival as they could be used for slave labor. Tens of thousands of Romani (gypsy children), between 5,000 and 7,000 German children with physical and mental abilities living in institutions, as well as many Polish children and children living in the German-occupied Soviet Union were also killed during the Holocaust.

⁴ Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) was a German politician who was the leader of the Nazi Party, Chancellor of Germany from 1933 to 1945, and Führer ("leader") of Nazi Germany from 1934 to 1945. As dictator of Nazi Germany, he initiated World War II in Europe with the invasion of Poland in September 1939 and was a central figure of the Holocaust.

⁵ *Mein Kampf* [German: My Struggle] is an autobiographical manifesto written by Nazi Party leader Adolf Hitler while imprisoned following the failed Beer Hall Putsch of November 1923. In the manifesto, Hitler outlines his political ideology and future plans for Germany.

⁶ Amid an economic depression and increasing political instability in Germany, Adolf Hitler and his party, the National Socialist German Workers' Party [German: *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*; also known as the NSDAP or Nazi Party] rapidly rose to power. In 1932, the Nazi party was elected to fill more seats in the *Reichstag* (parliament) than any other party. In 1933, democratically elected President Paul von Hindenburg appointed Hitler Chancellor of Germany, a position responsible for leading the *Reichstag*. As Chancellor, he began transforming his position into a dictatorial one. When the President died in 1934, Hitler declared himself head of state and effectively became absolute dictator of Germany under the title of *Führer* (German: *Führer*).

⁷ World War II was the most widespread and destructive war in history. It was also the deadliest conflict in human history. It directly involved more than 100 million people from over 30 countries, making it difficult to calculate casualties. In addition to millions of soldiers wounded or killed on battlefields, the war was marked by mass deaths of civilians, including the Holocaust (in which approximately 6 million Jews were killed) and the strategic bombing of industrial and population centers (in which approximately one million were killed, and which included the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki), it resulted in an estimated 50 million to 85 million fatalities.

period of time because the Final Solution kicked in in 1942 after the Wannsee Conference documents were approved.⁸ Eighty percent of those who were murdered were murdered from 1942 to 1945 when the war was over.

The question always came to my mind as I looked at this, and studied it, and as I grew up, and thought about, is how can we allow, or how did the German people, how can they allow this terrible crime to take place? As we know, there are four classes of people: the victims, the perpetrators, the rescuers, and the bystanders. By far, the largest group of people in this particular crime were the bystanders, the people who looked the other way, who didn't want to get involved. That's what we can learn hopefully out of the Holocaust. I'm here to talk to you about it and I wanted to relate it while I still can and have the strength and the ability to discuss it. Because we need to be sure that this shall never happen again. It will never happen again.

The reasons that I've picked out that we allowed this to happen are three reasons basically. One of them is a thing that I lived in Germany, and experienced, and was raised under, which I call "absolute obedience." The German child is taught and the German people are taught that when government speaks, you do whatever the government commands. You have absolute obedience to your government—regardless what the government is or whether you like it or not—to your teachers, and to your parents. There is no way to compromise that. The Nazis used that concept in perpetuating or perpetrating this terrible crime and getting the German people to support it. Sixty million people lived in Germany in 1933.⁹ It's just inconceivable that a government of thousands of people can do these things that were done without some support of the people or at least bystander attitudes, "Let the government do."

The next thing the Germans or the Nazis used was mass psychology, propaganda. The way that was done was [through] all the mass assemblies and the marches, which is a typical German thing: the militaristic uniforms, bands, torches, music, flags, repetition over and over again of the theme that Hitler is our leader, our Fuhrer, and what he says we believe in—that the

⁸ The term "Final Solution of the Jewish Question," or simply the "Final Solution," was a euphemism used by Nazi Germany's leaders to refer to the mass murder of Europe's Jews. Policies that had once encouraged or forced Jews to leave Germany and other parts of Europe were replaced with policies of systematic annihilation. It remains uncertain when Nazi leadership decided to implement the Final Solution. A secret meeting held in January of 1942 in Wannsee, Germany is often cited as one of the pivotal points in the Final Solution as leading police and civilian officials discussed its implementation. However, the genocide or mass destruction of the Jews was the culmination of a decade of increasingly severe discrimination and violence.

⁹ According to the census of June 16, 1933, the population of Germany including the Saar region (which at that time was still under the administration of the League of Nations) was approximately 67 million.

Jews are our enemy, [German:] *Die Juden sind unser Feind. Die Juden sind unser Unglück.* [German] The Jews are our misfortune. That was said over and over again in banners, in slogans, in mass assemblies where everyone joined and shouted, “Sieg Heil!” It means, “Hail to the Fuhrer. Hail to our country.” With that mass hysteria and almost cult-like system, they were able to get the masses of the people to turn against the Jews and against anybody who was not part of the German race, the Aryan race, or were not in tune with what the government was about to do.

The third reason was that when you have a plan like Hitler outlined in his book, *Mein Kampf*, to conquer Europe, to conquer the world, to destroy all people who were not pure Aryan, who didn't fit into the system all over the world . . . When you have such a tremendous plan, you've got to have a scapegoat. The Jews became the scapegoat. They were the natural scapegoats because they had always been hated by the people not only Germany, all over Europe during the Middle Ages. They just had emancipated in World War I—that's the reason why my grandfather and my father was a part of the army. My grandfather was one of the first field grade officers. He was a doctor in the Kaiser's army. They just had come up to a level where this was allowed. They were moving up the ladder. They wanted to be sure that . . . The Nazis, in their plan was that if you have a plan to destroy all these people, then you gotta have a scapegoat. The Jews would be the scapegoat. The Jews were hated since the Crusades, the Inquisitions, the ghetto period, and this was a natural minority. There was only maybe less than fifty thousand Jews in Germany at the time—less than one percent of the population. They were easy to be use as those people are different. They are the enemy. They are to be blamed for losing World War I, for the economic crisis that caused the Depression, which was in Germany also, and of course all the problems that might occur from then on.¹⁰

There was a professor at Harvard University, Dr. Daniel Goldhagen,¹¹ who wrote a book, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, which really were the German people, which actually verified

¹⁰ The Great Depression was a severe worldwide economic depression in the decade preceding World War II. The time of the Great Depression varied across nations, but in most countries it started in about 1929 and lasted until the late 1930's or early 1940's. It was the longest, most widespread, and deepest depression of the twentieth century.

¹¹ Daniel Jonah Goldhagen (1959-) is an American author and former associate professor of government and social studies at Harvard University. Goldhagen reached international attention and broad criticism as the author of two controversial books about the Holocaust: *Hitler's Willing Executioners* and *A Moral Reckoning*.

these three points that I found myself over a period of years, or came up with that theory.¹² In his book in a very learned way and very academic way, he was able to document why the German people were at fault for accepting this manipulation by the Nazi party.

Interviewer: I want to ask you some questions about your personal life and your family. What were some of your earliest memories of your family when you were in Germany before the war?

Herbert: My family was actually a middle class family. My father's side of the family was highly educated, very cultural. My father and his . . . my grandfather and my grandmother—I didn't know my grandfather on my father's side, but my grandmother I did know very well and my great-grandmother, who had lived with us at the end before she died—they were very educated and they were very involved in the arts—music, dance, opera. My father tells me that he saw any major opera at least seven times. They had loge seats at the Frankfurt opera.¹³ They were very much into the artistic and cultural part of the community of Frankfurt, very much involved in it.

On my mother's side, my grandparents were working people. They had a little small business, a wholesale grocery and fish business in the market. They got up early in the morning and had to go to work, to buy their goods and then sell them. They were very much involved. Both of them came from Jewish backgrounds. My father's family [had] more of a Liberal Jewish background.¹⁴ My grandparents on my mother's side [were] maybe a little more toward the Orthodox side, although they were not practicing Orthodox Jews.¹⁵ They were brought up under that in smaller towns. They came from . . . not from Frankfurt. My father's family was in

¹² *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* is a 1996 book by American writer Daniel Goldhagen. In the book, Goldhagen argues that the Holocaust was a result of a uniquely German brand of antisemitism and nationalism that had developed over the course of preceding centuries, producing a population of "willing executioners." The book challenged common ideas about the Holocaust, including the idea that most Germans did not know about the Holocaust and that only the SS participated in murdering Jews (as opposed to the ordinary German conscripts Goldhagen argues killed Jews willingly). The book became a bestseller that stoked controversy and debate in Germany and the United States.

¹³ In a theatre, a box, loge, or opera box is a small, separated seating area in the auditorium or audience for a limited number of people for private viewing of a performance or event.

¹⁴ Reform Judaism, sometimes also called Liberal Judaism, is a division within Judaism especially in North America and Western Europe. Historically it began in the nineteenth century. In general, the Reform movement maintains that Judaism and Jewish traditions should be modernized and compatible with participation in Western culture. While the *Torah* remains the law, in Reform Judaism women are included (mixed seating, *bat mitzvah* and women rabbis), music is allowed in the services and most of the service is in English.

¹⁵ Orthodox Judaism is a traditional branch of Judaism that strictly follows the Written *Torah* and the Oral Law concerning prayer, dress, food, sex, family relations, social behavior, the Sabbath day, holidays and more.

