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ESTHER AND HERBERT TAYLOR  
JEWISH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF ATLANTA**

**MEMOIRIST:** GENE SCHOENFELD  
**INTERVIEWER:** UNKNOWN  
**LOCATION:** ATLANTA, GEORGIA  
**DATE:** FEBRUARY 28, 1996

**Interview Begins**

<BEGIN DISK 1>

**Interviewer:** You can start at any time.

**Gene:** My name is Gene Schoenfeld. Actually, I was known by many names. I was born in Mukachevo or Munkacs, which was from 1918 through 1938, part of Czechoslovakia.<sup>1</sup> In 1938, through the courtesy of [Neville] Chamberlain, [Edouard] Daladier, [Benito] Mussolini, and [Adolf] Hitler, obviously, the [Munich] Conference, my hometown was turned over to Hungary.<sup>2</sup> When I was born on November 8th, 1925, it was Czechoslovakia; a country, which I must say, was one of the most democratic countries in the world. The President of Czechoslovakia at that time was Tomas Garrigue Masaryk,<sup>3</sup> who happened to be also a professor of sociology, just like I was—I'm saying 'was' because I've just retired recently—and was, from my estimation, perhaps the most democratic country that this world has ever known. Unfortunately, it didn't last long, because the Hungarians took it over.

I was the oldest of three children. I had a brother and a sister. My name was Schönfeld, Eugen. When I was born as a Czech, my name was Schonfeld, Evžen. My birth certificate also has my Hebrew name. It's **Iztacknaf Dalif**. My brother, Beinush [Hebrew:

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<sup>1</sup> Munkacs [Hungarian: Munkács also Minkatch, Munkács, or Munkachs] is a town in present-day southwestern Ukraine. Munkacs changed hands many times over the years and has many alternate spellings. It was part of the Kingdom of Hungary from the eleventh century until 1918, when Munkacs and the surrounding area became part of Czechoslovakia. In 1938, this part of Czechoslovakia was ceded back to Hungary. After the war, it became part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Today, it is called Mukachevo [Ukrainian].

<sup>2</sup> A settlement reached during the Munich Conference held in Munich, Germany in September 1938 ceded the German-speaking Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia to Germany. The agreement was reached between Adolf Hitler, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, French leader Eduard Daladier, and Italian dictator Benito Mussolini. Czechoslovakia was not permitted to attend the conference. Poland and Hungary occupied other parts of the country (including Gene's hometown) and, after a few months, Czechoslovakia ceased to exist.

<sup>3</sup> Tomas Garrigue Masaryk (1850—1937) was a Czech politician and sociologist. Masaryk was appointed head of the Provisional Czechoslovak government after World War I ended. He was reelected three times, serving as president from 1918 until health problems forced him to resign in 1935.

Benjamin], or **Baylor** in Hungarian; my sister, Esther or Naomi; and my mother, Yocheved—all three of them did not survive the Holocaust. My father [Henryk] did, with me. I'll tell you a little bit more about that later.

I went to the school, a parochial school in Munkacs, or Mukachevo. It was a school in which most of the subjects were taught in Hebrew. My native language, if there is such a thing, was Yiddish,<sup>4</sup> because that's what I spoke at home, and Hebrew, which I spoke in my high school. In my school, all twelve grades, most of my subjects were taught in Hebrew.

I'll tell you a little bit about my town. My town, Munkacs, or Mukachevo, had a population of 27,000, of which 18,000 were Jews. It was a *shtetl*.<sup>5</sup> [When it was] *Shabbos*, it was almost dead because all of the stores were had by Jewish people and, of course, everything was closed.<sup>6</sup> It was an Orthodox city in the sense that most of the people there were Hassidim.<sup>7</sup> There were Hassidim of all kinds of rabbis. There was obviously the Munkacs Hassidim, the followers of the Munkacs rabbi. There were also Belzer Hassidim.<sup>8</sup> There were also Satmar Hassidim.<sup>9</sup> There was Hassidim of all kinds of varieties in there, each of them believing in, and touting their own rabbi and the powers of their own rabbi.

In 1938, my hometown was turned over to the Hungarians, and when the Hungarians took over my hometown, clearly they brought with them the anti-Jewish laws.<sup>10</sup> The first thing which they did is they forced . . . they said that only seven percent of Jews may own stores. Since it was a largely Jewish town, this meant that most of the people there who had stores lost their license to practice their business. Later on it became *numerus clausus*, meaning

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<sup>4</sup> Yiddish is the common historical language of Ashkenazi Jews from Central and Eastern Europe. It is heavily Germanic based but uses the Hebrew alphabet. The language was spoken or understood as a common tongue for many European Jews up until the middle of the twentieth century.

<sup>5</sup> The Yiddish term for town, '*shtetl*' commonly refers to small towns or villages in pre-World War II Eastern and Central Europe with a significant Jewish presence that were primarily Yiddish speaking.

<sup>6</sup> *Shabbat* (Hebrew) or *Shabbos* (Yiddish) is the Jewish day of rest and is observed on Saturdays. *Shabbat* observance entails refraining from work activities, often with great rigor, and engaging in restful activities to honor the day. *Shabbat* begins at sundown on Friday night and is ushered in by lighting candles and reciting a blessing. It is closed the following evening with the recitation of the *havdalah* blessing.

<sup>7</sup> Hasidic Judaism (also sometimes called *Chasidim* (From the Hebrew word "Chasid" meaning "pious")) refers to a branch of Orthodox Judaism that maintains a lifestyle separate from the non-Jewish world.

<sup>8</sup> Belzer is a Hasidic sect originally located in the town of Belz (Polish: Belz) in present-day Western Ukraine. Rabbi Shalom Rokeah founded it around 1817.

<sup>9</sup> Satmar is a Hasidic group originating from the city of Szatmárnémeti, Hungary (now Satu Mare, Romania), where Rabbi Moshe Teitelbaum founded it in 1905.

<sup>10</sup> As early as May 1938, Hungary had adopted comprehensive anti-Jewish laws and measures. In 1941, racial laws that were modeled on Germany's Nuremberg Laws were introduced. Among other provisions, the laws defined "Jews" in so-called racial terms, forbade intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews, excluded Jews from full participation in various professions, and restricted their opportunities in economic life.

that almost no Jew was allowed to have a store.<sup>11</sup> By that time, it was already January of 1944 and soon enough, in the beginning of March of 1944, the Germans took over all of Hungary.<sup>12</sup> Soon we saw the SS that came into my hometown.<sup>13</sup> I'm trying to make a long story short, but to come to the point.

