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AN INTERVIEW WITH KURT AND MARGO DAVID

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KURT PIEHLER: This begins an interview with Kurt David on August 13, 2000 in Glenwood, Illinois with Kurt Piehler and ...

AMY KOTYNSKI: Amy Kotynski.

PIEHLER: And I guess I'd like to start off by asking—could you talk a little bit about your parents, your father and your mother?

KURT DAVID: My father and mother were born in a very small town in Germany—in Hessen, Germany—that's the middle of Germany. My father was born in Ansbach and my mother was born in Hähnlein, which is about five kilometers from each other. At that time the Jewish community was so small in these little towns, they couldn't afford to have a synagogue. So four or five Jewish communities in different towns went to Ansbach and there they had *Lehrer*, from the teacher. *Lehrer* is a little bit more than just teaching. You heard that word—*Lehrer*.... And ... he taught Hebrew, and he taught Torah, [and] played the Rabbi. And then every once in awhile Rabbi Metzberg from Darmstadt, which is a bigger town, came around to these little synagogues and made them feel like there's a real rabbi around. (Laughs) And my father was in World War I, and would you believe he was an officer in the German Army in World War I, fighting the Americans. (Laughs) I still can show you a picture of [him]. And I was an officer in World War II fighting the Germans! (Laughs)

PIEHLER: What rank was your father?

DAVID: He was first lieutenant when he ... resigned.

PIEHLER: And he was in infantry?

DAVID: He was in the infantry, yes. He was wounded and—actually, he had some shrapnel in his arm and [it] actually killed him when—it was ... when he was sixty-two years old, because he got an infection. And he actually was killed by a wound that he got in ...

PIEHLER: In World War I.

DAVID: ... in World War I, yeah.

PIEHLER: When did your father pass away?

DAVID: In—Margo, when did my father pass away?

MARGO DAVID: I think it was 1963.

DAVID: Yeah, '63 or '62, yeah. And my mother, she died at a ripe old age of ninety-two. [In] the whole *mishpokhe*—the whole family—there were eight girls. Of the eight girls, four in that family were killed in the Holocaust. The four that lived—they all were over ninety. Hope I don't get that kind of a trait! (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Where did your mother die? Was it in—did she come to the States?

DAVID: Here, right in Chicago.

PIEHLER: ... in Chicago.

DAVID: Michael Laurice?

M. DAVID: No, it wasn't Michael Laurice.

DAVID: Come in here, if you correct me from out there! (Laughter)

M. DAVID: I'm making coffee!

DAVID: Oh, I see.

PIEHLER: What did your father do for a living?

DAVID: My father was in the oil business. Not Shell Oil. Amoco. These two brothers and my father, they sold oil and grease to farmers in Hessen. So they went to these farmers. It was a small business, but it kept ... three families in good shape, you know. And my Uncle Felix was the salesman, my father was the accountant, and uncle—the one in between—the one ... I could never see what the hell he was doing.... (Laughter) But his daughter is now in Haifa, Israel. In our family, we have to thank two early Zionists. I have two cousins who went to, then, Palestine in 1931, before Hitler came in 1933. When Hitler came to power in 1933, these two girls made so much noise to get the young people out of Germany. At that time, my father said that *meschugah* will never last that long. Unfortunately, he was so wrong, you know. Hitler lasted a long time. But these girls actually got all my cousins, with the exception [of] myself and another cousin in Darmstadt, where we lived—all went to Israel. So then my whole *mishpokhe* was in Israel. But the parents of some of these kids in Israel, they died in the Holocaust.

PIEHLER: They wouldn't leave, because ...

DAVID: I don't understand the situation, but I think the situation was like I had an uncle, Uncle Marx, who was a big shot in a leather manufacturing company. He owned the company. He had one in Frankfurt, one in Switzerland, and one in Argentina. When Hitler came to power, he went to Argentina and bought himself a citizenship of Argentina. When he came back to Germany, all of a sudden he wasn't a Jew anymore—in the beginning, you know. After '38, it wouldn't have made any difference if you were an Argentinian Jew or a Chinese Jew. He told my parents, "Go to Uruguay," okay. But we—Henry ... [and I] registered at the American Consulate in Karlsruhe to go to the United States whenever our number was up. And in '38—1938—we found out there was a Jewish camp in Holland to make farmers out of Jews, okay? And we ... left Germany two weeks before Kristallnacht. And here was my mother—she'd lost her only son going to Holland, which was, you know, she wanted that. And as soon as—the ninth of November, the Gestapo came to my mother's house, took my father to the synagogue in Darmstadt to see them burn the synagogue down. And then ... they took him into the

concentration camp in Dachau. That's near *Munchen*. Munich. The funny thing about the concentration camp at that time—you might know that—[was] that anybody in the world who would have given an affidavit to anybody in the concentration camp could have saved these people. After 1939, forget it, you know.... But at that time, my father got from the concentration [camp]—it's hard to believe—into Switzerland with help from my Uncle ... that's where my mother and my aunt [were]. So we were in Holland and they were in Switzerland. And they were always wondering about Uruguay. I don't know why, you know. Now it's like going to the United States every time you go to Uruguay. (Laughs) But they went to Uruguay. But one of the reasons was my Uncle Marx ... lived in Buenos Aires—which is right across from Uruguay.... When we were in that camp in Holland, we had a ball. There were 250 Jewish boys and girls. We worked hard. But we also had a lot of fun, you know. We were just young people, you know. As a matter of fact, the ... farmer in charge of all these young Jewish boys and girls, he gave me a special name. He called me a (Roilag?). Know what that means?

PIEHLER: I think a “loafer,” because ...

DAVID: It's a “loafer,” right. I think I told her. (Points to Kotynski) (Laughter) And I was proud of that title. (Laughter) Well, in 1940, our number came up to go to the United States from '34 to '40, you know. We got a call from the American consulate in Amsterdam, “You can go to the United States.” So we called our parents, who wanted to go to Uruguay, “Well, should we go to Uruguay, wait for when you go?” You know. Thank God they said “Go,” otherwise you wouldn't be talking to me. Because, of the 250 boys and girls there, with the exception of a handful that were saved by the Dutch farmers, they were all killed. So you wouldn't have had an interview! (Laughs)

PIEHLER: Do you remember the name of the farmer?

DAVID: I have no idea.

PIEHLER: ... Was he Jewish, this farmer?

DAVID: No! Hell, no! He was a Dutch farmer who made it his business to train us to be farmers to go to Israel. Palestine. And we were Zionists from really up high. We wanted to go to Palestine. I didn't want to go to the United States, but my parents said, “You get the hell out of here before the Germans come.” And here again, I'm going to say first, two weeks before *Kristallnacht*, I left Germany. And two months before the Germans invaded Holland, I left Holland. So if I would have waited for my parents to go to Uruguay, you wouldn't be talking to me.

PIEHLER: I'm curious about your father. He was a World War I veteran. What did he ever tell you about the war?

DAVID: ... I can show you a picture of him. Here, he's right here.... (Laughter) And he got an E.K. 1 [Eisernes Kreuz 1]. You know what that means? Iron Cross Number One. The highest medal that you can get in the German Army. So he was more German than the Germans! (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So he was very German.

DAVID: Very German, yeah. In that little town where I was born, called Zwingenberg—you know, it's on the Backstarden—well, he was the number one guy. In 1933, overnight, nobody knew us anymore. They were so scared of what might happen if they talked to a Jew. So all of a sudden we were completely isolated in that little town. So my parents, after a year or two—I'm not quite sure when—[left]. I had a sister of my mother who lived in Darmstadt, which is a bigger town between Heidelberg and Frankfurt. And we went to this town, so we got a little bit hidden away from the Nazis, but not for long, you know. And Henry Mosbacher—that's the son of that other sister—and we went to Holland to that farm, you know, where I was called a (Roilag?). And we went to the United States in 1940....

These rich American cousins of my mother were supposed to pick us up. Here we get landed in New York, everybody's gone. (Laughs) We looked around, nobody there. Well, the Joint—there's a Jewish organization—you've heard of it. They're used to this. They saw these two guys standing there. (Laughs) So they said, "What's the matter?" You know, they spoke German. We spoke very little English. And they took us in the car and drove us to these assholes, excuse me, who didn't want us in reality, you know. We gave the affidavit, *Dayenu*. While we were there, they couldn't throw us out. (Laughter) Henry Mosbacher, Heinz Mosbacher, his parents, his mother—he became a carpenter, and learned how to be a carpenter in Germany. He got a job the next day. What do I know? I went to Gymnasium in Bensheim. All I'm into is school, you know. I have no profession, you know. And then they finally found out: what did I do in Holland? I was on a farm. Would you believe, the next day I got to the farm, the chicken farm in Toms River, New Jersey. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Oh, okay! Yeah ...

DAVID: Here, now I'm a farmer and have to pick up that chicken stuff. It was an *awful* job.

PIEHLER: Were you ... working for a Jewish farmer?

DAVID: Jewish farmer. German Jewish.

PIEHLER: Yes, there was a whole resettlement—that whole area in Vineland also. Yeah ...

DAVID: But these guys weren't very nice. I bet I worked seventeen hours a day. And one night I got so p'ed off at this stuff, I wrote a letter to Henry in New York, who had a beautiful job. He was a carpenter. Here I was picking up chicken stuff! And I complained to Henry about it, "I want to get out of here." Would you believe it, that night at dinner, that lady said, "I understand you don't like it here." She'd read my letter! That night, I picked up my stuff in the middle of the night and hitchhiked from there to New York to go to my cousin. Well, he got me a job in a couple days in a barstool manufacturing company. You take the leather and you take nails in your hand and have a magnetic hammer, and then you hammer the things on. Well, the first hammer I did, I nailed my thumb on that thing. (Laughter) So the guy fired me right there! So, then I decided New York wasn't for me. And I came to Chicago, where I had a cousin from

my father's side, where I could stay with. And he was in the dry cleaning business. He got me a job—a wonderful job—to pick up dirty laundry, towels, in restaurants. So I was the *shamash* [In Hebrew, “the one who serves”] of a truck driver, and picked up this dirty laundry. Well, that worked out for awhile. And then one day, he asked me, “Do you know how to drive a truck?” And I said, “Yes.” I lied through my teeth. I'd never drove a truck in my life. So he said, “Drive!” So I drove the truck and I ran it right into the wall. I lost that job, too.

And then I got a job selling oil to farmers, the same job my father had in Germany, you know. Well, we went to these farms [and] half the time no one was there. And I did a hell of an awful job. And then one day I was caught into a farmer's home. It had a screened in porch. And I knocked on the door. Nobody was there. So I wondered what's going on. I wanted to go out [of the porch]. And the next thing I know, there was a huge dog in front of that screened door. Really wild. So I put out my sandwich case and he bit right through it. I figured, “If he bites through the sandwich case, he's going to bite through me, too.” (Laughter) So I stayed there for two or three hours—I forgot how many hours there was. When the farmer came back, you know what he said? “Nice doggy.” (Laughter) And I quit that job, too.

And in Chicago, there was a company called Ada Ada. That was a German shoe manufacturing company, big company, who started off as a small, little shoe manufacturing company in Chicago. And nobody was allowed unless he was German Jewish. All the people in there were Jewish refugees. And I got a job there, also a very good job. The job I had to do: you'd take a shoe and then you'd put the heel on it, and with the machine, the heel went onto the shoe. That I did from morning until night, day in and day out. (Laughter) And then I decided nothing can be worse than that. And I tried to enlist in the American Army, because I wanted to get at the Germans, and in the meantime get out of this awful job, you know. But my problem was, when I did that in 1942, you couldn't enlist! As a—we were enemy aliens! A German Jewish guy is an enemy alien. You know about this. So, but in 1943, I got my papers to go into the Army. And that's when I went in the Army. Camp Grant. And then I was in maneuvers. From there we went to 84th Infantry Division on maneuvers in Louisiana. And you know how it is, we have three-four days we play war. Then two days you sit on your behind. Three, four days you play war. And during these [days], there was two things that happened to me which was weird. We were sitting down there, ... about five or six of us. Everyone had something to say about Jews. Nothing very good, okay. Farmers out of Iowa. They never saw a Jew in their life. And finally, when he came to me he said, “What do you have to say about Jews?” I said, “I *am* a Jew!” (Laughter) And the answer I got, I could never forget as long as I live. “You can't be. You're a nice guy.” Here, guys who never saw a Jew in their life, have that product that somebody gave it into their mind. And that's how anti-Semitism exist, because nine times out of ten they've never met Jews.

Well, where were we? Well, I'm in the Army now. Well, one [thing that happened] was this. The other one: when we were in these maneuvers where we sat down on our behind. My top sergeant was a joker. And there were two C.I.C.—Counter Intelligence [Corps]—Agents at that rest period. And he said to me, “We got a German here!” They loved it, you know! They interrogated me from morning to night playing that game, you know. When that section was over, all I said, “That's a nice outfit. How do you get into that outfit?” That's it. I kept on playing infantry in Louisiana. And then we went to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, and there I got

my orders: go to Officers Training School in Washington, D.C. That's how I got in the C.I.C.!
(Laughter) I didn't know what C.I.C. stood for.

PIEHLER: But you first met them because they used you as practice?

DAVID: You're right. Exactly. And—well, actually, the C.I.C. school was near Washington—called Camp Ritchie, which was I.P.W.—interrogating prisoners of war camp/school, and counter intelligence school. Well, then I went to England, from there. The job of C.I.C during the war wasn't exactly a great job. Our job was—number one, in France, when we liberated a town, we went to the Gestapo headquarters to get out all the papers we could find and put down the names of these Gestapo officers so we could arrest them when we win the war ...

(Tape paused)

DAVID: Going into bars.

PIEHLER: Well, you said you were compiling these arrest lists ...

DAVID: ... And listened to the GIs—that they didn't open up their mouth, “Tomorrow we're going to go there!” You know, that's exactly what the Germans wanted to hear. You know. So our job was to shut them up. “Who the hell are you?” Here went in civilian clothes, you know. And, well, something else: I'll show you a picture of it. My rank was never shown. I have an army officer's uniform. You know why that was? 'Cause we went to general headquarters—if you're a first lieutenant or second, who the hell would talk to you? You know? But this way, they didn't know who the hell I was. (Laughter) I could get out what I needed to know.

(M. DAVID brings coffee and desserts)

KOTYNSKI: Oh, thanks.

DAVID: This is better than my speech. (Laughter)

M. DAVID: I hope so! I don't know.

PIEHLER: Now you said there was a third thing you would do. In France, you said going to the Gestapo headquarters and then looking for loose lips, as they use to say. And then what was the third thing? Would you interrogate German prisoners of war?

DAVID: I was not in the I.P.W. That was not ... my job. A lot of German Jewish boys I know were in the I.P.W. for a simple reason: they know how to speak German. They could interrogate these guys. But during the Battle of the Bulge, the Germans put a battalion of German soldiers in American uniforms. Okay? So, one day a GI comes in here, in my office, and says, “We got a German in an American uniform!” I took my jeep, I drove down there. It was a German Jewish boy, who said to me, “By God, am I happy to see you!” (Laughter) Because they were ready to put this American soldier into—as a spy.

KOTYNSKI: Could you talk a little bit about going to the Gestapo headquarters in France?

DAVID: But the Gestapo wasn't there anymore, you know. You couldn't arrest anybody there, because they're the first ones to leave when the Americans came, you know. But my job in Germany ... when we invaded—liberated, yeah—my job was to arrest the Gestapo.... And I did this. But how do you find the Nazis—the Gestapo guys—that you want to [get]? You know what we did? We went to the Communists. The German Communists, they knew where these guys were. And they went with us to find them until we arrested them. And I arrested [them]. As a matter of fact, ... my other station [was] in Bremen for awhile, and our headquarters was in Frankfurt. Then every once in a while I went to Frankfurt there and they said, "I don't know. There's about fifty C.I.C. Agents. The only word I'm getting is from you. What do the other guys do?" They did nothing because they didn't speak German, you know. So I am the one who would make the reports, you know.

PIEHLER: Well, you could ask questions. I mean, if you can't speak the language it gets ...

DAVID: It gets very dangerous. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: I want to just back up a little bit, and ask you—you mentioned your father was sometimes more German than the Germans. How observant was your family?

DAVID: Orthodox.

PIEHLER: Really? Even though he was more German ...

DAVID: He was an Orthodox Jew, but nothing like the Germans in the area, you know.

PIEHLER: Yeah. But you would keep *kashrut*?

DAVID: Oh—are you kidding?

PIEHLER: So he was very strict.

DAVID: He was strict. And, you know, in that little town where I was born, Zwingenberg, you know, we built a synagogue. We had ten Jewish families. There was only one reason you didn't come on Friday night. You either were dead [or] sick—no either reason would do. You had to be there. One Friday night—I'll never forget it—a Gentile friend of mine who's older than me, he took me on a bicycle ride. He took me on it. I sat on the front—you know, not on a separate bicycle—and we bicycled. Well, we came by the synagogue in Zwingenberg ... when the Friday evening service was out. (Laughter) And here was the son of an Orthodox Jew bicycling passed the synagogue. He put me down from the bicycle. I didn't know if that's okay for an Orthodox. He gave me *Mackes* when we went into Zwingenberg to the other end. (Laughter) *Mackes* means he spanked me.

PIEHLER: What about—would he work on *Shabbat*?

DAVID: Oh, no. He had his own business, so ...

PIEHLER: So he had to work on Saturday.

DAVID: No.

PIEHLER: No, he would not work?

DAVID: We were selling oil to farmers, you know, and on *Shabbat* he closed the door. Nobody could get in there. There was nobody. And as a matter of fact, the accountant of my father's business was the *Lehrer*, and the *chazan*—the cantor—of the synagogue in Zwingenberg.

PIEHLER: Your father—you said he was well respected in the community until '33.

DAVID: Very. Yeah. Before circa 1933.

PIEHLER: And in part because he had a distinguished war record.

DAVID: Exactly. He had the E.K. 1, the highest [medal]. And he was an officer, you know.

PIEHLER: Was he involved in any veterans' organizations in the twenties that you remember?

DAVID: No, no.

PIEHLER: Politically, where, in the twenties, did he stand?

DAVID: He was a Social Democrat. That I know. Because ... we used to call it *drei Feilchen* [Three Arrows]. It was the sign of the Social Democrat. And I used to ... as a soldier I used to march with him, you know, as a little kid, you know. But he was not a super right guy. He was a Social ...

PIEHLER: ... Social Democrat.

DAVID: Yeah.

PIEHLER: But he always remained proud of his military service?

DAVID: Sure. My father, in 1920—actually, 1918—there were very few Jews who had college educations.... It was hard to get in. Somehow he got in and graduated. He had two years of college. That made him automatically an officer of the ... German Army. And he was proud of this.

PIEHLER: I guess I forgot to ask a very basic question. When were you born?

DAVID: 1920.

PIEHLER: 1920?

DAVID: Yeah.

PIEHLER: I guess—could you talk a little bit about going to school, and your early days of school, and then when you went to the gymnasium?

DAVID: Well, grammar school is grammar school, you know. That's it. And I went to grammar school in Zwingenberg. And high school, well, gymnasium, you know, where the language you learn in gymnasium is very important. Greek and Latin—it's really going to help you in your life. Well, I went to this gymnasium. And [it] wasn't very interesting. You know what a *Stammbaum* is? Tree of life. And everybody had to do a tree of life. And all of sudden ... my forefather was longer in Germany than any of the pure Aryans. (Laughter) So my *Stammbaum* wouldn't be shown, because a Jew couldn't be longer in Germany than the Aryans. But you know how you find this out? (Reaches into a cabinet)

M. DAVID: What's in there?

DAVID: In Germany, all the prayer books in the beginning had the dates of ... when the people were born and died. And then if you had enough prayer books, you could go back as far as I did. (Opens a small, worn prayer book)

PIEHLER: So how far does your prayer book go? I just can't resist looking. Oh, take your time.

M. DAVID: I don't think this one even has it.

DAVID: Maybe this one doesn't have it, yeah.

PIEHLER: Oh, okay. How long had your family been in Germany? How many generations back did it ...

DAVID: In the 1700's.

PIEHLER: And the rest have come from, say, Russia and other ...

DAVID: I don't know where. I don't think they came from Russia, my forefathers.

PIEHLER: No, I mean, not your forefathers. But, you know, you said your kids—your fellow students—they did not have a tree that went as far back.

DAVID: Yeah, but they were the purest Germans, you know. The non-Jewish Germans.