Frankfurt. My mother's side of the family came from smaller towns, Weiler and Sinsheim, which is close to Heidelberg [Germany].¹⁶

Interviewer: What kind of customs and holidays would your family celebrate?

Herbert: We celebrated all Jewish holidays in a liberal Jewish sense. Sometimes we think all German Jews are Reformed Jews. That's not quite so. We belonged to a synagogue, which was a liberal synagogue, the Westend Synagogue in Frankfurt.¹⁷ You wore hats but you also had music and organs, so it was kind of conservative, but more leftwing toward what we know today as Reform Judaism.¹⁸ It wasn't quite reform Judaism as I saw when I first came to this country. We celebrated. We had *seders*.¹⁹ All the High Holy Days were celebrated.²⁰ We went to synagogue regularly. We were not observant Jews, but practicing Jews in many of the customs. It was a very important point in our lives.

Interviewer: What were some of the key values that you felt your father and mother were trying to teach you, either out of Judaism or just in their lives?

Herbert: Like I told you, obedience and discipline are the words that I heard very often. It's a typical German way to be brought up. There were no options like we have today. When I was brought up, I wasn't asked, "Do you want hot dogs or hamburger? Do you want this or that?" You ate what was on the table. If you didn't finish your soup, you didn't get anything else. If you did finish the rest of your meal and complained too much, you went to your room without eating. [It was a] very strict upbringing, typical German. When my father corrected me—which was often—I had to stand at attention while he corrected me. [My father would say,] *Stand geshtanken!*" [German: Stand up], stand at attention. It was a word that I heard often. It was a strict bringing up.

¹⁶ Weiler is a small town approximately 200 kilometers (124 miles) south of Frankfurt, Germany. Sinsheim is a small town approximately 100 kilometers (62 miles) south of Frankfurt and 25 kilometers (16 miles) southeast of Heidelberg, Germany.

¹⁷ In 1910, Franz Roeckle completed an imposing building at Freiherr-vom-Stein-Strasse 30-32, featuring a domed central building in Egyptian-Assyrian style. The richly ornamented synagogue was built for the liberal congregation, whose members increasingly settled in the West End at the beginning of the 20th century. The Westend Synagogue survived both Kristallnacht and World War II relatively unscathed. Today, the buildings have been fully restored and the large main sanctuary holds Orthodox services.

¹⁸ Jewish men cover their heads during prayer with a small skull-cap called a 'yarmulke' or 'kippah.' Orthodox Jewish men wear it at all times to remind themselves of G-d's presence.

¹⁹ *Seder* [Hebrew: order] is a Jewish ritual feast that marks the beginning of the Jewish holiday of Passover. It is conducted on the evening of the fifteenth day of *Nisan* in the Hebrew calendar throughout the world. Some communities hold *seder* on both the first two nights of Passover. The *seder* incorporates prayers, candle lighting, and traditional foods symbolizing the slavery of the Jews and the exodus from Egypt. It is one of the most colorful and joyous occasions in Jewish life.

²⁰ The two High Holy Days are *Rosh Ha-Shanah* (Jewish New Year) and *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement).

It wasn't without rewards. On weekends, we went often to the zoo, botanical gardens, museums, and for long walks in the mountains. [We] carried picnics into the mountains. We kept busy. Something was planned almost every weekend. [I was] very active in school sports. I will relate to that in a minute because after a while we were not in public schools anymore. Sports still was a very important part of our upbringing.

Interviewer: What was your relationship with Jewish and non-Jewish families in your community?

Herbert: If you don't mind, I'd like to tell you when the break came. There was a break that came. We lived on a street where everybody knew each other. What I can remember was Humboldt Street 66. Every morning, I walked to school with some of my friends on the block. When I started school, I was six years old, in the first grade. It just so happened it was in 1933. I actually started in 1932.

Hitler came into power in March of 1933. Three weeks after he came to power, I walked to school with my friends like I did every morning about three-quarters of a mile to the first grade, elementary school, public school. When I got there and got settled into my desk, the teacher said, "Are there any Jews in this room?" Two of us held our hands up. I held mine up very prominently and excited that I was being called on. I thought maybe I had to recite something, especially because it was close to Passover.²¹ I wanted to be sure they knew that I went to Sunday school, which I did, and had learned something. The teacher said, "Just get your things and go home. Jews are not allowed in public schools anymore as of today."²²

Now, it's very traumatic when a six year old is told all of a sudden he's different and everything has changed. That was a big change in my life. I walked home by myself. [It was the]

²¹ Passover [Hebrew: *Pesach*] is the anniversary of Israel's liberation from Egyptian bondage. The holiday lasts for eight days. Unleavened bread, *matzah*, is eaten in memory of the unleavened bread prepared by the Israelite during their hasty flight from Egypt, when they had not time to wait for the dough to rise. On the first two nights of Passover, the *seder*, the central event of the holiday is celebrated. The *seder* service is one of the most colorful and joyous occasions in Jewish life. In addition to eating *matzah* during the *seder*, Jews are prohibited from eating leavened bread during the entire week of Passover. In addition, Jews are also supposed to avoid foods made with wheat, barley, rye, spelt or oats unless those foods are labeled 'kosher for Passover.' Jews traditionally have separate dishes for Passover.

²² On April 25, 1933, the "Law against Overcrowding in Schools and Universities" was issued. It dramatically limited the number of Jewish students attending public schools to no more than 5 percent of the total student population. In 1933, 75 percent of all Jewish students attended public schools in Germany. German public schools played an important role in spreading Nazi ideas to German youth. Educators taught students love for Hitler, obedience to state authority, militarism, racism, and antisemitism. In the face of increasing persecution at public schools, Jews in Germany turned increasingly to private schools for their children. Then on April 9, 1937, the Mayor of Berlin ordered public schools not to admit Jewish children until further notice. On November 15, 1938, the Reich Ministry of Education expelled all Jewish children from German public schools.

first time I ever did that. Next thing I knew, when I went home even, I realized everything had changed.

The next morning, I couldn't go to school. When I walked out of the house, some of the other kids saw me. Instead of calling to me, "Hi, Herbert," [they said,] "What are you doing here, you damn Jew?" The same kids one day before were my friends, the next day weren't. That was true also for my parents. My parents couldn't speak to their neighbors anymore. Their neighbors couldn't speak to them. If they did or it was reported, they would also be punished or lose their job possibly.

Jews became segregated.²³ The propaganda went against them. The park benches had signs on them, "Only for Jews," or "Jews are not allowed." Everything was segregated. [Signs that read,] "*Juden sind nicht gewollt.*" [German] That means Jews are not wanted. [It] was on every public place—libraries, theaters, the botanical gardens, zoo, movies. Everywhere you went, there were signs on them, including stores—except those owned by Jews—had signs on them right at eye level, "You're not wanted here." That went on from 1933 to 1935, when laws were actually passed, the Nuremberg Laws, which spelled out exactly what a Jew could do and what he couldn't do.²⁴ Also, he had to have identification with him that had a big "J" on it.²⁵ That particular identification four years later changed into a yellow star.²⁶ The Star of David, which

²³ In the years between 1933 and 1939, Nazi Party leaders began to persecute Jews through a series of antisemitic legislation that included more than 400 decrees and regulations restricting all aspects of their public and private lives. The anti-Jewish policies brought radical and daunting social, economic, and communal change to the German Jewish community.

²⁴ The Nuremberg Race Laws formed the cornerstone of the German Nazi Party's racial policy and were introduced in September 1935. They heralded in a new wave of antisemitic legislation that brought about immediate and concrete segregation. Among other prohibitions, the Nuremberg Laws deprived Jews of German citizenship. Jews were banned from universities; Jewish actors were dismissed from theaters; publishers rejected Jewish authors' works; and Jewish journalists were hard-pressed to find newspapers that would publish their writings. Part of the Nuremberg Law passed in 1935, the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor banned marriage between Jews and non-Jewish Germans. It also criminalized sexual relations between them. These relationships were labeled as "race defilement" [German: *Rassenschande*]. Jews were also forbidden to employ female German maids under the age of 45, assuming that Jewish men would force such maids into committing race defilement.

²⁵ All German Jews were obliged to carry identity cards that indicated their heritage, and, in the autumn of 1938, all Jewish passports were stamped with an identifying red letter "J".

²⁶ In September 1941, Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi Propaganda Minister, issued a law requiring Jews over the age of six to wear a yellow Jewish star, or *Magen David*, on their outer garments. The star had the word "Jude" [German: Jew] written on it. The following year, Jews in lands under German control were also forced to wear the Star. The design of the badge varied from region to region. The German government's policy of forcing Jews to wear identifying badges was but one of many psychological tactics aimed at isolating and dehumanizing the Jews of Europe, directly marking them as being different (i.e., inferior) to everyone else. It allowed for the easier facilitation of their separation from society and subsequent ghettoization, which ultimately led to their deportation and murder. Those who failed or refused to wear the badge risked severe punishment, including death.

said “Jew” on it, had to be sewn onto the outer garment that any Jews wore in Germany to be sure to be identified that he was the enemy or she was the enemy. There was ongoing segregation.

I just want to tell you one thing that I found in the process. When you describe the Holocaust, it really led up to and can be described with four words. Discrimination leads to segregation. Segregation leads to persecution. Persecution leads to extermination. Those four words describe the process from 1933 to 1945, which is the period of the Holocaust.