The first edict was that we all had to . . . that most of the Jews had to leave their homes and move into the ghetto.<sup>14</sup> My home was in the middle of the ghetto, so consequently, most of my relatives moved in with us and they stayed there. We were in the ghetto for like a few weeks, for two or three weeks. One morning—it was a Friday morning. I remember it distinctly. It was before 6:00 in the morning. We woke up with noise, gunshots. We looked out the window and we saw that Hungarian police and Army were walking around shooting their weapons in the air.<sup>15</sup> There was a total commotion on the street. People were moving out into the street. Soon, we realized what has happened. The Hungarian Army and the police came into my hometown, again, shooting their guns into the air and inside the house. [They] told us that we had 15 minutes, at which time we had to pack up any of our belongings

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<sup>11</sup> *Numerus clausus* [Latin: closed term] is a term that refers to anti-Jewish policies that limited Jews from certain professions, public offices and institutes of higher education by applying fixed quotas. In 1920, Hungary had enacted a *numerus clausus* that placed a ceiling of 6 percent on the amount of Jewish students allowed in institutes of higher education. In general, *numerus clausus* policies were religious or racial quotas used to discriminate against Jews in Eastern Europe.

<sup>12</sup> The Hungarian government began to build an alliance with Nazi Germany soon after Hitler came to power in 1933. In October 1940, Hungary had officially aligned itself with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Nonetheless, despite antisemitic restrictions, most Hungarian Jews were initially spared ghettoization and deportation, as the Nazis did not directly control the internal activities of their allies. By 1944, however, after Germany's defeat at Stalingrad and other battles in which Hungary lost tens of thousands of its soldiers, the alliance with Germany began to weaken. Recognizing that Germany was likely to lose the war, Hungary began negotiating an armistice with the western allies. To prevent losing the territory, German forces invaded. In March 1944, Germany occupied Hungary. Within a month, Hungarian authorities began to systematically concentrate Hungarian Jews in ghettos and, by May 1944, had begun deportations.

<sup>13</sup> 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.

<sup>14</sup> Immediately after Passover, on April 18, 1944, flyers announced that the Jews of Munkacs and the surrounding villages must move into an improvised ghetto. They were allowed to take only a few items into the ghetto. Over the course of two days, over 11,000 Jews were concentrated into a section of the city centered on an old brick-making factory and its yard, where they stayed for a few weeks. Railroad tracks passed close by it so it was a useful and easy place to guard. Other Jews from the area were also pushed into the brick-making factory's yard. In the ghetto, Jews lived in terrible conditions of poverty, and suffered from cruelty, daily abuse and forced labor in the town.

<sup>15</sup> Although Hungary had initially been resistant to mass deportations of its Jewish population, after the German occupation in March 1944, Hungarian authorities complied. In coordination with the German Security Police, police, gendarmerie, and local administrators began to systematically roundup and concentrate 440,000 Hungarian Jews in ghettos before forcing them onto the deportation trains.

that we wanted to carry with us, to be ready to move out of our home. We did. They came in. To emphasize their seriousness, they used the butt of their rifles to move us on.

We got out into the street—most of the other people already, our neighbors, were there on the street—and we marched. They took us . . . in the outskirts of the city there was a brick factory. They took us to the brick factory because that had the largest place under a roof where they could gather people. After all, this was the place where they used to keep the raw bricks and cover [them] up so that the rain would not fall on them. We stayed in that brick factory for a few days, until they were able to gather everybody from the neighborhood. Approximately from over a 50 or 60 miles radius, they gathered all the people and brought them to the same place. My grandmother, who lived in about 36 miles away from our hometown in the middle of a small, little bitty village in the Carpathian Mountains, she too was brought there and we found her there.<sup>16</sup>

Soon, we were taken away from there. Meanwhile, all kinds of rumors were flying about. The Germans were very adept at this. They hired—‘hired,’ I’m saying because the payment was they promised the Jews who would spread these rumors they would be taken care of . . .<sup>17</sup> The rumors were spread, "Don't worry. Don't fight. All they are going to do, they're going to take you to a place where you're going to work. You'll be together with your family. It will not be bad." [They were] trying to allay our fears, but we already knew what has happened, what the Germans were doing in Poland . . . that we will be taken just simply to a work camp, where the family will work together. Nonetheless, people had their suspicions.

In fact, there was a big latrine there and people were so concerned about what has happened to them. When they took us out and they asked us to bring along whatever we could carry, a lot of people took their jewelry along with them. They thought maybe they could bargain with their jewelry, you know, buy some food or buy their lives off. Soon they realized that that's not going to happen, so they went into the latrine and they dropped all their jewelry into this big hole of the latrine. If somebody would have drained all of this, they would have

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<sup>16</sup> The Carpathian Mountains or Carpathians are a range of mountains forming an arc across Central Europe. The roughly 1,500 km (932 mi) long arc stretches through the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Ukraine, Romania, and Serbia.

<sup>17</sup> The *Judenrat* [German: Jewish council] governed the ghetto's internal affairs. Members of the *Judenrat* lived with their families in a special quarter of the ghetto, located near the hospital. Most of the *Judenrat* had been community leaders prior to the German occupation and fulfilled their difficult roles under the misguided belief that they would be spared deportation. The authorities kept them in their positions until the end of the deportations and then deported them as well.

probably found a lot of gold and diamonds in there.

One day the trains came—the infamous trains.<sup>18</sup> They were cattle cars. We were taken and we were put into the cattle cars, the doors locked, the windows barred with the barbed wire, and we were off. On the way to someplace—we didn't know where—my mother started crying. I said, "Mama, why are you crying?" She said, "You know, I'm not old but I've lived my life. I have seen good times. But you children have not lived yet. I'm crying because of you." It stuck in my memory—this event.

One late night, or very early in the morning before dawn, we arrived somewhere. It was three days after we had been on the train. We looked out of the window and all we could see was some huge fires and a stench. We didn't know where we were. As daylight came, the doors were opened and we were told to get out. Men and women had been told to stand in single formation, separately. I'm sure that this story has been repeated by many others who have told you this same thing. As I was standing there in line with my father and my brother—my mother and my sister were in another line—there was an inmate there, a *kapo*.<sup>19</sup> A plane flew overhead and this guy says, "Oh, dear G-d, if that guy would only drop some bombs over here, we all would be better off." I asked him, "What? What do you say? Why do you want to die? Why do you want the bombs to drop?" He said, "You'll find out."

