

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

MEMOIRIST: HENRY GALLANT
INTERVIEWER: JOHN KENT
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INTERVIEW BEGINS

<Begin Disk 1>

John: Let's start with the date today and where are we?

Henry: We are in Atlanta, Georgia. September 21, 2000.

John: What's your name now and at birth?

Henry: My name is Henry Gallant . . . spelled G-A-L-L-A-N-T . . . formerly Heinz Goldstein.

John: Where were you born and when?

Henry: I was born in Berlin, Germany on the thirtieth of October, 1928.

John: Discuss what your original family life looked like as a child.

Henry: It was a very comfortable life up to the time things deteriorated with the Nazi laws,¹ and restrictions, and harassment, and what have you, which culminated on *Kristallnacht*² which was the worst. Our life was very comfortable. My father [Hermann] was very German . . . he was a very proud German . . . he fought in World War I . . . he was [a non-]commissioned officer in

¹ The Nazi's racial laws were a set of policies and laws implemented by Nazi Germany, asserting the superiority of the "Aryan race," and based on a specific racist doctrine which claimed scientific legitimacy. These policies targeted Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, handicapped people, and others who were labeled as inferior in a racial hierarchy to the "master race" of Germans. In Germany, the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 were passed on November 15, 1935. They included the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor, prohibiting marriages and sexual relations between Jews and Germans, and the Reich Citizenship Law, which stripped Jews of their German citizenship. These laws were emulated by allies of the Nazis.

² On November 8 and 9, 1938, a state-sponsored nationwide pogrom was started by the Nazis. 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.

the German army. That whole family on my father's side was very pro-German, very assimilated; whereas on my mother's side, they were very Orthodox and came from Poland. My mother [Rita] was the force in the family that perpetuated the traditional Judaism type thing.

John: How many brothers and sisters?

Henry: I have no brothers and sisters. I'm an only child. My father had four brothers, and it might be worth noting that one of his brothers fell in World War I. He served also and died for Germany.

John: What did your parents do in Berlin?

Henry: My father worked in the early years for a bank. Later he took a partner and they manufactured perfume. He was a chemist.

John: When you were hearing your parents talking as a child do you remember what their outlook was on their situation as far as the Jewish identity issue?

Henry: They identified strongly with Judaism . . . I think . . . as I remember . . . most German Jews pursued their traditional Jewish background . . . but they traveled socially in a very Jewish environment.

John: Did they talk at all about the issue of the relationships between Jewish and non-Jewish people? Was that a topic or any kind of a problem?

Henry: No, not really. First of all, I was ten years old at the time, therefore I was probably not too tuned into whatever these kinds of conversations were about. I really couldn't tell. But we had gentile friends and the relationship of gentile to Jew was not problematic at all until the rise to power by Adolf Hitler and his entourage.

John: What are some of the memories you have of the mid 1930's, late 1930's, when things were changing. What did you see around you?

Henry: I saw it change and the implementation of the laws. I remember the park I played in had yellow benches and green park benches. The green benches were for gentiles and the yellow ones were for Jews, and they were so marked. I remember that restaurants—certain popular cafes and restaurants—had signs outside on the lawn, "Dogs and Jews Not Allowed." These are the things that I remember quite well.

John: How was it explained to you what these things meant or why it was happening? Any explanation?

Henry: It wasn't really explained . . . I don't remember that I asked any questions. It's something that got worse and worse, and you just lived with it. But I was quite sheltered. I went to a Jewish school that was a very popular school in Berlin called . . . on the Fasenenstrasse [German: Fasenenstraße] off the Kurfurstendamm³ [German: Kurfürstendamm], which is the Fifth Avenue⁴ of Berlin. I do not recall anything unusual until late 1938 when my parents were preparing for the inevitable immigration—leaving Germany. I was in a summer camp. It was really—I just recently found out—a school that was opened year round outside of Berlin. During that period of late 1938 they took in lots of children whose parents were preparing for the immigration. Precisely on the night before the *Kristallnacht*—the 'Night of Broken Glass'—hordes of Nazi youth invaded the school, threw the furniture out of the windows, and screamed insults. We went away—I ran away—and made my way back into Berlin. I recently found out, through a German magazine which I receive once a month from Berlin, that this school was actually burnt down to the ground. I didn't know that. I went into Berlin, and I saw the stores on the Kurfurstendamm—the main boulevard—had in huge red letters the word 'Jew' painted on it. The next day all these windows were broken. There was one store that I recall was a store where they sold yarn for knitting. The Nazis were not sure whether the owner was Jewish or not. I remember the name Geiger—G-E-I-G-E-R—a wool store. They put not the word 'Jew' on the window but a huge question mark. Because evidently their records did not show exactly what the background was of the owners. Anyway, the next day all these windows were broken, and it was immense. Thousands of people were arrested and put into these camps like Dachau,⁵

³ German: Kurfürstendamm. The Kurfurstendamm is one of the most famous avenues in Berlin. It is long and lined with trees and shops, hotels, and pricy real estate.

⁴ Fifth Avenue is a major thoroughfare in the center of the borough of Manhattan in New York City. It is lined with prestigious shops and is among the most expensive shopping streets in the world.

⁵ A concentration camp in Germany established on March 22, 1933. Dachau was originally a camp for political and criminal prisoners in need of punishment and rehabilitation to the proper German mind set. After *Kristallnacht* several thousand Jews were imprisoned there to make the point that they had no future in Germany. Some died but most were released in due time finally properly terrorized into leaving Germany no matter what. The conditions were harsh but got more so during the war when medical care was inadequate, prisoners were murdered by lethal injection and used as guinea pigs in medical experiments, or worked, starved or death to death. In the last year of the war, 78,635 prisoners were registered there, doubling and tripling the size of a camp which was already a nightmare of sickness, starvation and death. And that was just the prisoners who were registered—in the final months of the war most weren't. Toward the end of the war it was the dumping place for thousands of prisoners, mostly Jews and prisoners-of-war, who were there marched from the east where they were left to die without food, water or housing. Disease and starvation from the overcrowding killed thousands of prisoners. The Americans liberated Dachau on April 29, 1945. They found thousands of corpses strewn around the grounds and thousands more dying.

Ravensbruck [German: Ravensbrück],⁶ various concentration camps—not death camps, although people died there because of terrible treatment—but I don't think they had any gas chambers. On the thirteenth of May, we left Berlin for Hamburg [Germany] and boarded the *St. Louis*⁷ along with 937 other German Jews, and we left Germany. That was a wonderful journey, actually—it was a wonderful trip that I recall as a child. I have definite memories of swimming and festivities, specifically for children, and as well as for adults. We arrived in Havana [Cuba] . . .

John: Before we move on, do you know anything about what your parents had to do or to go through before this immigration was possible?

Henry: I know that they had to liquidate the best way they could whatever our possessions were. The laws were such that even our business, really, was no longer totally owned by us—you had to have a non-Jewish partner. All assets were frozen, so it happened gradually that they took control in every conceivable way of whatever it was that you owned. My parents were busy liquidating the best way they could to raise the . . . I believe, if I'm not mistaken . . . it was \$750 that you had to pay the Cuban government to receive the visa. Also, there was the cost of the trip to Havana [Cuba], which you had to buy a return ticket [for] because that's what the Hamburg-America line requested or required.

John: What was the final destination?

Henry: Havana.

John: You were going to be living in Cuba?

⁶ Ravensbruck was established in 1939 and approximately 120,000 women of 40 nationalities passed through it. The women were put to work in the textile and armaments industry. In 1943 the population of the camp tripled with the conditions deteriorated drastically. When the number of women exceeded the barracks capacity they were put in tents and slept on the bare ground. They died in droves every day. The infirmary was the source of women for experimentation by German doctors. At the end of the war the camp population was swelled by Jewish women who were marched out of camps to the east and driven there and dumped. In January 1945 preparations were made to start mass executions and many were murdered by injection of poisons or shooting. There was a small gas chamber installed in early 1945 in which about 5,000 to 6,000 women were murdered. In March 1945 thousands of women prisoners were marched out of Ravensbruck and sent to Mauthausen and Bergen-Belsen where they were abandoned. On April 27 and 28, another 20,000 women prisoners were marched out in a northwesterly direction. On May 1, 1945 the Russian army liberated the last 2,000 prisoners left in the camp.

