

Transcript:

Jacob Seidner

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Interviewer: This is Jim Siebold. It's June 10th, 1990. Jack, can I have your full name please.

Jacob Seidner: Jack Seidner.

Interviewer: Your date of birth?

Jacob Seidner: July 12, 1921.

Interviewer: Your place of birth.

Jacob Seidner: Lujan. It's North Bucovina; it's a part of Romania in that time.

Interviewer: Can you please spell Lujan?

Jacob Seidner: L-U-J-A-N, or in Romanian it's spelled L-U-J-E-N-I.

Interviewer: The name of your spouse.

Jacob Seidner: Sarah.

Interviewer: The date and place of your marriage.

Jacob Seidner: It was August 31st, 1945 in Belgrade, Yugoslavia.

Interviewer: Your father's name.

Jacob Seidner: [Laip unintelligible 0:00:52.3].

Interviewer: The date and place of your father's birth if you can recall it.

Jacob Seidner: Well, it's Lujan too.

Interviewer: Lujan?

Jacob Seidner: Yeah. Well, he was 65 at that time of his death, that was in 1941, so I think...

Interviewer: So...86?

Jacob Seidner: So he was born on...18.

Interviewer: 1886.

Jacob Seidner: Something like that.

Interviewer: Something like that. Ballpark.

Jacob Seidner: Right.

Interviewer: Your mother is?

Jacob Seidner: [unintelligible 0:01:21.3]

Interviewer: And her place of birth.

Jacob Seidner: [unintelligible 0:01:23.9]

Interviewer: Any rough...

Jacob Seidner: Next to Czernowitz that was still Austria in that time when she was born, right.

Interviewer: And her age?

Jacob Seidner: Her age? She was about five years younger than my father, so it would be in 1890 something like that.

Interviewer: '91 maybe...Her occupation.

Jacob Seidner: Housewife.

Interviewer: Okay. And the name of your children and their ages right now.

Jacob Seidner: Well, Leo is 44, Janice is 39, Betty is 31, Sammy is 30, and Helen is...she was born in '63, so she would be...

Interviewer: 27.

Jacob Seidner: Right.

Interviewer: Good. Good. Maybe we could begin Jack for you just describing for us a little bit about the town Lujan, where you lived in.

Jacob Seidner: Well, Lujan was a little rural area, you know, a farm town. My father used to peddle. He used to go from little town...you know with a horse and buggy selling shoes. I was born and raised there. I went to public school there. High school, we couldn't afford; high school was expensive, you had to pay for it.

Interviewer: Were you a poor family would you...?

Jacob Seidner: Well, I was never hungry. Let's put it that way. We were not rich, but I had everything what I needed. We were all right, but not to be able to pay for higher education, that was not possible. In those days it was not easy, you know, and it was very expensive too. And naturally, you know, a Jewish boy when he was 13, you became a man, and in those days if you didn't further your education you went to work. So I went...from Lujan I went to Czernowitz, the big city.

Interviewer: At what age?

Jacob Seidner: At 13. And I went...I was an apprentice in a store for three years. That's how the system works, you know. I work for three years, no wages.

Interviewer: Who did you live with?

Jacob Seidner: I lived with some family there and I had a brother there, my older brother he used to help me pay for my food and lodging. And after three years you had to go through the chamber of commerce and put up an exam and become a full-fledged salesman and I was doing all right.

Interviewer: And then sales is what you'd been trained in?

Jacob Seidner: Yeah. That was the system in those days. And it was considered a very good job in those days. It paid very well, yeah. And I was doing pretty good, and in 1940, the

Russians came in. They occupied the North Bucovina and Bessarabia in that time, and they were there about a year.

Interviewer: This is a year after the occupation of Poland by the Germans?

Jacob Seidner: Right.

Interviewer: And Germans...

Jacob Seidner: The Russians came in. At that time King Carol was the king of Romania and somehow they made a deal and they gave that part, North Bucovina and Bessarabia, they gave it to the Russians. So when they came in I went from Czernowitz back home to that little town to my parents to stay with them.

Interviewer: So all that time you had been in the larger town?

Jacob Seidner: Right. And naturally in Russia in those days you had to work. If you didn't work...that meant that you were doing some commerce, it was illegal. You had to work. So I was working in an alcohol factory, and then I changed and I worked in a...we had the alcohol factory in that little town and we had a sugar factory. And in June of 1941, the Russians left and the Germans came in.

Interviewer: Let me ask you, before you go on to that. How many Jews were in your town?

Jacob Seidner: About a hundred family.

Interviewer: A hundred family. And the total population?

Jacob Seidner: About 3000.

Interviewer: About 3000?

Jacob Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: What was life like for Jews in this town before the...?

Jacob Seidner: It was not bad. It was not bad. It was...who was in power, you know, if we had the right person in power it was okay, if we had the right...but you know, sometimes it happens if the sermon was okay, you know, if the people went to church Sunday morning and the bishop forgot about Jews it was okay. If they didn't forget about Jews it wasn't a terrible thing.

Interviewer: Is that right?

Jacob Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: Was there so much discrimination?

Jacob Seidner: Only where education was considered. Education, you know, to become a doctor, a lawyer, an engineer it was very hard in those days because you had a quota.

Interviewer: Yes.

Jacob Seidner: You know, they allow a minimum. And naturally you have to be pretty wealthy to be able to do it, to get in especially to college—

Interviewer: Right. Right.

Jacob Seidner: —in those days and...

Interviewer: But there was a synagogue, there was open synagogue.

Jacob Seidner: Oh yeah, sure, sure, sure. When I was in public school and when we had a national holiday and when we were marching from school, the Christians went to church and we went to the synagogues. I mean, you know, you made a prayer for the king, the president or whatever it was. It was all right. There was no...we had religious hours in school and the Jewish were excused for that hour.

Interviewer: Is that right?

Jacob Seidner: Yeah. We walked out. We played in the yard and after an hour we came back to school.

Interviewer: I think you have a picture of your family...

Jacob Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: And maybe you could show those at this point.

Jacob Seidner: Oh yeah. I was lucky I had an uncle here and he had that picture and he gave it to me, otherwise, I wouldn't have it. That's my father.

Interviewer: Can you turn it a little bit towards the...there you go.

Jacob Seidner: That's my father and my mother and my two older brothers and that's me when I was eight years old, yeah. And then I have a picture of my grandmother.

Interviewer: This is your mother's mother?

Jacob Seidner: That's my mother's mother, yeah. The other one I don't have. When her husband died she lived with us for a little while, and she died of natural causes.

Interviewer: She did?

Jacob Seidner: Yeah. Now my parents actually, when the Germans came in June...dates I don't remember, in June in 1941. Before they came into that little town, we had a river that's called the Prut, a big river. So all the Jews from that little town went to hike, I don't know what they call it, but big grasses growing around the water, tall.

