

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

ROGER BRYAN

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Natalie Packel

Date: July 9, 1996

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Gratz College

Melrose Park, PA 19027

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RB - Roger Bryan¹ [interviewee]

NP - Natalie Packel [interviewer]

Date: July 9, 1996

Tape one, side one:

NP: Today is July the 9th, and this is Natalie Packel, interviewing Mr. Roger Bryan. [tape off, then on] Mr. Bryan, can you tell me where you were born, and when, and a little bit about your family?

RB: All right. I was born in Berlin, Germany on June 14, 1921. My father was a physician at that address. And my mother was a housewife. She never worked like...

NP: What type of physician was your father?

RB: He was a general practitioner and well, it's a little, it was a little different over there. It's a, in German it's a *Geburtshelfer* [obstetrician]. That means *Wundarzt* [German for wound doctor] and *Geburtshelfer*. That's what it says, and it means general practitioner assisting at birth.

NP: Birth.

RB: Yeah.

NP: Oh, O.K. Let's see how we can spell that, *Geburts...*

RB: Yes.

NP: *Helfer*.

RB: *Helfer*.

NP: Helper.

RB: Helper, you know...

NP: Similar to Yiddish.

RB: Helper at birth.

NP: Yes.

RB: Yes, yeah, sure.

NP: Yes. All right.

RB: But it actually means obs-...

NP: Obstetrician.

RB: Obste--yeah. But he wasn't a specialist, actually. He was a general, GP.

NP: And you had a brother?

RB: I had a brother, Heinz. And of course he's changed his name later on.

NP: What did he change his name to?

RB: Let's see, we named him? We always called Heimie. And of course that's the version over there. And in Spanish, Enrique. [also spelled Henrique].

NP: Enrique.

RB: Enrique, yes, Enrique.

¹Formerly Rudolf Britzmann.

NP: That was when he was...

RB: I never called him that, yeah.

NP: When he was in Santiago, Chile.

RB: Chile, yeah. He got there in 1939, some time a little after my emigration, actually.

NP: I'm just gonna check on the machine. [tape off, then on] O.K., we can continue. What was your life like before the war? What was the name of your town? I don't think we got that.

RB: Berlin.

NP: Oh we, right, O.K. I thought there was a move about.

RB: I never, I was never out of town, no, no, no.

NP: You were never out of Berlin from the very beginning?

RB: No, no, from the very beginning in elementary school and, which I recorded there. This four years elementary school. I followed my brother there in the same school, in the neighborhood school, public school.

NP: Did you experience any antisemitism at the time?

RB: No, not even much. That, later on in high school I recall once, one of the guys called me a dirty Jew or something to that effect, and we had a bash in in school yard. And I got a lot of applause because I knocked him out. So, it so happens he had a brother, a tall guy, who was one of the early S.S. men, the Black S.S., you know, a political guy. But otherwise I had no problems, really.

NP: There was co-existing in the community?

RB: Yeah, yeah. Oh, the community, fine. My father was very popular. An unheard of thing these days, he never owned a car. He had a bicycle and he went on his rounds visiting patients, which is also unheard of nowadays. And he went visiting and was very popular in the neighborhood. We had a little dog who usually went along with him. And he, [unclear] and then he was a character, belonging to the neighborhood. And things went fairly normal, until first, when Hitler came. Then I do remember one particular thing, my father's friends being, other doctors in the neighborhood. And he usually got together on an evening and would say, "Well, let him get in. Let him get in. They won't last long. The German people won't stand for it." Well, famous last words.

NP: Indeed. Was there an organized Jewish community?

RB: Yes, but even the synagogue we belonged to wasn't in that part of the section of Philadelphia. Ah, Philadelphia! I'm sorry.

NP: Of Berlin.

RB: Berlin. There wasn't a permanent synagogue. We had--actually the rabbi was a personal friend of ours and he taught Hebrew, not in Hebrew school but in the *Realgymnasium*, which is the high school. I think once a week it was for about an hour, which amounted to very little.

NP: Excuse me, that was called the *Al Gymnasium*?

RB: The *Real*, *Re--Re--*...

NP: Oh, the *Real*.

RB: Yeah, *Real*.

NP: *Real*.

RB: Andreas *Real*...

NP: *Gymnasium*.

RB: *Gymnasium*, yeah. It was, Andreas was the name. Andreas *Realgymnasium*.

Also my brother preceded me there.

NP: And so the rabbi did the...

RB: Well, he...

NP: Teaching of the Hebrew?

RB: He, yeah, he taught religion and Hebrew to us, as far as I can remember. It was once a week. When the others had religious instruction we left and went to a different room with the rabbi and only three or four once a week in the whole school.

NP: And this was at the Tunuv [phonetic] high school?

RB: Yeah high school.

NP: And so he was your private tutor, really.

RB: He, well, sort of, yes. And he was, because we only, they rented, the community rented a hall for the *Yomim Tovim*². And my father was always the physician in residence and he always got an honor. And I wrote this down here too at one time. Well, it's [unclear] important, actually. But we went there, that's the only time. There were about three times a year we went to synagogue and, yeah, he was, in fact he always went with a silk hat on *Yom Tov*, a silk hat, and he got *haftorah* and one, I remember once he had forgotten his glasses. And he couldn't read too well. And his arms just weren't long enough. So it was a little awkward for him but he made it. He was well educated in Judaism. And in fact, I saw once his certificate of when he left the *Gymnasium* [unclear]. And they said he leaves in order to take up the study of religion. Because his father was a rabbi--I never knew him of course--and he wanted him to be a rabbi too. But as soon as he got to Germany, or [unclear] or Berlin or wherever he got to, he took up medicine instead. And he paid for his education by tutoring other students. And also I know that he was in the German Army. And he got married in 1916 while he was in the army. And he was a physician in the army and he got an Iron Cross, second class, too, he was very proud of that in a way, I think.

NP: Indeed.

RB: And my brother was born in 1917 and where he was, somewhere near where he was stationed in the southern part of Germany.

NP: And your mother tended the house?

RB: Yes, yes [unclear].

²He probably means holidays, especially the *Yamim Noraim*, the Days of Awe, from *Rosh Hashanah* to *Yom Kippur*.

NP: At the times of holidays was there an ingathering of family? Cousins? Aunts? Uncles?

RB: Well, no, I don't think so. I don't think so. We were, maybe we had guests over [unclear] at *Pesach* or something like that. I don't really remember that too well.

NP: So your family's reaction to Hitler's appointment as Chancellor in 1933...

RB: I believe, well I said what he said.

NP: Your father?

RB: He said, "Well, nobody will go for that." My father was a liberal Jew in Germany. In fact, he was a member of the, I'll say it in German first, the *Reichsbund Jüdischer Frontsoldaten*. That [chuckling] don't try to write it.

NP: Which means?

RB: Which means the Organization for Jewish Veterans, the Jewish Veterans Organization, and who fought at the front. Yeah, I don't know [unclear] active, how much action he had. I don't, he had, he never fought. [chuckling] I saw one picture of him with, I think the only time he sat on a horse. And he also belonged to the *Zentralverein*, which is quite significant...

NP: What was that?

RB: The name.

NP: The name?

RB: The *Zentralverein*...

NP: *Zentralverein*.

RB: Yeah, with [unclear] it's just called [unclear], CV. Named, *Deutscher Staatsbürger Jüdischen Glaubens*. That means the German Citizen of the Jewish Faith.

NP: I see.

RB: Well, it's somehow significant, the...

NP: And that was called the *Zentralverein*?

RB: Yeah.

NP: O.K.

RB: And of course I know about it because he always got a monthly paper or a weekly or...

NP: And were they active, did he attend meetings?

RB: No, I don't believe. He was interested in medicine, and he attended medicine lectures very often. He assisted well-known physicians occasionally. And I think this one of the contentions in the family. He was always out studying or...

NP: Serving humanity.

RB: Yeah, either serving or trying to learn more.

NP: Did you have any contact with the Council of German Jews, which was called the *Reichsvertretung*?

RB: Huh? *Reichsvertretung*, oh, the *Reichsvertretung*. No, I don't have any-- well I was a kid anyway so...

NP: Right, right, and were you affected by the boycott of 1933 or by the Aryan Paragraph?

RB: Well, only in [unclear]. I don't know what year it was, but they, eventually came, maybe '33, '34, '35, plastered, my father had his sign downstairs on the street, on the wall. And they plastered a sign over it, "Germans Resist. Don't Buy From Jews."

NP: And...

RB: They shouldn't buy any health from the doctor.

NP: Who were *they*? Who were *they*?

RB: That's interesting too. They posted, *they*, the Nazis, they posted a guard--for a while anyway--and then it went back, we lived in the same building--in an S.A. uniform--you know, the cocky uniform. And actually my father had assisted at his birth. So that's of interest.

NP: That was interesting, yes.

RB: Yeah.

NP: Yes. And so they put it...

RB: At first they--he was also a public servant. He had the welfare patients, because the state-assigned doctors. And they took that away from him pretty soon, I think, in 1933, '34. Who knows?

NP: And the laws, the Nuremberg Laws were passed in September of 1935.

RB: Yeah.

