Interviewers: Jennie Reich, Tova Tennenbaum, Amber Kepple-Jones
Also present: Flo Bretholz

[Beginning of Interview 1]

Tova Tennenbaum: This this about your life before the war, which pretty much all we know about you so far is that you’re from Vienna. Is that right? Were you born in Vienna?

Leo Bretholz: Yes.

TT: And you lived there all the way through the war or not?

LB: No. The war didn’t start until 1939, but I was there until 1938, actually, after the annexation of Austria.

TT: So you were like 17 at that time?

LB: I was 17. That was when the Germans entered Austria, annexed Austria. The Germans called it the Anschluss. Anschluss, meaning annexation.

TT: And you—

LB: That’s when I left Vienna in October of 1938, so I was 17 then [indistinct].

TT: So you’ve got a really, pretty good solid memory of things before the war.

LB: Oh, I’ve got a solid memory of it.

TT: Um, so, what was—

LB: I’m just going to ask—

TT: Sorry.

LB: Ask you if you’ve had a chance to read my book.

TT: No, we haven’t, but we heard about it.

Amber Kepple-Jones: Heard about it.

LB: Oh, because sometimes Uta is sometimes using the text of it.
TT: Is she?

LB: I believe so. I believe so.

TT: She mentioned it to us. She didn’t say—she didn’t tell us, exactly.

LB: A professor in California just produced a teacher’s guide. It’s a student guide based on it.

TT: Does that book cover your whole life, starting from way back then?

LB: It started 1938. It’s subtitled, *Seven Years on the Run in Wartime Europe*, and it became a sort of story of my family and what we went through and the war years and my escapes and everything else.

TT: That’s perfect, because like you, we were all talking about how we want to read it now.

AKJ: Yeah, we really want to read it.

TT: We especially, we really want to know about your family and all those things like—

LB: It’s good that the beginning of the book is like an introduction. The first couple chapters deals with family and sets, it sets the background and a framework for the whole [indistinct].

TT: Well you are. So, when’s your birthday? When were you born?

LB: March, March 6th, 1921.

TT: 1921? That’s not my calculation, but I can still subtract.

LB: You still need the mathematics.

TT: Someone said you were 86, so I—

LB: Who said that?

TT: Uta.

LB: Uta did.

TT: So I figured you were born in 1921 and you were born right in Austria—I mean, right in Vienna?

LB: Yes.

TT: Very cool. So, do you have like an earliest memory, any first memory can you recall?
LB: I don’t recall my *bris*.

TT: I would hope not. [laughter]

LB: Are you Jewish, the three of you are Jewish? [points]

AKJ: I’m not.

LB: Do you know what a *bris* is when I said it? You laughed.

TT: She laughed ‘cause we were laughing.

LB: So you’re Jewish. [points at TT] You are, you are not. [points at AKJ and Jennie Reich] I just wanted to know your background, because if I say some things are sort of Jewish, I would like for Amber to understand.

Jennie Reich: We’ll let you know if something you say could confuse us.

AKJ: I’ll wave.

LB: My early memories are the normal memories of a, of a child, remembering a young person. Remembering family and the normal activities that go with childhood and young years, you know. I lost my father when I was 9, and it wasn’t easy. I remember exactly what happened at my father’s funeral. That’s also in the beginning of the book. My mother became a widow when she was 39—

TT: Wow.

LB: And my father was 39—35, I mean, my father died at age 39.

TT: Why did he die?

LB: It was then called bleeding ulcers, and ulcers at the time, the methods of medication were not, not as they are today. He was 39. It could have been stomach cancer, but the doctor once told him at the young age of 39, it’s not as prevalent or as possible, but bleeding ulcers in those years were just as dangerous, but people were just like... that’s when I heard of bleeding ulcers. And we had 2 younger sisters. I was 9 and when my father died, my youngest sister—my middle sister was 7 and a half and the youngest was just a year and a half.

TT: So you have some memories of them?

LB: I have... I have good memories, pretty vivid memories of all that, yes, there’s no doubt in my mind. And... grew up like any other normal family with school and with... going on trips and vacations. And family. And aunts and uncles.

TT: So was it just the three of you, your siblings, you and your 2 younger sisters?
LB: Yes, and my mother.

TT: And your mother. Did she ever remarry?

LB: My mother never remarried.

TT: Good for her.

LB: And she had to provide for 3 children.

TT: Yeah, what did she do?

LB: She was—my mother was a seamstress. She was very good with handiwork, like embroidery. She did an interesting thing that’s also described in my memoir. She did embroidery for bridal trousseaus.

TT: What’s a trousseau?

LB: A trousseau is, you know, you get together the things for a bride…What do you call it?

TT: A dowry?

LB: No. Not a dowry. A bride, a bride bride bride—brides-to-be get a shower where they prepare for them. They give them, you know, bed linens and this sort of thing.

TT: Okay, so like a registry. So, like wedding gifts that people give.

LB: Yes, a registry. And my mother embroidered these towels and sheets with the initials. She was very good at that.

TT: And people paid her for this?

LB: Yes, and she did what you call button holes and all for gowns and blouses and in those days, pillowcases. They had buttons also.

TT: Did she do this all by hand?

LB: Ja, by hand. She did it all by hand.

TT: No machines, not even the little foot pedal kind?

LB: That was my mother. She was handy with that and moderate income was never enough, probably, but this was also, also the Depression years. It was probably like 1930, right in the midst of the Depression.
TT: Did you notice like a big change in your financial situation after your dad died?

LB: No, because my father was a tailor.

TT: A tailor?

LB: He was a tailor. He made clothes work, men’s and women’s suits to measure.

TT: Did he work in the house?

LB: He worked in the house, yes.

TT: And your mom, also?

LB: Yes, she worked too in the apartment, yes. That was Vienna, yeah, in those days, you know. It was small, but together, yeah, and that’s what I remember. My mother had to struggle to do it, but we were helped. There were some organizations that helped, Jewish organizations, so my childhood memories, and when I was 17 and a half, I left. That was after the—when Austria was annexed by the Germans in March of 1938.

TT: And did you… when you say your mom was always working out of the house, did you ever help her? Did you have a job yourself or was that not something?

LB: I went to school.

TT: You went to school. What kind of school did you go to? Was it Jewish?

LB: Elementary school. It was a public school, a high school.

TT: Public school? Never a Jewish school?

LB: I did, I did go to a Hebrew school, but that was twice a week, learning the Hebrew language.

TT: On Sundays?

LB: Not only. It was also during the week. Not on Sundays. This was not until Mein Fuhrer [indistinct] when you learned how to pray. This was to learn the modern Hebrew, and I learnt Hebrew, and it was called a Hebrew school. School for Hebrew.

TT: Was it like conversational Hebrew?

LB: Yes, it was conversational, because religion was taught in school, in a public school.

TT: In the public school?
LB: Yes. Just like, they had math and science and geography and history and chemistry. They also had religion.

TT: Did you go to that course?

LB: Well, we had to.

TT: So you just sat there and learned about Christianity?

LB: No, we were separated.

TT: Oh, okay, I was going to say—

LB: The Jewish students and Jewish class were separated into one room, and a professor, a rabbi came and taught us, and a priest came and taught the Catholics, and a preacher came and taught the…

TT: Protestants?

LB: Protestants.

TT: Wow. How many Jews were there in your school?

LB: In my class, we were 30. We were 30 students in my class, and we had 6 Jewish students.

TT: 6? Wow.

LB: 6. And in the school, maybe 40, maybe 40 percent were Jewish, maybe 35 percent. I lived in a district that was, had a large Jewish population in Vienna. We had a large Jewish population in Vienna.

TT: So the public schools were set up like, by districts? So—

LB: Every district had schools, yes.

TT: Okay. Everyone.

LB: When I went to what was like Gymnasium. It was like a junior college, it was—

TT: Right, right. That’s the college preparatory.

LB: College preparatory.

TT: And you took your *abiturs*?
LB: No, I didn’t get that far, because I had to leave earlier. The abitur was like [indistinct]. It was called [indistinct], which was like graduation, I remember, because I left before I finished school.

TT: Did you have a chance to pick out—I know in the Gymnasium, you have a chance after 10th grade, you pick out subjects that like interest you. Is that right?

LB: Yes, for instance, French and German—no, German and Latin were obligatory.

TT: Those were the ones you chose?

LB: No, you had to take them.

TT: Oh, oh, had to take them.

LB: We had to take them, but I also chose English and French as a elective.

TT: So you speak like, what, 5 languages?

LB: I speak French, German, Dutch, English, Yiddish and Hebrew, not so much.

TT: Not so much?

LB: Well, not as much. I lived in Israel for a couple of months.

TT: What did you speak at home? Yiddish, German?

LB: German. My father and mother spoke Yiddish, because they were raised—but not to us—they were raised in Vienna for many years, since the ‘20s.

TT: So, how did you learn Yiddish then? In school?

LB: No, I, I lived with my grandmother. My grandmother spoke Yiddish to me, and I answered her in German, and she understood me and I understood her. That was my father’s mother.

TT: I know, I know a lot of parents use Yiddish as a secret language so their kids don’t know what they’re talking about.

LB: Well, Yiddish sounds good, because it’s very close to German. I like to say German is not but bad Yiddish. But when they didn’t want us to understand at all, then they spoke Polish.

TT: Polish? Were your parents from Poland? Is that—

LB: From Poland, yes.
TT: Okay, because all parents have to have something that their kids don’t understand, right? [laughs]

LB: Makes sense, doesn’t it?

TT: Oh, definitely. Well, I guess my parents—they spell things out when you’re little and they want you to understand.

LB: You know what your name means in English? Tova, it means the good one. Have you heard the expression, *mazel tov*?

AKJ: I think so.

LB: The Jewish say *mazel*, which means good luck. *Mazel tov. Tov* means good, and tova is the female term.

TT: What’s more appropriate right now is *shanah tova*.

LB: *Shanah tova*, which means have a good new year, yes.

TT: Were you, were you religious growing up?

LB: Traditional. My father knew everything that came out of the Bible, because when he was a kid, he learned that in school. He could quote chapter and verse, but he never went to a synagogue. He was actually agnostic, yeah. He became a socialist.

TT: Really?

LB: And he never took me, but I—a couple of uncles, they took me to for the holidays, and my mother kept a traditional Jewish home. She wanted to maintain the tradition and the mood. She maintained Sabbath, candles, and she kept kosher.

TT: Was the house kosher?

LB: The house was not strictly kosher.

TT: You didn’t have separate—

LB: Only for Passover, but she would never buy meat that was not kosher, for instance, because that’s the way she was raised, but… so.

TT: So your family—you’d celebrate Shabbat in the house?

LB: In the house, ja, with candles and the traditional meals, and my mother was very much in the tradition, yes. Not strictly orthodox, but more leanings towards orthodox than to conservative. Right now here, we have conservative and reform, among other denominations.
TT: What was your favorite holiday growing up?

LB: My favorite holiday, holiday, probably, was Passover.

TT: Why is that?

LB: Probably because there was a change. I liked to eat matzo…

TT: Oh, god.

LB: And you don’t?

TT: Oh, no, of course not.

LB: And my mother used to make these good dishes with the matzo, you know. And other holidays were usually an event.

TT: Did family come from all over or you went to their houses?

LB: Aunts and uncles came to our apartment, or sometimes we joined them.

TT: Did they all live nearby in your area?

LB: In the general area.

TT: Like, in Vienna?

LB: Well, if I had to see my grandmother, I had to take a streetcar for 20 minutes.

TT: That’s not so bad.

LB: And another aunt lived half an hour away, but there was nothing bad about that. Streetcar was the usual mode of locomotion.

TT: How much did the streetcar cost?

LB: Maybe, maybe it was dreizehn—30, 30 Groschen. There was the schilling and the Groschen, which was like a little.

TT: Which would be like a couple cents?

LB: Well, maybe 5 cents.

TT: 5 cents.
LB: When I came to this country, I bought a cup of coffee for 15 cents.

TT: Wow.

LB: I came to this country 60 years ago.

TT: I don’t think you can find a 15-cent cup of coffee anymore.

LB: Today?

TT: No, not at all.

LB: The teabag without the tea costs 15 cents.

[laughter]

TT: Probably. Now, my question is, you said really liked when your mom made dishes with matzo. How is that possible?

LB: Well, my wife told me the same. [sees Flo Bretholz] Flo, tell, tell her it is possible to make a good dish with matzo.

Flo Bretholz: Matzo brei is good.

TT: Oh, that’s true.

FB: Brei is good.

TT: I’ll concede that much.

LB: And you, you use matzo meal for other things, too.

FB: I’m not a real Passover gourmet. I don’t know much other than the staples, you know?

TT: Yeah.

LB: I ask because Tova asked me what was my favorite holiday when I was young. Well, Passover, usually, because I always liked matzo. I liked the dishes my mother made, so I see her, I see her wincing going, “Wow, what?”

TT: But you never got to ask the 4 questions at the Seder?