⁷ The *St. Louis* was a German ocean liner most notable for a single voyage which began on May 13, 1939, in which her captain, Gustav Schröder, tried to find homes for 936 German-Jewish refugees, after they were denied entry to Cuba (even though they had valid visas), the United States and Canada. The ship with its Jewish refugees was forced to return to Europe where the passengers were admitted to France, Belgium, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The 288 passengers who were accepted by the United Kingdom survived. Of the 620 who were returned to continental Europe, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum estimates that 254 were murdered by the Germans.

Henry: That was the idea . . . to go to Cuba . . . to Havana . . . until our quota number would come up to enter the United States. It was an in-between type thing that we were looking for. But as it was we were not allowed to disembark, and that was quite tragic. We had already relatives in Havana who had left Berlin two weeks before with a smaller ship called the *Iberia*. It had 200 passengers, and they managed to enter Havana, Cuba.

John: What are some of the other memories of that trip on the ship?

Henry: What I remember distinctly is that one man jumped overboard when it turned out that the ship had to leave the so-called ‘port’—the harbor—and go to the three-mile international waters. When things became more and more clear they we were not [going to be] allowed to land, this man lost his head, and jumped overboard, and cut his wrist. Then they took him to a hospital in Havana, but from what we understand is he was not allowed to stay there either. I remember a lot of turmoil on the way back to Europe. The whole world was trying to find a place for the 937 people because return to Germany would have been unthinkable. What happened is that France, England, Belgium and Holland took each something like 220 or so Jews. Unfortunately, France, and Belgium, and Holland were overrun. War broke out a few weeks afterwards. Then the people who had found refuge in those countries, with the exception of England, were quickly caught up in the Holocaust, of which I don’t think too many actually survived. My own family . . . I was put into a home for children outside of Paris, my mother was permitted to remain free, and my father was interned. He never saw freedom again. He was interned in a French internment camp . . . in several camps . . . finally shipped to Gurs⁸—that’s G-U-R-S—a camp on the Basses-Pyrenees [French: Basses-Pyrénées]⁹ near the Spanish border. I do have letters—we received letters from him. The conditions were—it was not a concentration camp by any means, it was a *condentainment*—an internment camp—but the conditions were something as you would probably imagine happened in Bosnia¹⁰ as recent as several months ago. People had not enough to eat, they were literally dying from hunger, they were walking in mud knee deep, and sleeping without heat on straw mats, and generally . . .

⁸ The Gurs camp was located in the Basque region of southwestern France, near the village of Gurs. It was one of the earliest and biggest transit camps for Jews established in prewar France.

⁹ A region in Aquitaine, southwest of France that takes its name from the Pyrenees Mountains and the Atlantic Ocean.

¹⁰ The Bosnian War took place between 1992 and 1995. The main belligerents were the forces of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and those of the self-proclaimed Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat entities within Bosnia and Herzegovina. The war was part of the breakup of Yugoslavia and was characterized by bitter fighting, indiscriminate shelling of cities and towns and ethnic cleansing, perpetrated by all the forces against each other.

people were dying there. The fate of my father is well documented. By 1942, the French Vichy¹¹ government—which [was] the fascist government—deported all Jews including 70,000 French Jews, to Drancy¹²—that’s six kilometers outside of Paris—and from there to Auschwitz-[Birkenau].¹³ It’s just recently that I found out even the number of the convoy in which my father was deported to Auschwitz-[Birkenau]. It was convoy number 17.¹⁴ He was never seen again from that day on. We were somewhat—I would say, very—fortunate. My mother took me out of that home for children. She was permitted to do so, and we left the Paris area—[Le] Lemont is the name of the town—for Nice on the French Riviera. We lived there until the end of 1942 in a relative safe and pleasant lifestyle . . . then bought false identification papers . . . because the Jews were picked up at the Riviera, Nice, Cap d’Antibes, and Juan-les-Pins, and Monaco, Monte Carlo, and that whole area . . . wherever they could find them they picked them up and they deported them. We were hiding with a gentile family in an attic, and bought false ID papers, and took a guide who drove us with a car to the base of a mountain that would lead . . . that crossing that mountain would lead into Switzerland. By the end of 1942, I must say that Switzerland did not refuse entry. We were given sanctuary in Switzerland—treated marvelously.

¹¹ Vichy France was the government of Marshal Philippe Pétain’s regime during France’s occupation by Nazi Germany in World War II. It was named for the town of Vichy where the capital was established. From 1940 to 1942, while nominally the government of France as a whole, Vichy only fully controlled the unoccupied zone in southern France, while Germany occupied Paris and northern France. Following the Allied landings in French North Africa on November 8, 1942, southern France was also occupied by the Axis on 11 November 1942, the although the Vichy regime remained in existence, it was reduced to a puppet government.

¹² The Drancy internment camps was an assembly and detention camp for confining Jews who were later deported to the extermination camps during the German military administration of Occupied France. In a northeastern suburb of Paris between June 1942 and July 1944, 67,400 French, Polish and German Jews were deported from the camp in 64 rail transports, which included 6,000 children.

¹³ Auschwitz was a complex of camps: the Main Camp (Auschwitz I), Auschwitz-Birkenau and Monowitz (Auschwitz III). Many smaller sub-camps were attached to the complex which drew their labor from the Main Camp and Auschwitz-Birkenau. The Main Camp is where the museum is today and has the famous ‘*Arbeit Macht Frei*’ gate. The Main Camp was established on the site of existing Polish army barracks just outside the town of Oswiecim (renamed Auschwitz by the Germans) and could hold about 10,000 prisoners. Later, when Hitler and Himmler wanted to expand the size of the camp they built Auschwitz-Birkenau about 2-1/2 miles away from the Main Camp. This is the camp with the big brick gate and the railroad tracks leading to the ramp and where the four gas chambers and crematoria came to be located. About 76,000 Jews from France, mostly from Paris, were deported by train; most of these people died in Auschwitz. A majority of the deportations left France from the detention camp of Drancy.

¹⁴ Herman Goldstein was deported on Convoy 17, which left the Gurs transit camp on August 6, 1942. It stopped in the Drancy internment camp where the final transport was assembled, finally departing for Auschwitz-Birkenau on August 10, 1942. Convoy 17 was composed almost entirely of German Jews. There were 1,006 Jews in total of which 525 were women and 475 were men. On their arrival in Auschwitz-Birkenau on August 12, 1942, 240 Jewish men and women were selected for labor and given numbers and the other 766 were murdered immediately in the gas chambers. To the best knowledge, only one man, Herbert Fuchs, had survived this convoy by 1945. See the page 140 from *Memorial to the Jews Deported from France, 1942-1944* by Serge Klarsfeld (1983) for the transport list and description for more information.

We were first in a football field outside of Geneva [Switzerland], then put into a camp near Bern [Switzerland] in Eriswil, and then the Swiss *Kinderhilfe*¹⁵ . . . Red Cross children. . . how would you say that . . . an assistant program for children . . . a relief organization to protect the children. They placed me in a . . . first a Jewish family, later on after about a year in a gentile family. I lived a rather pleasant life in Switzerland.

John: What were these years . . . what was told to you and the other kids about what happening, and why it was happening . . . what you could expect?

Henry: We didn't really have access to very much news. It was the height of World War II. We followed the war—the progress of the Allies—and waited for the invasion, and listened to the broadcasts in Switzerland—which was a democracy—you could listen to the radio. We had no news—we knew nothing of concentration camps. Yes, we knew there were camps, but no one had any idea that people were being gassed. These pictures . . . they came out in 1945 at the end of the war . . . we were kept totally in the dark . . . we didn't know anything.

John: What did you know about your father's death?

Henry: We had always hoped up to 1945 . . . we came into Switzerland in 1942 and stayed there until 1947 . . . and the war ended in 1945. Up to 1945, we had actually lived with the hope of seeing my father again. That's very interesting—I never really had the opportunity to thoroughly mourn, as you would when someone dies, because when you live with a person that's absent for five years or six years, and then you don't see them again, it's a very strange emotion. I find it hard to explain. It's not something where you have someone who's sick or old and dies regardless. My mother was 85 when she passed away, and even though it was a very advanced age, I was devastated—much more so than I ever was from my father, simply because he just . . . he left . . . in a way that just is simply not normal.

John: What was it like for you being a boy going through the war, even if you didn't know what was happening?