Interviewer: I wanted to ask: That very first day when you were separated from your school and experienced segregation, how did your parents console you? What was it like that day inside the home?

Herbert: My father, who was German in his thinking and my family who had lived in Germany all these years and their family lived before—I have a family breed that goes back 500 years—they said, “Oh, this will go away. This is just like a political party that’s going to lose power. This can’t work. The Germans won’t allow this. You know, we are a cultural country. We just can’t make those kind of drastic changes. Those people . . . You’re not the enemy. You’re okay.” It changed over a period of years. It took about three or four years for my father to realize [that] no, it wasn’t going to change.

He lost his job. He was a representative for leather dyes. He traveled and had clients. They wouldn’t see him any more. In fact, that segregation went all across business and economic ways, so he lost his job. He finally got a job with the new school we were going to, which was a segregated Jewish school, only for Jews, with Jewish teachers, Jewish staff, Jewish janitors. He got a job in the sports department because he was very active in sports and had a military background. It was a minor job, not enough to really get by on for the family, especially under the conditions.

We knew we had to get out. He realized that. In 1935, he made a family tree, which I still have, and picked out people all over the world who related into the family and wrote letters. One letter was to a family in Birmingham [Alabama] who were relatives. It was a daughter out of a very prominent family who were out of Atlanta, the Heyman family. This lady, Dorah Sterne,²⁷

²⁷ Dorah Heyman Sterne (1896-1994) was born in Atlanta, Georgia. She married Mervyn Hayden Sterne of Birmingham, Alabama, in 1921, with whom she had one daughter. She served a three-year term as president of the Birmingham chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women and was active in the League of Women Voters in Birmingham.

wife of Mervyn Sterne,²⁸ gave us an affidavit, which entitled us to get a visa to come to America.²⁹ We got this visa in 1938 but we couldn't get to America because of the quota system until 1940.³⁰ Because there was only 25,000 people allowed to come into the United States from middle Europe under the quota system. That's still, by the way, in effect today.

Interviewer: As a child, do you remember seeing how all of this this affected your mom and dad's spirits, seeing this persecution and the fact that they were segregated and their lives had changed? How did it affect them emotionally?

Herbert: It was very difficult for them. Like I said, for a period of time, they thought this was just a temporary thing. Then it became more and more segregation. You didn't have the transportation systems like you have in this country. We didn't have cars. We were a middle class family but only ten percent of the population had cars. You couldn't meet and get around with fellow Jews like you could here as a community. The communication system . . . We had a radio I think when the first radios came out, but there was no television. The newspapers were totally controlled. They were often showed nothing but . . . They showed every Jew always made up like he was the enemy. They doctored up the pictures to put Jews looking like the enemy, with a crooked nose. Those were the black hats, not the white hats coming out of western literacy.

The point I'm trying to make here is, yes, they had a hard time adjusting. But it all came to a head really for me, and for them, and for my brother, who was three years older, and for my grandfather who lived with us. My grandmother and grandfather were divorced, which was a sad situation but they were divorced many years before. My grandfather lived with us and my

²⁸ Mervyn Hayden Sterne (1892-1973) was born in Anniston, Alabama. He was a prominent banker and financier in Birmingham, Alabama. He was also a tireless civic leader, remembered for having led efforts in the 1920s to establish better funding for public schools in Alabama by promoting a property tax. He served in the United States Army during World War I and World War II. When he returned to the United States after the First World War, Sterne raised more than \$400,000 to aid Europe's Jews.

²⁹ An Affidavit of Support and Sponsorship was among the criteria applicants seeking an entry visa into the United States during the 1930s and 1940s had to meet. This required two sponsors who were United States citizens or had permanent resident status. Sponsors had to provide proof of their financial status (Federal tax returns and an affidavit from their bank and employer) to ensure that the immigrants would not become dependent upon social welfare programs.

³⁰ The Immigration Act of 1924, popularly known as the 'Johnson-Reed Act,' was a federal law that limited the annual number of immigrants who could be admitted from any country to two percent of the number of people from that country who were already living in the United States in 1890. Great Britain and Ireland dominated most of the available slots. Germany was assigned about 26,000 immigrants per year while countries like Poland were allowed 6,000 immigrants per year. It was aimed at restricting Southern and Eastern European immigrants, mainly Jews fleeing persecution in Poland and Russia, who had started immigrating to the United States in large numbers in the 1890's. It was still in place at the end of World War II.

grandmother lived in an apartment. Yes, we had to take care of them. We had to bring food to them because we couldn't just move around like you could before. As a matter of fact, rationing started for World War II. Jews got only a portion of the ration everybody else got.

Jews were totally segregated and persecuted in the 1930s, up till 1938. That was when it really came to the forefront—*Kristallnacht* [German: night of broken glass], November 9, 1938.³¹ I was there. It really turned out to be a test of how to get into the Final Solution. Many Jews had already left. Because of this segregation and persecution, [they] were leaving if they could, but many hadn't. Although [*Kristallnacht*] was based on the murder of an ambassador by a demented Jew in Paris, France³²—that's what they claimed: [that it] was a spontaneous reaction—it was really a test of how to take that step forward into the Final Solution, which means to completely get rid of all the Jews.

That night, I was at home. I remember it very well. During a short period of time—three hours, every Jewish synagogue in Germany was burned, destroyed and desecrated. I think there may be over 300 of them. Every Jewish owned store got broken into. The glass was broken. That's the reason they call it *Kristallnacht*, because glass was all over the streets. [They were] looted and destroyed. Every Jewish male between the ages of 16 and 60 was arrested and shipped off to a camp.³³ Many people didn't know where.

I was at home that night when the storm troopers came up the stairs, knocked on the door of our apartment—we lived in a very nice apartment—and my mother opened the door.³⁴ I stood right next to her. He just stepped in in his khaki uniform, leather belt, leather shoulder strap,

³¹ On November 8 and 9, 1938, the Nazis started a state-sponsored nationwide pogrom. Across the country (and in Austria) Jewish synagogues, homes and businesses were looted and burned, Jews were attacked on the streets and 91 were killed. Thousands of Jewish men were sent to concentration camps for several weeks and released only when they agreed to leave the country as soon as possible. The Jews were made to pay for the damages to their premises. The pogrom was called '*Kristallnacht*,' which means 'Night of Broken Glass,' because of all the damage done to Jewish shop windows.

³² On November 7, 1939, Herschel Grynszpan, a 17-year-old Polish Jew living in Paris, shot German diplomat, Ernst vom Rath in Paris. Grynszpan apparently acted out of despair over the fate of his parents, who are trapped along with other Polish Jewish deportees in a no-man's-land between Germany and Poland. The Nazis used the shooting as antisemitic propaganda fervor, claiming that Grynszpan was part of a wider Jewish conspiracy. When Vom Rath died two days later, the Nazis used the incidence to fuel violent pogroms.

³³ Thousands of German Jews and close to 6,000 Austrian Jews were arrested after *Kristallnacht* and deported to the Dachau or Buchenwald concentration camps in Germany. Most were released within a few weeks, but only if they promised to immigrate immediately, leaving their property behind.

³⁴ The *Sturmabteilung*, also known as the "Storm Troopers," "Brown Shirts," or "SA," was the paramilitary of the Nazi Party commanded by Ernst Rohm [German: Röhm] and responsible for helping Adolf Hitler rise to power in Germany in the 1920's and early 1930's. By 1934, tensions within the party saw Heinrich Himmler and the SS (*Schutzstaffel*) replace Rohm and the *Sturmabteilung*'s position as the dominant organization within the Nazi Party.

swastika on his arm and very loudly shouted, “Any damn Jews in here?” My father came out from one of the back doors. Before that, he had pushed my mother to the floor and just stepped in, just like taking over command. My father went with him. We didn’t know where he went, didn’t know what happened, or where he was going to. Like I said before, the communication wasn’t as sophisticated as we have it today.

Anyway, my mother immediately the next day found our visa to America. Based on that, she called a very distant relative in England, in London, which we didn’t even know but she knew of him, to see if she couldn’t get a transit visa for my father. If he ever should have come back, she said he’s got to get out of this country. She was able to get this distant, elderly relative to commit to two pounds a week, which is a very small sum of money, just for the sustenance of my father because you couldn’t work on a transit visa. With that, she went to the English Consulate in Frankfurt. The English Consulate [Robert Townsend Smallbones] saw the telegram.³⁵ He knew the situation. He said, “Let me see all of your passports of your immediate family”—my brother’s, mine, my father’s, my mother’s. He took his visa stamp and stamped all of them with a visa.

The reason this is an experience that I will always remember—my mother told me what happened and of course I saw the stamp in my passport. It’s in the [The William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum] to this day—is because this man was not a bystander. He was a rescuer. As a matter of fact, he was one of the Righteous Gentiles. He adjusted his thinking to how to save lives. Knowing that there was not enough sustenance, he stretched the thinking in such a way to get four people saved. That’s what saved our lives. His action of stamping that passport with the visa saved my life.