LB: No, because I wasn’t the youngest.

TT: Right. And you were not old enough, more than your sister, to get a chance.
LB: Yes, that’s correct.

TT: Right. See, I’m the youngest. I always loved Passover, just ‘cause I got to ask the 4 questions.

LB: You see, my father was actually agnostic.

TT: Right.

LB: But he did the Seder just to entertain us and to make it homey, to make it traditional, and he knew all the things, you know, but I don’t think he ate matzo all week. He did not.

FB: I’m learning something. Do you remember you sister singing? And asking the 4 questions, too?

LB: No, my youngest didn’t sing, because she was too little. But Annie did, yeah, my little sister.

TT: Did she sing them or just say them?

LB: That, I don’t even recall.

TT: Did your dad let you help out with the Seder, or was it just—he did the whole thing?

LB: No, no, no, I helped out a little bit with it up that point. But, of course my father died, I remember, I was 9. Like he guided me, but he was never too emphatic. He was not, like, let me say it… we went from one to the next thing very quickly, and we went to the [indistinct] in no time. There was never a signal that lasted till midnight.

TT: Like some of them have now are.

LB: He made so sure there wasn’t.

TT: If you started Seder by 8, by what time were you finished?

LB: We started at 8, by 9 we were eating, by 10 we were finished.

TT: That doesn’t sound bad at all. If that was my Passover, I also would like Passover just as much. But, I’m curious about, you talked about your dad was agnostic and he was a socialist. Was this stuff you understood before he died or was this something you got explained to you?

LB: Well, I got, I got explained it a little later. I found out about it. I remember that in 1927, when I was 6 years old, so happens I read a book about Austria. It tells a story how the justice palace, the palace of justice was burned down because of a protest. Somebody was wrongly accused and sentenced, so there was a little bit of a…
TT: What was the palace of justice?

LB: It’s like, like the, like the place…

FB: It’s like city hall?

LB: No, where the attorney general has his office in Washington. What’s it called? The attorney general… the Department of Justice.

TT: Okay.

LB: The Department of Justice. They were in the building called Justizpalast, the palace of justice, because everything was called a palace in Vienna, because there were palatial buildings, but I remember, there was a protest and a palace, the building was set aflame. This was 1927, I was 6 years old. And my mother was in conniptions at home. “Where’s dad? Where’s dad? Where is he?” It was already maybe 8 o’clock, 9 o’clock in the evening and he had been gone since the afternoon. In the meantime, the radio had been going on about that and the radio told about the tumult that was going on in the inner city. And then he finally came home and what was it? He went out to be one of the protestors.

TT: So—

LB: So I remember this was one of the actions that he was involved in, which was a socialist protest, because the government, the Reich—something happened that they didn’t like, don’t, you know. In Washington, they have protests.

TT: Right.

LB: In front of the White House, in front of other buildings, in Lafayette Square and… so this was one of those things that I remember, and I was 6.

TT: So your father was part of the group that set fire to the building?

LB: No, no, no, he just went down. He was part of the group that spent a few hours to see what was going on, to be part of the, the, the tumult. You know, in 1927, he was 36. He was a man who was an activist.

TT: Still a young guy.

LB: He was an activist, so he wanted to be part of the action. He shouted a few words there, make himself feel better. I, I don’t know.

TT: Were you proud of him?

LB: Yeah, I was proud of him, and he once, he once spank me real hard because he was a chain smoker and I didn’t like to inhale the smoke and he gave me the money, 20 Grosch, and told me
go across the street and buy me a pack of cigarettes and I said, “No.” He said, “What do you mean no? I asked you to go.” And I said, “No, you always ask me to go there.” He said, “I always ask you, but you never want to.” So he put me over his knee and slapped me. And then I had to go, because he was a chain smoker and perhaps that was his downfall. That’s possible.

**TT:** They didn’t know back then that cigarettes were bad.

**LB:** Who knows. I remember the doctor told him, “Stop smoking and maybe your ulcers will ease up,” but that wasn’t his intention to stop.

**TT:** He sounds like a pretty resolute guy.

**LB:** Yeah, he was. And he knew what he was doing. And he was a bright man, and he was also, among others, an amateur actor.

**TT:** Really?

**LB:** In the Yiddish theater. He, he, he acted in some very classic Yiddish plays.

**TT:** Like what kind of plays?

**LB:** *Dybbuk*. You ever heard of *Dybbuk*? Look that up, look that up on—

**Jennie Reich:** How do you spell it?

**LB:** D-Y-B-B-U-K.

**JR:** D-Y-B-B-U-K.

**LB:** And there was one what was spelled, called, *Uriel Acosta*. U-R-I-E-L Acosta A-C-O-S-T-A. And then there was another one that was called *Der Wilder Mensch*, The Wild Man. Now, *Dybbuk* was a kabalistic play and it had to do with, with para, parapsychology. You know of the Golem of Prague? Have you read of the Golem of Prague?

**TT:** The big, giant clay monster that terrorizes—

**LB:** Yeah, that was the *Dybbuk*. These were classic plays and I was privy to them. My mother took me to watch my father in the theater.

**TT:** So you got to actually see him perform?

**LB:** I actually got to see a performance. That made me very proud.

**TT:** And your sisters too, or just you?

**LB:** Well, it was mainly I because my sisters were too young.
TT: It must have been really cool to see your dad acting on stage.

LB: Yeah, yeah, yeah, not only that was cool, what was cool also that the director, the man who directed the plays, a fellow of the name of Remes, R-E-M-E-S, Remes came and he and the group came to our apartment for rehearsals. There was this place when it was cold in the winter, my father had worked late—around Easter time—Christmas time, when he had work to make suits for men and women to all measure. He had people working for him. So when they came to our house to rehearse, I was privy to all the rehearsals and all the interaction

TT: Oh, wow.

LB: And the repetition. You know, when you rehearse and you repeat.

TT: Yeah, I know. You probably memorized all the lines.

LB: Yes, some of them. Then when I saw the play, I say, “Hey, I remember that one from rehearsal.” And then, and then I remember I was watching out, and then I was watching out if they are doing it right, now, because in the rehearsals they didn’t do it right, but now they’re supposed to do it right, because it’s on stage.

TT: Was it a big play? Like, how was the audience?

LB: Well, the audience was pretty big. It would fill the, fill the events with 5,600 people.

TT: Wow.

LB: Yiddish theater was very prominent in Vienna. In fact, the theater audiences in Vienna, whether it was the Yiddish theater or the German theater, the theater audiences in Vienna had between 35 and 40 percent Jewish attendance.

TT: Wow.

LB: Yes, this is a fact is brought up in a book I am now reading also.

TT: So of all the theater goers in Vienna, 35 to 40 percent of them were Jewish?

LB: Jewish, yes.

TT: Wow. And I bet overall, a lot of people went to the theater, right?

LB: Well, Vienna had a population of 1,800,000, and there was 180,000 Jews—10 percent, and 65,000 of the 180,000 were murdered. They were deported and murdered.

TT: Sorry, can you repeat that?
LB: 65,000 Jews were deported from Vienna.

TT: Of the 180,000?

LB: Over 30 percent.

TT: And what happened to the others?

LB: Some of them left, like I did. And others emigrated and others survived. Some survivors, but not very many. Of course among family, over 20 family members went to the camps and were murdered, my mother and sisters, too, but… it was Vienna, ja.

TT: Vienna must have been, from what I understand, Vienna was obviously a big a cultural capital, a very vibrant arts city.

LB: Yes, Vienna was what you might call really the crossroads in Europe. The crossroad. The Crusaders went through Vienna in the Middle East, when the Turks invaded Austria in 1683, and besieged the city of Vienna, the Polish King, Catholic King Sobieski, came to help the Viennese to spring that siege. He came down from the North and helped us at the time. But Vienna was always at the crossroads of, of civilization, of history, of culture. Napoleon went through Vienna on the way to Russia.

TT: And all the famous composers as well.

LB: Many of them were, yes, from Vienna but even today, if you go to Vienna, you see a lot of history. You’re surrounded by history, and important history—world history. Often history that had a very great impact on, on, on events. 1850, 1815 packed with the German chancellor, Metternich, went through Vienna. Napoleon went through Vienna, so did the Sultan, so too crusaders and so on. And of course, the Danube flows through Vienna. The Danube is a main artery of commerce. The ships go down from the Black Forrest all the way to the Black Sea. We could say it’s close to 3,000 kilometers, so that it is a main thoroughfare. So, coming back to your question, yes, Vienna was a cultural center for medicine, literature, known for the coffeehouses where the people were sitting and talking and debating and discussing, and the writers, professors, and…

TT: Did you do that too? Sit in coffeehouses and discuss?

LB: No, I was too young.

TT: You were too young?

LB: My father sometimes took me when he was playing dominoes and cards. For relaxation, I had a hot chocolate. My uncles used to take me to these places. He wasn’t supposed to take me to these places. But you know today, there are still the coffeehouses, but the name on the coffeehouses, you wouldn’t guess—what would you guess?
TT: The coffeehouse?

LB: Starbucks.

TT: I should have guessed, yeah. Nowadays, teenagers go hang out at coffee shops.

LB: Flo, I’m telling ’em about Starbucks in Vienna.

FB: That’s terrible! That’s sacrilege to have Starbucks in Vienna when they have all these great coffeehouses with the great pastries and they’re turning them to Starbucks. I won’t bother the Americans, but the Viennese who walk in there? Really. Americans already have it here.

AJK: You’d think the Americans would say, “Oh, a Starbucks. Just like home, let’s go to Starbucks.”

LB: But the Viennese go to Starbucks.

TT: Really? What kind of paste—you were saying that they have all kinds of pastries?

FB: Oh, all the custard, and all the chocolate, all the mousse, and…

LB: Well, they have—

TT: Did you ever get to try that stuff?

LB: Oh, Flo loves it.

FB: Yeah, we go often to Vienna.

LB: Well, they have a, they have a pastry chain store there. They have them in every district.

FB: We have good friends in Vienna, a younger couple there, they are like their 40s. He a physician, she’s a nurse, they have pretty good income. They can afford to travel. They have no kids. They love to come to the United States. They just love it here. They love the people and they love the whole atmosphere and—guess what their favorite restaurant is in the United States?

TT: Starbucks.

FB: They can afford anything.

AJK: McDonald’s.

TT: Burger King.

FB: Almost. Denny’s. They think Denny’s is the greatest. I can see maybe for breakfast, but for dinner as well? They think it’s real American.
**LB:** They were just here 3 weeks ago in Washington. They came to visit.

**TT:** You didn’t eat out a lot at restaurants as a kid, but you probably don’t go out to Denny’s down the street.

**LB:** Well, we ate at home, and when—I went out to a restaurant with an uncle after I lost my father. They took me from time to time. To me, it was a great treat.

**TT:** Yeah, that was a big deal.

**LB:** We never drove in a taxi except for one time, one time to go to a wedding, to the wedding of my aunt. In all those years, I was only 17 and a half, and but up to that point. I haven’t been in a taxi in a long time.

**TT:** And what was that like?

**LB:** Well, I had never seen one in motion, in Vienna, either until I came, left behind, to West Belgium, but that, that, that was our life.

**TT:** By a taxi, do you meant like a yellow cab with a driver?

**LB:** Yeah.

**TT:** They must have been very cool.

**LB:** I felt very important stepping into a cab and being driven around, you know. I was 17 years old.

**TT:** What an experience.

**LB:** Keep asking your questions—I talk too much.

**TT:** No, that’s the whole point. We still haven’t talked about your friends growing up, your friends at school, your friends anywhere, your friends in your neighborhood, your friends at school, your friends at Hebrew school. What were they like?

**FB:** Tell them about Bobby.

**LB:** Of course. Like same thing with you. I had a couple of very close friends. I had some later when I was 16, 17, I had my girlfriend.

**TT:** Yeah. [indistinct]

**LB:** But I had a very good friend. His name was Robert. We call him Bobby.
TT: Was he Jewish?

LB: Yes, his last name Hochman, H-O-C-H-M-A-N. I mention him in my book. I said goodbye to him, he at the time, he was 16. He went to Youth Aliyah, you know, get to Palestine. The cutoff age was 16, up to 16. You weren’t qualified after 16—you were over-qualified for Youth Aliyah. So I was 17 when the Germans entered Austria and occupied—

TT: He was a year younger than you?

LB: Yes, so he qualified with Youth Aliyah, meaning youth emigration to Palestine. Well, he went there and I went west. Fled to Luxembourg.

TT: Would you have gone with him if you could have? If you were 16, would you have gone?

LB: I would have gone there, yes, if I were qualified.

TT: What about your sisters?

LB: My sister tried, but she—it was too late for her. My youngest sister was too little.

TT: Too late for her, meaning?

LB: Too late for her to register, because they were sent away, but Bobby and I separated. I went to Belgium and then in 1938, December, I left Vienna—I left in October. In December of that year, I sent them a note from Antwerp. I was in Antwerp and sent him a postcard to Palestine.

