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Interview with Helen Zelkowitz and Margo Waddell

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Margo Waddell

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Interview with Mrs. Helen Zelkowitz and Mrs. Margo Waddell on Thursday, October 8, 1998, in Mrs. Zelkowitz's home in Mount Vernon at 7:30 p.m. as conducted by Christina LeStage and Darlene Feldman.

H=Mrs. Helen Zelkowitz

M=Mrs. Margo Waddell

C = Christina LeStage

D = Darlene Feldman

H: ...and his son is a very prominent attorney in Columbus, Lourey (sp?).

M: Uh, now are you doing this for a class project or on your own or...

C: Yes.

D: It's a class project.

H: Now how do you want to approach this?

C: Um, I was thinking that we could start off...well, I would ask, we would just ask some questions?

H: Yes. But now Margo's family came here, she was here before I was here.

C: OK.

H: And her family came from the Holocaust, and I think that's a very interesting thing. Margo, were you born here?

M: No. I was nine when we arrived.

H: Oh, where were you born?

M: We came in '38? When did you come to Mt. Vernon?

H: Oh, you came in '38? Well, goodness, I came in '34! I was married...

M: I thought you were here. I thought you were one of the first families we met.

H: Oh, for goodness sake. I didn't realize that! Yes. I came...we were married in '33, and I came the year the banks closed in '34, the only thing was, we didn't have anything in the bank, so it wasn't such a shock. But, ah, now, so where do you want to start?

C: Well, let me start with just saying who we are for the tape. So this is Christina LeStage and Darlene Feldman, um, with Mrs. Helen Zelkowitz and...

M: Margo Erlenger Waddell

C: Um, at her home in Mount Vernon, Ohio, on Thursday, October 8th, 1998 at 7:30 p.m. And why don't we start with, well, let's see, with who came first.

H: Oh. I didn't realize. Well, I was married in '33. My husband came to Mt. Vernon in '31 and he came here to practice law. And, ah, a friend, Charles was born and raised in East Orange, New Jersey, so he was interested in a small town and he graduated from Cornell and Ohio State. And he came to Mt. Vernon and he is my first cousin once-removed, so we had the same relatives with no problems. But, ah, Charles came here and the first year that he practiced law he made a quarter, and he made it from Sam Epstein because he notarized a paper, so, ah, it shows you what, ah, what can happen. Charles came here primarily because Dr. Wharem, who was an optometrist here, said that a prominent judge had just passed away and he thought it would be a good idea. Well, unfortunately, ah, the judge who passed away his, ah, clients, and business had been dead for quite some time. But nonetheless, when my husband arrived, ah, there was a doctor and a dentist, a Dr. Julius Shemansky, his brother, Dr. Isaac Shemansky, and there was a, ah, Shalmar had come to Mt. Vernon and a group of new Jewish families with them. The treasurer was Ben Verson of Shalmar Corporation, and the production manager was David Rabashaw, and they both were married and they had their families here. But, ah, Shalmar coming here was a very important move for our community, it really gave it the boost economically that it needed. And, um, so, ah, let's see, where can I go from there?

C: How old were you?

H: I came here at 21 as a bride, and I'm now 86, and I've lived in this same house sixty years and I've NEVER thrown anything out, and as you can see, that it needs it. But I figured, my husband said let my executors worry about it, so that's what I'm relaxed in doing. But, ah, this has been a wonderful years and I have loved Mt. Vernon because it is a very warm, caring community, and I was fortunate enough to ah, ah, we had three horses. Maybe I told you that story. We had three horses and that's how the radio station happened, you know, Margo. We had three riding horses, we kept them here in the barn and shoveled every night. It was no small item. But, um, anyhow, I went out everyday looking for a farm. I had met every farmer in Knox County. I should have been running for office instead of looking for a barn. But, anyhow, I finally found this farm on the top of the hill.

M: Oh, is that why they call it The Farm?

H: Yes. And Radio Hill. I found that farm and Mr. Booth owned it. And I went back to, he was milking his cows and I went back to talk with him 'cause he had it for sale, and I said, "Mr. Booth, I'm very interested in this farm. I'm going to bring my husband out tomorrow." And, so,

um, I left and I went to, ah, I belonged to Psi Iota Psi, which is a philanthropic sorority, and one of the girls called and said, "Helen, they've called and want us to have a representative at the meeting and I don't know what it's all about, but they want a representative." And, of course, I have always enjoyed going to meetings. My husband said I was only happy if I had a double-header. But anyhow, I went to this meeting and get in there and here are these gentlemen, are talking that they need a location for a radio station, and they need one on a high altitude. And, of course, I had just come from this farm and discovered that it was 1100 feet about sea-level. It's the highest point in Knox County, that's why they have the sanitarium. Used to be a TB-cen, you know. And that's, so, it was on a level with that there. Well, anyhow, subsequently, when the meeting was over, I went up and talked to Mr. Burns, Dr. Burns, he was a professor from ah, ah, Baldwin Wallace, and I told him that I was very interested in his project and I'd like for him to meet my husband. So, we arranged a meeting the next day, and ah, we went out to the farm and subsequently, we ended up with the farm after so much time and Dr. Burns decided that they were going to have to look for different horizons because it was losing money. We had an FM, and the only person I knew with an FM was my mother, who lived in Columbus. But, ah, finally, you can see what's happened to FM today, but at that time they were very sparse, and, ah, AM was, of course, the frequency. So, anyhow, just ah, that's how the ah, I got into radio. And I ended up, I'll never forget Jim Beam was on our board, and so was Mr. Martin, president of Shalmar, and his wife was a very dear friend of mine. And, um, we had, my husband had put all kinds of money into the company trying to keep it afloat as an FM, and ah, finally, it got to the place where it didn't look like it was gonna work, and I had sold stock, I had sold stock to people in this community, and I told this one woman, I said, "Now, don't buy any of this stock (it was \$100 a share) unless you're willing to lose it because I don't know what kind of an outcome it's going to be and I don't want you to go around saying that Mrs. Zerkowitz was here and sold me some dead stock." So, anyhow, subsequently, ah, I ended up going to see Mr. Martin, and, Mr, ah, I called Ada, and she told me to come out, they were having lunch, and I went out and I said, "Mr. Martin, we have got to have fresh money in this company because I'm not, my husband and I have decided we are not feeding it any longer." So he said, "Well, how much do you need?" And I said, "Well, we need \$25,000 and we need an AM and we can't get an AM without having those funds because we need an engineer for designing." So he said, "Well, call a board meeting." So I called this board meeting and John Glacken was alive then, you know he had the Chevrolet company, and ah, Mr. Ruden and, ah, Jim Beam and ah, and ah Dr., well, I can't think of his name now, it's terrible. Well, anyhow I called this meeting and Mr. Martin said, um, ah, "Helen says she needs \$25,000, now I'll sign the mortgage. But," he said, "I'll sign for it, but I want everybody in this room to sign." Well! You know, we all know that when Mr. Martin puts his name on first we're in good shape because he was financially responsible. So, anyhow, subsequently we got the 25,000. We were able to put on an AM, and it made all the difference in the world and that's how WMVO-AM was born, and I turned it on on Thanksgiving Day, and, um, so, because it was such a gift. Anyhow, that's a story, and of course the station has flourished ever since. But, now, to get back to the family history, on this whole family that came here, you know, a lot of these names, of course, I've never met. They were here before I got here, and it's recorded in Fred Lorey's history of, Knox County history, and the names there are, ah, are, are you interested in the names? The Closer? I never ah, Stradler? Harry Lorey, he has a

son, a prominent lawyer in Columbus now. I think Erin and Marcus Rosenthal, I don't know them.