Henry: I lived a very normal life in Switzerland. I lived with a Jewish family for a year. This family they had two other sons. I must say they treated me—they made it a point to treat all three of us—in the same way. I was a member of the boy scouts. Due to leaving Germany and not knowing French at the time, I had fallen behind in my school grades, and this woman sat up

¹⁵ The Swiss Red Cross, during the Second World War, provided for 180,000 children to come to Switzerland in the form of the "*Kinderhilfe*."

into the wee hours of the morning studying so that I would catch up in secondary school. I lived a very normal life. The only thing that troubled me was that I was separated from my mother, who was in a camp—which you can really not call a camp. What the Swiss did—they took all the resort hotels, since there was no tourism—they transformed the hotels into refugee camps, with a limited amount of freedom. I remember the women were allowed to go to town—they went to Lucerne [Switzerland]—and they didn't have a bad life. That's why I could never really condemn the Swiss. We just know about the negative things, such as what the banks did, and what have you, and the failure of Switzerland to allow the refugees to enter.¹⁶ But that was not known to us . . . we didn't really know it until just recently. To us, Switzerland was a county that granted us asylum, as they did to many thousands of others. We were well treated.

John: How did your mother cope with that war period, being separated from her husband?

Henry: I cannot really divulge the emotions that . . . it would be very difficult to speak for another person. I can only imagine that it must have been a very difficult time for her. She probably . . . but since all these other women were in the same predicament . . . I saw my mother once every six weeks. That was the policy of the Swiss government—to allow the children to join the mothers—we would then be given a furlough, so to speak, for—I believe it was one week—which you could choose the place where you wanted to spend that week, and you would be given spending money. The Swiss were . . . my recollection is really one of appreciation and gratitude to the Swiss for what we experienced. I can't talk for those poor victims who were sent back, who tried to enter Switzerland . . . the policy that they led on changed to the better . . . but for us—under the circumstances—it was a positive thing.

John: Since most of the people on that *St. Louis* ended up in death camps, any knowledge—even afterwards—as to why you and your family were one of the more fortunate ones? Was it luck or were there decisions made that . . .

Henry: I suppose it depends on the individual. Some call it fate . . . others . . .

John: Did people choose where they go or was it chosen for them?

Henry: No, when France, Belgium, England, and Holland decided to accept each 200 and some of the passengers, I remember that four delegations came on board, and you could utter really a

¹⁶ Swiss officials, wanting to restrict immigration, negotiated with and approved of the Germans' decision to put a red 'J' in the passports of Jews in 1938. Further, although Switzerland did allow the entry of about 25,000 Jews they also rejected more than 30,000 Jewish refugees at the border, although they knew that their return usually meant that would be sent to labor camps. The Swiss government publically apologized on March 8, 1955 for their role in marking passports.

preference. To what extent that would be given . . . I don't know. There were many people . . . nobody knew what would happen . . . this was before the war broke out . . . whoever was clever enough to choose England had a better fate, a better chance for survival than those who chose either France, Belgium or Holland.

John: What do you remember about the trip back to Europe?

Henry: I remember the mood had drastically changed on board. Instead of festivities, they had meetings on board where the progress would be relayed to the passengers as to what the chances were to go here or there, and rumors were flying around about going here, or going there. There were organizations in the United States, like the [American] Joint [Distribution Committee]¹⁷ and HIAS [Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society]¹⁸ and several others, and they were all trying to find a place for these people to go. FDR . . . [Franklin Delano] Roosevelt¹⁹ . . .

John: Was this ever brought up as a topic or an issue?

Henry: You have to understand that a ship with a thousand people—937 people—is like a small town. If you're on 'A' deck, you do not really know what goes on on 'D' deck at the time. You only, by way of rumor, you find out that this happened, or that happened. From what I know—through the media and the book *Voyage of the Damned*,²⁰ which documented the voyage of the *St. Louis*, and other magazines, newspapers, and other media—I know that they had discussed the possibility of taking the ship to Palestine and scuttling it . . . or whatever you call it . . .

¹⁷ A worldwide Jewish relief organization headquartered in New York. It was established in 1914. Before World War II, it sent funds to subsidize medical care, schools, vocational training, welfare programs and emigration efforts to beleaguered Jews in Europe. During the Nazi era they tried to get Jewish refugees out to anywhere that would have them including the United States, Palestine, and Latin America. When war broke out they helped thousands of Jews in Poland with shelters and soup kitchens, hospitals, and educational and cultural programs. When the United States entered the war in 1941, the Joint shifted gears since it was not allowed to operate legally in enemy countries. They used international connections to channel aid to Jews in conquered Europe. Wartime headquarters were set up in Lisbon, Portugal from which the Joint mounted rescue operations for desperate refugees including sponsoring a program to get 15,000 Jews from Europe to Shanghai, China. After the war, the Joint provided desperately needed supplies and necessities to survivors. More than 227 million pounds of food, medicine, clothing and other supplies were shipped to Europe to survivors inside and outside of DP camps in Eastern Europe, Hungary, Poland and Romania.

¹⁸ HIAS was founded in 1881. Its original purpose was the help the constant flow of Jewish immigrants from Russian in relocating. During and after World War II, they had offices throughout Europe, South and Central America and the Far East. They worked to get Jews out of Europe and to any country that would have them by providing tickets and information about visas. After World War II, they assisted 167,000 Jews to leave DP camps and emigrate elsewhere.

¹⁹ Franklin Delano Roosevelt (January 30, 1882 – April 12, 1945)—known as FDR—was the 32nd President of the United States. He served for 12 years and eight terms and was the only president to serve longer than eight years.

²⁰ *Voyage of the Damned* by Gordon Thomas and Max Morgan-Witts was published in 1974. It was made into a 1976 film of the same name.

blowing up the engines. There were all sorts of options that they had been considering, from what I understand.

John: Continuing in Switzerland then . . . you were living with some other people . . .

Henry: I lived first with a Jewish family and stayed with that family for a year. Then I became a foster child of a gentile family—a secondary teacher outside of Basel [Switzerland]—and that’s how this continued. I also spent two years in a Swiss boarding school called the ‘*Ecole d’Humanite*.’²¹ Life magazine in 1946 had a story about that school. It was a school founded by a German professor who actually was about 65 or 70 years ahead of his time. It was a very classic school based on humanity, that’s why the school was called ‘*Ecole d’Humanite*.’ It had children from all over the world and also, interestingly, two nephews of the famous German chief of staff—General [Walther] von Brauchitsch.²² These two boys—one is Matthias and the other one Hannes—two German boys also went to that school. About two years ago I traced them down and found one of the brothers living, and he’s a teacher in California. I asked him how he come that he was there with all these Jewish children, not that all the children were Jewish—it was a very mixed crowd. He explained to me that his mother was Jewish, and the Nazis permitted them to leave Germany and go to Switzerland. They went to Switzerland with their aunt. I was a good friend of one of the brothers. They had all this in *Life* magazine . . . as a matter of fact, I have it here . . . I’ll show it to you later. It’s an interesting story.

John: What did Jewishness mean to you, given that being Jewish was a dangerous thing? How did you relate to that identity?

Henry: During the war . . . the years that I spent . . . for me being Jewish was a *fait accompli*—it was just an accomplished fact. It was something that I didn’t have to debate, or adjust to, or reason with. It was just something that I very much identified with. There was never any question. It was not only a matter of religion, although that did play a part; but it was a matter of

²¹ The school was originally founded in 1910 as the *Odenwaldschule* by Paul Geheeb in Germany. It soon became the most progressive school in Germany. With the ascendancy of the Nazis to power in Germany the school was closed and Geheeb moved to Switzerland where he found the *Ecole d’Humanité*. After a twelve-year odyssey with a small group of children, mostly war refugees, the school settled in the mountain village of Goldern on the Hasliberg, where it is today.

²² Heinrich Alfred Hermann Walther von Brauchitsch (1881-1948) was a German field marshal and in the era of National Socialism he was Chief of the Army. He led the German army’s invasion of Poland. He opposed what he believed was Hitler’s premature plan to attack France in 1939, from which Hitler did eventually back down (he did invade in May 1940). He was fired by Hitler, allegedly due to his health which was deteriorating, in December 1941 but largely because of the disastrous failure of the German army to take Moscow before winter set in. After the war in 1948 he was arrested, but was not put on trial because he died.

being what you are. I never had a problem with that. I had problems—antisemitism—I was confronted with antisemitism, but nowhere was I confronted with antisemitism as much as I was confronted with antisemitism in the United States. There was—upon arrival in America—that I came face to face with antisemitism in the most drastic of incidents.