NP: Right. And how was your life changed? Or, during this period did the family discuss leaving Berlin?

RB: Yes. It's interesting, yes. As far as I remember, my father had an offer to go to Brazil, to a hospital somewhere there, to São Paulo, I believe. And he [unclear] them whether he should come. He said, "What would I do? I don't know any Portuguese. And what do I know there? I don't know anybody. Let's sit it out." So you know, unfortunately, he never went.

NP: And what year was this?

RB: I believe 1935.

NP: 1935.

RB: Yeah.

NP: So he did not leave Berlin.

RB: No. He never left Berlin. In fact, I don't remember the year--I could look it up, you know--he was arrested. Somebody came, well I think, when, yeah, while I was in school, and took him to *Moabit* Prison, that's the police prison in Berlin.

NP: *Moabit*?

RB: Yeah.

NP: M-O-A-...

RB: M-O-A-B-I-T.

NP: All right.

RB: Police prison.

NP: And then what happened?

RB: As far as I know the--he was accused of illegal abortion. And he never returned. And they, an uncle or a cousin of my mother's, actually was a lawyer in Berlin, well-known. And he was permitted to go to [unclear] and he said, "He hanged himself in the prison with a belt." Which is very unlikely that a German police, in a prison, anyhow, they would allow a prisoner to retain a belt or even shoe laces, you know, whatever they do. But that's what the verdict was, and to top it, I remember not too clearly but, about three or four days or maybe later my mother got a notification that "Dr. Britzmannn can be released. There is no case against him." Now, it's--my brother couldn't remember that. So I don't know how true, it's whether it's my imagination or what. But it's, it fits in.

NP: [Unclear]. There was a conflict there. I mean, as to the truth.

RB: Oh yes, I mean it, certainly with a suicide. He wasn't certainly a suicidal type, and, you know, it's, that's what happened and he is buried in *Weissensee Friedhof*, that's the *Weissensee* Cemetery, the Jewish cemetery in Berlin.

NP: O.K.

RB: It's well-known, it's huge.

NP: But for our transcriber.

RB: W-E-I-S-S-...

NP: W-E-I-S-S-...

RB: E-N-S-E-E.

NP: O.K.

RB: Cemetery, Jewish cemetery.

NP: O.K.

RB: And I visited that when the Germans invited us, later.

NP: Later I'd like you...

RB: So we'll...

NP: To discuss that.

RB: Yes, yes.

NP: And so how did the family continue, at that point?

RB: Well, I remember the, my wife [mother] had to sell all the equipment, of course, which she got pennies for, I believe. And so, and we looked for an apartment on the outside of Berlin. This was a working class neighborhood. And she moved to a, the western part of Berlin and had an apartment there.

NP: Do you know the name of the town? I mean...

RB: Yeah, in Berlin, yeah, *Spessartstrasse*.

NP: And the street? That's the street?

RB: Yeah, that's the street, S-P-E-...

NP: S-P-E-...

RB: S-S-...

NP: S-P-E-S-S-...

RB: A-R-T.

NP: A-R-T.

RB: *Strasse*, S-T-R--you know, street. That's, the western part of Berlin, *Bayrische Viertel* or, they call it, you know, the [unclear] quarter. Anyhow, and there we, my brother and I and, at first, also my grandmother lived with us. And we stayed there until I emigrated and went to England.

NP: And they had the funds to survive?

RB: Yeah, yeah. You know, my parents weren't rich, I'm sure, but it was...

NP: They had a savings.

RB: They had enough to hold out, you know.

NP: Did you maintain contact during this period with non-Jews? Neighbors, non-Jews?

RB: Very little. It was interesting, at one time I was friendly with, and my brother was too, with some non-Jews. My best friend was also a brother of a friend of my brother's. And at first his older brother joined the Nazi movement, I don't know which part of it. And then soon he, oh, I guess it was 1935, '36, he joined the Hitler Youth and that was the end of our friendship. And so I had Jewish friends, again, the brother of another friend of my brother's. We became good friends. We went on vacation together, to camp, or whatever in the summertimes. At one time I remember we also went to Denmark with a Jewish group. But...

NP: At this time? At this time?

RB: Yeah, about 1936, I would say it was. And otherwise I, well, that's not true. In 19--or earlier, I joined a general swim club, because it was good and I liked swimming. And in 19--it must have been 1934 then, we went on route marches, all, military training also, apart from the swimming. And I think that was quite good. And I got a bronze medal when-- at one time...

NP: Oh, wonderful.

RB: In a race. But they came to me after. I was a kid and I didn't care about route marches and going around, but more in a military way.

NP: You call that route marching?

RB: Route march, yeah. That's, and they went also to be...

NP: R-O-O-T?

RB: No, R-O-U-T-E. That's a French word. T-E.

NP: Oh, route march.

RB: You know, like route 95.

NP: Mmm hmm. Right. And then?

RB: Then somebody approached me, he said, "I think you better leave." And so then I joined the Jewish swim club [unclear] then.

NP: And you, what happened to your family during *Kristallnacht*, which was November of 1938?

RB: '38, right. Well, I was at that time employed as an apprentice to a pharmacist, in the busiest part of Berlin near the *Kurfürstendamm*. I was then, anyhow...

NP: If you could help me with...

RB: *Kurfürstendamm*?

NP: The spelling.

RB: Yeah, O.K., it's so difficult to...

NP: I know.

RB: K-U-R-...

NP: K-U-R-...

RB: F-Ü-...

NP: F-Ü-R-...

RB: Yeah. S-T-E-N-...

NP: D-A-M?

RB: D-A-M--I think two M's.

NP: M, two M's.

RB: I think.

NP: All right.

RB: The pharmacy HACO, it's called *Hanscohn*. It was called HACO.

NP: *Hanscohen*, C-O-H-E-N?

RB: C-O-H-N.

NP: All right.

RB: He was my employer.

NP: O.K.

RB: That's...

NP: He was the pharmacist?

RB: Yeah, HACO. And I worked at this place, and which I quite enjoyed. At one time we had tried, or at least my parents had tried, to get me into an optics factory where they made microscopes. Because there was a friend of my father's, or a patient. I don't know. But it didn't work out, and so some, I don't know what connection got me there. And I worked there, which was quite pleasant. And then there was a law passed that all Jewish retail establishments had to paint an about six or eight-inch-high letters the name of the, like *Hanscohn* on the window. How about that? Which in other words means, recognize the Jewish place, and then they say, "Don't Buy From Jews," and the same old story. And then came first the--they painted "JEW" across it at night during the-- now I saw it in the evening. I walked by. That's an interesting side line. We-- they painted it up in red paint, so I got on the phone and called my boss and he came over and we had plenty of turpentine in the store, of course, and we washed it down, the windows. But the next

morning it was up again. They had come back. That was prior--see, all these things were methodically planned, and culminated in the November *Kristallnacht*. Well, anyhow.

NP: Did you witness the...

RB: I was there...

NP: Broken glass?

RB: Yes. I was out there, and in fact the--and I do remember a woman walking past one of the stores that had been broken into and telling a little boy, "Go ahead, boy, why don't you take something?" In a Berlin accent. I don't have to translate it here, but that's what I want to tell you. So that's the...

NP: This was from a...

RB: Has-...

NP: Non-Jew, or a Jew?

RB: Oh, non-Jewish, sure! Certainly, in the general population, yes. And the synagogue where I was *Bar Mitzvahed* in 1934...

NP: Do you know the name of that synagogue?

RB: Yeah, *Prinzregentenstrasse*. That's called the, let's not be technical about it.

NP: We'll make it through. The synagogue of your *Bar Mitzvah*.

RB: Mmm hmm.

NP: O.K.

RB: In 1934.

NP: And the name?

RB: *Prinzregentenstrasse*, P-R-I-N-Z, yeah.

NP: P-R-I-N-Z.

RB: That's Prince Regent, you know.

NP: Oh, Prince Regent.

RB: Yeah, *Regenten*.

NP: All right.

RB: Street, S-T-R-...

NP: So it was the Prince Regent Street Synagogue.

RB: Right, which was one of the more fashionable ones at the time, with Rabbi Swarsinski, who I never met again afterwards, but I talked to him in Wisconsin when I was there visiting.

NP: Oh!

RB: He didn't have time to see me, but he, soon after that he died, actually.

NP: And he...

RB: But he...

NP: S-W-...

RB: A-R-S-I-N-S-...

NP: Oh, K-I?

