

Interviewed by Stephen Berk
Schenectady, New York 1975

Mr. Lowen was a neighbor of Lucille Brown in Schenectady. He speaks of his life in Fuerth before, during and after World War I and his experiences as the Nazi Regime choked Jewish life in the city his family had lived in for generations.

Steven Berk: Let me begin, Mr. Lowen, by telling you the precise nature of what we are doing. I am a professor of Russian History. I teach European History as well, and I also teach a course or two courses in Jewish History. And what I am attempting to do is, through interviewing people like yourself, to reconstruct the life of Jews in Europe in the period before 1939. That is actually as far back into the early part of the 20th century as we can go.

Ernest Lowen: Before 1939?

SB: Before 1939.

EL: Why before 1939? Why not after '39?

SB: The reason for that is, there has been a lot of work that has been done on that period already; that is, Jewish life during the war and, of course, Jewish life in the United States after the war. There are many studies that are being conducted now on that. What people have not been doing is attempting to reconstruct Jewish life in the earlier part of the twentieth century. And what I am going to do is - we take this and we make a transcription of it, we have someone type off the cassette, and we plan on placing [transcriptions of this in the library](#) for students of Jewish history and European history to consult. Because what you can tell us, in many cases, is what we cannot get in books. What people like yourself can tell us - that information is something that we cannot get in books. We want to know how the individual human being was affected by historical events. And we hope that this will be of great importance to our students, and students will consult this material. We have no direct plans now, but at a later date we may want to publish this. Now, it is necessary for us to have some form of written consent by you so that we can make the transcriptions.

EL: A written consent that you use it in the library.

SB: That's your permission to allow us to use it in the library.

EL: Library yes, but I wouldn't want it in the public - newspapers, or...

SB: No, we will not put it in the newspapers. Can we begin by you stating your name and your age?

EL: Ernest Lowen. Over 75.

SB: Can you tell us something about the place where you were born?

EL: Yeah, it is the city of [Fuerth](#) in Bavaria, Germany.

SB: Is that not [Henry Kissinger](#)'s city?

EL: Yeah, it's the same city. He came to Fuerth as a young child. Or, he was born in Fuerth, maybe, but his father came to Fuerth. And was a very pious man. I won't say, you know yourself. It's more important.

SB: I will ask something about that later. Can you tell us something about the city of Fuerth?

EL: Oh, yes, I can. I can answer any questions you can give me, as long as I am able to hear it. Fuerth was a medium size city of about 75,000 people and, maybe, 2000 Jewish persons. [The people lived there](#) for hundreds of years. We had a cemetery in which were stones of 300 years - they were undisturbed for a time of, probably it would be, 150 years. Before, it belonged to the Catholic Church, to the [Archbishop of Bamberg](#); he was the owner. And, see, nearby was another city, like here Scotia, that was [Nuremberg](#), a big city that was a [free city](#). They had no master over them. But Fuerth, itself, was a city similar to Schenectady and they considered that as a matter of course, they were born there, their father was born there, their grandfathers were born there.

SB: Can you tell us something about how the Jews of Fuerth made a living?

EL: Oh, they made a living in all kinds of ways. Very many were wholesalers, some were bankers, some were manufacturers, some were exporters. Then, of course, some were doctors, some were lawyers, some were workers, some were... in everything.

SB: Can you tell us something about your family? What kind of a family were you born into?

EL: My family - I have a family tree that goes back at least 200 years living in Fuerth.

SB: What did your father do? What was his occupation?

EL: My father had a wholesale business in textiles.

SB: Was the family well-to-do?

EL: Oh, I wouldn't say well-to-do, but they made a good living. For example, my grandmother had 18 children and to nourish them - that must have been quite a job and her husband died with 54 years, so it was on her and grown-up children - the oldest was 20 years - to make a living for the others. I hope that answers your questions.

SB: Yes, it does. You say your grandmother had 18 children...

EL: Oh, I would have to look it up - 18 or something like that.

SB: No, that's all right. A very large family. Did most of the family remain in Fuerth?

EL: Yah!

SB: So then you had many cousins, many aunts and uncles living in the city.

EL: Very many, yah.

SB: Can you describe your education?

EL: My education was the middle, just one. At that time, there were 50 children in a class, then maybe one or two went to college, not like nowadays. The people didn't have the money to send their children to college and they didn't have the ambition to either. So I had four year in the first school - what do you call it?

Lucille Brown: Elementary.

EL: Elementary school four years and 6 years in a so-called high school.

SB: [Gymnasium](#).

EL: [Realschule](#) was the name, not gymnasium.

SB: All right.

EL: I've still my last report card here. In coming through with fair grades, I tried to get a job. That was much more difficult than you could imagine from American point of view; very difficult to get a job as an apprentice. You couldn't find any. Nobody wanted you.

SB: An apprentice in what field?

EL: I would have come in any field, but I couldn't get a job.

SB: Did you have any special training in terms of an occupation?

EL: No, I had a thing from school. I had very good marks. We learned everything - chemistry and physics, mathematics, English, and German and... everything.

LB: Were there still guilds of any kind in Fuerth? You say you wanted to become an apprentice - you would become an apprentice to whom?

EL: In a place - in a business.

LB: Oh, I see, that kind of an apprentice.

EL: And then finally I got a job in the neighboring city, but I had to go with the train every day from my hometown and from my living quarters to that other city. And I had to walk 15 to 20 minutes until I came to the office.

SB: Is this the city of Nuremberg?

EL: Yah, Nuremberg. And had to walk 20 minutes till I came to my office.

SB: I'm concerned about your education, if I could just ask you some more questions about that. This was a public school?

EL: Oh, yes.

SB: This was a public school. This was not considered a private school. Your parents did not pay money for this?

EL: Yah, that I don't know. I think it was you didn't have to pay anything. I don't think so.

SB: And this was a school in which there were Jewish and non-Jewish boys.

EL: Everything mixed up, yeah.

SB: Were there boys and girls in the school? In the class?

EL: No girls.

SB: Just boys.

EL: The girls were something for itself all the time. Later on, if we come to it, I will tell you - girls, they was something strange. You had nothing to do with girls until you went to the dancing class, and there you had nothing to do with them either - only to dance. Oh, that is a story for itself, if you want to hear about that later on.

SB: Did your family provide for you any type of Jewish education?

EL: Yah, we had in school religious hour - lessons - no? That was a Jewish teacher. But our knowledge, in that respect, was not too big.

SB: You say a rabbi came in to give you instruction during the religious hour?

EL: Yah.

SB: And do you remember, was this just one hour a week?

EL: One hour a week or 2 hours a week, that was the most. That was for the Gentile children the same thing.

SB: And this was the limit, this was the most that you received?

EL: What I had. There are people who went to the school where Mr. Kissinger went, they had maybe ten hours. That was a Jewish school.

SB: That was a Jewish school, yes, but you did not go to a Jewish school?

EL: No, Kissingers went to... because the times were different.

SB: Yes. And how would you characterize your family's religious background?