Interviewer: Right.

Jacob Seidner: And we were all hiding there.

Interviewer: This was in anticipation of the Germans?

Jacob Seidner: Yeah. They were supposed to come in and we left the house, everybody left their homes, and we stayed there for three days. And eventually we had to, you know...how long can you stay there?

Interviewer: Uh-hmm.

Jacob Seidner: But when we got back to our homes, the house was empty, nothing was left. The population, you know, went and just—everything. You couldn't find a cup to have a drink of water.

Interviewer: Who took the stuff?

Jacob Seidner: The population.

Interviewer: The population...these were your neighbors?

Jacob Seidner: Yeah, neighbors, sure. We had a guy who used to work for my father and he came over and he said, "Look, in all that everybody gonna take it, you know, let me

take it and in case everything is all right, you know where it is.” He took everything, but when we came back...So the Romanians at that time they took all the Jews to that sugar factory. They didn’t work in that time, you know...now we stayed there for about two weeks.

Interviewer: Hiding?

Jacob Seidner: No.

Interviewer: No?

Jacob Seidner: In the sugar factory.

Interviewer: Why in the sugar factory?

Jacob Seidner: They took us over there. They took all of the Jews?

Interviewer: Why not back to your homes?

Jacob Seidner: There was nothing in the homes. They didn’t leave us and they didn’t let us go to the homes. They took us all together. Now, we stayed there for about two weeks, then they took us all together again and they marched us over the Polish border. The Polish border was about 30 kilometers, not far.

Interviewer: These are the town officials that are doing...?

Jacob Seidner: Right.

Interviewer: Making these decisions?

Jacob Seidner: Right. And there came an order from Bucharest, from the government. And at that time it was Antonescu. I don't know if you heard it at that time.

Interviewer: No.

Jacob Seidner: Yeah. He was King Michael. He now lives in Switzerland.

Interviewer: Is that so.

Jacob Seidner: Yeah. And he thought he's going to go back now and become king of Romania...

Interviewer: Yeah. There's a lot of them that would go back...

Jacob Seidner: Yeah...

Interviewer: How were the people feeling as they're getting marched around? What is their thinking?

Jacob Seidner: Well, some people, you had neighbors and I never felt a stranger in that little town. I never felt any anti-Semitism. I never felt it as a kid. Yeah, with the kids in school, when you know, oh yeah, you always heard, you know, go to Palestine, go there, go here, go there. You heard that, but you didn't...it didn't bother you. That was a natural thing, you know. You live with that every day and it didn't bother you. But as a whole we didn't have any trouble. As a whole we didn't have...but in that time when they drove us, when they marched us to the border, to the Polish border, they arranged for the elderly people to have horse and buggies. So I managed to put my father on one of them and my mother on another one, and we couldn't follow them. The young people, they marched in front and the horse and buggies were in the back.

Interviewer: This is you and your two brothers?

Jacob Seidner: No. My brother...the Russians took him with them.

Interviewer: Oh.

Jacob Seidner: You see, when they left, they took him with them. Somehow I couldn't do it. I was young at that time. I was younger, you know.

Interviewer: They took him to be a soldier?

Jacob Seidner: They took him for work, not soldier. They didn't trust him, no, not a soldier, but as a worker. He was in [unintelligible 0:13:13.4] for four years.

Interviewer: Okay.

Jacob Seidner: And then he went to Israel from there. But anyway, I put my father on my wagon and my mother on my wagon and we were going all night and early in the morning when dawn, about four o'clock, five o'clock in the morning, we were over the border and I was going through to see where my parents were and I haven't seen them since. Two couples disappeared, my mother and my father and another couple from that group. And I've never seen them since then.

Interviewer: No clue?

Jacob Seidner: No clue. I don't know what happened to them.

Interviewer: And so now you're alone?

Jacob Seidner: And now I'm alone. Strictly alone.

Interviewer: How's that feeling? I mean is this terrifying?

Jacob Seidner: Well, I'll you what, in a situation like that, you become so hardened that actually nothing bothers you. You cannot cry. I couldn't shed a tear. I sit today and watch television and if it's too dramatic I start crying and my family looks at me, "Hey, you must be crazy." But subconsciously, you know, what I mean, I start crying and during that time I could... I couldn't do it, I could not. But anyway, we stayed there, it was Saturday. The city was [unintelligible 0:14:39.1].

Interviewer: This is Poland?

Jacob Seidner: In Poland. And the Hungarian army was there because they were with the Germans. And every Jewish house had a Star of David, but they were still home. And the rabbi of that town told the people to...they call it [unintelligible 0:15:01.9] to cook on Saturday to give us food. So in the meantime they received the order from Bucharest that they should send us back.

Interviewer: Why did they send you to begin with?

Jacob Seidner: I don't know. I don't know. Who knows?

Interviewer: Who knows?

Jacob Seidner: Who knows? They want to get rid of us. They didn't want us. The Germans didn't want us there. The Hungarians didn't want us there. The Polish didn't want us there, so they sent us back. We came back and we were there about another two or three weeks, and then they started again and they marched us all the way from the Bucovina through Bessarabia all the way to Dniester [unintelligible 0:15:51.0]. It is the border from the Romanian side to the Russian side.

Interviewer: And this is still your town people that are marching?

Jacob Seidner: Yeah. And they marched us and everyday people just dropped. The elderly people, I mean it was hot; it was in summertime, no food, no water.

Interviewer: Why are you being treated this way by your own countrymen?

Jacob Seidner: Because they said that we deserve it.

Interviewer: Oh really?

Jacob Seidner: And we don't deserve a bullet because we're going to die anyway.

Interviewer: So this is the country that had been very nondiscriminatory, now it's changing dramatically?

Jacob Seidner: Right. This is a change because the climate was entirely different.

Interviewer: Sure. Sure.

Jacob Seidner: So they marched us for three months and from that group I had five uncles and five aunts in that group, they all died. They just dropped and you left them there. I don't know what happened to them if they buried them or not, but we had to keep on going. The younger people survived, because at night I used to sneak out in the gardening and eat vegetables and fruits, whatever I could find, and that's what kept me going. But anyway that was going on for three months.

Interviewer: You were not being fed?

Jacob Seidner: No. No food.

Interviewer: At all, literally?

Jacob Seidner: Literally, no food.

Interviewer: And were these soldiers by the way?

Jacob Seidner: Soldiers, Romanian soldiers. Then finally the brothers took place, it was called Yedinitz, a little town surrounded with barbed wire, open space, and they kept us in there. Still no food, no water, I had to sneak out at night and get me some food.

Interviewer: Were you afraid at all?

Jacob Seidner: No.