RB: K--either I or Y.
NP: And he was the rabbi at the time. Was, do you know what kind of..
RB: Well, but the--the two prominent, fashionable rabbis in Berlin were liberal, you know.
NP: [Unclear].
RB: Yeah. He was not Orthodox.
NP: Liberal meaning Reformed? Or..
RB: No, not Reformed.
NP: No, not Reformed?
RB: It's more like Conservative here. And it was he, and the other one was Prinz. But he was I believe more Orthodox at least. More right-wingish. But they were the two fashionable, he was a young rabbi at that time, and then ours, one of ten [unclear] at the same time. He got at that time...
NP: Ten?
RB: Yeah. It was unusual in that way because a lot of people were planning already emigration or something. And to get them in, and I believe that it's right. A lot of synagogues didn't make it any more. I don't know why there were so many. But that was a huge cathedral-type synagogue, beautiful, and I saw it later burn down too.
NP: This was burned during *Kristallnacht*.
RB: Oh, at *Kristallnacht*, yes, the *Prinzregenten*...
NP: The Prince Regent Street Synagogue.
RB: Yeah. There is a story attached to that too. Do you want that now?
NP: Sure, sure.
RB: Which happened later. When I was thrown out of school I was going to what they call *Obersekundareife*, and I mean four years of high school. After that, I just barely made that and I think I was the only Jew in class at that time. Interesting, at the beginning of 1933, '34, still in school, they always, every morning instead of, "Good morning, teacher," it was-- you had to stand up, raise your right arm and say, "*Heil* Hitler." Everybody, including the Jews. But soon it was made, "Jews are not allowed to say that any more," which I didn't mind, of course! And then I had to leave high school. I had to get out.
NP: What, excuse me, I see here written down that at the time that you were at pharmacy school...
RB: That was later.
NP: As an apprentice. Oh, that was later...
RB: That was later.
NP: That you attended art school.
RB: That's when I was employed by HACO.
NP: HACO.
RB: You know, the pharmacy.

NP: Yes.

RB: HACO, and then I had to attend [unclear]. I attended [unclear] pharmacy school, too. The--what I was going to say? Oh, I left there. And of course we were already living at the other-- at the apartment. You know the apartment...

NP: In West Berlin.

RB: In West Berlin, yeah, right. And somehow my brother was enrolled in the private lessons in photography by a Jewish photographer, who lived also [unclear]. And we [unclear] dark room work and...

NP: And what was the...

RB: Dark room.

NP: Dark room, oh dark room.

RB: Yeah, yeah, yeah, mostly that.

NP: Yes, mmm hmm.

RB: And my brother had gone to *Reimann Kunstschule*, which is art school, which later on changed their name to *Kunst und Werken*. That means art and work. It's not important.

NP: Art and work?

RB: Yeah, *Kunst und Werk*, in German.

NP: *Kunst* meaning?

RB: But that--well *Kunst*? Art. *Kunst* is art.

NP: All right. This helps our transcriptionist...

RB: Oh yeah.

NP: While going through.

RB: Well, he was there as a, in painting and sketching and so on. He was a commercial artist eventually. And that's what he was interested in and I loved that. I wanted to join the, that was after HACO finished. I was admitted in the photographic section, photography section of the *Reimannschule*, *Reimann*. That was also of Jewish origin.

NP: All right.

RB: The name *Reimann*, R-E-I-...

NP: R-E-I-...

RB: M-A-N-N.

NP: M-A--*Reimann*...

RB: *Schule*, school.

NP: O.K. That's that.

RB: You know, the *Reimann* Art School.

NP: O.K.

RB: That's just about the best in Berlin at the time, until-- and that's in--there I was only for a few months, and the teacher, a Miss Barleben, which is also not important...

NP: Well, Miss B-A-...

RB: R-L-E-B-E-N...

NP: Barleben.

RB: A German, I mean non-Jewish, very pleasant, a wonderful person. She came over to me and, after they had told me I'd have to leave there too, no more Jews, and said, took me aside and said, "I like your work. Would you like to work for me in my studio? Unpaid of course." And I grabbed the chance and [unclear]. It was wonderful and I liked her, a nice person.

Tape one, side two:

NP: ...B, and this is Natalie Packel, continuing the interview with Mr. Roger Bryan. Mr. Bryan, how did the family continue to exist and make a living at that time?

RB: Well, my father ran, you mean after that?

NP: Yes, yes, and you're describing...

RB: And we had moved to the apart-...

NP: Are we up to *Kristallnacht*?

RB: Oh, yeah, I guess so. Yeah, we're still there. One incident, I guess it was after, between '38 and '39, we got word that the Gestapo was around the neighborhood and it would be a good idea if we didn't stay at home that--for a couple of nights. Then my wife had, not my wife, my mother, had--that's Freudian there, I guess--had friends, non--unmarried, three women, which were safe as far as the Nazis were concerned, at that time at least, and we stayed with them for two nights, my brother and I, stayed with them. But we never found out whether they, anybody ever came looking for us or...

NP: If I may, who warned you? Who forewarned you?

RB: Well, that's a good question. I don't know.

NP: Neighbors?

RB: Yeah, I guess it must have been, neighbors, sure.

NP: Non-Jews?

RB: My mo--maybe some Jews; my mother knew that, lived around in the general neighborhood, not-- next door neighbors. But they lived around. So, you lived on rumors anyway in that town, at that time. Another thing talking about emigration, naturally we, or everybody else, all other Jews, wanted to get out somehow. And it was impossible. My brother had an affidavit to come to the States. They had long, long waiting lists. And his number never came up. I didn't, he got it from an uncle who was in the professor, not an uncle, a cousin's hu--my father's cousin's husband, a Professor Ttycocziner, in, at the Urbana University.

NP: The professor's name, if I may?

RB: Tycocziner.

NP: T-I-...

RB: T-T-Y--I believe.

NP: T-T-Y? All right.

RB: C-O-C-Z-I-N-E-R, I believe.

NP: And he was a professor where?

RB: At Urbana University, U-R-B-A-N-A; it's in the States.

NP: All right, and where was this located? In...

RB: I don't know where Urbana is. It's in the States, anyhow.

NP: But in the States.

RB: In the States, yeah.

NP: All right.

RB: Anybody in that field would probably know him. In fact he was the radio specialist in, I think he worked with Fermi sometimes.

NP: With Fermi?

RB: Fermi, Fermi. Oh, no, I don't know. You better not.

NP: It's all right.

RB: [Unclear]. Anyhow, I had never met him. His wife was my father's sister or cousin, I really don't know. Anyhow, he was good enough to give an affidavit. So my brother with it was to no avail. It didn't help him at all, to come through. And I had nowhere to go. And this Miss Barleben, who employed me...

NP: Yes, the art teacher.

RB: In...

NP: The art teacher?

RB: The, no, the photographer. She had a photo studio where I worked. I met an, she had an assistant, a non-Jewish, of course, assistant, who was very nice. In fact she, I still have one photograph she took of me in 1939, I guess. She had a boyfriend who was an S.S. man, a black S.S. man. And whenever he came visiting to the studio I had to slip into the darkroom. O.K.? So, but she never said a word to him, none. That's how it went there. What I want to say, Miss Barleben had a sister, she was also a wonderful person. And again, everything worked on the "q.t.," who had friends by the name of Parnofsky, who I didn't know--only by name, in Berlin, who were ready to emigrate. And apparently they were very wealthy. And they, by I don't know what means, they transferred a lot of money by the way of Switzerland to England or wherever.

NP: And this was Miss Barleben's sister?

RB: Sister, yeah.

NP: And...

RB: Oh, no, yeah...

NP: Her sister.

RB: Yeah, sister, yeah, friend. And she, this Ilze Barleben, that's the-- you know, arranged, because, I needed a deposit in a British bank of 100 pounds, in order to get into Britain as a trainee. That means young person to take a job that pays at least 30 shillings a week and 100 pounds, British pounds, deposited in a bank for security. Now through the, this person...

NP: This...

RB: Was some way...

NP: This Parnofsky?

RB: Parnofsky, yeah.

NP: Who was related to the...

RB: Who I never met.

NP: Barlebens.

RB: Yeah, who had arrangements for manipulating money or something or other. We sent, and this is a cloak and dagger story. I met a man at the corner of actually *Prinzregentenstrasse*, on there, one day, by, prearranged, had cash in a box, photographic paper box. The, I believe it was about 600 *Marks*, German *Marks*, to give it to him in order to get it transferred to Britain. Now, I didn't know the man. I didn't know who he was. I had anyhow a sign. I met him in the street, gave him the box, and that was the end of that. But within a week we got a telegram from London, "Guarantee available," which means that the money had arrived.

NP: And this was in 1939?

RB: This was in 1939, and the Woburn House, and who looked after refugees...

NP: Wohlburn?

RB: Woburn House, yeah.

NP: W-O-H-L?

RB: No, W-O-B--Wo-...

NP: Oh, Woburn.

RB: Yeah.

NP: Yeah, all right.

RB: B-U-R-N.

NP: That's what we have.

RB: U-R-N.

NP: U-R-N.

RB: Yeah.

NP: O.K.

RB: Woburn House in...

NP: I do re-...

RB: London, yeah. Well, the committee [unclear] people over who worked with us there. And they had arranged--they got this from the--the arrangement with the British government that it can be done. But I didn't have a job that paid 30 shillings a week. So a former girlfriend of mine, who had left for England, went around photographic studios and see if she could get me a job that paid 30 shillings a week. She hit on one guy in Whitechapel, which is a Jewish section of...

NP: Waite?

RB: London. White.

NP: Whitechapel.

RB: Mmm hmm, that's...

NP: Was this a Jewish woman?

RB: Oh yeah. I, well, yes, so she is. [chuckles] So, anyhow, she went around. And she hit on one guy at Studio Suss, S-U-S-S, in Whitechapel, who said yes, he's willing to help, but he can only afford to pay 15 shillings a week.