EL: Like here. Let me say, it was a [Conservative, not like Reform](#) because Reform didn't exist at that time except in a few big cities.

SB: How often did your family go to the synagogue?

EL: Like the people here go - Saturday sometimes, but mostly only for the [Holidays](#).

SB: Did you observe [kashruth](#)?

EL: As I was young, yah, my mother did.

SB: Did your mother come from Fuerth?

EL: My mother came also from the city, yah.

SB: So both your mother and father came from the city. And you went to an elementary school and then to the realschule.

EL: High school, yah.

SB: And you graduated from the realschule. You were about 16 years old when you graduated?

EL: Fifteen and a half - school is behind me.

SB: Fifteen and a half. And then you got yourself a position. You got yourself a job.

EL: I got a job, yah.

SB: I would like to ask you some questions about relationships with non-Jews in the period through your school years. Did you have any experiences of [anti-semitism](#) in those years?

EL: No. (long pause) I wouldn't say this, no.

SB: Do you remember any abrasive incidents? Was there any difficulty?

EL: Okay! In gymnastic classes, sometimes the Jewish children, including myself, were not the biggest success. Those teachers sometimes made a remark.

SB: But there was no violence? Nobody was beaten up...

EL: Violence in school didn't exist.

SB: No, I mean outside of schools.

EL: Outside, no.

SB: On the way to school?

EL: Oh, no.

LB: By mouth, then, would you say the teachers would differentiate between Jewish boys and non-Jewish boys?

EL: No, I wouldn't say so.

LB: But you remembered something in a gymnastics class.

EL: They made some jokes, I don't know, that was maybe a little anti-semitic colored; but you were not so sensitive.

Sure, there was a certain kind of anti-semitism there in the people, but hardly noticeable.

SB: So it's fair to say, then, that in your early years, antisemitism was not an important factor of life?

EL: Oh no, no. Not an important... I wouldn't say it was nonexistent, sure, there were single people who didn't like Jews. Maybe they were the Jews working and they were not satisfied or something like that and they were unfriendly to Jewish people. But I didn't have any bad experiences. I had Gentile friends, and...

SB: You say you had Gentile friends - did you mix with Gentiles? Did you go to parties when you got older?

EL: Parties? There were no parties in school. School was school. There were no parties.

SB: When you reached, let us say, 13, 14 years old?

EL: Oh, you mean private parties?

SB: Private parties.

EL: That didn't exist either. If somebody had a party, let me say, if they had a daughter and they made a party, that means that two or three boys were there where the girls were and the whole city talked about it.

SB: All right, then if we talk about boys that you played with. Were they Gentile boys?

EL: We had no arguments, but we were not tightly friends.

SB: Would you say that your friends were Jewish?

EL: (Long pause) There was not so much in Germany. There was not so much like here. This Community Center, and things like that didn't exist. Whatever you did, you did in school.

SB: What you are saying is that when you were a young boy, before you got your job, there was really no social life after school except in the family?

EL: There was no social life.

LB: It was mostly in the family? Is that correct?

EL: Sure, yah, yah.

LB: So your whole life outside of school was centered... Were there any brothers or sisters? Did you have brothers or sisters?

EL: Yeah, one brother and one sister.

LB: You had one brother and one sister, a mother and a father, and you all lived in one house, right?

EL: Yah, yah.

LB: So then your social life centered around these people, plus your aunts and uncles and cousins? Is that correct?

EL: The social life was with the relatives; it was not so tight. Everybody had to do for himself to make a living and you saw them sometimes; for instance, a grandfather. My grandfather went with me for a walk but he didn't ask, "Do you come along in school?" Or, "You don't come along". Everybody took care of himself. They talked about the weather, about the garden, or about what the rabbi said in the sermon, but they didn't go into depth in your interests, what is going on in your mind.

LB: Were you lonesome?

EL: No, I was not lonesome. I had my work to do, I had my parents around me and I had a few friends or people with whom I can talk. I was not lonesome. (Long pause). The main thing was school, your day was filled with work and school. And was everything extraordinary strict. There was no going against the teacher or anything like that; that just didn't exist, didn't come into the mind of a boy or of a child. What the teacher said, that was the first command. It went over the commands of God.

SB: Was your father concerned with politics?

EL: No, no, he was concerned to make a living. And you couldn't do that.

SB: There would be no political discussions in the house?

EL: Oh, no. No.

SB: Nothing at all?

EL: Politics played at that time not a big role as it plays nowadays. As I say, you had to make a living and that was very, very difficult.

SB: In the period in which you were growing up, many important things were happening in Europe, and also within the Jewish community. Do you remember any of those things? For example the Zionist movement was forming in this period...

EL: You know, I don't remember everything. I remember that there was a big thing against Jews in Russia, in 1906. Kishinev.

SB: After the [Kishinev pogrom](#).

EL: That was something my grandfather talked with me. But he never asked me, "How do you feel?" or, "How is your girlfriend?" or things like that. That didn't exist.

SB: But you remember that the Jews, or at least some of the Jews, of Fuerth knew about the Kishinev pogrom and were upset about it, is that right?

EL: Oh, sure, sure.

SB: Can you describe, to the best of your knowledge, the reactions of these people to what was happening in Kishinev? What happened, outside of the fact that your grandfather spoke to you?

EL: No, you see, in Germany there came many Russian or Polish Jews, through, and they found willing reception. And contrary to what you hear very often, they were taken care of and they were treated fairly. But they were different kinds of people at that time, right; they came very, very poor and they didn't know what to do with themselves. So, what could you do with the people? You could help them and that was done, absolutely done. But they wanted to make a living. In fact, everybody was busy with his own making a living so they couldn't go into the depths with this thing. So they didn't stay too long and went on to another city.

SB: So you did have Russian and Polish Jews arrive in Fuerth?

EL: Especially Polish. Russian, I don't think so many.

SB: And you had Polish Jews arriving in Fuerth before the First World War?

EL: Oh yes, and some stayed there and did very well. I know, a few years ago we had here a singer - his grandfather lived near us. He - you were not here at that time - (came), I guess, as a cantor on the holidays. His grandfather had a milk business in Fuerth. And I reminded him because he had the same name as his grandfather, that they were living near me. And - what else did you ask?

SB: What about the Zionist movement?

EL: That it came up - that this was something new, but there again, most of the German Jews, they're busy with making their own living, and they were interested to make that. I don't think they took - in the beginning - too much interest in the [Zionist](#) movement.

SB: Did you know of [Herzl](#)?

EL: Oh, yes.

SB: You knew of him Fuerth?

EL: And I knew more about him in later years as I was grown up. At that time, as I was a child, I didn't care about politics of any kind.

SB: Was your family and were you secure in your Germanness? That is, you considered yourselves to be German, is that right?

EL: Yes.

SB: And as far as you can remember, you did see yourself and your parents saw themselves living their lives out in Germany?

EL: Of course, there was no reason to think otherwise.

SB: Did you have any family outside of Fuerth?

EL: My brother lived in Berlin. My sister lived in Nuremberg, but otherwise not many, if any. I don't remember.