M: They had a clothing store where the Elaine shop was for so long.

H: Is that right? And Joe Levinson, where was he?

M: That's not familiar to me.

H: I'm not either. Jack Hornstein I never heard of. Lewis Kameedo (sp?). Now, Lester Smilak and Jeanette, he had a clothing store...

M: Men's clothing...

H: A men's store, and Jean Schwartz had a store, and ah, Sam Epstein had a, ah, People's Shoes that is still alive today under the same name. And then there was a Collin Armdealer (sp?), the, ah, Debinsky family, and a stove merchant, Max Myers, who was a scrap dealer and Bernard Landers, who was a scrap dealer, and tobacco wholesaler Max Hymen, movie man and salesman Sam Hampman, and grocer Phil Abrams. Now, Phil Abrams had a shop on Mainstreet called "Stop 'n Shop" and it was really, he had the finest foods there. Somehow or other it never survived because of the, ah, the old markets. You know, we used to have Pitkin's and, ah, and then, ah, let's see, what was his name...

M: Victory Market.

H: And Victory Market, yes.

M: The A&P store.

H: Yes.

D: Did he say...

H: And then among the professional people was my husband, Charles Zelkowitz, a physician, Julius Shemansky (sp?), and his dentist brother, and engineer Leo Erlanger (sp?). Now, Leo, was he your uncle?

M: Um-hm.

H: He was your uncle. And he, did he work at Cooper's?

M: Yes.

H: And, ah, he had a wife, a physical therapist, Gretta, and, ah, she maintained and had a

business all her own, and Harry Hymen, I don't know, became a world famous engineer, ah, and um, I don't know...Shalmar Products Company came to Mt.Vernon in 1935 and it is, as I said before, it brought many Jewish families with it. The Versons, the Gerwicks, the Rabishaws, the Susmans, and the Zwicks.

C: None of those families are still here?

H: Everybody's underground. You see, we're talking about 1935, and I seem to be the only one surviving at this point. And ah...

C: And the children? Did they...?

H: Well, the children scattered. They're all over.

M: I guess I would be the only one...

H: Now you know where the Versons...

M: Ben Versons had three children, and two are in California and one is in Sioux City, Iowa. Ah, he himself is deceased, his wife is still living. Her name is Sarah. Ah, the Rabishaws are gone. The Sussmans, I don't know.

H: Yeah, but Roberta Rabishaw is...

M: She's in the Chicago area.

H: But, you see, actually, I think that Arlene and I are the only two ah that, and Margo...

M: Have you ever heard the name Arlene Landers? She's um, well, her husband, was...

H: Arlene never married.

M: No. I know that. I meant her brother, if I said her husband.

H: Yes. That's Richard.

M: They are the children of this Bernard Landers, right?

H: Yes.

M: Now, she's still living. Unfortunately, she's not in Mount Vernon right now, but she lives in Mount Vernon. Ah, their father was a scrapman.

H: A scrapdealer, yes.

M: For some odd reason, quite a few, even in other communities that I'm familiar with, a lot of the Jewish gentlemen were scrap and iron dealers. I think there must have been a lot of money in that, because most of them became pretty, ah...

H: Well, I don't think they had to have a start-up business. They could just rent a lot and get into that. It was a business you could get into with a lot of, ah, without a huge investment. Ah, I have the ah, the congregation Bible that we, it's a sytyr (sp?), it really isn't a Bible, that we used for our services. We had rented a room above Lester Smilak's (sp?) and we had...

M: Which is now, you might mention it, that is now where the Jordan Quilt Shop is.

H: Yes, where the quilt shop is now, it was up to, that's where Lester Smilak was, in that corner. And we had rented a room on the second floor for our services, and that's where...I think your uncle conducted them.

M: Leo Frankle?

H: Was it Leo or?

M: Well, I had two uncles. One was Leo Erlanger and one was Leo Frankle.

H: Oh.

M: I'm inclined to think it was probably more Leo Frankle.

H: Yes, it was.

M: And ah, we had, we referred to it as Sunday School. I don't know now whether we met on Saturdays or Sunday, but it was, you know, just like...

H: Well, I know...I know one thing. I finally ended up with it in my apartment at 512 ½ East Chestnut. We rented an apartment and I was so horrified, it was eighteen dollars a month, and I thought that was astronomical. Course, we had...

M: See how times have changed?

H: I had never lived in a rented place. My father always provided and we always had a home. And here I was down here paying eighteen dollars a month rent, why, and we were subsidized. Both our parents subsidized us because we simply wouldn't of been able to stay here without that. And, ah, so when I came to Mt. Vernon, Charles drove me around and I looked at this...He drove me down to Cooper-Bessemer. Every window was broken. This was in 1934. Every window was broken, the plant was closed, and we had a terrible depression. Cooper stock, I

asked my husband what their stock was selling for, and it was selling for one. Now you can imagine. We didn't have one at the time, because it was unfortunate, but imagine people that could afford it to have bought Cooper stock at one in 1933. But that, the town really was, and that's why it was so important when Shelmar came here in '35. It gave the first shot in the arm to this community that brought it back to breathing because it was in very bad shape.

C: Is that why your family came?

M: No. My family, and my father's name was Loether. We, ah, basically left Germany because of the Hitler situation. And my father had a brother here by the name of Leo who had come after he graduated from the university in Germany. He was employed by the Cooper Company, and at that time, they had a big plant in Grove City, Pennsylvania. That's where my uncle originally started. And then Cooper's transferred him here. I don't know whether they started their factory here after that or if it had been here. But anyways, my uncle came to the state in '33. Leo. And, ah, things started getting serious in Germany, and my uncle, but the immigration quotas were very tight. And, ah, I recall my family telling us that my uncle and his wife had volunteered to take my sister and I. Apparently, my parents were allowed two passports, if they chose to accept them, and that was in '33. And, ah, my sister is two years older than I. We would of just been pre-school at that time. But my uncle, in order to at least save our lives, if possible, he volunteered, you know, to accept Penlor as, into their home, but my parents could not get themselves to break up the family not knowing whether they would ever meet up with us again or not. So it was not until 1938 that our family of 6 by then, the family grew, was able to get out. And we arrived in the United States on November 11 of 1938. Sixty years this year. And I've always thought that was so significant that we would arrive on what they called at that time Armistice Day. And, ah,

H: So when you came into New York, then, how did you get to Mt. Vernon?

M: Ah, we had some distant relatives in New York. I remember we spent a night with this aunt in one of the New York flats, I guess they call it. Then by train we came to Ohio, and Leo and Dina Rabishaw in two separate cars picked us up in Newark, Ohio.

H: Is that right?