Interviewer: Just weren't feeling a lot.

Jacob Seidner: Because you didn't know what happened. Every second was, you just let it go, you know, "Qué será, será."

Interviewer: Were you hearing at all about what was happening to Jews in other countries?

Jacob Seidner: In that time, we knew. We knew what was going on in Poland.

Interviewer: What had you heard?

Jacob Seidner: We knew that what they were not out that time. Some of them at certain cities, they were still home in '41, but in deeper Poland, they were taken away in '39 and '40.

Interviewer: So you were aware that you as a Jew with the Germans...

Jacob Seidner: We were aware...we didn't know exactly what was happening, but more or less we knew that it didn't smell right.

Interviewer: To put it mildly.

Jacob Seidner: It wasn't right. It wasn't right. But at least we were lucky in one way. The Ukraine was split, half was Germans, half was Romanians, but the Germans were there too, but it was Romanian territory. And the Romanians told Hitler, Michael told Hitler that his Jews are his deal, not...whatever he wants to do with them, it's his deal. And he let them be. Now, those Jews who got in on the German side never came back.

Interviewer: Got you.

Jacob Seidner: Now, those Jews who were lucky and were on the Romanian side had the chance to survive. I was in that part.

Interviewer: You were with the...

Jacob Seidner: On the Romanian side, but the Germans if they were asking for people for work, they had to give it to them.

Interviewer: What was the political relationship between Romania and Germany at this time?

Jacob Seidner: They had a pact.

Interviewer: They had a pact.

Jacob Seidner: Sure. It was Germany, Romania, Italy, you know the Axis, you know, the German Axis, they called it. But anyway, after three months, they took us over Dniester on the Ukrainian side, and they took us about I would say about 100, 120 kilometer from the city was [unintelligible 0:20:36.9], the border city on the Ukrainian side. And from there they marched us about another 120 kilometers.

Interviewer: Still the Romanians.

Jacob Seidner: The Romanian and they call...in Russia, they call them [unintelligible 0:20:55.4], collective farms, but in that time it was gone. So they took out the cows and the horses from the barns, they threw us in there and that was it. They put 50 people in this town, a hundred people in this town, 50 people in this town from all over the Bucovina and Bessarabia.

Interviewer: Are you by yourself?

Jacob Seidner: I was by myself. And it was called Transdniester. "Over Dniester," that was what they call it, Transdniester. Now, those people who came from the big cities with families, they still have...when you were taken on the German side to work you never came back. If you were working on the Romanian side you had the chance to survive.

Interviewer: This is Jim Siebold, June 9th, 1990 with Jack Seidner. What were you saying, that the people who were able to work, they were able to live well, but you...?

Jacob Seidner: I was not a barber...So what happened there were no men. All the men, the Russians took with them...the Ukrainians. So there were only women. The German army needed bread, so they forced the women to work in the fields.

Interviewer: So the Romanians forced the Germans?

Jacob Seidner: No the Germans.

Interviewer: Oh now we have the Germans...

Jacob Seidner: Oh sure, they were too.

Interviewer: I see.

Jacob Seidner: Oh yeah, sure, but they were asking the women, the farmers, came to those barns and were asked who wants to go to work. Well, I volunteered because I have to

eat. So we used to work in the fields and they used to feed us. And finally I started walking around, going from place to the other. I saved a lot of people. I used to carry letters. If I found out, for example, that you have a brother 100 kilometers from [unintelligible 0:23:14.2], I went there and I used to bring him back.

Interviewer: How did you save people?

Jacob Seidner: I used to walk at night. I had a friend of mine. He was a dentist and he was with his mother and his mother died, and he sat down on the floor with his leg under his, you know, and he was sitting on a sweater and I swear to God that every hole in the sweater had a louse. The sweater was moving with her, you see. And when I saw that I picked that guy up, carried him on my shoulders that high a snow, it was in the wintertime, carried him into a little town that was called [unintelligible 0:24:04.7]. And it was a room [unintelligible 0:24:10.3] where people used to come, you know, and sleep over the night and go on further and I took them over there and there were still some Russian people, Russian Jewish people there left. And somehow they had pity on that fellow and they took him in their house and they cleaned him up and they fed him. And there was...out of the ghetto there was a Jewish dentist and he took him in for work and whenever I used to come to that town he used to treat me royal, you know, I saved that guy's life, and I saved a lot of people like that. I saw a little girl. Her parents died and I knew that her uncle is doing very well. He was an interpreter between the Germans and the Romanians at the border, and he lived very good. I didn't ask him any questions. I took that girl, you know, and I walked three nights and brought her home and saved her, you see [unintelligible 0:25:13.8]. But anyway that was going on from '41 until '44.

Interviewer: And this was in the Ukraine?

Jacob Seidner: That was in the Ukraine?

Interviewer: And this was in the Romanian-occupied area of Ukraine?

Jacob Seidner: Right. Right. But the Germans were there too.

Interviewer: But the Germans...how were you able to get so much access?

Jacob Seidner: I was walking, I took chances. I was by myself, I had nothing lose. I didn't know where to start...

Interviewer: You didn't know where to start.

Jacob Seidner: Not up front, they're not in the back. They knew who I was anyway, I mean, the people.

Interviewer: And that's right...

Jacob Seidner: When I met a soldier I was in trouble, but somehow, you see today I believe 100% in destiny. If your destiny is not to die you can go through hell and nothing will happen to you. I used to...soldiers, they used to find the letters, they used to...that was against the law.

Interviewer: These are Romanian soldiers?

Jacob Seidner: Yeah, but somehow I always got out of it alive.

Interviewer: Uh-hmm, my goodness.

Jacob Seidner: And I was lucky somehow.

Interviewer: Any encounters with the Germans at that time?

Jacob Seidner: Yeah, but I was lucky. Somehow I was lucky. I was walking one time on a highway and I had a friend of mine and there was a sergeant and the soldier in a horse and buggy and he shouted. I didn't know. When he got to me he took the whip. He whipped the horse and whipped me as he run with the horses and left me and didn't bother me, you see. So my time was not...

Interviewer: My goodness.

Jacob Seidner: My time was not up. But anyway, it was going on until 1944. In 1944, I went to a city Murafa, and I went in every city, every little town, the Germans and the Romanians had a Jewish police. If they needed something they went through them.

Interviewer: This was every town had one of these?

Jacob Seidner: Every town. Every town. So I walked into the Jewish police station and I asked him, "I would like to have a place where to stay overnight." So they send me somewhere, there was a Russian Jew who had a little room. There were 10 people in there. He had one bed, he slept with his wife. The people slept on the table, under the table and benches and they put me in there too. The same day the Germans were asking for every man to work. They got every man and anybody who still had something to pay off got up. It was 10 o'clock in the evening and there was one lady, she had a son 18 years of age and she was looking for a replacement. So the police station, one guy said, "Hey, I sent a guy there." And they came over and she gave me 300 German marks and a pair of shoes.