SB: Was there any [Social Democratic](#) element in Fuerth?

EL: You mean Communistic?

SB: No, Socialist. S.P.D.

EL: Socialist like today in Germany, Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands. Socialist, the movement is mainly from the workers and, sure, there belonged Jewish people to it too; had some big voice in it.

SB: Do you happen to know how your father voted or if he voted?

EL: He voted Democratic.

SB: Does the name - or did the name - [Ahlwardt](#) mean anything to you?

EL: No.

SB: So you were not worried about antisemitism? Again, I'm going back to this, in Germany.

EL: Not in the years what you ask for. There were antisemitism before I was born, I guess, in Austria. There was in Vienna, there was a mayor who was very antisemitic as far as I remember that my father told me.

SB: Yes, that was [Mayor Lueger](#).

EL: Yah. But in Germany there were emperors and there were kings and if they didn't want that... In Bavaria there was a king or a king representative and they came to Fuerth, into the synagogue...

SB: Who came to Fuerth?

EL: The king.

SB: The Kaiser you're talking about?

EL: Not the Kaiser. The Kaiser was from the highest in all of Germany.

SB: Oh, you're talking about the King of Bavaria? All right.

EL: From Bavaria, yes.

SB: And you say he spoke in the synagogue?

EL: I didn't say he spoke.

SB: Oh, I'm sorry.

EL: I think he came once.

SB: And this was when you were a young man?

EL: No, no, no. I was not born. I'd say they are not antisemitic. The [Hohenzollern](#) was the name of the house. And they were not antisemitic at all.

SB: Did your father speak at all about the [Kaiser](#)? Was there any talk about the Kaiser?

EL: No, that was not so important. As I say, I had to do with making a living. Politics, Kaiser, or parliament, that was, in the fifth grade - first a man has to have something in your pocket. And that was difficult, to make one dollar.

LB: Excuse me, why was it so difficult then?

EL: Because the competition was very big.

LB: Were you competing with Jews and non-Jews, or...

EL: Oh, sure.

LB: And who was the market?

EL: As I was grown up, I had made the market wider, see... Before the whole market, what we tried to work on was maybe 100 miles from the home town. And...

LB: So it was a local market.

EL: No, you couldn't say local market, 100 miles was a lot with a horse and a thing, no? Or 200 miles. But as I grew up, I went away from that idea; I travelled in all of Germany, or in large part and I had a specialty and so I made very much better.

LB: But your father was struggling, and the reason was...

EL: The older generation, because there was so much competition, that is incredible. We had, in that one town - I was not born at that time - maybe 50 wholesalers in the same stuff. And as I got grown up, from the fifty maybe ten were left. They all disappeared; couldn't make a living. And it was similar in Poland, this condition. In that respect it was, in Poland, very similar. I was once in Poland because I was near the border, and it was a Jewish city from 100,000 people and 99,000 were Jewish people. There on the street, one stopped you, you should buy a newspaper for 5 cents, and if you didn't buy it he walked behind you for ten minutes until you bought it for five cents. And then two other ones came and beat him up; they wanted part of the 5 cents. You have no idea what is poor...

SB: Did you, in your religious education, learn Hebrew?

EL: No, only as prayers - that we learned. We were able to read the prayers and we were able to translate some into the language.

SB: If my calculations are correct, by the time that you graduated from the *Realschule*, this was not very much before the First World War. Was there a feeling in your generation that something was imminent? Did the War come as a surprise to you?

EL: That's difficult to say today, after such a long time. If you want to know the truth, it surprised us, yah.

SB: Going back to that time, do you remember any hostility directed towards other countries? Was there a hostility, a fear, or a dislike for other countries, other peoples?

EL: Fear for other people?

SB: No, fear of other people. Before the war was there any anger directed, for example, to the French, to France, to England?

EL: There was not much friendship at that time between Germany and France, but, why, because the [last war was 1870](#), and that was about forty years later, forty four years later. I came to France, too. There the Jews were very... French; they wanted to hear only French, and they didn't want to know anything from Germany. I remember, I came to France to buy things.

SB: And this was before the war?

ELL: That was before the war.

SB: And before the war, when you went to France, you dealt with Jews and non-Jews or just Jews?

EL: There I dealt with Jews, that was in [Mulhouse](#). They were the Jews in the textile business and I wanted to buy there, bought there, and...

SB: So this was in [Alsace](#)?

EL: Alsace, yah.

SB: Right, so they spoke German.

EL: No, no, they spoke, preferably, French. If they couldn't talk in French, they talked German. They didn't want to be German, but at that time I think it belonged to Germany.

SB: That's right.

EL: But they were in their heart and in their daily things French. Isn't that right?

SB: That is right, that is right. You mentioned that you had a brother and sister, is that right?

EL: Yah. My brother, sisters - they didn't get some education. They were in a girls' school, where Mr. Kissinger worked - the older gentleman. In the beginning, in a girls' school, and they learned a little bit of everything; altogether not much.

SB: So they went to a religious school?

EL: No, no. He was not always in the religious schools, he was... only in the beginning, and then he came to a city school, a *maedchenschule* - a girls' school.

SB: And how long did your sister remain in school?

EL: About ten years.

SB: And what did she do when she left the school?

EL: Oh, that was a different life. Girls didn't work, no? They learned household duties, and they learned a little bit of music, and I don't know what they did - they waited until they found who married them. They went to dancing school...

SB: They sat and they waited to get married.

EL: Oh, sure, that was the usual thing. Nobody went to work at that time. That started later, that the girls also went to work.

SB: I have just one more question on the Zionist movement and that is, was there any sympathy for [Palestine](#)? Did people [give money to Palestine](#)? Do you remember your father giving money? Did you ever give money?

EL: There were no collections like you have today. There were no collections from the Jewish community at all because the Jewish community was maintained, of means of the state. The state paid everything. And the state, on the other hand, collected it from the person. You had on your tax declaration, so-and-so many percent belonged to the Jewish community. And if you said you

are no Jew, you are no Protestant, you are no Catholic - that doesn't exist, everybody had to belong to one religion and had to pay the tax. You couldn't say, "I have no religion."

LB: Did the Catholics and the Protestant have to pay a tax for being a Catholic or a Protestant?

EL: They were not treated different. There was a religious tax for everybody. And it was conferred to the religious community to which they belonged.

LB: But it was not more, or separate for the Jewish community?

EL: Oh no, oh no. As far as I know, I wouldn't swear to it, but why should it be more for Jews than for the other one? The State paid only out of the Jewish community, what they got from Jews. They didn't take the money from the Protestant and gave it to the Jews. If the Jews in Fuerth paid a million dollars, so the community got a million dollars; maybe they kept for themselves something, that I don't know. But anyways, the state paid all the expenses of the religious thing.

SB: So there were no collections then, for Palestine?

EL: Not that I remember. Maybe there was later on, yes.

SB: How did the coming of the war affect you? What was the impact of the war on you and your family?