NP: What was that equivalent to, do you know, at that time? Not very much.

RB: No, it was, maybe even at that time a dollar here is quite different--what it is now about 50 years later. Anyhow, it's not too much. So anyhow, here is the interesting part. A non-Jewish friend of my mother's in Berlin, who was again a wonderful person--I've taken her photograph--I still have the photograph of her before--through her travel had befriended an English woman by the name of Louisa Howey.

NP: H-O-W-E?

RB: Mmm hmm. E-Y.

NP: Oh, Louisa H-O-W-E-Y, O.K.

RB: Who lived in Watford [phonetic] in, near Harrow, London. Anyhow, this woman said, "I agree to keep him here, house him and feed him," so on and forth. And the Woburn House agreed that this would be sufficient to make up for the other 15 shillings a week. So, it was touch and go. And I never went to see this Suss.

NP: Oh.

RB: Like Jew Suss. There is a book called *Jew Süß*³. Anyhow, there is a photographer in the studio and you know because it was ridiculous that the traveling costs would have cost me as much as that. And through this Louisa Howey, somehow I got a job with the Photostat division of Kodak in London. I mean, not much of a job; it paid about 25 shillings a week. But I was happy, and it was Photostat, it was at least the smell of high point developer. This is good.

NP: Stimulating.

RB: And I worked, and I, yeah, and a good break for me. And actually that's where probably I improved my English. I...

NP: If I may...

RB: Yeah.

NP: Your mother, did she stay in West Berlin?

RB: She stayed there, you know, and as soon as war, I got out about five, six weeks before war broke out. Then that severed all mail connection with Britain. And I couldn't communicate. So she wrote only to my brother in Chile. He was on the high seas when war broke out, on the way to Chile. But she corresponded with him and I've still got, the peculiar thing, my brother sent me those letters, typed letters, some of them years later. I started reading and I haven't got the heart. Anyway...

NP: So you were with Kodak...

RB: I was with Kodak for a while, yes. They were nice to me and they--until "enemy aliens" in Britain had to report for registration and eventually, on the 16th of May I believe it was, a guy came to the door, police. A report was taken there and no way of getting out of it. [unclear] I had a friend who worked at the home office somewhere where--"Oh, it won't even be for a short while." [Unclear] anyhow. Then I went to, you know I

³German book *Jud Süß* by Feuchtwanger. The English translation is "Jew Süss".

worked on the [unclear] barracks. They put us in different camps. [Unclear]. And then the *Dunera*, now that's another long...

NP: This is the ship...

RB: The ship, yeah.

NP: That you were on.

RB: *HMT Dunera*. That was a converted troop ship.

NP: Excuse me, that was *HMT*, and then I, you showed...

RB: Here.

NP: Mr. Bryan is showing me a book, whose title is *The Dunera Scandal*, by Cyril Pearl, "A deplorable and regrettable mistake." -Winston Churchill

RB: O.K.

NP: About the *Dunera*, and where were you heading at this time, at the time?

RB: Well that's a peculiar story too. We were herded onto the ship. First of all, the married people said, "Don't worry. Women and children will follow on another transport soon," which of course never did. Another ship, the *Arandora Star*...

NP: *Aran--A-R-A-N--*...

RB: *D-O-R-A*.

NP: *D-O-R-A. Star*.

RB: Mmm hmm.

NP: O.K.

RB: On the--was torpedoed, and they lost more than half the people. They were partly German prisoners of war, and partly German refugees, internees. And I think two--I know I've got the numbers here, but were lost at sea. And they put them back on the *Dunera* about a week later and--these people--on the boat. And we, it was at least 90% Jews--German, Austrian, maybe a few, a mixed crowd and a few non-Jews, Germans they are, ex-Communists and what, and had escaped from Hitler. When we were embarking at Liverpool, the, they stood there, guards around us, and as soon as we got onto the ship, they took all belongings away from us. They ripped the cases and then people--papers, photographs--were thrown overboard. And so a couple of people were punched because they didn't move fast enough. And it was our British "brethren."

NP: All by the British brethren.

RB: And the ship, we were behind barbed wire for eight weeks. On the way, which we thought to...

NP: In the ship itself?

RB: Yeah. The--we were told, oh, by rumor, that this is going to Canada, the ship, or the U.S. Anyhow, we went on the Irish Sea the second night. A torpedo hit us, but it didn't explode. There were two noises, resonations or bumps, whatever they were there.

NP: By whom?

RB: Ger--well, this came out, of course, later on. We didn't know. But there was no explosion, except there was panic. They had Italian and German prisoners, above us, on

a deck above us. And they tried to pull down some of the barbed wire. And the troops threatened to shoot them. And they, anyhow, later on it came out, by a German U-boat command, but how true all this is has never been proven, that they shot a torpedo at us and it didn't go off. It went underneath...

NP: The British ship?

RB: The ship. No, no, no, the Germans.

NP: The Germans.

RB: The Germans, yeah, submarine.

NP: Yeah.

RB: And the sea was pretty rough and they zig-zagged along and avoided them, without convoy. The convoy had left because the faster ships could go without convoy. And eventually, after days, it got warmer and warmer and we said, "This isn't gonna be Canada." You know, it was the coast of Africa. We went through [unclear] the Gold Coast down there. And then there was the war against the French at Dakar at the time. And the one for, yeah?

NP: Excuse me. The condition of the ship, the food, the sleeping facilities...

RB: Terrible.

NP: The sanitation?

RB: Terrible, terrible. The only thing in my favor was that I was young. There were a lot of young fellows. And partly we took it as a great adventure, for what it was. It's...

NP: Did you have something to eat?

RB: Yes. The food was terrible, as far as I remember. Soup. And the hygienic facility was terrible. They put buckets in there, and when the sea was rough you can imagine what happened. And sleeping, we--it was so overcrowded, it was--I've got the figures if you want. I mean, we can look it up later. About three times as many on the ship as it was designed for. We slept, first some on the floor, some on benches, some on the mess table. The mess tables mostly were passing through the floor. And then they brought out some hammocks. I slept first on the--on a bench. And then let some other internee to, an older man--he couldn't handle the hammocks. So I got a hammock, which was a lot better. And I slept in a hammock. And conditions were just impossible, which I described in my book and [unclear] from here. The worst thing, well not the worst, it was generally terrible. And then we got one piece of soap for ten people to last three weeks or something like that. And then they had taken every--they had stolen everything--jewelry, passports, emigration papers--people had thrown overboard. And I was in one incident that was funny. And I carried an attaché case. And Louisa Howey had sent me for my birthday, for my, that was my 19th birthday, on the Isle of Man. She said, "What can I send you?" I said, "Send me my Boy Scout's uniform." I had joined the Boy Scouts in London. But Rover Scouts, that's, it was over 18. And, "Send me that." And she sent me that. And some food and some sardines and something else to eat or too, I believe some candy. And yeah,

shaving equipment. Anyhow, then I took that in my attaché case. They took that away from me too, of course. But it was kept behind barbed wire on the deck, near where we were looking out. And one of the--it was a former judge of the internees, was walking with a cane. So when the guar--went the other way, they were going up and down watching, I saw my case on top of the heap, some of it, all the other luggage. And I asked him, "Can I borrow your cane?" Two of my friends held the barbed wire apart. I pulled the case in. Everything was fine. Oh yes, a couple of books were in there too.

NP: Oh!

RB: Paperbacks, which was very good on the way. We had something to read. And I got this and distributed whatever we could eat from the case. And I was fortunate, one of the few to get toothpaste or something. But of course that didn't last too long either. The washing, we only could only wash with salt water was in there. And not enough to eat, not enough to drink, whatever it was. It was [phone ringing] I can give that to you to read if you like. And at last and then we got to Cape Town, so we knew for sure [chuckling]. [Unclear]and some of the soldiers absconded, didn't get back on time. They were loaded with jewelry, which they had stolen from us, and money, too, things like that some of them had. And got drunk and never made the ship back. And then we went across the Indian Ocean.

NP: Did you stay long in South Africa?

RB: In, what, the ship?

NP: Yes.

RB: No.

NP: You just came...

RB: Just, just overnight or...

NP: Went there...

RB: Two nights, maybe. I don't remember. It was a beautiful view from the ship as we left from Cape Town, but first we were up on the Gold Coast and then we put on some water, eventually, we got from somewhere. And then we started across the Indian Ocean. And somehow they got newspapers, [unclear], somewhere from the-- and it says, "Raiders in Indian Ocean," which means German ships were in, submarines, [unclear], whatever. And the Germans, up above the deck above us, the German prisoners, saw this, and we found out later they tried to give signals in the sea where at night, putting light, you know, through the bulls-eyes. But nothing, nothing happened. We got across and the Germans and Italians, the prisoners of war, were taken off. We stopped at Perth, yeah, Perth, and then Adelaide, and they were taken off there.

NP: A-D-E--Adelaide?

RB: Ade--Adeliede, D-E-L-I-E-D-E. [Adelaide]

NP: Right.

RB: They were taken off, fortunately we [unclear] to another camp. And we went on to...

