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Interview mit

Kurt Schoen

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Verwendete Kürzel:

MH Martin Horváth

KS Kurt Schoen

Teil 1

MH: This is tape number one of an *Austrian Heritage Collection* interview with Kurt Schoen, conducted by Martin Horvath on December 17th, 1996 in Manhattan. The first part, I would like you to tell me something about your family, about childhood and adolescence, about life in Vienna before 1938. And I would like to start with your grandparents. Can you tell me something about them? Where they came from, what their occupations were? What your relationship with them was?

KS: My father's parents…I had never seen my grandfather, because he died in 1897. He was born in Groß-Siegharts in *Waldviertel* in Lower Austria, and his wife…he married a girl with the family name of Fischer. She came from Znaim in Czechoslovakia, and met her. She died in 1924. My grandfather had…what they did up there…the house was upper and lower house, and the upper house was the store. They had a business. They bought, from the farmers, hides of cows, of pigs, whatever…and then they salted them, and stretched them and sent them out for tanning. And then they got back the leather, and then they sold the leather in the store. I think they had four sons and four daughters. The oldest son then took over the business there. My father was the youngest. He was born in 1882, and he then moved to Vienna and he married my mother, in Vienna. The oldest brother, who had taken over the business, he stayed there in the upper house, and the oldest sister, who married a man by the name of Meister…they took over the lower part of the house, then. And in the middle was the big yard with a fountain, that you had to pump the water, I still recall. And the bathroom, of course, was outside in the yard, the latrine there. And about four years ago, I went with Paula and Paula's daughter Evelyn…we went to Europe and we flew to *München*, then rented a car and drove down into Austria, and then Vienna. And then we took a trip up to Groß-Siegharts. I have never been there since the early [19]30s, and I recognized the house right away. Even so, my cousin who was born there, in Groß-Siegharts…he was the son of the oldest brother…he had given me a house number: Langegasse, a certain number. But they must have changed the house numbers, but I recognized the house right away. A veterinarian lives there now and has his office there. And we had dinner there, in a restaurant, that my wife said was the best dinner she ever had. In a plain local restaurant. [Lacht.] But I did not know anybody there, so we just took it as an excursion. Then we went to the *Waldviertel*, Zwettl, and stayed there, overnight. It is a beautiful area. I never remembered it to be scenic and so nice.

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And my grandparents, my mother's parents…my mother was born and raised as a Catholic. She was born in Auherzen, *im Sudetenland*. And her father was a postal employee, there in…they lived in Dobrzan…we called it Dobrzan at that time, and the Czech name was Dobřany. And then when Hitler came, they changed it to Wiesengrund. So my grandfather worked there for the post office, and my grandmother, she was a nurse at the hospital there. It was about ten miles from Pilsen, so we always went by train from Vienna…there we went to Pilsen, and then we had to take a local train for two stops. My mother then went to Prague, and there she took a cooking school, chef's school. Then she came to Vienna and met my father,

and they got married in 1912. She converted. She became Jewish, and I must say that she really never wavered. Come the Nazis and so, she remained steadfast Jewish. And I recall one incident: there was a small earthquake in Vienna one night, and my mother woke up and the first words she said was: “Sh’ma Jisroel.” I was shocked at that time, knowing her background, but it was a sign the way she felt. When I got married, my wife came from a not very religious family, and my mother taught her to light the Sabbath candles and to say the prayer over the candle. So she was really…she showed class, I would say. There were others, that when it got a little hot, they left.

And we had good contact with my grandparents. I knew both of them. My grandfather died, I think, in [19]33, and my grandmother died in [19]43. She had come to visit us in Vienna, still. But I remember, she wrote a letter that I still do not forget. She wrote that…that was during the war, in the beginning…that she had a letter from the *Führer*, thanking her for giving four sons to the armed forces of the *Reich*. My mother was the oldest of nine children, and there were four brothers of her. All four went into the German army.

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Three of them never returned. Two, they heard that they died. One was declared as missing, but left the family behind. One brother returned and he then married a Czech girl. And he stayed in Czechoslovakia. The other…the sisters and so that were in Dobrzan then…when the war ended, the Czechs threw out all the Germans from the *Sudetenland*. They had to leave, and they went to Passau, the whole family, and settled there. I went there once to see them in…it must have been in the early [19]60s…in the [19]60s I met them there. But now I am out of touch because my aunt…whom I was rather close with…she passed away and the cousins there did not show too much interest, and it was really…the distance was too great to keep up any close relationship there. But we were friends with them. My mother’s sisters…one sister came when the war, the First World War, broke out. And my mother had already given birth to my sister. She was born in April [19]14, and then I was born in August [19]15. And my father then went into the army in 1915. And then from [19]16 to the end of the war, he was at the Italian front. And I remember, he came back in 1918, just before the war ended…they sent him. He was wounded and he came to the hospital in Baden bei Wien. And even so I was only three years old then, I remember that I saw him in the hospital. I remembered that all through my life. And…that is about the grandparents.

MH: Was there a strong Jewish identity, was there a religious tradition in your family?

KS: No. It…I would say the family was more…or less traditional Jewish. Of course my younger brother and I, we both had Bar Mitzvah in Vienna, in the *Kluckytempel*, which was near us. And the only holidays that we really kept, were the high holidays, Yom Kippur and the Rosh Hashana. But otherwise no, we did not keep a kosher house, and Saturday was a work day like any other day.

MH: You were born in 1915, and you just mentioned that you can remember your father coming back from the war. Do you have any other childhood memories of that time, early childhood?

KS: Early childhood I remember that my mother took us, when we were really small, always to the park in the afternoon, to the *Augarten*, and we were sitting there on the bench, and she had other women there that…they talked. There was one neighbor from the next building. Through the yard, we could see over to their apartment. They were not Jewish and they had children. They had two sons. They were the same age as my sisters and me. So we always played there together when we were very small. And then…you could see the way history went there, because at that time, we children, we were innocent. We did not know any difference. Jewish or not Jewish, we played together. My mother and the mother of the other children, they talked, and I do not think that there was any animosity whatsoever. But then over the years I remember, when I went to the *Gymnasium* and I met those two boys, we said "hello", but that was all. The friendship had cooled off tremendously. Then, when I went to the university, I heard that both of them became illegal Nazis.

1/00:16:30

MH: So you are saying that even before 1938, the relationship had cooled off?

KS: It had cooled off definitively, I would say, in the middle [19]30s, earlier part of the [19]30s. It had cooled off, you could see. I had a feeling in those years that something is changing. I could see it. I was always more inclined to the Social Democrats in Vienna. And my parents did not see it. They were very conservative and my father said, if the Social Democrats would come to power, it would ruin his business, and he did not want to have anything to do with them. My sister was also more like them. My brother followed more in my footsteps. He joined the *Falken* in Vienna. And I became…when I went to *Gymnasium*, I joined the VSM – *Vereinigung Sozialistischer Mittelschüler*. I do not know if that still exists or not. And then as a student the VSS – *Vereinigung Sozialistischer Studenten*. And my relationship with other students…at that time, we always went…Sundays and off days…to play ball, out in the *Wienerwald*. We had a very friendly group, but it changed, and you could tell that one fell off, joined…went over to the right. Then the other one…you could see it coming. Once I was…I did not have much to do with the university. I was a Medical student. But they had…[Kurt] Schuschnigg had then installed two courses: *Vaterländische Kunde*, or something like that, that you had to attend. If you were a student you had to attend, I think, for one semester, two hours a week. That was held at the university and you had to take a test on it. And on one of those occasions, when I was at the university…I think that was in [19]35 or [19]36…[19]35 I do not know. The Nazis started a demonstration there, in the university, in the *Aula*, with a few hundred students, and they started to shout: "Heil Hitler!" And: "Deutschland erwache, Juda verrecke!" And I was caught in that mass of students, and they all walked out of the university to the *Ringstraße*, and I was just in the midst of them. They raised their arms and shouted. I felt I could have…no, I remember there was, in front of me, a short guy…I had the feeling I should hit him in the head, but I knew better than that. And once we came out to the street, then it just had worn off and went away. But those were the signs, already at this time, that you could see what is coming.

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MH: Can you tell me something about the household in which you grew up? About the role of your mother and father, how many people lived with you? Did you have servants?

KS: We had a small apartment, a rented apartment…Brigittenauer Lände. That was the same apartment that my parents moved into when they got married. My parents lived there until they had to leave it, when somebody wanted the apartment. There were my parents, my older sister, my younger brother and me. We had…during the war, when my mother was alone…my father was in the army and my mother had the three children. One sister of her always came to help her. And then we went…for the summer we usually went up to Groß-Siegharts where my father came from, because it was hard during the war to get food. So up there, the farmers…since they knew my father and his brother, there was always something to eat. And then we had a live-in maid, a girl from...she was from Zagreb, I think. And she was with us until I was about…eight, nine years old. And from then on we did not have anybody. We did not…we were a rather poor family. But the family relationship was very good. It was…my parents had a wonderful marriage. And my father, especially, was such a proud Austrian, that…I do not think that anybody could match him easily.

MH: What was your father's occupation?

KS: He was a salesman…in pants.

MH: Did he have his own business or was he--

KS: --no. He worked for somebody.

MH: Did your mother work too?

KS: No. That is why I say, there was…we lived more from hand to mouth. But still, it was a very happy family life. And my older sister, she then went to the university. She got her PhD in [19]38, just when Hitler came. And I went to the university. But for my youngest brother, there was not any money left to send him to university, and he started to work then as a *Lehrling* at *Kastner & Öhler*. And that endeared him especially to my mother, because I had the feeling that she felt, he sacrificed something by helping out with his… He then became a salesman there, for the company and he did make a living, but he gave it to my mother. And he was, to the very end really, my mother's darling. Not that I was less or that she loved me less, but you could see that she knew that he really did it for the family.