PIEHLER: So in other words, they couldn't trace their tree back as far?

DAVID: No, no. Margo, she did the same thing.

M. DAVID: Yeah, my father helped. We had to do it for school one time. And mine went way back. Like he said, my father had all these prayer books, and everybody always wrote in. And it just went back so far. And then, we don't know what was before that.

DAVID: But I told you all that's the only reason I married Margo.

M. DAVID: Oh yeah. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: What about your religious education? You said you went to services, and you talked about the *Lehrer*. How good was your Hebrew?

DAVID: The most Orthodox Jews, like my father, they could read Hebrew from morning to night. But I didn't understand what they were saying half the time. They didn't know how to translate the Hebrew. That's the way I read. I can read Hebrew fluently. I've been the *chazan* in our congregation. And then I married a rabbi's daughter. (Laughter)

M. DAVID: But I didn't—I mean, my father was not Orthodox.

DAVID: No, he was a liberal rabbi. Interesting.

PIEHLER: When you went to gymnasium, you went clearly on ... what we would call a college track.

DAVID: I went. Sure, my parents wanted me [to be a] professor, you know. That's what my goal was.

M. DAVID: Doctor, probably. (Laughter)

DAVID: Or a doctor, you know.... But when I was kicked out of the gymnasium because I was a Jew, I went to Frankfurt. And there's a famous high school in Frankfurt called Philan-Thropin. That is a very famous Jewish high school. The problem at that high school was [that] they didn't have Latin or Greek. They had three or four years of French and English. And I didn't speak a word of English. It was a horrible time for me to go there.

PIEHLER: When did you get kicked out of gymnasium? Do you remember what year?

DAVID: Probably '36.

PIEHLER: So you were sixteen when you were kicked out of gymnasium?

DAVID: Yeah. Right. Well, I guess you get fourteen years 'til you get out of the gymnasium. I'm not quite sure.

M. DAVID: Probably earlier, because we got through high school at age sixteen.

DAVID: No, wait a minute.

M. DAVID: Mm hmm.

KOTYNSKI: So, did your whole family move to Frankfurt? To go to that ...

DAVID: No, no. My family was at that time in Darmstadt, which is about fifteen, twenty ... miles away from Frankfurt. But there was no Jewish school in Darmstadt. The only Jewish school in this medina was Frankfurt, and you're lucky to get in there, you know. Because every little town from all over swings into Frankfurt because that's the only high school Jewish kids could go into.

PIEHLER: And how long did you stay in that high school? You said it was a nightmare with trying to learn English.

DAVID: Two years.

PIEHLER: Two years?

DAVID: Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: And then after you left that high school you went to Holland?

DAVID: Holland, yeah.

KOTYNSKI: How did you feel about going to Holland? Was that like an adventure for you, or were you sad to leave Germany?

DAVID: Well, Holland for me was seventh heaven, you know. I got out of Germany! And sorry to tell you that it [could] have been Czechoslovakia and I would have been just as happy just to get out of Germany. But, I like the Dutch people anyhow—not only because of you. (Laughter) [Kotynski has Dutch ancestors]

PIEHLER: When you were a young boy, I mean, your father was a respected member of the community and it sounds like you were fairly prosperous. And you had friends, gentile friends.

DAVID: Sure. And there was only ten Jewish families.

PIEHLER: Yeah. What was life like in the twenties for you as a young boy?

DAVID: Great! I mean, wonderful! We went on vacation, I mean, like a good middle class family, you know. And ... that business kept three whole families alive. I mean, whatever—in good shape, anyhow.

PIEHLER: In the twenties, as a very young boy, do you remember any anti-Semitic incidents?

DAVID: Not really.

KOTYNSKI: What's your earliest memory of that?

DAVID: Well, the very [earliest] was in 1933, when all of a sudden all the neighbors that used to come into our house, eat in our house, didn't speak to us! Because they were afraid what the Nazis would do to them. And then, you know, it got so bad that every parent wanted to get kicked out of Germany, if they could, you know. A lot of them couldn't. But, you know, my parents had enough foresight to, number one, register us in the U.S. Consulate in Karlsruhe, and we could go to Holland to that farm where all Jewish boys and girls lived and farmed.

KOTYNSKI: How did your parents respond to the anti-Semitism when it started in '33?

DAVID: Well, my father was super-German, you know. He said, "That *meshugah* is not going to last more than six months." Well that *meshugah* lasted ... for years, you know. And then, you know, it was not easy for him being a German officer, you know. Very respected, all of a sudden you're shit.

PIEHLER: I mean, ... particularly because he was so respected in the community, it must have been hard. And he was decorated. A decorated veteran.

DAVID: Sure. Yeah.

PIEHLER: Did anyone come to the aid of your family in the small community?

DAVID: There were some people. There was an older lady right behind us where we lived, you know. She did hide some German Jews. But my father had three brothers.... My parents went to Uruguay, the other one had *mishpokhe* here in the United States, and the third one nobody took care of, and they committed suicide.

PIEHLER: You mentioned also in your town that a lot of people, sort of, when the Nazis came to power, just went along. But were there any ardent Nazis in your town?

DAVID: Before?

PIEHLER: Before '33.

DAVID: ... Not really. But there must have been some. But they sure didn't make it—before, in the Weimar Republic, the Nazis weren't very much liked, you know. The government would do something about it. But after '33, the government was the Nazis.

PIEHLER: So you don't remember, say, in '31 or '32, Nazis marches or any incidents ... before '33?

DAVID: Not really.... If the Nazi party wanted to start something, they don't want to monkey around in Zwingenberg.

KOTYNSKI: Did you have any siblings? I don't remember you talking about that.

DAVID: You mean brothers and sisters?

KOTYNSKI: Yeah.

DAVID: No, they saw me and they said, "*dayenu*."

KOTYNSKI: Oh, okay. (Laughter)

DAVID: That's enough.

M. DAVID: Only child, only child.

PIEHLER: What was it like to be an only child?

DAVID: Heaven! (Laughter) But, in all fairness, that cousin of mine that went with me to Holland and went with me to the United [States], it was like my brother. We were constantly together. And then when it got so bad in Zwingenberg, we went to Darmstadt and lived with my cousins. So, I did have a brother—not in reality—but a cousin.

PIEHLER: I'm curious: as a young boy, what did you do for fun? You told us about the bike ride on a *Shabbat* evening ...

DAVID: I had a lot of non-Jewish friends, you know. We did all the things—what kids do, you know.... The ten Jewish families, all of them, they had maids, okay. And these maids carried stuff. And then the whole family all went up to Ansbacher Schluss, the castle in Ansbach. And we had dinner up there. The Orthodox Jews, they had—what do you call it? The *eruv*? Not the *eruv*.

PIEHLER: Yeah. I can't think of it.

DAVID: They made that, you know.

PIEHLER: Yeah, it is the *eruv*. Where they could ...

DAVID: ... Carry things and walk, you know. Well, it's all, you know, hypocrisy. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: But you said ... you didn't have television, and that takes up a lot of time.

DAVID: We'd read, you know.

PIEHLER: I assume you hiked a lot.

DAVID: We hiked a lot. Very much. I still do sometimes. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: What about, say, swimming or camping or the other sort of outdoor ...

DAVID: Well, we went to like—what was it?

M. DAVID: Black Forest.

DAVID: ... Black Forest, you know, frequently, you know. And when you go to the Black Forest, if you sit on your behind you're nuts, you know, you have to walk around in this place. So we did do a lot of walking with other Jewish families, you know. I cannot say that we had [a] close relationship with non-Jewish families, you know. My father was in the business and the farmers weren't Jewish. So they had contact with non-Jewish people, but not in a social manner.

PIEHLER: You mentioned you used to go on holiday. Where would you go on holiday, growing up? Do you remember?

DAVID: I mean, not on Jewish holiday.

PIEHLER: No, no, no. I mean regular vacation, yeah. On vacation.

DAVID: Mostly in Germany.

PIEHLER: Mostly in Germany? In the sort of Rhine region, or would you go ...

DAVID: We were in the Rhine region.

PIEHLER: Yeah, I mean, but would you go just locally, or ...

DAVID: Up to Cologne. I have been there many times, you know....

PIEHLER: Never outside of Germany? Never to, say, ...

DAVID: I don't remember ever being outside of Germany. And we could afford it, you know. But ...

PIEHLER: Your father, ... did he tell you about what happened to him in the war when you were a young boy?

DAVID: You mean and brag about his ...

PIEHLER: Well not even so much brag about it. Well, I guess, let me tell you a story. I remember one person I interviewed said he very vividly remembers his father who also survived World War I. And they came to Newark, New Jersey. And he said once his father took him to

“All Quiet on the Western Front,” and then started talking about the war, which was very unusual for his father.

DAVID: That was something he never talked about.

PIEHLER: He never told you ...

DAVID: He never did. He showed me his decorations, you know. I still have it. I could show it to you.

PIEHLER: So he showed you his decoration, but he never told you how he got it?

DAVID: I know how he got [it], because he held a college education, you know. But his brother, he was a *Feldwebel*. You know what that means? That’s a top sergeant. (Laughter) Here, my father’s an officer and I’m picturing [my uncle] as a top sergeant. “*Deutschland über Alles*.” You know. “Germany above all.” But, you know, then when Hitler came to power, it must have been an awful shock to all of a sudden find that you were nobody, you know. But ... my family was lucky. We got out, due to the fact of Uncle Marx, who got my parents into Switzerland, and my aunt. And I ... came to the United States.

PIEHLER: Were you ever tempted to go, or did you ever want to go or try to get to Palestine?

DAVID: Yeah. Very much so. In that camp in Holland, the guy in charge of us was a Moshe. That’s a Palestinian! He wanted us to go to Palestine, not to the United States. And, you know, lucky he couldn’t do anything about it either, you know. It’s just that my number came up, and my parents said, “Go.” That’s how I’m alive today.

PIEHLER: So if the number had come up, say, ... to go to Palestine, you would’ve just gone to Palestine?

DAVID: My number could never have come up because I wasn’t registered.

PIEHLER: Well, yeah, you weren’t registered. But if you had had that chance, you would’ve ...

DAVID: If I would have had the choice to go to the United States and Palestine, there was no question in my mind. I would’ve gone to Palestine.

KOTYNSKI: Once you went to the U.S., you decided you would stay there, though? I mean, that was final? You weren’t going to go anywhere else?

DAVID: Oh yeah. Oh, you betcha.

PIEHLER: You mentioned that you had these cousins who were ardent Zionists and they’d gone in the early ’30s. How did your father feel about Zionism before ’33? In the family?

DAVID: I don't think he was a big Zionist, you know. These two girls that are my cousins, they were rare. They went to Israel—to Palestine—in 1931 or '32. Thirty-one, I think. For no other reason because they were super-Zionists. How the hell they got that way is ...

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PIEHLER: So they didn't get it at home.

DAVID: No, no way.... I forgot my thought already!

PIEHLER: Oh, I'm sorry.

M. DAVID: You said you don't remember how they got that way—your cousins.

DAVID: Oh, yeah. These two cousins. I don't know how they got that Zionist ...

PIEHLER: But that was pretty important for the family, because, in terms of getting things going.

DAVID: Well, not in '32 ...

PIEHLER: But once Hitler did come to power ...

DAVID: Oh, no question about it. Because they got God-knows-how-many of my cousins into Israel. And then, unfortunately for them, they're all dying. They're older than me, you know, and I'm eighty, you know. But they have kids, and their kids have kids. And I don't [know them]. They're complete strangers to me. We've been in Israel three times now. Three times, right?

M. DAVID: Mm hmm.

DAVID: And I've been introduced to all these guys, but don't ask me what their names are, you know. I know my first cousins there. That's for sure. Gabi is one of my cousins. He was a real big shot. I mean, a *big* shot-big shot in the Mossad.

DAVID: You don't know what Mossad is?

PIEHLER: Oh yeah—no, I know.

KOTYNSKI: What is that?

DAVID: That's a super-secret police.

M. DAVID: It's the Israeli FBI.

KOTYNSKI: Okay.

PIEHLER: When was he in that position?

DAVID: Oh, years ago. He was in there for a long time, you know. And it's funny—he had the tag on when we came to Israel and we went flying out. There was a line from here to— (Laughter) And they see his tag—everybody goes and runs, you know. And he used it. He needs it—he's really not a tall guy, you know. He's a real little guy. But he was in Germany as a Mossad agent, and all over the place.

M. DAVID: And he never admitted it.

DAVID: No, hell no. But I see pictures of the Shah of Iran [with his] hands around Gabi. He was very close with the Shah, because Israel was close to the Shah of Iran.

PIEHLER: ... We've talked quite a bit about your father, but what about your mother?

DAVID: Well, my mother was a very little lady, and not very Jewish. When she was brought up, she knew she was Jewish. She went to synagogue in Ansbach. But my father was an Orthodox Jew. So it couldn't have been an easy step marrying an Orthodox Jew, you know. But she was a seamstress. And she worked for her sister, who was in Darmstadt, who had a dressmaking business. So my mother had the famous job of being a seamstress. And then she married my father. Then she became a housewife, and had one son: me. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Did she ever work outside of the house once she was married?

DAVID: No, no, no, no. My father wouldn't have [let her]. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Oh, your father was very strict?

M. DAVID: It was not the German way, anyhow. Well, for women here, either.

DAVID: Most women at that time, you know, didn't work. I mean, if they were married, unless they had to. Even then, it was looked upon as something a woman shouldn't be doing. That was the time.

M. DAVID: Same here [in America].

PIEHLER: ... Did you go to movies growing up very much?

DAVID: Not much in Zwingenberg.

PIEHLER: Did you have a movie theater in town?

DAVID: I'm not sure. I don't think so. But in Darmstadt, you know, [we had one]. When we were in Darmstadt, there were two Jewish organizations, synagogues. One was an Orthodox synagogue—Rabbi Metzberg—the one who also came around ... when we lived in Zwingenberg. And one was a conservative synagogue. I had to lie to my father. My cousin belonged to the conservative synagogue. And the Orthodox young man I didn't like. So I wanted to go to my cousin's synagogue. (Laughter) So I had to do all kinds of tricks to my father—actually, lies. Then I went to the synagogue in the conservative congregation—the conservative congregation who might as well be a church. That's what my father said. (Laughter)

KOTYNSKI: Did he ever figure you out?

DAVID: Maybe he did, but my mother did.

KOTYNSKI: Did you have a radio?

DAVID: Yeah, sure we had a radio. We didn't live exactly in the desert, you know. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: And your father had a car?

DAVID: Well, our business had a car.

PIEHLER: Yeah—the business had a car.

DAVID: But if he's going to farmers, he sure as heck couldn't walk from where we were. And so that one car was used for business, and also—my parents didn't have an individual car. They only had a ...

PIEHLER: ... business car.

DAVID: Business car, yeah. And that was the only car in Zwingenberg ...

PIEHLER: Oh, so your father—this business *was* doing well.

DAVID: Well, we weren't *super* rich, but we had a three-story building. I always used to tell my grandchildren. We lived on a farm in Zwingenberg, you know. And then, one year, we took Lisa, our oldest grandchild, to Germany and Switzerland. And we passed by there and she said, "You liar!" (Laughter)

KOTYNSKI: So you actually went back to your hometown. Zwingenberg.

DAVID: Yeah, well, I went back to my hometown the first time as an officer in the United States Army. And I went to the place, I opened up the door as if I belonged there, and there was the guy who actually stole my father's business, you know. And, I swear to God, he must have [wet] in his pants. And I let him do that for about a half an hour! (Laughter) And then I said, "Okay, I'm not here to do anything to you. I just came here to see the place," you know. And

then I had [coffee]—the whole thing. I drank it, what the hell. And, well, I took my wife back and my grandchild. And there were three stories. And my bedroom was on the third floor. We had opened up the door and there was a bed. It wasn't *my* bed, obviously now! I slung myself down on the bed like I did a hundred years ago. (Laughter) And Margo took a picture of me.

KOTYNSKI: What was it like being back there for you? I mean, how did you feel about that?

DAVID: I had no feel—I mean, [after] what the Germans did to us, I can never have great feelings for Germany. As a matter of fact, the couple times we went through it, what aggravated me more [was] how nice they were to me. I would have loved it if they had done anti-Semitic things so I could slap them, you know. But they were so nice to us, you know. So that wasn't the greatest thing.

PIEHLER: But I'm just curious, because the first time, I mean, you were confronting the person who had stolen the house. And you said he was understandably upset, because he thought, "This could be it. Something's bad." I mean, what did he tell you? And your thoughts about ...

DAVID: I wasn't going to interrogate him, as to his thoughts. It's hard. I had no problems ... doing it. But if you get coffee and cake, you know, what the hell you going to do? "You son of a bitch, what did you do to my people?" Which he might not have done, other than he paid my father a few pennies for the business, you know. Which wasn't much to start out with, because they weren't buying from us anymore. So whatever penny he got was more than he could've gotten any place else, you know. He did pay something, you know.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

M. DAVID: Well, they had to. That made it legal in the German books at that time, you know.

PIEHLER: How long were you back that first time—during the war or just after the war, in your [town]? I mean ...

DAVID: How old was I?

PIEHLER: No, I mean, how long were you there? Was it just a day?

DAVID: Oh, just a few hours. I mean, I wasn't going to sleep in this place.

PIEHLER: Just a few hours?

M. DAVID: Tell them about the gardener.

DAVID: Oh yeah. That is the funniest thing. We had a guy who worked for my father as a sort of a *shamas*. He went into the oil business. He schlepped the barrels around and all that kind of stuff. And his wife was our maid. And here I come to this place in an American uniform. Officer's uniform, cap on, you know. I go in the backyard and there was a guy digging. He looked up and said, "Hello, Kurt." Would you believe that? I hadn't seen him for God knows

how many years! Like I was there yesterday, you know. Here I was in an American Army uniform. Looked up, “Hello Kurt.” (Laughs) Then he brought me to his wife, you know. We shook hands and they were very good people, you know, to us.

PIEHLER: So he was glad to see you.

DAVID: Oh, I don’t think they had enough sense to be Nazis.

PIEHLER: I guess I would’ve asked it later, but since we’re on this topic: One of the things the American GI’s always tell me who were in Germany after the war or just towards the end of the war, they said it was really tough to find a Nazi after 1945.

DAVID: I was in Munich, and here’s Dachau. Across from Dachau is a street and there are individual homes. Okay? I could still smell the flesh. I knocked on the door of one of these homes, and said, “What is that smell?” You know. “*Keine Ahnung.*”—I don’t know, you know. I said, “You don’t know? This was a concentration camp where they burned Jewish people!” You know. They lose—the Germans are very great with that. They do the horrible things and then if the things don’t work out that way, they don’t remember a damn thing. That’s why I love them so much.

KOTYNSKI: When did you get married? What year was that?

DAVID: Ask her—I don’t remember.

M. DAVID: (Laughter) ’49.

KOTYNSKI: ’49? When did you guys meet?

M. DAVID: I met him here.

DAVID: I didn’t meet her in Germany.

KOTYNSKI: Okay.

DAVID: By the way, this is the synagogue—that little picture on top—where her father was the rabbi in Dresden. (Pointing to a framed picture hanging on the wall)

PIEHLER: Growing up in Germany, did you date at all, when you were a teenager?

DAVID: Sure! (Laughter) Do you think I cut the thing off? (Laughter)

M. DAVID: Kurt! No one asked you that! (Laughter)

DAVID: I’m sorry.

PIEHLER: (Laughs) That’s okay.... What would be a typical date like?

DAVID: Not much, you know. I wouldn't have [money]. My parents wouldn't give me money to drive to Darmstadt to see a movie. Well, we went up on *Shabbat*. We were holding hands going up to the *Alsbergerschloss*. And if you ask me the name of them, forget it. I wouldn't admit it in front of her.

M. DAVID: I wouldn't know who it is anyway.

KOTYNSKI: So when did you meet in Chicago? What year was that?

M. DAVID: We met around '47 or ...

DAVID: Blind date! A second cousin of mine said, "I'm going to a Blackhawk hockey game." There was a lady—not a lady—a girl who is coming along with [him]. "Come along." I said, "Okay." That's how we met. And then we went—do you know where The Point is? Fifty-fifth Street.

PIEHLER: See, I don't know Chicago as well.

KOTYNSKI: I know 55th Street.

DAVID: It goes right into Lake Michigan, like a point, you know. And there we were sitting on the grass, you know. I made a *very* romantic proposal to Margo, "What the hell—let's get married!" (Laughter)

M. DAVID: Just like that.

KOTYNSKI: Did you date much before the war—when you were in the U.S.?