M: Uh-huh. And uh, now at that time, you had to have a sponsor. You couldn't of, we could not have come to the United States if my uncle or any other relative, which we did not have any really close, he was definitely the closest blood relative. He volunteered to serve as a sponsor, which made him responsible for the whole family if my father could not have found a job. Uh, we would have lived with them, you know, I mean, so it really was quite an undertaking, and it ended up, he ended up helping fourteen people totally, besides the six there were of us, there were fourteen others.

H: Is that right.

M: So we, I remember we arrived on a Friday. And, of course, we were hot and we were tired. And, my uncle taught us, there was three school-age children, he taught us how to say please and thank you and stuck us in school on Monday morning.

D: Wow.

H: Is that right.

M: And ah, ah, of course, the teachers were forewarned and at that time the first, my sister was in the sixth grade, I was in the fourth, and my brother would of been in first grade but they held him up because they knew we were gonna be leaving. But they stuck all of us in first grade because of the language barrier. My sister, who was quite tall and well-developed for her age, looked like the mother of these first graders. But, ah, the teacher was also, that first-grade teacher also served as the principal of the school. We went to what is now East School. That was Ruth Tullis.

H: Oh, is that right.

M: And she had a student teacher, the sister, it was a large class, and here she ends up with these three non-verbal students. She did have a German dictionary that she used quite a bit, plus I think she probably had had some German in her own training. But we each progressed at our own pace and it wasn't really too long before my sister and I both advanced and we, the teachers were terrific as far as giving extra time and attention to us, and we had to study over the summer month to help. So we all three ended up really just graduating a year behind what we normally would of, which I think is really good.

C: Yes.

M: Um, but going back to the, your real interest, which is the Jewish part of it, um, my recollection of the Jewish religion part, of course, the Jewish families that were here then, plus Protestants, really were very gracious to our family, and, you know, came to my uncle's home to meet us, and a lot of them brought gifts for the children which we really devoured in because we had been basically outcasts, you know, in our own hometown, and when you met someone you didn't know if it was friend or foe. And, now, at that time, and I understand they did this until just four years ago, um, they went to school for six days a week. I mean, their educational system at that time was far more advanced than what it was in the...

H: You mean in Germany they went...?

M: Yes. And we just this last year had a German exchange student and he happened to be from Germany. And I was kind-of appalled to discover that now, even as much as we consider ourselves informed, educated, and what-have-you, the knowledge this young man had over the,

he was a se-well, actually, he was, he would of been a junior back home, but when the administration tested him they put him in all the honors senior classes here. He was so well-informed on our history and on our government, and his English was so good, and his reading. It almost was embarrasssing to my husband and I. In a way, it turned to be kind-of a disadvantage to him in the school because his classmates resented it. And he came at the beginning of the schoolyear, and ah, the teachers loved it, but the students resented his knowledge. But I must admit, it was, I would say embarrassing to us, to discover how far behind schools at least in Mt.Vernon were, even though we've had some very well, you know, really good scholars that end up on national merit rolls and what-have-you. But, anyways, ah, I don't recall now whether we had, we called it the synagogue, the room that Mrs. Zelkowitz over what is now Jordan's Gift Shop, or Quilt Shop. And we, but we had lessons up there, and there were more families with children at that time.

H: That's right.

M: And I don't know of any Jewish families here now, do you?

H: Oh no, there isn't.

M:I mean, not with children in school.

C: Do you live in Mt.Vernon yourself?

M: I do live in Mt.Vernon. But I, ah, now, to begin with, my father was Jewish, my mother was Protestant, which created multiple problems for them in Germany. And us children were actually exposed to both religions, but I would say we were more Jewish than we were Protestant. You know, father was the head of the family. But, we observed Chanukkah, and then we observed Christmas. We had it all. But, um, I attended Sabbath School here. And then when the, um, I imagine it was because of lack of families, they gave up the Sabbath school here and Sam Epstein, the shoe merchant that's mentioned, he was really a great man. He had his own family of children. They had two children. But every Sunday morning, he would load up his car with any of the Jewish car that were willing, I don't know how he got us all in there, come to think of it, and took us to Mansfield which did have an established synagogue and we went to Sabbath school there. And I participated in that. Ah, both of my brothers were bar mitzvah, through their education they received in the synagogue in Mansfield, and then became young adults and started dating. Well, there just weren't very many eligible females or males in Mt.Vernon at that age. Ah, I remember, I had a crush on Rabbi Ruben's son in Mansfield at one point, but of course he didn't have the same feeling, but I don't think it would ever have worked out, do you? But,um, no, I ended up marrying a Mt.Vernon Protestant, so we don't, you know, practice the Jewish religion. Out of us, after my parents were here they had another child, their full American citizen, and ah, there was only one out of us five that married a Jewish person.

H: Ah, was that Essie?

M: And that was Essie.

H: Essie? Where is Essie now?

M: She lives in Akron and her husband died...

(Change tape sides)

H: ...was the first Orthodox religious leader of Achgoodum Sachim (sp?), which is the largest synagogue in Columbus, Orthodox, and my grandfather was Calman London. And, ah, so I was raised in a very Orthodox home, and I went into Columbus every Friday for shabbatz (sp?) for the Sabbath to spend it with my mother and my husband and son, so we were there for the Sabbath and for services. And, of course, my son was bar mitzvahed because I drove him in every week for his Hebrew lessons, and so he was bar mitzvahed in Columbus. And he subsequently then, when he graduated from Ohio State, he married a very lovely Jewish girl in Columbus, and that's what he was looking for. It never occurred to him to do anything else because our whole family was so steeped in Orthodoxy. And so, ah, he, um, married Donna and they had, I have two grandchildren, and ah, Jonathan graduated from USCLA in California and Julie graduated from Emory Law School. She's in Atlanta and Jon is in California. So I can only tell you, I've got two grandchildren that are either end of the continent. But, um, I must tell you about the family that came here, and that's Dr. and Richard Gomer. Now, these two folks came from Austria, and ah, they came in '38. Her sister committed suicide. Mary's sister did, she just couldn't take all of the chaotic situation that existed, so Mary and Richard came to New York, and they read an ad in the paper about a job over at the Mt. Vernon state institute. And so they came to Mt. Vernon Developmental Center now, but at that time, it really was a TB-cen. And subsequently it was changed to retardation, to developmental center. And ah, so that's how I happened to meet them. When they I came, I went out to visit, and Mary, they were such charming people, and he was a um, he was a captain in the navy, of the German navy of all things, and ah, and here they had to leave, they have a son that is a professor in Chicago, I've never heard from Bob. That's always surprised me because I was so close to his parents. So, I helped him furnish an office, and he had subsequently opened a practice here after being out at the institute for several years. He was able to save enough, and then they opened an office, and Richard was a skin specialist. Fabulous individual, and a learned scholar, and Mary was a charming individual. And she said to me one day, (*Helen mimics an accent*), "Helen, I must, I MUST get rid of my accent." I said, "Mary, why do you want to get rid of your accent?" I said, "It's so charming!" I loved to hear her talk you know. (*Helen mimics the accent again*), "Oh, it is, oh it is impossible." Oh, she was so mad at her accent! But what a delightful individual. They both have passed away. And ah, as I say, they had one son that they sent to England when he was ten years old.