NP: Do you know the name of the camps that they were taken to or...

RB: I think Tatura.

NP: T-A-...

RB: T-U-R-A. Maybe there was another camp also. I can look it up in this book.

Yeah...

NP: The prisoners were sent.

RB: The, yeah, prisoners of war.

NP: German and Italian.

RB: Yeah, yeah.

NP: Prisoners of war.

RB: Yeah, they were taken off, yeah. It's maybe, I don't know, it's possibly--we had our leaders. There were some very young ones, anyhow, complained which you know, how the only decent person on the British side was the medical officer. And he tried to help a little bit. And he got several doctors aboard and he helped in sick bay and so forth. On the, I think, two people got, one jumped overboard on the day that his visa expired. And another one, I think they had a fight with another one and he had a heart attack and died on board ship. He, I...

NP: Were there any children on the ship?

RB: No.

NP: No.

RB: No, well, unless you call 15--16-year-olds children. Sure, now. I was 19. And I eventually, I don't know how, I got a job in the galley, preparing food. That was already--but I don't know how I got it. Yeah, got there and helped there, and of course you got fed properly, more quantity anyway. And when we got to Sydney Harbor we saw the bridge, the [unclear]. We in the kitchen, we threw all the kitchen equipment overboard. Reactions!

NP: Sure.

RB: And, well there...

NP: How many days were you aboard ship, do you think?

RB: I probably, I could look it up. But it's about eight weeks.

NP: Eight weeks.

RB: Eight weeks, under those conditions. You know, I don't, no change. We wash our underwear in salt water once in a while and we have to wait till it dries. And it's a lot of detailed stories which actually later on worse then. They took it to court in London and they made a long report and so on. That's where the quotation comes also, you know, the...

NP: From Winston Churchill?

RB: Winston Churchill, well I guess he made...

NP: From the book.

RB: Yeah, that, well the book quoted him...

NP: Yes.

RB: That it was a “deplorable mistake” interning us, altogether. So anyway, and there the Australian troops, they expected prisoners of war, yeah, [unclear] but they soon found out. They were very nice, very pleasant. And we got on a train to go west. This is all the other end of New South Wales. And they gave us box lunches and went on and eventually they, very talkative and right, the guide, and they couldn’t understand the whole situation. And very helpful and in a way. In one case one of the soldiers said, one of, “Well here lad, hold my gun,” his rifle, for a while, whilst he rolled a cigarette.

NP: They were trusting you.

RB: Oh, yeah, eventually. We talked to them and they were human, *Menschen*, you know, and the others were what we call a *Auswurf* [an undesirable person]. You know what it means? The...

NP: *Auswurf*?

RB: *Auswurf*? You know this word? Yeah, that’s Yiddish [German].

NP: A--how shall we spell that?

RB: Ah, you don’t need it.

NP: All right.

RB: Now they were partly the retired and ex-retired soldiers, well, not a retired, a low medical grade or they couldn’t--had been on the front and partly wounded. They were disgruntled and partly, some of them are being evacuated from Europe too, and, at Dunkirk. You know the history. And they made all sorts of excuses afterwards, but the worst one was one of the commanding officers of the squad that was court-martialed later on, regardless. So on that trip to--which of course is quite interesting to us--we happened to be away from the ship in a friendly country at least and we saw kangaroos jumping along the railroad and it’s interesting. Sixteen hours on the train, we went to Hay, New South Wales.

NP: To where?

RB: Hay, H-A-Y.

NP: Hay, New South Wales?

RB: Yeah.

NP: All right.

RB: Sydney is New South Wales, but which is part of Australia. And that was just the edge of the desert, four miles from the desert. And as we got there the first night right away we experienced a sand storm. And one of the soldiers on horseback and that was wild west for us, anyway. And the camps were prepared in a desolate part.

NP: So very different from Berlin.

RB: Yeah. But any young can take it much easier. And later on we had friends and...

NP: If I may, did you have any news while on board ship or once you landed, of what was happening in the world?

RB: It's...

NP: As far as...

RB: Well, I don't think they had...

NP: Germany?

RB: They, no, no. In fact, nobody even in England knew much about what was going on in the camps and so forth. And those that knew didn't tell. If you read the book, *The Abandonment of the Jews*...

NP: Yes.

RB: Then you know what happened. The ones that knew, didn't say. And, no, we had no, till we, even when we got into the camp, we...

NP: In Australia you mean.

RB: In Australia, at Hay, behind barbed wire again...

NP: Behind barbed wire.

RB: Yes, with the Aussie troops and with a guard tower with a machine gun on top, but they just followed orders, and they were very pleasant later on. The camp, camp life in it's--excuse me, in itself, was getting organized very well. We had very many capable persons, scientists and we...

Tape two, side one:

NP: ...two, July the 9th, 1996. This is Natalie Packel, interviewing Mr. Roger Bryan. [tape off then on] Mr. Bryan, would you continue to describe your life in Australia?

RB: In Australia. Now, as far as Australia is concerned, we never got out of the camp except once was an excursion to the Murrumbidgee River, which is nearby.

NP: M-A-R-A-M?

RB: M-U-...

NP: M-U--Muram, bigee, B-I?

RB: B-I-G-E-E. Something [Murrumbidgee]. An aboriginal name, I guess. The river, that was exhilarating because it was a change of scenery and we could swim in the river and there were eucalyptus trees on either side of the river. And that was quite an experience. I had various jobs in the camp. At one time I was a gardener for the Australian commander, his house, around his house. And that was another opportunity to get out of the camp. Then, in the camp, I was a mess orderly at one time. Then I was a medical assistant, somewhere, as a nurse, a male nurse sometimes. Then I had a job in the kitchen helping. As a matter of fact, apart from the excellent camp university that developed, because we had many doctors and scientists and lawyers among us, there were some excellent cooks and bak- [tape off then on]

NP: And so there were excellent cooks and bakers.

RB: Yes, and that benefited us. And we had good chemists too. Because we, with all the load of mutton, they had a lot of fat. And he managed to get some chemicals and made soap out of the sheep's fat, which helped. It--the activities--but the most important activities were, of course, the camp university. And I took some English classes there. And a couple of poems I still remember to this day that I...

NP: Poems?

RB: Poems, yes.

NP: Oh.

RB: One by Milton on his blindness. I still remember it fully. And Longfellow, which I do remember as a young fellow. Well, anyhow, that, and I remember lectures by an Austrian, Doctor Eirich. He was an atomic scientist.

NP: Doctor...

RB: Eirich.

NP: I-R-I-S-H?

RB: No.

NP: I-...

RB: E-I-...

NP: E-I-...

RB: R-...

NP: Yes.

RB: I-C-H.

NP: Eirich. He was an atomic scientist?

RB: He was an atomic scientist. We had a Doctor Wolf, he was a chemist. We had industrialists. We had...

NP: And the countries of their origin, do you know? Dr. Wolf, Dr. Eirich?

RB: Germany, Germany.

NP: Germany.

RB: No, Eirich is Austrian. I think he's still around. I'm not sure. And that helped a lot, because mail was terrible in the beginning and we were--had a pro forma sheet only to use, "don't write between the lines." And certain things to add and certain were limited in how much you could write and how often you could write. That changed eventually and one day, or it was after several weeks I think, we got mail in. And I got...

NP: Did you hear from your brother?

RB: Eventually. I got mail from England from, actually the friend of Louisa Howey's who got me into the Boy Scouts. He wrote me that Louisa died in an air raid. The house where we lived was bombed with a direct hit. And that was tough to take at the time because we'd gotten pretty close.

NP: It was a loss for you.

RB: Yeah.

NP: And so this was in 19-...

RB: It so happens that I had everything. I still had there and photographic equipment and I lost it of course with the house. And the raids were going on--on London. We heard what the situation was there. About Germany, of course, we didn't hear anything. I heard from my brother directly or, I don't know whether he sent me on any letters that my mother had written to him, but she was always concerned about me, the "*Das Kind*," the child.

NP: Of course. And your grandmother at that time?

RB: They, I knew, I guess I must have heard it through my brother. They had put her in an old age home in Berlin. But she died there eventually. I don't know any details or what.

NP: The Archive at Gratz College has a *Gedenkbuch*...

RB: Yes?

NP: Which took about 20 years to compile. They are, listed in there are names of families that lived in all parts of Germany and what eventually happened to them. Some are--their whereabouts are unknown, but if they perished or where they were transported, that's all listed. If that might be of any help to you in any way...

RB: Well, it may be worth checking in. The German government asked us to, I mean they gave all those [the camp University], the Berlin government anyway, wherever you originated, invited us in. Lore, how long, what year was it? Oh, she isn't there, makes no difference. Anyhow, it must have been eight, nine years ago--I can check it--to come.

The first year we turned them down. We didn't want to go. We didn't want to. They wrote again the following year, and we said, "Look, let's go. And at least I can do the cemetery and see what..." And then we did. And it's...

NP: What year was this in?

RB: About eight years...

NP: About eight years, oh...

RB: About eight, yeah. In the eighties, somewhere, well, maybe in, I can...

NP: Were there any neighbors that you knew?

RB: No. No, I'll tell you something else that's, I mean, at other times before that actually when I, well what--or do you want to continue chronologically?