DAVID: I didn't much, but I dated, you know.

KOTYNSKI: Were they Jewish girls?

DAVID: Yeah. As a matter [of fact]—this is funny—she dated a guy and I dated a girl, obviously. We rearranged and I married her and he married the girl that I dated. (Laughter) We still know each other.

PIEHLER: Oh wow. I guess, talking a little bit more about your experiences in the States, you mentioned that you had these cousins who—they had sponsored you, but that was it. They didn't really want to have anything to do ...

DAVID: No, no. That's how I got on a chicken farm, and Henry was by himself.

PIEHLER: Yeah, he was a carpenter.

DAVID: But I'm still thankful for them, because without them I wouldn't be here, you know.

PIEHLER: ... When you came here, did you have a sense that American Jews knew how serious it was in Germany?

DAVID: ... No question about it. Because like I said before, every Jew—I'm not talking about all the Polish Jews that came—nobody could've handled all these Jews. But there weren't that many German Jews, you know. Anybody in the United States who would've given an affidavit could've saved Jews in Germany. And these cousins of mine, number one, they didn't have any kids, you know. So they lived separate, and we never met them much after we went to Chicago, you know. And, hell, New York was ... like Europe, you know. It's so far away at that time. So we never saw them anymore. And I'm sure they're dead by now, but I sure didn't go to the funeral.

PIEHLER: You were Social Democrats in Germany. What did you think of American politics when you first got here?

DAVID: Well, to be honest with you, I didn't know what was going on, you know. And I've never been a Republican. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: ... At the time, what did you think of Franklin Roosevelt?

DAVID: Well, I thought he was next to God, you know. But, what I heard lately—things—I got him way down on the stools where you sit next to God.

PIEHLER: But at the time, you thought ...

DAVID: Oh yeah, I mean—all of us did, you know. He was *the* guy who saved us, you know. Even though he wasn't that eager to get us in, either. Well, I think anti-Semitism is something that exists all over the world. But in Germany, anti-Semitism was taken over—by the government. And then it really worked wonderful for the anti-Semites. And as long as our government protects us, hallelujah.

KOTYNSKI: So were you eager to take on American traditions and really become Americanized?

DAVID: You bet! *America uber Alles*, as far as I'm concerned.

PIEHLER: It sounds like you consciously stopped trying to speak German.

DAVID: No question about it. Which was very hard to do because I spoke very little English, you know.

PIEHLER: And English isn't the easiest language to learn.

DAVID: No, it's very hard to learn. I knew Greek and Latin, and I don't think anybody speaks that in the United States. (Laughter) That was a dumb thing to do—go to that gymnasium. But

by that time my parents thought, you know, that *meshugah* is not going to last and I'm going to be one of these professors that my father and my mother thought I should be. I fooled them.

PIEHLER: Had you thought, in the states, of trying to go to college here? Before the war, before you got here?

DAVID: Well, not before the war. No. When I got here, I needed a job.

PIEHLER: You needed a job.

DAVID: Right. And I didn't have enough—between learning English and having a job—I didn't have the guts to go to college in the evening. It was just not what I wanted to do. And then I went into the army. And when I came out of the army, I could've gone on the GI ...

PIEHLER: GI Bill.

DAVID: GI Bill, you know. Somehow, all Margo's brothers went to college. I never did. Don't ask me why. I just wanted to get a job and get my parents from Uruguay into the United States. And man, did I have jobs.

KOTYNSKI: Did your parents ever come to the U.S.?

M. DAVID: Yeah.

DAVID: Sure.

KOTYNSKI: They did? They lived here?

DAVID: Mm, hmm. My mother lived here and she died when she was ninety-two years old, which was—how long was she here? I don't know.

M. DAVID: She died in 1982 or something like that.

KOTYNSKI: What did they think of living in the U.S.?

DAVID: U.S., to people who've been in Germany and had been through that, is heaven! I mean, they have—my father always voted. I mean, that's something he did in Germany. And he did here. I mean, Germany didn't work out too well. And my mother voted, sure. I mean, they were proud Americans. And even they spoke German to each other every once in awhile, but not to us.

KOTYNSKI: Were they able to become citizens?

DAVID: Sure! As a matter of fact, I became a citizen in the army.

KOTYNSKI: When was that?

DAVID: In, okay, 1943.... My mother, when she applied for citizenship, she went before a judge and he asked ...

M. DAVID: It was me.

DAVID: Was that you?

M. DAVID: It was me. (Laughs)

DAVID: Well whoever it was, my mother or my wife—I know the story but I don't know the people.... At that time, the governor of Illinois was Governor [Dwight Herbert] Green, so he asked ...

M. DAVID: He was helping out a really elderly couple. He asked them who was the—what was he, governor or mayor?

DAVID: Governor!

M. DAVID: Governor of Illinois. And they didn't know. So I said, "Brown, green, blue." He said, "Green." No, "Brown." Well, whatever it was. (Laughter)

DAVID: He said, "Okay." (Laughter)

M. DAVID: That was me.

PIEHLER: Learning a language is hard, particularly English.... My mother said when she learned English, she knew she'd learned English when she could dream in English.

M. DAVID: Oh!

PIEHLER: How long did it take you to dream in English?

DAVID: Beats the hell out of me.

PIEHLER: You don't remember that?

DAVID: No. There's a difference between learning English or having to learn English in order to keep a job, you know. Even though ... one of the first jobs I had was in ... the shoe factory where everyone spoke German, you know. If you would've come in from Germany without it being known that you were in the United States, you'd never know you were in the United States because everybody in there was German. Because that's—if you want to get a job, ... go to Adder-Adder. And that's where I went.

PIEHLER: ... What was your image of the United States was before you got here? I mean, it was obviously a place ... that rescued [you]. I mean, you know, it's tough to be ...

DAVID: I don't think I had much of an impression about the United ...

PIEHLER: Well, but I guess, some images—one was jazz, one was sky-scrapers ...

DAVID: Well, sky-scrapers, you can argue, [you] fall on your behind when you see that coming from Germany. (Laughter) That's incredible! And let me tell you something else. What really got me: seeing the Statue of Liberty.... I cried like a little child—still cry. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: And there were a lot of cars, even then?

DAVID: Well, we did have a car in Zwingenberg.

PIEHLER: Yeah, but you had the only car. But I mean, I guess one thing that seems striking about American culture even then, even though it's not quite as informal today. I mean, German society is very formal. American society can be very sort of ...

DAVID: Free.

PIEHLER: Free.

DAVID: I don't think when you come here [that] these things really matter. The only thing back in my mind was: "What am I going to do tomorrow? Where am I going to live? Where am I going to work?" You know. And that takes up your whole mind, you know. Especially—we go to these cousins who made it so [obvious] that they want get rid of me. And I find myself picking up chicken stuff [in] Toms River, New Jersey. I don't think I would've gone back to Germany, (laughs) but it wasn't exactly an exciting time, you know.

PIEHLER: When you first got to the States, did you continue to go to *Shul*? Did you continue to go to synagogue?

DAVID: No. My father was an Orthodox Jew, and as soon as I got out of his reach, I became an atheist. And then I married a rabbi's daughter! (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So after you got out of Germany and away from your father, you didn't go to services anymore?

DAVID: Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: And what about food? Did you eat anything you wanted, or did you still ...

DAVID: Anything—no, I didn't eat—I still don't eat any ...

PIEHLER: Pork?

DAVID: Pork, no.

PIEHLER: But you didn't keep all the meat and milk and that?

DAVID: No. We don't do it now, even though I married a rabbi's daughter.

M. DAVID: We didn't do it.

KOTYNSKI: So did Margo convince you to become more religious, or did you just feel it was necessary since you were marrying a rabbi's daughter?

DAVID: I think I felt it was necessary, marrying a rabbi's daughter. And I liked to.

KOTYNSKI: Okay.

PIEHLER: But you've become quite active in the synagogue.

DAVID: Very active.

PIEHLER: I mean, being the *chazan* is ...

DAVID: I also was the president.

PIEHLER: Oh, that's—yeah.

M. DAVID: Well my father's kind of religion made more sense to him.

KOTYNSKI: The Reformed ...

M. DAVID: Yeah.

DAVID: As sub-*chazan*, when the main *chazan* wasn't there, and nobody else was going to do it, I did it, you know. I wasn't going to go out of there and be a *chazan*.

KOTYNSKI: Did you bring your children up in a way similar to the way your parents raised you?

DAVID: No. I brought my kids up as Reformed Jews. And one of my daughters married a non-Jew. I love him. (Laughs)

KOTYNSKI: You didn't at first, though, did you?

DAVID: Well, I tell you, it was a pretty funny, and sad story. I made such a pout on my face when I first saw Ted and Jackie going together, you know, who's also a doctor. And, well, Jackie noticed it. And she talked to me like this only once, and never before, and never since. She said, "Dad, would you cut out that shit and be nice to Ted." (Laughter) I became nice to Ted. And his kids are being brought up Jewishly, so I got nothing to complain about.

KOTYNSKI: Are you pretty open with your kids about your experiences in Germany and in the war?

DAVID: Let me tell you, you ask more questions about Germany than my kids do. My one daughter is more into it, but Jackie—that is something she doesn't much discuss.

PIEHLER: So your kids would never go, "So what [happened]?" You know.

DAVID: No. I mean ...

M. DAVID: Well, ... they're very different in that respect. One of them is *very* interested, and the other one, unless she hears about it ...

KOTYNSKI: Is it hard for her ...

DAVID: I doubt it.

KOTYNSKI: ... or is she just not interested?

M. DAVID: I think she's just not [interested]. Maybe someday, even though she's pretty old already. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Though, also, coming from the Normandy semester, it's often hard to forget other people are not as, you know, interested in World War II or even just in the past.

KOTYNSKI: Yeah, definitely.

PIEHLER: This group has gotten pretty inculcated with it.

KOTYNSKI: (Laughs) Yeah.

PIEHLER: You mentioned you tried to get into the army but couldn't because you were a resident alien.

DAVID: An enemy alien!

PIEHLER: You had to register, then, as an enemy alien.

DAVID: You *were* registered as an enemy alien.

PIEHLER: Were you ever interrogated by anyone before—in '42?

DAVID: No. But, you know, I came to the army in '43. And, you know, I told you the story. I became a C.I.C. Agent.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

DAVID: And the beauty of this—it still is the greatest thing—arresting the Gestapo and the SS ...

KOTYNSKI: What was it that appealed to you about becoming a C.I.C. Agent as opposed to being in the infantry?

DAVID: Easy! We don't have to walk, we don't have to fight! I mean, ... I was going to fight, but also it's a more interesting job, you know, I mean, than being in the [infantry]. You carried a rifle and you shoot. It's not exactly the most liberating thing. (Laughter) But that job was something I wanted to do very much.

PIEHLER: Now when you said you tried to enlist in the army, had you thought of trying to go into the navy or army air corps?

DAVID: No, I was going to go into the infantry. I was going to fight.

PIEHLER: You wanted to fight?

DAVID: Yeah. Sure. I wanted to get at these Germans, you know.

KOTYNSKI: You said you went to officer training school in Washington, D.C.?

DAVID: Well, actually, in Camp Ritchie, which is near Washington, D.C.

KOTYNSKI: Okay.

PIEHLER: Just backing up a bit—could you talk a little bit about your initial induction at Camp Grant? What happened to you?

DAVID: I think it was hell on earth. (Laughter) Let me tell you, if you get through basic training—nothing could be worse. I mean that. What they make you do—march from morning to night. My feet were bleeding. And on you go. I mean, they make an infantry soldier out of you because, you know, once you get in the infantry it's the real McCoy. Unless you get through this kind of a maneuver, you're not going to make it. And, well, ... things can happen to you. I went in—I forgot what town—in France, I went into the Gestapo headquarters. I parked my Jeep outside. And went in to see what kind of records they left. When I came out, there was no more Jeep. Not stolen. It was shrapnel [that] went into my Jeep. But I was in the Gestapo headquarters! (Laughter) Saved me.

PIEHLER: That's a pretty close call.

DAVID: That was a *very* close call—very close.

PIEHLER: Was that your closest call during the war?

DAVID: To be honest with you, I was very much behind the infantry.

PIEHLER: But not completely out of harm's way.

DAVID: No, you're never out of harm's way. I mean, if you are following the infantry, of course you want to be the first there to see that these son of a guns don't take all the records out, you know. So we want to be there right behind the infantry to go to the Gestapo headquarters so we find the records that we want. And that we did many times. And the other job, going into the bars.

KOTYNSKI: When you'd go into bars, would you ask GIs questions to try to see if they would give away answers, or would you just listen?

DAVID: No, no.... That wasn't my job, to make them give away things. But you didn't have to worry about that. You had a couple of drinks and the tongue gets pretty loose, you know. And every once in awhile I got hit by some of these guys. "Who the hell are you to tell me?" You know.

KOTYNSKI: So it was quite frequent that you'd hear some of them?

DAVID: Not too [frequent]. No, but you have a few drinks, you know, you don't think clearly.

PIEHLER: I'm curious—you said that basic training was ...

DAVID: Hell!

PIEHLER: Well, hell. Yeah. Do you remember any—you may not remember his name, but do you remember anything about your drill instructor?

DAVID: Well, he was a son of a bitch.

PIEHLER: Was he an old army ...

DAVID: Old army guy, yeah. But thank God he did what he's supposed to do, you know. But you'd come in as a civilian, you know, even though I was ready to go to fight the Germans. But I was more ready to fight that son of a gun. But he was stronger than me, and ...

PIEHLER: What about your initial basic training unit? What about the people in your unit? Where were they from?

DAVID: You got mostly farmer's kids. I was one of the few kids out of the Chicago area. And I don't know why, you know. Camp Grant is in Illinois, you know. And, well, even more so in the infantry division. We found very few Jewish guys there, let me tell you.

PIEHLER: When you were in the service, did you go to services at all?

DAVID: Well, I did go on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. And I don't think I went for Sukkot or Pesach ... We'd get a good meal out of that ...

PIEHLER: So you did in the service—you would go to high holy days.

DAVID: Mm hmm. No question about it.

PIEHLER: What about Jewish chaplains? How often did you encounter [them]?

DAVID: Very few.

PIEHLER: Very few?

DAVID: Very few times.

PIEHLER: Did you ever have—some GI's have told me the experience of having a minister or a priest even do the High Holy Day services? Did you have that experience?

DAVID: Yes. Yes, I did that, too.

PIEHLER: Do you remember when and where that occurred?

DAVID: It was in France some place, but I don't remember it now. Most of the time ... it could be in some tent. And, "Okay."

KOTYNSKI: You said that after you got out of your father's reach, you kind of became an atheist. So when you participated in the religious services and everything, was it just simply for tradition's sake, or what were you thinking? What was the thinking behind that?

DAVID: Well, even though you want to get away from ... the Orthodox spiel, you know, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur you never give up. It's something that you have at ... the first day of the New Year. And Yom Kippur's for atonement.

M. DAVID: It's like Christmas, you know.

DAVID: No, you don't—that's something you can't give up.

KOTYNSKI: Right. Okay.

DAVID: I mean, I was, I say, atheist—it's a little bit exaggerated, you know.

PIEHLER: What about—you mentioned the walking didn't agree with your feet. (Laughter) What about the rest of army life—the food and the routine? And how often did you get K.P. at Camp Grant?

DAVID: Well, first of all, you are not a GI unless you bitch about the food. Even it would be from the former *Chez Paris*, you would bitch about the food. Because if you're a GI, you bitch about the food. What else you gonna talk about? Man, my mind is like a sieve. I was going to say something else. Well, go on.

PIEHLER: What about—you mentioned you would complain about the food. I mean, how was the food? Was it as horrible as people complained it was?

DAVID: Number one, when we were in France, we very rarely got cooked food. We got canned food. You open it up and you heat it up and it's like canned food, you know. But if you're hungry enough, it tasted like the best meal you ever had. But you survive, you know.

PIEHLER: What about K.P. duty and guard duty?

DAVID: Oh, that's the one I wanted to say.

PIEHLER: Cause you said you had some fights. You were almost hating the sergeant more than the enemy.

DAVID: Right. But K.P. was something I'll never forget as long as I live. We were in Louisiana on Maneuvers. And the number one rule is "Don't drink water out of the rivers or the creeks," you know. But if you're thirsty, and you're thirsty, and you see a river, you drink. Well, there was an officer at that time who knew we would do this. During all the Maneuvers in Louisiana, during the breaks, I had to dig latrines because he caught me drinking water. I had to dig latrines for two months, every four or five days. So I didn't drink anymore water. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: I've been told that the Louisiana Maneuvers—even some infantry—people really on the front lines said they really hated the Maneuvers. They were just horrible.

DAVID: I always told Margo, I always wanted to rent an airplane and do something over Louisiana. (Laughter) It was unbelievable. I mean, these woods are the pits. I don't know if you've ever been to Louisiana.

PIEHLER: I have been. Because I've been told it was very hot.

DAVID: Hotter than hell in there, and snakes, and everything around there. That was a miserable place.

PIEHLER: And that the locals were not necessarily happy to see you.

DAVID: No! We'd trample all over the place. Some of these GIs went through fields that had vegetables on there, you know. We didn't care, really. GIs—we can do anything! But no, the relationship between the population and the GIs wasn't good in Louisiana. I don't blame them.

PIEHLER: What about—you had mentioned that you were interrogated by the C.I.C. people. And you thought, “This isn’t a bad thing. I would like that.” Did you try to get into any other army specialties, like ordnance, or ...

DAVID: No. I thought this ...

PIEHLER: You wanted to be infantry?

DAVID: I wanted to be infantry, but after [being in infantry] it wasn’t that good anymore. I mean, I got the opportunity to say, “That’s a nice outfit.” And counter intelligence will make a lot of sense to me with me speaking German. It would be the right outfit for me to be in.

PIEHLER: And so that’s when you started trying to apply?

DAVID: Well, I didn’t apply! All I did—they took my serial number, and that’s it. And when I came to Fort Sam Houston, I had my orders to go to Washington, D.C. If that guy wouldn’t have made that joke, “He is the German,” I don’t know if I’d be alive, because the 84th Infantry Division had an awful record of casualties.

KOTYNSKI: What did you do in Texas?

DAVID: Well we just went to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, which was the 84th Infantry Division. But when I got there, I had my orders to go to Washington.

PIEHLER: So you didn’t really spend much time there.

DAVID: No. A few days.

PIEHLER: How long were you at Camp Ritchie? Do you remember how many [days]? Were you a “90-day wonder?”

DAVID: Well, at Camp Ritchie, actually—that’s right. Ninety days and you became a lieutenant, you know.

PIEHLER: So it was basically a 90-day permit?

DAVID: Sure.

PIEHLER: Cause you were going to the C.I.C. What did they train you to do? I mean, what was some of the training?

DAVID: Well, it was mostly FBI Agents, and they trained us to be an FBI Agent, you know.... As a matter of [fact], when I came out of the army, I didn’t know what the hell I was going to do. I applied for the FBI, but they didn’t take me. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: I guess, one question I would have, in terms of thinking of your training, how useful was it actually? 'Cause you said, in some ways, they're training you to be an FBI Agent.

DAVID: Not really, because the only useful thing I had is [working] with the Communists [to] get these Nazis, you know.... I wanted to get these guys in the first place. I had more energy to do this than anybody else, you know. And it was *wonderful* to get these guys out of their bed with some of their girlfriends in the middle of the night.

PIEHLER: So you would literally just ...

DAVID: I wouldn't call them up and say, "Hello, I'm coming."

PIEHLER: Yeah. No, I mean, you did really ...

DAVID: Yeah.

PIEHLER: How shocked were some of these Nazis when you would arrive—particularly if they were in bed? I mean ...

DAVID: Oh, they were shocked. I mean, I didn't make it easy on them, either, you know. I didn't let them get dressed or anything. I mean, they'd put on a shirt or something. I was a bastard.

PIEHLER: Of the Nazis you arrested, how many actually really did get a real punishment and not just a slap on the wrist? Did you have any sense of that?

DAVID: Well, my job was bringing them to the camps. I wasn't a camp guard.

PIEHLER: Yeah. So you don't know what happened?