1/00:26:06

MH: You grew up in the 20th district, which had a very large Jewish population at that time. What was it like to grow up in a neighborhood like that? What were the relationships between Jews and non-Jews, between assimilated Jews and Eastern European Jews?

KS: Generally speaking, among…in the building where we lived, I would say there were about 80 percent Catholics and about twenty percent Jews. But the relationship was very good. We were really friends with everybody. There was…one family then moved in from Poland, very orthodox family. And there it was different. I must say, to my shame, that I myself did not approve of them. I would think quite different now, but at that time I did not know any better. And they had a very though stand with…not only with the Jews of Vienna, generally, but also among the non-Jews especially, because they were marked, more or less. But otherwise, in my childhood, I did not notice much of an anti-Semitism. That turned up later, then. Then I studied medicine. There it was more or less official, because when you came…after you finished the preclinical studies, when you became a *cand. med*., from *stud. med.* to a *cand. med*., after you took the first *Rigorosum*, in which medicine consisted of physics, and chemistry, and physiology, anatomy and histology. This you had to take between your fourth and fifth semester. You could not go on to the sixth semester before you had finished the *Rigorosum*. So I did finish the *Rigorosum* on time. But when you came then to the clinical studies, you had…in the hospital, in the *Allgemeine Krankenhaus*, you had two clinics, first and second, in almost every department: internal medicine and surgery, ophthalmology, obstetrics. And then you had to…students had to be divided. So you chose, like in the lottery, the numbers. And you pick…let us say you pick the first clinic. Now it was an unspoken rule. The Nazis always preferred a certain clinic, and if they picked the other one, they came to you and: “Would you change?” And that is the way it was then, all through.

1/00:29:59 [Übergang/Schnitt.]

MH: You said you yourself did not approve of the Eastern European Jews, of the Jews from Poland, who lived in your apartment. Why--

KS: --in the house.

MH: In the house I mean, sorry. Why was that so? Were you prejudiced?

KS: Because I was not brought up in that orthodox way. And they, for instance…they put up a *Laubhütte*, for [unklar]. They set it up in the yard of the building, I remember. And we always…we took, from the *Augarten*, the *Kastanien* – the chestnuts – and threw them down on that. Now I know it was very mischievous, but we did it. And…we felt, at that time…I suppose that it will throw a bad light on the Jews that were born in Vienna. If those people walked around with the beards and black coats and black hats, and so…so that was the reason that I felt some antagonism towards them.

MH: Can you think of…any other kind of anti-Semitic events, incidents, in the neighborhood for example? I mean before.

KS: Not before…let us say [19]35, [19]36. Then you could hear that people were cussed at as Jews, and remarks were made much more frequently than ever before. Then of course, the closer you came to [19]38, you saw what was coming, more or less. Those people that were out of the country, they could see it much clearer than we could in Vienna. I for one could…I could never imagine that people could get so violent, especially people of culture, like the Germans. That they could be so vicious, so…they did not act as humans anymore. I could see that already coming. I could see it in [19]36, [19]37.

MH: Can you tell me something about the schools you attended? What kind of schools they were? What was the relationship between the Jews and non-Jews there?

KS: The *Volksschule* I attended was just across from our windows. We could see down to the school yard from our windows. Then after that I went to the *Realgymnasium*, Unterbergergasse, 20th district. And there I was for eight years, until I went to the university, to medical school. In the *Gymnasium*, I had a professor in Latin. He was a very fanatic Christian Socialist. But he liked me very much and…I was rather always more on the athletic side. I played soccer, and I was in track and field, and swimming and skiing, and so on. And whenever we went on school excursion, we played ball. He came then, when I was in the seventh grade, the seventh year of *Gymnasium*, the last year, he came to me and said: "Did you decide what you are going to do after the *Gymnasium*?" So I said to him: "Not really." I really did not know where to turn. He said: "You would be the candidate to become an Austrian officer." I should join the Austrian army. So I figured I try.

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I filled out the application, went to the Rossauer Lände, to the *Kaserne* there, for the medical examination, and… But I had the feeling…when they found out that I was Jewish – that was in [19]34 –, they did not want me. I do not think that I did any worse than any of the others there. But there was a lot of anti-Semitism there. And he was…that professor, Vogelsang was his name…he himself then went to a concentration camp. Not because he was in any way Jewish, but he was *vaterländisch* at that time, *Vaterländische Front*. But he came through the war. At that time, I saw what was going on. Then I changed and went into medicine.

MH: Can you think of any anti-Semitic incidents in school? Were there teachers who would--

KS: --the teachers definitely. You could see that there were some Nazis. I remember, I had a French professor, in French, and he was definitively anti-Semitic. He…I do not know what he criticized on me, but my mother then went there and she did not take anything before her mouth and she really told him off. That she does not think that he is fair. And from that time on, I had it easier. Sometimes it helps to open your mouth. But otherwise I did not…among the students…I did not know this much until the upper classes of the

Realgymnasium. There they separated the students, the Nazis and the *Vaterländischen* and the *Sozialdemokraten*. But we kept on discussing things. For instance, with the *vaterländischen* students, we walked together in the streets and spoke, and discussed things. The Nazis, they would never walk with you. Not already at that time, but you caught them in class and you could tell them what you think of what they are doing. But that was already in the very early [19]30s, at that time. So you could already see a separation there. But I never had any real problems with anybody there.

MH: What was your religious education like?

KS: I just had the school religious education. It was an obligatory subject. Otherwise…before I had my Bar Mitzvah, my mother took a religious teacher…private teacher, who prepared me for the Bar Mitzvah. But otherwise I did not have anything.

1/00:40:30

MH: Did you learn Hebrew or Yiddish?

KS: No.

MH: What did you do in your leisure time? Did you have any hobbies? You mentioned that you were interested in sports. Were there any cultural activities?

KS: Oh yes, there were…we always went to the *Burgtheater*, opera, and either as clerks we tried to get in, or we would go all the way up to the *Stehplatz*. But we took in a lot of plays and operas at that time. And I went to the soccer games, as a spectator. I belonged to a choir from the VSM, and boys and girls who sang. It was a rather active life. I belonged to the library there, the *Arbeiterbibliothek*. I do not know if they still have it. And I read a lot of books.

MH: That was a part of the Social Democrat party, that you--

KS: --no, anybody could take out books. It was more like the public libraries here. You could take out books there. And I made good use of it.

MH: You mentioned this *Verband Sozialdemokratischer Mittelschüler*, and also the *Verband Sozialistischer Studenten*. What were their activities? Can you describe some of the activities?

KS: We had meetings, at least once a month, in a hall, and discussed what was going on in student life and in the national politics, and so. And then, as I said, we had weekends. We usually went out on hikes in a group, and then went skiing.

MH: Was politics discussed in your family? Was it an issue?

KS: It was discussed, but it was not an issue. I mean, there were never any…any loud words about it. We were a little bit divided there, but it was never an issue.

MH: Can you tell me something about your friends and acquaintances, and your family's friends and acquaintances? Were they mostly Jewish or was it mixed, Jewish and non-Jewish friends?

KS: I would say it was mostly Jewish. There were…I had a few non-Jewish friends. I recall one especially. His name was Leopold Schmidt, and I was very close with him. We went together to the *Gymnasium*. He was also very athletic, and we went to many meets together. We played in the *Brigittenauer* football club, in the *Jugendmannschaft*. And only then in [19]38, just before Hitler came, I found out that actually his mother was Jewish. He and his older brother, they were really solidly built youngsters. Real athletes, both of them. I never found out what happened to them. Because once Hitler was there, you just were on your own. You just tried to do what you can to save your skin. Many people that I was good friends with, I never heard of them. I had one fellow, with whom I studied medicine together, and we always prepared for the tests. We studied together, either at his house or at my house. And then, when the day was over, we took a walk together and tested each other. And when Hitler came, I never heard of him. I heard that his parents were taken away, and I heard that he fled to Belgium, but I never heard of him. I tried to pick it up here, but I did not find anything.

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MH: You mentioned before that there was no strong Jewish identity in your family, but nevertheless, you said that most of your friends were Jewish. Why do you think is that so?

KS: I do not know. Somehow, I would say, you felt more at home in the Jewish circle. I did not see any reason, but that is the way it happened. As I said, I had a few friends that were…there is even a picture of one there. [Sucht und zeigt ein Foto.] That is when I was intern at the obstetrics, at the hospital. And this fellow, he was not Jewish. And we always studied together too. Those two were Jewish. I took the picture. But you had…let us say in the night, when you dissected, they gave you a body and you had to…one took, let us say *Kopf und Hals*, and the other one the chest, and the other one leg, and the other one arm, and the other one the abdomen. So we were always a group of students together, and there were some…we picked, of course, we selected who is with whom. You could do that, but we were…for instance, that cadaver we worked on, we were three and three. About three non-Jews and three Jewish students. One was a girl, of the three. So it was not that you tried to escape into a Jewish group, but it so happened. Here it is the same. It is the same thing here. You are more with Jewish groups than non-Jewish groups. In the building here are mostly non-Jewish people, but we are friendly and on good terms with everybody. But really close…you feel more at ease with Jewish people. That is…I do not know, is it the upbringing, for instance? My son cannot understand it. But even he, the way I see it…his friends and the people that he associates with, are mostly Jewish. So…is it by choice or is it by luck? I do not know.

1/00:50:13

MH: Austria at that time, between the First and the Second World War, was – compared to now – a very poor country. And in times of an economic crisis, people are very often looking for a scapegoat and at that time, it was the Jews. Was that strongly felt at that time? Was it evident?