My father did come back. He came back three and a half weeks later. I was there when he came back. He rang the doorbell, came up the stairs, and there he was. He was at that time thirty-

³⁵ Robert Townsend Smallbones (1884-1976) was a British diplomat who served as Consul-General in Frankfurt-am-Main between 1932 and 1939. After *Kristallnacht*, Smallbones came up with a plan—later known as the Smallbones Scheme—to assist German Jews. He persuaded the British Home Office to provide a temporary haven for German Jews who would eventually go to the United States under the quota system. As long as relatives or relief organizations provided a guarantee of financial security while they were in Great Britain, they could wait in Britain for their turn to enter the United States. He then made an agreement with the local Gestapo whereby they would release prisoners when informed that a visa was granted. The men would return to Frankfurt for a limited period to sell their possessions, pay the taxes or fees charged by the Nazi authorities, and then be allowed to leave. Smallbones liberally issued visas until September 3, 1939, the day the British declared war on Germany. By then, about 48,000 individuals had benefited from the scheme and another 50,000 cases had been under consideration when the war broke out. He was posthumously awarded the medal of a British Hero of the Holocaust in 2013.

eight years old, but I could hardly recognize him because he had lost thirty pounds and all of his body hair was white. He had nothing on but a raincoat. It was end of November. In Germany, [that is] very cold.

He was so glad to see us. He hugged us. He was so glad to hear that he could leave the next day. He said, “You know, you wonder what happened to me and I’ve got to tell you although I was told never to speak about it, that the arm of the German government could reach all over the world and would get me if I ever talked about what happened to me. But I’ve got to tell you.” He sat us in front of him and he talked for a few minutes. I was twelve years old at the time, but he talked for hours and told us in great detail what happened to him.

He was taken to a police precinct. From there, to a sports arena in Frankfurt, a *Festhalle* [German: festival hall] it’s called.³⁶ [It is] a big hall, like Philips Arena here in Atlanta.³⁷ All the Jewish males between 16 and 60 in [the metropolitan Frankfurt area] were brought to this place to be assembled. They were there two and a half days without food, without water, without bathroom privileges. Not only that, they were made to crawl on the floor of the arena, on the playing field, on their bellies in teams, competing. The Nazi guards—the SS³⁸ and the SA, political police—made fun of them, poked them, and treated them like animals—roaches, frogs, termites. Inhumanity of man to man was unbelievable. It was so bad that these people who were doctors, lawyers, merchants, workers, students . . . the rabbis in the group couldn’t take it. They

³⁶ Festhalle Messe Frankfurt is a multi-purpose arena located in Frankfurt, Germany that opened as an exhibition hall in 1909. Architect Friedrich von Thiersch designed the Festhalle in a rectangular layout that is superimposed by a cupola-crowned rotunda, which reaches a height of 40 meters (131 feet) inside. The Nazi regime frequently used the Festhalle for mass propaganda rallies. During the *Kristallnacht* pogroms in November 1938, Jewish citizens were rounded up in the Festhalle before being transported to prisons and concentration camps. Fire and Allied bombings damaged the hall during World War II but it was later restored and continues to serve as an exhibition hall and is a popular venue for concerts.

³⁷ State Farm Arena (formerly Philips Arena) is a multi-purpose indoor arena located in Atlanta, Georgia. The arena serves as the home venue for the National Basketball Association’s Atlanta Hawks. It opened in 1999 and is owned by the Atlanta Fulton County Recreation Authority. It was renovated in 2017.

³⁸ The SS or *Schutzstaffel* was a major paramilitary organization under Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party. It began at the end of 1920 as a small, permanent guard unit known as the “*Saal-Schutz*” made up of Nazi Party volunteers to provide security for party meetings in Munich. Later, in 1925, Heinrich Himmler joined the unit, which had by then been reformed and renamed the “*Schutz-Staffel*.” Under Himmler’s leadership, it grew from a small paramilitary formation to one of the largest and most powerful organizations in the Third Reich. Under Himmler’s command, it was responsible for many of the crimes against humanity during World War II. Among other activities, black-shirted SS men served as guards at labor and concentration camps.

went up in the high part of the bleachers, some of them, and with a prayer to G-d on their lips, the *Sh'ma*, they committed suicide and jumped into the arena.³⁹

Two and a half days later they were taken in trains—not in cattle cars, but in regular trains—to the concentration camp, which turned out to be Buchenwald, which is in the foothills of the Bavarian mountains.⁴⁰ Then when they got on these trains, first they started fighting among themselves to get to a window—not to look out, not to escape, but to lick the condensation on the inside of the window because they really were dying from thirst.

When they got to the camp finally two and a half or three hours later, they got their first meal, which was watered down rice. Then they put them in military barracks that were built to hold 200 people with barbed wire around it and machine guns behind the barbed wire. Then they loaded them, put them into these barracks. Instead of 200, though, they put 400 in each barrack. They were lying crosswise in the two [levels of] deck bunks.

Then comes another of mankind's inhumanity to mankind. After a short while, they found out that the Nazis had laced their very first meal they had had in days with laxatives. These people who were related to each other—some of them were friends—were fighting for a piece of shirttail or a piece of cloth to keep clean. Many of them couldn't take it. When they broke out of the windows, machine guns went off. Almost a third of the group that my father was with were killed the very first night.

The next morning, they had to stand in formation. At five o'clock in the morning, ten [degrees] below zero, very cold, foothills of the Bavarian mountains and they had to stand formation naked, without clothes on. The Nazi guards again made fun of them. They would say, "Look at yourselves! You're not teachers. You're not lawyers. You're not students. You're not workers. You're nothing but damn Jews. You all look alike when you're naked." Mankind's inhumanity to mankind.

³⁹ *Sh'ma* is the title of a prayer that serves as a centerpiece of the morning and evening Jewish prayer services. The full title of the prayer is *Sh'ma Yisrael*, two Hebrew words meaning "Hear, O Israel." *Sh'ma Yisrael* is often considered the most important prayer in Judaism. The first verse affirms the monotheistic essence of Judaism: "*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our G-d, the Lord is one.*"

⁴⁰ Buchenwald was established in a wooded area near Weimer, Germany at the beginning of July 1937. Originally it held political prisoners, criminals, Communists, "asocials" etc. from the area. After *Kristallnacht* on November 9, 1938, German SS and police sent almost 10,000 Jews to Buchenwald. They were subjected to extraordinary cruelty upon arrival and 600 Jewish prisoners died during their brief imprisonment. Due to pressure from the victim's families and Jewish and International organizations, the Germans released over 9,000 Jews from Buchenwald at the end of 1938. After World War II began, Buchenwald housed Soviet prisoners of war and became a transit camp, housing a large Jewish population. In all, approximately 56,000 of the 238,980 prisoners who went through Buchenwald died.

My father, who had military training and sports training, created support groups so people could help each other survive. After three and a half weeks, he was called out of the formation because they had found in his wallet a document that was given to him in the name of the Fuhrer and Chancellor, Adolf Hitler, giving him a special Iron Cross for his services as front soldier in World War I. The Nazis, in their warped sense of justice and propriety, couldn't continue to abuse somebody who was honored by Hitler himself. He and maybe two or three others were released that day. That little piece of paper, which is also in the museum, saved his life. He was able to get home. How he got from Buchenwald to Frankfurt, I don't know to this day.

He left the next morning to England and he was saved. My family followed shortly thereafter. My brother [went] first because he was older and bumping that 16 year group. He was fifteen. [He] left a few weeks later because my father had found him an apprentice job. He couldn't work, but where he could get room and board for doing some work. My mother and I left in May 1939, three months before World War II started on September first with the invasion of Poland. We left in May to England. We were able to get out.

[We] lived in England during the first blitz of London and the bombing of England in the first year of the war.⁴¹ I lived in a Jewish boy's home. My mother lived in a one-room place with my father and my brother had this apprentice job. We just got by and were able to . . . The boy's home that I lived in was supported by B'nai Brith⁴² and one of the other [Jewish] Federation⁴³ funded accounts. At that time, it was not called Federation, but it was an international fund.

⁴¹ The 'Blitz', or the 'London Blitz', was the sustained bombing of London by Germany between September 7, 1940 and May 10, 1941. Many other cities were bombed as well, including Coventry, which was destroyed. The *Luftwaffe* [German air force] bombed London for 76 consecutive days and nights. More than 1,000,000 homes were destroyed or damaged, one in six Londoners were made homeless, and more than 40,000 civilians were killed, half of them in London.

⁴² B'nai B'rith International [Hebrew: Children of the Covenant] is the oldest Jewish service organization in the world. B'nai B'rith states that it is committed to the security and continuity of the Jewish people and the State of Israel and combating antisemitism and bigotry. Its mission is to unite persons of the Jewish faith and to enhance Jewish identity through strengthening Jewish family life, to provide broad-based services for the benefit of senior citizens, and to facilitate advocacy and action on behalf of Jews throughout the world.

⁴³ There are Jewish federations in most major cities. Their function is to fundraise for the Jewish community centrally and disperse it throughout the Jewish community (locally, nationally and internationally) rather than each Jewish institution trying to raise money individually.

We were able to survive until in April 1940, we got on a ship in Liverpool [England] that happened to be a cruise ship that was later on was sunk.⁴⁴ Before the war started with America, [we] took a 15-day journey. [We] had to zigzag through the Atlantic Ocean to get to Halifax [Nova Scotia] and then to New York [City, New York]. That's how we arrived.

We had two dollars and fifty cents each. We had clothing. I think fifteen suitcases. [We were] typical greenhorns.⁴⁵ We had some furniture that had been shipped a year earlier. It was in storage in a port in New Orleans [Louisiana] somewhere until we got settled. We were the one of the last people who could take any out but we couldn't take anything material out. We came to America and started from scratch.