DAVID: And I don't know. For all I know, they had a better life there than they had outside, you know. I don't know, you know. But something else happened. At the end of my stay, I got orders from Washington, D.C. "Will you now interrogate these Nazis?" Not for what they did to the Jews, the Gestapo. What they know about the Russians. At that time they were already more worried about the Russians than the Germans, you know. And that really upset me. As a matter of fact, I wrote a letter to my colonel, you know. But he never replied.

PIEHLER: Did you actually do the interrogating?

DAVID: Sure. Not I.P.W. I interrogated the guys and then I made a report of what I ...

PIEHLER: About the Russians.

DAVID: No.

PIEHLER: You never did do that?

DAVID: No. When I arrested these Gestapo guys, I could interrogate them about their life. And half the time, they lied through their teeth, you know. And I knew that, and they knew it, you know. So after awhile I didn't even interrogate them anymore. I just sent them to the camps. And in my opinion, they never got what they really deserved. They got away with murder.

PIEHLER: When you got this order to interrogate them—the German officers—about finding the Russians. You never did ... do that. How come you never did have to actually do that? Do you know?

DAVID: Because there's two outfits. The C.I.C. outfit is like the FBI. And the I.P.W. are like the police, you know. And ... I would have love to do some of the—but the thing that bothered me more is what I told before—that these German people who lived right next to Dachau concentration camp acted like they didn't know what the hell was going on.

PIEHLER: When you came into Germany, in particular, with the C.I.C., when was your first contact with displaced persons? Do you remember?

DAVID: Near the end.

PIEHLER: Just near the very end? Not until like April?

DAVID: No. Way at the end. Because we weren't really looking for it. Even though I was a Jew, I would've—you know—that would've been my number one [goal]. But my number one item was get these bastards.

PIEHLER: So you had really a very focused [goal] in terms of what you were looking for.

DAVID: The I.P.W. was in the displaced person camp. They had their own American units to take care of them.

PIEHLER: I'm curious about ...

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO-----

DAVID: Have some more to eat.... I *know* you can eat another one.

M. DAVID: Yeah—go ahead.

PIEHLER: This continues an interview with Kurt David on August 13, 2000 in Glenwood, Illinois with Kurt Piehler and ...

KOTYNSKI: Amy Kotynski.

PIEHLER: And I asked you, sort of, what was a typical day like when you were actually in France and Germany, in terms of—where did you sleep? What would you do in the morning? What would you do in the afternoon? You know. Who was with you? Who was immediately around you? Did you have, for example, a driver or a sergeant, or ...

DAVID: Well, sometimes I had a driver and a sergeant. But most of the time I didn't like the idea because I want to go in there, drive my own jeep to where I have to go. And we know where we want to go. We knew where the Gestapo headquarters were in the next town, because we already saw all the papers. So that was our number one thing: the Gestapo headquarters. And nine times out of ten, we didn't find anything, because they weren't that dumb, leaving anything there. So we rifled through all kind of papers. Drove me nuts because there's nothing I needed, you know. And the other job, like I said before, going into the bars and shutting up the GIs, wasn't exactly the greatest job either.

PIEHLER: And you did that in France and Germany, too, going to the bars?

DAVID: Yes. And we couldn't even drink! (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Did you also do that in England?

DAVID: No.

PIEHLER: Were you based in England at all?

DAVID: No. In England we—actually, we had just, like, getting more instruction how to be a C.I.C. Agent.

PIEHLER: ... After you finished your training with C.I.C. at Camp Ritchie, where did they send you? I mean, how did you actually get deployed? How did you make it on ...

DAVID: Well, I went right to England—to London.

PIEHLER: And how did you get there? Did you take a boat or did you fly?

DAVID: Boat, sure.

PIEHLER: Do you remember that voyage at all? Do you remember?

DAVID: It was like the pits, you know. Back and forth because it was during the war, you know. And Margo went through this coming here.

M. DAVID: Zigzagging.

PIEHLER: And your rank was—even though you didn't wear your rank, you said, you were a second lieutenant?

DAVID: I was discharged, so you really came up in the ranks as a first lieutenant. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: First lieutenant. And you went over and ... you landed in England. Do you remember when you arrived in England? Was it before D-Day or after D-Day?

DAVID: Before D-Day.

PIEHLER: Before D-Day? And ... how long were you in England? Roughly.

DAVID: Half a year.

PIEHLER: Half a year? And so you did additional training?

DAVID: Yeah.

PIEHLER: ... But no bar, and no making sure no one spilled the beans about ...

DAVID: Not in England.

PIEHLER: Not in England.

DAVID: Because we weren't trained enough, you know.

PIEHLER: So what additional training did they give you? I'm just curious.

DAVID: Not much. I mean, to be honest with you, I don't remember it.

PIEHLER: Yeah. Yeah.

DAVID: It wasn't that much that stayed in my mind. But my mind was all set up. Only one thing was on my mind: "I want to get these guys wherever they are, in France or in Germany or in Belgium or in the Netherlands."

PIEHLER: You knew things were very bad for Jews in Germany. And you knew that ... the Nazis weren't good for the Jews in other places they conquered. When did you have a sense of how bad things were, that in fact it was genocide, the Holocaust?

DAVID: Well, I left two weeks before *Kristallnacht*. Okay? At that time, we got out of Germany ... and went into Holland on a train because we had the right papers to go to Holland. Nobody stopped us, okay. We were lucky. We got out before the Holocaust started. So we lived in that little town. And like I said before, when Hitler came to power, nobody talked to us anymore. It got to the point where it was crazy to live in this town. So we went to a bigger town where there were more Jews, you know. Had two synagogues. And that's where we stayed until we left to go to Holland.

PIEHLER: But did you have, say in '44, did you have a sense that there was actual extermination of Jews going on?

DAVID: Well, my father was arrested and—but he got out, you know. So, in '38, the Final Solution, well, it might have been in Hitler's mind, you know—in Hitler and all the rest of them. But it wasn't already all set to go. So we were glad to get out of Germany. My parents were glad to get rid of us, even though it must have been a horrible situation. Their only child. They never knew if we'd ever see each other again.

M. DAVID: Yeah, but, Kurt wants to know in '44 or '43, did you realize what was going on in Germany?

DAVID: Well, I knew there were concentration camps, but I didn't know the Final [Solution] ...

M. DAVID: No. We lived here. I mean, I lived here already. I didn't know.

PIEHLER: When did you have a full sense—'cause you mentioned going to Dachau. Was it at Dachau you really realized—fully realized—what ... had gone on?

DAVID: Well, I'd never seen a concentration camp until I went to Dachau, and I saw the ovens and I smelled the flesh. I mean, that hits you in the head like—there's just no explanation for how you feel. It was ...

PIEHLER: Did you talk to any of the former inmates of Dachau?

DAVID: Well, I ...

PIEHLER: 'Cause you mentioned talking to some of the Germans who lived across the street.

DAVID: Inmates—we have people belonging to our congregation. What I went through is nothing, you know. They were in a concentration camp. I have one friend of ours, Esther Shuftan. She is a Romanian. She describes the walk they did from Romania into Germany and how the women dropped like flies, left and right, because they just weren't used to this kind of a treatment and this kind of marching they had to do.

M. DAVID: Her sister wrote a book. You might have heard of it. The Seamstress, it's called. It's in the stores, and it's unbelievable.

DAVID: And this lady, she went through the works. But she somehow survived. So did her husband. As a matter of fact, they got married after they got out of the concentration camp!

PIEHLER: But did you actually go into the camp?

DAVID: I've been in Dachau.

PIEHLER: Yeah. In '45, did you go?

DAVID: Yeah. Yeah.

PIEHLER: And did you talk to any of the liberated prisoners?

DAVID: When I went in there, the liberated prisoners weren't in Dachau.

PIEHLER: They were in the displaced ...

DAVID: I mean, that's not a place they wanted to stay.

PIEHLER: No, so you ...

DAVID: The first day out of Dachau is one day ... not enough. So there was nobody in Dachau.

PIEHLER: By the time you got there ...

DAVID: They did make some—where the people slept, you know—the Germans made some repairing, which actually made it look better.

M. DAVID: Well, yeah, but that was years after.

DAVID: Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: In terms of being a C.I.C. man, where would you draw your rations from, and ...

DAVID: That was the beauty of being C.I.C. We could go to any place in the army and show our C.I.C. cards and we could empty out the store. Nobody would question us. It was beautiful. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So you had your pick. I mean, you often said you didn't get a hot meal. But whatever you could get, you got the pick of.

DAVID: You bet.

KOTYNSKI: I read a story about a man who was discriminated against by an officer who didn't think much of the C.I.C. Did you ever come across that? Or did people pretty much treat you pretty well in the army?

DAVID: Well, number one, we ran around without bars. So they didn't know whom they were talking to. This helped a lot, you know. Because, you know, if I would've been just a second lieutenant, which I was, you know. Who the hell is a second lieutenant? It's the lowest guy in the army, lower than a private, you know. Everybody gets on the second lieutenant. So the question—not really.

KOTYNSKI: People treated you pretty well?

DAVID: Sure, because they didn't know who I was. Like I said before, we went to general headquarters, you know. There's a general. I was a second lieutenant. (Laughter) And the guy treated me like I was an equal, you know, because he didn't know who the hell he was talking [to]. Or else he thought I was a civilian.

KOTYNSKI: What were you doing when you found out that the war was over? Do you remember?

DAVID: Well, I ... signed my commission and stayed on doing the same job, making about four times as much money as I was making as a lieutenant. So I stayed over as a civilian.

PIEHLER: Who paid you? I mean, what agency did you work for?

DAVID: The army.

PIEHLER: The army. You were paid as a civilian?

DAVID: As a civilian in the army.

PIEHLER: How long did you stay on?

DAVID: One year.

PIEHLER: One year?

KOTYNSKI: In Germany?

DAVID: Yeah. And then I decided, "What am I going to do? Stay her forever? Is that what my job's going to be?" I didn't know what I was going to do in the United States.

PIEHLER: So when did you resign your commission? When did you leave the army?

DAVID: '45.

PIEHLER: '45? What month was it? The war ends in May of '45. When did you leave the army?

DAVID: Altogether, when I went back to the United States?

PIEHLER: But as an officer, no longer, but you said you stayed on as a civilian.

DAVID: In '45.

PIEHLER: '45. But you don't remember what month?

DAVID: No.

PIEHLER: But they paid you better, which is a certain ...

DAVID: You bet.

PIEHLER: And you said they had a hard time getting—you had the right skills, then, in part because you knew German.

DAVID: Well that's my number one skill, you know. I didn't have no police experience, you know.

PIEHLER: So the training you got didn't really ...

DAVID: Bologna.

PIEHLER: I mean, I guess I figured FBI Agents learn how to do stakeouts, and they learn how to do fingerprinting. And they learn how to ...

DAVID: You can't learn that in six months, you know. I mean, they might have talked about it. But not something they expected me to do, you know. And I didn't need it. I didn't need anything. If somebody told me, "He's a Nazi," I took his word for it. He might have been the nicest guy in the world, but if somebody tells me he's a Nazi, I arrested him.

PIEHLER: I figure you'd let someone else sort it out.

DAVID: You bet.

KOTYNSKI: How successful was being a C.I.C. agent after the war?

DAVID: When coming home?

KOTYNSKI: No, when you stayed on, after the war ended.

DAVID: As a civilian?

KOTYNSKI: Yeah. Was that ...

DAVID: Well, I had to show them that I am a C.I.C. civilian employee, you know. And the C.I.C. is the one that makes people look at me and do what I want them to do, you know.

PIEHLER: When you would go and make arrests, how many people would you bring with you to make the arrest? Would you take M.P.s with you or other C.I.C.s?

DAVID: No, I took out my own pistol, and I had a couple of Germans behind me who came along, you know.

KOTYNSKI: The Communists?

DAVID: The Communists. And I let them go first. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Now you—it's interesting because a lot of Americans are anti-Communist.

DAVID: Yeah, but I had problems with that, you know, with some of my other officers, you know.... But it doesn't—you cannot get the Germans to point out the Nazis, because they were all Nazis. Not all of them, but you needed somebody who hated the Nazis as much as I did. And nobody hated the Nazis more than the Communists. And if the Communists can tell me where the Nazis are, I don't care what they are. I don't need to have politics, Communist politics. I wanted to get the Nazis. That's all I wanted to do. And they were the ones that helped me to do this.

KOTYNSKI: How did you find the Communists?

DAVID: That you can find—they'd come to you.

KOTYNSKI: Oh!

PIEHLER: They came, I mean, you didn't have to really [look]?

DAVID: No. They'll come to you, "We want to help you."

PIEHLER: 'Cause I remember a veteran was saying to me he had been a prisoner of war and that he'd escaped [in] the last few days before the war. And he was taken in by an anti-Nazi family. And, in fact, as he was in this cave, he sort of met this family in this cave. The whole village was using it as an air raid shelter. The family took him in and then started pointing out the Nazis: "These are the people you want to stay away from."

DAVID: Well, you have to be careful. Some of these people that point out the Nazis, they did it because they didn't want to be pointed out as the Nazis themselves.

PIEHLER: So you also had that to deal with.

DAVID: You bet.

PIEHLER: So how do you figure that out?

DAVID: It's not easy. Other than, most likely, the Nazis said, "What the hell is going on? They [the accusers] are more Nazis than me!" You know. So you go back and arrest those people who gave you the [name]. I have no problem with that.

KOTYNSKI: Did you come across any double agents?

DAVID: Well, not really. I mean, not that I know of. A couple agents that I was with were C.I.C. guys or FBI guys, you know, and the people we arrested were Nazis. So I don't know where double agents would come in.

PIEHLER: I once read a set of letters by someone who was in the C.I.C., although he never made it to Europe. I mean, he only made it to Africa. And he said—before that, he did investigations in the Chicago area—going to bars and stuff. And he said, you know, in a lot of the tone of the letters and his sort of commenting, he said a lot of this was pretty amateurish. That is was an important job, but that the training was pretty ...

DAVID: The training—well, if they wouldn't have had me—there were not too—amazingly enough, there were more German Jewish boys in I.P.W.—Interrogating Prisoners of War—than in C.I.C., because it makes more sense because I.P.W. means “interrogating prisoners of war,” you know. C.I.C. is investigating. The only reason I got in there [was] because of these two C.I.C. guys and, “That's a nice outfit.” You know. And I guess it helped that I spoke German. But to be in the C.I.C., to be a policeman, is more important than speaking German, you know.

PIEHLER: Did you ever think you'd be better off in the I.P.W.?

DAVID: No, I thought C.I.C. was a fine outfit.

PIEHLER: What about—did you develop any close comradeship, close relationship, with other C.I.C. men? Did you stay in touch?

DAVID: I did for awhile. But then, you know, as time passes, you know. And, well, for years the C.I.C. was pestering me to join a C.I.C. veterans' organization, which I didn't do. But, God, I got letters. Ask Margo. (Laughs)

KOTYNSKI: Why did you not join?

DAVID: Because I'm not a joiner, and I don't want to be—the war is over, and I really had enough of it.

KOTYNSKI: So you were ... ready to get back to normal life then?

DAVID: You bet. Even though I stayed over for a year, you know. But the money made it—helped me do this.

KOTYNSKI: Was it hard to readjust back to normal life?

DAVID: Well, yeah, very much so. But over here I was a big shot—in the C.I.C. and all of a sudden I had no job, you know.... What the hell was my first job?

M. DAVID: I didn't know you then. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Though it doesn't sound like it was a great job. (Laughter)

DAVID: ... I did that job picking up these damn towels. I think that was before I went in the army. But coming out of the army, then I went ...

PIEHLER: You mentioned trying to get into the FBI.

DAVID: Well, that was a fake thing. They wouldn't want me.

KOTYNSKI: How did your neighbors treat you when you came back? How were you welcomed?

DAVID: Well, I mean, the neighbors in the United States, I hope you mean, ... not in Germany.

KOTYNSKI: Yeah, in the United States.

DAVID: Sure! I ran around with my uniform for the longest time, you know. And they want to hear what I did, you know.

KOTYNSKI: Was it something you were willing to talk about?

DAVID: Sure! They always wanted to hear how I arrested all these people.

M. DAVID: People were very acceptive of GIs coming home from the war, not like the other war.

PIEHLER: What other jobs did you have after the war?

DAVID: Well, one job was—I told you already. The other one was going to farmers and selling oil, and that I didn't do so well. The dogs didn't like me.

PIEHLER: No, I mean after the war.

DAVID: Well, after the war I went back for a while to that shoe company. And I didn't like that either. And then, a friend of mine said, "I got a job for you." I said, "What is it?" "Selling boxes and bags to ..."

M. DAVID: No, first you were offered to work [at] Maling's.

DAVID: Oh, then I ...

M. DAVID: Maling's Shoe Store.

DAVID: Oh yeah. Then I went back to Maling's Shoe Store, you know. I was sort of a manager in there. And then I got a job selling boxes and paper bags, plastic bags, zipper bags, to retail stores, men's and women's. And that job I had forever.

PIEHLER: That became your career?

DAVID: That was my career. Not a policeman. I think it pays better, too.

PIEHLER: When did you start with selling as a sales representative?

DAVID: I think 1947, '48.

PIEHLER: It's been a long [time]. I mean, in other words, once you ...

DAVID: I was there all the time.

PIEHLER: And where was your territory?

DAVID: Just around here, you know. I didn't want to stay overnight any place, you know.

PIEHLER: So it was really this side of Chicago.

DAVID: In Chicago—you can't find any more retail stores in the city of Chicago. We could go to Springfield, you know. You see fifteen retail stores that's [on] one street. On State Street there's a hundred, you know. So even though I hated downtown, you know. There's the parking and all that stuff. It was more expensive than going to [other places]. I did go a lot to Indiana. That's how she got a hold of me. (Referring to Kotynski)

PIEHLER: Oh, that's—oh, okay ...

KOTYNSKI: How do you feel that your life was affected by the war, afterwards? Do you feel that you saw things differently, like you changed a lot?

DAVID: Well, I did change a lot because I, you know, went in there as a little guy, you know. Came out as an officer in the United States Army, you know. And I'll show you the picture.

(Tape paused)

PIEHLER: ... You're showing us a big [collage].

DAVID: This is *Leutnant* [Lieutenant] David, World War I.

KOTYNSKI: Who is that?

DAVID: That's Lieutenant David, my father. (Points to another picture) That's me, without ... [a uniform].

PIEHLER: Oh yeah.

DAVID: And this is the house where I was born. This is my mother and this is my father. These are my kids, grandchildren.

KOTYNSKI: Who's that?

DAVID: That's Aunt Freda. She was a head nurse in a hospital in Hamburg, Germany.

PIEHLER: Was this a wartime decoration?

DAVID: Yep.

PIEHLER: She was a nurse during the war?

DAVID: Mm hmm. World War I.

KOTYNSKI: Is that you?

DAVID: That's me. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: And this is your mother?

DAVID: Yeah, with Budgy. That's a parakeet she called Budgy. And this is—remember I told about Uncle Marx? And that's my mother bicycling in Switzerland.

KOTYNSKI: Margo, right there?

DAVID: That's Margo, yeah. Must have been our wedding.

KOTYNSKI: Oh yeah.

DAVID: Where am I? (Laughter)

PIEHLER: And this is your father with his Iron Cross, First Class?

DAVID: Yeah. And that is the *Feldwebel* [sergeant], his brother. That's really a totally different army. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Now, none of your children ... served in the military?

DAVID: No.

M. DAVID: No.

PIEHLER: So that line was broken.

DAVID: ... Thank God.

M. DAVID: Couldn't imagine what ...

(Tape paused)

DAVID: Mm hmm. There's a document here for all German refugees sworn into military duty. They're all German Jewish guys. I'm not on here.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. Have you ever seen a film or read a novel that sort of described your experiences in the army or from the '30s? Does any film or novel—'cause I don't think the C.I.C. have had a film done about them.

DAVID: No, they don't ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, but I'm just wondering if there was something that you say ...

DAVID: Not that I know of. I guess I talk about this, but the number one thing they were telling me all time, "Don't talk about the C.I.C." That's such a secret outfit, even though it wasn't that secret. Here's something that's interesting. The ... birth certificate in Hebrew of my father. I want you to read it from top to bottom. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: I'm still struggling with ...

DAVID: *Barkhu et Adonai* ...

PIEHLER: Yes, I dread—when the president of the synagogue has called me up to do an *Aliyah*. Oh, I just—'cause my Hebrew's ...

DAVID: (Singing) *Barkhu et Adonai ha-m'vorakh*.

PIEHLER: (Laughter) 'Cause one day he pulled me up, but I hadn't practiced for awhile. So it wasn't a pretty sight.