TT: You sent it to Israel. I call it Israel.

LB: Palestine. And sent him a card. And in January of 1939, I sent him a birthday letter, a letter, because he had a birthday, and I remember his birthday—January the 11th. So I sent him a birthday—it was wishes for his birthday. That was the last that Bobby and I were in touch. Now, listen to this. In the year 2000, after my book came out—my book came out in ’98. It’s not 9 years already, but the paperback is now on the 7th printing, by the way, [indistinct] so anyway that’s my reward that makes me proud of what it is, that’s my profit for doing this, because I wanted to be a vehicle—I wanted it to be a vehicle for teaching. So, a fellow in California, the man that I told you, he was in Foster City. Got my book, because he saw it on the internet and he ordered it from Amazon and he was also from Vienna, so he was interested in another book written by somebody from Vienna. Then he bought this book for a friend of his who lives in Vienna and had gone to Palestine also in ’38 but had come back to to live in Vienna.

TT: I like where this story’s going.

LB: He—you like this story?

TT: Yeah, a lot like a movie.
**LB:** I’ll tell you something. Had the book never been written, it would not have happened, because—

**TT:** Right, [indistinct].

**LB:** He sent it to his friend in Vienna and his friend in Vienna wrote back to him and said, “Interesting fellow. Your friend Leo writes about a fellow by name of Robert Hochman. And it just happens I was in Jewish army for Palestine. The Jews joined the army for the British. The Arabs never did. So in my unit, in Montgomery’s 8th Army, the Royal British Engineers, there was a fellow by name of Robert Hochman. Why don’t you ask your friend Leo to inquire with some of the organizations, agencies that may have paid compensation or whatever, but maybe Robert Hochman is on their list if he qualified. If he’s alive, he will qualify.”

Well, I wrote to the organization in Vienna. They have given compensation, a refund. And I wrote to them and I described all this, I described this was my friend in 1938, I found out he was with the British Army, this and that. Would you have a Robert Hochman on your list? Well, I emailed them, I emailed that—no, I faxed that. I got a letter back week or two later, “Yes, indeed, we found a Robert Hochman on our list, but we are not at liberty to divulge his address or his phone number. That’s private, but we can let him know that you are looking for him.” 2 days after I received that letter from them—they wrote me a regular letter by snail mail, not fax. It’s sad, they took their good ol’ time. 2 days later, I received a phone call from Robert Hochman, my friend Bobby, that I hadn’t seen in 62 years.

**TT:** Wow.

**LB:** You will never guess where he called me from.

**TT:** Where did he call you from?

**LB:** Virginia Beach. [laughter] And Robert and I got together and we exchanged memories. We exchanged thoughts.

**FB:** He still had the letters that Leo sent.

**TT:** He still had the letter?

**LB:** He still had the letter that I had written to him.

**TT:** For his birthday?

**LB:** Yes, the original letter I had written to him for his birthday inside his car.

**FB:** It said, “Happy 17th Birthday.” Do you remember what else the card said?

**LB:** Whatever it is, I said to Bobby, “Could I have copies of these cards?” He said, “You may have them over my dead body.” So we went over to Kinkos and made copies. And he made
copies for me, and he came over in January to visit us, and we visited him in Virginia Beach and a son of his in Chevy Chase. We also have son in Virginia Beach, a physician. In November of that year, Bobby passed away. He had a stroke and passed away. Wasn’t it something to meant to be that he and I met after so many years?

And you know, I tell you what the whole story is, and this’ll flabbergast you. The man in California who suggested I should contact some agencies, he was with a Robert Hochman in the same unit, came to visit his friend in California and he told him, “Yes, Leo took your advice. He wrote to an agency, and he connected with his old friend, Robert Hochman. Why don’t you call Robert Hochman?” He called me to ask his phone number. “He lives in Virginia Beach not too far from Baltimore. Why don’t you call Robert Hochman and you connect with him for old times’ sakes, because he was your pal in the army, the British Army?” He did it. He called Robert Hochman. A day later, I get a call from Bobby. And Bobby says, “You know that fella that called me? He knew another Robert Hochman—not me. I didn’t even know that guy.” [laughter] Robert Hochman is a common name, right? In Vienna, especially.

TT: So when he was talking about in the Army—

LB: It was another Robert Hochman, but I connected with the real one.

TT: Wow.

LB: That is—that is something.

[people talking over one another]

FB: You know what, was interesting when they got together at Bobby’s house, Bobby’s brother was there—Bobby’s son was there, and his son and I were just watching the two of them, and Rod says to me, “You see those two? They’re not 2 old guys getting together. They’re—they’re 16 and 17 picking up where they left off, because they’re acting real crazy and they don’t see each other as they are now. They saw each other as they were when they last saw, you know, met.” They were acting like they did when they were 16 and 17. It was really very strange watching.

LB: We had a lot to reminisce about, talk about, rehearsed some things you know after 62 years. It was amazing.

FB: And Bobby spoke fluent Italian. He had been married to an Italian woman. Italian-Catholic woman whom he met when he fought in Italy. We went to an Italian restaurant and he’s ordering everything in Italian. And Leo’s like, “Where did you learn Italian?” and he said, “I learned it in Italy.”

TT: So would you say way back you guys were like best friends?
**LB:** Well, we were. We went to the same, we were, we were, we were members of the same Zionist organization. We had meetings once a week and got together on outings, and he was actually an amateur boxer. Bobby would—

**TT:** Of course, this fits with the story.

**LB:** Bobby would, Bobby was an amateur boxer. And it’s interesting, on the night when the Germans entered Austria—the Anschluss, the annexation where German armies entered Austria, the 11th of March, Friday the 11th of March, 1938. That evening, Bobby and I and other friends, we were in a meeting in a Zionist organization. When I came home that night, it was almost 10 o’clock. My mother, in conniptions, was standing in front of the house—the entrance of the building where we lived in. “Where were you? Do you know what’s going on? There’s all the police and soldiers and the uproar, they’re up waking everybody else, do you know happened?” I and—I told her, “Mom, you don’t have to worry, I was with Bobby.” You see, I was older, but Bobby was always my protector. He strode with this [imitates posture], like a boxer, you know? He, when he walked, people made room for him, you know.

**TT:** Was he a big guy?

**LB:** Yeah, he was stouter than I, and perhaps he was more…

**FB:** He was muscular.

**LB:** Right, more muscular.

**TT:** Were you little?

**LB:** Well, I was short, ja. And actually frail, you know.

**TT:** So you were the bad influence on him, then?

**LB:** I wasn’t. No. When my mother was worried about me, my explanation was, she shouldn’t have worried because I was with Bobby.

**TT:** Bobby took care of you?

**LB:** Yes.

**TT:** Even though he was younger?

**LB:** Yes, yes.

**TT:** And that comforted your mom?

**LB:** Well, that, it consoled her for her, but she was still angry that I didn’t come home earlier with all that was going on, you know. The police were starting to arrest people and attack Jews.
A book that I’m reading, it’s unbelievable. It makes it all bring back memories as if whether I need them. You see, I remember going to Austria in June for a special occasion. I’ll tell you that in a minute. And we were supposed to leave on the 21st of June, which was a couple of months ago. It never happened. The night before we were leaving—we were leaving on the 21st. On the 20th, Flo and I went out to have a bite. Go to a restaurant. Let’s say by 8 o’clock we were home, get ready for bed, and lay down. I didn’t feel good. My teeth were chattering. I felt shivering and hot at the same time. She takes my temperature. You want me to tell them that?

**FB:** I don’t see what that has to do with anything.

**LB:** It has to do with going to Vienna.

**FB:** We’re going anyway.

**LB:** We’re going, we’re going in October again. We rescheduled. I had 103 fever. She took me to the hospital for emergency. My doctor was with me that night. I said, “Get me out of here because I’m flying to Vienna tomorrow.” He says, “Leo, you ain’t goin’ nowhere.” [laughter] We had to cancel. I had a urinary tract infection, no other symptoms. The fever went away after 10 days. I was fine. Now we rescheduled. I am going back to Vienna for a special occasion. There was… plaques, memorial plaques from the installed on the front of the building I’d lived in. I told you about my mother being in front of the building. Commemoration of my mother and sisters. Later on I’ll show you. They sent me the pictures.

**TT:** What kind of building memorial was it? Was it an apartment? Was it a high rise?

**LB:** No, it was 5, 6 floors, whatever, a tenement building like they have in New York.

**TT:** What was like, what was the setup like? How many rooms was there?

**LB:** Well, there were, there were at least 30 tenants.

**TT:** In the whole building?

**LB:** In the whole building.

**TT:** Okay.

**LB:** Just 35 tenants.

**TT:** And your family had—

**LB:** And our family had our own apartment. Small kitchen, living room, bedroom, small den.

**TT:** Did you share your bedroom with your sister?

**LB:** Yes, in fact, we did.
TT: 3 of you in one room?

LB: 1 bed for my 2 sisters and 1 for me.

TT: Did you mind?

LB: If I’d’ve minded, it wouldn’t’ve helped.

TT: Right.

LB: That was, these were the apartments, one for your family. And the bathroom and the toilet was in the corridor and the main faucet was in the corridor. We needed water for cooking, we had to get it from the corridor. And you know what, it still probably exists today in Vienna.

TT: So you probably knew your neighbors pretty well if you had to share a bathroom with them.

LB: Well, yeah. Sometimes we had to wait for them. Yeah, we knew all our neighbors pretty well, yeah.

TT: Do you remember any of them particularly?

LB: Oh, I do.

TT: Yeah? Were they Jewish or mixed?

LB: Mixed.

TT: It didn’t seem to matter, I guess.

LB: Well, it didn’t seem to matter, except after until the Anschluss. There was one very, very nice family, a policeman by the name of Schreier. S-C-H-R-E-I-E-R. Schreier. And they were very friendly, especially when my mother became a widow. They came to the apartment and brought food and, and various solicitors.

TT: So they came to help her feel better?

LB: They came, but for 2 days. We had helped these people trim their Christmas tree in December. In March, they didn’t talk to us because we were Jewish.

TT: Were they the only ones who acted different?

LB: Well, no, there were some others there. One of my good friends from school, when I said hello to him, he spat in my face.
TT: And what did you do?

LB: And you know what, I came home and I told my mother.

TT: What did she say?

LB: And my mother, you would say in Hebrew, I called her as Eischid Heim, a woman of valor. My mother didn’t want to aggravate it. My mother didn’t want to make it worse for me. Here’s what she said to me: “He spat in your face? Wash your face.” You know why? Where she came from in Poland, there used to be pogroms, where people were being killed. Being spat in the face was not as bad as being killed. So, she wanted to make light of it. She didn’t want to make it more worrisome for me. “They spit in your face, wash your face and you’ll be alright. The next time he’ll speak to you, don’t worry.” She said, “Next time he’ll talk to you.” She just wanted to make me feel better. But that was my mother, you know. See, mothers don’t want to make it worse than it already is. But, that’s a way of telling it, and after the Anschluss, all of a sudden, I didn’t know who speak to. By the way, that’s in the book that I’m reading too, now.

FB: What?

LB: That’s probably in the book too that I’m reading now, how it describes how overnight, good friends didn’t speak to you.

FB: Oh, yeah.

LB: This was traumatic. It was… why?

TT: So it was really like, sudden?

LB: Yes, it was. It was a trauma.

TT: Okay. I can’t even imagine.

LB: But you know why? Only because we were Jewish.

TT: But before the Anschluss, did you have good relations?

LB: Oh yes, we played soccer together, we went to school together. We often did homework together. We went on outings. During the Jewish holidays, we went to synagogue. They went to church on their holidays. But on Christmas, we were often invited by our neighbors to sit by the sparklers there to enjoy the “Silent Night, Holy Night,” and we sang it with them.

TT: Did you sing, “O Tannenbaum”?

LB: O tannenbaum, o tannenbaum, sie treu sind deinen Blätter. Du grünst nicht nur zur Sommerzeit, Nein auch im Winter, wenn es schneit. O Tannenbaum, o Tannenbaum, wie grün sind deine Blätter. [laughter] How green are your leaves?
TT: My last name in Tannenbaum. I was actually in Germany last year.

LB: Which means, which means, means…

TT: Christmas tree or pine tree.

LB: There’s, there’s, some tannenbaums with thick needles, and here, there’s some tannenbaums that’re ornamental. There are some pine trees in Baltimore.

TT: Really?

LB: Ja, on Main Street.

TT: And you sang?

LB: O tannenbaum, o tannenbaum…

TT: So you sat next to the Christmas tree and sang carols?

LB: Yes, with them. We would…

TT: Help them decorate the tree?

LB: Help them put the angel on top and the tinsels and everything. It’s interesting, isn’t it?

TT: Did they come…was it reciprocated or…?

LB: Well, they, they also said to us on Rosh Hashanah, they, they, they gave us also wishes for our holidays. They knew when we had Rosh Hashanah. They knew when we had Passover, because they usually coincided with Easter anyway.

