

Hans Strupp  
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Interviewer: Well, I'm Judy Aron here interviewing Hans Strupp. It's June 10th, 1990. And these are tapes for the archives. Hans, would you tell us what year you were born and where you were born?

Hans Strupp: Uh-huh. I was born in Frankfurt am Main in 1921, August 25th.

Interviewer: And who was in your family?

Hans Strupp: My parents, and I have a younger brother who's three and a half years younger than I am. He also lives in the United States now.

Interviewer: And your parents had always lived in Germany or—

Hans Strupp: Yes. My father was born in a small town in Bavaria, and my mother was born in Strasbourg in Alsace-Lorraine, which at that time in 1892 was part of Germany. But in 1918, was ceded to France at the end of the First World War.

Interviewer: And then, what happened?

Hans Strupp: My mother and several members of her family emigrated from Strasbourg to Frankfurt, and then in 1920, my parents were married and I was born in 1921. I lived in Frankfurt until my emigration in 1939.

Interviewer: When you were 17?

Hans Strupp: When I was...yeah.

Interviewer: Is that what you said?

Hans Strupp: Yes, 17 ½.

Interviewer: What did your family live like? What was your life like? What did your father do?

Hans Strupp: Well, my father was the manager of a haberdashery store, part of a chain that was owned by several uncles, and we lived in an apartment and lived comfortably. We were not particularly wealthy but lived comfortably, so nothing very remarkable about our family life.

Interviewer: What kind of education did you and your brother have?

Hans Strupp: We both went to the usual kind of elementary school. In my case, I then entered the gymnasium at age 11. I went to school there until 1937. This was a public school. At that time, it was no longer possible for Jewish kids to go to public school. Also, emigration already had begun to loom large and people were preparing for emigration. And so, it was common for people to want to learn something that they could use as a trade or as a skill abroad. Since I didn't have any particular manual skills or agricultural interests or mechanical ability, I was sent, as an apprentice, to a business. This was an export business in costume jewelry. And so I learned some basic things like bookkeeping and correspondence and I knew some English already, so I was able to translate letters that came in and letters that were going out.

Interviewer: That was English that you'd learned in school or—

Hans Strupp: Yeah. Our first foreign language was French which started age 11 and English came two or three years later, and I had some private lessons in English also.

Interviewer: How about religious training?

Hans Strupp: Well, we were brought up as Jews of course, and I became Bar Mitzvah at the usual age and religious instruction was handled in the public schools, for Catholics and for Jews. The respective representatives came and gave classes to Jews and Catholics, and the Protestants, they had their own instruction.

Interviewer: Religion was important to your family though?

Hans Strupp: It was to my father. He died however in 1930 at the age of 45 when I was only 9 ½ years old. And he came from a rather religious family. My mother was less observant. And my grandparents on my father's side were quite religious, and they came from a small village in Bavaria where my grandfather was a teacher, but he also was the Shochet, the ritual slaughterer. And I remember him when I was a boy, he would spend his time reading the religious texts, that was his main ... he was retired and nearing 80 and I remember watching him fill his pipe which—

Interviewer: You could smell it.

Hans Strupp: I can still smell it, yeah, right.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. The types of things that you were involved in as a boy, were you in any kinds of activities or things outside of school?

Hans Strupp: Well, I belonged to—

Interviewer: Or anything permitted?

Hans Strupp: Yeah, I belonged to a Jewish sports club for a short time but not being well-known for my athletic abilities. I didn't do very much. I did a little rowing and did little bit of running and that was about it. I might say something about the school experience. This was a public school as I said. There were a number of Jewish kids in my class. This was an all-boys school, the gymnasium, and beginning in 1933, when the Nazis came to power, it became increasingly difficult for Jewish kids to be in the public schools. Why did we go to public school in the first place, that was one of those things my father had thought that it was a good idea. There were some Jewish schools there in Frankfurt also. But he decided we should go to a public school. My brother also went to a public school, later on transferred to a Jewish school. I went to this public school, and increasingly, the school became part of the Nazi machine, that is, the educational system was rapidly taken over by the Nazis, and the other kids would appear in uniform in school. There would be periodic kinds of parades from which the Jewish children were excluded. And increasingly, we were excluded and made to feel different and inferior and humiliated in various ways.

Interviewer: Do you have a first memory of that?