DAVID: Now here's a picture of the town where I was born. (To Margo) I don't think you ever saw that.

M. DAVID: No, I didn't. What is this?

DAVID: I don't know what the hell this is. (Picks up another paper) And this is the first Thanksgiving in 1943 in the army. (Refers to an army menu that is covered in signatures)

PIEHLER: And this is greetings from everyone?

DAVID: Everyone on Thanksgiving.

PIEHLER: Well it looks like people signed this. I mean, you have people from California, from Pennsylvania.

DAVID: It was just in the beginning when I went in, in 1943. See: November 25, 1943. Yeah, it's the same thing.

PIEHLER: I'm very intrigued at this menu, because it sort of says "Shrimp cocktail, Roman olives, Moscow pickles," ...

DAVID: It's a bunch of crap.

PIEHLER: ... "Roast turkey a la United Nations, Guadalcanal dressing, Sicilian gravy," ...

KOTYNSKI: Now where was this restaurant?

PIEHLER: This is an army menu. This is an army Thanksgiving. No, no, no, it's not a [restaurant]. And this is Camp Ritchie, Maryland. This is the Thanksgiving ...

M. DAVID: How come you kept all this from me? (Laughter) I haven't saw it.

DAVID: And that—you know what that means? *Judische Gemeinde in Zwingenberg*. Do you know what that means?

PIEHLER: Jewish ...

DAVID: Jewish *Kehilla* in Zwingen[berg]. And here is ...

KOTYNSKI: What does it mean?

DAVID: The Jewish congregation in Zwingenberg, where I was born. And here—here is something else.

KOTYNSKI: Wow.

PIEHLER: This is your work paper.

DAVID: My work paper. I worked for about four months. And this here is school year 1927, '28, and '29. My grades! (Laughter)

KOTYNSKI: Can I see this?

PIEHLER: Now I'm curious, 'cause you have religion listed here. What religious instruction did you have in the public school?

DAVID: None.

PIEHLER: None?

DAVID: I don't what that was. They gave me a grade in here.

PIEHLER: They just gave you a grade?

DAVID: Yeah.

PIEHLER: So you didn't have to sit through Protestantism?

M. DAVID: Oh, they used to get the grades from your religious school.

PIEHLER: Oh, so they'd get it from [there].

M. DAVID: That's right.

DAVID: ... I didn't get a "1" in religion. It must have been "2". Wasn't it? (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Yeah.... Well, one case they don't have any. But you were a good student.... I only see "1s" and "2s".

M. DAVID: What happened? (Laughs)

DAVID: What happened? I married you! (Laughter) ... The mayor of Zwingenberg signed this one.

KOTYNSKI: What does this word mean?

DAVID: Workbook.

KOTYNSKI: Oh. Okay.

M. DAVID: That's like when you pay social security, you ... used to get a stamp or something.

PIEHLER: Did the mayor change in '33 in your town, your childhood town?

DAVID: You mean, because the Nazis came?

PIEHLER: Yeah.

DAVID: I doubt it. I mean, they were ... Germans or Aryans, you know. They wouldn't change it. Here's the—let me show you. Spies is ... my mother's maiden name. There they have "1840: Spies, Moses. Jew." And his job was "Vegetables, cows." What does Eleanor mean? (Referring to different pictures)

M. DAVID: Eleanor? I don't know.

(Tape paused)

DAVID: I don't know. This is a picture—it's nothing.... Zwingenberg—the story of when Jews first came to Zwingenberg. And you know, the first Jews were in the 14th century—there were Jews in Zwingenberg. That's just in the synagogue—the synagogue that was built in Zwingenberg.

PIEHLER: What ever happened to the synagogue? Does the building still stand?

DAVID: There's a movie theater in there now.

PIEHLER: It's the movie theater?

DAVID: Yeah.

PIEHLER: ... When was the last time you went back? You said you went back with your children.

M. DAVID: ... The last time we were back there was three—let me see—it was four years ago.

PIEHLER: Is there any plaque that says that that was the old synagogue?

M. DAVID: I don't think we ever even saw it.

DAVID: No. When we went in there, there's nothing to see there ...

M. DAVID: I don't recall that we saw anything.

KOTYNSKI: What did you say that this was?

DAVID: What?

KOTYNSKI: This paper.

M. DAVID: I don't know what.

DAVID: I don't know what it means, either.

M. DAVID: I don't know what it means, either.

PIEHLER: This history—I'm just curious where it comes from. The history of—do you remember where you got it from?

DAVID: Well it says here “Province of Darmstadt” and “Rabbinat of Darmstadt.” And that means—the Rabbinat of Darmstadt was in charge of all these little synagogues. And that is from the Rabbinat of Darmstadt. That’s what they said about the synagogue in Zwingenberg. Funny thing: here the rabbi in Darmstadt was Dr. Landsberg. Maybe he’s related to Landsberg.

M. DAVID: His name is Landsberger.

DAVID: Oh, I see. [Let’s] see what else I have. You can ask me questions while I [look].

PIEHLER: Well, I’m enjoying you going through the papers, ‘cause questions come ...

DAVID: These are the passports of my parents.

M. DAVID: See how much hair he used to have? (Laughter)

DAVID: This is the synagogue in that little town.

KOTYNSKI: In Zwingenberg?

DAVID: Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: Oh, okay. It seems like it was very nice.

DAVID: Yeah, it was very [nice]. I went there many times.

KOTYNSKI: So how many people attended there?

DAVID: There were only ten Jewish families.... When that synagogue was in existence, women didn’t exist. They didn’t count. Only men counted in the *minyan*.

PIEHLER: In the *minyan*, yeah.

DAVID: So we have ten Jewish families and if one is sick ...

KOTYNSKI: Yeah, but, the whole family would go to synagogue, wouldn’t they?

DAVID: Yeah, but the women sat upstairs.

KOTYNSKI: Oh!

PIEHLER: Yeah. Well, it was an Orthodox.

KOTYNSKI: With the children?

PIEHLER: Did you have a *mikveh*?

DAVID: No.

PIEHLER: You didn't have a *mikveh*?

DAVID: No. But you can go to Darmstadt and get a *mikveh*.

KOTYNSKI: What is that?

DAVID: Well, that's a cleansing.

M. DAVID: A ritual bath.

DAVID: A ritual bath to cleanse you when you say some Jewish prayers over—then you are a 100% Jewish woman.

KOTYNSKI: Oh, that's just for women?

DAVID: Only for women. Men, you know, they're better than women, you know. (Laughter)

M. DAVID: They don't need to be cleansed. (Laughter)

KOTYNSKI: You said that picture up there is a synagogue. Now where was that one?

DAVID: In Dresden.

M. DAVID: In Dresden, where I was born.

KOTYNSKI: In Dresden, okay. Right. It's the small one, right, the small picture?

M. DAVID: Yes, it's the small one right there. And that's a picture of Dresden underneath.

KOTYNSKI: Oh.

DAVID: I wonder why we got that one from Hamburg ...

M. DAVID: In Hamburg?

DAVID: That's Hamburg.

M. DAVID: No, that's Bremen.

DAVID: Is that Bremen?

M. DAVID: Mm hmm. That's what you told me.

DAVID: Here: this was Margo and I in 19—I don't know what year that was. 1983 ...

M. DAVID: 1983. Boy, I was young. (Laughter)

DAVID: And this is the house and the gravestone of my great grandparents. This is in Hähnlein, and this is in the cemetery in Ansbach. We've been there. We've seen this.

PIEHLER: So the cemetery does survive.

DAVID: ... We also went to the cemetery where my father's *mishpokhe* was buried. When we got there the first time, he took us way out in no-man's land. We saw a screened-in cemetery. And we went there, and I was absolutely upset, because all the gravestones were down, you know. I shouldn't have got—they were so old that they tumbled down by themselves. And when we first got back, we saw the new cemetery where everybody [was buried]. There was no Jews there, but it's all taken care of by the Germans.

KOTYNSKI: Could I see this? Could you pass that to me?

DAVID: ... What the hell is this here? That is my father's identification card when they were in Montevideo.

M. DAVID: I've never seen any of this stuff. (Laughter)

DAVID: That's my mother.

PIEHLER: So this was June of 1940, when they arrived in Montevideo—at least from these—from their passports' [date].

DAVID: Can you identify me on there? That's all my cousins.

PIEHLER: Oh wow.

DAVID: I was young once! (Laughs)

PIEHLER: Are you ... (Points to a child in the picture)

DAVID: I don't know—I can't find myself!

PIEHLER: Oh!

M. DAVID: Let me see.

DAVID: I think this is me here.

M. DAVID: I have no idea.

DAVID: This is my father—an article that ... I got when he passed—when he died—because my father was the president of this Jewish-German congregation in Montevideo.

M. DAVID: (Looking at the picture of the cousins) I can't figure out which one he is. I think it's that last one over there. I think, but I don't know.

KOTYNSKI: It's so cute!

PIEHLER: 1964. Your father died on May 17, 1964 ...

M. DAVID: I think this is you.

DAVID: You mean the girl? (Laughter)

M. DAVID: The clown, not the girl.

DAVID: I think you're right.

PIEHLER: How did your father and mother survive while they were in South America during the war?

DAVID: Well, number one, they did get out of Germany, and they took some money out of Germany.

PIEHLER: They *were* able to take some out?

DAVID: Yeah. And my Uncle Marx, he was a very well-to-do person, but also a generous person. So he helped out.

PIEHLER: Were you able to write ... during the war to your parents?

DAVID: Sure. Not enough—they were mad as hell at me. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: But you were in contact with them.

DAVID: I was in contact with them, you know. But sometimes, you know, you're in the middle of a battle, you know. You're behind—even two hours behind there. You don't feel like writing or doing anything, even though my parents were worried every time they'd get a letter [saying] "I'm not here anymore," you know.

M. DAVID: But you still don't write.

DAVID: Yeah. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Were you able to send an allotment to them when you were in the service?

DAVID: Yeah, but they didn't ask for it.

PIEHLER: They didn't ask for it. I'm curious—it's a side question, but did you gamble during the war at all?

DAVID: Well, I played some black jack, you know, but I'm not a gambler.

PIEHLER: You weren't a big gambler?

DAVID: No, but she's the gambler. (Laughter) If we go to Vegas ...

M. DAVID: Only the machines.

PIEHLER: What about U.S.O. shows? Did you ever get to a U.S.O. show?

DAVID: Sure! Yeah, that's fun. See nice looking girls. Pardon me, ma'am.

PIEHLER: ... I've been told GIs were often treated very well, both overseas and here. Particularly in, say, England or the United States, ... often in a lot of places, if you had a uniform on, you might get a dinner invitation. Did any of that ever happen to you?

DAVID: Yeah, that happened to me, but not that often, you know. I mean, number one, the C.I.C. is kept sort of separate, you know. And we could get anything we wanted anyhow, so we didn't need the dinner. When we went to the best places with our C.I.C. card we could requisition anything we wanted. That's a fact, you know. And we didn't [misuse] it ... but it helped a lot, you know.

PIEHLER: Now you were not ... looking for French collaborators at all when you were in France?

DAVID: Yes we were.

PIEHLER: You were?

DAVID: No question about it, because they were worse than the Nazis.

KOTYNSKI: Did you find any?

DAVID: Not too [many]. They disappeared amongst the population. But, I told you that before, but the Dutch people were unbelievable as far as saving the Jews. Out of the 250 boys and girls, I said, most of them were killed. But the ones that weren't killed were saved by the Dutch people—not Jews. And I love the Dutch, because they really saved a lot of our people there. And they lied to the Nazis when they were looking for us. And they were great.

PIEHLER: ... You mentioned you had these cousins who were Zionists, and a lot of your family did go to Palestine. What ... were your reactions at the creation of the state of Israel? I mean, it's sort of an obvious question, but ...

DAVID: That was it.

PIEHLER: And you had showed earlier that you were active with ...

DAVID: I was a Zionist when I was in Holland. I wanted to go to Palestine. And the guy, Moshe, was a Palestinian Jew. He knew when to get out of Holland, though. He was the first one to leave Holland. He must have smelled the Germans coming before any of us did.

PIEHLER: You were active with the sale of Israel bonds. How active with it were you? What was your involvement in terms of Israel bonds?

DAVID: Well, actually, we were honored to be there.... Margo made a speech. I made a speech. I wasn't really active as an Israeli bond—but the Israeli bond people don't want these small congregations anymore. But we haven't had an Israeli bond in forever. It used to be the thing. Every year, somebody was honored and we had a bond dinner. They don't do that anymore. I was always wondering. I mean, you could get some \$40,000-\$50,000 to get that.

M. DAVID: It was a small price.

PIEHLER: That wasn't enough?

DAVID: No, that was peanuts.

PIEHLER: You mentioned you made three trips to Israel. What were your impressions of Israel and when was your first trip?

M. DAVID: Well, we always went on a tour, every time we went.

PIEHLER: When was the first ...

M. DAVID: No, I don't know. The first time was ...

DAVID: I have no idea. All I know: when we went there, we got out of the airplane, my whole *mishpokhe* was there. (Laughter) Must have been 40-50 people there trying to say "Hello." And then they were all mad at me, because we didn't stay long enough with each one of them.... I didn't stay with any of them. That I knew. I wasn't going to stay with any of them, because then they'd all be pissed off, excuse me, with each other because I stayed longer with [some of] them. They're the same people like here.

KOTYNSKI: So you stayed in a hotel?

DAVID: We stayed in a hotel.

M. DAVID: Well it was all arranged for the tour anyway.

PIEHLER: Was the tour with, say, the U.J.A.?

DAVID: Well ...

M. DAVID: Well, the first time—no, we didn't go with them.

PIEHLER: Or with a travel agency?

M. DAVID: We went with Hadassah once and with O.R.T. once and I don't know.

DAVID: It's mostly cheaper than going by yourself.

-----END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE-----

PIEHLER: You were obviously glad to see family, and new family. But any other impressions of Israel from any of the trips?

DAVID: Well, the first trip, I kissed the ground. I was very emotional.

PIEHLER: And then the second and third trips?

DAVID: (Laughs)

PIEHLER: You can't kiss the ground that many [times]? Is Israel what you expected, having heard about Palestine?

DAVID: Well, I mean, it's so modern, you know. It's nothing like seeing the Bible, you know. It's changed.

M. DAVID: Well, it's changed. I understand it changed a lot since we were there last time ...

PIEHLER: When was the last time you were in Israel?

DAVID: I'm afraid you would ask this question. Three years, I think.

M. DAVID: No, it's more than that.

DAVID: More than that?

M. DAVID: Six.

PIEHLER: Six years ago?

M. DAVID: Six years ago.

PIEHLER: But I'm sorry—I cut you off.

DAVID: No, no.

M. DAVID: It's impressionable.

DAVID: I'm very much impressed, but it's a modern state, you know. And, you know, what really amazes me—you go to your relatives, and they got a machine gun over the door. (Laughter) Everybody has a weapon. So they can be called anytime—up to fifty years—the Israeli Army and say, “Tomorrow you got to be there.” You got to be there. Every Israeli civilian is in the Israeli Army. That's the most amazing thing.

KOTYNSKI: So the civilians carry around these guns?

DAVID: They don't carry it around, but they got it at home.

M. DAVID: They have it at home.

KOTYNSKI: Wow. Was your main reason for going to Israel several times to see family, or was it sort of a pilgrimage for you?

DAVID: Both.

M. DAVID: Just to see it, really.

DAVID: Yeah. Well, Margo doesn't have much family there, but I have a lot of them, you know. So I was eager to see them. But I think we see Israel as Israel, not because my *mishpokhe*—my relatives—are there, was the number one reason we went to Israel. But now they expect you. The Americans are all rich, so you can go to Israel every year. And if you don't go there every year ...

M. DAVID: He's got some cousins there, I think, are much richer.

DAVID: Gabi, and one guy who was in the Mossad. He's more in Europe than he is in Israel.

PIEHLER: Have any of your Israeli relatives come here to the States to visit?

DAVID: Yeah. Gabi.

M. DAVID: Yes, he's been here.

DAVID: He's been here many times.

M. DAVID: A couple of times.

DAVID: A couple of times, at least.

PIEHLER: I guess you were raised Orthodox and then are now Reformed. What have you thought about the sort of tensions that have developed in more recent years between Reformed and conservative branches of Judaism and the Orthodox?

DAVID: And the *Heridim*.

PIEHLER: Yeah, the Black Hats.

DAVID: As far as I'm concerned, that's not my religion. They're awful. I mean, what they ... call the Reformed and Conservative Jews is outrageous. But they're in Jerusalem. And unfortunately, they take over the city of Jerusalem. And the young people of Jerusalem [are] leaving Jerusalem. Because they don't want to have to take that crap that the *Heridim* lay out. And they go to Haifa or Tel Aviv.... And that's why the big industry is not in Jerusalem. Which is too bad, because they need the industry there.

KOTYNSKI: How do you feel about Germany today?

DAVID: Well, like I said before, I wouldn't go back to Germany if you give me \$1,000,000 to live there. Now try me. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: But you have been back. I mean, was it difficult to go back? I mean, not when you were in the army, because there you had a reason to be back.

DAVID: Well, it wasn't that difficult, because I wanted to show my granddaughter where I was born, you know. But we never took a trip into Germany. We came to Germany—Frankfurt—and we went either to Austria or to Switzerland. Not to go touring Germany. That I wouldn't do.

PIEHLER: So it was really just to see where you'd grown up.

M. DAVID: We've been back to Dresden.

DAVID: We went back to Dresden where Margo was born. Where her father was a rabbi, you know. As a matter of fact, I was at the ground-breaking of the new temple.

M. DAVID: It hasn't been built yet. (Laughter)

DAVID: No, it hasn't been built yet.

M. DAVID: Ground-breaking.

DAVID: Here, ... I'll show you the picture of the new temple.... We don't know which one is the temple but it's like a pure modern ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, it's very modern.

M. DAVID: Very modern.

DAVID: But if you look at this. Look at this synagogue over there. Couldn't be more ornamental if you tried.

PIEHLER: Yeah. No, I know ...

DAVID: But when that is built, we're going over there.

KOTYNSKI: So do you feel ... a lot less hateful towards Germany today, though?

DAVID: Oh yeah. No question about it. I mean, I wouldn't live there, you know. I wouldn't ... go back there [saying], "Here's my Fatherland," you know, or motherland, you know. That's not the way I feel about Germany. But, you know, a lot of these people who are your age (points to Kotynski) or your age (points to Piehler), they didn't live during the Hitler era. But, I'll go back to Holland. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: I'm curious about—you mentioned being ... at the campfire and all these people giving all the sort of ... anti-Semitic clichés. And then not believing you were Jewish.

DAVID: Cause I'm a nice guy. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Well, also, ... I remember one guy I was interviewing, they started asking him and making these anti-Semitic remarks. And then he said, "So what do you think Jews really look like?" And he said, "Well they have horns and...." And he just started laughing and he said, "You know, I'm Jewish." What about after the army—American anti-Semitism in the '40s and '50s? How much experience did you have with it?

DAVID: Very little.

PIEHLER: Very little?

DAVID: That's a fact. Can you think of anything?

M. DAVID: No, I can't think of anything, either.

PIEHLER: No problem with housing, say, in the '40's and '50's?

DAVID: No.... When we first wanted to get an apartment, everybody wanted money under the table to get an apartment because the apartments were so scarce, you know. Even people that we

knew well. One couple especially, we were just talking about it. I wouldn't shake their hands now in a million years.

M. DAVID: Well, there was, what they called, rent control at the time. You couldn't find a place.

DAVID: And if you had a place, they wanted money under the table for you to get the apartment.

KOTYNSKI: Why was housing so scarce? Just so many people?

DAVID: Because of what happened in the war. There was nothing built before. And then all these GIs come back. They got married. They want an apartment. They want a house. And there was nothing there. So these S.O.B.s—they used that occasion to make extra money.

PIEHLER: Did you use the GI Bill to buy a house?

M. DAVID: Yeah, we did. Yeah. Our first house we bought.

PIEHLER: Where was your first house?

DAVID: In Marynook. You know where that is?

KOTYNSKI: No, where is that?

M. DAVID: It was within Chicago city limits, but far out.

KOTYNSKI: Is that north of the city?

M. DAVID: No. South.

DAVID: 87th and Kenwood.

KOTYNSKI: Oh. Okay.