D: Wow.

H: Because they were, ah, they could see the handwriting on the wall. They sent him to foster parents in England, and he was raised in England, and then came to this country when they did. But it was a very interesting experience, what happened to these people that the German country dispersed all these people, and just like Russia now has had a brain-drain. All the brains in Russia are either in Israel or they're in America. They have cleaned house, you know. It's most unfortunate, what they have done to their own country. I think that's the reason they're in such financial shape is they don't have any, they simply do not have people that are capable any longer. It's unfortunate. But, um, Mt. Vernon was fortunate in having families move here that were very, um, ah, very fine people so we could all be proud of each other.

M: I also remember going to some Hebrew lessons in the Gerwick home after school Mr. Gerwick?

H: Oh, is that right? Oh, well, you know, we haven't even mentioned Rabbi Kuhlman.

C: Yes.

H: Now, Rabbi Kuhlman officiated at my husband's funeral. Rabbi Kuhlman was a very unusual person. I received a phone call one day from a friend of mine..

M: Have you met him?

C: No.

M: You probably won't be able to. He's not very...I don't think, he's more or less living a hermit existence right now.

H: Yes. Uh-huh, well, his dog died and he just hasn't been the same.

M: He was never married, and the friends he had, as far as Jewish friends...

H: Well, he was very good friends with Mary and Richard Gomer.

M: And Friel.

H: They were very good friends.

M: Right. And he used to have a real good relationship with a lot of the Kenyon students, and I understand some of them still call on him. But, he's been out of Kenyon, what, about ten years?

H: Oh, more than that.

M: Has been?

H: My husband's been gone 25, so, ah, it's been, it's been quite a while.

M: He did Aunt Frietel's service, and it was she that passed away 9 years ago.

H: Well, that's right. That was your, was that your aunt?

M: Yeah.

H: Yes, and she was an outstanding person and gave so much of her effort to the ah, to the hospital. She worked there all the time.

C: What was her name?

M: Frietel Frankle.

C: Frietel Frankle.

H: Oh yes, and all the much, she was in the ah, ah obstetrics, and she was, oh, she loved those babies! And they, all the mothers felt safe as long as Frietel was taking care of the babies.

M: Now, this, now I noticed Leo Frankle's name was not on here, so it must have been prior to Leo's arriving. Remember, they were not able to come together. Frietel was here about three years before Leo was able to join her.

H: Oh, is that right?

M: Now, my family, the one that landed on November 11th of '38, we were the last passenger ship to get out of Germany. And Frietel had come a year and my aunt had come A WEEK, she left, I'll say ten days, it took eleven days in those days to get here, but she had, she and her husband actually had made plans to relocate to Brazil to escape the Nazi regime, and then her brother Leo, who we've mentioned, his wife gave birth to their second child and she died a few days after childbirth.

H: Oh my, that was such a tragedy.

M: And, so here he was in the United States with two small children and somebody must have had a heart somewhere in that immigration office, because they did give her an emergency passport to come here then and assist her brother with these two small children.

H: And she raised those children.

M: Uh-huh, until he remarried about 7,8 years later when he married P---(name not discernable). But I remember, ah, her boat, which was a German steamboat, crossing, going back as we were

coming, the two boats. And to this day I remember the look on my father's face when they announced that the Prehman, which was the name of her boat, was approaching and passing. I still remember the relief on my father's face and the gratitude because he knew she had arrived safely. We weren't sure yet whether we were gonna get here, you know. I don't know where in the Atlantic those boats crossed, but, you know, there's certain things in your childhood that you never get over. And, of course, everybody was rushing up on deck to watch the boat, you know, pass. Ah, I don't know, I never thought of it until this minute, whether there were other passengers on that boat heading back to Germany. Why they'd want to...I don't know who would have gone back at that time. But, we learned later that ours was the last German oceanliner that got out.

D: Wow.

M: And then there was no communication for about seven years because of the war.

D: Right.

M: But, um, maybe it's time now for you to ask questions, because we're jumping around a bit between...

C: Yes, I was...let's talk a bit more about the services when they were here, such as, well you had a rabbi here in Mt.Vernon who presided over...?

H: Oh no, honey.

C: OK

H: We couldn't afford a rabbi. And ah, so, I, I think you uncle did it.

M: I think it was basically, I mean, we, there were some Jewish gentlemen that were very well informed.

H: Oh and I think this Mr.Gerwick, wasn't he, is he the one that taught Hebrew?

M: He did in his home. I remember we used to go there after school.

C: Was there a Torah?

M: Yeah, they had, they had their Torah. I don't know whatever happened to those elements. For High Holidays, I'm sure Mrs.Zelkowitz and her family went to Columbus.

H: Yes, we did of course.

M: My family and the Epsteins and several others went to Mansfield, ah, for the High Holidays,

and as I mentioned, somewhere along the line, they started transporting us children to the Sabbath School, I suppose was the official name of it. But it was held on Sunday.

H: But you know, Rabbi Kuhlman. I received a this call from this friend of mine at from the Catholic Church and they wanted to have a seder. And she called me up to see if I would conduct the seder. Of course, I thanked her profusely and told her I was not adequate to do that, but that I would get someone for it, because they were having thirty people at this seder and they were going to have it in the gym, at the Catholic gym, at the ah...

M: St. Vincent's?

H: At St. Vincent's. And they had a balcony filled with people, and here's thirty people. So she said she wanted to buy the right food. She went over to the kosher market and got geffilta (sp?) fish and matza and horseradish and wine, because I told her she had to have chopped apples and all the ritual plate that she had to have. And I took my ritual plate, and I'll tell you if my mother knew if I had her candlesticks in the St. Vincent gym...Well, anyhow, what happened was, I picked up Rabbi Kuhlman because I called him and asked if he would do it. So, he was delighted to.

M: That must of been a number of years ago.

H: Oh my goodness, yes. It was in the paper. I may have a clipping on that someplace. But, anyhow, so we get into this gym and here are thirty people sitting around and Father-I don't know who was the priest at that time-but anyhow, we sat at the head table, Rabbi Kuhlman and Father Dunn! I think.

M: Oh, that does go back a ways.

H: And um, and then a couple of sisters. And so Rabbi Kuhlman conducted the service. Well, I want to tell you, I thought it was crossing the desert took 40 years. And I thought Rabbi Kuhlman was going to beat it, because I tell you that service went on for two or three hours! He put everything--he didn't leave anything out! And, ah, and by the time everybody got to, of course, he explained the rituals and everybody tasted, you know, the salt water representing the sadness, and the uh, and the uh, the hardboiled egg and the ah, and the bone that represented the life, so all these things. And by the time he got done with the seder, I'll tell you, we were all, we all felt like we had crossed the desert. But anyhow, it was a wonderful evening and they appreciated it so much. But that was the first seder that they...

C: When was that?

H: Oh my goodness, that, that...

M: I bet it's been thirty years.

H: My husband was alive, so, it had to be over thirty years ago.

M: Because Father Dunn hasn't been at St. Vincent's. He's deceased now, I'm sure.

H: Yes.

M: I would say thirty-plus years.