Hans Strupp: Oh yes. The first memory actually of this is a rather important one for me. On April 1, 1933, this was two months after the Nazis came to power in Germany. They organized a boycott against all Jewish businesses, and that meant that they wanted to show to world jury how opposed the Nazis were to Jews in Germany. And so, the Jewish stores were boycotted and there were big parades, and for the first time, the Jewish children were excused. They didn't participate in the parade. I was 12 years at the time and I simply felt excluded and was sad about not being able to participate in something that my classmates—

Interviewer: Was that something then that you wouldn't ask your parents about or your mother about?

Hans Strupp: Yeah. Well—

Interviewer: What is happening?

Hans Strupp: I didn't have much understanding and I don't know that there was much to explain, but I remember that, as time went on, as the schools became increasingly Nazified, life became more difficult. One would frequently be harassed by other kids on the street and called Jew or occasionally be

beaten up, but that was not that common. But increasingly, the other kids would join the youth organizations and appeared in school in uniform and participated in various activities of that kind. And so, the Jewish children were increasingly made to feel unwelcome. I should mention here, too, that there was some preferential treatment given in the early years of the Nazi regime to kids whose fathers had fought in the First World War. My father was a soldier, had been a soldier in the German army, and so as such, you were treated a little better, but that didn't last very long.

Interviewer: It was just a very short period of time.

Hans Strupp: That was a short period, yeah. Of course, by that time, he was already dead.

Interviewer: Yeah. Did you have friends who were not Jewish as a boy?

Hans Strupp: Not really. There were mostly Jewish boys.

Interviewer: Do you have any memories of, or what memories do you have, of people who had previously been familiar to you who then shunned or turned or changed?

Hans Strupp: Yes. One person comes to mind particularly a teacher whom I admired quite a bit. And he was not a Nazi. This was in the gymnasium. However, it became increasingly difficult for these people who were Gentile to even be seen talking to Jewish students or at least they felt that way. He had to join the party and then appeared with the Nazi insignia in school. And I remember that he increasingly avoided contacts with me. We would ride on the street car occasionally together but didn't want to be seen talking to Jewish kids anymore. And if you consider that from their standpoint, it meant that they could lose their job or much worse. So, it became increasingly difficult for these people to show any kind of friendly relation to Jewish people.

Interviewer: Was that something that caused you a lot of pain back then or—

Hans Strupp: Yes, it was hurtful and it was really more internal than external and I think, although I cannot attribute that, I've been a consumer of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis many years after that. And I think some of the early memories certainly the experiences during the Nazi regime didn't help to build one's self-esteem and self-respect. And increasingly, Jews were humiliated and the Nazi propaganda became increasingly intense in the years that we're talking about between '33 and '39 when I finally left Germany.

Interviewer: The kinds of humiliations that you're talking about, again, do you have

some specific memories of things you saw or that happened to you?

Hans Strupp: Well, there were mostly subtle things that happened as I was saying, being excluded from participation in class affairs which is generally experiences painful by children.

Interviewer: Yes.

Hans Strupp: And these were really about the main things that I recall.

Interviewer: Your brother was younger than you. I wonder what your relationship was to him during this time.

Hans Strupp: Yeah, well, we had—

Interviewer: —with your father?

Hans Strupp: We had a pretty good relationship. He kind of looked up to his older brother and we're still pretty close and he's a tax attorney. He immigrated with my mother and me in '39, went to law school eventually, and became a tax attorney. He's doing quite well in Washington, DC.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. You mentioned before about Kristallnacht.

Hans Strupp: Yeah.

Interviewer: Can you say something about that?

Hans Strupp: Yes. This was actually the most dramatic memory I have of the Nazi period. As you know, this happened in November 1938, and I was then an apprentice in this business I had mentioned earlier. So, you remember the circumstances. There was a German attaché in Paris who had been shot and killed by a young Polish Jew who was irate because a lot of Jewish Polish families were driven out of Germany and had to go back to Poland. They were not allowed back in Poland. Anyway, he appeared at the German embassy in Paris and shot this attaché, which was used as a pretext by the Nazis for a major action against all Jews and perhaps the first major action against Jews in Nazi Germany. So, I was working in this business. I arrived there in the morning, and people were reporting that the windows of Jewish stores were being smashed, that the synagogues were on fire, and that there was a big uproar in the city. Frankfurt had always had a rather sizable Jewish population. So, the boss who was also Jewish said to the employees, well, it's probably better to go home for everybody and see than wait it out there. So I walked home. On the way, I saw some evidence but not very much of fire department still rushing around and I didn't pass any synagogues that were on fire, but I came to