We were told by the rumors that you had to be 16 to have a chance for survival.<sup>20</sup> When they asked—they came and asked how old my brother was, we automatically figured the year in which he's going to be turning 16, but not the month. According to the month,

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<sup>18</sup> The Munkacs ghetto lasted about a month until mid-May 1944, when the Jews were forced into cattle cars and transported to the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp, where most were murdered. By the end of May 1944, Munkacs was declared *Judenrein* [German: free of Jews].

<sup>19</sup> To assist in managing the large communities within concentration or labor camps, German authorities installed a hierarchy of administrative units under their control. A *kapo* was a prisoner in a concentration camp who was assigned by the SS guards to supervise forced labor or carry out administrative tasks in the camp. *Kapos* were generally criminals. The *kapo* system minimized costs by allowing the camps to function with fewer SS personnel. It was designed to turn victim against victim, as the *kapos* were pitted against their fellow prisoners in order to maintain the favor of their SS guards.

<sup>20</sup> In Auschwitz-Birkenau, the selection of mass Jewish transports took place on three railroad unloading platforms, or ramps. SS doctors made most of the decisions about who was qualified for labor, and who was killed immediately. The selection procedure carried out on the ramps was as follows: families were divided after leaving the train cars and all the people were lined up in two columns. The men and older boys were in one column, and the women and children of both sexes in the other. Next, the people were led to the camp doctors and other camp functionaries conducting selection. They judged the people standing before them on sight and, sometimes eliciting a brief declaration as to their age and occupation, decided whether they would live or die. Age was one of the principal criteria for selection. As a rule, all children below 16 years of age (from 1944, below 14) and the elderly were sent to die. As a statistical average, about 20% of the people in transports were chosen for labor. They were led into the camp and registered as prisoners. The remainder was killed in the gas chambers.

he was only 15 minus three months before becoming 16, so he was taken away. We were marched ahead single file. There was a guy standing there at the head of the line in a leather jacket. I later on found out who it was. It was the infamous Dr. Mengele, who did nothing else but stood there with his finger pointing left or right.<sup>21</sup> Later on, we found out that those who turned . . . who were pointed to the left, never [re]appeared. My father and I were—and I had some uncles there, and my cousin . . . we were sent to the right, and we were told that we had to undress. Leave everything except my shoes. We got undressed. You went then in front of people who had shears and they cut all our hair, including our pubic hair. Then, in front of a person who had some creosote there and dabbed our underarms and our pubic region with the creosote to make sure that they killed the lice.<sup>22</sup>

Then they send us to the showers. In the showers, we received some soap to wash ourselves. On the soap it was stamped, "RJS," which later on we found out what this abbreviation stood for. Whether it's correct or not, I do not know, but this is what we were told, that the RJS stood for *Reine Jüdische Seife* [German], Pure Jewish Soap, meaning that the fat which was gathered from the crematorium were used to make soap out of which. That meant that it was pure Jewish soap.<sup>23</sup>

After the shower, I came back where I left my shoes and suddenly I found that I had only two right shoes there. I asked somebody, "What now?" He says, "You see that window there?" He says, "Knock at that window and when it opens up, begin your request with the following words: *Ich erbitte demütig*, [German] meaning, 'I humbly request,' and tell them what happened—that you're requesting a pair of shoes. They might give you a pair of wooden

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<sup>21</sup> Josef Mengele (1911-1979) was an SS doctor who was notorious for being one of the physicians who sorted newly arrived prisoners on the ramp at Auschwitz-Birkenau, picking out those he wanted for his medical experiments—especially twins. Many survivors recall being selected by Mengele, but caution should be used because many physicians worked at Auschwitz-Birkenau during its existence. Medical staff routinely performed selections of prisoners at the arrival ramp, determining who would be retained for work and who would be sent to the gas chambers.

<sup>22</sup> Creosote is a chemical formed by the distillation of various tars and plant-derived material and is typically used as a preservative or antiseptic. Various chemicals like creosote were used in concentration camps to control the lice, bed bugs, and other insects that spread diseases among the dense populations of people who were housed in conditions where poor hygiene and malnourishment often led to outbreaks.

shoes." I went over there and I knocked at the window. When it opened up, there stood an SS and another inmate, a *kapo*, who had a big stick. The first thing was he hit me on the head and then he says, "What do you want?" I told him -- I started with the "*Ich erbitte demütig*. . . I am humbly requesting a pair of shoes. Somebody took my . . . left shoe. I have two rights." The man hit me on the head again and closed the window. I went back to my father and I said to him, and I started crying. He says, "Why are you crying?" I says, "Dad, I'm not crying because it hurt. I'm crying out of frustration. How is it possible that now, in the middle of the Twentieth Century, this kind of inhumanity can be practiced?" As it turned out, the man who took my left shoe, he had two lefts, so we found each other and got my shoes. Let me close my experiences in the camp.

This was in Auschwitz-Birkenau, actually.<sup>24</sup> We stayed in Birkenau for a week.<sup>25</sup> We were shipped from Birkenau to Warsaw [Poland]. After the Warsaw Ghetto . . .

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<sup>23</sup> Rumors that the Nazis produced soap from the bodies of concentration camp inmates circulated widely during the war. Germany suffered a shortage of fats during World War II, and the production of soap was put under government control. The human soap rumors may have originated from the bars of soap being marked with the initials 'RIF,' which was interpreted by some as meaning '*Reich-Juden-Fett*' ('State Jewish Fat'). In German the "i" and "j" are often used interchangeably. In fact, 'RIF' stood for '*Reichsstelle für Industrielle Fettversorgung*' ('National Center for Industrial Fat Provisioning,' the German government agency responsible for wartime production and distribution of soap and washing products). RIF soap was a poor quality substitute product that contained no fat at all, human or otherwise.

<sup>24</sup> 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. Auschwitz was a complex of camps: the Main Camp (Auschwitz I), Auschwitz-Birkenau (Auschwitz II) and Monowitz (Auschwitz III). 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.