Interviewer: To take her son's place.

Jacob Seidner: And the son was out and I was in and that was the first time they laid a hand on me after almost four years. I was able to always stay away from...

Interviewer: Right. I'm curious that you took the deal.

Jacob Seidner: I didn't want to fight it. I said, "I did it for four years, my time came we'll see what's going to happen." I could have escaped. I had chances, but I didn't. And they put us on trains and they took us close to the front. And it was a German...it was a town, it was called Kolosofka.

Interviewer: And which front are we talking about?

Jacob Seidner: The Russian front. And that little town had...the population was all German. They came after World War I and they settled down there. And they all spoke German. And we stayed, we slept in the railroad in those freight wagons and we had a straw, it was the wintertime.

Interviewer: How many are there?

Jacob Seidner: Oh we were several hundred. And I was detailed to work. You know, in those days we had water pumps for their locomotives. There was no diesel in that time. You know, it was old fashioned, especially Russia, they didn't have...And we would build those water pumps for their locomotives and the railroad station. And I had a foreman and he was from [unintelligible 0:30:19.9]. He was from, you know, [unintelligible 0:30:23.5] was in Czech... it's a German, remember Hitler wanted that annexed in the beginning and they gave it to him too. But anyway, he was a very nice guy. He used to give us chocolate, he used to give us cheese, he used to give us bread, but he said, "What can you do, he wants to destroy." But anyway, one day he sent me to pick up pipe, you know, elbow.

Interviewer: This was an area in Germany that you're talking about?

Jacob Seidner: No that was in Ukraine, they were still there, but I was detailed there, when they caught me in that little town in Murafa they sent me to work. And I didn't have any power in my hands and when I pick that thing up, I dropped it in the middle of the railroad like this, you know. And the locomotive came and hit it and the big guy from the railroad station was an SS guy. He was eight feet tall. He was so tall and he came running and pulled out the pistol and they told me that I'm a saboteur, you know, from the German Reich, you know. But my foreman saw what happened. He came running and explained that it happens, I mean, it just fell off my hand. I didn't do it because I'm a saboteur, and he saved me. He put the pistol back in his holster and left. When the front start coming closer and closer, they put us in trains, and freight wagons and the front...half the train was freight, half was passenger. And there were German soldiers, Ukrainians who were working with the Germans and they were trying to leave the Ukraine because they were scared of the Russian government.

Interviewer: We're in the Ukraine at this point now.

Jacob Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: And then the German...the Russians are coming closer and closer.

Jacob Seidner: That's right. So we stopped about 8 kilometers from Odessa. And we heard noises, airplane noises, but the Germans were calm because the noise was Messerschmidts, German Messerschmidts, but when they came closer the pilots were Russians and they hit all the passenger, they made a blood bath out of there, but they tried to hid. There was a big train with ammunition going towards the front behind our train. They tried to get that one, but when they did that to our train, we all...they didn't bother the freight train, they knew who we were somehow, I think. And we ran and we were hiding in the fields.

Interviewer: Now, "we" is who?

Jacob Seidner: Oh, we were several hundred of people.

Interviewer: Okay.

Jacob Seidner: They tried to take us to Germany at that time.

Interviewer: I'm sorry, no I don't...

Jacob Seidner: Yeah...

Interviewer: At what point did they try to...

Jacob Seidner: At that point, we were...

Interviewer: Okay. They were taking you back from the front back into Germany.

Jacob Seidner: Into Germany.

Interviewer: And you were at Odessa...

Jacob Seidner: When that happened, we ran out of the train and we were hiding about a day. In the evening, we went back towards the railroad, but the train was already gone. They had to clean it up and we walked on the railroad to Odessa.

Interviewer: This is this whole group of people?

Jacob Seidner: Yeah. And...

Interviewer: What country is Odessa?

Jacob Seidner: Odessa is in the Ukraine.

Interviewer: Okay.

Jacob Seidner: Yeah. It's a big city, nice city at the Black Sea, a big city. And we went to the Romanian police and they put us for the night in jail to sleep, and the next morning they took us over the border on the Romanian side.

Interviewer: You weren't afraid of the Romanian police?

Jacob Seidner: Well, they were a little mellow because they knew already what's going on. The Germans are [unintelligible 0:34:39.6], so they were not that harsh. And when we came on the other side there were a Jewish delegation from the joint distribution center and they bought us tickets wherever we wanted to go.

Interviewer: But when they dropped you...when they took you into Romania you were met by a Jewish delegation?

Jacob Seidner: Yeah. Yeah. We were met there. They gave us clothing. They gave us food. They gave us tickets.

Interviewer: Let me ask you a question, a general question, Romania...were there ghettos in Romania?

Jacob Seidner: No.

Interviewer: The Jews weren't actually...

Jacob Seidner: In Romania, they were taken to work.

Interviewer: Right.

Jacob Seidner: Some people.

Interviewer: Right.

Jacob Seidner: But they were not sent out. They were in their homes.

Interviewer: Were any of the Romanians...

Jacob Seidner: There was trouble in certain cities, a lot of people were killed, you see.

Interviewer: Program type of things?

Jacob Seidner: Yeah. But they were not taken out of their homes.

Interviewer: And were they sent to concentration camps?

Jacob Seidner: They were not sent to concentration camps.

Interviewer: Okay.

Jacob Seidner: Only the part where I come from in Bessarabia, they did it only because we were occupied from the Russians. That was the only reason they did that to us.

Interviewer: And they marched you.

Jacob Seidner: That's right. That was the only...they took us out from our homes.

Interviewer: Have you been in other parts of Romania, you would have been...you'd stay.

Jacob Seidner: Yeah. If I was from Romania, yeah, it would have been all right.

Interviewer: So now you have this Jewish delegation actually is in existence, and they're coming and they're going to support you, they're going to help you.

Jacob Seidner: They came and they gave me a ticket, so I took a ticket to go to Czernowitz, to go home, but it was too late, the Russians were already there. So I stopped in a city that's called Yassi.

Interviewer: The occupying Russians are already in your hometown?

Jacob Seidner: Not yet, yeah, in Czernowitz.

Interviewer: In Czernowitz.

Jacob Seidner: The Russians were there already.

Interviewer: And you don't want...

Jacob Seidner: I don't want to go.

Interviewer: Why not?

Jacob Seidner: I didn't want to go. I knew them already. I don't want nothing to do with them.

Interviewer: You don't like those people?

Jacob Seidner: No, I don't know.

Interviewer: Okay.