EL: That had some effect, of course, of any family living in Germany. First, we had to go into the army and there was no business after one, two years - there was no merchandise. There was hardly anything to buy, like meat. It was very difficult after two, three years. You got per week, let me say, an eighth of a pound of meat per person. And in Germany, the rules were observed absolutely, strictly; very little on the side. So you got a tenth of a pound of sugar, and so everything was rationed. It was one of the things which was brought up, but naturally the boys were taken into the army. I was taken one year after, my brother was taken immediately.

SB: Did you serve in combat units?

EL: No. My brother, yes.

SB: And where were you stationed?

EL: I was an up-commander to the high authority.

SB: What part of Germany?

EL: I came to Munich first and there I was for four months and then they transferred me to a new unit in Nuremberg. And there, little by little, started a certain kind of antisemitism... later on, in the years 1917...

SB: Can you tell us about that?

EL: Sure. A little story, which was true but it shows that... In the underground they said, "The Jews don't belong to Germany. They should to go Palestine." And they said, "The Jews don't like the War. They want to see that we won't be victorious, and we want to be victorious."

I came forward very nicely in that Authority and on a Yom Kippur, once, I was furloughed for the day, and suddenly they had, it seems to me, [an inquiry](#) of how many Jews are in that Authority. And each department had to report to the General who was in power, the amount of Jews. And they were so exact that they wanted to have the confirmation of each of these Jewish men that they are Jews. I was not in the office, so they called up my home and on Yom Kippur only the maid there; and they said, "Where is Itzik?" She said, "It's a holiday today and he is in the synagogue." So they said, "He has to come immediately to Nuremberg." She didn't know what to do. She came to the synagogue and got me and told me I have to come immediately to Nuremberg. I never travelled on that day in my life, but of course, if the government tells you something, you did it. So I came in and reported to the head of the department. He said, "Nice to see you. Are you Jewish?" I said, "Yes, of course I am." He said, "That's all I want to know. Goodbye." (Laughs) He made me come in for a couple of hours and only to report something he knew exactly.

SB: You said that people were saying these things about Jews - that they didn't want the war - to who?

EL: Yah, I had a few gentlemen in the office and another Jewish man, and he always talked of Palestine. And so they came to the idea... he went away, I think, maybe he went to Palestine or something. And he probably would say, "That is not my home anyway, I go to that-and-that..." And so, later on, they said, "Why don't you go where you belong, too? You should go to Palestine."

SB: These were other soldiers that were saying these things?

EL: Yah, these were not soldiers, these were higher officials.

SB: Were they military people?

EL: Yah. They were military people at that time. Yah.

SB: How did your family manage during the war? Your father?

EL: All right. They were very thrifty people, they made the best... They didn't need much and I didn't need much. With them, I lived with. I got about \$35 a month and I could live on it.

SB: And your father's business... Did he still stay in business?

EL: Business was none. In the last three years, there was no business. There was no merchandise. You couldn't buy anything.

SB: In 1918, there were [many revolts in Germany](#).

EL: Yah, sure. November 1918, it was similar as was going on this week in Vietnam.

SB: Can you say something about this? 1918?

EL: You mean at the end of the War? It was similar to what you hear now. The soldiers and the wives of the soldiers, and not soldiers - everybody started looting...

SB: Where? Did you see any of the looting?

EL: I saw some, yes. For instance, in that big establishment where I worked, one noon time, there was outside a big case with shoe soles. That was at 12:00, as we went to lunch. And at one o'clock, we came back from lunch, that case was open and nothing was in anymore, everything was out.

LB: So the soles of the shoes were stolen?

EL: Nothing. In the evening, I saw a few times in the barracks, where nearby I had my room. I passed by an army barrack, and there came women and men and children out and had guns and everything - stolen.

SB: This was in Nuremberg?

EL: That was in Nuremberg, yah. Where no real government is, where no police is, untouched, and goes about their obligations, there you find the things. I lived through the same thing. I had a house in Holland and there they knew that is a Jewish owner - Holland was no antisemitism - they know that is a Jewish owner of that building and they knew that owner doesn't come, and

they knew that the Jews in Germany are persecuted. So everything that was in that house disappeared. And opposite was the mayor and the mayor was asked, "Who picked that stuff up? You must know it, you have opposite your office." He said, "I don't know anything."

SB: This was when? This was in the 1930s?

EL: Oh, what I said just now, that was later. That was during the Second World War.

SB: Yeah. Right.

EL: But I only wanted to prove, there's no order, in the government and in the police - there everything can happen. Your life is not worth a penny if there's no order in the government and no handling from the police.

SB: When the people were rioting in Nuremberg and they were stealing, no police came out in the streets to touch them?

EL: No, not in that particular - that was maybe three, four days, then it got more quiet again. That was at the end of the war. The Emperor disappeared. The police were uninterested because they couldn't dominate the masses. That was in November 1918.

SB: Right. In this period of November 1918 - a period of anarchy...

EL: A kind of anarchy, but that was short-lived.

SB: Yes. Was there any action against the Jews? Anything specifically aimed at the Jews?

EL: No, no that I know.

SB: In your experience you didn't see anything. People weren't saying anything about the Jews?

EL: Oh no, no. There was not such a strong feeling against Jews amongst the people. The feeling against the Jews in larger numbers came only later on, after 1924 when Hitler and his groups came out - 1925. They made that, and as the war ended, there it started. You could hear sometimes, "Jews can't go there, and Jews can't go there."

SB: When the war was over, the Kaiser went away and there was the [Armistice](#) - what did you do?

EL: My personal experience? I worked first in a place for a few years as an apprentice in Nuremberg.

SB: In what kind of a company?

EL: In a company which exported items for giving it as a present for customers; items - let me say you bought a dress and you got a calendar, or you got a pocketbook, or some extra smaller items, which were given by business people or companies as presents. There I worked for four years, maybe three years.

SB: This is after the war?

EL: (Long pause.) No. After the war, no, no - that was before the war three years. And then I worked for a few months with my brother-in-law because he gave me more money. Because he said, "Why do you work for ten, fifteen dollars a month? I'll give you 40." So I wanted \$40, so I went to him and after 2 months he said, "I can't use you. You can't do anything." So I was on the street again.

SB: This was also before the war?

EL: That was before the war.

SB: After the war you were discharged from the army - what did you do then?

EL: I was discharged in 1919. Then I went where I was before the war a few years too, at my father's business. This is where I stayed as long as I was in Germany.

SB: And you helped expand the business? Is that what you said?

EL: Yah. That was 120 years old.

SB: The business was 120 years old?

EL: Yes, 1835, that was 100 years. No, 1827 it was. Excuse me.

SB: 100 years, and this business had been founded by your family?

EL: By my grandfather, yah.

SB: And could you describe your life in Germany in the years just after the war?

EL: Oh, then I married- that was the main thing. In Germany, especially amongst Jews, you had crazy ideas of how to marry. That is something what make me angry as long as I live. A Jewish man was only allowed - was how they ruled - to marry with 30 years.

LB: Say again. What?

EL: He couldn't marry before he was 30 years old.