John: Describe that.

Henry: For example, I went to hotel school in Switzerland—that was one other thing that I did as I got older—at the age of 16, I went to Lucerne to the Swiss hotel school. I took a course in cuisine—in cooking—and also serving. Upon arrival in New York—finally when we were allowed to enter the United States—I went to the Swiss culinary association and got a job in a matter of hours. I had a job as *commis saucier*—that means ‘assistant sauce cook’—in the famous Greenbrier Hotel in White Sulpher Springs, West Virginia.²³ Now . . . traveling . . . I had \$11 at the time . . . I was a short time in America . . . and coming to the Greenbrier Hotel . . . you were hired from the culinary association in New York—the Swiss culinary association—Union Helvetia, it was called, but it was then that you had to go through the “formality” of being processed into the role of employee. You had to fill out the papers in the personnel office. As my name was Heinz Goldstein, a friend, a young lady, said to me, “With that name, you will last here two weeks.” I discovered . . . I found out that the hotel was restricted. There was no clientele . . . no clients, no Jewish guests . . . the hotel was restricted. There were no Jews there. That’s precisely when I changed my name, actually. But I didn’t change my name legally; I just changed my name from ‘Heinz Goldstein’ to ‘Henry Gallant.’ Much to my mother’s pain, I would say. She would say, “Ambassador Goldberg and Jonathan Goldstein, Attorney General of the State of New York, Ruby Goldstein, Referee of the Boxing Commission and you have to change your name to Gallant.” She found it very difficult to accept. But I changed my name because it was convenient . . .

John: Did anybody know you were Jewish, anyway?

Henry: Yes, yes, yes. The whole kitchen, from the executive chef on to the pastry cook, they were all Swiss, and all the waiters were German. There was no animosity whatsoever on a one to one basis—none whatsoever. But policy was very antisemitic. Somewhat later, I recollect

²³ A famous spa where a spring of sulphur water surfaces in the center of the property. The hotel was built in 1858 and after the Civil War it quickly began a vacation spot where one could “take the waters” allegedly to relieve rheumatism and other conditions. Interestingly, it is also the site of a massive underground bunker that was meant to serve as an emergency shelter for the United States Congress during the Cold War. It was code named “Project Greek Island.”

that there was ad in the *New York Times*—they wanted a steward. Pan American Airlines was looking for a young man, 21 to 30, capable of speaking two languages. I thought . . . perfect qualifications . . . I spoke fluently French and German. I applied for the job. I got a letter after the interview I still remember verbatim—every word. It said, “Dear Mr. Goldstein, There were relatively many applicants for the very few openings. It is the opinion of this board that your qualifications are not best suited for our specialized requirements. This in no way is to reflect upon your scope of ability and wishing you every success for the future, W. J. Parrot [sp], Superintendent of Flight Services. I found out that this was just about the time of the Israeli-Arab war, and with a name like Goldstein . . . which I had to let them know, because I had never changed my name legally until that event . . . then I changed my name legally.

John: What made you believe that that letter had another meaning?

Henry: In all fairness, I cannot say. It was just something that I felt very much profoundly. [On] another occasion, I was in the American Air Force, and I went through basic training at Lackland Air Force Base [San Antonio, Texas]. Then I was stationed at what is now called Travis Air Force Base [Fairfield, California]—it used to be Fairfield-Suisun Air Force Base—and they sent me to Cheyenne, Wyoming to Fort Warren. The papers arrived before the person gets to the base, so my name being Goldstein at that time, in 1949—that’s when I was in the service—they were well aware that a Jew was coming into the . . . we weren’t very many . . . I think I was the only one in the whole squadron. That was also . . . there was a movie . . . I forgot the name of it . . . but it was not a pleasant experience, because inevitably, while I had lots of friends, there would always be one or two who just simply . . . who hated Jews with a passion.

John: How did you respond to that when you encountered it?

Henry: It was miserable. I was miserable. On furlough, I traveled through North Dakota and went into a roadside bar or restaurant and ordered something. The bartender said, “You’re not 21.” I said, “Yes, I am. I can prove it. I have my citizenship papers here.” This guy got furious—he said, “Get the hell out of here. You’re not 21.” If I had pursued it any further, I’m sure that I would have been in dire straits, so I was smart enough to just leave. But that was a classic incident of . . . he left no doubt . . .

John: How would that person know you were Jewish?

Henry: He wouldn’t really know . . . it was a matter . . . I don’t think it would have made very much difference if I had been Italian or Greek. It was something that just looking at your image

was totally different from the image of these people that were at home in that part of the county. No one looked like an Italian, or Greek or Jew. It wasn't . . . this type of hatred was thrown at anyone who was not exactly of their own background. I remember there was an Italian fellow in my squadron . . . I remember his name—Rosario Rubilado [sp]—he was Sicilian . . . he had the same problem. It wasn't just an anti-Jewish thing.

John: Let's back up a little bit towards the end of the war. What was going on around you, late 1944 and that period?

Henry: In late 1944, let me say 1945—the end of the war—I had been in the Hotel Montana,²⁴ which was the hotel school, and we came face-to-face with the American soldiers. They were stationed in France, Germany and all over Europe, Italy, and they came to Switzerland on a seven-day so called 'R and R'—rest and relaxation—that's when we came face to face with the first Americans. Let me tell you something, it was an emotional encounter because, unlike today, where you have anti-Americanism here or there in certain parts of the world, in those days anything that reflected the United States, anything that looked American, was something that was very valuable. A carton of cigarettes, a raincoat, a Parker 51 [fountain pen], anything made in United States of America was ten times the value, and the Americans . . . the music . . . all of Europe celebrated the United States. That's how popular we were at the time. That's what I remember. The American uniform was idolized . . . in France . . . everywhere.

John: When were you and your mother reunited?

Henry: Right at the end of the war, one had to decide whether to go to Palestine, or whether to go to the United States, or what to do, or whether to remain in Switzerland. I do remember that a good number of people chose to remain in Switzerland, and they were given that choice. But we had always wanted to come to America, and so we did. We had relatives here that had preceded us, that were fortunate enough to escape Germany and found asylum here.

John: At what point did your mother come to the conclusion that her husband wasn't going to come back?

Henry: It was a slow process. There was an organization called *Bureau de Recherche*, based in Belgium, who occupied itself with searching for survivors, and documenting those that . . . I have a letter here . . . you can look at it later . . . it reads that, "In regard to your inquiry, we must tell you that your father was deported from Camp Gurs on the tenth of August 1942, to Drancy,

²⁴ Henry may mean the 'Les Roches International School of Hotel Management' in Crans Montana, Switzerland.

and shipped to . . . deported to . . . concentration camp Auschwitz-[Birkenau], where it must be assumed that he was a victim of the persecution.” When we got this letter, we knew . . . then when you realized and saw the pictures that came out . . . saw the many documentaries . . . this was the time of the Nuremberg Trials.²⁵ It became clear that there was no possibility of survival, because he had addresses of common friends, relatives, and so forth that he would have contacted.

John: How did you and your mom react once you knew what had been happening throughout the war, and you just narrowly escaped all that?

Henry: We were very grateful that we escaped. We just had to live with the fact that my father would not return, as did hundreds of thousands of others. The inner feelings or emotions my mother experienced is something that is a blank in my mind. I really could not focus on it because some things just simply are blurred, where I would not know . . . did I hear it somewhere, did I read it somewhere, did I see it somewhere, does my knowledge come from a film, from a documentary, from a newspaper, or a magazine, or have I actually seen it myself? I wouldn't know . . . I don't remember.

John: Can you describe what you were like as a young person, or how somebody else might have described you?

Henry: I remember that . . . I must say that I lived for . . . I had a craving of enjoying life . . . of growing up and being independent. I really looked forward to not be in a family . . . the kind of adopted child or so . . . and being regimented in where to go, how to go, when to go. I really looked forward to coming to America and enjoyed it to the fullest. It was very, very exciting—the arrival in New York and all that it implied. It was wonderful.

John: How did you feel about leaving Europe?