Jacob Seidner: But anyway, we stopped in Yassi, and the Jews from that city were working for the Romanians and the Germans. So when we came they said, "Well, we're going to feed you and we're going to give you lodging, you go to work and we're going to stay home." So that's what happened.

Interviewer: Wait, I'm sorry...instead of these other Jewish...

Jacob Seidner: The local Jews change with us.

Interviewer: Was this done nicely or was there...

Jacob Seidner: It was done nicely. Well, I don't blame them...

Interviewer: Okay.

Jacob Seidner: Nobody blamed them. So we made a second line and the Russians were there surrounding that city about three-quarter...like a boot.

Interviewer: Okay.

Jacob Seidner: One area was out free, but the rest of the Russians were staying there for six months. They didn't bother...

Interviewer: Why did they not occupy it?

Jacob Seidner: That was the deal, I don't know. They just didn't bother that area in that time.

Interviewer: This was 1944?

Jacob Seidner: Yeah. And in August, we were seven boys which stayed together in Yassi. You know in Europe, you have big buildings, and then you have a courtyard in the middle. And in that courtyard was a little synagogue. And I always used to say, if a bomb is going to fall 50 miles from that little synagogue, it's going to collapse. Now we slept there in that little synagogue.

Interviewer: There were seven or eight of you?

Jacob Seidner: Yeah. The seven boys, we stayed together. The seven boys stayed together. And one Easter, when the Allied troops made a push, you know Romania had gas, [unintelligible 0:38:53.3]. They had a lot of natural gas, so they tried to get there, they needed it and they bombed that [unintelligible 0:39:00.1] and they had a base there, and then they come to Yassi. 12 o'clock in the evening, they bombed that city from 12 to three o'clock in the morning without stopping. One group came, dropped the bombs, left, another group was there. And we were staying in that courtyard and we felt each time a bomb fell, we felt the current, and we did like this [covers head, makes a sound]. Nothing happened. And you know what, in

the morning three o'clock, exactly three o'clock in the morning it stopped. The whole street was done and that synagogue is still there. It's still there.

Interviewer: You're talking about destiny, huh?

Jacob Seidner: It's still there. And we survived. But anyway, then August the 20th, the Russians bombed the city and they came down with parachutes. I knew one thing because I knew the Russians. If they come, there wouldn't be nothing to eat, so seven of us, the minute we saw that the Russians are coming down, we went to the open market and we...sacks of food, we brought to that place where we stayed, so the whole family ate, because I knew nothing...we knew it. I knew it. But anyway, we stayed there, the Russians were there, but after two months, I decided I want to go home...

Interviewer: Let me ask you a question, how was it with Russians occupying?

Jacob Seidner: At that time?

Interviewer: Yes. How did they treat you?

Jacob Seidner: They treated us all right. You see, in the beginning, when they came in to us in 1940, the Russians came in with sacks of money because they couldn't spend it in Russia, they couldn't buy anything. When they came to us, they led us through the black market for three months. I made a lot of money. I used to deal and wheel with them like crazy. They spend that money and there was anything they could lay their hands, but after three months, that was it. They said, "That's it, if you do it, you'll go to jail," and that was it. For three months, and that's what they did there too, wherever they came in.

Interviewer: They allowed...

Jacob Seidner: They cleaned out everything. They bought everything they could lay their hands, and then...whatever was left, I was working in a store, in a piece goods store, inventory, and they took everything to Russia. You see, what they're doing, they're ruining the city. You take Nashville, for example, you take Fifth Avenue, I'll give you the downtown, all

right. Let's take the time when Monday nights and Friday nights were open until nine o'clock, you see windows, beautiful clothing. Now, when they came in, they took everything out and they made one store in corner, one store in another street, with nothing, with buttons, with galoshes. They didn't have anything, you see. It's the same thing like they say, "What can we buy from them?" The only thing you can buy from them is vodka, caviar, what else? Nothing. Cigarettes, they have that long. Half of them is empty and a little bit of tobacco. So they're in trouble, see?

Interviewer: As a Jew, did it make any difference with the Russians?

Jacob Seidner: At that time, no. In 1940, '41, Jews had very nice positions with people, they were everywhere, they were in the army, they were everywhere.

Interviewer: How about in 1944 now, is there...

Jacob Seidner: But after Hitler was there, he ruined it, you see. After he just...it changed, but not...in '40 when they were there, it was not bad. It was not bad.

Interviewer: So when they came in now, when they were para-trooping...they're parachuting in '44, are you frightened as a Jew?

Jacob Seidner: No. No. I went home...

Interviewer: It's June 10th, Jim Siebold interviewing Jack Seidner. So you're looking for your mother.

Jacob Seidner: I decided to go home and see if somebody is alive, you see.

Interviewer: You had no contacts or heard nothing from them?

Jacob Seidner: No. I didn't hear nothing...so when I came to Czernowitz, I've seen right away that I made a mistake, I haven't seen a young person around at all. And I knew if I'm

going to go to register to the police, they're going to take me, the war was still going on and I was 20 years old, and they'll take me. I survived Hitler for four years, I didn't want to do it.

Interviewer: The Romanians will take you to...

Jacob Seidner: No, no, the Russians.

Interviewer: The Russians would take you.

Jacob Seidner: I went back, the Russians were already there.

Interviewer: Got you.

Jacob Seidner: And I decided that I don't want to go. After surviving for four years, the way I used to live those four years in the Ukraine is, I used to spend in the summertime, I used to live in the fields or on trees. I used to eat fruit that would keep me going, or I used to eat green peas, carrots, you know. In the wintertime, it was a little rough. I have to go on the fields, you know, they put their potatoes and their beets, they make a big hole in the field and they kept it there for the wintertime and it stays nice and fresh and it doesn't freeze. You see, I used to go and dig at night so I can eat. I used to go on Sunday, I used to look for weddings, yeah, and they used to feed me. And that's how I survived. The only thing was food. The main thing was food. If you got sick, you die. I lived in a place where they used to keep hay and the people, the woman used to let me sleep there.

Interviewer: Now, are you speaking now of being in Ukraine?

Jacob Seidner: In Ukraine, yeah.

Interviewer: And in being Jewish...

Jacob Seidner: Well, they knew we were Jews, you see.

Interviewer: And that was...

Jacob Seidner: They knew. That was the deal, you know, that the Germans got us and they used to take us to work.

Interviewer: But people would allow you to sleep in their haystack, feed you at their wedding...