KS: Oh yes, you knew it. And in fact, I always say: if God forbid, in this country here…if we would have an economic depression, a real depression, I do not know how those young people would survive it. We were used, in Austria, to try to save pennies for times that will be tough. Here, the young people – even my own family –, they spend whatever they have. They spend rather a dollar more than a dollar less. And if there would be an economic depression, they would be lost. I have that definite feeling. But Austria was definitively a very poor country…after the war it was very hard to get food, and to get a job. People had a lot of problems.

MH: Looking back, it was also a very troubled and violent period. Just to list a few events: the demonstrations in 1927, and the fire in the *Justizpalast*--

KS: --Schattendorf.

MH: Schattendorf, yes. And then the fightings of February 1934 and the assassination of [Engelbert] Dollfuß, and so on.

KS: I remember, in 1927, I had an ear operation. I had an inflammation of the middle ear, and then I had pus, I was swollen up to the eye, and so. And I was then taken to…I had two small operations first, and then I was taken to the ear clinic in the *Allgemeine Krankenhaus*, and they operated, and then I was in the hospital for about two weeks. And then I ran around with a big bandage around my head. And one day, I went up to the hospital with my mother to have the bandage changed. And that was just…I think it was June 12th, when those violent demonstrations started, and they burned the Ministry of Justice building. And people thought that…seeing me with that, that I was injured during those demonstrations. But we had problems, I remember, getting home from the hospital. Instead of going down Alserstraße, we went the back way out, down over the Strudelhofstiege, down to Porzellangasse, then Liechtensteinstraße…Porzellangasse to the Friedensbrücke.

MH: How did you or your parents feel about these events, about all this violence? Was it considered to be normal or was it something one simply got used to, because it--

KS: --no. I probably took it different. For instance, when that verdict came out – that Schattendorf murder trial –, I felt that was an invasion of justice. That this verdict was definitively wrong, when they acquitted those *Heimwehr* people. My parents did not agree with me on that, but that was the ideology that I had, and they did not. And then, when Dollfuß was murdered, you saw already…the growth of the Nazi party. So it was very upsetting.

1/00:55:30

MH: Democracy ceased to exist in 1933 in Austria, when Dollfuß eliminated the parliament…officially at least. What was your reaction, or your parents' reaction, to that event? Was it considered something tragic or--

KS: --I thought it was a travesty of justice to send parliament home. I mean, that is not democracy anymore. My parents thought that it was necessary to do it, in order to keep order and tranquility in the country. But it is different if you are an eighteen-year-old boy or a grown-up, I guess.

MH: The same year – 1933 – Hitler came to power in Germany and step by step, Jews were excluded from society. What did you, or again your parents, know about the political situation in Germany, about the situation of the Jews?

KS: We just knew what we read in the newspapers, I mean, we had no personal friends there, in Germany, who would tell us details. But the way I saw it then, was more of…outrages against individuals, and that generally, the anti-Semitism would be more economical, in fact. And I never could imagine that it would go that…even in [19]38, when I was…we will come to that…when I was in prison in Germany, the Gestapo [Geheime Staatspolizei] was not…at least not to us there…not as violent as the Austrians were. I think there was a distinct difference between the Germans and the Austrians. The Austrians that all of a sudden came to power, it went to their head. And they did not know how to show their power. They were…really beasts then. I know, when they killed my cousin in the Karajangasse, just because he said to them…when they marched him around, he said to them: "We are human beings like you." They took him out of the line. His brother was there, and he just heard him scream. And a few days later they brought the urn to his parents. They had to pay for it. They said he was shot while he tried to escape.

MH: In 1933 and in the years following Hitler's takeover, did you ever feel threatened? Did you fear Hitler would invade Austria?

KS: Yes, I was…I gave it a lot of thought. [Es klingelt an der Tür.] But I was not clever enough…or let us say, I was not looking to the future to see the real danger, and to get out. Some of the people fortunately…for instance, my wife's aunt, she saw it coming and she left Vienna. She had just finished her medical degree in Vienna. She worked a year in Vienna, at the *Herzstation*, and then she came to the [United] States [of America]. And that was fortunate for us, because she then worked hard to get us visas.

1/01:00:27

Ende von Teil 1

Teil 2

MH: Do you have any recollections of the fightings of February 1934?

KS: Not…I remember that one of our neighbors…they had a grocery store in the building. And we were friends, he was a year older than I was. He came up to me and said that he is going to join the *Schutzbund* people. They were meeting…somewhere, Stromstraße…if I want to come along. I was…I guess I was a coward. Anyway, I did not go. I mean, I did not belong to the *Schutzbund* or anything. So it was not an obligation. And then we saw that…some of the on-goings when they stormed the…in Heiligenstadt, the--

MH: --*Karl-Marx-Hof*.

KS: Karl-Marx-Hof, yes. And in our district the Winarskyhof they had also taken over. But I only saw them when they executed some of the people that they said…traitors they called them.

MH: Did you know anyone who was involved? Any friends or acquaintances or relatives?

KS: No, that was the only one from the building. Otherwise I did not know anybody there.

MH: Was there a big discussion in your family? Because, I guess, your parents had a different opinion from yours.

KS: Yes, but…I do not really recall any…we were shocked, all of us, as I remember. But my parents' opinion…especially my father's opinion was more that they had it coming, and my opinion was different. But it was not anything earth-shattering going on.

MH: Do you have recollections of the days and weeks preceding the Anschluss? Was there any particular tension?

KS: Yes. The day before…actually, it was…but the day before, the afternoon…it was on a Friday afternoon. I went to a lecture in pharmacology, and it was supposed to be at two o'clock. We were sitting there in the classroom and the professor did not show up. After about 30 or 40 minutes, his assistant came in and said: "Professor Pick is unable to lecture today…the class is dismissed." So I knew something is not right. And from there, I went to my fiancée's house, and on the way…she lived in Lazarettgasse in the 9th district. On the way up there, you could see something strange. I had a strange feeling. Something like before the storm. The clouds before the storm. And then, when I came up to her, and we looked down the window, we saw – it was about five o'clock in the afternoon – from across the street, from a yard, came out a truck – an open truck – and men in SA [Sturmabteilung] uniforms on the truck, with the swastika flag. That was before you heard anything official.

2/00:05:37

MH: That was on March 11th, [1938]?

KS: That was on March 11th, yes. And then, I think in the evening, he marched into Tirol, where he crossed the border, there. And from then on, it was tough.

MH: How did you spend the rest of the day, the evening? Did you listen to Chancellor Schuschnigg's speech on the radio?

KS: Yes.

MH: Did you witness Nazi riots in the streets and things like that?

KS: As I said, there were demonstrations like…that they came out and…you saw then. In the evening, I then went from my fiancée's house home. And as I walked over…I went down Spitalgasse, down there. You already saw people shouting and jubilantly praising Hitler. It did not take long. All the…I would not say all, but a lot of those people, the Social Democrats, who before had the blue shirts, they changed over to brown shirts. I did not feel at ease anymore.

MH: Can you recall the feelings when you heard that Schuschnigg surrendered, that Hitler would march into Austria?

KS: I felt very bad about it, not only because the Nazis came in, but I had the feeling that Schuschnigg really meant what he said. That he really tried to keep Austria as a separate country. But I do not think that he had any chance. If there would have been…in my opinion, if there would have been elections, let us say the week before the Germans marched in, and they would have asked the Austrian people if they want the Anschluss or not. I would say that 65 or 75 percent would have said yes. I had that feeling. I mean, that the actual *Volksabstimmung* then, on Sunday [March] 13th…that of course was a farce, because an election where you get 99,6 percent of the votes, that is ridiculous. But I think that the majority of the Austrian people wanted it. I mean, as a kid, I was actually…Austrians, more or less, always felt that Austria is too small a country to be alone. That they should be attached to Germany. Even after the First World War, when they came out with the national anthem in Austria. They did not speak of…also, they spoke of *Deutsch-Österreich*. So there always was a strong movement toward emancipation of Austria by Germany.

2/00:09:53

MH: Do you have any recollections of Hitler's arrival to Vienna? Of his speech at the Heldenplatz? Did you see any of--

KS: --I did not see any of it. I stayed away from it. I only saw it and heard it on the radio, and in the papers…the pictures. But I did not see anything.

MH: But did you see hundreds of thousands of people in the streets cheering and--

KS: --I did not see that. No, I did not. I mean, I did not go there. I had no reason to cheer him.

MH: What was the impact of the Anschluss on your personal situation, and your family's situation?

KS: I had worked, at that time, in the hospital in Vienna… in the medical unit. And when I came there on Monday, [March] 14th, I was told that I was dismissed because I am Jewish. So I did not even put on my white coat there anymore. And my father's business was out. He could not do it anymore. He tried for a few weeks, but nothing diligent. My brother stayed on for about six weeks, and then he was dismissed. But they gave him a very, very nice letter, when he left. They praised him to high heaven, and in fact, after the war, when he went back to Vienna, and he went to the company there, they received him with open arms. And his boss there, he was…he always wrote to him after the war. They always communicated per mail, until he passed away then.

MH: That was *Kastner & Öhler*?

KS: Yes, in…I think Schottengasse, it was.

MH: What happened to your apartment? Could you stay, or were you forced out? Was it looted?

KS: I left in September, and my parents and my sister and brother were still there. My brother then left a few weeks after. And then my sister, we brought over then in…and me in [19]39. And then…about a week or a month later, somebody asked for the apartment, and my parents just had to give it up. They moved then…they then took a room in an apartment. My sister's friend, they had a large apartment in the 8th district, and my parents rented a room there. And moved in there and stayed there until they left. But with apartments…if somebody said they are a party member, they could choose any apartment where Jews live, and just say: "Get out!" And that was all.