our house, this was around, we lived in an apartment with my mother. And there were two men standing there and they had a car, and one of them asked me who I was and did I live in this house and was I Jewish. So, they said, well, go and sit in this car, and I did, and they went to the house and they canvassed the house. They were trying to arrest whatever Jewish men they could find. They didn't have records that were that precise in those days although the police department in Germany had registration of all Jewish citizens. So they came to my mother's apartment and verified that I was her son and I'd learned that later. Then, they came down, they talked to each other some more, got in the car, and then, one of them said to me, "Well, get out. Your mother is waiting with dinner up there." It was the closest that I came to being sent to concentration camp.

Interviewer: How frightened were you?

Hans Strupp: Well, I didn't—

Interviewer: Didn't know what was happening?

Hans Strupp: I didn't have much sense of what was happening, but they were arresting whoever, whatever Jewish men they could find.

Interviewer: You mentioned an uncle. Did you tell me an...or your wife's—?

Hans Strupp: My wife's father was arrested, sent to concentration camp. He went to Dachau for about six weeks and then was able to get out because he was able to show evidence that he could immigrate to the United States.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. Well, it sounds like you came very close.

Hans Strupp: We came close. We came here in June '39 and the war started September 1.

Interviewer: How did your family make the decision to leave, Hans?

Hans Strupp: Well, the decision was made increasingly easy because of the difficulties that my mother encountered. She had become the owner of a haberdashery store comparable to the one in which my father had worked. And this was in a rather poor neighborhood of Frankfurt and there were frequently boycotts organized by the Nazis. Usually around Christmastime, there would be some SR men in uniform appear in front of the store, stand there, and try to prevent people from entering and say, "Don't buy from Jews." And across the street, on a balcony, where there was another store, there were men with cameras and they threatened to take pictures of people who bought in these Jewish stores. So, then, usually, the cops would appear because a small crowd would accumulate

and they would say, "Well, you better close the store." And so, increasingly, and after the Kristallnacht in '38, it just became amply apparent that you had to leave Germany as quickly as possible. The Nazis made it abundantly clear that they wanted the Jews out. And those who could get out were still able to get out, although we could no longer take any money with us, and whatever—

Interviewer: That was made clear to you. You must leave everything or—

Hans Strupp: Well, that was the law. You couldn't...there were strict regulations as to what you could take. You could take some personal belongings and we had some furniture that was left in a lift van supposedly to be shipped later, but then the war broke out, and of course, we never saw that again.

Interviewer: What else were you allowed to bring?

Hans Strupp: Ten marks which was a few dollars and that's about all.

Interviewer: And the rest of your money you would have to leave in a bank there?

Hans Strupp: No. It had been confiscated through taxes. There was a very high tax that was levied on all emigrants. That is to heap insult or an injury; you had to pay a tax for what was called fleeing Nazi Germany when in fact it was no longer possible to live there. So my mother in fact lost her belongings, lost her money. And Jews had also been required earlier to hand in all valuable jewelry, gold, silver, diamonds and got pittance for that. That was another one of those actions that the Nazis had organized.

Interviewer: And was your mother somebody who showed the pain of this or was she somebody who just—

Hans Strupp: Well, she's...I guess everyone became subdued and their spirits were pretty low. And immigration of course was the topic that everybody talked about including what kind of a registration number you had with the American consulate in Stuttgart, which would issue the visas.

Interviewer: How did that happen and you have a passport with you, too?

Hans Strupp: Yeah, okay. By 1930—

Interviewer: Let me introduce—

Hans Strupp: Oh I'm sorry.

Interviewer: Judy Aron interviewing Hans Strupp, June 10th, 1990. This is tape 2. And again, if you would say some more about the decisions to leave and

how you did this.

Hans Strupp: Yeah, by 1938, it had become abundantly clear to all Jews in Nazi Germany that they had to get out if they could get out and that there was no future. Previously, it had been possible at least to live there. Of course, you could no longer participate in any kind of social activities. Restaurants were restricted. Stores had signs of “Jews are not wanted here.”

Interviewer: Could you walk around? Could you walk around in the city?