<sup>25</sup> Auschwitz II (also known as Auschwitz-Birkenau or simply Birkenau) had the largest total prisoner population. It was divided into more than a dozen sections for women, men, *Roma* (Gypsies), and a family camp for Jewish families deported from the Theresienstadt ghetto. Auschwitz-Birkenau also contained the facilities for a killing center, which continued gassing operations until November 1944.

revolution has been defeated, they brought us there.<sup>26</sup> They went about to dynamite each house in the ghetto and they brought us there, what they called for project or *Projekt Umbau Berlin* [German: Project Rebuild Berlin], meaning that our job was to go to the Jewish ghetto, to the Jewish homes, to all of these tall apartment houses on Nowolipki Street [in the center of the ghetto]. We lived [a few blocks away] on Gesia [Street]. The camp was on Gesia. Our job was to clean the bricks, stack them up, and the Germans would ship the bricks back to Berlin to try to rebuild Berlin. Now Berlin was being bombed.<sup>27</sup>

Soon, we heard gunshots from afar. We came back from work one day and we were told to line up because we would be taken away. The first question was . . . the Germans came and said, "Is there anybody here who cannot walk 100 kilometers [about 60 miles]? Step forward and we will provide transportation." A classmate of mine was standing right next to me. He wanted to step forward. I told him, I said, "Look, don't go out." His name was Friedman. I say, "Don't go out. You know you can't believe the Germans. Stay with us." [He said,] "No, no." He stepped forward. Soon came the trucks. They put him on the trucks. They took them out of the camp. When we hear the rat-tat-tat of the machine gun, we knew that was the end of them.

We were going to be the next ones to be taken out because somehow, as the

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<sup>26</sup> The first mass deportations from the Warsaw, Poland ghetto began in July 1942 and lasted until August. In just ten days, nearly 65,000 Jews were deported. They were told they were being resettled to the east to work but instead they were transported to Treblinka death camp where they were murdered. A second major wave of deportation started in January 1943. By this time, most of the Jews knew what had happened to those deported before them and they did not go voluntarily to the trains, but instead hid in bunkers. In order to fill the trains the Germans now had to rout Jews out of hiding. The first act of resistance occurred during this period, when a number of armed Jews opened fire on SS guards leading a deportation column. This resistance surprised the Germans who could no longer move through the ghetto without resistance or fill the trains quickly and efficiently and the deportations were discontinued until April 19, 1943. This time the entire ghetto was to be liquidated. The Germans were met by stiff resistance from Mordechai Anielewicz and the ZOB (Jewish Fighting Organization.) Again they temporarily withdrew. A new commander was appointed, General Jurgen Stroop, who returned to the ghetto in full force with 850 soldiers, tanks and armored cars. The Germans literally destroyed the ghetto building-by-building, block-by-block, burning and demolishing the ghetto one street at a time. As they routed the Jews out of hiding by fire or poison gas, the Jews they found were either put on a transport or shot on the spot. The resistance continued for three weeks until May 8, 1943, when the Germans discovered the ZOB's main command post and the last of the fighters committed suicide rather than surrender.

<sup>27</sup> On July 19, 1943—after the Warsaw ghetto was officially liquidated—a special concentration camp was set up there. Ironically, between August 31 and November 27, four transports of 3,683 Jews arrived from Auschwitz-Birkenau to clean up the area and reclaim building materials for construction in Germany. The camp was called *Konzentrationslager Warschau* but was known as "Gesiowka" after the prison for the Jews that had been in the ghetto and in which they were now housed. Other Jewish prisoners retrieved the bodies of Jews who had died in the ghetto during the liquidations. They were brought to Gesia Street and burned on byres.

Germans were retreating from Warsaw, the Russians were coming closer.<sup>28</sup> All of the highways were filled with Germans. We knew that they were getting ready to kill us all there, but suddenly there came a messenger, whispered something to the Commandant. We were sent back to our barracks. The next morning we lined up again and we were taken out. This was in July or August in the middle of Poland. It was hot. We had no water. We marched. All day long, some people dropped on the side and they were shot. I find that that march to the place where we were going to catch the train, something really similar to the Bataan march the Americans have experienced, because as people dropped, they were shot.<sup>29</sup> They were not . . . there was no way for them to pick them up and carry them. Again, a lot of people were dropping out because of thirst.

That evening, we came to a river. We stood in front of the river and they would not let us into the river to drink. After standing in front of the river for about a half an hour, finally, slowly, they let us go into the river for five minutes. We stood there like cattle and we drank from the water from the river. We settled down for the night. We had no food. We were suffering from dehydration, that extremely hot summer day, marching. I knew instinctively that if we don't get any more water, if we cannot hydrate ourselves, we will all be dead the next day. I don't know what to call the event that happened, but I'm going to tell you anyway—whether I call it a miracle, a coincidence, just one of those things. We were lying there at the edge of the river. It was a sandy [beach] there. Suddenly, all I could think about is water, and I decided to dig a hole. There is a passage in the Old Testament, in the Five Books of Moses, that when Jews came in the desert they were, at one place, digging holes. In Hebrew, it's called *hammereme hammereme*, holes and holes. I had a spoon, and I had a metal dish, and I started digging into the ground and there was a sandy soil. After I dug about a foot, maybe 14 inches, 15 inches, suddenly, water started seeping through from under the ground there. I dug a little bit

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<sup>28</sup> In July 1944, as the Red Army was approaching Warsaw, the Gęsiówka camp was emptied of its prisoners, who were deported by foot and had to march 30 kilometers a day. Many of them were murdered along the way. Those who survived ended their march at Dachau. In August 1944, the Polish Uprising began. Soviet troops finally liberated Warsaw from German occupation on January 17, 1945.

<sup>29</sup> The Bataan Death March was a 66 mile (106 km) march in the Philippines that 76,000 prisoners of war (66,000 Filipinos, 10,000 Americans) were forced by the by the Japanese military to endure in April 1942, during the early stages of World War II. During the main march—which lasted 5 to 10 days, depending on where a prisoner joined it—the captives were beaten, shot, bayoneted, and, in many cases, beheaded; a large number of those who made it to the camp later died of starvation and disease. Only 54,000 prisoners reached Camp O'Donnell, a former Philippine army-training center used by the Japanese military to intern Filipino and American prisoners. Though exact numbers are unknown, some 2,500 Filipinos and 500 Americans may have died during the march, and an additional 26,000 Filipinos and 1,500 Americans died at Camp O'Donnell.

more and suddenly the whole hole was filled up with water. My father and I started drinking. When the people around me saw what I had done and what the result was, they too started digging. The Commandant came and stood right in front, above me, and graciously said, "Well, if you found water, you might as well have it."