Interestingly enough, we were met by our sponsors. Some relatives of ours sponsored us, who are still living in Atlanta, Georgia. Joe Heyman [is] an elderly man today.⁴⁶ [He] was a brother of Dorah Heyman Sterne, who met us in New York and gave us a choice, "You can either go to New York or Chicago and we'll help you get set up. Or, you can come down South. We would prefer for you to come down South because we would like for you to become farmers.

⁴⁴ The Kohn family set sail from Liverpool, England on March 9, 1940 aboard the *Lancastria*, a British ocean liner that launched in 1920. Her Majesty's Transport [HMT] *Lancastria* sailed routes between Liverpool and New York as well as cruising in the Mediterranean Sea and to northern Europe. Operated by the Cunard Line, she was requisitioned by the British government when World War II broke out in September 1939. Three months after Herbert's family sailed to the U.S., she was sent to France as part of Operation Aerial, the codename for the evacuation of Allied forces and civilians left in France after Dunkirk. Between June 15 and 25, 1940, the operation rescued some 163,000 people from ports in western France. As a cruise liner, the *Lancastria* could take 1,785 passengers but the urgent need to evacuate so many meant that she was grossly loaded and no official count was taken. Estimates of the number of people on board have been placed as high as 9,000. German planes bombed the ship when she left the port of Saint Nazaire, France on June 17, 1940. There were 2,447 survivors. At least 4,000 soldiers and civilian refugees—men, women and children—lost their lives when the *Lancastria* sank 20 minutes later. The loss of the *Lancastria* was Britain's worst maritime disaster. Although photographs and news of the disaster were published in an American paper a few weeks later, the disaster remains a virtually untold story as Prime Minister Winston Churchill had asked the British press to suppress the story for the sake of morale.

⁴⁵ A 'greenhorn' is a term for an inexperienced person, and oftentimes refers to newcomers who are unfamiliar with the ways of a place or group.

⁴⁶ Joseph Kohn Heyman (1908-2001) was born in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1908, the son of Minna Simon Heyman and Arthur Heyman. He attended Fulton High School and graduated Phi Beta Kappa from the University of Georgia in 1928. In 1930, he received his Masters of Business Administration from the Harvard Business School. From 1930 until 1942 he served on the staff of Tri-Continental Corporation, a New York investment company, initially as an investment analyst and later as economist. He returned to Atlanta in 1942 to serve with the War Production Board. From 1945 to 1951, Heyman operated his own investment firm, joining the Trust Company of Georgia as a vice president in 1951. Throughout his career, Heyman was often called upon to comment in print and in speeches to local organizations on the state of the economy. Notwithstanding two years during which he served as financial vice president of Rich's Inc., he remained at the Trust Company of Georgia until his retirement in 1973. Heyman served as a member of the Board of Directors of Rich's Inc., and was active in a variety of civic organizations, including the Atlanta Parking Commission, Community Chest, Family Service Society, Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, Atlanta-Fulton County Joint City-County Advisory Commission, Atlanta Arts Alliance, Inc., and the Atlanta Economics Club. He was also a member of The Temple and the Standard Club.

We would like to show the world to save more lives and for more refugees to come to America to do something other than crowd the cities and take jobs away from people, especially just coming out of the Depression.” My father, being very idealistic at the time, just out of concentration camp, we chose to come south to Alabama, to Birmingham because they lived in Birmingham. Then later on, [we went] to Demopolis, Alabama, where they had found a farmer who would teach us to farm.⁴⁷

We started life completely anew. It was a very different life. We’d never been on a farm before really. We were . . . I was at that time thirteen. My brother was sixteen. My parents took a whole new challenge on in a little town, Demopolis, which had a very small Jewish population. We were kind of like the freaks when we went to public school and got to meet some people because we spoke English broken. I spoke English pretty good because I had had English in high school in Germany and I picked it up. I spoke better than the rest of the family, but they all had learned in England and were learning still. I had not as much accent as everybody else had.

It was a very difficult adjustment, especially because the town we lived in, Demopolis, which had 5,000 population—3,000 African Americans; 2,000 white. [It was] completely segregated. The schools were segregated. Actually, the black population was only one year out of slavery, literally.⁴⁸ Especially on the farms, they worked from sun up to sun down for one dollar a day and got a quart of milk if they were assigned to work with the cows, milking cows. It was just a very primitive lifestyle and primitive standards. We were here from a cultural world. We were right next to them, worked alongside them, with them. It was a tremendous adjustment to make. We couldn’t understand it. Now, it was easier for us younger people—myself and my brother, but it was very difficult for my father and my mother.

Interviewer: Did you witness the discrimination of the African Americans?

⁴⁷ Demopolis is a town in west-central Alabama that was found by French settlers as an agricultural settlement in 1817. It lies at the confluence of the Black Warrior and Tombigbee rivers. In 1940, the population was 4,137. The population was 7,483 at the time of the 2010 United States Census.

⁴⁸ It is unclear what Herbert means by this. Slavery was made illegal in the United States upon the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment in December 1865, although formal and informal policies of repression, such as separate public accommodations, limited access to suffrage, and strict control over black labor were put into place between the 1870s and the 1890s. At the end of the Civil War, Alabama had to reconstitute its state legislature. When the legislature reconvened in December 1865, it passed Alabama’s notorious Black Code, which, like codes passed in other states, rigidly controlled and managed the lives of black citizens. Alabama’s 1901 constitution rested upon white supremacy as a basic element of governance. The supremacist underpinnings of the constitution persisted until judicial decisions in the 1950s and 1960s rendered them inoperable, and some segregationist language, like the ban on interracial marriage, remained in the constitution until Alabama’s voters removed it by constitutional amendment in the twenty-first century.

Herbert: Yes. We rode on the back of the truck with them when we went to town because they only were allowed on the back of the truck . . . even from the farmer. Yes, those people had to be off of the streets in Demopolis by sundown, except on Saturdays. On Saturdays, they got paid the little pay they got. Out of the five or six dollars they got paid, they would take five dollars on their grocery account and take one or two dollars and bought liquor to get drunk on. That's what they did. They were allowed to do it on Saturdays, but if they got into any kind of trouble or any kind of fight, the little town's police . . . they would not think twice about shooting anybody and there was no investigation of who killed who.

It was just very different from anything we'd ever been accustomed to. Frankly, in Germany when we grew up, the only black person I ever saw before we got there was a boxing instructor we had in school. It was a total new adjustment.

We were very close to the people because we were in the barns milking cows and we were out in the fields working next to it. My job was I was a water boy kind of. At thirteen years old, I went out in the field, took water, and had it there for them when they took a break under a shade tree running the equipment.

Interviewer: Did your family ever share about your experiences of being from Germany or being refugees with the people you worked with?

Herbert: Yes, we shared the experience when we got to school. We went to school everyday and we shared the experience with the Jewish community who was there. There was a small Jewish community. As a matter of fact, one of the Jewish people later on became the mayor of the city⁴⁹ and there were prominent people, had a big store, the family of Jerome Levy.⁵⁰ It was . . . They were very prominent. There was a number of families there. I would say altogether maybe forty or fifty people [from] about twenty or twenty-five families living there.

Yes, we shared. They were very supportive, that group. Then some of the Christian people, the farmer, people in school were very supportive. They were very open because they wanted to . . . We were different. They had never seen anything in the black belt of Alabama, people who had seen things. Also, they appreciated the fact we had a very good education.

⁴⁹ Napoleon Bonaparte 'Bony' Fields (1894-1964) was born in Decatur, Texas. He later moved to Demopolis, Alabama, where he served as mayor from 1949 to 1952 and was a member of Congregation B'nai Jeshurun. He and his wife, Louise, had four daughters.

⁵⁰ Jerome Milton Levy (1902-1988) was a native Alabaman and belonged to a prominent Jewish family in Demopolis, Alabama. He operated a department store, B.J. Levy & Son, was a member of the Chamber of Commerce and served on City Council. He was married to Emma Marie Levy and had two daughters.

Immediately, we were able to . . . In high school, when I went to high school, my best subject was English because I was better trained in grammar and punctuation than they were. In literature I wasn't but it was so strict in Germany. You've got to memorize your words. You've got to memorize everything. It was a very strict education process I'd just been through. Yes, it was a very new and different experience while we were there.

Shortly thereafter, we were able to get on our own farm. After we learned enough, our sponsors, the Sternes, helped us to acquire a farm. We really rented it. We had our own cows. It was just the four of us—mother, father, and my brother, and I—who took care of that. It was again a very trying experience because there wasn't a lot of money in farming in 1941. It was a big adjustment for all of us. Later on, we moved again to Union Town, Alabama, to become a manager of another farm.

In 1944, I became eighteen years old. I volunteered to go into the United States Army. I was going to be drafted but I was an enemy alien.⁵¹ It was a problem but I volunteered and became a citizen while I was in the army. I was in Camp Blanding, Florida when I became a citizen of the United States.⁵² I was very proud of it. My parents became citizens too after passing all the exams. After five years, they were allowed to become citizens. I served two years for the United States Army. I was one and a half years overseas as an infantry soldier.