2/00:14:50

MH: A Viennese specialty, so to say, was that a lot of people were forced to scrub the streets. Did you witness any such things?

KS: Yes, this I saw. I saw it a few times. I was never picked…but I saw. I walked down in the district…I forgot the name of the street where it was…a rather busy street, and in front of me walked a family, a couple and the son…the son must have been about eighteen, twenty years old…and all of the sudden they pulled…a car pulled up…I was six, eight feet behind them…and a car pulled up, and two SA men jumped out, went over to that family and asked if they are Jewish, and they said yes. They took the two men into the car, they left the woman there, she was crying. Nobody of the people around took any interest. They were just taken for granted and if anybody says that any Viennese people who were not Jewish…if they say that they did not see anything of that kind: it is impossible. It is impossible. Because you saw that continuously, that people

had to scrape the floors. Even Paula had to do it. It was *gang und gäbe*. It was routine. That is why…when I went back to Vienna in the end of 1950…and on the train, I remember, I went out of the compartment to look out of the window from the hall, and I spoke to people there. And when they heard that I was not in Vienna, then. "Oh, you are so fortunate, you are so fortunate. You do not know how much we suffered. How we were bombed and so." They told you all about their misery there, but that we were fortunate.

MH: A lot of people tell stories like that.

KS: Yes, that is why I have such a…I love the country, but the people…if I see people my age, I never can face them, really, because I do not know what they did. What they knew and so. There are some that I am as open with as can be. I know there was…in our building, just half a floor below us lived a family. He worked for the Viennese city government – he had a PhD – and their daughter went to school with my sister. They went to school together in public school, then they went to the *Albertgymnasium* together – MRG 18 – and then they went together to university. They both got their PhD there at the same time. They were together all the time. My sister took piano lessons from her mother, and I took violin lessons with her father. And we were close to the real…to the end. And there you could tell, they felt sorry for you. No, but they felt helpless. I mean, very often I say to myself, if the roles would have been reversed, what would I have done? Would I have been courageous enough to stand up and say: "That is wrong"? I do not think so. So in that respect, I can forgive and forget. And those people that I mentioned, those neighbors, they were nice. And when we went back then, in [19]50, and we went there with our two little boys…the father had died, but the mother was still alive with the daughter, who was the friend of my sister. And they were happy to see us and so we spent a few hours together. And whenever we go to Vienna…now the mother had passed away too, but we meet with the girl. The girl…she is 82 now. [Beide lachen.]

2/00:20:50

MH: How did other people behave towards you and your family? Friends, fellow students and…

KS: They all of a sudden did not know you. None of the non-Jewish people wanted to be seen with a Jew. They were afraid it would reflect on them. They did not want to talk to you. If you saw somebody and said "hello", maybe they responded saying "hello", and then turned their head and walked away. But in most cases, they did not even say "hello".

MH: And that started right after the Anschluss?

KS: Right after. It did not take a week.

MH: And was it also close friends who turned their back on you or your family?

KS: Let us say the neighbors in the building. There were two tenants there that we knew all along were Nazis…so they did not talk. They said "hello" and period. Most of the others, you would say "hello" and say a

few words, but you would not have been invited to the apartment anymore. Or they would not come to you. So in that respect, that changed drastically. And with friends…I know, all of a sudden you did not know anybody anymore. When I went back then, to the university, to the lectures in the hospital, there were only Nazis there. You came to a lecture, the professor came in, they all stood up, raised their hands: "Heil Hitler!" So you can imagine how I felt there. There were…a few students at least acknowledged that they knew me, but there was no relationship whatsoever.

MH: Were there people who helped you or supported you in any way?

KS: No. You were all on your own. You had to…with all the…all of a sudden, the jobs that you had, trying to get out of the country. You had to line up for hours, lines here and there, to get all your papers in order, to get out, to get a *Visum*. I saw the other…a few weeks ago, at the *Leo Baeck Institute*, I do not know if you saw the exhibition, about the Jews of Shanghai.

2/00:24:55

MH: Sure.

KS: That was one thing, that the Jews who could afford the passage to Shanghai. They could leave, because you did not need a visa. And before the *Kristallnacht*, if you could get out, they let you out. If you had a *Visum* or so, you could leave. You could not take anything along, except your personal belongings. But in cash, you could only take ten marks. But at that time, you could leave. So if had the fare to Shanghai, and you had no other expectations of getting a visa to any other country, you took that. We were in that respect fortunate, because my wife's aunt here, she had sent us affidavits. So all of us had affidavits. Sometimes it took longer, sometimes they were rejected. But it somehow worked with my close family. From my father's family, the oldest brother who was up there in Groß-Siegharts, they were then sent to…the business and the house were taken away, shortly after the Anschluss, and they were sent to Vienna. They had to take an apartment in the Leopoldstadt, in the 2nd district. And they were…their older son was the one who was killed, where they brought them the urn. The youngest son, who was also there in the Karajangasse, was sent to Dachau. He was seven months in Dachau. And then his parents could get a *Visum* for him for England, to go on agricultural work. And he got out, but the parents and the youngest sister, who was then…I think seventeen…they were sent to Theresienstadt. And then in [19]43, they went from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz, and they…all three of them died. And the same thing: another sister and brother-in-law of my father, who lived in Vienna, they also were sent to Auschwitz, and were killed there. It was a tough time.

MH: Did you know right after the Anschluss that you had to get out of Austria?

KS: Yes. There was never a moment that you thought you could stay. [Telefon klingelt.]

MH: Was it same with your family? They all knew that they had to get out immediately?

KS: Yes.

MH: Did you know people who thought it will not last long and it will get better soon?

KS: I do not think…I did not know anybody who was that optimistic.

MH: So you started immediately to try to get affidavits and a visa?

KS: Yes, we started immediately. The first thing was, we went to the American consulate to get a number, an application to--

MH: --a quota number.

KS: Yes, for the visa. And after that, you…but I tried to finish my term. I was in the eighth term, that was in March, so the term had started, I think, in February. And I went a few times to the lecture, but as I said, it was very…the surroundings were too bad. But then they came out with a law, that they will allow two percent of the Jewish students to finish the year…no, that they can continue their studies, not just finish the year. That they continue their studies. And they selected two students, whose fathers who had fought in the First World War and were on the front and had decorations. So my father had that. He had a few medals and was there. So they accepted me in that two-percent-group. But it was no sense. I did not profit from it for anything in my studies. Because we came to…you were, twice during your studies, for one week in obstetrics. It was up in Lazarettgasse, *Gebärklinik*. And you were there in a room, at night let us say, after the day studies, and they rang the bell…births. So everybody ran down. But as a Jew I was not permitted to assist in births, because I could not touch a non-Jewish woman.

2/00:31:25 [Übergang/Schnitt.]

I then did whatever I could to finish the term. I went to the lectures, and then in the end of the term you had to go to the professor to get his signature that you attended the course. So I got that and they gave me credit for the eighth term. I suppose if I would have wanted to stay, I could have even enlisted the next term, but of course it was impossible. You had to run, not stay.

MH: Did you go yourself to the American consulate, for example? Did you line up there?

KS: Sure, I had to.

MH: So that was standing in line for hours and hours, and days and days.

KS: That it was. And not only that you had to stand in line, but you had to put up with all the shenanigans of the guards there, the police or whatever it was, I do not recall. If you stepped out of the line, they would immediately jump at you. And they were a few instances where they just took people away. I do not know. They did not like their faces or whatever it was. It did not need much to be singled out and taken away. That was the same thing then, when we had to line up for the…for your…at the police department…I think it was

Boltzmanngasse, yes…to get your clearance that you do not have any criminal record, and that your taxes are paid. You had to line up for that. Then you had to line up for your passport. Only after all those things, that your taxes are paid, until you could line up for your passport. That was the last thing. The passport was...it came to me at the end of August, August 27th. And I left then on September 8th, right after.

MH: On September 8th you left for Holland. How did you get the visa for Holland?

KS: My father-in-law somehow went to the Jewish *Kultusgemeinde* in Vienna, and they had arranged for a trip to the Dutch crowning facilities, for the Dutch queen…for her crowning. So my father-in-law had to pay for that, I am sure, I do not know exactly how much it was. But we went. It was in a group of 40 people from Vienna, and from the Burgenland…Jewish people.

2/00:35:03

From our group…from our family, there was my fiancée…she already had her visa for America and she already had the ticket for the ship too…not the date, but just for the ticket in Vienna…and then her parents, and her brother who was then sixteen, her grandfather, her aunt, and her aunt's ten-year-old boy. We were in that group of 40. And we first went by train to *Köln*, and from there we then took a Rhine cruiser to Rotterdam. And when we got off the boat there, the Dutch police took our passports away, and said that the visa was for one week. When we go back, we will get the passports back. But they knew already, that it was not our intention to attend the crowning facilities. They knew we wanted to stay. So they kept a tight watch on us. I went with my then future father-in-law to Amsterdam, to some Jewish groups, and tried to arrange that we could stay until we get our *Visum* for the States. But it was of no avail. And then after seven days, they rounded us all up, put us on a bus, and took us to the German border, somewhere near Arnheim, and turned us over to the Gestapo there. And they put us on another bus, and they put us into a school gymnasium for the night. We slept there on the floor. And the next morning, they took us all to Anrath, *bei* Krefeld, to a prison. It was a prison where they kept criminals. And the warden there was a very decent nice man. He did not know what to do with us. They marked in our records there that our crime is "*Jude"*. So they put us there into single cells. You could not do anything. You did not have any reading material. It was a small cell. You could just walk up and down and count your steps. You were not permitted to open the bed – it was just a folding cut there – until the night. So it was miserable. All you had as reading material was the regulations of the prison that was handed down there.