TT: Did they ever come to your Seder or just—?

LB: No, they did not.

TT: A little too much?

LB: That was too much.

TT: Never to Shabbat?

LB: But that’s where, that’s where that Tannenbaum, that’s with an A, not with an E—that’s Tennenbaum.

TT: With an E.
LB: The tree is tannen. Tannen, tannen is the pine tree, yes.

TT: I guess mine’s like a little anglicized version.

LB: Yeah. It’s good to see you wrote it.

TT: Which reminds me, your name—was your name always what it is right now?

LB: Absolutely.

TT: You never got it changed?

LB: Never. You don’t pronounce it stumbling over the T-H, but as one syllable, “Brentolz.” In fact, the original spelling was with double T. The tombstone of my father in Vienna still has the double T on his tombstone. Laying there in the middle, it’s not just one T. And that’s the way it remains. And that’s the way it’s pronounced.

TT: So not because of the war? Just—

LB: No, just happened naturally. We started spelling it with one T, then the next document came out with one T, and that’s the reason it’s pronounced “Brentolz.”

TT: What does that mean?

LB: Brent means board and Holz means wood. If you went to have an English translation, it would be Boardwood.

TT: Boardwood. [turns to AKJ and JR] Did you hit the tape limit?

AKJ: Oh, we got a couple minutes.

TT: Board wood?

LB: Brent is a board.

TT: A board wood, like a board of wood. [laughs] And… what were we talking about before?

AKJ: Ask about the times… Communism?

TT: Oh yeah, I was curious about that, you said your father was a socialist from what, what, I guess what I wanna know, the political climate? Like how much did you know was happening before. What was the date, ’38, you said?

LB: March ‘38.
TT: March ‘38.

LB: Everything was in the papers, of course, but I, of course as a young man, I didn’t read the papers like the adults did. But we knew exactly from the radio and from all the news media what had happened in Germany since 1933. We knew what had happened with the Jews in Germany because in our class, in school, in gymnasium, we had a few Jews who had come from Germany—Jewish students that fled Germany to look for asylum in Austria. So they came and joined our school. And they came and told us what had happened to family members—persecution and their father’s store. One of them said, “My father had a shoe store. She had a good friend, an Aryan who took over at the store, and he told us that when we come back, the store will go back right to my father. He’s just going to take care of it, you know.” But, this was wishful thinking, and the German-Nazi regime lasted from ‘33 till the end of the war, ‘45—it lasted 12 years. Hitler wanted it for a thousand years. He called down to create a thousand-year Reich, you know, but in those 12 years, it changed the world.

TT: I’m guessing that his father didn’t get the store back.

LB: No, I don’t think so. His father probably did not get the store back. His father was probably deported from Vienna, but I don’t even remember what the name of the student was, because there was several Jewish students who came up to Vienna, from Germany to Vienna.

TT: So—

LB: And then, then left from Vienna to some other place, and when the Anschluss came, people went from Vienna to Czechoslovakia.

TT: So just farther east and farther east and farther east?

LB: Or south. Some people went to Italy. They had business connections. Others went to France and Belgium, Holland, and England. I mean, I fled Vienna in 1938 and went to Luxembourg.

TT: So you knew about it? You heard about it?

LB: I was also afraid it might also happen in Austria because Austria had a Nazi party, but they were illegal, you know. They were underground. And when you’re underground, you get stronger, because nobody knows what you’re doing. If you’re up top, it’s always a wrong to ban a party. If you ban a party, they go underground and you don’t know what to do with them because you don’t know them, but if they’re above ground, they’ll spout whatever they wanna spout, their propaganda and you’ll know just what to do with them, and you can act against it. You can act against it. It’s always bad to, to ban parties, because these parties become stronger as they are banned, because they’re, their secrecy binds them together.

TT: Did you know about them? About the Nazis?

LB: Oh, we knew all about Nazis because sometimes they were attacking Jewish stores, yes.
TT: In Austria?

LB: Yes, and sometimes they were marching in the streets and shouting, “Sieg Heil!” for which they could have been arrested.

TT: What does that mean?

LB: It means, “Hail victory.” It was the German shout, “Sieg Heil! Seig Heil, Seig Heil!”

AKJ: One second—stop with that, we’re exchanging—

TT: —walking through the streets and they say, “Sieg Heil”?

LB: Sieg Heil.

TT: Sieg Heil, sorry.


TT: And they got arrested for stuff like that?

LB: Well, they would, they would… they ran away, whatever, yes.

TT: As I understand, socialism and like, at least sort of the ideals, and Nazism, are about as far apart as possible.

LB: Well, socialism and Nazism, yes, but Communism and Nazism, no, not because they’re both extreme.

TT: Yes, far extremes, but socialism’s not as extreme.

LB: You see, the Jew fit every situation. They have a saying in Yiddish and I’m not going to say it in Yiddish because it won’t translate.

TT: You can say it in Yiddish. I’d like to hear it.

LB: The Yiddish says, “Da yid is das dettle, muss pastien top.” The Jew is the lid that fits every pot. Why? And this is political. When the Communists attacked capitalism with the West, they said it’s the western, capitalist, Jewish conspiracy.

TT: They associate Jews with Western ideas?

LB: That’s right. When the Nazis attacked the Communists, they said socialist, Communist, Jewish conspiracy. So they’re both extreme ends. For them, we were the lid that fit every pot.

TT: Every excuse?
LB: Every excuse. And we were always the scapegoats and something went wrong, it was the Jews. The first World War? Hitler said, “The Jews, the Jews responsible for it.” I wanna give you a statistic that is very important. Keep that in mind when you speak. Germany had a population of 60 million.

TT: That’s—.8 percent were Jews.

LB: What?

TT: .8 percent were Jews.

LB: 1 percent.

TT: 1 percent were Jews?

LB: 600,000 Jews. 1 percent were Jews. 20 percent of the Jews served under the German colors. A hundred and 20,000 Jews served under the German colors. Is that a lopsided percentage? Of those hundred and 20,000 Jews, 12,000—a full 10 percent—were either killed on the war front or came home crippled, maimed for life. That is quite a contribution to the German war effort. Hitler never recognized them. “The Jews were traitors, the Jews didn’t fight with us, the Jews were this.” The Jews were scapegoated. We have today in the world, we have a man in Iran today, he says he wants to get rid of the Jews. He talked about coming to the United States, by the way. He’s supposed to come, there’s going to be a protest this next weekend. And the man who wants to be president, Mitt Romney, he said, “Actually, the United States should not let him come over here.” But, here is a man that spouts the same hatred and it’s the 21st century. How many Jews are there in the world?

TT: In the world, it’s about 11 million, is it?

LB: About right now, approximately 13 million.

TT: 13 million.

LB: You know, Tokyo has more inhabitants than that, that or Mexico City or New York or whatever. We are a minority, but yet it seems to be, for some reason, this interview is all about that. If not for that period, there wouldn’t be an interview. If not for that history, there would, if not… my books wouldn’t’ve had a reason to be written. The Holocaust Museum should never had a reason to exist, if times would have been [indistinct], but these times of depravity, utter depravity. Insanity. And as our people would say, “How did you get involved?” “Well, two things got me involved. Number one, I was born in Vienna and I committed the great crime to be born into a Jewish family.” I always say that.

TT: Did you understand all that?

FB: Yeah?

LB: Should I show them the plaques that I, well, that we were going to Vienna for?

FB: Did you describe your escapes? Or if they’re going to act out anything—well, you know, they want to know?

LB: Well, she asked questions. I told ‘em I’d answer questions.

FB: Okay.

LB: I’m only gonna answer questions that she asks, naturally, but sometimes I talk too much.

TT: Not at all. [laughter] You’re obviously really well like, you’re so politically informed now, but is that all stuff you learned after? Did you have, you have, did you have an interest, obviously, because you were in a Zionist organization, so you must’ve been—

LB: I was also that was in a way that was political, so I was interested.

TT: Even as a teenager, you were politically active?

LB: It’s sad, knowing our history.

TT: You supported the Zionists?

LB: I supported the Zionists, yes. I was in Hashomer. Hashomer…Hashomer, that is actually the leftist… the leftist of the Zionist wing of the Zionist organization.

TT: Was it all…Was your group, was it like a branch of an adult group, or were you—

LB: It was all youth.

TT: All youth?

LB: Yes.

TT: Who? Did you have like meetings?


TT: And you just—

LB: The translate would be young guardians.
TT: And what did you talk about at these meetings?

LB: Well, we had meetings, we had leaders, we tried to speak Hebrew, we sang songs, we had parties where we discussed what would happen when we go to Palestine. In the summer, we had summer camps, they already directed towards activity—it was communal.

TT: Was it coed too?

LB: Yeah, it was coed, and it was kibbutz type. It was communal, you know, like a kibbutz. Most of the kibbutz you see in Israel were socialist. Kibbutz.

TT: Right. Did you ever think that would be you?

LB: Well, I thought I would go to Palestine, but when the time came, I was too old for that. I was no longer—I didn’t qualify.

TT: But it was some idea you had? ‘Someday, I’ll go to Palestine.”

LB: Yes, in fact, after the war—well, that comes later, later, not now. But I, I had a certificate to go to Palestine. I handed it to someone else because she’d lost her husband in the war and had her children and I had my affidavit to come to America, so rather than go to Palestine, I opted to come to America. [indistinct]

TT: So as a teenager, Palestine was always that, that grand ideal?

LB: It was. It was like a dream. An ideal… a dream.

TT: Did you ever have… have the idea among your Jewish community that you were like, living in the diaspora and as long as we are, we’ll never be good enough, or…?

LB: Well, we knew what diaspora was. By the grace and acceptance of others, we also knew that our existence and our well-being depended on a government that was willing to include us into their society. It was not against us. But, as things happened in Europe, we already—the Communists showed animosity to us, although the original Communists were all Jews. Kerensky and Trotsky, all Jewish.

TT: Which is why Jews were associated with them.

LB: Yes and… but, we always realized that our safety depends on goodwill of the government under which we lived.

TT: Did that cross your mind a lot? Was that—

LB: That crossed our minds. That crossed our minds, yes, but we lived with it. We always hoped that, the worst would never happen, and so it was a day-to-day existence. We hoped that
everything was alright, although life for the Jews in Vienna wasn’t bad. There was, there was a very, very active, very involved Jewish community.

**TT:** Was it... was it very separate, though? You know, like, you said there was the Yiddish theater and then there was the other theater?

**LB:** Yes, but there were some districts in Vienna that were heavily Jewish populated. The district I lived in and another district. There were over quite, maybe 30 to 40 percent of these districts or more were Jewish. Other districts had no Jews at all, but we lived under those circumstances on a daily basis. As long as nobody would physically attack us, that was fine, but with words.

**TT:** Did you get that?

**LB:** We got that, yes.

**TT:** What kind of stuff?

**LB:** Sauer Jude, pig Jew, they would say, dog Jew, you Jew. They would, they would insult us, yes.

**TT:** People at school?

**LB:** In school, in the street, yes.

**TT:** After a while it just rolled off your back?

**LB:** Yes, and my elementary school teacher, a fellow by the name Kadensky, his son was a good friend of mine, Robert [indistinct]. So after my father died, Kadensky came to my mother’s house and brought us things and was very friendly with my mother.

**TT:** Was he Jewish?

**LB:** No.

**TT:** No?

**LB:** So after the Hitler Anschluss, I see Kadensky walk down the street where I lived, he lived on a side street, near where I lived. So I see the teacher in the street. I walk up to him, you know, at the time I was already 17 and he was my elementary school teacher from 6th to 10 and he liked me. I always thought he liked me. I walked up to him. First of all, he said to me, “Don’t worry about my son”—because his son had become a Hitler Youth and didn’t want to speak to me anymore—He said, “He doesn’t know what he’s doing. See, he doesn’t—he hasn’t got his right senses.” He wanted to tell me. And I wanted to tell him, I said, “**Herr** Kadensky, Mister Kadensky, my mother said I must leave, it’s too dangerous here.” Why? Because Jews were being arrested. 16 to 60 Jewish males.
TT: From the age of 16?

LB: From 16 to 60, never to be seen again. And that happened around us—Bobby’s family, friends and family—

TT: People you knew?

LB: People we knew. She said, “Look at what’s happening. You could be next. Leave.” And it was arranged. She fought, she prevailed. No matter what I said, she said I must leave. That was very courageous of her. I asked Kadensky, “My mother told me I must leave. What do you say?” And do you know what he said to me? “Dein Mutter hatrecht.”

TT: Your mother—

LB: Your mother is right. She’s right. And if he said it to me, I took his word for it. I didn’t take my mother’s word for it, because my mother would send me away, no matter what.

TT: Because your mother was appealed to emotions?

LB: When Kadensky told me she was right, he knew what he was talking about, and he was a Socialist, actually. He hated the Nazis. His son became a Hitler Youth overnight. They put on brown uniforms and that was it.

TT: It must have been hard for him.