M. DAVID: Yeah, 87th and Kenwood.

DAVID: That was beautiful. Even at that time, it was a third Catholic, a third Protestant, and a third Jewish. And we had plays, we sang for Hanukkah, we sang for Christmas. (Laughter)

M. DAVID: It was a wonderful place.

KOTYNSKI: How long did you live there?

M. DAVID: About nine years, and then the neighborhood changed.

DAVID: By then we made a wonderful move from 87th Street to 92nd Street. Crazy.

M. DAVID: Four years, and the neighborhood changed again. And our kids were still in school at the time. We needed good schooling for them. So it wasn't so much that we were fleeing from whoever moved in. Now this neighborhood is changing. (Laughter) But very slowly. It's different nowadays. People don't just pack up and run like they used to.

PIEHLER: So you remember an era where people really packed up and ran.

DAVID: ... Oh, the whole area on the north side. The only reason we were on the south side because our congregation moved from 87th and ... Jeffrey to here, you know. And I wouldn't go north if my congregation is here, you know.

PIEHLER: So this is why you've ended up in Glenwood. The congregation—you followed the congregation.

M. DAVID: Right. The congregation, and my brothers—my two brothers—moved out here. And most of our friends did.

DAVID: Our friends moved here. Kanda, he's a very good friend of mine.... Kanda, he's the guy who gets peanuts paid for me. He does it because he loves to do that. He's eighty-one years old and he still sings the whole Yom Kippur through. I mean, it's amazing what he can do at his age.

PIEHLER: That's long—that's a very long service.

M. DAVID: Yeah, and a rich man besides. That helps.

DAVID: He used to be in the cabinet business.

KOTYNSKI: So have you stayed a part of the same congregation since you were on 87th Street? Has it been the same one that kept moving south? The exact same one?

DAVID: Yeah. Actually, we started out from Hyde Park—liberal congregation.... To 87th and Jeffrey. From Jeffrey to here—183rd Street.

PIEHLER: And the name of your congregation, just so we have it on tape?

DAVID: Temple B'nai Yehuda, and then now we merged with Beth Shalom from Park Forest. Now B'nai Yehuda Beth Shalom is the temple name now. And their rabbi's now our rabbi. And she's a girl.

PIEHLER: Which is quite a departure from your Orthodox upbringing.

M. DAVID: Oh yeah.

DAVID: Oh, my father would turn [in his grave]. (Laughter) And she's a great rabbi.

M. DAVID: Yeah, she's good.

PIEHLER: I'm curious. What did you—when the Korean War came along, did you think there was a chance you might have to go back, I mean, even though you weren't in the army anymore?

DAVID: No, no. I completely severed every connection with the army and C.I.C. They knew I wasn't [interested]. And at that time, they couldn't have gotten me. No way! I was a civilian.

PIEHLER: But you had no irrational fears that there would be another draft?

M. DAVID: Well, by that time he was married, had three little kids, and too old, probably.

PIEHLER: What did you think of the Vietnam War?

DAVID: I was totally against it. I mean, I was screaming my head off. That's not a war that I would've [fought]. I would have run to Canada and left her here. (Laughter)

KOTYNSKI: Why were you so against being involved with the army after you were done?

DAVID: Well, number one, I didn't want to be—the army as being my life, you know. And I did my job. I went to Europe. I fought in the war. I stayed over another year. Like I say in Hebrew, "*Dayenu.*" Enough, you know. I just didn't want to be connected with the army period.

PIEHLER: So the Jewish War Veterans or the American Legion ...

DAVID: Oh! They're after me like recruitment.

PIEHLER: So the Jewish War Veterans have knocked, as they say.

M. DAVID: Every time we get mail, we get mail from them.

DAVID: After all these years, you know. (Laughter) I still get applications to join them. I just got a letter about a week ago. It goes to the same drawer: garbage can. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: You mentioned you stayed in touch with some people you served with. When did you lose—when was the last ...

DAVID: I can't remember.

PIEHLER: So it's been that long?

DAVID: A very long time, yeah.

PIEHLER: You never sort of run into someone you remember from the war?

DAVID: No, but before I got the [longtime] job that I had for—I was a manager of a Maling’s Shoe Store. And Maling’s Shoe Stores always had high school kids filling in. Quite a few. I mean, one time I had about fifteen, twenty high school kids. I mean, that’s a job by itself. And every once in awhile, years ago, I’d see a nice looking young man or a girl, “How are you, Mr. David?” (Laughter) They used to work for me as shoe salesmen. And then the job I had, you know, like I told you before, I was selling boxes and bags to retail stores. Which was—at first, it was a hell of a job. I tell you, you knock on doors, “I’m selling boxes and bags.” He’s got boxes and bags. He’ll see me next year, see me next month, you know. It was a rough job ’til you get into it, you know. But then, once you get started, it’s a good job.

KOTYNSKI: Margo, did you have a typical motherly role in your marriage and in raising your kids? I mean, were you like a housewife?

M. DAVID: I was a housewife staying home with the kids, yes.

DAVID: But without her—I worked, you know, so hard. I left in the morning before they woke up. Came home when they were in bed, you know. The only time they saw me was during the weekend. During the week, all they saw, all the upbringing, was her.

M. DAVID: And even the weekends, you had one day off, maybe. Sometimes, not always.

DAVID: So the greatness of our—did you show our kids?

M. DAVID: Well, I have one recent picture. They’re big already.

PIEHLER: You said one is a doctor?

M. DAVID: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And the other one is what?

DAVID: She’s in charge of a lawyer’s office of seventeen lawyers.

PIEHLER: So she’s an administrator.

DAVID: Mm hmm. So they all don’t need me.

PIEHLER: And they both went to college? Well, obviously the doctor went to college.

M. DAVID: Oh, I don’t even have a picture of the kids! These are my grandkids. (Laughter) She’s already in her second year of college.

KOTYNSKI: Yeah. I think you told me that.

PIEHLER: Oh wow. Yeah, the grandkids are big.

M. DAVID: Yeah, they're big already.

DAVID: I think I saw that picture.

M. DAVID: We don't have a picture of our kids. That's terrible.

PIEHLER: Well I saw some in the big [collage].

M. DAVID: Oh, I know, in the big picture. But those are old.

PIEHLER: I'm curious: how much—you mentioned some of this was new to you—some of the papers and some of the stories. Some of the stories you've heard before, but some of them are new.

M. DAVID: Yeah, I didn't see some of these things. The stories—most of them I've heard.

PIEHLER: Most of them, but were there any you haven't heard?

M. DAVID: Well, there are little tidbits here and there that I haven't heard before.

PIEHLER: ... It sounded like you did talk about the war when you came back—'cause a lot of veterans never do.

DAVID: Well, you know, after awhile you want to forget, you know. You can't say, "I had [a] great accomplishment during this war."

PIEHLER: I'm curious—you didn't—and I should have followed it up earlier. You mentioned at the Battle of the Bulge you saved this poor German Jewish soldier whom they were convinced was one of those crazy Nazi infiltrators. What were you doing in the Battle of the Bulge, because things got a little hairy with the lines?

DAVID: Well, my job didn't change. I was still-during the Battle of the Bulge, we were stuck there. So how often can you go to the same Gestapo headquarters? Because for me there was really not much to do, other than go into a bar and shut up these GIs, you know. But [at] the Battle of the Bulge, thank God, we weren't overrun.

PIEHLER: So you weren't at a part that was overrun, where you were all ...

DAVID: Actually, very few GIs were overrun by this German thing.

PIEHLER: Yeah, I mean, compared to the whole line. But still, you were fortunate not to be in one of the parts of the line that got overrun.

DAVID: I made sure of it.

M. DAVID: You come out as a real hero. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: You mentioned the case where the jeep got destroyed by shrapnel. Were there any other close calls? Any close calls with land mines?

DAVID: Not really.

PIEHLER: No small arms fire?

DAVID: Every once in awhile. I mean, when I went to follow the infantry and I got ... too close to small arm fires, my legs stopped.

KOTYNSKI: Did you ever think about the fact that you could lose your life when you went over there or were you pretty confident that you'd come back?

DAVID: Well, you've got to think of that, you know. But what I was most afraid of [was] being captured. That was really my worst fear, you know, being a Jew, and an American, and born in Germany, in the hand of the Nazis. That would have been a wonderful situation.

PIEHLER: Your dog tag said "Hebrew." Did you ...

DAVID: I took that off.

PIEHLER: You took it off? You did take the Hebrew off. Did you think, "What would I do if this was to develop?"

DAVID: Not too much.

PIEHLER: You didn't have like a plan besides not having Hebrew on it?

DAVID: I wouldn't have said, "Hey, I'm a German Jew." I sure as hell wouldn't have said that.

M. DAVID: You still got your dog tags some place.

DAVID: Yeah. They're hanging next to my ties. (Laughter)

KOTYNSKI: Well, looking back on all this, do you feel like you have any regrets of the way that you were in the war, and just the places you went, and everything?

DAVID: Well, the places you go is not your decision. You follow the army wherever they go. And the greatest pleasure I had in ... the army, back then when the war was over, [was to] go to Germany and arrest the SS and the Gestapo. That was my greatest ... joy. That's for sure.

PIEHLER: Were any of the SS or Gestapo arrogant in defeat?

DAVID: None.

PIEHLER: You never had any arrogant SS?

DAVID: No, because they saw the pistol in my hand.

PIEHLER: So you never had that. Because I've been told by some there were still some.

DAVID: I'm sure there were, but not that said, "Oh, here comes a officer of the United States Army arresting me." And they had enough brains not to do something against me. I would've killed them there, right there and then. And with pleasure.

PIEHLER: What about—when you were a civilian, where were you staying in Germany? I mean, where would you live? Would you still live in army—I guess, where did you actually ...

DAVID: I stayed in homes throughout the civilians—I stayed in their house.

PIEHLER: That must have felt weird at times.

DAVID: It felt weird, but I said, "I'm going to stay in the best places I can stay. I'm not going to stay in the army barracks as a civilian." And, you know, as a civilian I looked the same as I was in the army, because I wore civilian clothes, you know. I don't know where the hell I got the civilian [clothes]. I must have bought it in Germany some place.

KOTYNSKI: Did you stay with Communists when you were living in Germany?

DAVID: Well, I stayed in the best place I could find, you know.

KOTYNSKI: So you could just go in and say, "I need to stay here."

DAVID: Yeah, I could do that. But I didn't do it very often. Most of the time, I went in a nice hotel if we could find one, you know.

KOTYNSKI: Right.

PIEHLER: Did it surprise you how well Germany has done since the war, in terms of rebuilding? Because Germany was ...

DAVID: Yeah, I mean, it's unbelievable. But it is not surprising, because the Germans are the Germans, you know. They do everything 100%. How to kill six million Jews, how to build a shopping center, how to do business, you know. Everything's going *eins, zwei, drei*, and they do it, you know. So I'm not that surprised, other than amazed as to how much we all kiss their behind. She's through. (Laughs—referring to Kotynski)

KOTYNSKI: Oh, I was thinking what else to ask.

PIEHLER: Well, is there anything we forgot to ask you or any stories that you haven't told?

DAVID: I told you enough stories. (Laughter) Well, Margo's father, you know, he was a real [rabbi]. Dresden was a big Jewish congregation where he was the rabbi, you know.

PIEHLER: Well, actually, we could ask Margo, if you don't mind, we could ask you a few questions maybe as part of a preliminary interview. And you don't have to. You can stop, too.... I guess, one question as relates—where were you born?

M. DAVID: I was born in Dresden.

PIEHLER: So you were born in Dresden. And what year, if you don't mind?

M. DAVID: 1920.

PIEHLER: 1920. So the same as him.

DAVID: I told you, I married an older woman.

M. DAVID: Two months—claim to fame.

PIEHLER: Oh wow. I would've said you were younger by a lot.

DAVID: ... The other day, when she went to the doctor, and he almost fell over his chair when he said, "How old are you?" And she said, "Eighty."

PIEHLER: So you were born in 1920 in Dresden and your father was a rabbi.

M. DAVID: My father was a rabbi and he was a brand new rabbi at the time that I was born. And I was there 'til I left—a little later than he did. I left in the spring of '39.

PIEHLER: Oh, you left very late.

M. DAVID: Very late.

PIEHLER: Our next-door neighbor is from Dresden.

M. DAVID: Oh really? No kidding.

PIEHLER: Yes. Trudie Dryer—that's her name. Well, I don't know what her name was.... What a coincidence.

M. DAVID: Oh, is that her married name?

PIEHLER: Yeah. But she grew up in Dresden.

M. DAVID: No kidding.

PIEHLER: Oh wow.... You never know—it's a small world.

M. DAVID: That's right.

PIEHLER: But—and your mother was ...

M. DAVID: My mother was born in Frankfurt, and my father was born in Southern Germany, also, in a little town. Yeah. But he left home when he was ten years old, because there was no high school, even. It was such a small town that there was no high school there.

PIEHLER: Was it ... in Bavaria?

M. DAVID: No. In—what's the name of the state?

DAVID: It wasn't Hessen.

M. DAVID: No. But it's not far from Heidelberg and in that area. And I used to know the name of the state, but I can't remember. So he left home when he was ten years old, because there was no high school in this town. And then he went to Karlsruhe. Didn't you say ...

PIEHLER: Yes, where my mother grew up.

M. DAVID: Yeah. He went to live with his older sister, who was quite a lot older and already married and already had children. And he lived with her through his high school years. And then he went to Breslau, which is now part of Poland.

DAVID: Not anymore.

M. DAVID: Hmm?

DAVID: Not anymore.

M. DAVID: Yes it is. And he went to college there and then to rabbinical school. And then his first job was in Brumberg, which is also Polish now. And as a matter of fact, it became Polish already after the First World War. And my mother was highly pregnant with me at the time. They were newly—I mean, fairly newly married. But that was his first position. But he said, "No child of mine is going to be born in Poland." (Laughter) And he got the job and the position in Dresden. I mean, it happened to be open. And then he moved to Dresden. And three weeks later I was born, which was really a lucky thing because I would've been on the Polish quota. Which ...

PIEHLER: There was no quota.

M. DAVID: There was no quota. And I don't think I could've left. Of course, my parents wouldn't have left either, then. So, anyway, it was a lucky thing.

DAVID: But she had problems in England, too....

M. DAVID: So anyway, I was able to go to England then.

PIEHLER: But ... it sounds like your father was very German in that sense.

M. DAVID: Oh, he was very German.... He was also in First World War. He was, well, he was in the infantry, I think. And then he became a chaplain.

PIEHLER: During the war itself?

M. DAVID: During the war. And then he was, of course, an officer as a chaplain. So ... this was another lucky thing. My father, being a minister, was able to come to the United States without a quota number.

DAVID: Margo, first he went to England.

M. DAVID: Yeah, well he had to go to England for a year because his papers were not ready. But he was able to go to England.

KOTYNSKI: What year was that that he went to England?

M. DAVID: That was in '39.

KOTYNSKI: '39.

M. DAVID: They could've gone earlier, but I had no place to go yet. It was like January, February. I had nowhere to go yet. And then an English family took me in as their maid. That was a way for girls to get out.

PIEHLER: Were they a Jewish family?

M. DAVID: No, they were not Jewish.

PIEHLER: They were Gentile.

M. DAVID: Gentile, but proudly British.

PIEHLER: Like they really wanted a maid, in other words.

M. DAVID: Yeah. They could've never afforded a regular maid.

PIEHLER: So this was the way they were going to get it.

M. DAVID: This was their way. But they were also helping someone out, you know.

PIEHLER: So there was a sense that there was some philanthropy. They weren't just doing it for a maid. But you were the maid.

M. DAVID: And they were very nice to me. I shared a bedroom with a daughter—a bed, even. I had never seen a double bed before, because in Germany everybody has twin beds. Well, maybe not anymore. I don't know.

PIEHLER: No, it's still [like that]. When we were in Prague, we got two double beds. And we kind of asked. (Laughter)

M. DAVID: Yeah. If you were in Prague, you were very close to Dresden, because it's just across the border, really.

PIEHLER: Yeah. And then I remember we talked to a British couple. This is sort of funny—it's sort of odd that there were double beds in Prague. And they kind of looked at us like we were a little too—I don't know. It was just that they thought this was perfectly normal. Yeah, but you were saying?

M. DAVID: So they were very, very good to me—these people, really. I must say. But I was alone all day long. Alone with a dog, and I happen to be afraid of dogs. But they were working. They were not even middle class people, I would say. He was Mr. Anderson. [He] was a foreman in—what was it? What do you call this? Anyway, he was a foreman in some factory. And the son was also working there. And the daughter was a secretary to someone. And the woman was actually a teacher. But at that time, she was a secretary somewhere. But they were nice to me—very good to me. And I stayed there a year.... Everyone I knew. And I was still homesick at that time. My parents were living in the south of England, in Brighton. I don't know if you know anything about Brighton. And they were sort of taken care of by a Jewish committee there or refugee committee, whatever. And my brothers were only fifteen at the time.... My brothers are twins. So they stayed together no matter what. But they went on a farm somewhere in the country. And they had a pretty miserable time there. Then they changed farms and then it got to be a little better. Well anyway, they couldn't leave. In the meantime, the war started and there was a shipping shortage and whatever. And it was finally the beginning of '40 that they were able to leave. And we're all going to the Consulate, me included. And whilst we were there, my father was being told that I cannot come along because I was not ...

DAVID: sixteen.

M. DAVID: I was sixteen. No, I was eighteen, actually. And children over eighteen cannot go on a non-quota visa.

DAVID: Her whole family goes to the United States.

M. DAVID: Yeah, and I had to stay behind.

PIEHLER: How long did you stay behind for?

M. DAVID: Well, actually, once your parents are in the United States and you're a minor, you can follow in about three months, ordinarily. But I could not. I had so many visas that my parents were able to send me. I couldn't get on a ship. I mean, the war had started in the meantime, and there was no ship. Finally, in the end of 1942, I was able to get on an Egyptian passenger boat, because Egypt at the time was still a British territory or whatever you call this. And this was the last voyage that ship made once it came to the United States. It was being converted into a troop ship. And we were on that ocean about three weeks. And it was warm one day and cold the next day. And it was just zigzagging around.

DAVID: But you had a ball dancing with Egyptian officers!

M. DAVID: I had a ball. No, no, you're telling this wrong. (Laughter) On this ship, there were a few girls or young kids like me, whose parents were already over here, and then a few elderly people. But on ... one deck was British sea—I don't know what you call them. Seamen, or merchant marines.

PIEHLER: Merchant marines.

M. DAVID: Merchant marines. And the other deck was American Sailors going home on furlough. And I had a ball on the ship. This is how teenagers are, you know. You just don't worry.

PIEHLER: Well, you were one of the few available women. I mean, it's limited.

M. DAVID: Oh yeah. Right. And we all had a good time. And the depth charges would go off and it sounded like torpedoes, you know. I don't know—we were so careless. (Laughter) So dumb, really.

PIEHLER: So you would leave lights on occasionally? You know, 'cause you're not supposed to.

M. DAVID: There were no lights at night.

PIEHLER: So you were careful about that.

M. DAVID: Yeah. Oh yeah.

DAVID: Sure, or you get killed.

M. DAVID: Yes.

PIEHLER: With the depth charges going off, what would ...

M. DAVID: They were to see if there were submarines in the area.

PIEHLER: You were part of a convoy?

M. DAVID: Oh! You couldn't even see the last ship. There were so many destroyers, and whatever they had.

PIEHLER: Was any ships in your convoy actually sunk? Were you attacked at all?

M. DAVID: No.

PIEHLER: You weren't attacked at all?

M. DAVID: No. Thank God, no. But I would have probably sunk laughing. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So that part sounds like it was really ...

M. DAVID: I mean, it just really shows you how dumb teenagers are. I mean, they just don't worry about things.

PIEHLER: Now, you didn't have as much fun in England? Cause it sounded like that was more ...

M. DAVID: Well, you know, in England—let me see. We did have a curfew, I think. Because, you know, until they straightened out who was a German and who was a Jewish German—it took them along time. And I mean, the guys, the men, were interned. And some were sent to Canada, some to Australia.

DAVID: Some got sent to Australia, yeah.

M. DAVID: And they were only women at home, you know. And then they started releasing them. And then, there were the bombings.

PIEHLER: So you were in a community that was bombed?

M. DAVID: Oh yeah. I lived in London.

PIEHLER: Oh, okay ...

M. DAVID: And I was working in a factory. And the factory—the whole factory—I was sewing corsets. You know, every time you sewed a little thing. It was the same thing, day in, day out. But that was after I left this family I was with. This was already a big improvement because I ...