LB: In Germany a Jewish male could not get married...

EL: Oh, Gentiles didn't marry so young either... but Jews had special rule - not written rule - but that was custom.

SB: This is not a law he's talking about. This was Jewish custom that you're talking about.

EL: This was custom. Marrying before 30 years - you can't marry - you have to wait until you are 29 or 30 years old. Makes really what happened between eighteen and thirty, that was not always very nice, because nature wanted to have a girl and you couldn't. And the girls were kept so strict, if a girl got a kiss from a boy then the girl was out of society. And so, I married also, only as I was 30 years old. You asked what I did. I married 1922 and then another life started. I was in my father's business, and expanded it very much and very nicely; was very liked by my customers and very liked by the makers of merchandise, and so I came along very nicely.

SB: In the period after the First World War, this was a period when - I'm sure you know - groups of German soldiers, the [Freikorps](#) people roamed throughout Germany.

EL: Yeah, I remember.

SB: Were there any of these people in Fuerth, Nuremberg? Was there any trouble? Talk or violence?

EL: Violence?

SB: Was anybody shot by the Freikorps people?

EL: That was not of importance. In the beginning, they shot once into that building where I worked, I mean, in that government building. And so we laid on the ground, and that was over again. Otherwise I don't remember anything of attacks from these groups. Luxemburg, you mean? [Rosa Luxemburg](#).

SB: Well, I mean Rosa Luxembourg, but I mean the people who killed Rosa Luxembourg. People like Kapp.

EL: No, I don't know. I don't remember anymore.

SB: Right. So when the war was over and you set up business, you went into your father's business. Would you say life was quiet in Nuremberg and Fuerth?

EL: Yah. Life was... always, you had to make a living. A day was filled with trying to make a living and that was difficult.

SB: Can you describe? You say your day was filled with trying to make a living- can you describe that day? When you got up in the morning?

EL: Yah, I got up at 7:00 and I do business at 8:00 or half past 8. Stayed until 12:00, then from 12:00 to 2:00 you went home with your feet, not with a car, to get something to eat. As long as I was in Nuremberg, I had to take the train home again. I went home at 11:58, so I had to leave the place at 11:40 in order to run to the train and then I came home at 12:15 and at 1:15 my train went back again. I didn't eat in the town where I worked. That would have been much too expensive, so I had to go home to eat.

LB: It would have been more expensive to eat in Nuremberg than to take the train and go home?

EL: It was cheaper, much cheaper. You didn't spend 25 cents or 50 cents for eating out. You didn't have...

LB: You go back from lunch. After lunch is what time?

EL: Again, 1:15 the train went up. Then I came at 1:35 to Nuremberg, then I walked to my place of work again.

LB: And you stayed there until when?

EL: Until 7:00, 8:00, 6:30, 7:30, and then you had to wait until you get another train home again.

LB: About what time would you get home?

EL: Oh, it's different - 7:00, 8:00.

LB: You're talking about your parents' home?

EL: Yah.

LB: And then, once you got home, you were too tired to...

EL: You didn't go out. Maybe you went out sometimes. Maybe you went to a coffeehouse and ordered a coffee for 15 pennies and then talked a little bit to the other boys on account of the girls, which they want to see. Or played cards, and then you went home again.

LB: And then the next day you started over again.

EL: The same thing including Saturday. Saturday was also work hours at least until 12:00.

LB: And what did you do on a Sunday? How did you spend your free time?

EL: As long as I was single, I went with my girlfriend in the neighborhood walking and trying to have a good time. Then in the evening we went to a theater or ate outside, and then - I don't know what happened then.

LB: And then, you married after the war? In 1922 you said?

EL: The real war ended only in 1924 because between the end of the war, 1918 to 1924, Germany had nothing. There was not enough food, there was no material, no yard goods, just nothing, because the money was nothing worth. There was a scarcity with everything and that probably made the people furious that later followed the ranks of Hitler. It was a very bad time. No work. It was a very bad business until 1924. In 1924 the money started to be of value again and then everything got better... or '23. When was it ?

SB: In 1923 [the inflation](#)...

EL: The money was of value again. It was such a terrible thing, was that inflation. You couldn't imagine. You went to the market in the morning at 10:00, you bought a pound of butter, it was 125 marks. And the mother told you in the afternoon, "Go over and get another pound of butter," it was 450. We had girls in the store, in business, they went out - they said they can't go home. There were numbers. Let me say, somebody had to pay 1,590,000 marks. They couldn't take that anymore. We don't know how to do that.

SB: What about your savings? Did you lose all your savings because of the inflation?

EL: I think we had no savings. I really don't know. If somebody had savings - my brother-in-law, for instance, he was a very wealthy man before the war, and as the war was over, he had nothing. He had bonds of 1,000 marks. After the war they were maybe worth 50 marks. Not like there, that you could buy something, that is 90, goes back to 60 or 70, but say it went down from 100 to 5.

SB: In the early 1920s, a number of people were killed ...

EL: And killed themselves, too.

SB: And killed themselves. I have in mind, for example, a man like [Walter Rathenau](#). He was killed. Did this make an impact upon you? Were people frightened?

EL: When was that, anyway?

SB: In the early 20s, I think.

EL: As the [Ebert government](#) was.

SB: Yes, this was in the period of the Ebert government, that's right.

EL: No. The people were indifferent as every day something else happened, and that's a case of... just didn't make much impression or so.

SB: You were in Bavaria, in Fuerth, did you know of the [Hitler putsch](#) in Munich when it happened?

EL: Yah. Maybe we read something about it or we heard something about it, but at that time, that was a beginning, you didn't take it as serious, you lived on your daily routine. You took notice of it. Before the war, many people were killed, many boys didn't come home and you were cool about things like that. That man was killed - nobody cared. Another man was sitting in his place.

SB: [National Socialism](#), then, was not an important fact in Fuerth?

EL: No. At times it was important, 1928, '29.

SB: But not in 1923? And not in 1924?

EL: No.

LB: Wasn't there a Communist takeover in Bavaria?

EL: The first time you heard that a putsch was been made in Munich, as far as I remember that was, I think, 1924 or so, the Hitler putsch. But he was not successful at that time. Then you didn't hear too much of him. But later on, so many people were out of work, they followed anybody who said, "I will bring you happiness." I had a customer, her son was out of work for years, or he never had work, so once, six months later, I came again to her in Salzer and I said, "How's your boy?" "Oh, he's fine." I said, "I'm glad for you. You waited long enough." "Yah, you know, he's at the S.S. and he's a big man now." No? They collected the people who were unsatisfied and angry and so they got a lot of people together.

SB: But, again, this was at the end of the 1920s. It didn't make any impact on your life earlier? 1923, 1924?

EL: No. It made an impression on me privately because I lost a child around that time. That I remember. But otherwise... People were not so politically minded as here. Many people, especially women had no idea of any politics.

SB: What about Communism? Did it make any impact upon your life?

EL: No.

SB: What about the Russian Revolution in 1917? Were you concerned about it? Was your father concerned about it?