LB: Yeah, and it was hard for us to see the scene, overnight… overnight to see Swastikas. Swastikas overnight flying all over the place, from the steeples, rooftops, windows. And where did it all come from? There was underground, and overnight, it came to full force.

TT: It wasn’t… did it feel gradual at all?

LB: It was a shock. [stands] And that, that was a shock. I’m just getting to this, I’m just getting to this chapter. I was just getting to this chapter, and this is before Kristallnacht.

TT: Is this the book you’re reading?

LB: This is Kristallnacht. [indisinct]

TT: Kristallnacht was ‘38? March ‘38?

LB: November. This was March. Kristallnacht was in November. But they don’t call it Kristallnacht in Europe.

TT: I know, I know.
LB: They call it, “The night of the November Pogrom,” because that was coined by Goebbels, and they don’t want to lend to him.

TT: Right, right.

LB: See Anschluss? That’s the Anschluss.

TT: And this is the book you’re reading right now?

LB: Yes, yes. This man is a half Jew. He lives in Bronxville, New York. He’s not Jewish, he’s a half Jew. He’s from Bronxville, New York. There’s an interesting thing in this, this introduction. And it’s an interesting thing to see, since he writes very well. [reads from book] For “in the end, it was the Viennese themselves who opted for wealthy Prussian provincialism over cultural and intellectual excellence that might have restored the city’s greatness. All that is left today are the monuments.” He’s very, very critical of the Viennese. He was born in Vienna. This man, he lives in Bronxville, New York.

TT: The Viennese meaning the people who were living there, how they changed their minds?

LB: Well, he speaks of the time, but he writes now. He writes with what he knows now. Had they not been for the Anschluss, they could have saved the greatness of Vienna. And you know what, setting in the Pearl, this is what Hitler said that, “Vienna is a pearl, and I am coming to set it.” And you know what it setting, it’s putting something in a proper setting, like you put a diamond into a ring. He was going to do with Vienna, what he thought should be Vienna—a Vienna without Jews.

TT: And Vienna itself was very Jewish.

LB: About, about 10 percent.

TT: Yeah.

LB: A hundred and 80,000.

TT: And compared to Germany, it was much more Jewish.

LB: Well, it was more Jewish-oriented, yes, intellectually, but of course, Germany had 600,000 Jews. I’m trying to read this. For me, it’s quite aggravating.

TT: It must be hard to read about—

LB: I’m a little bit masochistic about that. But I wanna know some details. I wanna know some details that have escaped me that he digs into it very deeply with archives and records he went through Vienna with to get with all the offices he sees what went on before, before the annexation. How they negotiated before Mussolini, and how Schuschnigg, the last chancellor of Vienna before Hitler came, went and, and made a speech about how there was resistance for
some and agreement by others and in fact, it’s really a story, the inside story, of what happened before the Anschluss became a reality.

TT: How does it feel to know that all these things were happening when you were just living your childhood, you know?

LB: It’s, it’s, it’s strange now. It’s weird. I’m reading and my mind boggles. I wish I had known this. I wish I had known, and if I had known, what I would have done about it. Question is, could people have known or perhaps have gone into hiding? My mother never could leave as a widow, and my father, being alive, he would have done something. But he had been alive, he probably would have been arrested the first day, because his name was on the list of the people who were a part of the socialist party.

TT: How, how did the rest happen?

LB: They went to the homes.

TT: Come to the house?

LB: Stop you on the street, come in the middle of the night at 4 o’clock in the morning for being Jewish, for being whatever. They had lists. They had records.

TT: So any, any day after the Anschluss, they could have just come in as you were sleeping and had you arrested?

LB: Any day, yes. It tells you all about the Kristallnacht. The Anschluss was the previous chapter.

FB: [indistinct]

LB: Flo, why don’t you serve up these ladies something?

FB: I’ll get some ice cubes, too. It’ll be getting warm right about now. You want a raspberry or a peach flavor?

TT: I’ll have the raspberry.

LB: This is Amber. This is Jennie. This is Tova.

FB: I know, we’ve met.

LB: A-J-T.

FB: See, yeah, I wouldn’t have remembered that.

TT: Yeah, that’s great.
FB: I don’t have a memory like you.

TT: That’s crazy.

LB: You see, Flo, Amber is the technician today.

FB: Huh? You switch around?

LB: The next meeting, they switch roles.

FB: Help me with this, would you please?

TT: Let’s see if he still needs to open things for her.

FB: He comes in handy sometimes.

LB: Still have a purpose.

FB: It’s not a full job. [laughs] Thank you. You want some of these?

LB: It’s very refreshing.

FB: I’m going to get some ice, though.

LB: You know what? Tova’s last name is Tennenbaum.

TT: Oh, yeah.

LB: And what is your last name?

JR: Reich.

LB: R-E?

JR: I-C-H. I pronounce it rice.

LB: R-E-I-C-H?

FB: Where did I hear that name before?

LB: Leo Reich. He was with Talmudic Academy. He passed away last week.

FB: Oh, okay.
LB: And you heard of Oscar Reich? Oscar Reich was the foot—the base—the soccer player for the Viennese team, Hakoah, which was a Jewish team before the war.

TT: During the war?

LB: Before the war. He was soccer player in Vienna. He fled to France, was Jewish. He fled to France and collaborated, became a collaborator.

TT: I want to ask you about—

LB: And you know what? He was executed. [background noise disrupts] He was executed after the war. He collaborated with the Nazis.

TT: You know that?

LB: Yeah, Oscar, Oscar Reich. I knew him when I was in France, yeah, it is. And what is your last name?

AKJ: Kepple-Jones.

LB: What?

AKJ: Kepple-Jones.

LB: A double name?

AKJ: Yeah.

LB: Hyphenated?

AKJ: No.

LB: Not hyphenated? Amber Kepple? K or C?

AKJ: K.

LB: K.

AKJ: E-P-P-L-E.

LB: Kepple. That was, the was, I was going to spell, you know, phonetically, Kepple Jones but Jones, J-O-N-E-S?

AKJ: Yes.

LB: Amber has a double name, Flo. That is almost like royalty.
TT: Why is that royalty?

LB: Because hyphenated names usually are.

FB: Has royal blood.

LB: Has connotation—it has connotation. I tell you something. Kepple-Jones, people will remember quicker than Reich or Tennenbaum.

AKJ: That’s a sure thing?

TT: That’s true. People usually remember my last name because of the alliteration, Tova Tennenbaum.

LB: The alliteration, the double T, yes.

TT: Yeah. Thank you very much.

FB: You want some too, babe? I’ll get you some.

LB: No, I’m fine. Just wait there. That’s a different dimension there, yes, yes. It’s very much.

FB: You want more sausage?

TT: Oooh, oooh.

LB: There’s at least two more. One, this is Vienna before the war, the next one is during the war, and the last one is after the war. There’s 3, there’s 3 segments to this interview.

JR: Oh, thank you.

TT: So, you were talking about this Oscar Reich. He was a soccer player?

LB: A soccer player in Vienna.

TT: Was he famous?

LB: Oh, yeah, he was.

FB: You can find him on the internet. I don’t know why.

LB: Thank you.
TT: So how did you know about him? Did you see him? Did you see him play?

LB: I was a soccer fan, went to a lot of matches.

TT: Did you play yourself?

LB: I used to play, ja.

TT: You play on organized team or just pickup games?

LB: Sandlot sorts of thing.

TT: Did you play any other sports?

LB: Oh, yes, I did ice skating.

TT: Ice skating? Like, professional?

LB: Skating. In the winter, we always went skating. The classes took us to skating, actually. That was part of Phys Ed.

TT: Really? What else did you do for Phys Ed?

LB: Track and field. I did 60 meters, a hundred meters, 400 meters. I did relay. I did the broad jump. Not the high jump because I was too short.

TT: Oh, the long jump, oh. So were you pretty good at that relay?

LB: Pretty, yeah, I was pretty fast. I was thin. I was fast on my legs.

TT: So a track star.

LB: Not a star, but we had inter-school contests, you know. Gymnasiums had their own little uniforms.

TT: Did everyone participate in, in, in the inter-school competition or just whoever wanted to?

LB: Phys Ed was very much emphasized like it is here. Those who excelled in basketball, they played basketball. Those who in excelled in track and field, and there were those who excelled in soccer.

TT: So you did track and field?

LB: Yeah. But, there was other Phys Ed. [indistinct]

TT: You sound like a pretty well-rounded child.
LB: Yeah… well, I was participating.

TT: Did you ever play a musical instrument?

LB: When I was 6, my father gave me a violin.

TT: The violin?

LB: You see, in those days, the movies… the silent movies became sound movies. So the musicians who played in the pit of the silent movies, because silent movies had musicians playing to do the background music. The musicians lost their jobs all of a sudden. So they went into the courtyards and played in, in the buildings. You walked into the house and there was a courtyard in the middle of the building and they would play there. Some of them had harmonicas, you know, reed instruments, and you know, trumpets, and others played the violin. And that is also described in my book. My father went up to—people would throw coins from windows out into the yard to, to treat the musicians. They also played in the streets. That was not allowed and when the police came, they scattered and ran.

TT: Why wasn’t it allowed?

LB: Because it was a nuisance in the middle of the street with traffic and the everything else. Also, people would gather and all that was a little bit of a nuisance. Because I remember my father goes into the courtyard and spoke to the Jewish, the Jewish…

TT: Do you remember his name?

LB: I was 6. “You don’t have to do that, play in the yard and wait for coins to be thrown down to you. Why don’t you—I want you to give lessons to my son.”

TT: Did you have any say in this?

LB: I was 6, 6 and a half maybe. And 2 and a half years later, my father died. And I gave up because my mother couldn’t afford to pay the man. So, and I remember exercises and a few, a few pieces. Exercises, strings E-A-B-G, you know.

TT: Can you still play?

LB: No, no, I couldn’t play, but I could play the exercises. I did that. I did that, yes. I remember diligently, diligently standing in front of the mirror. The teacher told me, “The first thing you have to learn, how you want to be a good violinist”—you had to know how to hold your violin, how to hold your bow. You can’t lose—you had to have wrist movement. And you could never let it slip, so you had to have a nice grip on the bow as you do, because if you lose your grip, the bow slips. How to hold the violin with the arm under it like this—you cannot hold it like this, and he wanted me to stand in front of the mirror 10, 15, 20 minutes, every minutes, just do this.
TT: Every day?

LB: Every day.

TT: And you did this?

LB: Yes.

TT: Wow.

LB: My wrist hurt me. I did that. I did this. And when he came to the lesson, he told me, “Let me see you hold it.” One lesson was nothing, holding the bow. The other lesson was nothing but how to hold a violin and how to apply the bow, that it should not scratch, that it should flow. And how to use the finger action, and I was very serious, because I wanted to learn the violin. And to this day still, the violin is probably still my favorite instrument and a great frustration that I never could continue doing it. But, some things work out and some things don’t, you know.

TT: You could always take it up again.

LB: Nah, I can always listen to it.

TT: Was it something you did every week? You came in, you had your lesson?

LB: Twice a week.

TT: Twice a week?

LB: Twice a week, yes.

TT: Wow.

LB: And he came and I did it, as I said, for 2 and a half years.

TT: And you liked it?

LB: I liked it, and he thought I was good student, and he entered me into one of the children’s contest there, there were some of the teachers too…

LB: A recital?

LB: Ja, something like that to give you encouragement and make you feel make you feel good about it. And the first exercise was daa-daa-de da da-da de, da-da da dada dada dee dadaa deeda daa-daa. E string, the first string. E A B G, but that’s—Flo, I’m telling them how I was frustrated I couldn’t continue learning the violin.

FB: Yeah, because your father died and you couldn’t afford it anymore.
LB: Yeah.

TT: So how did you do in the competition?

LB: I don’t recall. They thought I was great. My mother must’ve thought I was great.

TT: An 8-year-old who knows how to play the violin.

LB: We went to, we went to like a little recital evening with other kids.

FB: I never heard that part. I know you like violin, yeah.

TT: Well, it’s competitive.

LB: Well, you know the rest of the story, baby. [laughter]

TT: So I think he was, he was what you would call now a very well-rounded kid. A kid nowadays who did sports, ran track and field, went to Hebrew school, took violin lessons, all while doing school.

LB: As I, as I, as I told you at the beginning, we did the normal thing how when you’re young. We did the normal thing that any kids do, you know. With family, you go out and you go to movies, you go to theater, you go out. You do sports.

TT: You went to these silent movies? And then came talkies.

LB: Talkies, I remember, ja.

TT: Do you remember the first talkie that you saw?

LB: I believe it was The Jazz Singer.

TT: The what?

LB: Jazz Singer.

TT: That was what it was called, The Jazz Singer?

LB: It was Al Jolson’s.

FB: You know Al Jolson? Al Jolson.

TT: I don’t, no.

LB: In the ‘30s—he was in American film in the ‘30s.
FB: Now I really feel old.

TT: Did they have subtitles or did they dubbed it?