NP: Well, perhaps we'll backtrack.

RB: You want to go on?

NP: Yes, that would be good. That would be good. And so you were at the...

RB: O.K.

NP: University.

RB: I took on and off in case it, yeah, it can be relaxed. I regret actually that I didn't spend more time in that way. And we get lazy and we'd play around with the kids. And they had football teams and soccer teams rather, there, and whatnot, and shows, which were produced and actually written in the camp by someone there.

NP: What were, do you remember some of the...

RB: Ray Martin was one of the guys that's well-known.

NP: A producer.

RB: Yeah, he was a producer and I guess he was an actor later on, too, and a movie director.

NP: Do you remember the name of some of the shows, or...

RB: Yeah, I, and they wrote poems, a lot of poetry were written in their hey days or gay days and. actually making fun of the situation. But it was very, some very good pianists we had there and also the officers, the Australian officers were invited and they came and enjoyed it. And I mean the people, the internees knew how to make it livable conditions. Otherwise, the food improved, and well, they couldn't improve the weather, but anyhow it was, anyhow people wanted to get out and occasionally one or two managed to get-- make use of a visa that they had or whatever. And the transport eventually, then there came word that you may be allowed to join the British Army, the Pioneer Corps, and that's one way of getting back to Britain, which was being bombed at that time. So I considered, I didn't, I applied only because I wanted to get out in the worst way, whatever plan it was. And there, one small transport, a few left, and one was sunk, with a loss of life. I don't know if I can find out the details. But ours was the *Sterling Castle*, a British ship, eventually. And this time, no barbed wire. And we...

NP: Excuse me. If I may...

RB: Yes.

NP: Back up a little. Before you left, or all of the time that you were in the camp in Australia, did anyone come from the community?

RB: Yes.

NP: To--they did, to...

RB: We had some visit-...

NP: Organize?

RB: Well, the first one...

NP: Well, did you hear of, oh, go ahead.

RB: The first one I remember was a Reverend Twig. He was non-Jewish, of course.

NP: Mmm hmm.

RB: And he was also a Boy Scout leader. And he, therefore, he talked to us and he, I believe he gave us, sent us some items which we wanted in the end, or needed. And I personally didn't see any other from the Jewish community. Funny thing happened, it was known, of course, to the Jews in Melbourne and Sydney. And in the Melbourne community, eventually, I got a letter from Ilse Dreyfus.

NP: Oh yes.

RB: From Berlin. Ilse, L--Ilse, E-L-S-E.

NP: Oh E-L.

RB: No.

NP: That's I-L.

RB: No, no, that's right, I-L-S-E, sorry.

NP: All right. Here we go. That's right.

RB: Dreyfus. And she said that, I believe that she saw my name on the list of internees that they had at the community center or whatever. And is there anything that she could do for me? But this Dreyfus was a member of the same dancing school I attended in Berlin when we went dancing. You know, ballroom dancing. And it was really funny. I never saw her, and I wrote back and I thanked her, I believe, and that I didn't need anything. And I lost contact with her. But it was rather--I don't know what year I really took dancing school. It must have been in '37, '38.

NP: But bef--ORT, the organization, ORT...

RB: Yes?

NP: Or HIAS, Joint Distribution Committee, were they in contact with...

RB: I believe eventually but...

NP: Not at that point.

RB: Not with me personally. I had no...

NP: I see.

RB: Contact with--they had certain--well they used to, the British government when they sent a major in--who happened to be Jewish too--oh, what's his name? I can look it up too. I have it on record [Major Julian Layton].

NP: It's all right.

RB: And he got things moving. And especially with the court, we took them to court and they got court-martials, the officers, from the *Dunera* ship.

NP: Who took them to court?

RB: Well, the British government, but it took a long time. And we, lawyers, got together and wrote a long detailed report about the treatment. And one day, in fact we got delivery, luggage, to the camp. It was all torn cases and most of the stuff, and no valuables. Of course, they were missing. It's pretty rough the way it was. And...

NP: Could you describe your next journey?

RB: Yes, well, that's-- that only took five weeks back to England. We went through the Panama Canal, a different route, through the Panama Canal then, and, well, we were free on board, aboard ship. Not FOB. And that was, we were over 150 of us or so. And we got to England and went to Ilfracombe in Devon.

NP: I-L...

RB: F-...

NP: F-R-E?

RB: No, F-R-A.

NP: F-R-A...

RB: C-O-M-B-E.

NP: M-B-E, in Devon.

RB: Yeah.

NP: Right.

RB: In the south of England. And then there we, there was an induction center and training for about four weeks for the British Army, for the non-combatant unit, the Pioneer Corps, which had, other than the Jewish refugees that they finally admitted, they were the dregs of the army. I, in fact, when I was, my first station was to Glasgow, Scotland. And the sergeant we had there, who was a Scotsman, and he had been in the trash disposal unit for the city of Paisley, I think, which is just outside of Glasgow. So that's the account. He wasn't a bad guy, but not a brain surgeon. And...

NP: And...

RB: Yeah?

NP: Where, were you shipped somewhere then or what were your duties at this point?

RB: There in Scotland, in the Pioneer Corps, we were employed mostly in building camps, army camps, erecting huts. And most of our job, most of the time, was wheeling concrete and making, I mean, tough, very tiring, from morning to night and [unclear] machines. And also building them and eventually I got a--I passed a test for carpentry, which gave me a little extra pay--good. And then we had a job in town to paint some [unclear] hall somewhere in town. And I went out with that group but I, eventually, I made lunch. Well, lunch, made tea, at the canteen there. The Salvation Army had a

canteen and we got friendly and I ended up in--making three-course meals for our guys. So that I didn't have to paint then. That lasted a while. And then we moved. In the meantime, the first night, the first weekend, we went to the Jewish Institute in Glasgow, who had, I guess it was a Sunday, for our boys in the forces, you know, entertainers, the food and drink and the dance. And then I said to a friend of mine, "I'm gonna dance with her." That was it!

NP: The rest is history!

RB: Well, the funny thing is my wife, later she became my wife, said to her girlfriend there, "Oh yes, I danced with one of the boys that came just back from Australia," meaning, came from Australia, not knowing my history, my background, which we cleared up afterwards. And...

NP: Could you describe the Jewish community in Glasgow? Or...

RB: Well that, yeah, that was a fairly large community, a few thousand, and several synagogues and I got into that after I got out of the army, in the army, because in photography, I eventually with a partner, we started a firm there later.

NP: If I may back up.

RB: Yeah.

NP: When were you out of the army, with the British?

RB: That took a long time.

NP: It did.

RB: Yes. I went from there--we had several stations in different places in England. In fact, I came back to Glasgow in order to get married and got a special leave in September, '43. And on my wife's 21st birthday. I thought you may be interested to know I was 22, in uniform, and we had three *rabbonim*. One nice old man with a gray beard, Rabbi Atlas, and one British Army...

NP: Chaplain?

RB: Chaplain.

NP: Chaplain.

RB: Chaplain, and one Polish army chaplain. I don't know why he was there. Somebody with him.

NP: Any names that you might remember?

RB: Not the others, no, no. I don't remember any of those names. My, oh well, it's a funny incident if you want, are interested. My--Lore's uncle, that's her reason for being in Glasgow...

NP: Oh.

RB: She was evacuated from Liverpool where she lived. It was a protected area near the ocean, so she went to live with the uncle in Glasgow and he arranged more or less the wedding, who was there. And he told me, "It's a good idea if you learn the *Harae-at-Mekudeshet-Lee*," you know, the vows.

NP: Right.

RB: So I did. I didn't know much about it. And when we stood under the *chuppah* [traditional wedding canopy] and Rabbi Atlas started *Harae-at*, I continued, instead of waiting to repeat, I said the whole *Harae-at-Mekudeshet-Lee*. I know it now! And he turned to one of the other rabbis and he said, "A *Gelernter* [Yiddish for a learned man]?" Which I guess you know what it means.

NP: Yes, yes.

RB: And it was embarrassing in a way, but a good laugh afterwards.

NP: And...

RB: That was at a kosher hotel in Glasgow.

NP: In Glasgow.

RB: In Glasgow, the Queen Hotel in Glasgow, in the--it doesn't exist anymore. In the Jewish section, like Whitechapel in London. This was the Gorbals in Glasgow.

NP: What was it? What did you...

RB: Gorbals, the Gorbals is the district.

NP: Oh, O.K. And can you spell that?

RB: G-O-R-B-A-L-S.

NP: The Gorbals. O.K., it was a district, right?

RB: Yeah, a district in Glasgow, yeah.

NP: O.K., and so you were married and, but still in the service.

RB: Sure, after that we went for a honeymoon to London. Never mind the bombs...

NP: Yes.

RB: That was the V-2 at that, eh, the V-1 at the time, which they called the doodlebugs. The--every one, and in fact we were at the Cumberland Hotel and there was air raid alarm and we stood as suggested, by others. We stood in the doorway of a closet. And the thing came down and shattered several windows all over but otherwise was not much harm done and, well, you just carry on. That's your--we always considered how it must have hit somebody else. And so you carry on. That was the general attitude at that time.