Then…I was there for about two weeks, and then I was called to…somebody then took me to a room with a Gestapo man sitting there in the corner. With a table there in the corner. And as I walked over, he said: "Six feet back, six steps back." I was too close. And then he said that they will take me to the Dutch border, and I should then go to Holland. And I said: "Without my passport, I am not permitted to re-enter Holland." And he said: "That is your problem." About an hour later I collected my…I had a little briefcase. The luggage, they had already sent back to Vienna. All of our luggage. Except my fiancée. They took…when they put us on the

bus to send back to Germany, a policeman took my fiancée and took her aboard a ship there, the *New Amsterdam*…every Friday, the *New Amsterdam* left, every three weeks. And they put her there aboard of the ship. They gave her a suitcase that had her maiden name Terna on it. But they did not look at her first name, so when she came to the States, she had all the belongings of her mother in the suitcase, none of hers.

2/00:40:38

So then, after about an hour, they called and…no, he asked me, that Gestapo man asked me if I had somebody I know that I would like to go with. So I said: "My future brother-in-law." My fiancée's brother. So he said: "He is only sixteen. We do not break up families." And so then, they assigned me another fellow who was about my age. He was from Vienna. And another Gestapo man then took us into a car. He drove for about an hour, hour and half maybe, and then all of a sudden he stopped. During the trip, nothing was said, not a word was spoken. He stopped the car and said…there was a little wooden bridge there. He said: "Run across here, there is a restaurant on the other side." I think he said it was owned by a Jew. And that is all. So we got out of the car, and ran over there. I was sure that he would shoot us in the back as soon as we turned our backs. But we ran across, and there was a little deserted restaurant there. Nobody there but the owner, I guess. And we then told him what happened and that we would like to get into Holland. If he could help us. That was the time after the Munich Conference and after Hitler's agreement with Czechoslovakia. So the whole atmosphere was already very much war-like. The Dutch did not feel at ease, they had the border…they had the Dutch army all along the border, to prevent anything from happening, if they could. And so that man said it will be very hard to get into Holland, but he knows some people who will take us during the night…across. But it will cost a lot of money. So we had only ten marks each. We told him that, and he said: "No, they would not do that." So I then offered…I had a golden *Schaffhausen* watch, and I had a golden *Signet* ring. So I offered that, and the other fellow said he would give his watch and ring too. So he said he will let us know if they would accept it.

Then a few hours passed, we were just sitting around there, and then came two men…tall, husky looking men, father and son…they came by car. They were antique dealers, and they went to those forlorn places to see if they could pick up antiques. And when I saw them, somehow I felt this draw. And I approached them, and told them our situation, and told them that we were told they would pick us up and take us to Holland. And he said: "Do not dare to do that." He said he had heard horror stories what those people do. He said: "You come with us."

2/00:45:01

And he took us into the car, and he said we have to be careful how to get into Holland, because the bridges are watched by the military. But he said: "We will follow a smuggler column." They smuggled cigarettes into Holland. So they had a motorcycle in the front, and the motorcycle was quite a distance away from the trucks that carried the cigarettes. And he said that if the motorcycle turns around, the trucks would not continue. But it went smooth. The trucks went…and so we followed the trucks. And we got into Holland, and he took us in his home. That was in Nijmegen, it was about ten, fifteen miles from the…west of the German border. And they were Dutch-born Jews, both of them. And the…when we came to the house, there was his wife there. She was German-Jewish. And it was a Friday night. I remember, she lit the candles and she blessed us there. And they offered us a room each in their house. They did not know us, but they offered us a room each in the house, and they fed us. And they said we can stay here until we have…I said until I get a *Visum* to the States, and the other fellow said that he wants to go into Belgium. And he only asked us…when we write to our families, not to write a sender. Just write Zadik, their name, but not our name. But somehow, that other fellow, he wrote a letter and he must have put his name on, because after about ten days, there…one evening, only Mrs. Zadik was there, and the two of us…we did not leave the house. A policeman showed up, and asked for Mr. Stierbel, the other fellow. So we said there is nobody here with that name. They were very well known in the community there. It was a smaller town. So he believed her and he left. And then when Mr. Zadik came back the next day, and she told him, he said that he is sure that they will watch the house now. He said he feels we would be better off for a few days somewhere else. Until the heat is over. And the young fellow, he took us from the yard, over a few roofs to another street…back street there, and we went to the house of the Rabbi, and we stayed there for two days. And from there we went to another Jewish family for another day, and then we went back to the Zadiks. And he said that he would see…he was a little angry, I think, at that fellow, that he had written his name. He said he would see to it that he gets a *Visum*, legal *Visum* to Belgium, and he will take him there. And then he got a *Visum*, and he took him by car to the Belgian border, until he saw that he was safely in Belgium. The fellow survived. I met him then in New York after a few years, by coincidence. And in the meantime, I had gotten the *Visum* for the States in Vienna. The American consulate in Vienna had sent me a letter to Vienna that I can pick up the *Visum*…that I had to come to the medical examination first.

2/00:50:18

MH: In Vienna?

KS: In Vienna. So my parents then sent me that letter, and it so happened that my brother came…he had gotten, in the meantime, his *Visum*. And he then left Vienna, and on the train to Rotterdam, he had met an American couple. And he had told them about my situation. That he does not know how I will get my visa now. So they went with him to the American consulate in Rotterdam, and explained to them, that I am hidden here. And I do not have an official address here, but my *Visum* is ready, to come to the States. So he said they will make an exception, and I should come for the medical examination. [Lärm im Hintergrund.] So I went to…I had to go from Nijmegen to Rotterdam. And I did not know the language. So Mr. Zadik said he

thinks it is best if I take an early morning bus, where the workers commute to Rotterdam. I should take a newspaper, cover my face, and just pretend I am reading, so people would not be inclined to strike up a conversation with me. And it worked very well. I got there to Rotterdam, I went to the consulate and then went back in the evening on the train. And they said they will let me know when I get the *Visum*. Then about a week later, I got the notification that the *Visum* was ready. That was, I think, on a Thursday on…yes, on a Thursday I got that. In the meantime, I had written to my mother's sister, who lived in Zurich, in Switzerland, and I had asked her if she could advance me the money for the fare, for the ship's ticket. And she telegraphed me the money, and when I got my *Visum*, Mr. Zadik went to the shipping line…to the Holland-American line, and got me the ticket. And then the next day, on Friday, the ship left and he then took me to the ship. Can we interrupt for a minute?

MH: Sure.

[Übergang/Schnitt.]

KS: We then went…I think it was the 27th of October [1938]…we went to the ship. He went with me, and I presented the ticket and the passport there, and when they saw my passport, they said: "Step in there." They asked me to step aside, and then a detective showed up and he took me and Mr. Zadik in a room there, and he said…that stamp in the passport said that I came illegally to Holland. When I came here, and where I was while I spent time here. So I told him about how I got into Holland. That this Gestapo man took me there to the border. Then I said I stayed one night here, one night there, I do not know where it was. He got increasingly angrier when I always said: "I do not know." So he said: "But you must know where you were the last two days." And at that point I had seen already that Mr. Zadik was very restless. You know he kept him there to translate more or less, because his German was not very good. So Mr. Zadik said: "He was in my house the last two nights. And I must say I am proud to help him." So that detective said: "You know that this is against the law?" So Mr. Zadik said to him: "I would do it anytime, if I can help a human being." And that he feels that he did not commit any violation of the law, that he did a decent thing. So that detective said to him: "From a human point of view, I can understand you and your action. But I have to represent the law, and you did something that is against the law." So I understand he was fined then…money…a fine, he got.

2/00:56:40

But then he let me go on the ship, and I came here on the 4th of November. The trip on the ship, which is usually a festive occasion, more or less…I cannot recall anything about it. I know that I felt…I felt miserable on the ship. I could not see myself, that…now I have to start all over again in a different country and a

different continent. And my family I left back in Vienna. I did not know what happened to them or what is going to happen to them. So I do not recall a single day on the ship.

And then, when I came to New York, I saw the Statue of Liberty there. I woke up…and then my fiancée's aunt came aboard the ship, and they called her, and she took charge then. She said that she would…I would be staying with her. So my brother and my fiancée were there, at the dock with her. And as we walked off the dock…when you exit, you have to show the stamp, that your luggage was checked, I did not have that. So he said to me: "You have to go first, and go through customs to have your luggage checked." I said: "You see my luggage." All I have was a little bag, where I have an extra pair of underwear, and an extra pair of shirts, and an extra pair of socks. Which actually my brother had left me when he passed through there.

MH: So that was all you could bring with you from Austria?

KS: That is all I had. But then afterwards, my parents sent me my suitcase that I had originally taken along, that they had sent back to Vienna. But I had…in Vienna…I collected stamps in Vienna. And I had a nice collection. The father of a friend of mine introduced me to stamp collecting, and he took it very serious. And I had quite a nice collection. I know I was proud of my collection of *Muttertagsmarken*. But they had them all taken out. Out of my…they let through the book. I had an old book that my brother had used, when he worked at *Kastner & Öhler*. It was one of those big books where they had the salesmen…what they sold, and so on. And this, I used for the stamps. I just put numbers of the stamps and pasted them in. But all the good stamps, they had taken out.

2/01:00:22

MH: Who paid for your passage to America? Did you have enough money to pay on your own?

KS: I said…I had approached my aunt, and she had sent me the money, which I then repaid to her, when I came here. And once I was here…I arrived on [November] 4th…then I took…I worked for a few days. They set up a restaurant here, and I helped to wash the tables and the floors, and so. And then, instead of giving me money, they gave me basket full of fruit, but most of it was rotten. That was my first impression of New York. [Beide lachen.]