Henry: No regrets whatsoever. I adjusted very rapidly to the American way of life—very rapidly. On the other hand, I always retained some of the cultural direction . . . culturally I always remained somewhat European; but that was not very difficult because New York is a melting pot. I had lots of friends who were French, who were German. Particularly in the hotel

²⁵ The Trial of Major War Criminals was held from November 20, 1945 to October 1, 1946 in Nuremberg, Germany and was widely covered by the media. An international military tribunal tried 22 leading German officials for war crimes in Nuremberg, Germany. Twelve prominent Nazi Party members were sentenced to death. They were twelve additional tribunals including the trials of Nazi doctors, judges, industrialists and of the *Einsatzgruppen* (mobile killing squads) leaders.

industry—since I always worked in the hotels—the employees in the hotels were always from other countries and European—mostly European.

John: Was there any reaction by Americans to the German accent after the war?

Henry: I didn't have a very strong German accent, simply because . . . having left Germany at the age of ten, lived in France until the age of 14 . . . when you take the French and the German, you have a kind of continental accent, but not a distinct German accent. But even if I had a German accent, the American people, in my view, have always been very fond of the German people. That would not have really made much of a difference; in fact, it could have only been positive.

John: What did your mom do in America? She was starting up a new life here.

Henry: My mother actually worked in a coffee shop, she worked for a doctor. She had several jobs. As I worked at the Greenbrier Hotel, my mother came to the Greenbrier Hotel . . . she worked at the Greenbrier. She was a waitress—she served the executive management—and I was in the kitchen. I was a cook, she was a waitress. I worked in Atlantic City [New Jersey] at the Shelburne [Hotel] and the Traymore [Hotel]. My mother came to Atlantic City, and she worked in Atlantic City. She worked as a chambermaid . . . she did . . . in those early years in America . . . she did, just simply, anything. She certainly didn't do what she did in Germany.

John: Did she remarry?

Henry: No. Never did. Never did and never again had, at least not to my knowledge, a romantic liaison or relationship. I don't recall . . . she had lots friends . . . very good friends . . . mostly European women that she had known in Europe . . . in Germany . . . survivors. She was very active. She lived in—for the larger part—first in Manhattan, and as Manhattan got a little dangerous—the neighborhoods deteriorated—she moved along with so many other people to Queens, to Forest Hills. She was active in the Forest Hills Jewish Center. That really occupied her profoundly. She was very much involved in the center—Jewish Forest Hills.

John: Do you have any sense—even if she didn't spell it out—as to how the whole war experience affected her . . . how she carried it with her?

Henry: It would be difficult for me to put it into words. Like all of us . . . like so many or all of us . . . you just live with it. At least I am not aware . . . I know it affected me . . . in which exact way it would be difficult for me to tell, but I came face to face with certain observations or

thoughts. For example, the 400 days in Iran . . . when our hostages²⁶ . . . when I recall the phenomenal interest that psychologists and therapists . . . when finally they were released . . . that this trauma . . . all of the psychological ramifications. When I read about that, I said to myself, “I must really be an emotional wreck and not know it,” because of what we really went through in so many ways . . . in so many small details prior to coming to America during that period. But we didn’t know it, and arriving in America, we didn’t think about it much because no one really wanted to know anything about it. This kind of thing we are doing here today is something that is happening 60 years after the fact. The first . . . what I remember is that in Atlantic City [New Jersey] where I worked the first few weeks upon arrival in this country . . . I had a room with a Jewish family—American Jews—and they were totally detached from these events. I could almost say that they really didn’t want to know about it. They looked upon these people . . . these new arrivals . . . they had a name for them—they were ‘refugees.’ Today they’re ‘survivors,’ but yesterday they were ‘refugees.’ It took something like maybe 10 or 15 years until you could blow away that kind of identification as a refugee, until you became an immigrant or something.

John: The contacts you had with survivors in the years after the war . . . how much talk was there—personal talk— about all of those events?

Henry: I had quite a few friends who were actually . . . I didn’t even know that I was a survivor until very recently. I had thought that the term ‘survivor’ belongs to someone who had been in a concentration camp and survived the death camp somehow. These people didn’t really talk about what was going on in there. I suppose the reason that they didn’t talk about it was that they must have been doing some pretty bad things to survive. You don’t survive Auschwitz-[Birkenau] by luck—with all due respect, that’s my opinion. You survive because you were burying the dead or because you removed the teeth that had the gold. The instinct of survival was so strong as to do anything that they were required to do, including taking the bread or the food from wherever they could find it. He who pushes the hardest is the one who is going to be surviving. If you’re polite or dignified . . . in those days, you forget dignity. I had lots of

²⁶ The Iranian hostage crisis began when 60 American diplomats and citizens were held hostage for 444 days (November 4, 1979 to January 20, 1981) after a group of Iranian students who supported the Iranian Revolution, took over the United States Embassy in Tehran. The crisis reached a climax when, after failed efforts to negotiate the hostages’ release, the United States military attempted a rescue operation which failed resulting in the death of eight American servicemen and the destruction of two aircraft. Finally, the hostages were released, just minutes after the new American president, Ronald Reagan was sworn into office.

friends—they had the number—I thought those were the survivors. I was just a lucky guy . . . lucky.

John: How do you suppose it's affected you that you didn't have a father after the age of ten or so?

Henry: I missed my father very, very much in the beginning. It was very, very painful. I was in this home for children outside of Paris upon disembarking from the *St. Louis*. My father was in a camp outside of Paris. I saw him there behind barbed wire, once or twice, and it was extremely painful. I remember the separation from my family was the one, single most painful emotion that I experienced during the war years. Yes.

John: You said that you were in the military in America?

Henry: Actually, I volunteered. I joined the air force in 1949.

John: How come you decided to do that?

Henry: I liked everything that was American, and there was nothing that was more American than joining the service. I think, if I remember correctly . . . I know I volunteered, I wasn't drafted . . . whether I did this because they were beginning to draft people, that I don't remember. But I flirted with the idea actually of joining the service and somehow subconsciously had hoped that they would send me to Germany. I kind of liked that idea. Never happened.

John: What would you have wanted to do in Germany?

Henry: That's a good question. Have to think about that. I finally did go back to Germany. In later years . . . later on, when I could not become a steward with Pan American [World Airways],²⁷ as you remember . . . my testimony earlier in this session . . . I joined the Military Sea Transport[ation] Service²⁸ and worked on the ships. Merchant marine. I was a waiter—I was a room steward, but for the most part I was a waiter—on a liberty ship²⁹ going to Bremerhaven [in Germany]. I traveled from New York to Bremerhaven for eight, nine months, and once a month we were in Bremerhaven for three days. There were mixed emotions. I liked

²⁷ Known as 'Pan Am' the airline was founded in 1950 and was the principal and largest air carrier in the United States from 1927 until its collapse in 1991.

²⁸ The Military Sea Transportation Service (MSTS) was established in 1949. Originally it was tasked with providing ocean transportation for all United States military services and other government agencies. Today it controls most of the replenishment and military transport ships of the Navy.

²⁹ Liberty ships were cargo ships built in the United States during World War II. They were cheap and quick to build and came to symbolize United States wartime industrial output. Over 2,700 were built between 1941 and 1945.

Germany in one way . . . and didn't like what happened . . . but I went back to Germany frequently. I went back to Germany when it was unpopular to go back to Germany or buy German products. Later that no longer mattered, whether you bought a Mercedes or Rosenthal [china dinnerware], or any of the other German products. In the earlier days, there was a strong resentment.

John: What were those early years after the war, when it became really known what had happened, how did you feel about Germany and that part of your heritage?

Henry: That's easy for me to answer. I went to Germany because I liked Germany. I avoided anyone over the age of, say, 40 or so. For me—in my thoughts, in my feelings, and in the same feelings of my friends, who also went back to Germany—German Jews—we had no association with any of the elderly people. I spent frequent summers outside of Hamburg [Germany] in a resort town called 'Westerland.' I only associated with young ladies and fellows my age at the time. Those to me were absolutely without guilt—they were innocent—by way of having been five or ten years old by the end of the war. My wife was born in Germany.

John: Can you maybe talk about how you met her?

Henry: I met my wife in Canada—in Montreal. I had finished a season in Lake Placid, and spent a three-day vacation in Montreal and casually met my wife—what turned out to be my wife. I thought she was French and spoke to her in French, and it turned out she was German. She told me she did not speak French, and she said that with a German accent. I answered in German, and later on we met again in New York, and that went on for three years or so.

John: What other memories do you have of those early days with her?