NP: And where did you live after that?

RB: Well, I was in the army.

NP: Well, yes.

RB: I was still in the army and well, certain, I was transferred to Oxford, I was stationed, which I liked very much, with the--so Lore on the phone said, "This looks very permanent here," and so she came down and got a job in an ammunitions factory and worked on airplanes or whatever it was. But a couple of weeks later we were shifted down to the south of England. That was D-Day then.

NP: Yes.

RB: They went across and we were ready in the embarkation center and from the embarkation center I got a phone call to report to the orderly room I am to go to London

and report to GHQ Second Echelon, Prisoner of War Section. When I got there the Major or whatever he was said, "Oh, I'm glad to see you. And we had the intention of starting a Photostat section for the War Office here but that's been scratched since then. So since we see you're a linguist we can make use of you in the enemy Prisoner of War Section here." Which, by then I stayed in London all through...

NP: How many languages did you speak?

RB: Well, only--I speak only German and English, some French. And very little Spanish. [chuckles] So, that I didn't mind. I mean we had the air raids and all that. You get, it's amazing how you get used to it. Because you become fatalistic, you know, so that's, eventually--then this unit went to Belgium. We were transferred to Belgium and to Brussels. The people, the unit in Brussels, from there--it was a documentation unit really--from there we went to Louvain. When I was sent to Louvain...

NP: L--how do you spell that?

RB: L-O-U-V-A-I-N. That's...

NP: In France or...

RB: A few miles, no, a few miles from Brussels.

NP: It's still in Belgium.

RB: Yeah, a few miles from Brussels. That was a Prisoner of War camp. Well, I, actually I--that's where it was I heard that they needed interpreters [unclear]. And that carried the rank of Staff Sergeant, so I was promoted and was in the Prisoner of War. There are two incidents of interest. First of all, there were about four-and-a-half thousand prisoners there, all mixed Germans. And then one day I was supposed to address the crowd and give them instructions about something. And I was going up on the podium. But I picked a German translator, you know. And he, he said, "You tell them. They'll not listen to me." He said, "If I think," I didn't really want these bastards [chuckles], to know. And that worked out fine, but they had work groups that worked, went outside the camp to, whatever they were told to do. And they marched them back about 4:00 or 5:00 in the afternoon. And I stood outside my office at that time. And one of those from the ranks shouted, "Britzmann!" So I told the corporal, "Take the man's name and tell him to report to my office," which he did. And eventually the guy comes, a big strapping fellow, stood to attention and I said, I told him to relax. And he said, "I am very"--"Well," I said, I asked him, "Well what were you shouting about when you were marching in there?" He said, "I'm very sorry. I'm very sorry. I should have known better. But it's you, it's you, isn't it?" That was the guy who sat in high school the last two years next to me.

NP: Oh!

RB: And then, so we had a little talk. He told me so many got killed, you know, people who were from our class got killed at the eastern front or so, you know, which didn't move me too much I told him. And then he told, I asked him if he needed anything and I got him a shaver and some toothpaste or whatever it was. And I never saw him again after

that. He happened to be a decent guy, I remembered. He gave me that little, a few minutes between...

NP: [Unclear.]

RB: Getting his name and realizing who he was, I remembered that he was one of the last to join the Hitler Youth in that class. And that was '36, about eight years before that, you know, seven or eight years. And so that was it. Another coincidence, I write this in my book about that, this, I hitchhiked once to, or tried to hitchhike to Brussels, from Louvain. And stood there and a jeep, a GI jeep, picked me up. And we got talking and I noticed he had a bit of a German accent. And I asked him about where he came from. Anyhow, he said, "From Plauen."

NP: Oh.

RB: So I told him my wife came from there and said what her name was. Ah! Manfred her brother was his best friend there for many years.

NP: Oh, what a coincidence.

RB: And I told her about the coincidence and well, I never saw him again either. So, after that I, stop me if you...

NP: No, that's all right.

RB: Want to cut it short.

NP: The names of these two fellows that...

RB: Yeah, that...

NP: One was...

RB: That was *Oberstabsfeldwebel*, that sergeant major.

NP: Ober--F-E-L-D?

RB: Stab, S-T-A-B.

NP: Ober-...

RB: Stab-...

NP: S-T-A-B.

RB: E-A-B, S--F-E-L-D.

NP: Ah, F-E-L-D. E-R?

RB: No W-E-B-E-L.

NP: Oberstab-...

RB: B, B, not D.

NP: Oh, B. O.K.

RB: -feldwebel.

NP: I'll re-write this, yes.

RB: Yeah, you know, *Webel*, which means sergeant major. Stuber, Gert Stuber, G--oh I don't know what its name--that's not important. So, this...

NP: So there were two incidents of people that...

RB: Yeah, the other one, the GI, his name was Purilis [phonetic] if you want that, from Plauen. So, [phone ringing] if it's somebody for me let me know. The--I went from there--Yeah, coming out?

NP: Are you all right?

RB: Yeah, I'm fine.

NP: Good. O.K., fine. No I'm...

RB: Now, then I got a transfer to Neuengamme concentration camp.

NP: All right.

RB: I don't know if you ever heard of it.

NP: Yes.

RB: Neuengamme. Do you want it spelled?

NP: N-E-U?

RB: N-E-U. N, no.

NP: N-U?

RB: N--no, no, it was right.

NP: N-E-U.

RB: N-E-U, Neu--E-N-...

NP: G?

RB: G-A-M-M-E, concentration camp.

?: Would you like to join us for lunch? My son is coming right now.

NP: Oh no thank you. I don't want to keep you. No, I'm, this was just perfect, really.

?: Because I set the table in the kitchen...

NP: I don't want to...

?: Thinking you might join us in the kitchen.

NP: I thank you very much. Would you want to stop for lunch? Or are we towards-

Tape two, side two:

NP: And we continue with the interview of Mr. Roger Bryan. [tape off, then on]

RB: Yeah, Neuengamme.

NP: Neuengammen?

RB: Neuengamme, yeah.

NP: -gamme, concentration camp.

RB: Camp, right.

NP: Right.

RB: Well, I was in the intelligence office there, and we had an assortment of Germans from civilians, ordinary civilians, industrialists, prisoners of war, regular army, S.S., party officials, whatever, in there. I don't know the full number. It was well over 1,000. And mainly for interrogation and documentation. And, actually, in the end mainly, mostly wanted, maybe for a request. Somebody says, "Do you have," [door closes] [unclear]. That's my son. [tape off, then on] So, that went on for, in fact, I got friendly with the local *KRIPO* [*Kriminalpolizei*], which is the criminal police, because we had reason to keep them. We had a theft in our kitchen, I think stores and somebody from local and we went in there and the former S.S. huts, which were about a half a mile away from there...

NP: S.S. what?

RB: Huts, where they lived. They had, you know, the personnel, when it was, this is a former concentration camp...

NP: Yes, yes.

RB: With electrified barbed wire.

NP: Yes.

RB: And so I went along with him on that raid and the women, former girlfriends of--helped us, a German policeman was [unclear] rough, the German way, not like a policeman normally would act in this country. And he got on the--he drew his gun and said, "You whores, S.S. whores, get out of here!" They were lying in bed and under the mattress they found several bags of coffee and [unclear] and they [unclear]. And I also went to the police in Hamburg and made a report there about some of the goings on in the camp. And I got friendly with one of the...

NP: Excuse me, what year was this?

RB: This was 1945, yeah, because--and I remember when I was in Brussels, it was VE day, and VJ day and VE day, you know, Victory in Japan and Victory in Europe, which was riots in, you know, just wild.

NP: What were the streets like? What of the displaced persons? Could you describe?

RB: Where?

NP: After the war, when you were in Germany.

RB: In, well, I didn't see any displaced persons. I was with the German prisoners. And then we had in there all civilians and that. I didn't see any...

NP: People that were coming...

RB: Mainly...

NP: Out of the concentration camps...

RB: No, no.

NP: To resettle?

RB: Concentration camps, no.

NP: You didn't.

RB: But there weren't any...

NP: Not where you were.

RB: DP camps where I was, no, not around there.

NP: All right.

RB: No, not around there. And we were busy with our stuff, you know, and, oh, I remember something. In a funny incident in--we went to Hamburg at night pretty often, in the Sergeants' club or whatever. And I went on a trolley car in Hamburg again. And I stood there and, of course, a British uniform. And I had heard a woman talking to the driver. And I stood there in front, you know, it was crowded. And she said to him, "I," in German, of course, and she thought I, nobody could understand her. I mean, at least I couldn't, you know, and she said, "I think it's terrible how our German girls throw themselves at these Tommies." And she was ready to get off and I said in my best German, I said, "You don't have to worry. Nobody will make a mistake with you." And I got a kick out of it. I don't know what she thought. Anyhow, the--in the camp, I had befriended a guy by the name of Ehrhardt. He was...

NP: Ehrhardt?

RB: Yeah. He lived in Hamburg, some part of Hamburg, and he was an industrialist like a...

NP: How do you spell his name?

RB: E-H-R-H-A-R-D-T, I believe. [tape off, then on] I'll tell you, as short as I can I'll tell you.