LB: Some of them were dubbed. Some of them had subtitles.

TT: Which did you like better?

LB: I prefer the dub better.

TT: Really?

LB: Yeah.

TT: I hate dubbed movies.

LB: Really?

TT: Yeah.

FB: We don’t like it, either. Now, we don’t like it.

LB: Of course, my favorite cowboy was Tom Mix.

FB: He liked Cowboy movies.

TT: Did you like Western movies?

FB: American Western, he liked.

LB: Tom Mix and the wonder horse, the wonder horse. Tom Mix. T-O-M M-I-X.

FB: That was even before my time.

LB: And I read American authors.

TT: Yeah?

LB: But in German.

TT: What books did you read?

LB: Mystery, like detective stories. Tom Sharp and was one author, and the other one was Bill Strom.
TT: So you read American books but in German?

LB: And there was one written by a German author by the name Friedrich Gerstäcker. That was called *Die Regulatororen en Arkansas*. In German we would say, “Ar-kann-sas.” Translated, it means *The Regulators of Arkansas*. This was in the rush to the West, and whatever the regulators were, whoever they were at that time. That was a book by Gerstäcker, *The Regulators of Arkansas*. And in 1936 or 1937, I saw the film. It was a talkie.

TT: They made it into a movie?

LB: No, not this one. I saw another film.

TT: Oh.

LB: That was an interesting thing. Then there was *The Life of Emile Zola*. You all seen it?

TT: I haven’t, but I know who Emile Zola is, at least.


TT: I read that book. By Pearl Buck.

LB: Pearl Buck. I saw the film, *The Life of Emile Zola*, which was not only about Emile Zola, but which was also with the Dreyfus trial. You know the Dreyfus trial?

TT: Yeah—

LB: In France.

TT: In France.

LB: In 18—in 19—in 1895.

TT: That must have had particular interest to you.

LB: Exactly. It had Jewish interest. And Emile Zola, the famous author of *Nana* and *Germinal*, and some of the famous authors I read in school and I read in German, of course. It was about the coal mines. *Nana* was about the head baker, prostitute in Paris. But anyway, Emile Zola was a known actor—a known author to us. *The Life of Emile Zola* with Paul Moody and… who else was in it? Joseph Schildkraut played Dreyfus. The American actor, Joseph Schildkraut. You can look him up on Google.

FB: He’s dead now.

LB: *The Life of Emile Zola*. 
TT: This was one of your favorite movies?

LB: That movie—very impressive. What was most impressive was after the movie, I went to street on Barrierstraße. I showed you where the movie was. The theater does—no longer exist.

FB: He knows Vienna like he knows Baltimore. He just knows all the streets.

TT: Wow.

LB: The interesting thing I heard, I had never heard it before in a Viennese movie. You can hear it in America but not there a half a year, or a year. People applauding.

TT: When the movie ended?

LB: Ended. And that was interesting. This was just about a half a year, or a year before the Anschluss, the annexation, so the Austrian audience still were interested in…

TT: In justice.

LB: In justice, still interested in something that showed injustice being reverted into justice. And a man who fought for justice like Emile Zola, and he accused the government of doing wrong with Dreyfus. You know, he wrote that famous appeal, that famous protest, J’accuse. “I accuse.” He accused the French republic for doing wrong and the Austrian public sat there and, and appreciated that film. When you read this book and wonder where these people a year later turn it down, upside down.

FB: That’s why your grandchildren are so angry now. We know a lot of young people, with good friends of them who are so upset with what their grandparents, their parents did. They, they were Nazis. Some of them don’t even speak to their grandparents.

LB: Don’t write that down, that’s for the last session.

AKJ: Don’t worry, I won’t.

FB: You didn’t tell them about Robert inviting you to your school, your previous school that you had to leave?

LB: No, no, that’s later. Flo, don’t, don’t preempt this thing.

FB: We know some wonderful people in Vienna now.

LB: Yeah, we, we do. yes.

TT: I think it’s amazing that that timing of that film came out—what you said? 6 months to a year before the Nazis?
LB: Yes, yeah. I saw it in either ‘36 or ‘37.

TT: How often did you go to the movies? Were they a special treat?

LB: I went to the movie at least once a week.

TT: Wow.

LB: I liked American cowboy films.

TT: Did you go by yourself, or your friends, family?

LB: Lucky I never had to.

FB: His aunt took him. He couldn’t afford it, so his aunt took him.

TT: That’s so cute. Your friends didn’t go?

LB: There was this cowboy, this cowboy Warner, Warner [indistinct] something… and all these cowboy movies I saw, yes… Especially Tom Mix. Look up Tom Mix on Google.

TT: I will.

LB: The wonder horse. Tony, the white horse.

TT: You really wanted to be a cowboy, now?

FB: Yeah, sounds like kids really liked cowboy movies.

LB: That’s why I came to America.

TT: How did you know about all that stuff? I mean, you think about being in the West in the U.S., riding a horse, seems so foreign to what your life was.

LB: Well, I saw it. It impressed me. I always, I always rooted for the guy with the white hat, you know. I knew the one with the, the black hat was the villain. That’s what came out in those movies. Sometimes we sat through for the next session so we could see it again.

TT: You’d sit, you’d sit and watch the movie twice?

LB: Yeah.

TT: Did you pay extra for that?

LB: No.
TT: You’d just get to stay?

LB: Just sit. Yeah, nobody chased me.

TT: Did you ever read newspapers back then?

LB: Oh yeah, I read newspaper back then.

TT: Did they ever have like short stories in the newspapers?

LB: Short stories. They had cartoons.

TT: Cartoons, comics?

LB: Yeah.

TT: About what? Anything?

LB: Well, one was about a dog, Struppi. S-T-R-U-P-I.

TT: Struppi?

LB: Struppi.

TT: That sounds like a precursor to Snoopy. [laughs]

LB: The dog Struppi was the…

FB: No wonder Charles Schultz copied him of Struppi. He must of copied him.

TT: What was Struppi about?

LB: There was a copy character named Adabei. A-D-A-B-E-I. Adabei means almost like busy body. Adabei means, “I’m also there, I’m part of it,” or something like that. A little comic strip in the newspaper. We got that…we got that…my father bought the newspaper every day and we read it. When he died, I still bought the newspaper, my mother still did. We had to be informed.

TT: So you didn’t just read the comics? You read the articles?

LB: There were no comics like here. There was not a page of comics. There were just one or two strips near the puzzle, and I did the crossword puzzles.

TT: I love crossword puzzles.

LB: I do too. I do them all the time.
TT: So back then you did crossword puzzles, too?

LB: Oh yeah, in German. And now I do them in English. I did them in French, too.

FB: He did one in prison, too.

LB: I did some in prison in France to pass my time.

FB: It’s in his book. Have you read the book?


FB: Where is it?

LB: In the den, at the left, on the left side at the very bottom. You see it there?

TT: I should get my dad to read it. He likes Elie Wiesel.

LB: What?

TT: My dad likes Elie Wiesel.

LB: *Night*? Wiesel and I are very good friends.

TT: Oh, really?

LB: Ja, met him several times. In fact, I quote him often.

TT: Really?

LB: I wrote to him recently. I said, “Elie, you don’t mind, if you want to add something to it, tell me.” You see it, Flo? Bottom shelf, very left.

FB: Oh, yeah, you didn’t say shelf. Which shelf?

LB: The bottom.

FB: I was looking at the bottom. I found a bunch of stuff on the floor.

FB: I’m telling them I wrote to Elie Wiesel, because I wrote to Elie Wiesel, because he has a quote. When they ask him about faith, “Professor Wiesel, do you have faith?” and I said, “I get often that same question. Elie, do you mind that I quote you, because I attribute it to you, actually.” I always say, “My friend, Elie Wiesel, says that,” and I can only repeat what he says. And I think it’s a very, very significant, very, very succinct quote. “I still have faith, but my faith is wounded.” You can’t say it better than that.
TT: And you feel the same way?

LB: I feel the same way, too. See, this is what I did in jail to pass my time. Make—like advertising.

TT: So you were like that as a kid? So you liked words and word games? Wow.

LB: I was 9 months in jail in France. That comes, that comes next.

AKJ: That comes in the next interview.

LB: I read many, many crosswords. I did today’s both crosswords. Well, I like—

TT: You probably did really well in, in like—you probably didn’t take English—

LB: Well—

TT: But German class. You’re probably a good writer.

LB: I was also, I was also—I had good marks in English and in French.

TT: Were you a good student overall?

LB: Sciences, not so much, but languages, yeah. Languages, I did alright in. Geography, history, chemistry, physics, not so well. But, languages—

TT: But you got to drop those when you got to 10th grade, right?

LB: Yeah.

TT: That’s what’s nice about the German school system.

LB: See, this is what I did.

TT: It’s all French, too.

LB: It’s all in French.

TT: So you were pretty fluent in French by the time you left?

LB: I speak French.

LB: Well, I had a rudimentary knowledge. It’s like, when you go out of school here and you have 1 year, 2 years, 3 years of French.
TT: Yeah, well, they’re much better.

LB: You have to live in the country. You have to hear it every day. I had a facility with languages that came naturally to me.

TT: Was that your favorite subject?

LB: What?

TT: In school, French?

LB: Languages.

TT: Languages in general or just French?

LB: Languages in general. Also music. We had music lessons.

TT: In school?

LB: In school. [indistinct]

TT: What did you learn?

LB: Well, we had to learn how to compose little ditties, the keys and the flats and sharps. We had [indistinct]. High schools have music here, too.

TT: Well, they’re not required.

LB: We had choral, singing—that was required.

TT: You sang in the chorus?

LB: Yes.

TT: What part did you sing?

LB: I was an alto.

TT: Alto?

LB: But I also sang in synagogue choirs for 35 years.

TT: Was it an all-male choir then, if you were an alto?

LB: I was as a boy.
TT: As a boy?

LB: As an adult, I’m a second tenor.

TT: Okay, oh—I forget little boys have really high voices.

LB: Yeah.

TT: Do you think you were a good singer? Well, you must be if you sang in the choir.

LB: Well, I sang. I was in synagogue choirs for over 35 years. I was with Beth Tfiloh.

TT: I worked at that camp this summer.

LB: Hm?

T: The Beth Tfiloh camp, I worked there this summer.

LB: Yeah, did you?

TT: Yeah, I liked it.

LB: In the camp I was in, I was singing when it was still on Westerland Boulevard. You don’t remember that—you don’t even know where it was. But over 30 years, I liked choir singing. This is this is, here, this is what came up—what I did in jail.

TT: What are those?

LB: Monograms.

TT: Was that because of your mom? You said your mom always used to monogram things.

LB: Mom used to like lettering and she’d sew. This is meant to be systematic. This is, this is after—this really should be the next.

TT: Not if you did it as a kid. Did you doodle when you were a kid?


TT: Oh, wow.

LB: And then it tells you here—
TT: Did you ever get grades for handwriting?

LB: Yes.

TT: I bet you have very good grades of handwriting.

LB: I have good handwriting, yes, and that was also one of the subjects.

TT: Handwriting?

LB: Calligraphy.

TT: Really?

LB: It was called calligraphy.

TT: You must’ve done really well in that.

LB: I did really well in calligraphy.

TT: Did you get graded out of 20 or what were the grades out of?

LB: We didn’t have grades. We had 1, 2, 3 and 4. 1 was best. 2 was next. 3 was like, poor. 4 was failing. We did not have grades graded like 50, 60, 70, 100, well, A plus or B minus, whatever. It was numbers. 1, 2, 3, 4.

TT: And the teachers’d get to decide for themselves?

LB: Yeah.

TT: Was a lot of it based on participation in class?

LB: Yes, but a lot of it was based on performance.

TT: Performance? What do you mean by that?

LB: I mean the tests, the tests that you took. You had the math tests, the history tests, the geography tests and if you failed them, you got a 5 or a 4.

TT: A 5? You never said anything about 5.

LB: 5 was the last, yes. Yes, 5 was the last.

TT: Oh man, did you ever get a 5?
LB: No. Banshees—“One of the many drawings Leo made while in solitary confinement in prison tower in 1943.”

TT: Did you ever get a 4?

LB: Yeah, I did. I in fact have a few of these certificates—

TT: Really?

LB: From my Gymnasium here because I needed it once for some records and they sent it to me.

TT: Did you get a 4 in chemistry?

LB: I actually never got a 4 in chemistry. I got a 3 in chemistry and physics. I got—English and French, I got a 1. In German, I got 2. Geography was very good. [indistinct]

TT: Did you have a lot of homework?

LB: We had homework, yeah.

TT: Like how much each night?

LB: We had to make compositions. We had to do math problems. We went to school 5 and a half days.

TT: Saturdays, too?

LB: Half a day Saturday.

TT: Did you go on Saturdays?

LB: Yes, I did.

TT: What—

LB: And, and after school, I went to the afternoon service at the synagogue—

TT: Really?