Ende von Teil 2

Teil 3

MH: This is tape number three of an *Austrian Heritage Collection* interview with Kurt Schoen, conducted by Martin Horvath on December 17th, 1996 in Manhattan. What was your image of the USA before your arrival? What did you know about it? What were your first impressions upon arrival?

KS: We had heard – from my fiancée's aunt – all these good things about the States. And I was looking forward to come here. And whenever I was in Rotterdam at the American consulate, I felt in seventh heaven. I felt safe. And when I saw the American flag there, I felt…that is my new home. And I came here on the 4th [of November 1938]…I remember, about week later, after I worked for three days there at the restaurant…about week later I got a job through the *Council of Jewish Women*. They had an office here, and they tried to place refugees into jobs. And they had an offer…they wanted a chemist. So I said…I had actually…I was not a fake, because I did have the *Rigorosum* in bio-chemistry. So I said: "I can fill the job." And I went there. It was…there was not much chemistry to it. It was actually a leather-good factory, and they needed somebody to dye celluloid pieces that they used on suspenders. So all I had to do is: I had a room there in the back, where I had to mix some dyes, and then color those celluloid pieces. So that was finished in about ten days, everything was done, so I was afraid my job is over. But the boss there liked me, he took interest in me and he said if I would be willing to work out on the floor and do other work. Of course I said yes, I needed the job. It was tough here, at that time, to find jobs, in the late [19]30s. And I started working out there, mainly on men's belts, and I worked myself up. After a few months I became foreman there, and after a few years I became production manager. And…I was with that company then until…end of 1949. The company had grown quite a bit, and they then had trouble with the unions, so I was not involved in…even so, if I was the production manager, I was not told anything. One…it was a Sunday night, I received a telegram home…not to come to work the next day, but I should come to the boss's private home. So I did not know what was going on. So then, when I came there, he told me that they broke up the factory. They just cut all the wires, loaded the machinery and they set up a factory in New London, Connecticut. So he offered me the job in New London. He offered me that if I want to move with my family, they would get me a house, a car, and set up the family. The children with schooling and so, they would help me. My wife did not like the idea. Our whole family was in New York, and she did not like…but what I did is…for a few weeks, I went every Monday morning, he picked me up in the car from home, and we drove out to New London, and I stayed there until Friday evening. Stayed the whole week, with me up there in a hotel, and paid for all meals and everything. And he raised my salary quite a bit. And that went on for a few weeks, my wife was very unhappy. So we decided then, I will try to finish my studies, my medical studies.

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And I then applied to several – I think five or six – universities, medical school. To finish, I would need one more year here. I had already…before I had gone to Albany to get credit for the studies, and I had taken up…in New York, at *City College*, I took American history courses and English courses to get credit for the studies in Vienna. They gave me a lot of credit for the courses, for the university courses, I had in Vienna. So they said I need one year to finish, but no university…no medical school would take you in for the fourth year. It was impossible. All wished me luck, but that was all. So then I decided to…Vienna said they would give me full credit, and I could finish my studies there, but I did not want to go back to Vienna. So I then went to *Zürich*, and they also gave me credit for the four years and said I had to take one more year. So we

packed up then. I had a little money. We rented out our apartment here, and the four of us – my wife, my two boys, and I – we went to *Zürich*. I rented an apartment there, and I then enrolled in medical school there. It was tough, after so many years being away from it. It was twelve years since I had taken the last course. But that would have worked. It was very expensive, living there. Very expensive, money ran out very fast. And then, just before the year was over, an American commission came there. There were a few of us…American students who were there at the university, and we stuck together. They said we do not…we cannot only take the examination for foreigners, they would not recognize it in the States. We have to take the full domestic course…the credits there. And that would have taken another year and a half. I could not see myself getting that heavily in debt, so we then packed up and went back. And I then went…I took a job in a laboratory, in a medical laboratory, and worked myself up to technician, and then supervisor. And then I bought a lab and I then took it over. My wife worked there also. My wife had two years of medical school when she left Vienna – actually, a year and a half, because she did not get credit for the fourth term. And I had the lab until 1981. Then I sold it and retired.

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MH: Apart from your aunt, were there other people who helped you and supported you in the beginning? Organizations who supported you?

KS: Organizations, no. Just the *Council of Jewish Women*, they got me the job. But otherwise we did…we never took advantage of any public institution. And we had some…I had nobody from my family here, in the States, who could…who were here before us, who could help. But my wife had distant relatives and they were very helpful. At the beginning we had nothing. And there was one cousin of hers…an old couple…they invited us every Friday night over for dinner. I remember we stuffed ourselves that evening for the rest of the week. [Lacht.] And when we got…I came here on the 4th, and on the 18th of November we got married here. My wife was not 21 yet, she was twenty, so we could not get married at the City Court…City Hall. We had to get married before a judge, because her parents were not here. So we got married before a New York Supreme Court Judge. I only had, at that time, the brown suit that I had worn all along through prison, through Holland, and here. My brother who came here with his stuff, he had a dark blue suit. So when we came there for the marriage, for the signing, he looked more like the bridegroom than I did. [Beide lachen.] And my English was abominable, it was non-existent. So the clerk there asked my brother to sign where it says bridegroom, and he asked me to sign where it says witness. So luckily my aunt jumped in. She noticed it, and she corrected it. [Beide lachen.] But when the judge asked: “Do you take this woman for your wife?” I said: “Yes.” So he looked at me and he said: “Do you know what is going on here?” [Lacht.] I was supposed to say: “Yes, I do.” [Beide lachen.] But I learnt eventually.

MH: Was it difficult for you to adjust to this new environment, new mentality, new culture, also a new language?

KS: It was tough, but we were young, we were newly-weds…and we did not ask for too much. [Telefon klingelt.] When we got married, we took an apartment here on 82nd Street. It was a five story walk up. The bathroom was in the hall, but the rent was only 24 dollars a month. So we took that, and there was an extra room there, so my brother moved in with us. He took the room and he paid one third of the rent. So that we…we made a go of it. And as time went on, you got ahead more and more. But our main interest, at that time, was to bring the family over. So we first brought my sister, and then my parents came in 1940, and Erica's parents came also in 1940. They were in England and they then came here in September [19]40, from England. And my wife's brother came here…January [19]39. And they all first stayed over with us, in our apartment. Whoever came, until they could set foot a little. It was tough, but it was successful. There were not many families of our friends and acquaintances who came here as a family. Most of them, there was somebody…close family missing.

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MH: Did you have difficulties with the mentality, with the different mentality here?

KS: Yes, but you get used to it. There are some things that I still cannot understand. For instance, you come to a doctor's office once, and the nurse calls you by your first name. That is something that still goes against my grain. But that is the upbringing, that is the childhood you cannot escape. And I was for instance surprised that when I started working there at the factory, everybody called you by your first name. And my boss called me by my first name, and I always addressed him as Mr. Lester. So after about two years, I was already production manager, he said to me: "Kurt do you not…can you stop already with your European ways of thinking and call me by my first name?" [Beide lachen.] That was something that I could not see…would have happened in Europe or any place. I do not know how it is now, but I do not think it changed too much.

MH: It changed a little bit, but not too much, yes. Was it difficult for you to give up the idea of becoming a doctor, a physician?

KS: Yes, that hurt, that hurt a lot. And in fact, even now, I still very often have dreams, about medical school, medical studies, and so. But both of my sons became physicians. So…and not at my urging, I must say. When I had the lab, and I needed a physician…and when they studied, I asked them if they would want to come to the lab, eventually take it over. It was a very…well-known lab. It was in high standing here in the city. It was just two blocks from here, on Madison Avenue. I could see they did not want to disappoint me, but they said to me: "Look dad, this…I studied now for four years and being in the lab, I would not make use of medicine, actually." And they were right. Because it just really is a small corner of medicine. You do not treat patients. I always found it very advantageous that I had the medical background. That I knew how to speak to a patient, that I could discuss with the physicians on medical terms, statuses of patients, and so.

But for…I could understand my sons that they did not want to do it. They went…one became an anesthesiologist and the other is a gastroenterologist, and so they made up for it.

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MH: How did Americans in general behave towards you and your family and…towards other refugees from Germany or Austria?

KS: Generally, it was good. They did not have any real opposition. It was just that, during the war especially, you were marked with your accent. So there was kind of a standoffish feeling. But that straightened out. And I had some episodes. I know that…during the war years, I think it was in [19]44 or so, we stayed for the summer up in the Adirondacks. And one day we drove there…my uncle was driving, he was not a good driver. But he went into a ditch with the car, and we could not get the car out. And then came another car, there were three men in there, and I stopped them and asked them if they could help us. And they looked at us and then they said: "You dirty Jews", and just went on. But it turned out that there was…in the Adirondacks, there was a German camp…there were mostly Germans. Not German Jews, but Germans stayed there, and they were from that camp. So you had…you had here, especially Yorkville area…you had a lot of Nazis, and anti-Semites let us say, that were here. There was the *German Bund*, at that time, that Father McLaughlin…did not exactly add to your feeling of being a Jew. So you had some opposition, but generally speaking, let us say at the place of work, I had no problems, I had no enemies, I did not hear any anti-Semitic expressions or so. And there, the vast majority of the workers were non-Jews. During the war, we had 1.400 people working there, and we got twice the army, navy "E" for excellence in production. And I was, at that time, already up in the ranks, and counted the high army officers who came to check, and so. I never heard a cross word. So in that respect, I must say, I did not have any bad experiences.

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MH: How did American Jews behave towards you and your family?