Hans Strupp: Oh yes, yeah. But it just became an oppressive situation. So, people made great efforts to find ways to get out of Germany. Now, there was only a limited number of choices available because most countries didn't allow immigration. The quota for the United States was about 30 thousand a year which was the German quota. And Jews, of course, numbered about half a million in Germany, not everybody wanted to go to the United States. But until about '37 or there about, people still thought it might be possible to live in Germany, but that became abundantly clear after the Kristallnacht that you had to get out as fast as possible.

Interviewer: How did you get your papers then?

Hans Strupp: Well, you had to apply. You had to show that, first of all, you had to bring in some evidence that you could immigrate some place. And my mother was fortunate because for American immigration purposes, she came under the French quota because when she was born in Strasbourg, that was Germany at that time, but for American immigration purposes, it now was France. And since she had two minor children, she was able to come under French quota and was able to get the application processed rather rapidly. An uncle of mine, her brother, had put up \$5,000 as an affidavit in this country as security. And so, rather rapidly, early in '39, we got the summons to the American consulate in Stuttgart. You had to go there and fill out papers and have a physical examination. But prior to that, you needed a German passport and you were given this German passport only if you could show that in effect you had paid this horrendous taxes for fleeing the Reich, and that you weren't taking anything along other than your personal belongings and that was essentially it. And then, of course, they would kind of harass you, make you come back, say it's not ready, come back another time, and that sort of thing was...that was sort of standard. So, the passport that we got is one I still have here and I show you the inside. It has my name, but it says Hans Hermann, which was my given name, and in addition to that, Israel Strupp. Israel was required for all Jewish men to add to their name to make them recognizable immediately as Jews. Jewish women had to add the names Sarah in addition to. And these were all intended as humiliations and they were.



As you also see the J in the passport identified all Jews. I want to show you at the end of this passport, this was the document to freedom, which you cannot see very clearly, but this was the American immigration visa that allowed you to enter the United States and—

Interviewer: They sent that in Stuttgart?

Hans Strupp: This was issued in Stuttgart and, of course, you needed that to enter the United States.

Interviewer: What a treasure, huh?

Hans Strupp: Yeah.

Interviewer: And your mother went to get these passports for the three of you or you went alone?

Hans Strupp: Well, each of us needed the passports. No, we had to go to Stuttgart with her, yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: And these were important trips back and forth and back and forth.

Hans Strupp: Yeah.

Interviewer: It's not—

Hans Strupp: Well, that was about three or four hours by train.

Interviewer: What family did not come? What parts of your family did not come to the United States?

Hans Strupp: Well, there were several aunts and uncles who didn't succeed in immigrating. There were two sisters of my father's; one of them had married and lived in the Netherlands. Her husband had died and the second aunt, **Freda (sp)**, who had lived with us for a time, immigrated to the Netherlands, and both **Freda (sp)** and her sister and two children of the other sisters were deported during the Nazi occupation of Holland and they died in a concentration camp. Another uncle on my mother's side presumably died in the concentration camp. So, these were fairly close members of the family. My wife's grandmother, her parents had to immigrate, leave the old lady behind. There was no way she could come to the United States, and she died in a concentration camp. Another aunt of hers lived in a concentration camp or was incarcerated in Theresienstadt for a number of years during the war. Her husband died in the camp, but she was kept alive because she had skills as a seamstress and she was able to sew uniforms. So she had a skill that the Germans—

Interviewer: They kept her.

Hans Strupp: found useful.

Interviewer: Your mother selected the United States because of your uncle being here?

Hans Strupp: Yeah, we had some...my uncle had been...yeah.

Interviewer: You had other relatives in South America or who chose to go to South America—

Hans Strupp: That's right.

Interviewer: How did you—

Hans Strupp: Both on my...excuse me.

Interviewer: I was just saying for her to choose the United States...

Hans Strupp: Well, that was a logical place to come. We had thought about possibly going to a South American country. Tu (sp) and I had actually learned Spanish for a couple of years, started Spanish in preparation for that, and also had English private lessons. But, after her brother, my uncle, immigrated to the United States, he was fairly close to my mother, so that was the logical place to come.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. And you came in what form of transportation?

Hans Strupp: We came by boat. We left Germany on the train and they harassed you some at the border, but that wasn't very significant, but we breathe a sigh of relief when we left Germany. We stopped in Strasbourg, which was my mother's birthplace for just a short couple of hours and then went on to Paris where we stayed with a cousin for a night. Then went to Le Havre and caught the British ship, [unintelligible 0:28:52.1] liner Britannic, which I think was sank during the war. So we came from there, took the boat to New York.