EL: No. Russia was far away from us. What did we care what's going on in Russia, except something like that in 1906? My grandfather told me about it, right. But you didn't care what is happening if you were not politically minded, as the people at that time were. They were busy with other things, so they didn't care. They didn't read too much paper, and if they read it there was not too much in it. So they always had in the foreground, the task of making a living for their family. And many couldn't do that, or many did do as if they could, and one day it came and they had nothing, and they killed themselves. That was also a time, I don't know when that was - I think 1926 or 7 or 8. When did you have here the drop?

LB: [The Depression](#)?

SB: 1929.

EL: So. And in Europe it was about 1927. The Americans put a lot of money into Europe - into Germany and in other countries, right? Because here they had a lot of money; they wanted to invest it in a good thing and they allowed people to invest a lot in Germany. So, let me say they gave to a bank \$5 million, all right? The bank gave it to their customers - the customers built manufacturing places or built houses. Then, two years later, the Americans said, "We approach trouble here, we want our investments back." So now the German bank said to their customers, "You borrowed 100,000 marks. I want 50 back in the next two weeks." That started trouble in Germany. My own bank called me in three times. I owed them 5,000 marks. They were Jewish directors there and once I got a letter, "Come in, we have to tell you something." I came in. He said, "5,000 marks is too much credit, we can't give it to you. You have to pay 2,000 marks back within two weeks." I said, "What should I do as a wholesaler with 3,000 marks?" He made like that. (Gestures). He wanted to tell me, "To hell with you. Whatever you do that is your business." Two weeks later I got another letter. "You owe us 3,000 marks. Come in, we want 2,000 back." And that came through the conditions here because banks had to pay back. So that brought many people on the streets. The people lost their jobs and the owners of the business had no money anymore so they killed themselves - dozens - because they had no money anymore.

SB: So there were lots of suicides in Fuerth?

EL: Quite some, yeah, because they couldn't go on with their business. They couldn't make a living and they didn't know what to do with it through the conditions. I lived through that myself. I didn't believe it. I went at that time to another bank, to a smart banker, and told him the story. "Yah", he said, "We know of that." And he gave me, immediately, 50,000 marks credit.

SB: Why did he give you the 50,000 marks credit?

EL: I couldn't answer that. He had it. He was probably not owing money to the - in that way, you know. That bank, what I said, that was a big bank.

SB: So your business survived?

EL: Oh yes. We had no trouble at all.

SB: When did the National Socialists make an appearance in Fuerth?

EL: Oh, they made an appearance about that time, 1925, '26 and got more and more. 1932 was the high point.

SB: And how did you, personally, manage? And how did the Jews of Fuerth manage in this period? This is just before the Nazi takeover in January of 1933.

EL: I couldn't answer that exactly. Before 1933?

SB: No, you say that the National Socialists made an appearance in Fuerth in 1925.

EL: Yah, but in my case they were not as strong that they influenced my customers. I didn't have very much trouble at that time. Only later on some very nice customers got entirely insane. Once, one customer wrote us - we came much to small villages and he liked me very much; I came myself to him - and once he wrote a letter, "From now on, everything I have in my store must be Christian, Gentile. My feed must be Gentile, my tablecloths must be Gentle and..." such stuff. Crazy stuff.

SB: This was after the Nazis came to power? Or before?

EL: About that time, yah, about 1933. They got influence. I didn't know. It must be Christianized. Everything must be Christian. It can't be anymore Jewish.

SB: Before 1933 was there violence in Fuerth? Were you boycotted?

EL: No, the violence started only after 1933. Before, was in Fuerth nothing at all.

SB: Did you vote in the elections?

EL: Yah, in 1932.

SB: Whom did you vote for, if I may ask?

EL: Oh, no way the Nazis. Probably I voted for the Center one, that was the Catholic Party.

SB: You voted for the Catholic Party?

EL: Probably, yah. They were powerful in Bavaria and they were peaceful.

SB: And you wouldn't have considered at that time to vote Socialist or Communist?

EL: Communist, no...

SB: Never Communist?

EL: I don't know. Communist was not important at that time. I don't think there were many. Communists were Jewish people too, but I don't know that... As I say, it was not in the foreground of my life, politics. I didn't care until I faced the consequences of the change; until 1933.

SB: Before 1933 were you aware and were your family or friends aware of what the Nazis stood for?

EL: Not 100 percent. Some thought, "Let them try, let them try. They will see that they can't do anything." Some other ones, then, the biggest manufacturers, they were not aware of what could come out of that power. How should you know? For hundreds of years there was not an uproar like that. I talked with a very big manufacturer with thousands of workers, he'll say, "Eh, that will go over again. They can't... What will that little painter do? What should he do? He is nothing." And so they didn't recognize until the power of the masses, which he made greedy, came into effect.

SB: This manufacturer that you talked to, was he Jewish?

EL: No, no.

SB: Let me ask another question that may sound ridiculous, but perhaps is not. Did you know any [Jews that supported the Nazis](#)?

EL: In the beginning I heard stories that the Jews supported and gave money to the Nazis. I do not know one case. I couldn't tell you any case and I think people would have to be crazy to have done something like that, but as far as I know, not one.

SB: All right. On January 30th of 1933, the Nazis took power. What happened to you? And what happened to the Jewish community of Fuerth?

EL: [The trouble started](#).

SB: What do you mean by the trouble starting?

EL: On the first of April, 1933, they made known that all the Jewish stores have a post before the entrance that no Gentile can go in.

SB: And this was done in Fuerth?

EL: In any city. Not in Fuerth alone. In any city of Germany.

SB: Did they do this to your business?

EL: I had no store; we had wholesale.

SB: But you had an office?

EL: Office, yah.

SB: Did anybody put a sign outside your office?

EL: It was only for retail; a wholesaler or exporters that there was no retail, no public traffic - they didn't do that. But, sure, I had to suffer too.

SB: Can you tell us about it?

EL: Oh, sure. First, I personally did a thing which was clever. I had my main business place in Bavaria, and we had a branch in Upper Silesia. And Upper silesia was under the protection of the United Nations of that time - not the United Nations, Friegebund was the name.

SB: [The League of Nations](#).

EL: League of Nations. And the League of Nations dominated a small part of Germany, Upper Silesia, until 1937. And so I moved my branch to Upper Silesia and I moved myself to that place. And in that place, that was near the Polish border, I had no trouble at all until 1937.

SB: You say you moved your branch and you moved yourself? You moved your family?

EL: Yah.

SB: So you moved out of Fuerth?

EL: Yah, but the main headquarters were as before, in Fuerth. Bookkeeping and everything was in Fuerth. And I came to Fuerth from time to time and was informed of everything going on by mail and telephone.

LB: Who stayed in Fuerth to keep track, to manage?

EL: I had forty people.

LB: Jews or non-Jews?

EL: No Jews, no. A Gentile lady was the head.

LB: And she knew what you were doing and she continued to work for you?

EL: Yah. They all continued. We had one lady - she was an honored member of the Nazi Party and she worked in our place too and made, never, trouble.