Soon, the next day we arrived at the place where we were to catch the train. As dry as it was while we were marching, now it started raining. For three days, we stayed in the rain. We had no place to go, so we just lay on the ground there in the rain. The day finally came where the train arrived again. We were given something to eat, some sort of canned meat, very salty.

Finally, we were put into the train. If you're looking at the train—these were cattle cars or freight trains—a freight train has got three sections. The middle section is where the door was and then you had the two other sections on the sides. Well, the door section—one third of that freight train—had to be left open for two SS guards who had some field beds put in there. They were going to stay with us in the train. The rest of us 90 persons—45 on one side and 45 on the other side . . . If you put 45 people on these, in that space, all . . . We had to sit—clearly, we could not stand—so they could watch over us more easily. You could not . . . there was no room for 45 people so we had to sit there or lie there with our legs on top of each other.

Soon, the sun came up. All our clothes were wet. It became hot in the train, steaming. Given the salty meat that we ate just before we embarked on the train, we started becoming thirsty and no water. Finally, the only solution was for us to start gathering our own urine. First, we started only washing ourselves, trying to get some moisture on our bodies from our own urine. Finally, in the end, I tried to drink it.

After three days we arrived in Dachau.<sup>30</sup> A lot of the people who were there were dead. One friend of mine that I made friends with in Warsaw, I couldn't recognize him because in just that very short time, he has lost so much weight that he looked almost like a walking skeleton. We stayed in Dachau for about a week.

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<sup>30</sup> 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 and at least 28,000 died there. Prisoners at Dachau were used as forced laborers and thousands were literally worked to death. American troops liberated the camp on April 29, 1945.

Then they shipped us to another camp called Muhlendorf Waldlager.<sup>31</sup> Our job at Muhlendorf was to build an underground airplane factory. The Germans were getting ready to build jet planes there. To finish my story: a lot of people died there. We never had more than 1,500 people in the camp [at on time], but from August [1944] until May of the next year [1945], we left over 10,000 dead in that one camp alone. The turnover rate was very high.

On May 2, 1945 . . . no, a few days . . . it was the end of April . . . we were told that the Jews will be taken out of the camp.<sup>32</sup> Only the Christians or non-Jews and the people who are ill will remain there. My father and I hid in the hospital. We figured that wherever the Christians are going to be, maybe they were going to be the safest. I didn't know that they had plans to pour gasoline on the hospital, and to ignite it, and to kill all of the people who were in the hospital. But on May 2nd, we wake up and the day when all of this was supposed to have happened, we heard fighting. We heard planes. We heard cannon. I went out around 10:00 in the morning and all the guards were gone. Liberation Day.

That afternoon, at 2:00, finally the Americans have arrived to our camp. A squad of soldiers headed by a Lieutenant Schwartz—a First Lieutenant, who was from Chicago—I wish I could have met him now—with one tank, came to liberate us. Since I was the only one who spoke English, obviously, I was the one who was interrogated, asking what it was, what this was all about. It was his first camp that he saw. I explained to him what this was and I talked about . . . The first thing I asked him was, “Do you have a cigarette?” He gave me a pack of Camel [brand cigarettes]. As I opened the pack of Camels, suddenly, I found I had a lot of

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<sup>31</sup>As the Allied air offensive intensified after 1943, Nazi leadership decided to construct underground installations in order to produce weaponry and related war material. Muhlendorf [German: Mühldorf, and also spelled Muehldorf] was one of four camps hastily constructed in mid-1944 in Mühldorf am Inn in upper Bavaria as a satellite system of the Dachau Concentration camp system. Between July 1944 and April 1945, more than 8,300 prisoners (800 females and 7,500 males) passed through the camp. Most were Hungarian Jews, but there were also Jews from Greece, France, Italy, as well as political prisoners from Russia, Poland, Germany, and Serbia. The camp's purpose was to provide labor for an underground installation for the production of the Messerschmitt 262 (Me-262) jet fighter. Prisoners frequently worked 10 to 12 hour days hauling heavy bags of cement and carrying out other arduous construction tasks. Prisoners were housed in two larger camps near the town, at a forest camp, and in two smaller camps in nearby communities (Mittergars and Thalham). Mettenheim (M1) was located in the barracks of a former clothing depot, while Waldlager V and VI were newly constructed in the nearby forest. Prisoners in the Waldlager forest camps were housed in earthen huts and barracks partially submerged in the ground with canvas roofs that rain and snow penetrated in the winter. Living conditions in the camps were catastrophic. There was no firewood in the winter, inadequate rations, little or no running water and medical care was non-existent. Typhus raged through the camp. It is estimated that more than half of the prisoners held in Mühldorf perished following deportation or on site from overwork, abuse, shootings, and disease. In the fall of 1944, SS guards deported hundreds of sick and disabled inmates to the gas chambers at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

<sup>32</sup> In late April 1945, as the US Army approached the camps, the SS guards evacuated some 3,600 prisoners from the camp on death marches. Many of the prisoners on the marches died, while survivors were liberated along the road.

friends. Everybody was saying, "Give me a cigarette. Give me a cigarette." I gave everybody a cigarette. Finally, I had only one cigarette left.

Two things happened afterwards. One was that as I explained to him what this was all about, I told him about the *kapos*. One of the *kapos*—he was the head of all *kapos*, he was a German, a criminal with a green triangle designating that he was a murderer—appeared. If there is any evidence of evolution, there was this man who had a totally simian look.<sup>33</sup> He looked like a great ape. His arms dangled below his knees, very short forehead. Here was this *kapo*, coming towards us. He'd just butchered a cow and his arms were bloody. The total appearance was really one of a criminal who just committed a major crime. The lieutenant took out his service revolver, gave it to me, and he said, "Shoot him. Nothing is going to happen to you." I could not commit murder. Not that I wouldn't have not loved to have done it, because previously, that man beat me almost senseless at one time.

Anyway, we were liberated. We went to the hospital and stayed at the hospital for a week. Afterwards, we were repatriated. I just want to tell you one anecdote or one story. We were in Bratislava [Slovakia], staying at a repatriation center.<sup>34</sup> Every time a new transport of people came, who had just been shipped back from the camp, we all ran up to this group of people asking the question, "Do you know anything about . . . Have you seen any such person?" In this case, it was evening. Again, we all ran out there, including one of the other persons who survived with us. We ran up to this new group of people and before we had a chance to ask any questions, this man saw his wife there. Clearly was a great cry and commotion. Everybody cried for the happiness of this person who was reunited with his wife. This was around 8:00 at night. Around 10:00 at night another transport came in. Again, we ran out there to try to ask the questions, "Have you heard anything about so-and-so or seen anything about so-and-so?" This man with his wife now ran up again. There, they found their two daughters. The whole family was reunited. Clearly, there was no sleeping that night.