KS: To a great extent, I must say, they accepted us, they helped us. When I came here, as I said, I had nothing, and we made the acquaintance of a young couple. And he gave me one of his overcoats and a suit, so it was a little tight on me, but I had only that one suit, at that time. So they were helpful. But as soon as they saw that you made advances…you do not need any more of their handouts. Then you became kind of a competition to them. And I think that…that is the feeling I had, that they looked at you differently than when you came here and needed their help. But now, for instance, we have as friends…I would say at least 75 percent American born, mostly Jewish people. But now, I have no problems with anybody. We play a lot of Bridge, so that brings you together.

MH: Did you ever have the feeling of being an outsider here in this country, in the beginning maybe?

KS: Oh yes, in the beginning you had the feeling that you were an outsider, but it soon gave me the feeling of belonging, very soon. And especially during the war, when you read in the papers how the Nazis and Japanese advanced, and how tough it was. You really were worried. My brother was in the…in the American Army and he was at the battle of the Bulge. He was with [General George S.] Patton's army and he was wounded. He had his problems. They were pinned down there, he was shot through the knee and they could not get him out of there. He was with an engineer corps. They had built a bridge and the Germans had pinned them down, and it was uphill and so they could not get him out, so he was lying there for, I think, 36 hours on a stretcher and they gave him…at that time, they just came out with penicillin, so they gave him penicillin, and they had to mark the time. He said they marked it on his forehead, always. The time that the last injection was given. Because they did not have the long acting penicillin yet, so they had to... Then afterwards, he came to a hospital in England, and was there for close to four months in the hospital, before they sent him back to the States.

MH: Were you drafted, or not?

KS: Yes, I was, but there was always money…but the job, they did not want me to go away. I wanted to go, but…I wanted to volunteer, but my wife did not want me to. She said we have the children and… Probably, I was told, I could have finished my studies in the army. They took…I know that friend of mine who was in the same situation like I was. He was not married then, and he enlisted and they took him. He went to the medical school, finished, but he had to stay on then with the army for two years after the war.

3/00:29:23 [Übergang/Schnitt.]

MH: When and how did you learn about the existence of death camps in Europe?

KS: From newspapers. I had not heard of it before, but the papers here came out, and there was a German language paper – the *Aufbau* – which is still in existence. So the people are not there anymore to read it, but they always…it was a very good paper. I always enjoyed reading it. And there you learnt a lot of what is going on. I mean…we all were very dear to President [Franklin D.] Roosevelt. And when he passed away, I remember my father-in-law, he was crying, and everybody was crying. But when you look back now, and you see the way he could have helped…could have helped many people escape, you feel a little different about him. But at that time, we were really endeared to him.

MH: There were lots of American people who just did not believe the news, when the news were first brought to America, about death camps.

KS: Oh yes, sure, today there are also people who do not believe that it existed. You have quite a few. But generally speaking, there were the people…I remember, I went once to a meeting that was in *Madison Square Garden*, somewhere there, where that Rabbi Weiss spoke. And he came out openly, he said that

those things are true. So people knew about it. And I think that the majority of the people did believe it. Even so it does not sound humanly possible, but it turned out it was the truth.

MH: You said that your close family, your immediate family, they all managed to get out of Austria. But you said there were some family members, some of your--

KS: --my father's family. My mother was not Jewish, so her family, of course, was a different factor. We then even brought my mother's sister here, the one who had sent me the money from Switzerland. We brought her here and she lived here for about ten years and then she went back to Switzerland. And my mother's youngest brother…he was the only one of her brothers, who came back…we brought him over too. And he was here until he passed away. He died young. So my mother's…with my mother's family, we were always on good terms and they got along very well. My father's family, they suffered a lot. One…the oldest sister who also lived up in Groß-Siegharts…she, her husband and one son were killed. Another son went to Australia. He died there, I think, twelve years ago. Then…one sister, who lived in Vienna, was married. She and her husband were killed in Auschwitz. And another sister, they lived in the Sudetenland too. She died just…she died after Hitler came, but she died a natural death. Her two children…her husband was killed in the First World War, but her two children left and went to Israel. The sister died, and my cousin is still alive there.

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MH: Did you ever feel what is commonly known as survivor's guilt? That you survived and some other relatives did not?

KS: I felt that way towards the family of my father's oldest brother, where the four of them were killed. Only the one cousin, who came here…we brought him here too, from England. And he is now out in [New] Jersey where we have a condo, and we are together with them very often. With their family, I sometimes think I did not do enough to get them out. Sometimes I have the feeling. I know that my brother worked very hard to get them *Visums*, affidavits to come here. But I know I was so involved, at that time, with the job. I put in incredible hours there. And sometimes I feel that I should have done more. But I was interested, when that cousin of mine who was killed in the Karajangasse and they sent the urn…my cousin who lives here in Jersey, he does not want to know anything about Austria, about Vienna. And he does not want to talk about it. He was in Dachau, and if you want to know something, you have to really poke him to get out something. So it bothered me what happened to the urn of my cousin. And when we were in Vienna, about eight years ago or so. I went with Paula already…that was my first wife there, over there. We were there about eight years ago, so we went to the *Kultusgemeinde* to find out if they have any record. And they said that if he is buried in Vienna, we had to go to the *Zentralfriedhof* and inquire there. So we went there, and the man at the Jewish Cemetery said: "In Jewish religion, they cannot burn…they cannot bury anybody, if they were cremated. That is against the religion, cremation." So I said to him: "It was not his choice, they cremated him

and sent the urn." So he said, in a case like that, if his parents put the urn into a coffin, then they could bury him…in the coffin, in the cemetery. So I asked him to look it up. So he gave me a whole list there, and I should go through the names, and I found the name. So he said…he told me where it is. We went there to look for it. It was just grass there, it was not even a real path. It looked so desolated, no marker there or anything. So we then went to a monument maker there, and we selected a stone. But I said, before he put it up, I have to check with his brother, the one who lives here. So it was tough to tell him, because it brought up new wounds with him. And then he agreed. And I would have put down…like you have many stones in Vienna at the Jewish cemetery, where it says: "Killed by the Nazis." But he did not want that. He just wrote down that he died in that and that year and so…a simple stone. At least now, when we go there, we visit the grave.

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MH: Were there any dreams that haunted you, in the years after the war or later?

KS: Oh yes, there were quite a few, quite a few that you dreamed of…persecution and tortures, and so. Even so I personally, I must say, I did not go through any tortures. But you hear so much and you read so much, and…you start thinking. Even now, I think: how did my parents manage? I know they did not have any money left, in Vienna. And that I should have asked my mother. My mother only passed away in [19]85. But now I am asking myself that question. It pops up at the wrong time.

MH: Those bad dreams, of persecution and torture for example, did they stop at a certain time?

KS: Yes, they stopped unless you…let us say you see a documentary, or you read a book about it, then they might come back. But generally speaking, they stopped. I now dream more often about medical school. [Lacht.] I torture myself that…I dream that I have to go for an exam, and I feel I am not prepared for it. And then I wake up and I say to myself: "Do not worry." [Lacht.]

MH: Did you talk about your experiences, after the war? After you came here?

KS: No. I do not think many of the people did. I did not tell anybody anything, until it was about eight or ten years ago…my nephew always arranges a Father's Day party in his home, out in Connecticut, where he invites the whole family. Usually about 30-40 people there. And at that time, at one of those get-togethers, I was sitting there with my brother, and he came over with a video camera, and he asked me questions. It started out very harmless, and I felt at ease more with the family. And then he came: "How was that, 40 years ago, or so?" In this way he questioned me, and to a certain extent, I opened up and spoke about it. But at that time, it was not as complete as, let us say yours is, but partially I did that. And I know that many of my relatives…my brother does not talk about it either. He does not talk about the war. He has the Purple Heart at home, and the medals, the bronze medals and silver medals with Oak Leaf Class and so, but he does not talk about it.

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My brother-in-law…my first wife's brother, the one who was in prison with me…he was drafted here, went into the army. And he then came to Europe, and they came into Germany. And when he was near that place where we were imprisoned, he asked his commander if he could borrow a jeep. He would like to go to the prison there. He was in the motor pool, so he could get a jeep. So he got a jeep and he went there, and that same old warden was still there. And Hugo approached him and told him, that he was in prison here, if there is still the record of his imprisonment. So that warden said: "Sure, it must be here." He went with him down to the basement. He said that is typical German order. He had them there, year by year, name by name. And he got out the book, he found all the entries of the family members. So he took…there were two pages, large, big pages…he tore them out and he sent them to us here, at that time, during the war. We gave them back to him when he came back from the war. But there was everything marked down.

MH: Did you ever tell your children about your experiences?

KS: Not until then. Now we talk about it more, because I feel that grandchildren…children and grandchildren should know that it was not just a story, that it was true whatever people were saying. I would not be able to swear to the number of casualties, if there were 6,000.000 dead. I have no way of knowing. But individual cruelties, and so…those I can attest to, and tell them about it.

MH: When did you obtain the citizenship of the United States?

KS: In 1944.

MH: Can you recall the feeling of becoming an American?

KS: Oh yes. I was very, very, very proud. It meant a lot. Especially, it was still during the war. And I have been proud of it ever since. I would not exchange it for anything. It gave me life. It gave me the family…it gave me everything.

MH: So do you consider yourself an American?

KS: Oh yes, I certainly do.

MH: At the time you arrived here, there was a system of apartheid, segregating black and white people, excluding black people from society, in many ways. It was of course not the same as it was in Germany, but it was similar in a way. Did that disturb you?

KS: Black people suffered a lot. Yes, sure, it disturbed me. Because I was one who could feel with them. So I was very much against the treatment of the colored people, very much against it.

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MH: Did you…I guess you favored the Civil Rights Movement in the [19]50s and [19]60s?

KS: Yes.

MH: Were you actively involved?