DAVID: But they were really, really mad at you for leaving.

M. DAVID: Oh yeah. This family was mad at me for leaving. I told them I was leaving for the United States, which I thought I was. And then I never went back. And I remembered I had left

my gas mask with them. And they had to send it to me. And they were furious with me for leaving. So, but you know, you get to the point [that] you look out for yourself. I had so many people I knew in London. This place where I stayed with this family was in Essex. You know, in the state of Essex? And I had one afternoon off a week and I always went to London. It was not far. But still, it was out in the country. And then ... all of a sudden jobs opened, you know, to these refugee girls, because the British girls got drafted in the army or into jobs vacated by guys. And so all of a sudden, there were jobs for us available. But it was factory jobs, you know. And then later on they got a little better. Well, anyway, I was there 'til the end of '42. And then I came over here, having a good time.

KOTYNSKI: So you enjoyed sewing corsets more than being a maid?

M. DAVID: Well, I was surrounded by friends. And even working—you know, I got the job through other people I knew.

PIEHLER: It also sounds like you had some dates.

DAVID: She had some dates. And I know the guy who she had dates with!

PIEHLER: Really?

DAVID: Yeah. He lived here in Chicago. (Laughter)

M. DAVID: Yeah. Well, I actually lived with his relatives. And so I met him there—I didn't know him before. And, yeah, I dated him the whole time I was in England. And then he came here after the war and I took one look at him, and I couldn't stand him anymore. (Laughter) And it was a good thing. He's not such a great guy.

KOTYNSKI: Was he Jewish?

M. DAVID: Yeah, he's Jewish. And he's an odd guy, let's put it this way.

DAVID: I agree with that! (Laughter)

PIEHLER: When you were in Britain, did you go to services at all?

M. DAVID: No, I didn't. On the High Holidays, by that time I lived with a family that were friends of my parents. I lived with them already before my parents left. They got me settled. And so they could leave without worrying about me too much. And they went to High Holiday services. And it was a very Orthodox service. I mean, it was so strange to me what went on there that I never went again. I don't think they went again, either.... We had no money, you know, very poorly off. And I made some money in this factory, but I'm sure it was [not much]. And then I had to pay those people for staying there. There was very little. And, no, I didn't go to services.

PIEHLER: What was your closest experience with the blitz, with the bombing? Do you remember any particularly close calls?

M. DAVID: Oh, I remember two incidents. The people I lived with—the lady of the house was maybe fifteen years older than me. But she was fairly young. She was married to an older man. Well, she had a little boy. He was maybe six at the time. And she changed off taking him to school with another lady who had a boy his age. And one morning she came back and she said, “Their house is gone. Their whole family is gone.” I mean, their house was flattened with a bomb. And then, another incident was [at] one of the places I worked. They always had the air raid alarms. And we ran down to some basement or whatever. And the house next door to where we were working was flattened. I mean, there’s a hole, you know. It’s all that was left. And those are the only really two. And then, the night I left, ... I had to go in the dark. You know, everything took place in the dark. I had a taxi, I guess. I don’t know anymore. And they took me to where the ship was docked. And before I got on the ship, I had three telegrams. One day we were leaving from Glasgow, the next day from Liverpool, and the third day some other place. And finally, they’d leave from Liverpool. So I went to the station, the train station that took me to Liverpool. And you could hear the shrapnel on the roof of the train the whole time.

KOTYNSKI: Wow.

M. DAVID: So, and then we got on the ship. And they didn’t leave for about three days, during which I was very sick. (Laughter) You know how a ship goes when it’s standing still.

DAVID: I could look at a ship [and] I get seasick.

KOTYNSKI: You said you just were pretty carefree when you were on the boat, not very fearful. Were you the same way when you lived in London, about the bombings? Were you just pretty carefree?

M. DAVID: No. Well, you know, you get used to living with this kind of thing. We had a shelter in the garden. It was separate from the house. It was a concrete thing, you know, with little holes for air and stuff. And as soon as the air raid sirens came on, we went into that thing. And we had mattresses in there, and we all ... slept in there, or tried to sleep. And I shared a room with a girlfriend of mine. And after awhile we just didn’t even go in the shelter anymore. You just got so sick and tired of this running back and forth. So, you don’t get carefree, but you ... get used to situations and make the best of it. And one time, we were in the house, just she and I. Everybody else was in the shelter. And they had sort of a skylight, you know, glass. And we stood there and the shrapnel broke the glass. And we just stood there and laughed hysterically. I mean, you know, because you know how you get when you’re hysterical and you kind of laugh. So that’s what we did.... Yeah, the glass broke all over us. But we didn’t get hurt.

KOTYNSKI: So how did you feel about coming to the U.S.?

M. DAVID: Well, my parents, as a matter of fact, they lived on the West Coast at the time, in Olympia, Washington.

PIEHLER: Wow.

M. DAVID: Beautiful place.

PIEHLER: Yeah, but that's very different.

M. DAVID: What a change.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

DAVID: That's what I was going to tell you. They were supposed to go to Milwaukee.

M. DAVID: Oh yeah.... Oh, in order for ministers—I think it went for all ministers—I don't know if that still holds true today. I don't know. Anyway, they're in that—yeah, there are many people who need to have quota numbers, I supposed, but I don't know. So, in order to get here, the minister had to prove that he has a job when he got here. Which wasn't such a big deal, because, you know, you just had to write to the Committee here in Chicago or wherever, and they found something, you know. So my father got a job in Wausau, Wisconsin, which did not even have a congregation at the time. But they did make out the papers, and so on and so forth. So when they finally got here, well, this job was not there. But he was here. And then he got a position in Madison, Wisconsin. And my brothers were still school age boys, so they went to high school there. Well anyway, when he came to Madison, Wisconsin, it turned out that ...

-----END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO-----

PIEHLER: ... This continues an interview with Kurt David, ... continuing with Margo David, on August 13, 2000 in Glenwood, Illinois with Kurt Piehler and ...

KOTYNSKI: Amy Kotynski.

PIEHLER: And ... I'll ask you also to hold your thought, but since were doing a tape intro, could you give us your maiden name?

M. DAVID: My maiden name is Wolf.

PIEHLER: Wolf?

M. DAVID: W-o-l-f.

PIEHLER: And your father's name was Rabbi ...

M. DAVID: Albert Wolf.

PIEHLER: And your mother's?

M. DAVID: Emmy Wolf, ... because my parents are somehow related. I don't know if they were second or third cousins. I don't really remember and ... there's no way to find out.

PIEHLER: But you were in the middle of telling a story, and ... the tape ran out?

M. DAVID: What story did I tell you? (Laughter)

PIEHLER: About Madison—and there was another famous rabbi.

KOTYNSKI: Zwarsensky.

M. DAVID: Right.... Zwarsensky. He had come because my father was so late in getting there. They had hired him in the meantime. So when my father came there—and Rabbi Zwarsensky was a bachelor. He was a young guy yet. And when my father came there, the congregation that was supposed to hire him split up because they figured, "Here's a man with a wife and three children," and my grandmother was supposed to come, and this young bachelor who can somehow make it—somewhere, somehow. And they split up. Well, my father was there about a year, I believe. My brothers went to high school there. And then, we knew a Mr. Schocken. I don't know if you've heard of the Schocken book company?

PIEHLER: Oh yes.

M. DAVID: Well, one of the Schocken brothers had lived in Dresden. But he had an American wife who came from Seattle. So my father got in touch with this Mr. Schocken and told him his sad story. And Mr. Schocken got him a position in Olympia, Washington. Olympia and Aberdeen, Washington. He lived in Olympia, but he changed off weekends going—one weekend he stayed home, and the next weekend he went to Aberdeen.

DAVID: Traveling priest. (Laughter)

M. DAVID: Yeah, traveling priest is right. So anyway, he taught Sunday school or whatever they call it—religious school—in all the little towns around there who had maybe two or three families. And they had a little house there, which they rented [for], I remember, \$35 a month. It was a nice little house.

KOTYNSKI: Wow. Not bad.

M. DAVID: And they loved it out there. But he was not happy with his [job]. He had not enough to do.

DAVID: He had a big congregation in Dresden. Here he had nothing.

M. DAVID: Yeah. I mean, he liked it, and the people were lovely and all that. There were eighteen families. Eighteen Jewish families there. And some of whom didn't come, and some of

whom were much more Orthodox. Like, I remember there was one man who went to Seattle to buy kosher meat. And, of course, my parents had to keep a kosher house. And, you know, little things—on the High Holidays he always went to Aberdeen because my father was not Orthodox enough for them or even religious—whatever—traditional enough for them. So lots of things that, you know, didn't agree with them too well.

PIEHLER: How big was your father's congregation in Dresden?

M. DAVID: Oh, there were about 5,000 Jews. They didn't all belong to this congregation, because some were Orthodox and they had their own little, you know, branches or whatever.

DAVID: But he was the chief rabbi over all of them.

M. DAVID: Yeah.

PIEHLER: So this was a real, I mean, in a sense, demotion.

M. DAVID: Oh yeah. But he was happy enough to have it, you know. They paid him—there were some rather well-to-do Jews there. And Olympia being the capital of Washington, there was—he had all kinds of contacts, you know.... And in the meantime, of course, I was there, you know. I went straight out to Olympia when I arrived here. Not straight out, I stayed with some people for two weeks, or something like that.

KOTYNSKI: In New York, or something?

M. DAVID: In New York. I actually arrived in New Jersey. In Hoboken, New Jersey. So I never saw the Statue of Liberty. I still haven't seen it! (Laughter) So, what was I saying?

KOTYNSKI: You went to Olympia.

M. DAVID: Oh, yeah. So one day—this was already in '45, the beginning of '45—the telephone rang and I picked it up. I remember exactly. It was a wall phone, one of these old fashioned things, you know. And it was a Mr. Glaser from Chicago. And he called my father. Well, they offered him a job here in Chicago. It was a completely German Jewish congregation, and all refugees who had come here over the years. And for the high holidays in 1945, we were already in Chicago. And he preached in German on, I don't know. I think Saturday mornings he preached in German, Friday nights in English. And you got to remember, he did not know a word of English when he [arrived in America]. He also knew Latin and Greek and Hebrew and Aramaic and you name it, but no English. He knew some French. And so one of the reasons we didn't speak German in my parents' home was he needed to practice English. I mean, he wasn't going to speak any German because he needed to learn English.

PIEHLER: Well, particularly [because] he has to give the sermon.

M. DAVID: Right. Especially there in Olympia. I mean, they spoke no German. So, maybe Yiddish, and that he didn't know. So, well, he accepted the job. And my mother was crying bitter tears. She did not want to leave there.

PIEHLER: Really? She didn't want to leave Olympia?

DAVID: No! She loved the house and her neighborhood.

M. DAVID: She loved the house and she loved the area. Well, it's beautiful out there.

DAVID: ... The first congregation—it was in Hyde Park—called the Shotwell Hall. If you're in Chicago, you know where the Shotwell Hall is. That's where the first services were held.

M. DAVID: Yeah, well, the first and the last. Well, he unfortunately died five years later already. Well, ... when did he die? In '51, yeah, the end of '51. So he wasn't there all that long. But he had lots of problems there, too, but he was busy. He was very busy. And it was a challenging job. The congregation had little money. Sometimes he didn't get paid on time, and when he did it was hardly enough. So, but I was working. My brothers were going to college, but also had part-time jobs. And so we made do ...

PIEHLER: But culturally he must have been, in some ways, more comfortable because he could preach a sermon in German, which ...

M. DAVID: Oh yes, he was. Exactly. He could preach—he did very well in English, too. But you could tell, you know, when he—if he couldn't think of a word in German, twenty other words came to his mind that he could have used. When he spoke English, you could tell he kind of stopped and then thought of what word, you know, he could use that would fit right. So it was difficult. And there were fights going on on the board of the temple. Some people wanted it a little more traditional and some people wanted it a little more liberal. And he was what they called in Germany a liberal ...

DAVID: Liberal *rabbinate*.

M. DAVID: Liberal rabbi, yes. So, leaning very much to the Reform.... Privately he always leaned towards Reform.

PIEHLER: Now did you keep *kashrut* here in Chicago?

M. DAVID: You know, we already stopped in Germany, because the last few years you could not legally buy kosher meat anymore. You could get it, you know, on the black market or whatever. That he wouldn't do.

DAVID: I remember a sermon.... He was talking about kosher and *treif*. You know what that means? Kosher is a strictly Jewish way of eating meals.

M. DAVID: Of killing. Killing meat ...

DAVID: And I'll remember that sermon forever. He said, "The only reason you all want me to eat kosher is so you all can eat *treif*." (Laughter) And that's the truth.

M. DAVID: The last year or two that we were in Germany, ... that was in the days when people thought eating meat was essential, you know. He said, "I got three growing children. They got to grow up healthy." And he bought un-kosher meat.

PIEHLER: But, of course, rabbinically, for life you can always trump almost any rule in the law of the Torah.

M. DAVID: Right, right. So and then, of course, in Olympia they expected him to have it, because they knew exactly what kind of meat my mother ordered from this guy who brought it from Seattle. And here in Chicago I don't think we kept a kosher house anymore. I don't think so.

DAVID: You lived with him, not me.

M. DAVID: Hmm?

DAVID: You lived with him, not me.

M. DAVID: Yeah. No, I don't think, but I'm not sure.... I mean, we ate no pork, and that's for sure. I still don't buy pork, but it's more a habit than anything else.

DAVID: But we do eat for breakfast when we're out, these little things there next to the eggs. (Laughter)

M. DAVID: When we're out. When we're out.

PIEHLER: ... We keep a kosher household.

M. DAVID: You do?

PIEHLER: Yeah.... So Susan thinks it's my German, legalistic mind cause I'm really into it. I've actually become more strict than she is in a lot of areas.

M. DAVID: Really? Well, that happens a great deal. Yeah.

PIEHLER: ... Do you think your father would have wished he could've—I mean it's obvious he can't go back in time—but do you think he really wished he could've had his old life back?

DAVID: And go back to Germany?

PIEHLER: No, but I mean, ... he's an American. But it sounded like it was very hard transition for him.

M. DAVID: It was a hard transition for him. He probably would have liked a bigger ... congregation. Cause this congregation was ...

PIEHLER: Even in Chicago, was ...

M. DAVID: In Chicago it was maybe 300 members, at best. Not even. And this quibbling that went around. I mean, some people wanted, like I said before, more traditional, some people more modern. And there was always a struggle. They were trying—the board members—were trying to outdo each other. “I’m from there, and I’m used to this.” It was pretty bad at times.

PIEHLER: So you really had all these people coming together, even though it was German Jews who came from very different parts of Germany.

DAVID: Different congregations.

M. DAVID: Right. And different backgrounds. Yeah, it was hard.

DAVID: We were always sitting behind some guy by the name of Metzger. Everything my father-in-law said, he didn’t like. And [he was] constantly going like this [shaking his head]. He’s lucky I didn’t hit him over the head.

M. DAVID: Yeah, you could tell he was shaking his head. On High Holidays we always sat behind him. And then, unfortunately, the congregation started picking up more people and getting some place. And then, of course, he got very sick and died.

PIEHLER: And the congregation today?

M. DAVID: Well, this congregation we belong to, ... it evolved out of that. But there’s hardly anybody left.

DAVID: No more German Jews, Margo. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: When did it become sort of, in a sense, more diverse—no longer just this German Jewish congregation?

DAVID: When we moved out here.

M. DAVID: Yeah, when we moved out here.

PIEHLER: Well, when did the congregation move?

M. DAVID: Well even when we moved to South Shore first ...

DAVID: By 87th Street.

M. DAVID: And we had several rabbis. Sometimes part-time rabbis, because they still didn't have any money. Then after my father died, they had even less money, because the congregation practically fell apart. There was another German Jewish congregation on the south side who did much better than we did. And some people went there, and some of their people came to us. It was difficult. So, but eventually, then, we moved out here. But it still started out with the Hyde Park liberal congregation and now it's, as you put down, Temple B'nai Yehuda Beth Shalom. So, but ... the older people, like my father's generation, they're not alive anymore. My father would be ...

DAVID: We're the older generation!

M. DAVID: We're the older generation! That's right. (Laughter) Much older. So there's a few people our age or a little younger.

PIEHLER: What was it like to be a rabbi's daughter? Well, clergy—I mean it goes beyond Protestant minister's daughters. What is it like to be a clergy's and a rabbi's daughter? And I guess you sort of have a unique perspective, 'cause you were a rabbi's daughter in Germany—Dresden, and then a rabbi's daughter here.

M. DAVID: Yeah. It was different there because we were more—my brothers and I—were more in the limelight than—rabbis' kids here are not so—I don't know. It's different. They're more casual about this whole thing here.

PIEHLER: Whereas in Germany, it was ...

M. DAVID: Well, first of all, we lived next door to the temple. There was a big apartment building that belonged to the congregation. And the apartment went with the job. And we were always being seen and heard. And we had a good life, I mean, we really did. And here, like our rabbi's kids—well, now they're all living out of town—and our rabbi's retired. Now we got a new one. But even her kids, they go off to school. And even when they're in school, they're just part of the whole society more than we were. And even though we went to public school. But I remember, in religious school, teachers were always catering to me and a little bit more, because my father was their boss. (Laughter) And it was a little different. And then, of course, on the Sabbath we were expected to stick around more than [others]. I remember getting a little older, like teenager, and I had friends that lived far away. So I had to take a streetcar. Well, I wasn't allowed to take it, you know. But then later on, I remember my father saying, "Oh, here. Get on the streetcar and go."

PIEHLER: Now you weren't allowed because—was it a law, I mean the legal reason? Or was it just that it didn't seem right?

M. DAVID: Well, it didn't seem right. It didn't seem right. And Saturday afternoons we used to go for a walk with my parents. And I remember sometimes we'd see a bunch of kids coming—Jewish kids. And when they saw my father, they'd turn around and go the other way. (Laughter) And here we were, you know. So, but when we got a little older, this all changed because even in school I was not allowed. You know, and we had school on Saturday mornings.

And you had to write. Well, the first few years ... I sat there and I couldn't write [not because] my father was so Orthodox or even traditional, but it was expected, you know.

PIEHLER: So you did keep quite a bit of law.

M. DAVID: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Because not writing on the Shabbat ...

M. DAVID: But then, I made such a fuss, my father wrote a letter to the school: "She's allowed to write." And I started writing. I mean, either I was going to go to school or I wasn't, you know. This seemed—to him, I know, this must have seemed very silly. But there were certain things that were expected of him by the congregation. And maybe it was [that] he also had an Orthodox upbringing as long as he was home. I never knew his parents, because my grandfather died already before I was born. My grandmother died when I was one year old. So I didn't know them. But they were Orthodox. And ... then he went to live with his sister in Karlsruhe. And she was—I know she was Orthodox. And her kids, who now live in South Africa, I know they're Orthodox. So he really has had an Orthodox background. But the rabbinical school he went to in Breslau—it's got a Polish name now. I forget what it is. And it was a liberal school for liberal rabbis.

PIEHLER: I'm curious—Danzig sort of had a very interesting political history during the interwar years. It was under the League of Nations mandate.

M. DAVID: Oh, Danzig?

PIEHLER: Yeah.

M. DAVID: What's it called now?

PIEHLER: Gdansk.

M. DAVID: Gdansk, right. We were there once.... We went there and from there we went to Lithuania to a seaside resort. It must have been, I don't know. In '35, maybe. And I remember we visited the rabbi there in Danzig.

PIEHLER: Yeah, I'm sorry. I was getting Dresden and Danzig [mixed up]. Yeah, I was ... blurring cities. When did you notice that things were going—I mean, obviously '33 is a turning point, ... but what about before '33?

M. DAVID: Well, even after '33, I did not know what was going on so much because, I mean, our parents knew.... But they tried to bring us up as normal as possible and tried to keep things from us as long as possible. So I ... had a pretty normal 'til, I would say, '35, probably.

PIEHLER: What made '35 the shift?