Interviewer: How long a trip was that?

Hans Strupp: In those days, I guess probably took about six, seven days, maybe eight.

Interviewer: Was that an exciting time or again a time of relief or fear or—

Hans Strupp: Well, it was a great relief to kind of a numb feeling. It was a great relief to get out of Germany, and the only thing I remember though about the trip

was I got seasick pretty badly for a couple of days.

Interviewer: Something to remember.

Hans Strupp: Yeah.

Interviewer: The city that you came to, then, you came to New York.

Hans Strupp: Yes as most Jews did.

Interviewer: Yes. And stayed for how long?

Hans Strupp: One year. My brother still had to go to school. He was too young to take a job. I found a job. It took a little while as my skills that I had acquired in Germany helped as a bookkeeper and sort of general office boy.

Interviewer: It was hard to find work.

Hans Strupp: It was hard to find work because there were a lot of immigrants. This was still the tail end of the Depression. And so I pounded the pavement for several weeks, but then through a friend of mine, whose father knew somebody, it was this kind of thing. I was able to get this job, worked as a bookkeeper for a year, started at \$11 a week and rose to 13, then 15, and then \$17, and then the company that owned the store had also a branch office in Washington. So they, for reasons of their own, wanted somebody to go there and work in their store in Washington. And so they asked me would I move to Washington at the munificent salary of \$20 a week. And since I had no reason not to, I accepted that. I moved there and then my brother came and my mother joined them and she worked as a companion for a couple of, first, an old lady, and then an older couple.

Interviewer: In New York City?

Hans Strupp: First in New York City and then also in Washington, DC. And then, she kept house for my brother and myself for a number of years in Washington.

Interviewer: Do you remember your first sight of New York City?

Hans Strupp: Not particularly. I remember that we arrived on a Sunday morning and the boat docked and—

Interviewer: The date you have—

Hans Strupp: Yeah, this was June 18, 1939.

Interviewer: So, it was warm?

Hans Strupp: It was quite warm and my uncle came. Of course, you had to be met by somebody at the ship and so my uncle came and the customs official, the immigration official, asked him for his papers and he didn't have any. He said, "I have them in a safe at the bank." He says, "Well, that's a good place to keep them." It was all right. So, we first lived in a room, the three of us that we had rented. And then, my mother of course moved in with her employer and my brother and I got a room with another Jewish family in Washington Heights, which was one of the places where a lot of the refugees had settled, which—

Interviewer: Did you come across other people you knew?

Hans Strupp: Yes, well, I started to go to school at night. I went to City College as it was known then, so the City University of New York. I went there for a year and took a couple of courses, and then, when we moved to Washington, DC, I went again to night school. We had to support our mother soon thereafter because she became sick. I went to night school and earned the Bachelor's degree at night, later on a Master's degree, and then, after that, a PhD, all pretty much through night school at George Washington University.

Interviewer: Working during the day?

Hans Strupp: Working during the day.

Interviewer: Doing this accounting. When you got off the boat, what did you have with you?

Hans Strupp: Well, we had some clothes, personal belongings and that was it.

Interviewer: Do you remember any things in particular?

Hans Strupp: No, we had brought a few books and just our clothes, really nothing that we were able to take out that was in any way bulky. We had a few suitcases and—

Interviewer: Was that like one for each hand?

Hans Strupp: Yeah. There were also some sort of duffel bags that we had brought along with various kinds of things we might need for the household in the—

Interviewer: Do you still have any of those things? You've managed to save your passport all these years.

Hans Strupp: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you have any of those things?

Hans Strupp: There may be a few books that I brought over at the time, but that was about all, nothing... We had some photo albums and—

Interviewer: Oh really?

Hans Strupp: Yeah, some pictures of... family shots and—

Interviewer: Bet those are treasure now.

Hans Strupp: Yeah. I remember in 1936, I had another uncle in Berlin who had invited me to spend the summer there and that was the time of the Olympic Games when the game Olympic Games were in Germany and they lived very close to the stadium. And one afternoon, my uncle took me to the Olympic Games; I remember that. It was in 1936.

Interviewer: Once you were settled in New York or then Washington, did your family bring any other family members over or any friends or did you become sponsors?