I came back to my hometown. When I found out that my hometown now was

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<sup>33</sup> Gene is using a Latin term to describe a person with unusually ape- or monkey-like characteristics.

<sup>34</sup> Bratislava is the capital of present-day Slovakia and is situated on the border of Austria and Hungary.

turned over to the U.S.S.R.<sup>35</sup> I told my father, "Forget it. I will not stay here." The next day, I snuck out and took a train. [I] went to Budapest [Hungary].<sup>36</sup> Then I spent a week there. I didn't care to be there. I went back to Prague [Czechoslovakia], hopefully to attend medical school.<sup>37</sup> Soon Prague too became slowly under the influence of the Russians. I decided that it was time again for me to run away again. That was . . . in March of 1946.

I went to the American Joint Distribution Committee asking them to give me some help of sneaking across the border.<sup>38</sup> They said, "Yes, we'll give you help on one condition. If you will take along with you some children." I said, "Okay." We made a date for two days hence that I will meet the children at the train platform and then I'll take them along and watch over them going to the border between the Czech and the German border. We were told that we will be given some help to cross at night from Czechoslovakia to Germany. Here I am, now I'm carrying myself about a dozen or so children that I am supposed to be in charge.

I and my friend, Chaim Sternbach—a classmate of mine with whom I also went to medical school there in Prague—have these children, and now, what to do? The policeman came to us because we were going towards the border. He comes to us, he says, "Why are you going to the border?" I had an [identification] with me. As a part of my medical school I also worked in the hospital called Bulovka Hospital.<sup>39</sup> I showed them my hospital ID and I told them that, "Listen, these are children who just survived. They are all suffering from [tuberculosis]."<sup>40</sup> This was all impromptu. You had to be quick on your feet if you wanted to survive. [I said,] "I'm taking them up into the mountains to a sanatorium there, to be able to recuperate from the TB, which they have." That seemed plausible. [He said,] "That's fine. Get on

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<sup>35</sup> At the conclusion of World War II, most of eastern and central Europe, including Czechoslovakia, were occupied by the Soviets and soon found themselves with Communist governments. The US-led Western Allies occupied Western Europe. As relations between the former allies became increasingly polarized and tense, crossing the borders of occupation zones became increasingly difficult. The Communist Party emerged as the largest party in Czechoslovakia's Parliamentary elections in May 1946. Following the elections, the Communist Party formed a coalition government and gradually took control of the entire government. Most non-Communist members resigned and, in February 1948, the Communist Party seized full power in a coup d'état.

<sup>36</sup> Budapest is the capital and the largest city of Hungary. The city was liberated by the Soviet Army on February 13, 1945 and remained under Soviet control until 1991.

<sup>37</sup> Prague is the capital and largest city of the Czech Republic. It is situated in the northwest of the country on the Vltava River. The Soviet Army entered Prague on May 9, 1945.

<sup>38</sup> The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (commonly called "the Joint") is a worldwide Jewish relief organization headquartered in New York. It was established in 1914. After World War II, the Joint provided desperately needed supplies and necessities to survivors inside and outside of DP camps in Eastern Europe, Hungary, Poland and Romania.

<sup>39</sup> Bulovka Hospital is a large teaching hospital complex in Prague, Czech Republic.

<sup>40</sup> Tuberculosis (often called "TB") is a potentially fatal contagious disease that mainly affects the lungs.

the train."

We got on the train. We got off at the border. We waited that night until midnight when a person came and said, "Okay, come on. I'll help you go across and I'll show you the way." We crossed into Germany.<sup>41</sup> He said, "Now, you're in Germany. Go take a train and go to Munich [Germany].<sup>42</sup> [I wondered,] "Take a train? I don't have any money. I've got 12 or some odd kids that are hungry. What to do now?"

Again, I got an idea. I told my friend, I said, "Listen, I'm going to be an American CIC.<sup>43</sup> I knew about the CIC because after the war I worked for the American in the hospital. I was the de facto . . . I was the only one who spoke English, so I learned a great deal about the Army. I said, "I'll be the CIC, speaking English. You'll be my interpreter." I went into a bakery. I take out my ID. Now, this was my student tram ID for the buses and for the streetcar. It had my picture on it and a lot of stamps on it. I flash it to the guy and I say in English that I am from the CIC, I'm requisitioning bread for some groups of people that I have with me. This was too soon after the war. They didn't ask any questions. [They said,] "Oh, yes." They gave me some loaves of bread. Same thing [when] I went into the butcher shop. I said I was requisitioning some salami and some wurst [sausage]. Immediately, they too said, "Yes, here is some wurst." No money passed hands. I had no money.

I went to the stationmaster and I said, "Look, I have to take these children to Munich. Add on a separate compartment for us to go to Munich." He did. He added another compartment. We got into the compartment. The Germans who came and tried to enter that compartment, I started showing my ID. I said, "No, this is an American compartment. You cannot enter here." [They said,] "Fine." That evening I came to Munich. Now, here I've got these kids and what now? Where do I take them? I saw a place where it said "RTO." Later, I found out this was called Railroad Transportation Office. I saw GIs going in and out.<sup>44</sup> I said, "Well, these are Americans. I'm going to find a way to do it." I go in that office and there was a Lieutenant. I

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<sup>41</sup> From 1945 to 1949, Germany was occupied by the Allied forces and divided into four administrative zones by the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, France and the United States. Much of southern Germany fell within the American zone of occupation and included the German states of Hesse, Bavaria, and much of Baden-Wurtemberg. The American occupied zone was in the southern portion of Germany and included the cities of Munich, Frankfurt am Main, Stuttgart, and Nürnberg.

<sup>42</sup> Munich is the capital of the German state of Bavaria. It is located on the River Isar, north of the Alps. After World War II, the city was occupied by the United States.

<sup>43</sup> The Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) was a World War II and early Cold War intelligence agency within the United States Army consisting of highly trained Special Agents.