Henry: I became increasingly fond of her. I had problems with my mother—my wife was not Jewish. Being German . . . that was for my mother, I must say, fairly devastating . . . although with mixed feelings because on the one hand, she found her extremely charming and very, very nice. I had a conflict . . . evidently had a conflict . . . but I overcame this, and later on my wife converted to Judaism. I must say, she is every bit as good a Jew as I am. She was the driving force besides my mother to see that our son identified strongly with Judaism. He went to *yeshiva*³⁰ for five years. My wife is the one really who supported and saw to it that his education was profoundly Jewish.

³⁰ Hebrew for "sitting." A Jewish religious school roughly equivalent to high school. Also a *Talmudic* college for unmarried male students from their teenage years to their early twenties.

John: What has been the extent of your involvement with the Jewish world after the war?

Henry: I always maintained . . . it's strange . . . I think it's a thing where most of us who are not **Orthodox** . . . in other words, *shomer Shabbos*³¹ . . . most of us go through different cycles. At least I have gone through various cycles. It was always when I was removed from Judaism by way of circumstances that I had the strongest attachment to Judaism. For example, when I arrived at Fort Warren, Cheyenne, Wyoming as the only Jew . . . I think I was the only Jew on the whole base . . . no, there were probably a half a dozen others in different squadrons . . . but I managed to go to the synagogue. I would actually arrange through the chaplain to attend services.

<End Disk 1>
<Begin Disk 2>

John: What other memories to you have of the whole *St. Louis* experience that historians might be interested to hear, either on the way to America or on the way back? What other images stick in your mind?

Henry: I think I've pretty much mentioned as much as I can remember in the life of a ten-year-old . . .

John: . . . from the ship?

Henry: Yes.

John: Maybe if you show those [pictures] now and explain them a little bit.

Henry: <reaches for pictures> I look upon these pictures. There really isn't too much that I can tell you here. I know that this was a time that everybody looked very happy, although they must have hoped to find a refuge somewhere, at the time. This is a festivity for children—they had parties for the kids. <holds up photo> Here's a party, and I have another picture . . . I don't know . . . I think it's back there. <holds up a different photo> This is also on the *St. Louis*.³²

John: Which one is you?

Henry: <points to photo> This is me.

John: Same face.

Henry: Is it really? Think so? Sixty years later?

³¹ A person who observes commandments for the Jewish Sabbath from sundown Friday evening until sunset Saturday evening.

³² This series of images is held in the Cuba Family Archives in the collection identified as HGF 287, Henry Gallant Family Papers.

John: As far as the whole issue of the ship being turned back—maybe as a child you didn't know the politics— but afterwards, did you think about that America didn't take you all in?

Henry: Yes, that was very troublesome. I did find out that this country at the time . . . it was in a very serious depression. Unemployment was rampant. Roosevelt was not a friend of the Jews, *per se*. He was a politician, and he was running for re-election, and antisemitism, from what I understand, was rampant. From the pictures, and the movies, and the newsreels that I've seen—Nazis parading in Yorkville (outside New York)³³—all the images, all things that I've seen . . . I think that there was absolutely no hope that he would allow us to enter the United States, as he did not let us enter.

John: Talk about your early days when you were starting up a family with your wife. What were the early days like and where?

Henry: We first lived in . . . can we stop this?

< interview pauses then resumes >

Henry: We were doing the same kind of work. Sometime later I became a *maitre d'* [hotel]—in fact, I worked ten years in the Waldorf Astoria in New York City [New York]. But before that my wife and I worked in Miami Beach [Florida]. We got married in Las Vegas [Nevada], worked in Miami Beach, and then moved to New York and worked the summers in the Marcy Hotel in Lake Placid [New York]. In the winter I would be at the Waldorf, in the Empire Room, which is a nightclub. That was fun—I could say it was a very good job— but it was a fun job. We had all the top entertainers—Tony Bennett,³⁴ Peggy Lee,³⁵ Diana Ross³⁶—one after the

³³ Yorkville is not outside New York City, it is a neighborhood in the Upper East Side of Manhattan in New York City. Its southern boundary is East 79th Street, its northern East 96th Street, its western Third Avenue, and its eastern the East River. Yorkville was the home to a large ethnic German populations and was known as 'Kleindeutschland' (Little Germany). In the 1930's it was the home base of Fritz Julius Kuhn's German American Bund, the most notorious pro-Nazi group in 1930's America, which led to spontaneous protests by other residents. Albert may also be referring to the huge rally held by the German American Bund at Madison Hall in New York City on February 20, 1929, which was attended by 20,000 persons.

³⁴ Tony Bennett, born Anthony Dominick Benedetto in 1925, is an American singer of show tunes and jazz. The heyday of his career was after World War II but he staged a comeback in the late 1980's and 1990's. His signature song is "I Left My Heart in San Francisco."

³⁵ Peggy Lee (1920-2002) was an American jazz and popular music singer, songwriter, composer and actress. She began her career singing jazz with Benny Goodman's big band. Her signature song was "Fever."

³⁶ Diana Ross (1944-) was the founding member and lead singer of the vocal group The Supremes, which, during the 1960's, became Motown's most successful act. In 1970 Ross began a solo career. Her most famous hits include "Ain't No Mountain High Enough" and "Reach Out and Touch (Somebody's Hand)."

other. Johnny Mathis,³⁷ Shirley Bassey,³⁸ the Pointer Sisters.³⁹ It was a job that I really enjoyed doing. Not just because it was lucrative, but because of the environment . . . being part of entertainment.

John: Was there more of a Jewish presence in that subculture?

Henry: Not really. Everybody knew I was Jewish, but I was the only Jew in the Empire Room. There's a tradition in hotels, nightclubs, restaurants, in the hospitality industry . . . I think that's part of America . . . if the *maitre d'* is French, you can be sure that the majority of employees would be French. If the executive chef is Austrian or Swiss, you could be sure that he would be hiring for the most part Swiss. I must say, looking back, I was a person . . . a guy for all seasons. I did whatever I had to do. If I knew the chef was French, I would make my application in French, and I turned out to be very French. If I was confronted with a German chef, my identity changed in a split second, and I became very German. Since I lived in Switzerland, and in Switzerland you speak three languages. You speak French, you speak Italian, and you speak Swiss-German, which is a dialect—it's not the same German spoken in Germany. It's a little bit different, but I can speak it. When I found out the chef is Swiss, I would be talking to him in Swiss-German. It had definitely an effect. While there was no immediate opening, the opening occurred the following day, and I had the job.

John: What was it like being a father, considering that you didn't have a father much . . .

Henry: Yes. It was not difficult for me. I had no role model, that's true, but I did not find it difficult. I think it was a natural instinct to do the best.

John: Can you show some of those pictures from the magazine?

Henry: <holds up magazine> This is *Life* magazine, 1946, May of 1946. That's the school that I had mentioned earlier which had all these refugee children. This is the professor who was at the head of the school. The school had an emphasis on the classics, on the arts. In music it was

³⁷ Johnny Mathis (1935-) is an American sign of popular music as well as jazz and rhythm and blues. In the 1950's he became a teenage heartthrob and he continues singing today (2014). One of his famous songs is "Chances Are."

³⁸ Shirley Bassey (1937-) was born in Wales, Great Britain and became famous in the 1950's. She is known for the theme songs the James Bond films *Goldfinger* (1964), *Diamonds Are Forever* (1971), and *Moonraker* (1979) as well as "Can't Help Falling in Love."

³⁹ The Pointer Sisters are June, Bonnie and Anita Pointer, an American rhythm and blues girl group who achieved mainstream success during the 1970's and 1980's. Later they diversified into many different types of music. Among their more famous songs are "Yes We Can Can" and "Neutron Dance."

Bach, Brahms, Beethoven, Mozart,⁴⁰ and the pictures of these composers were all over—on every wall. The painters—Rembrandt, Rubens⁴¹—there was a strong emphasis on art in every conceivable way. The school was also co-education[al]—boys and girls were in the same environment . . . it was an international school. There was no ill feeling towards anybody. In fact, these two boys here were good friends of mine. They were the nephews from the famous General von Brauchitsch I mentioned before. But it so happened, I found out recently, that the reason they went to this school and the reason were even in Switzerland is because their mother was Jewish, and the Nazis allowed them to leave Germany. Or forced them to leave Germany—they had no choice. Otherwise it would have been bad for them, I suppose.

John: How did you end up in Atlanta?