Hans Strupp: No. Later on, my wife's family brought an aunt over, but we didn't. There wasn't anyone left really.

Interviewer: Did you experience any prejudice in the United States once you came here for being Jewish or for being refugee?

Hans Strupp: Not really. I don't have any recollections of any kind along those lines and I've always been very vocal about the opportunities that the United States presented to refugees like us. I mean we had no... We didn't get any government aid or student loans or anything like that, but the opportunities just being able to go to school at night and holding down a job during the day, and advancing oneself, acquiring an education, which wouldn't have been possible probably in Germany, in the same way even under more favorable circumstances. I've always been very appreciative of these opportunities that presented themselves to us.

Interviewer: Some of the good that comes.

Hans Strupp: Yeah, right. And I think that still exists today. But I have no experiences that I could point to that we're in any way adverse.

Interviewer: Thank goodness, huh?

Hans Strupp: Yeah.

Interviewer: How long before you felt at home in the United States?

Hans Strupp: Well, that took quite a while. I felt pretty lonely at first but gradually began to experience myself as an American, and it has been said that once you start dreaming in the language of a new country, then you have really mastered it.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. Do you remember when that was?

Hans Strupp: No, I don't remember when that was, but I remember having quite a time at first with movies and even understanding people, even though my English was pretty decent, but it was, I thought it was difficult at first.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. Just to have the language. Have you been back to Frankfurt?

Hans Strupp: Oh yes, a number of times. My wife and I travel to Germany, well, every so often. And yeah—

Interviewer: Would you remember your first time going back?

Hans Strupp: Yeah, that was probably in late '50s, but I've been there a number of times because my father is buried there in Frankfurt to visit his grave. My grandparents on my father's side are both buried in another cemetery in Frankfurt and the school that I attended is still there. And the house in which we originally lived was bombed during the war and has been replaced. The city has changed a great deal and is now, really, is very American in many ways in its appearance, but—

Interviewer: How did you feel about going back to your country?

Hans Strupp: Well, I wouldn't want to live there ever again even though I have some professional relationships with people in Germany and especially in Ulm which is not far from Munich. And it's sort of a strange feeling where if you walk through the old streets and they seem more narrow than you remembered them and the street cars will have the same numbers and some of the stores are still there. Of course, there are a lot of bitter memories, but I must say that the people today, of course, now 90% of the Germans living today were born after the war. They are quite friendly and hospitable. I still speak the language, of course.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. So you can make your way around?

Hans Strupp: Yeah.

Interviewer: Your religious practices, did they continue after you came to the United States up to now?

Hans Strupp: Well, my wife is more observant than I am. We belong to the Temple here. Our son became Bar Mitzvah and I should mention that my wife was also a refugee from Nazi Germany. We're distantly related as a matter of fact; we're second cousins, yeah.

Interviewer: Though you met here for the first time?

Hans Strupp: We met in the United States and my mother had something to do with that. And we have three children, two daughters and a son. The two daughters are both psychologists. The eldest is a clinical psychologist. The second is a biopsychologist. Now, our son is an oncologist. He's practicing here in town.

Interviewer: Some of your other relatives, have you had any contact with them, the ones in South America and such?

Hans Strupp: Yes. Of course, all these people have died there. Their children are living; I have cousins. One lives in New York. Another cousin emigrated from South America where they also didn't stay; they went to Israel. So, there is some contact with cousins and, well, my wife's family is still in this country; that is also their children.

Interviewer: Judy Aron, tape 3, interviewing Hans Strupp, June 10th, 1990. How do you think this whole experience has affected you? You mentioned some.

Hans Strupp: Oh, I would say, profoundly, I think it has been a really major factor in my personal development and also the difficulties that I've experienced. I think the subtle and not so subtle degradation that I experienced between 1933, the beginning of the Nazi period in '39, certainly these were very impressionable years, have cast a long shadow. And I think that the enormous hostility shown by the Nazis and fomented in the population has left its mark in, well, Jews as well as other minorities have been known to have a good deal of self-hatred which is introjected by the attitudes that are displayed toward us. And that was something I felt really I've been deeply influenced by that and that is the deprivation of human dignity that is the, that I can only call, the degradation that gradually and progressively occurred where people were just simply treated as a lower form of life. And that, of course, was I think one of the worst aspects of the whole Nazi persecution. And the state-sanctioned kind of hostility and hatred that was shown by the general population to the Jews and that gradually escalated as, of course, it was fomented by the Nazis. And those are I think experiences that are just of lasting consequence.