<sup>44</sup> "GI" is a nickname given to American soldiers during the Second World War. GI stands for "Government Issue."

said, "Lieutenant, I've got to get these kids and myself and a friend of mine, we just came in here. We are survivors from the camp. Can you help us out? I do not know where to take and where to go." He said, "Okay. No problem." He called them and he called . . . He brought some trucks in. One of the trucks they took us to a camp that was called displaced person camp in Munich, in the [Funk Kaserne Emigration & Repatriation Center].<sup>45</sup>

We got to the Funk Center. Immediately when we got there people all started asking questions. I started asking questions, "Where are we? What do you do," and so on. They started talking to me about the food—how much food you get if you don't work, how much food you get when you work. I figured you get much more food when you work. I might as well go try to find some work. The next morning I went into the office. There were three women working for the United Nations, for UNRRA—the United Nations Release and Rehabilitation Administration.<sup>46</sup> They were French women. I go over there. I spoke English. I said, "Look, I speak English. I speak Yiddish. I speak German. I speak Hungarian. I speak Czech. I speak a little Russian. Can you use me?" They said, "Sure." I started working in the office and I worked there for about a week.

One day, they called me in and they told me, they said, "Listen, we have to open a new camp. There is a place the Army now released and they are turning it over to us. Why don't you gather some plumbers, some carpenters, and go up, and fix the camp, and go open the camp?" I said, "Fine." I gathered my friends with me and got some plumbers and some carpenters. We drove down to a camp named Wasserburg, in Bavaria [Germany].<sup>47</sup> We went to the camp, to Wasserburg, and we started opening the camp.

After about a couple of weeks in there, the United Nations came to take over from us, and also a gentleman by the name of Joseph Fink, working for the American Joint Distribution Committee, the AJDC. He comes to us and he said, "Look, Gene, why don't you

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<sup>45</sup> The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) operated the Funk Kaserne Emigration and Repatriation Center near Munich, Germany. It was originally a military barracks built in 1936. *Funk* is German for "radio" and *Kaserne* means "barracks."

<sup>46</sup> The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) was founded in 1943. Its mission was to provide economic assistance to European nations after World War II and to repatriate and assist the refugees who would come under Allied control. UNRRA managed hundreds of displaced persons camps in Germany, Italy, and Austria and played a major role in repatriating survivors to their home countries in 1946-1947. It largely shut down operations in 1947.

<sup>47</sup> Gabersee was a displaced persons [DP] camp in the Munich district, located near Wasserburg, Germany, in the American zone of occupation. It opened on March 29, 1946, under UNRRA auspices. The Jewish population averaged 1,750 people in the years 1946-49. On June 30, 1950, Gabersee closed.

join us and come to work for us? I said, "Okay." All four of us friends, we went with him. We joined up with him to work for the American Joint Distribution Committee. We got uniforms, PX privileges . . . wonderful. For the next two years, I worked for the AJDC together with the UNRRA. I worked a number of different camps. I was in Ansbach [Germany].<sup>48</sup> First, I worked in Munich and then in Ansbach, and then in Wasserburg, at a children's camp. I finally . . . as luck would have it, I was always Johnny-on-the-spot. When the . . . UNRRA had to have somebody else to go to do a special job, I happened to be there. They sent me and I did the job.

With the new job, came a promotion. I began as a Grade 3 clerk and I ended up having Grade 13, area director, which was equivalent to a full-bird colonel . . . the same rank.<sup>49</sup> As I traveled, my ID indicated my GS number here.<sup>50</sup> In those days, it was G-13 and they have to give me billeting according to my rank. Here I am, a 22-year-old kid, sitting there with all these senior officers. They look upon me and say, "What the hell are you?" But I had my rank. They had to accept me. I would have felt better with the GIs than sitting there with all the colonels and the generals.

While in Germany, working, I received a scholarship from the B'nai B'rith Hillel to come to the United States.<sup>51</sup> Finally, in . . . June of 1948, my turn came.<sup>52</sup> I was sent to Bremenhaven [Germany].<sup>53</sup> With the rest of the displaced persons who were immigrating, we

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<sup>48</sup> Ansbach is a city in Bavaria, Germany, 25 miles (40 kilometers) southwest of Nuremberg and 90 miles (140 kilometers) north of Munich. After the Second World War, Ansbach belonged to the American Zone. The American Military authorities established a displaced persons (DP) camp in what used to be a sanatorium.

<sup>49</sup> The rank insignia for Colonel is a silver eagle that is a stylized representation of the eagle in the seal of the United States coat of arms. They are sometimes informally referred to as "Full-Bird Colonels" as a way to differentiate between them and Lieutenant Colonels, because Lieutenant Colonels are often referred to as simply, "Colonel."

<sup>50</sup> The general schedule (GS) is the predominant pay scale within the United States civil service.

<sup>51</sup> Founded in 1923 and adopted by B'nai B'rith in 1924, Hillel is the Foundation for Jewish Campus Life. It is the largest Jewish campus organization in the world, working with thousands of college students globally.

<sup>52</sup> After the war ended, President Harry S. Truman favored efforts to ease US immigration restrictions for Jewish displaced persons but existing laws had no provisions for displaced persons until Truman issued a directive on December 22, 1945, ordering the State Department to fill existing quotas and give first preference to displaced persons. Still, of the 40,000 visas issued under the program, only about 28,000 went to Jews and between 1946 and 1948, only 16,000 Jewish refugees entered the United States. In 1948, Congress passed legislation to admit more DPs to the United States. The 1948 Displaced Persons Act authorized the entry of 202,000 displaced persons over the next two years but within the quota system. When the act was extended for two more years in 1950, it increased displaced-person admissions to 415,000, but Jewish DPs only received 80,000 of these visas, making them only 16 percent of the immigrants admitted. The law stipulated that only DPs who had been in camps by the end of 1945 were eligible and gave preference to relatives of American citizens who could be guaranteed housing and employment.

<sup>53</sup> Bremerhaven is a port city on Germany's North Sea coast. Between 1830 and 1974, the city was Germany's largest passenger port handling transatlantic traffic.

boarded a liberty ship called *SS Marine Flasher*, to come to the United States.<sup>54</sup> Throughout the days as I was coming to the States, I had one dream. I wanted to see the Statue of Liberty . . . "Give me your masses huddled, you know, yearning to be free." I wanted to see that great colossus. As we were approaching the New York Harbor, we had a very famous pianist on board. The newspaper guys came up to interview him and since I spoke English they got me to do the translating. While I was translating, the Statue of Liberty came and went, and I didn't see it. Never fear—I had a chance to see it again.