H: I'll never forget Father Dunn. I had him on an interview. They were having a fish dinner, and I said, "Father Dunn, how are those fish?" He said, "I want you to know, that those fish are asleep in Lake Erie and they'll be on our table tomorrow." Oh, he was so adorable. But, anyhow, that was ah...

D: You had mentioned a kosher market. Was there a kosher market close by? Were you able to keep kosher...

H: In Columbus.

D: ... once you came here?

H: Well, I kept kosher up until the time they sent me a dead duck. And, ah, and you know, at that time, they didn't have refrigeration.

D: Right.

H: You know. And so they put it on the bus, and by the time it got here, it died. And I called up that market and told him that I was sorry he lived fifty miles from me because I would of brought it in so we could of buried it together. But, ah, it was my husband's birthday and I wanted to have a duck. Well, when that happened, that ended it. I said to my mother, "I'm very sorry, but I'm not going to be able to keep kosher because I can't handle that meat." And, ah, and we just couldn't, you know, it just wasn't possible. And, ah, you know, they didn't even have frozen bags like we have today, you know. It's no problem today at all.

M: Now when Phil Abram had the store on Main Street, did he have any kosher?

H: But he didn't carry meat.

M: I didn't think so.

H: He carried cold cuts, but not meat. And, 'cause meat's a big deal, you know, it's a difficult thing...

M: I think, ah, the Jewish families, like where did Epstein's get theirs? I know they kept a pretty

kosher home.

H: I think they used to send stuff from Cleveland. Ann was always complaining. I don't know what they did. I tell you, I never asked people what they did...

M: You know, it wasn't available in Mt. Vernon. I know, ah...

H: I just never asked people what they did because I knew that it was too difficult. It was just one of those things. Oh, my mother was fit to be tied. My mother said to her friends her daughter's in some little country town, she'll be home in a couple weeks. She, my mother expected me back home in no time at all, because it was just unbelievable. And when my son was born, my mother came down and my husband met her at the train. At that time, you know, that was the mode of travel. And when he, and when Mother got off the train, she had her own pot, and she had her candlesticks, and she had her meat and everything with her, and my husband said to her, "Mrs.-", my mother was his aunt but he always called her Mrs. Weiner. He said, "Mrs. Weiner, where is your passport?" He couldn't--she had all this stuff. She looked like she came fresh from someplace else. And um, but anyhow, but Mother arrived and stayed a week, 'til...

M: You still go to Columbus on Friday's, don't you? To observe the...

H: Yes, I did for a long time. But I haven't been able to, so I have my Sabbath here, of course.

C: So, I was going to say, when you tried to observe kosher, you couldn't do that, could you, if you went to someone's house? Did it affect if you went, how you visited people?

H: Well, you see, I don't eat beef to start with. I don't beef and I don't eat ham. I only eat chicken and fish. So, I don't have a problem with my food because I love fish. As a matter of fact, I've got something to serve. I wanted to, I've got some ah, some ah smoked salmon with little crackers. Are we done?

M: Do you think you've got the information you needed with your class?

H: Wait, just a minute, I want to get that out of the...

M: Don't go to any trouble, Helen.

D: Yeah, we're OK.

H: I've got it in the refrigerator. I just wanna make sure...

M: Watch that cord!

H: Do you want to help me get this, dear?

D: Sure.

H: Just take this.

M: Do you have any questions that perhaps I can answer?

C: Yeah. Perhaps, um, well, I wanted to talk a little bit about, we didn't get into, well, you talked how the relationship was really good between the Jewish people and the non-Jewish people in Mt. Vernon. Or how would you describe that?

M: Well, I would say they were very receptive, you know, to my knowledge. Ah...

H: Where are those crackers? Oh, here they are. And there's a knife someplace. Where's the two little knives that was somplace?

M: Be careful! Be careful of that cord! She has had her falls, and it's...

H: Now, where are those two little...

M: I saw crackers once, when I came in. It also brought back a memory. Whenever anybody, any of the Jewish women went to Columbus, which, in those days, they didn't flit to Columbus like we do now. I mean, not everybody had cars. But, if somebody knew they were going to Columbus, they were, well, I know there was a bakery and, of course, a number of delicatessans, they were always very kind and checked with the other families to see if there was anything they wanted them to bring back, and usually, then, they came back loaded because they had purchased merchandise for a number of families. It never affected Helen that much because she routinely went on Friday nights because she had a number of sisters and her mother lived, you know, for quite a number of years. She probably was one of the most Orthodox that continued her religion the way it was supposed to be practiced.

C: So, you would say the food changed a lot. Would you say anything else changed in practicing, when people moved here, that they had to adapt?

M: Yeah. Like these families that came for Shalmar, most of them came out of Chicago. And of course it was very readily available there, so it was hard. Now, years later, as I mentioned, my one sister married a Jewish gentleman, and the first few years of marriage, they lived in Bexeley, in Columbus, and they happened to live in an area where there were a number of young, Jewish couples, but, as most of them were still students or maybe over there for their doctorates degrees and so forth, but I know my sister told me that most of those families, they couldn't afford the true kosher foods and things, so it seemed like the younger ca--I'm sure there are still some that are able to, but, ah, you know, at that time, she shared that with me--Be careful! Be careful of those wires! We don't want you getting hurt!--So, you know, because of economics, a lot of

them couldn't continue, practicing the way their parents had taught them.

H: Are the napkins in here or are they on the kitchen table?

D: Let me go look. I'll go look.

(Phone rings. Phone call conversation not relevant to this interview).

M: Helen, Mt. Vernon Jewish community and the Protestants have always been very good and healthy?

H: Oh, I think so.

M: I can't think of any...

H: Well, primarily because the Jewish people here in Mt. Vernon have been very philanthropic.

M: Well, they have, yes.

H: I have never in my life dealt with people that are so lack in giving of charity. I, I just am appalled, because that is a basic thing with Judaism. You see, this holiday we have just had, our New Year's, and our Yom Kippur, is based on repentance and with, and ah repentance and prayer and charity. Charity is a very basic thing, that means helping your fellow man. Well, I was raised with it. My mother had ten little boxes, they're called pushkies (sp?) and my mother had ten! And every Friday she fed each one of them. It was for the children's home and this, that, and the other, and all these different things. And, ah, so I was raised seeing my mother give charity all the time to different organizations. So this is a basic premise, and of course, on the basis of Judaism, that's what it's based on, is your fellow man. If you...

M: What was your comment? Before you started, you felt that now people are not generous?

H: Ah, I don't think that the Christian community has ever learned how to give to the extent, except the Nazarene Church. Now, the Nazarenes tithe; they take ten percent off of the top. And they tithe. The reason I say that, I belonged to so many organizations, and every time it came up time to give anything to an organization, we ran into trouble with people that didn't...I couldn't believe it, you know! That thing, oh, well, they're not doing that.

C: Were there any Jewish service organizations here?

H: No. Well, we had a sisterhood.

M: I was just gonna mention that.

H: We had a sisterhood for a while.

M: This was still the church ladies.

H: I dropped out of that all because of charity. Flo Shemansky (sp?) was president, and we were talking about giving to Haddasa, which is an international thing, and we were talking about a linen shower, and when she said that we weren't going to give any linens, I said well, you can count me out. And I dropped out because I figured I didn't...