SB: So what year did you move to Upper Silesia?

EL: 1935, I moved to Upper Silesia.

SB: And what made you move? The general persecution?

EL: Yah. I was afraid something could happen. I saw I have there a business anyway, and the people of that business, we were in Leibnitz before, that is not Upper Silesia, that is also Silesia and it's now Polish. And I located there, from Leibnitz to Beuthen to Katowice. You know [Katowice](#)?

SB: Yes.

EL: On the Polish border there... near Katowice. And I moved the business there, and I moved myself and my family there and my daughter went to schools there and everything. And there was a rabbi - we asked a rabbi at that time, before I moved there, "What do you think of my idea?" "Is an excellent..." I said, "No, but if the Nazis are going on like that, what defense has the Jewish people here?" He said, "Then we beat them on their fingers, they won't do anything to us." And they didn't do anything until 1937. And in 1937 that was out, that protection, the next day everything was like in other parts of Germany.

LB: In other words, the League of nations left in 1937?

EL: That ended.

LB: The mandate - their protectorate ended?

EL: Yah.

SB: Can you say what it was like to live in Fuerth between 1933 and 1935?

EL: Bad, bad. They did everything. 1933 started with that banning of Jewish traffic into the stores. They still came and wanted contributions for a lot of Nazi things and if you didn't give anything then they threatened you, and if you give them something then they say it was always not sufficient. And so everything happened, I can't say things altogether. They promised and didn't keep their word; they gave out orders that nothing should be done against Jewish companies which are honest and they have no trouble otherwise, but nevertheless a lot happened. And, if somebody complained, they threw him out of the window ... or they came later on. They came and they brought a piece of paper, also with business, and said, "From tomorrow, beginning, your business belongs to the Party." They didn't come to me because I had no house in Germany. Or they said, "I heard you want to give your business to the Party." The man said, "No", or "I have no idea". So they said, "It is eleven o'clock, we come at two o'clock again. If you don't follow the idea that you give your business to the Party, then you have to carry the consequences." And then if they came at 2:00 the people signed that they feel right at giving to the Party because they need. And they confiscated all the Jewish business which were there at the end of 1938.

SB: Did anybody else go to Upper Silesia with you? I mean friends or other businessmen?

EL: No, oh no. Why should they? They had no connection. I had that connection because I had the branch in Silesia. That was maybe good, maybe not good. Otherwise I would have maybe immigrated, 1935.

SB: Did you know anybody who emigrated before you went to Silesia?

EL: In my hometown?

SB: In your hometown of Fuerth.

EL: Oh, yeah, sure, many.

SB: When did they start to go?

EL: They started going little by little, 1933 - 34. Disappeared - one disappeared today, two weeks later you heard of someone else, and then you heard that-and-that people emigrate... as I did. I emigrated with 100 percent permission of the government; I had all the permits, what I needed. I mean, I didn't go away, as many did, in the middle of the night.

SB: When the Nazis came into Upper Silesia in 1937, what happened to you?

EL: Nothing. In November, 1918, there was a big pickup of Jewish people all over Germany. Also we had...

SB: This is November '38?

EL: Yah, November 30. But we lived outside of the city and remarkably they didn't pick me up.

SB: You're talking about [Kristallnacht](#)?

EL: Yah, yah.

SB: And you were Katowice on Kristallnacht?

EL: [Beuthen](#) was the name. It was ten minutes from Katowice. Beuthen. That is now a Polish name.

SB: Did they pick up anybody else that you knew?

EL: Oh, yeah, sure. They picked up 95.8 percent of the Jewish population - of the men. I was an exception. I don't know why. I was never picked up. Anyway, in Fuerth, they picked up the members from the [B'nai B'rith](#). I was on a business trip.

SB: When they came to your home to pick you up, you were where? I mean, where were you living? Where was your home at the time?

EL: In Fuerth.

SB: Oh, this was in Fuerth. So they did come to pick you up once?

EL: Twice.

SB: Twice they came to pick you up. And so the Nazis are now in Silesia and you're in Silesia- what do you do?

EL: What do you mean?

SB: I mean what happened then? We're in 1938. Kristallnacht.

EL: That was shortly before I emigrated. If I stayed later, I got my permit to go to the United States and that was five or eight days before that Crystal Night or what do you call it?

SB: Crystal Night we call it. So can you describe the process through which you got your permit to come to the United States? Where did you go? Who gave it to you?

EL: My wife came from a family and sometimes during the First World War, as Germany was in bad condition, this family sent sacks to the family of my wife's parents. And my wife knew the name of these people. They came from the town where her mother came from, no? And so we wrote. I have it here, they wrote a letter to that association in Berlin which had the contact with the United States, and told them the name of these people, and they should find out where they live. And they found out they live in Cincinnati, and after six or eight months I got the answer with the name in Cincinnati and we wrote to them. And this family in Cincinnati, very wealthy people, were not disinclined to give us a permit. But, I had a nephew in the United States, a young doctor at that time, and he went to them and told them that I had money here and they wouldn't have to fear anything, but they should give us the permit and they did and that helped us to come over.

SB: Did you have money here?

EL: I had money, yah. But I brought the money out in the danger of being killed if I would be caught.

SB: Two questions. You say you had money here?

EL: Yah.

SB: Where? In New York City?

EL: I had the money with my nephew, from which I just talked. I sent my money to him, to the young doctor.

SB: When did you send it to him?

EL: Between 1933 and 1938.

SB: Is it fair to say that you thought as early as 1933 of coming here?

EL: Yes. I tried to bring money out. I wanted to have a pillow if I had to go out. I told you, I had a house in Holland too for that reason. I had the house in Holland only for that reason, to have something outside of Germany.

SB: When did you buy the house in Holland?

EL: Holland? 1934.

SB: So you bought a house in Holland and you sent money to your nephew?

EL: Not much, but it helped us a lot.

SB: And so you made this contact with the people in Cincinnati?

EL: Yah.

SB: And your nephew went to them and they gave you a permit.

EL: You have a good head here.

SB: No, no, I'm just reconstructing.

EL: Oy, oy, oy. Isn't it?

SB: Did you deal with American officials at any time in the Consulate?

EL: Yah, sure.

SB: Where?

EL: In Berlin.

SB: How would you describe their conduct?

EL: Correct.

SB: It was correct? It was not condescending?

EL: No.

SB: It was proper?

EL: Proper, yah.

SB: And when did you apply for your permit?

EL: Oh, we applied maybe in June 1938 and we had to wait six months.

SB: And you got your permit...

EL: In November.

SB: Early November and then?

EL: Then I had still to do with German authorities for a few months until everything was in order. And at the end, they took away all the jewels of my wife. Oh, then we got permission.

SB: Can you describe your actions or your relationship with the German authorities. Were they proper?

EL: No, they were not proper. As human beings, they were proper for the time in which I had to go through. They were inhuman, unhuman.

SB: When they spoke to you?