Henry: As I mentioned, I had this wonderful job in New York at the Waldorf-Astoria, from 1965 to 1975. But this particular nightclub in the hotel had 400 seats. It becomes a matter of economics. They closed that room. The reason they closed it is because Tony Bennett and Liza Minnelli,⁴² and some of the other stars, they all began working there for about \$5,000 a week and then it got up to \$25,000 a week. Whenever the money paid to the entertainer increased, so did the cover charge, meaning the money that a guest had to pay for the ticket to enter the club. It got to a point where people like Barbra Streisand⁴³ were paid \$2,000,000 for a two-week engagement, and they could only play in Las Vegas where the profit would come from the gaming tables. In the case of the Waldorf and other clubs, they all closed up—St. Regis closed, The Persian Room in the Plaza closed, and so on. I had an opportunity here in Atlanta at the Fairmont Hotel and was offered a job here, and accepted, and we moved.

John: When did you move down?

Henry: In 1975. Just about the time that they closed the Empire Room of the Waldorf Astoria, I moved with my family to Atlanta.

⁴⁰ J.S. Bach, Ludwig von Beethoven and Johannes Brahms are major composers in classical music and all are German. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was an Austrian musical prodigy and is also a key figure in classical music.

⁴¹ Rembrandt van Rijn and Peter Paul Rubens were major artists associated with the baroque style of painting.

⁴² Liza Minnelli (1946-) is the daughter of singer and actress Judy Garland and movie director Vincente Minnelli. She is a well-known singer and dancer in her own right with one of her more famous roles being Sally Bowles in *Cabaret* (1978).

⁴³ Barbra Streisand (1942-) is an American singer and actress. She is one of the best-selling musical artists of all time. Her films include *Funny Girl*, *The Way We Were*, *A Star is Born* and *Yentl*. Her signature songs are “The Way We Were” and “People.”

John: What can you say about the culture or the social environment that you found here in the 1970's?

Henry: In the 1970's they began to call Atlanta the "International City," which I thought was totally untrue. There was nothing international about it. To my recollection, there was one Italian restaurant owned by Jean and Gabe [sp]. I don't want to say anything derogatory, but it had overcooked pasta, and it was Italian food . . . a six on a scale of ten. There were no delicatessens of any sort. If you wanted a bagel, you had to travel 20 miles. But it all changed drastically. Over the years, Atlanta became an international city. Today we have everything. Also, I remember there were two synagogues. There was Ahavath Achim⁴⁴ . . . or maybe three or four . . . Ahavath Achim, Shearith Israel,⁴⁵ and Beth Jacob⁴⁶ and Or VeShalom.⁴⁷ But today you have 20, 22, 23 synagogues.

John: What do you remember about the Jewish subculture in those days? How much did you participate?

Henry: Relatively little. I had been associated with the hotels here, and my life consisted mostly of going 85-South and 85-North. It was later on I had the opportunity to buy into a kosher catering business and traveled in the Jewish community very extensively . . . I would say constantly. I was surrounded with the Atlanta Jewish community in a very big way. I appreciated that—that was very nice.

John: Since food has been a big part of your career, have you gotten into Jewish cuisine?

Henry: Absolutely. The business that I took over—when I first started in 1981—was exclusively kosher. However, we cooked in the synagogues. We had to cook under the

⁴⁴ Ahavath Achim was founded in 1887 in a small room on Gilmer Street. In 1920 they moved to a permanent building at the corner of Piedmont and Gilmer Street. Rabbi Abraham Hirmes was the first rabbi of the then Orthodox congregation. In 1928 Rabbi Harry Epstein became the rabbi and the congregation began to shift to Conservatism, which they joined in 1952. The synagogue is now on Peachtree Battle. Cantor Isaac Goodfriend, a Holocaust survivor, joined the congregation in 1966 and remained until his retirement. Rabbi Epstein retired in 1982, becoming Rabbi Emeritus and Rabbi Arnold Goodman assumed the rabbinic post. He too retired in 2002 and Rabbi Neil Sandler is now (2013) the rabbi.

⁴⁵ Founded in 1904, Shearith Israel began as a congregation that met in the homes of congregants until 1906 when they began using a Methodist church on Hunter Street. After World War II, Rabbi Tobias Geffen moved the congregation to University Drive, where it became the first synagogue in DeKalb County. In the 1960s, they removed the barrier between the men's and women's sections in the sanctuary, and officially became affiliated with the Conservative movement in 2002.

⁴⁶ Beth Jacob is an Orthodox synagogue in Atlanta was founded in 1942 by former members of Ahavath Achim who were looking for a more Orthodox congregation. Beth Jacob is now Atlanta's largest Orthodox congregation.

⁴⁷ OrVeShalom is a congregation that began in 1920 and was based at Central and Woodward Avenues until 1948 when it moved to a larger building on North Highland Road. The current building for OrVeshalom is on North Druid Hills Road.

supervision of a *mashgiach*⁴⁸ and cooked strictly kosher food. Later on, I spread out somewhat in order to do more business. I did commercial and catering as well, and not necessarily exclusively Jewish.

John: You said you have a son?

Henry: Yes.

John: During the years when he was the same age you were during the war, did you make any connection in your mind as to where you were when he was 10 or 12, 14? Did you ever think about that?

Henry: Can you rephrase that?

John: When your son was going through the same years of life that you were during the war, did you think about . . .

Henry: One always does search one's mind as to where we were when he was . . . at that point or this point . . . we try to ask ourselves that in many ways. It's a very good question. I have a little difficulty with how young people relate to the period that we went through. There are exceptions. There are some very dedicated young people who try to, shall we say, live themselves into any given situation that occurred many years ago. For the most part, I think they are . . . I differ from those who believe that there is a serious interest. I find rather that they would be as interested in World War II as I'm interested in World War I. I really cannot identify with 1914 to 1918, although my father served in Germany during that period. I have postcards where he's writing about being in Verdun,⁴⁹ in some of the battle zones of France, when Germany fought in the First World War. I have absolutely no association with that period. It takes, I would say, very devoted or keenly sensitive children to identify and want to learn. We are making them [learn]—we are not letting them off the hook, so to speak. That's true.

John: Have you ever done any research or have you heard about any other relatives of yours who stayed behind in Europe?

Henry: Yes. I'm absolutely aware. I know how many were lost. I know my father's brother—one brother and his wife—were deported from Berlin to the camps and never seen again. Their daughter went to Palestine—to Israel—she still lives today in Bethlehem . . . HaGlilit in northern

⁴⁸ Hebrew: "Supervisor." A Jewish person who supervises the *kashrut* status of a food service business or establishment.

⁴⁹ The Battle of Verdun was fought in northeastern France from February 21 to December 18, 1916 between the German and French armies during World War I. It was the longest battle of this war and had many thousands of casualties.

Israel . . . and has a big family. Her husband has passed away, but she has children and grandchildren. It's a large family in Israel. My father's other brother left Germany. He was with a major newspaper in Berlin. He was the finance columnist in the financial page, and he left for Israel in 1933. He saw it all coming. He was one of the few . . . there were quite a few . . . but in the total numbers not many who saw it coming at that early time. He went to Palestine⁵⁰ when Palestine was a mosquito-infested piece of sand in the desert, so to speak. I'm exaggerating—I'm illustrating intentionally. It wasn't what it is today, or even in 1960 when I began to visit Israel. But he went, and today he is no longer with us, but his daughter . . . she's married, and they got grandchildren.

John: Your son, and the grandchildren . . . what images would you want them to know about their grandfather and grandmother? Especially the grandfather?

Henry: I think that they will search and become increasingly involved when we are no longer here. At this moment, they probably take everything kind of . . . sort of for granted . . . as we all do. We take life—everything—for granted. It's when you no longer have it that you search for it.

John: Someday, if they start wondering about their grandfather . . .

Henry: The roots are there. I believe the roots are there. I have made sure . . . I tried my best to let him know who he is, what he is, where he came from, where I come from, and so on, and somewhere or other, they have that in them.

John: Even if the younger generation doesn't take World War II that seriously, how would you want the future to remember this? What would you want people to learn from what you all went through?

Henry: That is something that . . . that will all be documented in the books of history. It depends on how far ahead you want to look. Eventually, my guess is it will become a religious thing perhaps even more than a historical thing, maybe like the *Haggadah*⁵¹ or something, where you recite it over and over, every year, the same story of the exodus of the children of Israel from slavery. It isn't just a religious thing—it's something that certainly occurred, that happened—

⁵⁰ 'Palestine' was the name of the area that is now Israel and Jordan. After World War I, the area came under the administration of the British and was called the "British Mandate." After World War II, the states of Israel and Trans-Jordan (now Jordan) were established.