M: What was her problem with that?

H: Well, Flo was as tight as a paper on a wall when it came to giving to someone else.

M: Is that right?

H: But she was very generous with herself.

M: So you see, ladies, groups had problems way back when. But I think Mt.Vernon as a community is very generous, don't you think?

H: Well, I think so. And, of course, our people have been pace-setters. Because Eileen, ah, Arlene has, gave the ground for the YMCA sports center. They donated that ground. And, ah, I'm giving this house to the Red Cross on my demise. And, ah, we just don't see that sort of thing here, you see. And this is what, I got so mad, they ah, I was on the community trust. My husband wrote the author of the community trust, and I was serving as a trustee, and, ah, the question came up. They wanted money for to build, to buy a home for Hospice. And I, of course, am very much in favor of doing anything for cancer, but I said that I didn't think that this community should spend \$165,000 for a home that would only be an office, that it did not have a service within. You know, it did not have people coming there except the volunteers. Same principle with Red Cross. They don't do any, they have their offices here. And I just was opposed to, ah, I thought somebody in the community should give their home, ah, for that purpose. And, ah, so anyhow, it was quite an ordeal. I contribute to Hospice but I ah, I didn't feel that we should spend money for a home because somebody should of given it. Now Mary Heron had that beautiful house there, and Mary Heron was married to a bank president. He died, and she went to a nursing home. And here's that lovely home. Now it's gonna be sold for the third time, you know, it's got a for sale sign. See, that's where Mary should of given that to Hospice. I mean, what'd she do with the money? You know, it's so...I just don't understand people's premise. You know, nobody has been able to take anything with them, so I can't understand why people wouldn't want to give in some way to...

M: You mentioned Arlene Landers did contribute to the um, well, gave them the land and money for the sports center. She also bought the house that they are using as a 4-H home.

H: Oh, yes, and she gave 4-H their house. Only the two of us have given things, physical things,

to the community. And after all, we've got 15,000 people living here.

C: Yes.

H: But, you know, I mean, that's what I can't understand. Why people, ah, well, you know, you can't ah...it's difficult. You either are raised in that basis or not.

D: What about when you first came here and you said you couldn't speak the language? Did you feel like the kids and the school teachers and your neighbors and everybody else were pretty welcoming or did you feel...?

M: Yes, they really were. Um, I have a, a girl friend who was in grade school...

(End of tape 1)

M: ...and, um, more or less asked us quote of the students. And this girl friend told me, not too terribly many years ago, she said, "You know, when you first came, I thought you were a real snob." (*Laughs*). And I said, "You did?" She said, "Yes!" She said, "We'd been told to be friendly, you know, and nice and I greeted you and wanted to become friends right away, but you wouldn't answer me." Well, even though she had been told I would understand, you know, at that time she probably was a second or third grader. She must of been a third grader since I ended up in her graduating class. But, ah, you know, they still couldn't understand that because they had not run into this situation before in Mt. Vernon. But everyone told us we really progressed very well, as far as, you know, children do pick up a language so much quicker than an adult, and, I wouldn't, you know, I don't think any of us children have what you'd call an accent. But, um, by, you know, the first grade readers we learned, and I know that every time the principal, or the superintendent came around we had to perform so he would know how we were progressing. But, as I said before, we had dedicated teachers. Of course, most of your teachers in those days were single. They didn't have to run home to their own families, or get kids to the city or daycare, you know. Their whole life is really in teaching. And ah, but ah, my sister who was two years older than I, she had that advantage. She seemed to understand. I remember standing in the room and the teacher saying, pointing to a girl and telling me, "Girl." In my mind, I was saying, "Girl." But I didn't realize she wanted me to verbalize "girl," until my sister said, "I think they want you to say it out loud." She said this to me in German. Well, so, I turned around and said it and then they left me alone for a little while. I remember, now, when we came here, I had a little sister, who, we arrived on the 11th and she was a year old on the 15th of November. And, of course, my mother was a stay-at-home mom at that time. And, ah, we did speak English at home so my mother would learn it. My father picked it up in his place he was working. And my mother had a visitor one time. It was Mrs. Dabinsky, and Essie was just learning how to talk. I'm assuming she was around two. And she said something to my mother in German, and Mrs. Dabinsky said, "I think it's just terrible that child is learning German. She should be learning English." And, as young as she was, she understood what the lady had said. And she turned right around and said the same thing in English, so that was a good example of

how a young person will pick up two languages at the same time. One experience, I know Helen has never heard me say this. On, as I said earlier, we went to school for six days a week, and, it came Saturday, ah, we were, we spent a week or two in my uncle's home until we could find housing. We ended up in two bedrooms, in a two room apartment that was Elsie Stillwagon's apartments there on East Vine Street, and ah, until our furniture arrived months later, and fortunately somebody did rent to my parents with their five children. But, um, OK, so that first Saturday that we were here, Mother got us ready and sent us off to school. And we got past this Dr. Shemansky's home and he happened to be out working in his yard. And he knew some German. Most of your physicians had some knowledge. And he asked us where we were going and we told him we were going to school. And he tried to tell us there was no school on Saturdays. Well, we didn't know whether to believe him or not because people had been so unkind, and the teachers had been very unkind in Germany, and we couldn't decide for a few moments whether he was trying to get us into trouble, or, you know, just what was going on. And my sister and I put our heads together, and we decided, well, he had called on us at our uncle's home, I think he even brought a case of baby food for my baby sister. We decided he was a friend. He wouldn't try to get us into trouble. So we turned around and trapsed back home. And it just had not occurred to my uncle, you know, with all he had on his mind, to tell Mother we don't go to school on Saturdays in Mt. Vernon or the United States. But it was Shammy who happened to be out and he asked where we were going, and that was one of the things that sticks out in my mind. And then we get to school, when we did get to school, we were apparently put in a desk, which in that room it was tables with little spaces underneath it for your... Apparently, we were placed in seats of absent children. But my golly, here we had all the crayons and the paper and the pencils and we thought that "We've hit the jackpot!" you know. You didn't even have to bring your own supplies. And over there, we were using slates yet, regular old slates.

H: Just think of that.

M: As days went on and those students came back, we got moved elsewhere.

H: Essie, I think it's marvelous the way you were able to pick up the language. I mean, how old were you?

M: Nine.

H: Well, you see, that's a very, ah...you thorough in German.

M: One of the main things I had trouble with, and still do, is my spelling. I feel very insecure a lot of times with the spelling, and I remember Ruth Ellis telling my sister Henlor, and we were typical sisters, one day we liked each other and the next day we didn't, ah, Mrs. Tallis the principal said to my sister, "I think the reason Margo has such a hard time with spelling is because of the transition at the time of lifespan she was in when you made the transition." And, as sisters will do, she said, "Well, she couldn't spell in German either."

H: Would you put a little salmon on there?

C: Sure.

H: And a cucumber.

M: But, ah, I did learn. I did graduate, and I went on to business school and held jobs for many years.

H: Thank you.

C: You're welcome.