I met again our sponsor, Mervyn Sterne, [who] was a World War I veteran and was very high up in the ranks as a Colonel. He was called back in, too. I remember right before I went overseas, I met with him in Washington [D.C.] and had an experience. He took me to the Pentagon. It was very exciting experience to me to see Washington and the . . . I had an opportunity to go to the [National] Archives and see the things that really people think there's nothing to it. I was very proud of it, to be a part of it now.

I came back from the military after I spent part of that time in Germany and helped to set up some [displaced persons] camps, and seeing all the cities devastated. I had the opportunity to

⁵¹ An 'alien' is someone who is living in a country but is not a citizen or national of that country. They become an 'enemy alien' during times of conflict with the country where they retain citizenship from. During World War II, Japanese, Italians, and Germans who had not become American citizens were legally considered enemy aliens and were subjected to many restrictions, which often included internment. Although many Jewish-Europeans were political refugees, they were still considered enemy aliens.

⁵² Camp Blanding Joint Training Center was built in 1940 in Clay County, Florida near the city of Starke. It is the primary military reservation and training base for the Florida National Guard, both the Florida Army National Guard and certain non-flying activities of the Florida Air National Guard.

visit the graves of my grandparents, the ones who . . . except my grandfather who wasn't there. I'll tell you that in just a minute, what happened to him.

We were very fortunate to get out, to come to America, to get the opportunity. What anybody may want to say about this country with all its flaws—and we've got plenty of them . . . I've travelled extensively in the last thirty or forty years. This country's the best country in the world. It gives the opportunity to do what's right, and to succeed, and to reach your potential, where in many countries, no one has that opportunity. I'm very proud to be a citizen.

As a matter of fact, when I came back, I volunteered to stay in the [United States Army] Reserves.⁵³ I came back as an enlisted man and went on the G.I. Bill⁵⁴ to school at Auburn University⁵⁵ and got a degree in agriculture. I joined the Reserves immediately. When I got out of school, I became an officer in the Reserve Corps. I stayed in the Reserves for twenty-five years and finally retired from the Reserves with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in 1971. I did it . . . It may sound trite, but I felt I had to give something back. It wasn't because of the few dollars that was paid then. I felt you had to give something back. I didn't have the opportunity to go overseas while I was in the Reserves, but I was alerted three times during world crises, and went to summer camp very year, and to weekend trainings too.

We feel very strongly. My father wrote a book and he was very emotional. He felt very strongly about what he owed to this country to give him the opportunity to get out. He never was the same person again after he got out of the concentration camp. He never made it in this country. He worked hard but he never made it, never succeeded economically.

My mother also worked. My father got sick. My mother worked. At age 60, she got a job in a factory. It's interesting. She worked in the Sharpe Manufacturing Company in Columbus, Georgia. That's where finally we had moved. My father had moved to another managing job in dairy. Then finally he couldn't do that anymore. They lived in Columbus, Georgia when I got back from the army.

⁵³ The United States Army Reserve is a reserve force of the United States Army. Together, the Army Reserve and the Army National Guard constitute the Army element of the Reserve components of the United States Armed Forces.

⁵⁴ The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, also known as the 'G.I. Bill,' was a law that provided a range of benefits for returning World War II veterans. It provides low-cost mortgages, low-interest loans to start a business, as well as educational assistance to service members, veterans, and their dependents.

⁵⁵ Auburn University is a public research and land grant university in Auburn, Alabama. Auburn is the second largest university in Alabama. It is one of the state's two public flagship universities.

Interviewer: Can I ask a question about your dad? You talked about the horrible treatment that he survived. Then he started a completely new way of life. You said that he was a very idealistic man. How do you account for all his mental strength? What kept him strong?

Herbert: My father . . . I'll be honest with you. The strength in my family . . . My father was a strong person but he didn't stay strong physically and emotionally. My mother was a strong person. She's the one who carried . . . She was the strong person in the family. She made things happen. She organized our lives. She became very strong. Both of them made a good team, but it was my mother who carried the strength.

In Columbus, Georgia, when somebody comes from another country, they were known as "the refugees." There was only fifteen of them. When she died in 1989, although she was still referred to in the eulogy as "the refugee who came to Columbus, Georgia as part of the group," she was completely self-sustaining. She was a member of Hadassah,⁵⁶ member of the Temple, of the Jewish community, she's the one who carried all the ladies around to the various events, and she was in charge of her life and a community contributor—not only in money, but in work. [She was] very active, very much a part of the Jewish community.

<Tape 1 Ends>

<Tape 2 Begins>

Interviewer: You shared with us some of the racial segregation that you saw in the South. Was there any treatment that you saw that reminded you of what your family experienced or what other Jews experienced in Germany?

Herbert: That's a good point. I hadn't thought about that a great deal. What we saw in Demopolis when we first came or out in the country when we lived on the farm, we saw how the farmhands were completely segregated, lived in shacks, very little pay, and had to work long hours, had very few rights, were completely segregated, they weren't exactly mistreated—physically mistreated—like maybe Jews were in [Germany]. But, they were, like I said, just one year out of slavery. They were a whole different class of people. [They were] completely dominated economically. They had no opportunities economically. They were not treated as equals. They were not treated as United States citizens that we were so proud of to become.

⁵⁶ *Hadassah*, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, is a volunteer organization founded in 1912 by Henrietta Szold, with more than 300,000 members and supporters worldwide. It supports health care and medical research, education and youth programs in Israel, and advocacy, education, and leadership development in the United States.

When we became citizens, it just opened up a whole new world for us. That's the reason I feel that the slavery and the aftereffects of slavery, the treatment, is a crime against humanity, maybe not on the level that the Holocaust is, but it's a crime against humanity because no human being should be treated like that or should be treated without an opportunity to move up and have the potential . . .

When World War II started, I was with the same people. We went to the registration centers to enlist and to go through the process to get into the army. I remember when I first volunteered in that group that I was in, I was in camps where there was a lot of African American people who had also just come in. Some of them didn't have a pair of shoes on. Some of them didn't know what to do with all the food they got. It just so happened it was Thanksgiving Day the first day I got into the camp. I was on KP, kitchen police. I could see that they couldn't handle the food because they weren't used to that type of food and the volume of it.

It was just a completely different life. They had a different opportunity in the military. It still was segregated at that time,⁵⁷ but they at least had an opportunity to experience what went on in other places. I think that's a good question, but I feel very strongly that . . . I'm grateful that things have gotten better in this country. They haven't gotten as good as they should be, but they're much better than they were in 1940, when I first came here.

Interviewer: Did you want to share your grandfather's story?

Herbert: Yes. I just want to talk about my grandmother and my grandfather on my mother's side, who were left when I left Germany, escaped from Germany in 1939. On that May day, they were at the train station. Frankfurt's train station is still there, which is kind of a back in train station.⁵⁸ [The trains have] got to back in. They were there. I can still see them waving. Like I said before, they were divorced, so they weren't even standing together. They were standing a little apart. [This is] a very important story, by the way.

⁵⁷ On July 26, 1948, President Harry S. Truman signed Executive Order 9981, establishing the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, committing the government to integrating the segregated military. It abolished discrimination "on the basis of race, color, religion or national origin" in the United States Armed Forces. The executive order eventually led to the end of segregation in the services.

⁵⁸ Frankfurt (Main) Hauptbahnhof is the busiest railway station in Germany. It was opened in August 1888. It is also one of the world's largest one-level railway halls, with five iron-and-glass halls covering 24 platforms. The station's layout requires all trains to change directions and reverse out of the station to continue on to their destination. In 1971, a subterranean level was added that includes a car park, large shopping mall, and stations for the U-Bahn and S-Bahn trains.

We were trying to get them out after we got here, but we were struggling so, learning how to farm, working long hours, no money. We didn't have no money. We bought groceries and the bills were sent to our sponsor, who paid it. I remember I got paid 25 cents a week spending money. My mother got a dollar a week for stamps so she could write her parents. The rest of it, we had to get by with on our own. We had very little money or none.

My grandparents, though . . . My grandmother died a natural death. But the pertinent story is that things kept on getting worse after the war started and moving toward in the early 1940s, which that was in 1940 or 1941 . . . I think she died in 1941. By that time, by the way, all Jews in Germany, including the ones who had already left, were given a middle name.⁵⁹ All females got the middle name of Sara and all males got the middle name of Israel to be sure that they identified as Jews legally. It's in the death notices that we got from my grandmother where my name said Herbert Israel Kohn—very interesting—grandson.

My grandmother died a natural death. My grandfather, who didn't live with her but helped her all he could because he saw that she needed all the help. He was 68 years old, and he scrounged food for her, and he was there, and helped her. On her deathbed, they got a rabbi and they got remarried. I thought that was poignant.

My grandfather . . . He wasn't as lucky as we were and not even as lucky as she was that she could die a natural death. He was picked up in 1942 on the streets of Frankfurt with his overcoat on and the yellow star on his overcoat. He was put in a cattle car.⁶⁰ This was a cattle car now with 40 and eight—forty human beings or eight cattle. The Nazis put 130 and more into these cars. There is a replica of a car in the Holocaust museum in Washington [D.C.]⁶¹ and there

⁵⁹ The Executive Order on the Law on the Alteration of Family and Personal Names was passed in August 1938. In the new law, authorities decreed that by January 1, 1939, Jewish men and women bearing first names of “non-Jewish” origin had to add “Israel” and “Sara,” respectively, to their given names.