Jacob Seidner: Some of them. Some of them did. Some of them...those people had a little...they rented a house or half of it and they lived there, you know. Well, I was by myself. My body was so destroyed from lice that I didn't have one piece of my body that was not bitten, because I never took a bath and I slept with my clothing and I never had a pair of shoes for four years. I had rags around. I never had a shirt. I used to have a canteen and a piece of wire, you know. I used to sleep on the snow. It kept me warm, you see. I didn't sleep in a house for four years because those people had families and they were clean and they didn't let me in. Because I was filthy. But in the summertime, I used to lie down next to those little rivers, not the river but small...creeks. And I used to bathe in the summertime it was fine, but in wintertime it was trouble. But it was...and one day, I got up and I had high fever and the main guy from the community, there was a guy where I was born and raised, so he came over. And they took a horse and buggy and they threw me in there and they took me 30 kilometers to the city to a hospital and I had typhus, but I didn't know it. They didn't know it, and the guy who was supposed to drop me off in a hospital dropped me off in an old home. And those people started hollering and it was wintertime, it was snowing and I had to get out. And I was walking around like in a dream, I didn't know where I was going, so a policeman, a Ukrainian policeman picked me up and took me to the Jewish Community Center. And I stayed there and they took me to the hospital. And I waited for three days for the doctor to come to see me and they kicked me out. They said they keep only healthy people here. So all during that time the sickness left me and I got well.

Interviewer: So you're not...

Jacob Seidner: With no doctor, with no medicine, with nothing, you see. I'm not sure why that I have the stomach typhus inside, you know.

Interviewer: So you were saying that you went back to look for your mother?

Jacob Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: And then you saw all the...

Jacob Seidner: I came...I didn't even recognize where the house was and I was scared. I met that guy who took everything from our house.

Interviewer: Oh my.

Jacob Seidner: And when I saw them on the fields and I was by myself and he was by himself and I said, "Uh-oh." I mean, that's going to be it. They might think I came for the, you know...so he told me, "Look, if you're going to go in there, they'll pick you up and they'll put you in the army, you better go back." And I listened to him. I went back to Czernowitz. I had a friend of mine, we were with those seven guys, and he met his wife, he found his wife who lived in [unintelligible 0:49:12.9] and I stayed with them. They had one room and I stayed with them. So one day, they were at work and the Russian policeman came into the house, and they asked me what I'm doing in daytime home. And I said, "Well, I'm working at night." In Russia, you have a piece of paper where you're employed. I didn't have any. So they took me to the police. If I would have anybody there or money, he wouldn't have taken me, you know, but I didn't have anything.

Interviewer: Is this still 1944?

Jacob Seidner: That was '44. And they took me to the police station and the police chief was a Ukrainian, the biggest anti-Semite you ever heard, but anyway he said, "Who's going to fight for you?" And I said, "Well, if you want me to fight, I'm going to go fight." I said, "Look, I just got back. I survived Hitler; I didn't know what I have to do." He put me in jail and the next day they took me to the penitentiary. And the minute you have trouble with the law in Russia, you have no rights. So when they took me, I had to stay with my face to the wall. I couldn't face people anymore. And I walked into the warden with a piece of paper that the police Jew gave and he didn't want to accept me. Well, they took me back to the police station

and he got mad and they wrote another letter and the next morning they took me in. And I stayed there for six months.

Interviewer: This was a prison that the Russians were running for their people.

Jacob Seidner: Yeah. There were a lot of Ukrainians. There were a lot of people who made themselves older so they wouldn't be eligible for war anymore.

Interviewer: And your crime was that...

Jacob Seidner: My crime was...I didn't have a crime. My crime was I didn't go and register.

Interviewer: Didn't register, didn't work.

Jacob Seidner: But anyway, I stayed there for six months, and one day they opened the gate and they let me out and they took me to a place where they went through my case. There was a captain sitting there, some military people, and they asked me what happened and this and that. He says, "Now that you have a chance, you came to go to Russia and you had a chance to fight the Nazis what they did to your people, what they did to your parents and you're hiding now." I said, "I didn't hide"...anyway.

Interviewer: And this had nothing to do with being a Jew?

Jacob Seidner: No no no. It had nothing to do with it. Absolutely. And they took me to the recruiting center and I was sitting there and a guy came in with a little goatee, a Russian and he's asking for two people. He needs two people for work. And he told them to wait. So I walked over to him. I spoke a little bit Russian words. And I ask him, "I heard that you're looking for a worker." I said, "How about you take me." He said, "What can you do?" I said, "Anything you want me to do." So he took me out and he took another guy. And he showed us where we have to go to work and he said, "Go home and clean yourself up," and I went back and I went back to my friend there, took a shower, cleaned up a little bit. The next morning I started going to work. So my work was black labor, on a truck to carry, move

furniture, this and that. And finally, in that time after a few months Stalin gave order that all the foreigners can leave. Everybody who is not from...

Interviewer: This was 1945 now?

Jacob Seidner: No. Still '44.

Interviewer: Still '44?

Jacob Seidner: Oh yeah...Can leave. So I went and registered that I'm from Bucharest. But how that thing worked is that when you register and that the place has two windows. When they called your name, when you said yes, you had to go to the next window. You had to give them a release from your job, then they gave you the piece of paper that you can leave. I went to my director where I worked. He was a [Grozny (sp) 0:54:14.2]. He was from the same place where Stalin came.

Interviewer: Grozny (sp)?

Jacob Seidner: That was one of the republics in Russia.

Interviewer: I see.

Jacob Seidner: Yeah. And I told them, "Hey, look the wire, Stalin gave an order and I'm going to leave." And he said, "No." And I said, "What do you mean, no?" He says, "Where do you want to go?" I said, "I'm going to Bucharest." He said, "We're going to be there pretty soon, why do you have to leave?" He didn't want to give it to me. So all the people who are registered to leave were scared, because when the Russians came into us in 1940, every night people disappeared. If you were a merchant, they took you away. If you were a worker, if you could show that your hands are hard, they didn't bother you. The minute your hands were smooth, you were out. You're gone. And they used to take people so people used to register for 10, 15 names. They were scared they're going to come and pick them up. They didn't trust them. So after three or four months those people had, papers, like stacks of paper and those people were already long time gone. So they gave the order that one day they said,

anybody who's going to call your name if you have paper, you don't have paper, if you're going to be there, you get your paper and you go. So I stayed there, you know, my name is Seidner, "S" is on the end. I stayed all day long, finally they called my name and he gave me the piece of paper. I didn't have any money. In Russia the railroad stations are packed. When you work, you have to go, you know. They're walking over people. They're lying and sleeping all over and all the windows were closed. I had an uncle there and I worked there and he gave me a hundred rubles. And I went to the railroad station and the ticket was 3 rubles. I knocked at the window and he opened. I told them I want a ticket and I gave him the hundred and he gave me the ticket. And I went to the border.

Interviewer: Which border?