LB: Because I—my religion teacher was Professor Menshur and he taught in school. He was also an ordained rabbi. And after school, we went—school finished at 12 on Saturday. During the week, we went to school until 12, went home for 1 hour, then came back.

TT: You went home for lunch?
LB: Lunch. And we came back at 1:30 or 2 to finish the day till 4 o’clock.

TT: What did you have for lunch?

LB: Stuff my mother made.

TT: What kind of stuff was it?

LB: Well, the lunch was the bigger meal.

TT: The big meal?

LB: The big meal. We had soup. My mother made good chicken soup. Either soup or borscht or whatever she made.

TT: What is borscht?


TT: [laughs] Just tell us what it is.

LB: Beet soup. It’s made from beets. Some of them are made from plums. There’s also some fruit borscht. And some of them are made with cabbage. My mother made red beet borscht.

TT: Was she a good cook?

LB: She was good cook, yeah.

TT: What was your favorite thing that she made?

LB: Ah, she made goulash.

TT: Mhmm.

LB: And she made this thing that’s called palatschinke, which that’s like thin crepes, almost like French crepes. She made it like a desert and, well, yeah, she was a good cook, and she made mean gefilte fish. Yes, yes, yes, yes. She was a very good cook. And this also in the book, all of this is described about my family. All of that, my family is described as going along from one thing to another, such as when I speak about my Israeli [indistinct], I mentioned my mother made the gefilte fish for that party.

TT: Because the whole family knew she was the best at it?

LB: Yes.
TT: Did you, did you have special occasions? Like, if it were your birthday, did you get to ask for something special, like your favorite food?

LB: No.

TT: No?

LB: No, I don’t think so, no.

TT: What did you do on your birthdays?

LB: Birthday… my best friend came over to the house and we sang and…that’s all.

TT: Bobby?

LB: There was Bobby… that was high school. In elementary school, there was another friend.

TT: What was his name?

LB: Alois. A-L-O-I-S. Alois. His name was Schrager. S-C-H-R-A-G-E-R. I met with Alois Schrager later. He was called Louis. He was an optometrist in New Brunswick, New Jersey, and he passed away soon afterwards.

TT: So he’d come over to your house and have family dinner?

LB: Yeah. Maybe we’d set out a desert or something my mother made. That was all. Bar Mitzvah wasn’t a big thing, either. You know Bar Mitzvah, I had 5 or 6 friends over at the house. One bought me a fountain pen. The other bought me a soccer ball. And I think it was a used soccer ball—it wasn’t new. [laughter] I think so, but that was a great gift.

TT: Yeah?

LB: Oh yeah, I consider it a great gift.

TT: Was your Bar Mitzvah held in the synagogue?

LB: Yeah. There were no thing such as that invitations yet. That didn’t exist in Europe. That didn’t exist in our time. There was no such thing as Bat Mitzvahs. There was Bar Mitzvahs.

TT: Oh, no Bat Mitzvahs.

LB: That’s right, they just did Bar Mitzvahs. A Bar Mitzvah is, you go to the temple, the rabbi blesses you, you say, you, you say your Torah, your kosher. Mine was Vayikra. Vayikra was my, my part. I remember Vayikra was the part I said for my Bar Mitzvah. That was in March. March of ’34 was Bar Mitzvah.

LB: No, it’s the portion—

TT: The actual portion?

LB: The actual portion.

TT: Do you know what it stands for?

LB: I forgot. Vayikra was [indistinct]. It was Israeli or whatever that means.

TT: Mine was Shemini, which I think is right after Vayikra.

LB: Was it April?

TT: The Bat Mitzvah month was April.

LB: See, Flo?

FB: Honey?

LB: Tova was Bat Mitzvah a month after I was Bat Mitzvah.

FB: When was it?

LB: Her Bat Mitzvah—her Bat Mitzvah was in April. Her part, her part was—the part that she said was…

TT: Shemini.

LB: Shemini.

TT: Which is right after. It’s in the same book as yours was. In—

FB: You mean your part in the Bar Mitzvah?

TT: Shemini. He said his part was Vayikra.

LB: Shemini—Shemini means aide, I think.

TT: Which means it was the one that lists the…

LB: The laws of kosher. [glances over at AKJ] You still working it?

AKJ: I’m still working it.
LB: How’s it coming along?

AKJ: Good.

LB: Yeah, well, I depend on you. [laughter]

TT: It’s all up to her.

LB: I’m telling you, I’m in the hands of these 3 young ladies here. They’re in charge.

JR: Yeah.

FB: Yeah, that’s right. You’re a movie star, whether you like it or not.

LB: Oh my god, yes.

TT: You gave have any other question that you can think of that I forgot to ask?

JR: Well, just generally with your sisters. You don’t remember them?

LB: I remember everything about my sisters.

TT: Were you a mean older brother?

LB: What?

TT: Were you a mean older brother?

LB: Well, no, I was not. But in fact, I had to help out with my sisters, because when you’re the oldest brother and there’s two younger sisters and a mother, really, you have to help out.

TT: So you did chores around the house?

LB: I did a little bit. I had to go out whenever my mother wrote something to an agency for some help for my younger sister, when our father died, was put into an orphanage. She was for the week. The weekend, we brought her home, and I always picked her up and brought her home.

TT: How much younger was she?

LB: Well, when my father died, I was 9 and she was a year and a half.

TT: Oh, much younger.
LB: When I left, she was 10. But the interesting thing is that when I left, and this goes before—naturally before, I left Austria on the day that I left. It was a Tuesday. I meant to say goodbye to my younger sister because she was confined to a quarantine ward in a hospital of Scarlet Fever. She had been taken to the hospital a couple days earlier with the Scarlet Fever. And I had to go say goodbye to her. On that day in the afternoon—I left late afternoon, it was somewhere between 2 and 3 o’clock. My mother and sister went with me. We were in the courtyard of the hospital, looking up to her window. And that’s where my youngest sister was, 10 years old. I called her. She looked at me like it was the last day on earth. Curly brown hair and brown eyes.

TT: What was her name?

LB: Edith.

TT: Edith?

LB: We called her Ditta. D-I-T-T-A. Ditta. I mean, I couldn’t go to her, hug her, because it was quarantine. It was a contagious disease, you know. Scarlet Fever doesn’t exist today, but it killed… I looked up her window and she looked down at us and I motioned to her I was leaving. She knew what I was talking about because this had been discussed in our apartment a few days earlier, preparing to leave. That was going on for a couple months. She knew what was coming, so I motioned to her in some sign language, “I am leaving.”

TT: She couldn’t hear you? Was the fever that strong?

LB: Couldn’t hear us—it was too far. It was an October mezzanine type window on the second floor. In Europe, the second floor is called first floor because, in Europe, the ground floor is called the ground floor.

TT: Right.

LB: Anyway, we were on the first floor. She was on the second floor, mezzanine type window, looking down at us. I motioned to her. She had a plank of wood and in her hand, she had a piece of chalk. And as I signed to her, “I’m leaving,” she wrote on the plank wood, “Good luck, viel glück. See you soon again.” This was our word, our mantra. This was our keyword because this could not last forever, right? This is—naturally, we’re going see each other again. But, do you know what, Tova? It was the last time I saw her. I can’t forget her eyes. I never forgot her, that last time I saw her. “See you soon again.” Who could have thought that 1938, 4 years later, it would be women and children who would be taken away, never to be seen again? This cannot last—this is the land of poets and thinkers. This is the land—Germany. This is not a court society. That’s what my mother said. In the streetcar where we said goodbye few hours later—that streetcar we took to go to the railway station—she said to me, as she turned away, tearful, “See you soon again.” That was our mantra. And then she added, “Never forget who you are.” These were our last words that I remember. I call her Eischid Heime, a woman of valor. She sent me away for me to be in safety. And they were deported in 1942 to a death camp in April of 1942. I got notified, but that comes later, in the last session. I got notified by the Jewish community center agency in Baltimore in 1962. And that I will tell you later in the next session,
because next sessions means after the next session, after the war. But they were deported. That was the last I ever saw them.

TT: And what about your other sister?

LB: Both of them were.

TT: No, but do you remember what she said to you?

LB: Henny didn’t, Henny didn’t say, she didn’t say much. I know that she—I know she cried, but she didn’t say much. My little sister, she was not less emotional, perhaps, whatever, but she didn’t say anything. If she did, I don’t remember. But I remember my—

AKJ: Let’s end it right there. I don’t want to miss anything.

LB: We called her Henny, H-E-N-Y. The other one was Edith, so we called her Ditta. My mother’s name was Dora. This was Ditta. This other one, this was I when I was 9 and my middle sister, Henny, was 7. This was my mother, my aunt Mina, this was I on the day of my Bar Mitzvah.

TT: The day of your Bar Mitzvah?

LB: Yes. This was my mother and this was my father. He was—she was very short and he was rather tall, close to 6 foot.

TT: Is she sitting down here?

LB: This is my mother.

TT: Is she sitting and he’s standing behind him?

LB: Yes. It’s interesting, though. I have a picture of my mother and my father—their wedding or engagement. Wedding. She was—he was sitting and she was standing.

TT: And the same height?

LB: Yes.

TT: [laughs] So you got your mom’s short genes.

LB: Yes. [indistinct] This is my mother. This was my mother.

TT: She’s beautiful.

LB: And this was my middle sister, Henny.
TT: And she was only a year and a half younger than you?

LB: Yes. [indistinct]

TT: I’d like to hear about the rest of that last day again, the day that you left home.

LB: Well, I went to the railroad station and made my way to Luxembourg. There—my mother was standing and my father was sitting.

TT: [laughs] They got married in ‘20?

LB: In 1920.

TT: And you were born the next year?

LB: In ‘21, yes.

TT: So how long—the day that you left, how long before that happened did you find that out with your mom?

LB: It was probably a couple of months because I had an aunt and an uncle who had preceded me to Luxembourg and they were the Jewish committee in Luxembourg, a way for me to be picked up by a guy. They called him a smuggler. [indistinct] in Germany, actually. I spent 5 nights in a monastery with Catholic friars, with Franciscans, sleeping on a cot next to a German soldier who was on furlough, which I’ll describe later. So I was very fortunate in being helped by some Christians along the way several times. Did you have a chance to see the DVD—how long have you been at Goucher now?

TT: I’m a sophomore.

AKJ: She’s a sophomore, I’m—

LB: Were you here in 2004?

Interviewers: No, no.

LB: Remember there was this DVD, the documentary, that was shown here on WBAL, Survivors Among Us?

TT: We know you were in that.

LB: Uta has that.

TT: Yes, she—
LB: And the Survivors Among Us tells all about the Christians’ help in London, in France, and that will come later. I told you that as long as I’m here, they will have nothing, they have nothing to fear, sisters in dark. I was helped by Christians along the way. There were some priests who sheltered me as I escaped, and I had several escapes. One was from a train that went to Auschwitz… so it’s an interesting story. In fact, the last couple of weeks ago I got an invitation, a tentative invitation. They contacted me, would I be willing to come in the spring, Billings, Montana, a Catholic high school. They took in my book as a reader for Holocaust European History Studies and they said they want me to come and give a talk.

TT: Are you going to do it?

LB: Well, probably. I’ve never been to Billings.

TT: [laughs] You have no reason to.

LB: [indistinct] interesting history, maybe you read that 3 or 4 years ago. You know what happened? They’re doing the Hanukkah holiday. A Jewish family had the menorah in the window—

TT: Oh, right, yeah.

LB: And they threw stones into the window to damage, whatever. Or try to [indistinct] whatever it was, and almost the whole town, a non-Jewish population, put menorahs in their windows as a solidarity, and that’s Billings. And the teacher at that high school, I met her last year at a conference in Washington. She teaches it in that high school. She teaches history. History or English. And then they took the book in. She told the history teacher that she had met me, and so they talked to the principal and it seems that he would be interested in getting me there, so he said, “Will you be coming?” I said, “Yeah. Arrange a date. If I can make it, I will. If not, I can’t.” But we’ll see what happens in the spring.

TT: You get a lot of invitations like that, I bet.

LB: I do get invitations, yes. I get a lot, too. I get more invitations to Christian schools and organizations than to Jewish. Jewish is a certain attitude. We’ve known it. We’ve heard it. My grandmother. My grandfather. I’m a survivor’s grandchild, and I’m overexposed maybe, whatever. But there is an amount of interest in that period in education so that as long as I can tell the story, I’ll do it. I didn’t start talking until—that comes later in the next session—until 1960 after I was 15 years in this country, but finally then I started talking about my life and then I never shut up. Don’t put that in there. That will be edited out.

TT: Yeah, you haven’t told us about your girlfriends, have you?

LB: About what?

TT: About your girlfriends.
LB: Oh, that's alright. That's at least 6 sessions.

TT: [laughs] Oh, I see.

LB: Don't put that in there.

TT: Does your wife know about all your girlfriends?

LB: Ah, 3 sessions, at least.

TT: [laughs]

LB: Well, she knows. She knows most of the things.

TT: Anyone important or just dates?