⁶⁰ Railroads played a crucial role in the implementation of the “Final Solution.” Between the fall of 1941 and the fall of 1944, millions of Jews from Germany and German-occupied Europe were transported by rail to the killing centers in German-occupied Poland and other killing sites in the occupied Soviet Union. The Germans used both freight and passenger cars for the deportations. There were many different kinds of railway cars used for deportations, varying in size and weight. Rail cars were routinely packed to over double their capacity. Passengers were not provided with food or water, even when the transports had to wait days on railroad spurs for other trains to pass. The people deported in sealed freight cars further suffered from intense heat in summer, freezing temperatures in winter, and the stench of urine and excrement. Many died before the trains reached their destinations.

⁶¹ The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) is the United States' official memorial to the Holocaust. It was opened in 1993, adjacent to the National Mall in Washington, D.C. The USHMM has a railway car on display in its permanent exhibition. It is not certain that the rail car on display was used for the deportation of human beings, but it is typical of the type of rail car used in deportations.

are tracks and pictures in [The William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum] here that you can see how these cars were loaded down.

They shipped him to Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia.⁶² I documented this when I was in Germany when I got there as a soldier in 1945. This was in 1942. The Wannsee conference had just concluded and the Final Solution was going to take place. Although we don't like to refer to *Schindler's List*,⁶³ which is a lot of Hollywood in it, but *Schindler's List* had a lot of real, true recollections, mostly of the logistics that went on in shipping these Jews to fulfill the Wannsee conference command for the Final Solution, that means to kill them with Zyklon B gas⁶⁴ in death centers or killing factories.⁶⁵ There was a number of them . . . mostly in Eastern Europe. Some of them [were] in eastern Germany; some of them in Poland, Auschwitz-Birkenau being the most well known one.⁶⁶ Birkenau [was] right outside of Auschwitz . . . Several of them, where they were shipped to be killed . . .

[My grandfather] was shipped to Theresienstadt, which was also a camp where a lot of people got murdered. He arrived there documented "DOA" [dead on arrival] because he was on the bottom of the cattle car. That cattle car, like all the other cattle cars, were put on side tracks when military came through with transports of personnel. This was in 1942, when Germany

⁶² The Theresienstadt (Terezín) "camp-ghetto" near Prague in the present day Czech Republic was opened in late 1941 and existed until May 1945. It served as a ghetto, an assembly camp, and a concentration camp. In the course of its existence, approximately 140,000 Jews from Germany, Austria, and about one third of the Jewish population of Bohemia and Moravia were sent to Theresienstadt. Roughly 33,000 died in Theresienstadt itself due to starvation and disease. Nearly 90,000 Jews were deported from Theresienstadt to other ghettos, concentration camps, and extermination camps in Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe.

⁶³ *Schindler's List* is a 1994 film directed by Steven Spielberg based on the book by Thomas Keneally of the same name, in which businessman Oskar Schindler arrives in Krakow in 1939, ready to make his fortune from World War II, which has just started. After joining the Nazi party primarily for political expediency, he staffs his factory with Jewish workers for similarly pragmatic reasons. When the SS begins exterminating Jews in the Krakow ghetto, Schindler arranges to have his workers protected to keep his factory in operation, but soon realizes that in so doing, he is also saving innocent lives.

⁶⁴ Zyklon B was originally used in Germany before and during World War II for disinfection and pest extermination in ships, buildings and machinery. After the end of August 1941, Zyklon B was used in Auschwitz, first experimentally, and then routinely, as an agent of mass annihilation.

⁶⁵ The Germans differentiated between "concentration camps," which were used to contain slave laborers and prisoners of the state, and "extermination camps," whose primary purpose was the systematic killing of prisoners. Chelmno, Belzec, Treblinka, Sobibor, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Majdanek-Lublin were the main extermination camps in the period of 1941-1945. The use of gas chambers was the most common method of mass murdering prisoners in the extermination camps.

⁶⁶ Auschwitz-Birkenau was a network of camps built and operated by Germany just outside the Polish town of Oswiecim (renamed 'Auschwitz' by the Germans) in Polish areas annexed by Germany during World War II. It is estimated that the SS and police deported at a minimum 1.3 million people (approximately 1.1 million of which were Jews) to the Auschwitz-Birkenau complex between 1940 and 1945. Camp authorities murdered 1.1 million of these prisoners.

fought on two fronts—the Eastern Front and the Western Front.⁶⁷ It's unbelievable that they would take the time out to fulfill their pledge to kill all the people who didn't fit in the middle of a war. My grandfather was one of the six million. There were a lot of other of my more distant relatives who were murdered and many friends in the camps.

Just four years ago I had the opportunity to go to Auschwitz-Birkenau. I went on a tour of Eastern Europe—my wife and I on our own. We went to Warsaw [Poland] and saw the Warsaw ghetto, which is not a ghetto anymore.⁶⁸ We saw the memorials. We saw Krakow [Poland], went to Poland, and ended up in Auschwitz-Birkenau. We didn't end up there, but that was a major stop. We took a tour. I've been also to Dachau twice and I saw that camp, which is now called a memorial place.⁶⁹ They don't call it concentration camps. It's [been] converted to a museum.

At Auschwitz-Birkenau, I saw actually what [was shown] in *Schindler's List* when the trains came in and unloaded the occupants. What happened was these people were shipped day and night. They thought they were going to a better place because they were taken out of a ghetto or some place where they just barely existed. [They thought] maybe they had an opportunity to get to a better life. A little German officer would stand there when the trains came in—a little Nazi SS officer—and he would wave his finger this way or that way. This way meant you would go to a work force. Over here, you would go to the other group. That process separated parents

⁶⁷ Germany's military engagements in Europe during World War II are generally divided into two separate headings—the Western Front and the Eastern Front. The Western Front included Denmark, Norway, Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, and Germany. The Eastern Front included conflicts against the Soviet Union, Poland and other Allies. The war on the Eastern Front was the scene of the largest military confrontation in history and was particularly brutal. By the winter of 1944-1945, Hitler's army was unable to maintain its eastern and western fronts.

⁶⁸ The Jewish community in Warsaw [Polish: Warszawa] was the largest in Poland, composing about 30 percent of the entire population of the city (about 337,000 Jews). Before World War II, Warsaw was a major center of Jewish life and culture. The Warsaw Ghetto was the largest of all the Jewish ghettos in German-occupied Europe during World War II. German authorities established it in November 1940. The Jews of Warsaw and the surrounding areas were shoved into a small space in a poorer part of the city, which was then surrounded by a wall. The ghetto population at its peak was about 400,000 Jews. The conditions in the ghetto were harsh. There was not enough food, coal in the winter, shelter or basic necessities. Starvation and illness from the over-crowded, deplorable conditions inside the Warsaw ghetto killed many. From July 22 until September 12, 1942, about 265,000 Jews were deported from Warsaw to the Treblinka extermination camp while approximately 35,000 Jews inside the ghetto were killed. Then there was relative quiet until January 1943 when a second major wave of deportation started. When German SS and police units, assisted by auxiliaries entered the ghetto, they were surprised to be met with organized armed resistance and withdrew. When they returned on April 19, 1943, stiff resistance that continued for three weeks met the Germans. By the time the better-armed Germans ended the operation on May 16, 1943, the ghetto was largely destroyed. At least 7,000 Jews sided during the fighting, another 42,000 survivors were captured and deported and approximately 10,000 escaped to the Aryan side of the city.

⁶⁹ Established on March 22, 1933, Dachau was the first concentration camp established by the Nazi regime. It was located in southern Germany near the town of Dachau, about 10 miles northwest of Munich. Over 188,000 prisoners passed through Dachau between 1933 and 1945. Prisoners at Dachau were used as forced laborers and tens of thousands were literally worked to death. American troops liberated the camp on April 29, 1945.

from their children, mothers from their babies. This little human being determined who shall live and who shall die.

The workforce was given an extra ration, maybe a slice of bread more and water, and they would work, taken off every day to work. The other group was over there. They were told to put their belongings down, take their clothes off. They were going to take a shower. They were going to take a bath for the first time in weeks. In Dachau, you walk in and there's even a sign over it, "*Brausebad*," [German] means shower bath.⁷⁰ It's like a communal bath with pipes and showerheads. About forty of them would be pushed into this room. The door would shut and all of a sudden Zyklon B gas came out of the showerheads. It took twenty minutes to kill forty people.

They brought in a workforce made out of Jews too, with carts, and loaded the bodies, and took them to the ovens, which were behind the gas chamber. But before they loaded the ovens, they were told to look at their teeth and knock out any gold that they may have had, or if they had any rings on their fingers to take them off, or if they had any shoes left on them for any reason to take those too.

When I was in Auschwitz-Birkenau, I actually saw big buckets full of gold fillings, of rings, that were still kept fifty-five years later as evidence of what the Nazis did. There were warehouses full of shoes. Very effectively, [at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum] in Washington [D.C.], there's a big room with nothing but shoes in it. It's a stunning sight when you see shoes that people wore. Then there were boxes and boxes, large boxes of prescription eyeglasses that were kept preserved as a reminder to the world what happened. That's a Nazi way. It's a German way: record keeping.