When I was coming in front of the immigration officer to enter the United States, the immigration officer stamped my passport. I had a passport issued by the Americans because you had to have a passport to come to the States, even though it was a passport in lieu of a passport issued by the U.S. Government. He stamped my passport and he says to me, "You know, your passport is only valid for three months. Are you going to study?" I said, "I'm glad you told me. I'm going to have it extended immediately." Then as an afterthought, he asked me this tricky question. Since I came here to study, I came here as a visitor not as an immigrant, he said, "Tell me. If the United States would permit you to stay here, would you like to stay?" I told him, "That would be a privilege, indeed a privilege." He cancels the . . . crossed off my "admitted" sign and said, "You stand there and wait."<sup>55</sup> Now, the person behind me also had a transit visa to go to Canada. He was asked the same question, "Would you like to stay in the country?" He started cussing. "Me? Stay in this no good country? Not on your life!" Admitted. What happened to me? I was taken to a privileged place called Ellis Island.<sup>56</sup> I stayed in Ellis Island with many people who were being deported or who were being threatened with deportation, including the members of the *Bund*, who were there, still waiting to be deported back to Germany.

The first question they asked me when I arrived there [was], "What kitchen do you want to eat? The kosher kitchen or the regular kitchen?" I said, "Why not the kosher kitchen?" It happened to be a Friday, so I went down to the Ellis Island to eat in the kosher kitchen. What do I see? I'm the second person there. Who is the other person? There was a black

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<sup>54</sup> The *SS Marine Flasher* was a converted troopship that brought the first displaced persons (DPs) to the United States when it set sail from Bremen, Germany in July 1946. It continued to sail between Europe and the United States until 1949. In 1966, it was rebuilt as a container ship, but was scrapped in 1988.

<sup>55</sup> The ship's manifest shows that Eugene's status was originally listed as "Student" but was later "changed to sc. 4 (e) Act of 1924, C.O. Auth. 12-2-49-A.6977533 to 7/15/50."

<sup>56</sup> Ellis Island in New York Harbor was the gateway for millions of immigrants to the United States. It was the nation's busiest immigrant inspection station from 1892 until 1954. Today it is a museum.

person sitting there with a *yarmulka*, a *kippah* on his head, eating.<sup>57</sup> I have to find out what's this all about. I sat down next to him and introduced myself. I said, "Who are you?" It seemed to me he was a sailor, a *Falasha* from Ethiopia, and he jumped ship.<sup>58</sup> He was caught and was waiting to be sent back to Africa as one who jumped ship.

When I came to Ellis Island, immediately people surrounded me and asked me, "What has happened?" I told them what has happened. They said, "Now look, in a day or two, you will be taken in the front of a court. They will ask you questions about if you'd like to stay. Never—not on your life—do you want to stay in this country, because if you say that you want to stay, you will be deported. No person who comes here as a visitor may aspire to stay in this country." Indeed, I was taken . . . in a prison van to court. They asked me the questions about staying and I said, "No." They send me back.

I spent 28 days in Ellis Island awaiting my release. Why did it take them 28 days? Now, they decided that since I'm going to stay here, they might as well extend my passport. They could extend my passport in two different places. One is Washington D.C., by the State Department, or send it back to a place where the passport was issued—Frankfurt, Germany.<sup>59</sup> Guess where they send it? To Frankfurt, Germany. Meanwhile, I'm staying here, imprisoned in Ellis Island for 28 days until my passport arrived from Frankfurt, Germany, and then I was released.

I came to . . . I spent a few days in New York [City, New York]. Then I came to St. Louis [Missouri] to begin my education at Washington University, where I met my wife.<sup>60</sup> I got married.

In 1950, [President Harry] Truman had a law passed which stated that all people whose homes are behind Iron Curtain may apply for permanent residence.<sup>61</sup> I did. I am a citizen now of the United States by virtue of the Congressional Action. I did not come here as an immigrant, but Congress and their great glory and wisdom, acted on my name and permitted me

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<sup>57</sup> Jewish men cover their heads during prayer with a small skull-cap called a 'yarmulke' or 'kippah.'

<sup>58</sup> A *Falasha*, also spelled *Felasha*, is an Ethiopian of Jewish faith.

<sup>59</sup> After World War II, the American military government, which administered American-occupied Germany, was headquartered in Frankfurt, Germany.

<sup>60</sup> Washington University in St. Louis (also referred to as "WashU") is a private research university located in the St. Louis metropolitan area and in Missouri, United States.

<sup>61</sup> The "Iron Curtain" was a term coined by Winston Churchill in the context of divisions that had developed after World War II between Allied controlled Western Europe and Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe (including Czechoslovakia).

to stay here in this country as a resident and a citizen now.

I am now . . . I am still married. Soon, I'm going to have . . . in four years I will—or three and a half—have celebrated my 50th wedding anniversary. I have four daughters and six grandsons.

**Interviewer:** Dr. Schoenfeld, if you could leave a message for your family or the general community about the importance of your experiences, what would that message be?

**Gene:** You asked me to summarize a great philosophy in a very short time, which is almost impossible. Let me tell you this: The great message is not what I can leave. The great message that I can tell people is: Go back to the roots of Judaism—not so much the post-Talmudic periods, but go back to the prophets. Go back to Isaiah. Go back to Micah. Go back to Jeremiah. They give us the lessons of the importance of universal moral teachings. The universal moral teachings are founded on the most important principal: the principal of justice—not so much of love. This is where we differ from Christianity. Love does not create a condition that is universal. I can still say, "I love you, but I'm going to chastise you. I love you, but I'm going to beat the heck out of you." There are many incidences in the history of this country, too, where people . . . Slave owners said they loved their slaves, but nonetheless, they kept them slaves. We must develop a moral principle that is based upon the universality of justice. This is what I would like to leave to my children and my grandchildren. We are human beings. The only way that we can maintain our differences and yet have a universal spirit that guides us all is if we place the moral principle of justice above everything else. I think that if Judaism teaches anything—which unfortunately many rabbis have forgotten—it is this principle. If indeed we would like to have a Messianic period where people are going to turn their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, and where nations shall not teach nation war, can only come when we all universally accept the principle of justice as the foundation of human life. End of the Sunday School message.

**Interviewer:** Thank you. Thank you very much.

**Gene:** You're welcome.

<END DISK 1>

**INTERVIEW ENDS**