M. DAVID: Well, things happened. Like we belonged to a sports club.... And we rented a school for our sports activities. And all of a sudden we couldn't do this anymore. The school told us we couldn't use their facilities anymore. And in summer we had an outdoor spot where we had our athletic activities. My brothers and I were very athletic when we were kids. Not anymore. (Laughter) And that was taken away. You know, there were things that happened all along. Now, I was lucky. The school I went to—the high school I went to—we had a very decent principal there.... We graduated at age sixteen, unless we went on to what they called *Abitur*, which was already ... college, really. Well, I was never going to go further than graduation from high school. But, I mean, I stayed there 'til I was finished. But my brothers were refused at their school already before I did.... So things happened. Not everything on one day, but one day, and then two weeks later, and again. And we belonged to all kinds of clubs that all of a sudden we couldn't use the facilities anymore. And, of course, where we lived, on the first floor were apartments in this ... apartment house. And the people were given notice that they had to move out. And there was a Jewish old age home which they just closed up one day. And they all moved in on that first floor. And our house was there, and then there was the synagogue, and there was another building which was the congregational, I mean, the offices and all that. And so there were enough places to use. It wasn't easy, because all these places were needed. But different times—evening activities or when the offices were done—we used their offices. But, you know, these were all things you noticed no matter how much ...

DAVID: It was makeshift?

M. DAVID: Yeah, makeshift. And, of course, the synagogue itself—there was an orchestra, a rather famous orchestra for what they called *Kulturbund*. Culture ...

DAVID: Organization.

M. DAVID: Organization. And they played but they used the synagogue for their playing orchestra. They would play once a month. I mean, we couldn't help noticing all these things. And I fared better than most kids. Like I said, my brothers were thrown out of their school already. God, they were maybe thirteen years old.

KOTYNSKI: So was your family pessimistic or optimistic about your future, when all these things started happening?

M. DAVID: Well, my parents also thought 'til very late that "This thing isn't going to go on like this." And I think it must have been '37, probably 1937, that they realized they'd better start thinking. And I don't know if they did even then.

DAVID: Oh yeah.

M. DAVID: In 1938 when, of course, they blasted the synagogue ...

DAVID: They burned down the synagogue.

M. DAVID: They burned it down. And the caretaker of the synagogue called my father, not a Jewish man, very nice man. I remember his name was Mr. Hoffmann. He loved my brothers and me and we loved him. But I remember. Well, I wasn't even there. I was going to school in Berlin that year. And he called my father and said, "The synagogue is burning." And my father—that was in the middle of the night—and my father got dressed and went downstairs to see what was going on. He never came back up. They were waiting for him, to arrest him. And he was—went to Buchenwald for about four weeks. And I understand he came back very badly beaten, sick, whatever. So I wasn't there, thank God.

DAVID: Wait, tell them the other story about the *Mogen David* on top of the synagogue.

M. DAVID: Oh yeah. There was a *Mogen David* ...

DAVID: That's the Star of David.

KOTYNSKI: Oh, okay.

M. DAVID: The synagogue had—you can see, you know, the top part—well there's a *Mogen David* up there on the top. And a couple of firemen went up there ...

DAVID: German, not Jewish.

M. DAVID: German, not Jewish. [They went up there] the next day and took that *Mogen David* off and hid it all during the war ... to give back to whoever was still there. And now it's on top. They have a little chapel. It used to be a funeral chapel on the cemetery.... And it is now on top of that.

PIEHLER: Mr. Hoffmann, who's the caretaker, whatever happened to him?

M. DAVID: I have no idea.

PIEHLER: But he remained loyal to the congregation.

M. DAVID: Yeah. I have no idea what happened to him. I really don't.

PIEHLER: Cause by '38, I mean, ... the handwriting's on the wall. As a Gentile, he was taking a lot of risks, you know.

M. DAVID: Yes. Yes, he was. He was a nice man.

KOTYNSKI: How did your father only have to stay in Buchenwald for four weeks?

M. DAVID: Well at that time they took people there, and most of them were released.

KOTYNSKI: What year was that?

M. DAVID: That was the end of '38.

KOTYNSKI: Okay.

M. DAVID: Most of them were released after four weeks, six weeks, whatever. But he came home. I read somewhere, I don't remember where I read it, but that he was unrecognizable.

PIEHLER: And you were in Berlin studying?

M. DAVID: ... Well, when I graduated from high school, there ... [were] no Jewish schools in Dresden. There was one created for younger kids, then, because they had all been kicked out of their schools already. But even a grammar school and a high school, because I remember my brothers went there. But they could not find a school for me, you know. Usually when girls at that time—German girls—graduated from high school, unless they went on to college or something, which wasn't that usual in those days, they went to what they called a finishing school. I think they had them here, too. And, well, they tried several places. One finally accepted me. Fancy place. And all of a sudden, they called us up, they're terribly sorry, but they're not allowed to take me! So, you know, some schools and some people and some principals had good intentions. But they just weren't allowed to, and to go against the laws was very risky. So I had a friend who went to Berlin to what they call—I was going to be a nursery school teacher. So she was a nursery school teacher and she went to that school. And I thought to myself, "Hey, this sounds great." (Laughs) And this was a Jewish seminar. And so my parents got in touch with the school, and they accepted me, and I went. It seemed so far away. Berlin is really just [far]. What was it, two hours by car last time we were there? So, but I had to take the train, and it seemed so far away. And I wasn't crazy about leaving home. I never was. But I liked it there. But I wasn't there [long]. I didn't even finish one year because I started there in the spring ... of '38 and in the spring of '39 I already left for England. And I quit a little earlier to spend some time at home yet. And my parents left a month after I did. So that's my story.

PIEHLER: How much of the congregation was able to leave, or left?

M. DAVID: Well, I really don't know. I ...

PIEHLER: Or, I guess, did you ever stay in touch with people from Dresden?

M. DAVID: We're in touch with a few people. Yeah, we're in touch with—this is interesting in itself—there's a man by the name of Henry Meyer. He was a sort of a child prodigy. He played the violin. Well, he was best friend of my brothers. My brothers are three years younger than me. And he's somewhat like that. Well, he was not able to leave Germany. He was in Auschwitz, I guess. I think he was in Auschwitz.

DAVID: Auschwitz. Yeah, he was in Auschwitz.

M. DAVID: But through his music ...

DAVID: He kept alive.

M. DAVID: He stayed alive.... He had a brother and his parents, they all died. But he stayed alive. And he ended up in Paris somewhat after the war. I don't know how he got there, really. And then he came to the United States. And my father got in touch with several people, and they collected some money. And he then went to Julliard School of Music and he became very famous.

DAVID: LaSalle Street Quartet. Very famous chamber music quartet.

M. DAVID: Chamber music quartet. They played somewhat odd music. But he once said to me—we see him about once a year. He teaches here at Ravinia. I don't know if you're familiar with Ravinia. And he teaches a course there. And they were very famous, but they play odd music.

DAVID: Well, let me tell them. We were there and we sat in the front row, okay. And her brother is a son of a gun. He started to laugh, because the music they were playing was really out of this world. And, well, he started to laugh, his twin brother started, his wife started to laugh, Margo and I started to laugh. He saw it, and he started to laugh playing the violin. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: He didn't get upset.

DAVID: No. He came when the concert was over. He came over to us: "I know we play weird music, but that's our style." You know.

M. DAVID: Well, he once said to me, "You know, we could play pretty music that everybody loves to hear. But we wouldn't be famous, because that's what everybody does, you know."

PIEHLER: What's the name of the group again?

DAVID: They don't exist ...

M. DAVID: Well, no, they don't exist anymore. He doesn't even play the violin.

DAVID: He just teaches.

M. DAVID: He teaches at ...

DAVID: In Cincinnati.

M. DAVID: ... in Cincinnati at the Conservatory. And he still teaches, but he can't play anymore. He has arthritis in one of his hands. So we asked him what—he has one other Stradivarius. And I said, "What are you going to do with it?" He said, "Well I'll hold on to it." He's a bachelor, also. "And then I'll donate it to—" I don't know. To who?

KOTYNSKI: Does the name of the group have anything to do with LaSalle downtown?

M. DAVID: No, no, no.

DAVID: Forget about the Street, it was the LaSalle Quartet. I always say LaSalle Street Quartet. It's LaSalle Quartet.

KOTYNSKI: Oh, okay.

M. DAVID: Yeah, LaSalle Quartet. So, and they were quite famous.... So we see him about once a year when he comes to Ravinia in the summer, even though this year he didn't come, or else he didn't get in touch with us. I don't know. We'll have to find out.

PIEHLER: I guess you've been back to Dresden.

M. DAVID: We've been back, well, when was it? About three years ago? I got a letter from Dresden inviting me and my husband and my brothers and their wives to come to Dresden—an invitation by the city, because they were renaming a lot of streets and squares in Dresden, because they all had Russian names. And, you know, ... they wanted to get rid of all this Russian business. And they were naming one square in the name of my father, and another square right nearby in the name of his predecessor. And the grandson of his predecessor is really the one who got all this going. He set the cycle into motion.

PIEHLER: And the grandson, where does he live?

M. DAVID: ... He's a professor, like you. No, but he's in Chapel Hill, [North] Carolina. And he's retired now.

PIEHLER: Do you know his name?

M. DAVID: Henry Lanzberger.

PIEHLER: Oh okay. And he was really the one that pushed Dresden.

DAVID: Yes. He goes back and forth a lot, you know, because of his position. He's in the medical field, you know. He goes to Dresden.

M. DAVID: Yeah.... Well, he's retired now, but when he was still working his school or his university in Dresden had some kind of—I don't know exactly what. And so he got this thing in motion.

DAVID: When he speaks German, I thought he never left. We were there at some decorating—what was it?

M. DAVID: No, we were there for the naming of these squares.

DAVID: And he [gave] the speech. You wouldn't believe in a thousand years that he was an American.

M. DAVID: Words I had never heard before.

DAVID: I stutter around like crazy, but she's much better.

M. DAVID: He's a real educated German, which somehow ... I never spoke. He is quite a guy. Gets on my nerves a little bit sometimes, because he's a real pusher. (Laughter)

DAVID: He thinks he's it. (Laughter)

M. DAVID: But he set this thing in motion, and I'm grateful to him for that.

DAVID: And we had thanked him when the tent was going to be finished building. "If we get tickets or not, we go there," you know. Because, she didn't say, but it helped that we got airplanes to go there, paid for.

M. DAVID: Well, my brothers—one of my brothers—absolutely didn't go. He will not go to Germany. And the other one had just come back from Europe, and he couldn't. He was still working at the time, and he couldn't take off again. So we took my daughter—one of my daughters along, my younger daughter. And she loved it. Dresden, even now, after the horrible bombing, you know, at the end of the war, for which there really was no reason. But I'm not sorry for anybody that died there.

DAVID: No. I remember the first time you came.... We took a taxi from the airport to where we wanted to go. And Margo looked around and said, "God damn it! You lived here for eighteen years, but there was nothing that you could've seen." It was all new.

PIEHLER: It was all new.

DAVID: It was all new buildings.

M. DAVID: It was all new—all new or all very old and blackened. I mean you could still ...

PIEHLER: You could still tell.

M. DAVID: You could still tell.

DAVID: No, the *Altstadt*—you know what the *Altstadt* means? The old city.

PIEHLER: The old city, yeah.

DAVID: The Germans do something that's weird.

M. DAVID: Not the Germans, the Communists.

DAVID: The front of the *Altstadt* looks like, beautiful. You go around the corner, it's all torn down.

M. DAVID: In back.

DAVID: All they did was fix up the outside, so when you pass by there it looks like you see the real thing.

M. DAVID: But now, since the reunification, they're taking over, and it looks much better. We were there again, oh yeah, a couple years [ago]. This must have been five years ago, if not more. Six years, whatever. But we went there again for the groundbreaking ...

DAVID: Of the new synagogue.

M. DAVID: Which was a horrible day. Every time we were there it was November. They always take the ninth of November. And it was pouring, absolutely pouring, the whole time. But still, they put the shovel in the ground.

DAVID: I did.

M. DAVID: Yeah, he did, too. And—oh, I got to tell you something else. When we were there the first time, ... the newspaper sent a woman to our hotel to interview me. And then they asked me would I be willing. And I said, "You know, I kind of had enough," because they dragged us around every day, all day.

DAVID: Some place else.

M. DAVID: Some place else. It was lovely, but we were so exhausted already. I wasn't too crazy about it.... It was the day before we left, I think. Well anyway, she came and she interviewed me, fortunately, in the hotel so I could sit down and relax a little bit. And then she said, "Okay, thank you very much. We will publish it sooner or later." You know. Well, about a month after we came home, I got a letter from somebody. And the address said Christa Hustig and the Dresden address. And I said to Kurt, "Boy, this name sure sounds familiar to me." It was a girl—a lady, an old hag like me—who had gone to school with me. And she read this article. And the caption said: "Rabbi's daughter, Margo Wolf, here in Dresden," or something like that. And she read it and she wrote me a letter.... I remembered her. Then, I got two other letters. From one lady—I must tell you, I never know who I wrote to. She wrote me a very lovely letter, and I answered it, but I did not know [who she was].

DAVID: Had no idea who she was.

M. DAVID: And the third one was—I mentioned the school principal of my school—well, she was his daughter. And she had moved away from Dresden for sometime. Her mother got killed in the bombing. And her father had moved to Switzerland or something. And she wrote me also.

DAVID: All these ladies I took out for lunch when we went to it.

PIEHLER: So you actually did meet them.

M. DAVID: Well, one of them had died in the meantime. And the other two—the one I didn't remember ...

PIEHLER: Had died.

M. DAVID: Had died. But I always wrote her back. I mean, she was ... so grateful for my letters and interested, you know. But she died in the meantime. And the other two I remembered. And, yes, those two and three others they brought along that I went to school with, ... all came to our hotel, and he took them out for lunch. (Laughter) We had really a very nice time with them. But, you know, they were pretty nice. I mean, you know, but nice or not, you have to follow the rules of the land at the time, or else. But I remember the others also. And like I said, he can't believe it, but I had no problems in school.

PIEHLER: 'Cause it sounds like the principal really ...

M. DAVID: He was great.

PIEHLER: He was really bending the rules as much as he could.

M. DAVID: He was. He was. He was.

PIEHLER: Whereas the principal at your brothers' school just followed the line.

DAVID: He was a Nazi.

M. DAVID: They went to a fancy school where—it was a Catholic school, I think, which had nothing to do with this. But he was told: "Jewish kids out," and that was it. They were only, jeppers, thirteen at best. So, anyway, so we were there for the groundbreaking. And they always invited us. We didn't even expect to be invited the second time. The first time because my ...

-----END OF TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE-----

PIEHLER: ... Please, go ahead.

M. DAVID: Okay. So, yeah, we said, "Please make reservations, you know, for a room in the hotel." Quite nice hotel. New, fairly new. And they sent us tickets for all three of us, paid the hotel. Meals were on our own, of course. But the second time, well, she didn't come along the second time. But the second time, same thing. We expected to go on our own and there we were.

DAVID: I didn't send the ticket back. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: How did it feel to be back in Dresden?

M. DAVID: Well, you know, for many years, even before the reunification, I kept saying, "You know, I'd love to go back there just to see it. Get it out of my system. I want to see and that's it." You know, after all, everybody's got just one place where he or she is born, you know. And some people want to see it, and some people don't, you know.

DAVID: Like her brother doesn't want to see anything.

M. DAVID: Well, he doesn't want to go to Germany.

DAVID: Well, he can't go to Dresden without going to Germany!

M. DAVID: Oh, but he did. They did stop by there.

DAVID: Right.

M. DAVID: They went to Prague and around. And they stopped by there. So he was curious enough. But, then—and I didn't really have to go back again. But then ... they invited us again for the groundbreaking. And, well, in this last June they had—what do they call it when they put the first stone down?

DAVID: Groundbreaking.

M. DAVID: No, that's not [it].

KOTYNSKI: Cornerstone.

M. DAVID: Cornerstone, that's right. They sent us a newspaper article for the cornerstone laying.... It's supposed to be built, ready, in 2002. But they're still short of some money.

PIEHLER: [Did] any of the congregation ... survive the war and remain in Dresden? Or is it all a new congregation?

M. DAVID: It's all new with the exception of two people I think, two people.

DAVID: Most of the people who are in Dresden right now are Russian Jews.

M. DAVID: Yeah, mostly.

PIEHLER: Yeah, that's what I've read.

M. DAVID: But there is the—what do you call the ... top board member of the congregation?

DAVID: The president.

M. DAVID: The president, I guess. He is a former resident of Dresden, even though I don't know him. I didn't remember him.

DAVID: How about Guy Arias or something like this?

M. DAVID: Yeah, but he's—I don't know.

DAVID: He was a former resident of Dresden.

M. DAVID: Yeah, right. There are two or three people who survived everything. And I don't know how, really, to tell you the truth.

PIEHLER: And stayed.

M. DAVID: And stayed.

PIEHLER: I mean, others survived ...

M. DAVID: And went away and came back or something. Like this Mr. Kurnik—I think he had left and then came back.

DAVID: When some people went to Israel, they couldn't take the heat, and ... they came back, you know. Not because they wanted to come back, they just couldn't stand the climate in Israel.

M. DAVID: But not there. I don't know anybody that [did that in Dresden].

DAVID: No.

M. DAVID: But, no, there really was nobody other than these two that I know of.

PIEHLER: Now when you were married, earlier, you had mentioned that you had a sort of very traditional household. You raised the kids, which was a lot because your husband was on the road.

M. DAVID: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Did you ever work paid employment outside of the house at all?

M. DAVID: No, not at all, not at all.... I actually started working about twenty years ago now. I worked in the Jewish Community Center ... in the nursery school as an assistant teacher because I have no degree and I can't. At least in Illinois, you're not allowed to teach unless you have a degree. And I liked it. I sort of fell into this. Somebody called me, and I said, "Oh

maybe, maybe not.” Then I thought to myself, “Why should I? I haven’t worked my whole life, why start now?” (Laughter) But I did.

KOTYNSKI: And you were paid to do that?

M. DAVID: Yeah, I was paid. Very little, very little.

DAVID: We finally could eat. (Laughter)

M. DAVID: And I stayed twenty years and loved it. I really liked it.

PIEHLER: Now were you involved in any other organizations?

DAVID: Jewish Sisterhood President.

PIEHLER: Oh, I was just going to ask! So you were active in the Sisterhood?

M. DAVID: I was active in the Sisterhood. I don’t do anything anymore now. I belong to Hadassah. I belong to O.R.T. What else? And C.J.W. But I pay my dues and I don’t involve myself. I’ve done enough work, I think. So, the only thing I do is once a month I drive the senior ladies—or seniors, there’s some men going, too—to their program. They have a program every Tuesday and they have no transportation unless somebody [volunteers]. So there are volunteers who will drive them. That’s all I do. That’s all I want to do. (Laughter) Kurt—does this gentleman remind you of somebody?

DAVID: Frankie.

M. DAVID: No, Danny, my nephew. Every time I look at you: “What’s he doing here?” (Laughter) Frankie, too.

DAVID: Yeah.

KOTYNSKI: Who’s Frankie?

DAVID: Frankie’s the editor of the Star newspaper.

PIEHLER: My wife will be amused to hear that. I know you probably didn’t expect to be interviewed, and we had sort of discussed a later date. And we might still come back.... But is there anything we forgot to ask that you’d like to talk about?

M. DAVID: Oh probably, but I can’t think of it right now. If I think of it, I’ll send it to you.

KOTYNSKI: Yeah, that would be good.

M. DAVID: But you’re welcome to come back any time.

PIEHLER: Well, ... I've really enjoyed it and I think Amy ...

KOTYNSKI: Yeah, definitely. This was so good.

PIEHLER: Is there anything, ... Mr. David, that you would like to add?

DAVID: Call me Kurt, for crying out loud.

PIEHLER: (Laughter) Is there anything, Kurt, you would like to add?

DAVID: You, too. (To Amy Kotynski) I don't want that Mr. David business.

KOTYNSKI: (Laughter) Okay.

DAVID: No. (Laughter)

M. DAVID: That was emphatic.

PIEHLER: Well, I want to just ... ask—I hope you might consider coming down to some of the Celebrate Freedom, particularly on the 22nd and 23rd. On the 22nd we're going to have a program on liberators and liberated. And then we're having Elie Wiesel on the 23rd.

DAVID: That is where?

PIEHLER: At Pigeon Forge, Tennessee.

M. DAVID: (To Amy) Are you going?

KOTYNSKI: Yeah, because it's only an hour away from school. So, yeah. It's right by Knoxville.

PIEHLER: And then you could give Amy a ride home if you drove.

KOTYNSKI: Yeah, there you go!

PIEHLER: She could come back with you and split up the driving. Well, let me thank you again. We really appreciate it.

M. DAVID: Oh, you're welcome.

DAVID: It's interesting for me, too.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

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