⁵¹ A Jewish text that sets forth the order of the Passover *seder*. Reading the *Haggadah* at the *seder* table is a fulfillment of the scriptural commandment to each Jew to "tell your son" of the Jewish liberation from slavery in Egypt as described in the Book of Exodus in the *Torah*.

what we went through is big. It seems to me that it gets bigger as time goes on . . . somehow . . . as it should.

John: How has your relationship with that experience changed over the years, especially as you start getting older?

Henry: I deal with it, like everybody else. It's something that happened . . . the way things go on, it becomes bigger and bigger because the story is being constantly told in so many ways. There's seemingly no end to the subject. There are books . . . forever more—more books and more books are being written—and somehow there are results. Just very recently, France—after all these years—France decided to pay indemnification to children who lost their parents in that period. The French never really occupied themselves with their role in World War II. The French Jews—70,000 of them—were deported to the camps. It's now all of a sudden they are very interested in what evidently happened.

John: Why do you suppose you survived? Do you have any personal . . .

Henry: I'm very, very lucky. I sometimes, in moments of a setback—a setback could be a simple traffic ticket to a falling equity in the stock market, or a busted pipe in a swimming pool—any minor thing that occupies your mind and makes you very, very upset. “My G-d, my car broke down. I need a valve job” or something. But then precisely at a moment like this, I try to tell myself, “I shouldn't even be here. I'm so lucky to be alive.” My father was . . . I kind of look back at how old my father was when he endured what he had to endure. He was not even 50 when his life ended. When I took recently—a couple of years ago—I took a trip to, as I mentioned to you, to Warsaw [Poland] and then with a guide went to Krakow [Polish: Kraków], Auschwitz-[Birkenau]. Spent three hours standing in the snow up to my knees wearing a fur coat, warm underwear. I asked myself, “How lucky, that I didn't end up here.” Then the 21 hours by train from Munich [Germany] to Warsaw. I had a first class . . . I traveled first class . . . I said to myself . . . what crossed my mind was . . . the train was forever [makes train engine sound] . . . it was a locomotive, slow train, stopped at every . . . I don't know how many times . . . I said to myself, “Here I am, first class.” I was the only person in that compartment, and it had a soft seat. I said to myself, “How dreadful it must have been for a hundred people in a cattle

wagon, standing up for 21 hours, or 24 hours, without food or water.” It was just as bad to experience that comfort as it was to see the movie *Schindler’s List*.⁵²

John: Does being a survivor have any extra meaning to you in terms of what you’ve done with your life?

Henry: Occasionally. Yes, occasionally. What I’ve done with my life . . . my life . . . I was mostly preoccupied with the necessity of making a living, in the best way I knew how . . . in the most agreeable way.

John: What are the things you’re most proud of, or what you’ve accomplished with your life that you think matters?

Henry: I perhaps wished I had done more to . . . I have a great deal of admiration for the activists. Really, in all honesty, I must say, I’ve only recently become an activist. Occasionally, I’m moved to take action on a particular issue. Occasionally we come face-to-face with things that strike us as perhaps unfair or not just, and then how do I respond. I’m very proud . . . yes . . . I wrote a letter to a publication about Switzerland. I thought that I owe a lot to Switzerland, and all I was able to read or hear was condemnation, and condemnation from a country whose record of assistance during that period was very deplorable, very poor, to say the least. We all know the quotas that were designed to keep us out rather than to allow us to enter. Today, you look at events such as President [James Earl] Carter⁵³ letting in 200,000 Cubans . . . the irony . . . 200,000 Cubans coming to this country with a stroke of the pen.⁵⁴ Which is wonderful—in spite of their refusal to allow us to enter, I have nothing against the Cuban people—they are not responsible for what their government did, but their government of the time is responsible for the death of untold numbers of people. The United States, which did nothing, as we all know, has really no place in condemning a country that had given refuge to so many. Not just Jews—

⁵² 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.

⁵³ James Earl “Jimmy” Carter Jr. (1924-) was the 39th President of the United States from 1977 to 1981. He was a Democrat.

⁵⁴ The Mariel boatlift was a mass emigration of Cubans who departed from Cuba’s Mariel Harbor for the United States between April 15 and October 31, 1980. The Cuban government announced that anyone who wanted to leave could do so and the exodus began. Initially the Carter administration welcomed the refugees until it was learned that Castro was using the opportunity to empty Cuban prisons of criminals and persons from mental hospitals, after which the tensions heightened. Ultimately, about 125,000 Cubans made it to the United States on 1,700 boats, many not seaworthy. It was ended by mutual agreement of the two government in October 1980.

Switzerland had proportionately an unbelievable number of asylum seekers of every description. Innumerable American fliers on bombing missions over Germany . . . and shot down . . . and made their way into Switzerland. They had so many American fliers who were given asylum in Switzerland. The Swiss were not neutral. They were neutral on paper, but their policy was one of being totally for the Allied cause.

John: One last big question about Jewishness. Is there anything you think the Jewish world or Jewish leaders could learn from the Holocaust experience? Should anything change because of it?

Henry: They have done so much in recent years, from the [United States] Holocaust [Memorial] Museum in Washington [D.C.] to the Holocaust Memorial in Miami [Beach, Florida] near Lincoln Road there . . . it's phenomenal that the Miami community . . . the artistic presentation of that thing they got there . . . and here . . . Atlanta as well . . . and everywhere else. As little of Judaism, or the Jewish community, did in the early years following the war, that's how much they're doing now in the final stage—at least the final stage for us. I mean, in order to be a survivor of that period, you evidently were 10, 15 years old, so that makes to 70 something years old today. It is true that in 20 years, we will be like the last of the Mohicans,⁵⁵ or whatever—no question about it.

John: Is there anything else that you'd like to add that you haven't already mentioned?

Henry: I have a wonderful little granddaughter . . . it keeps on going . . . that is the joy of . . . shall we say . . . she is the apple of my wife's eye, or whatever. We're all very satisfied. When you ask me what I could be proud of, I could say that . . . it sounds funny . . . but I'm a little bit like Schindler,⁵⁶ in the movie *Schindler's List*. As I told you, my wife converted to Judaism. She became very, very dedicated to Judaism, as these things go . . . the kind of life that I've lived . . . the way things were charted . . . the way they came out . . . my son ultimately followed very much in my footsteps, and he also married a girl that was not Jewish. She went to school and learned with Rabbi [Mark Hillel] Kunis in Shearith Israel, and she converted to Judaism; and

⁵⁵ This is a reference to a historical novel by James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans: A Narrative of 1757*. It was set during the French and Indian War, when France and Great Britain battled for control of North America. Both nations used Native American allies. The phrase, "the last of the Mohicans," has come to represent the sole survivor of a noble race or type.

⁵⁶ Oskar Schindler (1908-1974) was a German factory-owner and Nazi party-member who is credited with saving the lives of 1,200 Jews during the Holocaust by giving them jobs in his factory. Later, Thomas Keneally wrote a book about Schindler and the "Schindler Jews" called *Schindler's List* (1982) which was made into a movie of the same name by Stephen Spielberg in 1993.

consequently, I have brought lots of Jews into the tribe. And now, my granddaughter . . . she had a naming,⁵⁷ and she is Jewish. My wife had to go into the *mikveh*,⁵⁸ my granddaughter had to go into the *mikveh* . . . but my granddaughter is Jewish . . . so it goes on. My influence evidently has something.

John: Thank you for doing this interview.

Henry: It's a pleasure . . . it's a pleasure. It's an honor. I feel very privileged.

<End Disk 2>

INTERVIEW ENDS

⁵⁷ Jewish babies are given Hebrew names shortly after they are born. A brief ceremony is performed, which often includes friends and family members of the new baby. Ashkenazic Jews often select a name that commemorates a deceased relative of the baby in order to honor that person's memory. Sephardic Jews often following the custom of naming their children after living relatives. Blessings are recited for the baby's well-being. The traditional wish is offered—that this child may grow into a life of study of *Torah*, of loving relationships, and the performance of good deeds. Boys are usually named at the same time as they are circumcised. Girls can be named any time in the first few weeks.

⁵⁸ A *mikveh* is a pool of water, gathered from rain or from a spring, which is used for ritual purification and ablutions.