Interviewer: Yeah, that would make you understand things that nobody else would.

Hans Strupp: That's right, yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: How do you feel about being Jewish?

Hans Strupp: You mean today?

Interviewer: Today.

Hans Strupp: Well, it's not an easy question to answer. In Germany, Jews consider themselves, that is, those who had lived there for generations, as Germans first and Jews second, as many, I would consider myself American first today and Jewish second. I'm not very observant. I'm a member of the Temple as is my family. And so, it is more a sense of tradition rather than...I'm not at all active in the affairs of the Temple, I go to services on the high holidays, and that's about the extent of it. So, it's not a very, as far as I'm concerned, to be quite honest, it's not a very deep thing. Well, we were talking about the Nazi experience. Perhaps because of my father's early death, I never took really great pride in being Jewish; do you see what I mean? I have a friend, who also went through the Nazi experience in Germany, and he had a very positive identification with Judaism through his family and that is something that I think has helped him a great deal. It also has been reported that it helped concentration camp survivors a great deal if they had a strong positive identification with Judaism. I always experienced being Jewish as something detrimental, as a negative valence. Certainly, that's what I mean by the experience in Nazi Germany, that is, unless you somehow had a very strong positive self-image, certainly, the experience in Nazi Germany didn't help and if you didn't have a very strong identification to start with, the attitudes that the Nazis displayed were sort of built into oneself and that I think was...

Interviewer: Yeah...In what ways has this whole experience affected how you brought up your children?

Hans Strupp: Well, they have grown up as Americans and we have neglected, unfortunately, to teach them German, which would have been nice to do. Their experience I mean other than...My wife and I are both have grown up in Germany, and have been reared in Jewish families. The influence has not been particularly, I mean there's nothing particularly noteworthy there. My second daughter is not at all identified with Judaism although when her little baby boy was born, we had a bris and my eldest daughter belongs to a Jewish congregation in Houston and my son, he became Bar Mitzvah at the synagogue, at West End Synagogue here and he's relatively observant. So, they're...I don't know quite how to answer the question.



Interviewer: They know the story? They know the story that you've told—

Hans Strupp: And I've recorded much of this on an audiotape recently, and that's really the main reason I'm doing this because I really think it's important for them to see and for later generations also. Especially, I'm troubled by the fact that there are revisionists at work today who say this whole thing didn't happen and I was spared from concentration camps and the most horrible experiences that other people went through. But I think it is important to have a historical record of these events. So, that's why I appreciate this opportunity to talk to you and for the Temple to have this project.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you would like people to know before we end the tape? Anything else you'd like to tell people?

Hans Strupp: Probably, there are lots of things, but I can't think of any one thing right now. So, thank you very much.

Interviewer: Yes, thank you. How do you feel about reunification in Germany?

Hans Strupp: Well, I have mixed feelings about that. I'm frankly amazed that the Allies are as acquiescent in this movement as they appear to be. And a lot of the past seems to have been forgotten. I'm not so much worried today and during the next few years because, really, I like to believe that there has been a basic change in the German character, although I have some qualms about that. I'm not so certain that actually has occurred. But I'm fearful of what might happen 20, 30, 50 years down the road, when have an enormously powerful Germany in existence again. Now, I think as long as Germany is prosperous and economically in a very strong position as they are now and as they're undoubtedly going to be in the years to come, things may well be okay and I like to believe that there has been a profound change in the German character. But at the same time, I also believe that there are certain German characteristics which I could spend a lot of time describing, that the attitude toward authority, that is, to kind of sort of look up to those who are above you and to oppress those who are below you. There's something in the German character going back to the Middle Ages which I view with great mistrust, and the fact that the whole experience of the Holocaust which of course was partly a function of the very bad situation, economic and social situation in Germany at the time. But that's something that only could have happened in Germany. It is still really hard to fathom that this could have happened in our time in a civilized country. And I'm just concerned. I would not be, if I had any say about it, so readily agreed to this reunification, I'm reminded of a statement that was made by a French diplomat a little while back. He said, "I'm so fond of Germany. I'm glad there are two of them." Maybe, that would have been better, yeah.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. Well, thank you.

Hans Strupp: Thank you.

Interviewer: I don't think we have anymore.