M: The unfortunate thing for us, for a time, of course, we got so we couldn't trust even a teacher. I mean, people who had been friends turned against you because they were trying to do what the government was expecting to do.

D: In Germany?

M: In Germany. And so, for a short while, we were in seventh heaven here because we felt everybody really loved us for what we were. And then, the United States and Germany became enemies because of the...So we felt like we were on a fence again. We didn't know whether we wanted to protect, which, what, whether we shoul--I mean they all knew. When we first came, they knew we were German. I don't think the kids at school really understood the Nazism. I mean, grade school kids. We didn't have television in those days and very few people had a radio in those days, so kids were not near as informed as they are now. But, you know, we went through this period of a europia of being liked by everybody and accepted and then, a few months later, it was kind-of turn about. But it wasn't to the pace where we were stoned or spit at, which we had experienced over there.

C: But you would say it wasn't because you were Jewish but because you were German if you experienced a problem?

M: Yeah, yeah. It was more of the nationality at that point. But then, you know, when they realized we also helped with the scrap (?-word not clear) drives and brought our money in for the victory stamps, and you know, we definitely became Americanized as quick as we could. Unfortunately, because of that, we also lost the German reading and writing skills. None of us children, well, Henlor has re-educated herself. She's had numerous opportunities. Her daughter's an airline hostess, so she gets free flights quite frequently. So a number of years she did re-educate herself in learning the German speak and...

H: Well, now, she's in California.

(Omission from transcript at request of Mrs.Waddell)

H: Well, ah, you know, there's a very interesting article in today's, is it today's paper? The fight that is going on in Germany right now with the Turkish, and was that in this paper or did I read it someplace else? I read so many different things. But, anyhow, they claim that, ah, that there is a resurgence of anti-Semitism, and not only that, but equally with the Moslems, because you know, the Moslems, in their Koran, you know, they are taught to kill anybody that isn't of their own. And so the Germans are very upset at this point. This one German said to this Turk, "Why don't you go home.?" And he said, "I am home." You see, the whole world has become a melting pot, so that it isn't...And German...And this article said that there is a staunch feeling of Germany for Germans only now, so I don't know where...

M: Well, the young man that was with us said, there is such a, now thank goodness he and his family are far more broad-minded because we would really have had a problem if he, I mean, you know, there's a group over there that wants to deny that the Holocaust ever happened...

H: Oh. Well...

M: ...and all this and that. And this really disturbs him, because he knows for himself because he has visited Auschwitz, and, you know, he showed real anger whenever this would come up, that there were groups trying to sweep it under the carpet and claim that it never did happen. Um, but, he's, I guess had never thought about it, especially with the coming down of the East Wall, or the Wall, there are so many East Germans invading the West, as they are thinking of it, and it's caused so much unemployment. I mean, the Germans there for awhile after the war they were doing financially very well because of the rebuilding of...I mean, there was jobs to be had and they paid well, were paid well, and I know my mother's family, who used to, who were farmers when she was growing up, they always lived rather modestly. On a very first visit that a family member went after the war and they were still, you know, they didn't have a refrigerator, they didn't have this or that. And then it seemed like five years later, they were just, seemed very wealthy. Well, it's because of the land value. But anyways, this young man was saying that there's a real resentment developing because of the East Germans. They look at it as invading their country and taking over the jobs that they had had.

H: Well, I think they resent the Wall. You know, when they took that wall down, ah, that mixed-up the east and west and they weren't too happy about it.

M: And there, I didn't realize there had been such an immigration from other countries, Africa, Turkey, all around, who have gone there for employment, and they don't intend to make Germany their home but they're there, you know, taking jobs away from, say, the German German, and they, they're providing schools for those children, the children of these immigrated, temporary workers. And the young man who we had, his mother was a teacher and she had, halfway through the school year she had to, to transfer to one of the schools where there was nothing but foreign children, and I guess they are so uncooperative because they don't want to be

there, they don't expect to be there all that long. It's just until Daddy makes a bundle of money, and then they're gonna go back home. And oh, his mother was just, you know, most upset, because they walk in the room resentful, you know, and anything she tries to teach them.

H: Well, you see, this is not only going on there, but it's going on in this country with Mexico, with the infiltration. And it's going on in Israel, because there are 90,000 Gahana that are jet black that are on visas and they don't want to go home. And, ah, Israel is having a big problem about this because of unemployment. And of course now the Arabs used to do the work. Now these Gahana blacks are in doing it, and so it's a, it's...the whole world is in quite a turmoil, you know. I don't envy you girls being young with what this world is going to come to because it, it looks like an inevitable war. I mean...

M: How far are you in your education at Kenyon?

D: We're both in our senior year.

M: Oh, so you're both seniors!

D: Yeah.

M: So the world is out there waiting for you!

D+C (together): Yeah.

H: So what are you majoring in?

D: Sociology.

H: Yes. Oh, and you're doing the same.

C: Yes.

H: Uh-huh. What do you think that will lead you to?

D: Um. I'm guessing I'll go to graduate school in psychology or social work.

H: I ask because my nephew is a sociologist and he works for the Columbus Jewish Center, and ah, of course a lot of his patients are Russians that are having difficulty. You know, this is a very trying thing for people that come to a country when they're not children. As adults to adapt is, I don't think we realize how...I know my niece teaches a Russian woman English. I mean, she has classes. Swedish speaks ah, Yiddish and Hebrew and French, so she is able to communicate. These people that speak Russian sometimes speak Yiddish. And, ah, so, you know, that's a very strange thing but they do. I was in the synagogue just this past weekend, sitting at a table, we had

just finished services and they always have a kiddish, which is a coffee afterwards, and these three Russian women were sitting at our table, and my niece was talking to them in Yiddish! And they were Russian. But that's the only communication that they had, and of course, I didn't know. Swedie was raised, her grandmother taught her Yiddish when she was five years old, so she speaks it fluently. And so she, ah, but ah...my goodness...

C: Is there anything you would like to make sure you add, before we...

H: Well, all I can say is we talked you two girls deaf and dumb. They haven't said a word, Margo. You can see that.

D: Well, you've covered all of our questions.

H: Now where is your home?

C: My home is in New York, but upstate New York.

H: Yes. And yours?

D: Around Chicago.

H: I see. Have you spent four years here?

D: Um-hm.

H: My goodness.

M: They don't look like seniors, do they? I thought they were freshmen.

D: No. I have a baby face.

H: My goodness.

M: Well, I wish you well in your pursuits.

D+C (together): Thank you.

C: Thank you very much.

D: Thanks for giving us this time.

H: Now what is your affiliation? Are you...

C: I don't really have one at all, and ah, if anything, I would be, my family is Italian Catholic out

of New York, but...

H: I see. And what is yours?

D: I'm Jewish.

H: Oh you are?

M: Are you?

D: It's interesting to hear your stories because my grandfather came over from Russia during the time of the war, but I never really got a chance to hear much about it, so...