KS: No, I was not. I maybe attended some meetings or so, but not that I was really in the midst of it.

MH: Also the McCarthy era, there was discrimination of people. In that case it was communists and another leftist people. Did you have any problems, at that time?

KS: No, I did not have problems, but I hated the man. He destroyed a lot of lives. I mean…to convict people just for their association with somebody, even if their association was only casual, that is wrong. That is definitively not right.

MH: Did that change the impression of the United States you got? McCarthy era or the apartheid?

KS: No, I felt that is an anomaly. This is not the United States, and if…I saw the way he finely got his end…made me feel good.

MH: What is your attitude towards Israel and towards Zionism? Was it ever an issue for you?

KS: No, I was never a Zionist. In fact, in Vienna, I recall a girl in my class…and it was in seventh class, seventh year in *Gymnasium*…and she married a Jewish fellow and emigrated with him to Israel. I could never understand it. We argued before, discussed that I was always against Zionism. But then, after the events of the war, after the persecution of the Jews, I came to the conclusion that they do need a land. That we should have a backbone. A land that, if the need arises, would accept us, even if we do not go there to live. I was in Israel a few times, and I could see myself live there, even though I am not…I am very much opposed to the present government, and I am opposed to the influence that the ultra-orthodox Jews have there. They have too much of an influence in relation to their number. But they somehow are the deciding factor there.

MH: So you said you could imagine living there, but you never really considered immigrating to Israel?

KS: No. But what I meant by that was that, the way people lived there, the way my family and my wife's family that we met there…the way they lived there. I could see, it is a normal life, more or less. Forget about the outside influences. I mean the relation with the Arabs, and so. But life, the way it is there, the way they live, what they have there. So I could have put up with that. But I would never leave here. Your home is where your family is, that is the way I feel. We have our family here, even so they are a little bit spread out over the country, but still, they are here.

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MH: You mentioned it before, that the first time you visited Austria, that was in 1950, I think. What was it like? Can you recall some of the feelings? You already told me you were received by people who told you--

KS: --at that time, it was still divided between the Russians, Americans…the four nations. When we came to Vienna, my wife did not even want to leave the hotel room. She was, most of the time, in the hotel. But I wanted to show the boys the city where we grew up, the schools that we attended, and how we spent our childhood. So I took them around all over Vienna, and showed them. But…those people that we met, except the neighbors that lived in the building where we had lived…but to most of the others, I had a very funny feeling. I stayed aloof of them, more or less. We went there, I remember, to a New Year's Eve party, and the boys were dressed like they were dressed in the States, with the long pants. At that time, in Vienna, children that age, they all wore shorts. So we went to that New Year's Eve party and we had seats in the front. And the MC there noticed the boys, and he then called us out, to the front there… But it is different. If you go to Austria now…I go as a tourist, I do not go as an Austrian. I have changed. I love the country. It is a beautiful country. Vienna is a beautiful city, and I love to walk around there. But somehow, I do not feel at home there. I could not see myself living there anymore.

MH: How many times were you there, in Austria?

KS: About six or seven times.

MH: Has your attitude towards Austria changed, within the last 50 years? Or is it still pretty much the same?

KS: It had changed for a while, I tell you quite honestly. But now when I see the way that the Freedom Party [FPÖ] is coming up, and this is making in-routes again. It frightens me.

MH: Do you follow the political situation in Austria?

KS: Yes.

MH: Do you see…you mentioned the Freedom Party…do you see parallels to the political situation in the [19]20s and early [19]30s in Austria, in a way?

KS: No, I could not say that, but on the other hand, I do not have enough knowledge, really, what is going on there. So I could not say. I only see the results of the elections, which tell me that their percentage is growing. So that is all I can compare it with. I do not know anything from personal experience there.

3/01:00:05 [Übergang/Schnitt.]

MH: Do you have a feeling that Austria's attitude towards its past and towards survivors has changed?

KS: I think it has changed in the last few years there. At least they recognized now, that…as I said, at the beginning, that there were not really victims, but that they were willing followers of the Nazis. And this I cannot forgive them, but I see recently more and more…and sometimes I go to the *Abende* at the consulate, when they have a film there, and we are here, then I go there. And I see that the attitude there, of the officials at the consulate, is very warm, one would say. But, like…they waited for 50 years until the majority of the emigrants had passed away, to now come out with that. My sister-in-law said she would want to send it back to them. I said: "Rather than to do that, take it and give it to charity here."

MH: You said the attitude of the Austrian officials now is quite warm. Was that different, years ago?

KS: I do not know. Before I never had any contact with them. I was never interested in Austria for a long, long time. I would not have gone any place, but as I said, for the last few years, we go there sometimes…occasionally, I would say. But if I go there and pick up a paper there…the culture in Vienna and so, in Austria…that interests me.

MH: Apart from the *Nationalfonds* money, did you ever get any kind of pension from Austria?

KS: Yes, I took it. I took the pension, yes.

MH: But apart from that, no restitution whatsoever for--

KS: --no. I could not claim anything, because we did not have anything there. And the pension I get, that comes in very handy. But for instance, my cousin who had the house and the business up there in Groß-Siegharts, they took it away. They did not see a penny, but he does not want to do anything. He does not want to be involved or anything.

MH: You never thought about getting back the Austrian citizenship? I think since last year, it is possible.

KS: I know, when we were there once, they gave out applications there, but I would not want it. A cousin of mine…they live in Los Angeles, and they took the citizenship. But I would not want it. Once is enough.

MH: Do you ever feel nostalgic about Austria? You said it is a beautiful country.

KS: I feel nostalgic, let us say, about the buildings in Vienna, about the mountains of Austria, about the *Wienerwald*, about those things. But not about the people, certainly not. When we go to Vienna, I love to go to a concert, for instance. Or to the *Burgtheater* for a performance. We were this year…in June we were in Tirol. And I love the mountains. I have always been an outdoor man…more. That I love, but…that is not Austria.

3/01:05:54

MH: You still speak German, of course. With whom do you speak it, and how often?

KS: Very little. When we go to a German speaking country, of course, then, we speak German. But with my wife or with my relatives here…of course, with my children or my grandchildren, there would be no use, they do not understand. But with my cousin for instance, we never speak German. We always speak English. There come in German words, German sentences, something that we feel we can still express better in German than in English. But as a rule, we speak English.

MH: Was that a decision you made, that you do not want to speak German?

KS: I do not think it was a decision, let us say…when we came here during the war years, definitely, that we did not want to speak German. But now, it is not so much that you do not want to, but it somehow does not seem logical. Somehow it does not seem natural. It is now natural to speak English and not German. I am reading a book now, I told you that…and there also, there come those German sentences that you can associate with. But as a language to speak, I would not speak it.

MH: You said before you considered yourself an American. There is no actual translation for the word *Heimat*, but would you say that New York, or America, is your *Heimat*?

KS: Yes. I would not consider Vienna or Austria to be my *Heimat*. It used to be, but no more. Now, if I go there, I do not go to see the *Heimat*, I go there as a tourist, to see the land. But not that I feel that it is my *Heimat*.

MH: Have the experiences of expulsion and exile changed your attitude towards your Jewish identity?

KS: I would think it has increased my identity. I almost have the feeling that…if I would not have been a Jew in Austria, it would have been too easy living…something of that kind. It would not have been interesting enough. But I must say that…even if I do not do it more…but for instance, I like to…when we are home on a Friday night. We have the radio on, on WQXI. You have at 5:30 the services from *Temple Emmanuel*, the Friday night services. I like to listen to it. I like to…attend to. We went then after…on a Saturday morning to *Temple Emmanuel* for services. So in that respect, I must say, I am a better Jew now. And thank God, I can afford to be more charitable now. [Klopft.] So I do now give more money for Jewish interests. Even so, Paula thinks I give too much, but I always say to myself: When I was running there, I would have loved to see somebody help me. To have an organization that had enough money to help. So I want to help others if I can.

3/01:11:26

MH: Would you call yourself religious now?

KS: No, I do not call myself religious, because I am not really religious enough to take the title. But I am a traditional Jew. I know that I am Jewish, I know that I belong to the Jewish race, and I want to stick with it.

MH: You said the first time you went to Austria, you wanted your children to see where you grew up. What was the impression that this visit made on your children?

KS: At that time, they were seven and ten years old. I do not know if it had any permanent influence on them. While we were in *Zürich*, they went to school there. So they had to speak German, and it was very tough on them. The little one especially, in first grade, he…they spoke Swiss *Deutsch*. So that was altogether impossible for him to understand. They both were used to hear German, because their grandparents spoke to them in German. Even so they did not converse, but they knew the melody of the language. Then, when they got older and they went to Europe by themselves and to Austria, they loved Vienna. They were enthused with their pastries, and so. But they did not have the bad experiences that we had. So for them, it was a city like they would visit Madrid or Lisbon, or whatever.

MH: And what about their Jewish identity?

KS: My older son passed away three years ago, and my younger son…I think he is more Jewish now than when we brought him up. Because the children, they attend school, then they go to the meetings of the young people, there at the temple. They live in Scarsdale. And they are more fluent in Hebrew than I ever was. So in that respect, they know more. The same thing with Paula's children…grandchildren. They are also pretty fluent now. They can pray in Hebrew, where I still have my difficulties. So I think they are better Jews now than I was at their age.

3/01:15:29

MH: Is there any kind of message that you would like to leave, to give to Americans, to Austrians, to younger generations?

KS: Be tolerant. We all come from the same source. We are so-called human beings, and I think we should treat each other as human beings. That goes not only religion-wise, but race-wise and whatever differences there are. I think we should overcome it and become a real human race.

MH: Thank you very much.

KS: It was a pleasure.

[Ende des Interviews.]

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