Jacob Seidner: Romanian border. Over there, they checked your luggage, they checked everything and they let you pass by, but they exchanged rubles for Romanian lei or Romanian money, but other than they have nothing, but people had some money. So one family said, "Look, 3000 lei, I'll give you 1500, go and exchange it." I was happy. I exchanged that 1500. I went over on the other side. I walked into a honky tonk. Romania has a specialty. They called it [unintelligible 0:57:15.8]. I still have that taste, I would like to eat it. They have it in Israel, but I walked in there and they have the dark beer and the gypsies with the violin. And I sat there and that's not a lie, I didn't get up until I spent my last penny. I spent all I could. I ate all night. And the gypsies were playing the violins. After that I went to the railroad station and hitchhiked back to Yassi. I knew some people there. I stayed there for a while, then went back, went to Bucharest, the capital of Romania. Over there, I went to...you know what [hashara (sp) 0:58:06.6] mean?

Interviewer: No.

Jacob Seidner: When you go...it used to be to prepare you for a kibbutz, to live in a kibbutz. In Europe, they used to have [hashara (sp) 0:58:17.7]. They used to go and work on fields, to get the feel of how it feels to work in the field. And they send me to one of those. It was about 50 miles from Bucharest.

Interviewer: Who sends you?

Jacob Seidner: The community sent me, so I can work in the fields and then go to Israel.

Interviewer: Were a lot of people going to Israel at that time?

Jacob Seidner: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. That was already early '45.

Interviewer: 1945, the war is not quite yet over.

Jacob Seidner: It was still going on around Berlin. At that time it was in Germany already they're going. It was almost over. I was going there to [hashara (sp) 0:59:04.7] and I used to work for the Zionist Organization. [unintelligible 0:59:10.6] that means, I used to go from country to country with papers with certain things that had to be done.

Interviewer: At what point was this?

Jacob Seidner: They call it [unintelligible 0:59:22.9].

Interviewer: When?

Jacob Seidner: In '45.

Interviewer: In '45? This is one of the things that you begin to do for the Jewish community in Romania.

Jacob Seidner: Right. Right. I used to go to Yugoslavia. I went to Hungary. I went to, I went to several Eastern European countries.

Interviewer: And specifically what were you doing?

Jacob Seidner: I had a piece of paper.

Interviewer: Uh-hmm.

Jacob Seidner: It was legal. In those days the only way you could go is you came home from a concentration camp. So you had a piece of paper with a Star of David and you went, you know.

Interviewer: They would let you get in free...

Jacob Seidner: I go home. I had a paper. I am from [unintelligible 0:59:58.2]. I go through Budapest. And then I did my stop then Budapest gave me another piece of paper...

Interviewer: What stuff would you do?

Jacob Seidner: I carried materials, all kinds of...different materials. You know, it was sewed in my clothing.

Interviewer: Material meaning?

Jacob Seidner: Paperwork for the Haganah, for the Israeli. You know it was going on at that time I was...big things going on.

Interviewer: My goodness. Did you know what it was, the communications you were carrying?

Jacob Seidner: No.

Interviewer: No.

Jacob Seidner: It was put in and I went there and they took it and then I went back. They gave me another piece of paper and I went back wherever I have to go. Money too.

Interviewer: And you were going to different European countries for this?

Jacob Seidner: Yeah. I took a lot of dollars too. It was everything...but anyway, I did that for a while then my wife came into that [hashara (sp) 1:00:56.7]. My wife, her sisters...three girls. And I met her that evening and we talked about half a night and I have to leave the next morning. And I left and when I came back she was already gone. She was gone, you heard when the troubles started in Romania, you heard a town [unintelligible 1:01:25.7] that's what started the trouble with the Hungarians and the Romanians. She was there. So I had to wait a few days, made me some papers and I went down there and I met her. She forgot already who I was and I asked her to marry me.

Interviewer: You're not taking much time.

Jacob Seidner: But anyway, she left the next morning she went to Belgrade, Yugoslavia. So I had to wait another few days to make my papers and I went to Belgrade, Yugoslavia. And in two weeks we got married that's how I married in Belgrade, Yugoslavia.

Interviewer: My goodness.

Jacob Seidner: Yeah. And we stayed there for a while. We were not far from [unintelligible 1:02:10.5]. We stayed in the temple, big temple in Belgrade. I got married there. They gave me a thousand dinars that was worth \$5 I think. I bought that ring for 800 and 200 I spent for wine. And I had 10 people there and they gave the [unintelligible 1:02:29.7] religious in Italy, then we went from there to Italy. And I lived in Italy for almost 10 years.

Interviewer: For what purpose Italy?

Jacob Seidner: To go to Israel. You have to go through some points. You see, immigration to Israel was illegal at that time.

Interviewer: What year?

Jacob Seidner: '45, '46. It was illegal, you couldn't do it. So they smuggled you in there. It was a big, big operation. I was going, "Oh yeah." They did tremendous things.

Interviewer: Is that what your paperwork when you're going back and forth.

Jacob Seidner: That was...yeah, that was what all kinds of things. But anyway, I did that and we got married in Belgrade and we went to Italy. Now, my two kids, my older son Leo was born in Italy and Janice, my daughter was born in Italy. My boy was here when I came to Nashville. He was about eight years old. My little girl was three and I got three hillbillies, three kids born in Nashville.

Interviewer: Now, you were in Italy though, waiting to get into Israel is that right?

Jacob Seidner: And I changed my mind.

Interviewer: Oh.

Jacob Seidner: I remember the address from my uncle in New York. And I wrote him a letter. I want an affidavit. So he sent me an affidavit.

Interviewer: What year?

Jacob Seidner: In 1948, I think, '49. But anyway, the Romanian quota was very small and I couldn't get a visa. So finally the United States recognized the area for where I come from as Russian, so they changed from Romanian quota to the Russian quota. It was still not enough. I waited nine years, almost 10 years.

Interviewer: This is Jim Seybold on June 10th, 1990 interviewing Jack Seidner. What changed your mind about Israel?

Jacob Seidner: I'll tell you what changed my mind in Israel. At that time, they didn't have any housing. People lived in tents. I went through hell for so many years and I wanted a

home and I wanted to sleep in a bed. And then I found out that I have a possibility to come to the United States, I just gave it up to go to Israel and I emphasized my thoughts and everything to come to the United States, and I waited nine years and we made it.

Interviewer: And what was special about the United States, what was your idea of it?

Jacob Seidner: Well, everybody knows that the United States is somehow heaven. I saw a play before I left Italy in Naples. I went to see a play where people say you come to the United States, you know, the trees, gold is hanging, the dollars are hanging, and that's all you have to do, just lift. And they showed it how heavy, you have to work to make the dollar. You know, you make a good trade. It was really nice. So I knew exactly, you know. I used to ask people. When I found out I go to Nashville, the reason I came to Nashville is my wife had already a sister and a brother here. And they survived Auschwitz together, and their mother told them always stay together and don't part. So one went earlier. Her sister came here in '49. I came here in '54 and that's the reason we came to Nashville, because of her sister and her brother were here and they were two survivors and they wanted to be together. And naturally I came to Nashville because people used to ask, "Why Nashville?"