Those gas chambers operated and the ovens burned from 1942 to 1945, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week in a number of locations until six million people were murdered for no other reason than they believed to worship G-d differently [and] because they didn't fit into the system that was being fostered in Germany. It shall never happen again.

⁷⁰ Dachau was divided into two sections—the main camp and a crematorium area next to it, which had been constructed in 1942. The crematorium was known as Barrack X and did contain a gas chamber with a sign painted above the door that read, "*Brausebad*" [German: shower bath]. There is no credible evidence, however, that the chamber was ever used to murder human beings. Instead, prisoners underwent selections and the sick or weakened prisoners were sent to the Hartheim "euthanasia" killing center near Linz, Austria and murdered. The SS further used a firing range and gallows in the crematorium area as killing sites for prisoners. The crematorium in Dachau served to dispose of corpses from the concentration camp, but by the end of 1944, their capacity was no longer enough to cremate the scores of dead from the camp.

Ruth: Is that why you talk to so many groups of students? When you talk with them, is that your main message?

Herbert: Yes, that's the message. When I teach this and talk to children, the message is that we have a role not to be bystanders. Schools are being . . . Columbine High School . . . That's caused because people were being bystanders. There's evidence that some people knew what was in the minds of these people and they were maybe afraid or they turned the other way instead of reporting it in an appropriate way to their parents and teachers without being hurt or being overt about it. We cannot turn our back. We gotta learn that this is happening all the time and can grow into something like this terrible crime, the Holocaust.

Interviewer: From telling your story to your family, your friends, and students, have you seen people's lives or ideas change?

Herbert: Yes, lots of changes have come about right here in Atlanta, for instance, which I can talk about. Twelve years ago, the Bureau of Jewish Education started a little program . . . trying to educate high school kids.⁷¹ There was lots of difficulty because the egos of the various groups wouldn't allow everybody to come together. In our committee, we brought together efforts of the [Anti-Defamation League],⁷² efforts of the various organizations, the [Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta],⁷³ Bureau, of the [Eternal Life-] *Hemshech*,⁷⁴ of the different generations of survivors who have organizations. We tried to bring them together. We did a fairly good job, but it was not easy. It was just the beginning.

⁷¹ The Atlanta Bureau of Jewish Education (ABJE) was created in 1946 to foster Jewish education in the city. In 1947, it was instrumental in forming a Hebrew High School in Atlanta. Over the course of four decades, the Bureau offered services to schools, the community and individuals including curriculum guides for Atlanta-area public schools, Holocaust education programs, conferences, workshops, programs for teenagers in Israel, festivals, adult education, classes, lectures, and extension classes for Sunday school teachers. The organization also operated a lending library of Jewish books and resources. The Bureau consisted of all accredited Rabbis in the community, all chairmen of committees of education of affiliated schools and all professional heads of affiliated schools.

⁷² The Independent Order of B'nai B'rith, a Jewish service organization in the United States, founded the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) in 1913. It is an international Jewish non-governmental organization based in the United States. Describing itself as "the nation's premier civil rights/human relations agency," the ADL states that it "fights antisemitism and all forms of bigotry, defends democratic ideals, and protects civil rights for all," doing so through "information, education, legislation, and advocacy."

⁷³ The Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta raises funds, which are dispersed throughout the Jewish community. Services also include caring for Jews in need locally and around the world, community outreach, leadership development, and educational opportunities. It is part of the Jewish Federation of North America (JFNA).

⁷⁴ Eternal Life-*Hemshech* is an organization of Atlanta Holocaust survivors, their descendants and friends dedicated to commemorating the 6,000,000 Jewish victims of the Holocaust. Approximately 100 Holocaust survivors living in Atlanta, Georgia founded Eternal Life-*Hemshech* in 1964. *Hemshech* is a Hebrew word that means "continuation." Their purpose was to "perpetuate the memory of their beloved families along with all of the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust."

Let me tell ya, today I got a notice that there's a [Georgia Commission on the Holocaust] that's being formed where they're trying to coordinate this.⁷⁵ They're trying this again but on a completely different level because today there's all types of programs going on. I myself speak to about 30 different school groups every year. I'm just one of many. Not that many. I think we have 16 or so speakers. Some of them don't go out. Some of them just do it in the [The William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum]. I go out to the schools.

There's a whole different attitude. There's a Commission on the Holocaust in the state of Georgia that is very active and has done a good job. There's marvelous resource libraries not only at Federation or Breman Museum, but also at Jewish Educational Services,⁷⁶ and at Emory University,⁷⁷ and at Georgia State⁷⁸—excellent libraries. At Georgia State, a lot of people don't know it's the Max Cuba collection, which is excellent.⁷⁹ One of the things I can envision that people need to organize [the resources so that] this is interactive, so people know where the materials are if they want to write on it. Hopefully, this council can help do this with Deborah Lipstadt and Emory's resources.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ The Georgia Commission on the Holocaust is a secular, non-partisan state-agency administratively attached to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. The Commission was established by Executive Order by Joe Frank Harris in 1986. Governor Zell Miller re-established the Commission upon taking office and charged it with creating education programs for the citizens. Then in 1998 by act of the Georgia General Assembly the Commission became a permanent state agency. The Commission consists of fifteen members who are appointed by the Governor, Lt. Governor and Speaker of the House. Its mission is to preserve the memory of the Holocaust and promote public understanding of the history through education and reflection.

⁷⁶ Jewish Educational Services (JES) was an organization that served the Atlanta, Georgia Jewish community. JES was eventually absorbed into the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta's Center for Jewish Education and Experiences (CJEE). CJEE in turn became Tribe360, which closed its doors in the early 2000s.

⁷⁷ Emory University is a private university in Atlanta, Georgia. It was founded in 1836 by a small group of Methodists and named in honor of Methodist bishop John Emory. Today it considered one of the top ranking universities in the United States.

⁷⁸ Georgia State University is a public research university in Atlanta, Georgia. Initially intended as a night school, it was established in 1913 as the Georgia Institute of Technology's Evening School of Commerce. Today, it is one of the University System of Georgia's four research universities.

⁷⁹ Max Cuba (1903-1972) was born in New York and lived in Atlanta, Georgia. He was a Certified Public Accountant, community leader, and philanthropist. Max served as a city alderman several times, and was a leader on the Atlanta-Fulton County Joint Planning Board for over 30 years. He was also twice the president of the Atlanta Jewish Community Council, and a member of the Board of Directors of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds. He was the "Man of the Year" for B'nai B'rith, Jewish War Veterans, and the Jewish Theological Seminary. He was the President of Ahavath Achim Congregation and B'nai B'rith.

⁸⁰ Deborah Lipstadt is an American historian and author of the books *Denying the Holocaust* and *The Eichmann Trial*. She is the Dorot Professor of Modern Jewish and Holocaust Studies at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. Lipstadt was an historical consultant to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. President Clinton appointed her to the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, on which she served two terms. She was a member of its Executive Committee of the Council and chaired the Educational Committee and Academic Committee of the Holocaust Museum.

Yes, there's been a big change in the last twelve years. We've moved from struggling with the education process to now it's an important part of the curriculum. In years before, we started in March for teachers to ask for people to come in or to take tours of the museum. It's year round [now]. It started already. October, November, December are full and it goes on all around though the year.

Yes, there's been change. I think people realize the Holocaust can teach us. We can't dwell on the crimes and we can't hate people for what happened 50, 60 years ago, and children don't understand it really. They can't relate to it. But we can learn from it. They do understand what happened at Columbine High School.⁸¹ And they do understand that there is hatred out there. Hatred's got to be stopped. We've got to come together and find ways to learn from this terrible crime. People are not that different that they need to be murdered and treated like . . . exterminated like a pest, like insects. I think we have come a long ways. I think we have a long way to go.

<Interview stops; then resumes>

Herbert: It's not an afterthought. It's something I think about a great deal when I talk about the Holocaust, and my experiences, and what I went through, and the ups and downs of my life. I married twice. My first wife passed away and I remarried again to someone whose husband had passed away. Between the two of us, to this day, we have five children and eleven grandchildren. That in itself is proof that Hitler's plan outlined in *Mein Kampf* to destroy the Jewish people didn't work.

On top of that, I want to be sure that we understand that by having the opportunity to come to America, which gave me the opportunity to have three careers—one, in agriculture; two, as a certified public accountant; three, as a homebuilder in a homebuilding company—and not only that, enabled me to work in this country and reach my potential. I'm still able to work to this day helping people because my work right now is dealing with low income housing for the city of Atlanta. I'm a consultant for the city and some city-related organizations, nonprofits to help them get better housing for people who never had the opportunity to get into decent housing. You see, what I learned, what came out of the Holocaust . . . that I was able to survive it

⁸¹ Columbine High School is a public high school in Littleton, Colorado, in the Denver metropolitan area. It was the site of the Columbine High School massacre. On April 20, 1999, two twelfth grade (senior) students went on a shooting spree, killing 12 students and one teacher and wounding more than 20 others before turning their guns on themselves and committing suicide. At the time, it was the worst high school shooting in U.S. history.

and escape from the Final Solution, gave me also the opportunity to do some of the things that I think are important. I do believe that we are our brother's keeper. I do believe that we have the responsibility to make this a better world.

<Tape 2 Ends>

INTERVIEW ENDS

Cuba Family Archives