M: Yeah, ironically, um, I think this is interesting but off the subject. Now we've been, my family, I'm the only one left in Mt. Vernon. My parents are deceased. My aunts and uncles are deceased. I have three siblings in Ohio and then the other one's in California. But, um, there is a retired Protestant minister in my hometown of Germany, or I don't consider it my hometown. I consider Mt. Vernon my hometown. Ah, but I think it's interesting, this is a retired Protestant minister in the town that I spent my first nine years in, who took it upon himself to research the Jewish history in this small community. Now, the population in that town was 2500. And, he's on his third edition because he gets one completed and it circulates and he learns more. And I have been the recipient of the first two copies. He's working on his third one now. But, and I read this, of course, some of it goes prior to my birth, but I can relate, still relate, I guess I was fortunate in a way. I was old enough to remember a lot of things and young enough to forget and be sheltered from a lot of things. I know, when we five get together and think of something, we discover we all have different recollections of it. And we're sitting there with blank faces trying to figure out which is correct and where did we get this assumption. And we have no parents or relatives to ask. Like all parents, I realize even more now our parents must have sheltered us, you know, as much as they could, and I would have done the same with my own children. But now I wish we had the facts, you know? And one thing that came up, when Essie started walking, the youngest one that was a year old two days after we got here, when she started walking, there was a deformity. And my parents took her to the doctors that were available here and in Columbus. And they all said that this child has, has had polio. And, you know, my parents said, "No, no, she never had polio." Well, after the war, it was seven years before there was any communication, you've never heard this one, I'm sure. My father wrote to our family doctor, who was still living. He also had married a Jewish woman, but because he was the only doctor in the vicinity, they spared them. And he and his wife are still living. It's ironic because they've gotta be way up there in their nineties. But anyways, my father wrote to the doctor and explained to him what they were running into with this youngest child of theirs, and that the doctors here were saying she had had polio. And would you believe he wrote back and said, "Yes, Luther, in fact, she did. But, I knew by the time...I knew this was your last chance to get out of the country. I also knew that by the time you would have to get on the boat, she would be over the contagious portion of it. Now we all remembered her being ill with a high temperature, but you know, an infant at eleven, twelve months is teething and you relate it to that. And lo and

behold, she did have polio, but he also said, you know, he felt confident. And I'm sure she must have been because so many during the boat exodus that were going on a few years ago, so many people asked my opinion. What did I think? Asked because of having been an immigrant, "How do you feel about sending..." It was so different, because I remember all of us, other than the infant, my brother who was five and the rest of us, all were given both mental and physical exams before we ever got past the...

H: Yes. They didn't let you out of the country. And they wouldn't of let her in if they had known that she had it.

M: Had there been any signs, ah, and then I remember, even the morning before we got on the boat, we had to go into some cubicles, you know, and go through the whole rigamarow. We had to read, and we had to show...the idea was so that you would not become a burden to the United States. And the same thing happened when we got to Ellis Island. That, you know, again, we received physicals from head to toe, and um, we had to read. So, it was altogether different. So, when this came up about the polio, I mean, I knew this, that this doctor had said that. And one day, my sister said, "You know what I feel really badly about? Is that I think, I get to thinking about how many people did I expose to polio?" And here she now as an adult has harbored this thought, you know. And I said, "Well, it was my understanding you were over that." And I really feel that she had to have been because as strenuous as the physicals were, you know, it would of been picked up. So then you get to thinking. The rest of us were outdoors, the two older ones were going back and forth to school, she was the only one that was home all the time, how in the world did she pick it up? And, from wherever? And, you know, the older ones that were out, playing with the few playmates that would still play with us, ah...

H: But Essie did limp, didn't she?

M: Yeah.

H: As I remember. I haven't seen her...

M: Oh yeah. She had numerous surgeries, and now she's suffering with a post-polio syndrome. But there's so many things like that, that'll come up. And like, now my grandparents had a dry-goods store. A very lovely store for those days. My father had had a tobacco, ah, well, they sold coffees and tobaccos and chocolates, which was a specialty shop in those days. And the story I remember is that since two Erlinger families owned businesses, that made the Nazi regime uncomfortable. That was too much power. So it was a matter of one of them having to give up their business. And my father being the younger, ah, volunteered to give up his business because he felt he could find another job easier than his elderly parents. But it didn't work out quite that way. He had to accept a job out of town and it was in, I don't know what the proper name would be. Of course, Germany is a big wine, grade growing country and a wine producer. He ended up in one of the wine cellars, making, helping make grapes. Of course, there's a lot of mold and mildew and he got a very serious lung infection. But of all the businesses in this history that

we're reading, that this Protestant minister has come up with, which, to the best of our knowledge, is accurate, and he speaks about all the businesses that were destroyed by the Nazis. The Jewish businesses. My grandmother's store, the building itself was never touched. They did, of course, help themselves to any of the merchandise.

H: What part of Germany were you in?

M: What pardon?

H: What city?

M: Ah, we lived in a small town by the name of Mines, which is between, no, excuse me. We lived in Gundersbloom (sp?) between, which is between Mines and Warms, Frankfurt. It's along the Rhine river.

H: Oh.

M: But, you know, we get to wondering, why...

H: Is that near Berlin or...

M: No. Uh-huh. It would be closer to Frankfurt and Hamburg. We sailed out of Hamburg. But, you know, there's just so many things that, why was that spared? The synagogue was dam--ah, the synagogue was right behind the house we lived in. Well, let's see...

(Change tape sides)

M: OK. I guess the building we lived in actually belonged to the Jewish organization in that town. It at one time had been the Jewish school. And our backyard faced the side of the synagogue.

H: Did you attend the synagogue there?

M: Um-hm. I remember going in there.

H: Oh, so your family observed Judaism then.

M: And they segregated the women and the men. Yup. Yup. Ah, it got so they made a side door into the synagogue, and in order not to draw suspicion, the Jewish membership staggered. They couldn't worship together anymore, but they observed their holidays and their Sabbath. But they staggered their time of coming. They came into our front door, we lived upstairs, went through the downstairs hallway, out our backdoor, across our yard, and into the synagogue, in order to have, you know, some prayers or services. But it had to be done pretty slick. If they discovered it, maybe some of them closed their eyes to what was going on. I mean, as slick as

these people were, you wonder...

H: Your family certainly left at an auspicious time, because as you stated, I think you were on the last boat.

M: But going back to the man that's writing this history. I think it's so ironic that a Protestant minister, who could be putting himself into jeopardy, because there could be somebody there that would really resent, because his purpose in writing all this is to show them, you know, how wrong and how unnecessary all of this was. And ah, now, I had a second or third cousin who just came back recently, and they had been invited to come to the community. Last October the little town we lived in celebrated its 1100th anniversary. Now that compares with, you know, 200 in the United States, so you can see how much older. I mean, we know it but we don't think about it, how much older Europe is than the United States. But, among other things, they were asked to go to the school, and I don't know what age classes, but she was asked to go to the school and speak to the students and tell them what she remembers as living there and what happened to her grandmother and an uncle. Ah, and she said the kids were very receptive, but they also wanted to make sure that she realized that they weren't a generation that caused that, which I thought was rather interesting. We are, my side, my father's side of the family lost sixty relatives during the Holocaust.

H: My goodness. Well, you know, Ellie Wazzell spoke at Kenyon, and I never will forget, there was a young, one young student came up to me...

(Telephone call. Not relevant to this interview.)

END OF TAPE