EL: That depends... some were decent, some were less decent. That didn't kill me, but they treated me as a different human being. There were - what was the name? There was a name for the Jews and for the other people... what was the name? [Aryan](#).

SB: Aryan. They were Aryan.

EL: Aryans, Gentile people and all the other people were Aryan and the Jews were *nicht-Aryan*.

SB: *Nicht Aryan*.

EL: Non-Aryan. They were different. (long pause) They had different blood.

SB: Did you have a family at the time?

EL: One daughter.

SB: And she was in school at the time? Did you have trouble in the school?

EL: Yah. She was in school in Upper Silesia at that time. And there was at the end celebration that all the Jewish children had to go out of the hall... and things like that. Crazy things.

SB: Did you take her out of the school?

EL: Not out of the school. The school was - at the end of the year celebration, the Jewish children were not allowed to be in the room.

SB: What year was this? This is 1938?

EL: That was 1938.

SB: Yeah. Because a lot of German-Jewish parents took their children out of the German school, like the Kissingers, and placed them in Jewish schools. Did your daughter attend the Jewish school?

EL: No, my daughter was... wait a moment... (long pause). She was not any more in school. She was at that time, 1938, in England. In that year she was in England in a Jewish school for nine months or so to learn the language.

SB: How did she get to England? Who sent her to England? Did you send her?

EL: I didn't pay officially; somebody else paid for it according to the conditions, right. I paid for it, but I had to say on my tax declaration somebody else paid...

SB: But you made sure that she went to England?

EL: I really brought her over. Yah, we made sure.

SB: And she went in 1938 to England?

EL: '37 or '38. And it may be '37 and in '38 she was in Frankfurt in a Jewish School

LB: She's back in Germany then?

EL: Yah.

SB: She came back from England and went to a German school in Frankfurt?

EL: For the last year, in Frankfurt, yah. That was the year we emigrated, 1938, when we got the permission.

SB: You got the permission, but then you did not emigrate until early 1939.

EL: In January 1939.

SB: January 1939 and you came immediately to the United States?

EL: Yah.

SB: It is true that the Nazis made you give everything up?

EL: No, not everything, but... That is a story for itself. As we went out, we could take along everything, still everything except jewelry. But the values, my securities, and these things I couldn't take out. I couldn't take out and they confiscated all the values later on.

SB: Did they allow you to take out money, cash?

EL: Yes, they allowed me to take out so much that I landed in New York with empty pockets. I didn't have one dollar. Everybody got \$10.

SB: So they didn't allow you to take out anything?

EL: That was all. I got \$30, and I think, \$50 more for something else. That was all. But we arrived here, I got money immediately from my nephew, because I had it here, right? But, from Germany, I didn't have a penny because the \$10 was not enough on the boat to pay the (?). But we had our ticket from Germany, right. The tickets we paid in Germany in Deutschmarks.

SB: So you, your wife, and your daughter left Germany and came to the United States in January of 1939? Did you ever, in the period after 1933, give any thought to going anywhere else, besides the United States?

EL: No.

SB: You never thought of Palestine or of England?

EL: No. I thought the right way is to go to a bigger country, but to a smaller town, and that is what I followed.

SB: Why to a bigger country?

EL: Well, because you have more chances in a bigger country than in a smaller country, and especially in such a big country as the United States, I thought many people had a good chance, so why shouldn't I go there, if I get permission. It was difficult to get permission to go to any country.

SB: You say “a good chance” - a good chance to do well economically?

EL: Sure. (long pause) I used my knowledge from over there, I started here with a business, in small amounts, in that line in which I worked over there.

SB: You must have still had relatives in Fuerth. Did they also leave Fuerth? You say your grandmother had fifteen children - there must have been a big family.

EL: That was like the wind - were all in the wind. Some were killed, some were in camp, some were going to Holland, some went to Sweden, some... that I can't say. Near family was hardly any there except my sister. She went away later, the next year. And my mother was still there in an old home. And she died, luckily, in that old age home in 1940. They picked up the people of the old age homes, or orphan homes, just as well. We had an orphan home in that town - maybe 100 children - they picked them up and brought them to a concentration camp. Nothing came back.

SB: You said you bought a house in Holland. You never thought of emigrating to Holland?

EL: No, I never thought of going for good to Holland, but I wanted to go until I got my permission to go to the United States into Holland, in my house. And they didn't give me the permission. The government refused permission to go into our house, notwithstanding that they had a good information from the mayor. Nevertheless they refused it because it was wartime and they don't want any more strangers in Holland.

LB: So it was the Dutch government that refused you?

EL: Yah.

LB: Even though you had bought your house?

EL: Mm hm. I have the thing here, if you want to see it, but that is not interesting for you.

(The tape is off while they are looking at and discussing Mr. Lowen's documents.)

EL: And since that time complete movement started from villages to cities. Is that right? 1836 Napoleon?

SB: No, no about 1806. Napoleon died in 1821.

EL: When was that law that everybody had a name, and everybody should be free?

SB: This is while Napoleon is alive, about 1806.

EL: Sure, okay.

SB: This was compiled in the synagogue?

EL: The Jewish community. They had the books.

SB: They had the books and they kept records like this for everyone?

EL: Everyone, yah.

SB: This is very important.

EL: Do you want to?

SB: Could we have a copy of this?

EL: You can make a copy of it, yah. But that is not all, is it?

LB: Well, that's all you gave us.

EL: Oh, yeah. But there is more.

Tape Off

EL: But I saw them every Saturday, as Mr. Kissinger and his little wife walked along the street, Saturday afternoon.

SB: Did you know the boy? Did you see the boy?

EL: No, all right, there was a boy. I didn't know him. I didn't know the Kissingers either. I knew this is a teacher and he came from a small village to Fuerth, that's all.

LB: Do you want us to go now, because it's ten o'clock? I wanted to ask you - you were going to tell us something about girls. You said, "I'll tell you another story about girls." You want to wait until another time?

EL: Yah. So if you want anything else, you are free to come at any moment.

LB: Thank you very much.

Ernest Lowen and his wife, Sophie, lived at 1106 Highland Park Road, in Schenectady, New York

He died in 1977 and is buried in Temple Gates of Heaven Cemetery, Schenectady, N.Y.

Daughter Elsie Lowen Sichel's Obituary

Ilse Sichel, age 86, of Schenectady, N.Y., died Wednesday, July 4, 2007 at the Baptist Retirement Center in Scotia, N.Y. Mrs. Sichel was born in Germany and resided several years in Syracuse, N.Y. and Schenectady. She had been employed by the Sealtest Company and the former Woolworths Department Store for several years. She was married to Arnold Sichel until his passing in 1990. She is survived by her daughter Ann Reznikoff of Albany. Services at the Beth Emeth Cemetery, Turner Lane Loudon-ville, N.Y. on Friday July 6, 2007 at 10:00 a.m.. Friends are respectfully invited to attend. Memorial contributions may be made to the Arthritis Foundation NENY Chapter, 1237 Central Avenue, Albany, NY 12205 or Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America, 386 Park Avenue, South 17th Floor, New York, NY 10016.

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