Interviewer: Sure.

Jacob Seidner: "Why don't you go to New York, Los Angeles, Chicago?"

Interviewer: Good choice?

Jacob Seidner: Yes. Oh yeah, oh definitely. I used to ask...whenever I saw somebody speak in English with my broken English, I used to ask them...soldiers I used to ask about Nashville, Tennessee and they used to give me a bad picture, small houses, green moss growing on the roofs, goats are eating from it. So finally I got sick and tired of it and I went in Rome and I went to the American Embassy to the library and got me a book of Tennessee. I still have a notebook. I wrote down everything what's going on...I knew more about Nashville than anybody who was born here. I knew everything what's going on. I wrote everything down. I still have it. And Nashville is beautiful.

Interviewer: And you were received well.

Jacob Seidner: Well, well. Oh yeah, oh yeah, very well. Very well. In the beginning, the Jewish community center did a lot for me, but I wanted to go to work. I was rather sick and tired of doing nothing, and a guy wanted to give me a chance to become a jeweler, William S. Klein. And I worked for him for three years. But I was a ragman all my life, at 13, you know, it's in my blood. And I dropped it and I started working here at the store and was the [unintelligible 1:08:17.1] Rosenblum factory outlet and Herschel Katzman, you heard of Herschel Katzman? I worked with them and then I went on my own. I had a business on my own. Now, I'm retired. I got five wonderful children.

Interviewer: How do you feel about your story?

Jacob Seidner: Well, I was lucky. I was lucky and I had a tremendous drive to survive. I did everything. A lot of people gave up. A lot of people died. And naturally, elderly people couldn't make it. There is no way they could make it. Those marches killed them. They dropped like flies. I was on my 20s, I was young, you know. And only young people survived, in the same way in the concentration camp, so long they were able to work. They had a chance to survive. The minute you got sick, they eliminated you. They didn't want to feed you. And the same way was there and I was fighting it. I did everything just to eat, you see. And if I had food enough and I was lucky, whenever I was in trouble I got out of it. And that for four years, sicknesses, I got through that. Soldiers, I got through that. I was happy I saved a few young people in my lifetime because of me they are alive.

Interviewer: Does this story bring up emotion in you at all as you tell it?

Jacob Seidner: Today?

Interviewer: Yes.

Jacob Seidner: It happened 50 years ago, and believe it or not sometimes I think how in the world can a human being or a human body go through it. I could eat nails. I went through a field with peeling from watermelons. The peeling. It tasted good. I never had a stomach ache. Now, I don't have a stomach, they had taken out my stomach two years ago, they took out my stomach. Everything is fine. I went through about five or six surgeries and four years I

went through hell, never had a sniffle. Slept on the snow, no shoes on my feet, never had a sniffle, never had a cold. So it's destiny. I believe in that a hundred percent.

Interviewer: How about being a Jew and having been through this, does it affect your feelings that way?

Jacob Seidner: No, no, no.

Interviewer: No?

Jacob Seidner: You see, I believe in it and I stick with it. I stay with my...where I was born and raised. I stayed with Sharif Israel. I'm not a [unintelligible 01:11:13]— I'm not a religious Jew, but I was brought up that way, and I feel good down there and I stayed there. And my kids are raised that way and they are proud of it. They'll never deny it. And I raised five good kids. We are happy.

Interviewer: Have your experiences affected how you raised your children?

Jacob Seidner: Yeah, in a way.

Interviewer: How has it?

Jacob Seidner: Well, my kids are very good-hearted. They are very emotional.

Interviewer: Very emotional?

Jacob Seidner: Yeah. Very emotional. But that's good. It's healthy. They can feel with you.

Interviewer: And this is something you feel you've given them and has been part of the experience you've had?

Jacob Seidner: I think so. Somehow, I think they were born with it. I never told them my burdens. You know we never talked a lot about it. But lately, a few years when it started with those interviews and this and that, it came out a little bit. But we never burdened them with it. I never...we tried to actually...maybe we made a mistake because you did keep another language in the house. They know a little bit of Yiddish, but we wanted them to learn English, but kids go on the streets. Those two who were born here naturally don't have accents and those who were not born...they don't have accents either, kids lose it. They don't have it. They were with kids. My boy had a hard time in school, he was...I put him back into first grade. He went to the second grade in Italy, but he didn't understand a word of English. But now you would think he was born and raised in Pulaski, Tennessee. That's how he talks, real southern.

Interviewer: Well, listen. Having gone through your story again, are there any things that you would say, I mean is this...

Jacob Seidner: Well, I would say is one thing, I'll tell you and I'm going to sum it up. I went through fascism, I went through Nazism. I went through kingdoms. I went through all kinds of governments in my lifetime. There is no better country in this world than the United States. The system is the best system in the world. I wish that people would understand and would appreciate it. The American people. You know I went through the '60s, when they played the Star—I used to get goose bump. When they used to burn their cards and my son volunteered and went to Vietnam, and that's how I raise him. And my youngest son went to the army too, because I told them you live in the country and they protect you and you got to protect your country too. I'm proud of it. You know you got to be proud. You got to have a little patriotism. Young people don't have it. You see you got to love it. You know, you have a country with...I mean, I can see a lot of people don't appreciate it because they were born with it, you see. They don't know what it means to go through....They don't know what it is to live in Russia or they don't know what it means to live under fascism. It's around, you know, that's the reason you got a freedom. Everybody can talk and say whatever they feel. You know, in my days when I was under the Stalin, if you would say something against Stalin you disappear, you see, but you can say anything about Bush, and you're still going to be here. This is the nicest part about it. Look, when I came over and stepped on the United States soil, I was a free man. I could go everywhere, anywhere. You're free. You're free, so long you're in the frame of the law, you can do anything you please and do anything you want to. So long you're in the frame of the law. There is no better place in the world, and I went through it. This is personal experience, I went through every phase of government there is in this world I went through, in my lifetime. And there is no better country than the United States. You know,

freedom is something—that's the reason they have trouble now. In Eastern Europe, they're going to have trouble because of...after 70 years they don't know how to handle it. It's not that easy, it's going to be trouble. Maybe Czechoslovakia, because they were the only real democratic country in Eastern Europe before the war. The rest of them...Romania was always a corrupt country. The soldiers were nothing. It was considered, as an officer run by and then he said, "Clean my boots," they didn't have a cigarette, they used to steal everything.

Interviewer: Mr. Jack Seidner, thank you very much.

Jacob Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: We appreciate it a great deal.

Jacob Seidner: You're most welcome.