LB: Just dates. Just dates.

TT: Where did you go on dates to?

LB: Beg your pardon.

TT: Where did you guys go on dates? To the movies?


TT: What kind of dances?

LB: I had one of the most interesting dates, but that also has to go later, not this, in this.

TT: Were they afterwards?

LB: No, this has to do with after I came to America, not with this session, not what we're talking about.

TT: Oh. [laughs]

LB: My young years in Vienna—but interesting thing is, I lived, when I came here before I was married, I shared an apartment with a friend of mine, Freddy Noble, with whom I came over together from France to America. He went to New York first. I came to live in Baltimore. Freddy and I went to the grocery store near where we lived in Park Heights Avenue.

TT: I think I know which one you're talking about.

LB: Slaters. You know Slaters?
TT: Mhmm, because my cousin lives on Park Heights.

LB: Oh. Mr. Slater at the time he was—the store is no longer Slaters. [indistinct] But he said to me, “I have a niece, a nice girl. Will you have a blind date?” I said, “Well, I don’t go much for blind dates.” And he kept insisting. I said, “Fine. Give me the number.” I called Blanche. So Saturday evening, I drove over, went into the house, rang the bell. A lady is in the door, opened the door. I said, “Mrs. Hyatt, good evening. I’m here to call for Blanche.” She says, “I am Blanche.”

TT: [laughs]

LB: This is the most embarrassing moment in all of my dates.

TT: [laughs] Was she a lot older than you or she looked older?

LB: No, she was not older. In fact, she was younger than I, but she was a bit taller than I.

TT: Oh. [laughs]

LB: And I’m 5-foot-6, 5-5 and a half. She must have been 5-8, 5-10 maybe. But also [indistinct].

TT: [laughs]

LB: I said, “Mrs. Hyatt, I’m here for Blanche.” “Oh, I am Blanche.”

TT: Oh. I guess that date didn't go very well.

LB: Well, that was one date. But I like to tell that because it’s one of the very embarrassing moments.

TT: That’s pretty embarrassing. That’s pretty awful.

LB: Yes. Do you have any more questions?

TT: Not that I can think of. I’m sure there’s a lot more I could ask. I’m just not thinking of them right now.

LB: Oh. I hope we got for this session enough for what you need.

TT: Definitely, yeah. It’s fascinating, too.

LB: You know your way back?

TT: Mhmm.
LB: And where you live—on campus?

TT: Mhmm.

LB: When are you going to see Uta?

TT: For Thursday.

LB: Uta is a wonderful quality person, a good teacher, very dedicated, and she might as well be Jewish.

TT: And you know she’s going to be watching this video.

LB: Hey, Uta. Hi, Uta.

TT: [laughs] She’ll love to hear all the stories.

LB: Yes. She has heard it before because I did some talks for her classes. And some of the things are, I repeat for your benefit. But it’s never new, but with different students and with different projects as a test, different while I speak for Christians, I’ll do this one thing. Jewish, younger people, older people. My favorite story is when I was introduced after the book had come out to a men’s breakfast club at the synagogue. I think it was at Orev Shalom. Well, a fellow introduced me and I never like to be introduced that way. “Well, we’re very fortunate to have Leo Bretholz with us. Mr. Bretholz, because you know the survivors won’t be with us much longer.”

TT: I agree.

LB: How long do we, does anyone have? How do we know that? But to say, “Survivors, they won’t be with us much longer, so very fortunate that Leo is still here to be able to tell his story.” I never know exactly how to—I speak [phone rings] off the cuff.

TT: Mhmm. As it should be.

LB: It should be. And I judge the audience, see who they are. Elderly, younger people, Christians, Jews, mixed, whatever, male, female. This time I knew just how to start. We call that speaking extemporaneous. “Ladies and gentlemen”—there were some women there, too. They bought their wives. “Good morning. It’s a pleasure to be here, but the way Stanley introduced me, I better talk fast.”

TT: [laughs]

LB: I had to get back at him because I didn’t like—it never flows. Flo often comes with me, sits there and I see if she cringes. We have to say that.

TT: Yeah, what a thing to say.
LB: It’s an awful thing to say, “He won’t be with us much longer.” But he meant to say, yes, some others won’t be here forever, therefore it’s good to hear about it. But why make a special point of it?

TT: Yeah, there are other 86-year-olds out there.

LB: Sure, and how do they feel? This is exactly right. Then I speak to elderly audiences. I can never leave them with a message. My message is to young people, take it with you into the future. Never let hatred speak to you. Stand your ground, and later if you reply, tell that it cannot come from you. You’re not on the same page with them because Hitler’s obviously [indistinct] unless you put them in their place. So I can say take it with you to the future. To the audiences that are my age, that would be very callous. I can’t say, “Take this with you into the future.” You’ve had your past. You had already experiences. Let the young people take it into the future. You have done your work. That is the—that’s the purpose of all of this, naturally, to instruct younger people so, in fact, this will be shown and acted out in November. I think I have the date already, on a Friday, November, it will be—

TT: A Shabbat—

LB: An Oneg Shabbat. I think I will ask him if I’m allowed to bring my daughter and my 2 granddaughters.

TT: Of course you are.

LB: One of my granddaughters is in that DVD in the Survivors Among Us. She was interviewed among them and she said, “Eventually I will be speaking for my grandfather.” Andrea. I have 4 grandchildren. We have 4 grandchildren. We have a son and 2 daughters. My son is not married and my daughters are married. One has 2 boys and one has 2 girls. My son is an interesting story.

TT: Okay. Let’s hear all about it.

LB: He’s now—he was born in ‘55 so he’s now 52, never married. [indistinct]

TT: Just like, takes after his father.

LB: He has a degree from Georgetown in the Chinese language. His major was Chinese and his minor was French.

TT: Just like you.

LB: And as a Jewish man, isn’t that the most normal thing for a Jewish man who has a degree in languages to gravitate to Irish music?

TT: [laughs]
LB: That’s very normal, isn’t it, to listen to Irish music? You go on Google, go on Google and type in Myron, M-Y-R-O-N Bretholz. You see what [indistinct] shows. I think he sent it to us by email. We have a picture at the White House doing a St. Patrick’s Day.

TT: [laughs] Ah, he’s really into Irish music.

LB: With Clinton there. But he also played with O’Malley a lot.

TT: Oh, okay.

LB: O’Malley had an Irish band that he went in and he plays the guitar. So— [talking over each other]

TT: Every city in Israel.

LB: Yes. This is our cousins in Israel sent us this. They always send us something for Rosh Hashanah.

TT: I was in Israel this summer.

LB: Are you finished, actually?

TT: Mhmm.

LB: Really?

TT: Unless you’ve got—

LB: I only got—I only have if you have questions.

TT: If you have more tricks in your bag.

LB: I have a lot of tricks in my bag. I have to be sort of—I don’t know what to say for this. There’s a lot to say, but you got most of it. If you have any questions that you think you have not asked me—

TT: We’ll be sure to pester you.

LB: You can do that.

TT: We don’t want to keep you—

LB: No, that’s fine.

TT: [laughs]
LB: I want to thank you for your efforts.

TT: Thank you. It’s very interesting, very moving.

LB: But when you [indistinct].

TT: [laughs] I wonder. I can still hear you.

LB: You’re wasting film, you know.

TT: I have a question off the record, sort of.

LB: Yes.

TT: So does it ever feel like—I know you probably have been interviewed countless times—

LB: Yes.

TT: Did you do any tribute for the Shoah Foundation?

LB: Oh, yes.

TT: And do you do talks a lot as well?

LB: Yes. Shoah Foundation, they came to this, right here in this place—

TT: Did they [indistinct]?

LB: In 1995, yes. And they did 5 or 6 hours. I have other tapes of them.

TT: They’re probably a little more professional than our tapes.

LB: Well, they are, they were Spielberg’s, you know.

TT: Right, right.

LB: Spielberg.

TT: My question was just, after doing this all the time, the interviews and the, you know, official foundations and the talks that you do—

LB: I know what you’re going to ask.

TT: Yeah. Does it ever start to feel like a, like a repetition, or, well, not so much a chore?
**LB:** My—I have a term for that, but you may want to edit it out. If Uta hears that, she may never invite me to come to a class.

**TT:** No, I want you to be honest.

**LB:** She doesn’t want to, she doesn’t want to be a burden, but she’s such a good friend, my Uta, and I know her husband [indistinct]. I have a term for that—sometimes I’m over-Holocausted, and I have to be very honest.

**TT:** I want you to be honest.

**LB:** And I often get calls from [indistinct], “Oh, Leo. I’m glad you’re home. I want to ask you something.” “I know you’re going to ask me something pertaining to the Holocaust or the museum or something.” “Yes, how do you know?” I said, “What else are you calling about?” I walk into a grocery store with Flo and see at another aisle a fellow I hadn’t seen in a long time. “Oh, Leo. I wanted to talk to you.” Flo says to me, “It’s about the Holocaust.” I don’t want this to be my life’s occupation.

**TT:** Yeah.

**LB:** And to speak to schools, there’s a purpose. Michael and I wrote this book. I wrote 60 pages on legal blank yellow paper because I don’t type. I handed it to Michael to put in the book on the computer [indistinct] to find someone, but he put in all the historic events. Beside my narrative, he put in also what happened in the world, the kinds of [indistinct], including his talk in London at the Commons. He put them into historical context. This is why that I write in a journal, the library journal. I said, and they gave it a 4-point critique, 4-star critique, “Essential for European History/Holocaust Studies,” because it has historic—not just family and my escapements, my various adventures.

**TT:** It does have value to read.

**LB:** Because historic, but when we spoke to the editor, Woodenhouse Publisher. They’re no longer in existence, Woodenhouse. It’s now in paperback by Doubleday and Random House. He asked me—Craig Woodenhouse—he says, “Leo, [indistinct]. What do you expect from that book?” I said, “It this could become a teaching tool, a vehicle for information, that would satisfy.”

**TT:** It has.

**LB:** He says, “Leo,” at the time, “if you would have told me that you want to make money, want to become rich with that book, I wouldn’t have taken it. But I like your answer.” And that they had already written the introduction, the formal introduction, 2 chapters. He says, and this was February 1998. In February, he said, “Leo, do you have enough time to finish this? I’ll give you enough time. I want this by November.” That wasn’t enough time, I figured. He said, and you can’t repeat me, “If you had told me otherwise, that convinced me I want to do it because you had a purpose, meaning, it should go as an educational tool to students.” And Uta has invited me...
and so many other teachers to do that. Not just Uta. There are many people who [indistinct]. She knows also. Morris Baker just passed away last month. [indistinct] Amy Karinsky, she was a child in the kinder transport. She speaks a lot, Amy does. I think she had Amy also. She had Inga Lineberger. Inga Lineberger once did an interview with another group or was it you?

TT: Yes, this.

LB: Did you do Inga?

TT: No, we are only doing this, but another group.

LB: Inga has [indistinct] another group. Steve Salzberg told me that he was, got in touch with Inga, so there are a few of us. And in that DVD, Survivors Among Us, you see the interview with several people. I’m one of them, and [indistinct] visit in 2004. She passed away last year, would have been 95, great lady, wonderful person, wonderful human being. I write about her here as I remembered her and there’s also a little bit of a soap opera in there [indistinct]. When you get the book, don’t jump ahead. I think your school has it.

TT: We do have it in the library, yes.

LB: Don’t jump. There’s a little soap opera at the end that will be part of the events after the war. Maybe you read it before, but perhaps you prefer a little bit from me before you read it.

TT: Oh yeah, [indistinct] ‘til after, after—

LB: Because this way it comes from your own mind rather than be influenced by what you—

TT: Yes, otherwise I’ll be, well, I know what comes next.

LB: But when you read it then, then you will know—

TT: I’ll read it afterwards.

LB: Talk about it.

TT: I’ll say, “I remember when you said that.”

LB: See, this is Michael Birnbaum. He was with the Shore Foundation. He’s no longer—he now teaches for—he’s a professor, Michael Birnbaum.

TT: That’s him?

LB: Yes.

TT: Good looking guy.
LB: You know who has [indistinct]. This is when I was 20—I was 23 in France. Most of my experiences took place in France, you know. The Vichy government, the collaborations government. So where did you all, you, you—where do you all finish your schools, in your hometowns, right? You in New Jersey?

TT: Providence.

LB: Providence? In California?

TT: I wish we’d had a book like that to read.

LB: Mhmm?

TT: I wish that we had had a book like that to read for history class or something.

LB: That would have been—well, you see, the atrocities are not taking place here. It’s only that my mother and sisters were deported, but the kids like the adventures.

TT: I don’t want to like, open it because I know I’ll start reading—I’m going to have to stop myself from reading it until—

LB: [indistinct]

TT: Until we’ve done all the interviews.

LB: I’ll show you some pictures.

TT: We’ll have to do the next interview.

LB: When will we do that?

TT: Let’s set a date.

LB: Let’s look at the calendar.

[End of Interview 1]