NP: Yes.

RB: He gave me a report that the S.S. officers in the camp there, they are still trying to be top dog and control the inmates. And I think they even managed to get a telephone in there somehow. Anyhow, they knew that he was not pro-Nazi. He was anti. We had a group come from Nuremberg to the camp, interviewing the prisoners--that was from the German defense--because it had to be proven that the S.S. was a criminal organization around there. And he was going to give evidence or something. Anyhow, he got word from another friend of his, "Don't stay in your bunk tonight." So he slept somewhere else. In the meantime, his wife in Hamburg got notified by police. They had to tell her that her husband died or--in camp, the night before. In other words, not only did

they intend to string him up, but they got word out to--from the--that he was--but he wasn't, he was very well. And later on, when I went to Nuremberg, to the trials, I got him to appear as a witness.

NP: I see.

RB: [Unclear.] They only would take deposition from there--they didn't, it didn't fit in to have him testify in court actually, but they took depositions from him. And I was very pleased. And that was, it's another coincidence there, doing documentation, if you're interested.

NP: Yes, yes, anything that you wish to say.

RB: O.K., O.K., anyhow. There, in one of those big huts, the Nissen huts they were called, in the British Army, they, we were set up for documentation and people walking from table to table around and giving--and one corporal came to me and said, "The prisoner wants to address you." In fact, he said, well, in German, it's a very stilted German [unclear] a very stiff [unclear]. Well, I don't have to bother you with the German. Anyhow, I said, "Give me his records." Then I looked at it and I realized who he was. And he came to me and he said, "I would like to be permitted," in German of course, "...to put a question to the Mr. Staff Sergeant." And I say, which made me chuckle inside. Anyhow, this was a--well, he said, "Have you ever been to Berlin?" And I said, "Never in my life." And then, so he turned away and said, "Amazing resemblance. Amazing resemblance," and turned away. This was a fellow who was at the pharmacist school with me. In fact, we were both interested in photography and he was at my house at my apartment once and we set up some stuff to take photographs. But he was a bit shifty, that guy. So, I didn't want to know him.

NP: And so your work, then, went on to Nuremberg? You testified at Nuremberg?

RB: Yes, and it was a party of British officers, visiting our camp for whatever reason. And one fellow said, "Oh, you are here!" It was one of the guys who was in Australia with me. He was an officer. And he said, "We need people like you in Nuremberg. I need you." I said, "Don't do me any favors. I'm comfortable here." I was there and I shared a room with another sergeant. I had a former S.S. man for a bat man who polished our shoes. In any event, very comfortable. And I said, "It can wait till it's--my time's up." I said, "No, no, no, no." Anyhow, a couple of weeks later I got orders to go to Nuremberg...

NP: And your wife...

RB: Which I visited.

NP: She came.

RB: She was in Oxford. So that's what I did. And that's what--and I stayed at Nuremberg as interpreter/translator before the British War Crimes Executives. That's the adminis--I can show you here the pictures and all sorts of stuff. And to the end of the trial. That was about the last four months of the trial. And then my number came up for demobilization. I passed the test for courtroom interpreter, which is grueling.

NP: Courtroom interpreter?

RB: Interpreter, yes, because all you have is a microphone in front and the switch. You can, red or a yellow light. Yellow light means please slow down or red light, stop. If you use it more than once, you're out. And no interpreter could serve more than two hours a day because it's so nerve wracking. Because you hear it, you have your earphones, and you have to speak it, hear it in German and speak it in English or the other way around, in English. And I passed the test for the subsequent trials. But I wasn't going to stay there any longer. I could have gotten a job for Lore too, to stay there. But I said, "That's enough." So I went home, and there, of course, I saw all our friends.

NP: And you were doing this as...

RB: Staff Sergeant...

NP: Staff Sergeant and the...

RB: And interpreter for the British War Crimes Executives. This is...

NP: Excuse me.

RB: Yeah. [tape off, then on]

NP: Mr. Bryan, when, what were the conditions under which you changed your name?

RB: Well, in the beginning it didn't matter. One thing I would like to say...

NP: Yes?

RB: In the American Army, German, former German refugees, joining the American Army, were made citizens within about four or five weeks after joining. In Britain, I served in the British Army as a German national. I wasn't, I did not become a British citizen until about two or three months after I got out of the army. When I was in the army, and later on, of course, I transferred to the Royal Army Service Corps from the Pioneer Corps. I--they--it was suggested those--sooner or later we knew we were going to Europe, so, to the continent. And those of German origin are suggested to change their names. And they changed all papers and didn't show place of birth. And, although I know of people who joined the fighting forces, who were parachuters and so on, and were killed in fact or taken prisoner and then killed or what, whichever way it was, by the Germans, well, and I changed it then. But it was partly because I didn't--because my name, Britzmann, is not a Jewish name [unclear]. It's a German name. And I was not keen to keep that. And then I changed it, because I'd become of the Royal Photographic Society before, and I made it up as a hyphenated name, Bryan-Britzmann. That was even before that mess. Anyhow, that's when we changed our name, when they changed my army papers and so forth [unclear]. In fact I was married as Roger Bryan. So, Lore never had--was never Mrs. Britzmann. So...

NP: And so, you were about to leave your job as, well, a sergeant of security in...

RB: Oh, at the camp. Yeah, yeah.

NP: At the camp.

RB: And then I went to...

NP: And then you went to Nuremberg and then you were going out of the service at that time, after that, right?

RB: After the,--yes, well, of course, here-- are we still on?

NP: Yes.

RB: O.K.

NP: Mr. Bryan is showing me a photograph of the Nuremberg Trials, which took place in 1945 to 1946.

RB: And here is, you see about Göring.

NP: In the picture are Hermann Göring...

RB: Hess.

NP: And Rudolf Hess.

RB: And other--the whole, Keitel.

NP: Keitel.

RB: Streicher.

NP: Streicher [Julius].

RB: Eh, all of these, but that's the British [unclear] and here's little me. And...

NP: And Mr. Bryan was there to testify.

RB: With the British...

NP: To interpret.

RB: To interpret, yeah, I was there...

NP: Interpret.

RB: On, with this David Maxwell Feif [phonetic] is the British Consul. And here is the German defense.

NP: Mr. Bryan is showing me a picture of the German defense, at the Nuremberg Trials.

RB: See, this is a better picture.

NP: [tape off, then on] Would you like to add anything? After you were out of the service...

RB: Well...

NP: How did you proceed with your life?

RB: Well, that, yes, I joined--first of all, I went back to Glasgow. That was where my wife was, too. And she had worked for Marks and Spencer.

NP: Oh.

RB: She was as a, what they call, window dresser, you know, decorating the windows. But then she changed. In fact, she asked me, she went to work for a friend of ours, also a former German, in a photo studio. He was a manager and she got a job as a retoucher. She asked me if I should do it. Well, that was self interest that time. Stay in the business. And I worked for him, too, for a while. And I ran a little studio but it wasn't--

didn't work out. And I operated a retail store for him for a while, in photographic equipment. And...

NP: Did you stay in Glasgow for a while?

RB: Yeah.

NP: You had your family there?

RB: Yes, yes. And my daughter was born and then I met a friend of mine, I met a friend, he *became* a friend, a Jew in Glasgow. He was Scottish born. And we started a photography business as partners. Bryan and Shier [phonetic]. And [tape off, then on]

NP: And when did you come to the United States?

RB: Well, my wife's brother lived in Philadelphia, because originally he had American, well, yeah, mostly American born cousins here and that's how he came to Philadelphia. And he was in the industrial thread business in 1952. He sent us the tickets because I didn't have anything. And he said, "Why don't you come to visit and see what--if you like it." So we came in '52 and spent most of that summer in Atlantic City, which was different then. And we went around and saw friends and a cousin in Baltimore and so forth. I had a cousin in Baltimore. And we liked it. So the following year, we came, to stay.

NP: Did you reunite with any of the survivor community? Was there anybody that you knew in Philadelphia?

RB: No. Actually, when I came eventually, Harold Stern...

NP: Yes!

RB: Who is distantly related to my sister-in-law--came--had been in Australia with me, but I never met him there. You know, but we got together here. And the first person we contacted here was Cahn. We had, we called them on the phone. And the lady said, "Oh, you sound young. I think you want to speak to my son really."

NP: Uh huh. Cahn was the name?

RB: Cahn, yeah, C-A-H-N, Ella.

NP: Uh huh.

RB: Walter Cahn. His name is Walter Cahn. We got in town and we've been friends ever since. And we see each other.

NP: Very good. Well, we...

RB: He is of German origin but he was not--he has been here since 1935.

NP: I see that you have begun to write your memoirs. I hope you will complete it.

RB: I started about ten years ago!

NP: And...

RB: And interrupted for several years and...

NP: I know this will be important for your children, for your family...

RB: Something, yeah, for them.

NP: In the future, and we thank you for the testimony that you've given this morning. I know it was lengthy...

RB: Yeah, yeah.

NP: There was so much for you to tell, I know.

RB: Yeah.

NP: And hopefully this will be used by serious students in the future, and for the purposes of research.

RB: O.K., thank you.

NP: And we thank you.