



Interview mit

# Emanuel Fuchs

InterviewerIn: Andreas Barth

Weitere anwesende Personen: -

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Verwendete Kürzel: AB Andreas Barth  
EF Emanuel Fuchs

## Teil 1

**AB:** This is an *Austrian Heritage Collection* interview with Emanuel Fuchs conducted by Andreas Barth on November the 3rd, in Cliffside Park, New Jersey. Mr. Fuchs, maybe we can start with your family life.

**EF:** My family life in Vienna? I want to start at the back...at the beginning. I was born in 1918 and that happened to have been the year where my parents immigrated to Austria, to Vienna from Poland. They had lived in the ghetto in small Polish towns. And my father was a professional...he had a profession, he was a worker at a shop and moved to Vienna. He had served in the army, in the Austrian army, and after the war he moved to Vienna. I was born in Vienna on April 1st, 1918. I have spent my first years in working...well, actually, my entire life in Vienna, which was twenty years, I lived in a working neighborhood. My father had a factory, a shop; he was a bookbinder, *Buchbinder, in Wien*. And he had, in order...in Vienna as conditions were, *wo man gearbeitet hat*, you lived near there, because my mother used to bring him lunch, so fort so [unklar]. It was right in the neighborhood where his shop was. And I was very friendly with all the people in the area, because it was a totally mixed area, as a matter of fact, mixed...by mixed I mean the number of Jews in my neighborhood was not too...too many. We were, I would say, if I have a ratio...it was maybe 95 to 5 – 5 percent Jews and 95 percent non-Jews, but that didn't mean anything in those days. It was truly a good life. It was freedom. It was a republic. After the war, particularly there was much attention paid to personal freedom...to individual freedoms and I grew up in that climate and we had formed great friendships with Jews, as well as gentiles, and, of course, proportionally for every ten non-Jews, I had one Jewish friend. And we...and because the school, by coincidence, happened to be across the street from where I lived...there was a public and middle school right across from my house where I lived. And I was born and lived all my life in Vienna. I had intimate friendships from school and from social...from home. So, I had many, many friends and I was very active socially and it changed periodically as my scope of thinking changed. I was always very politically interested in progress and coming towards the year 1938, we sensed that there was a difficult period ahead of us because we knew what Hitler had promised, what Hitler had talked...his speeches in the Austrian...when he was still in Austria, unknown to us at that time and we knew what to expect. And when the German government with Hitler at the head forced the Austrian government to give in, and I must give due credit to...[Kurt] Schuschnigg tried to resist as much as he could. He did resist to the degree that he called the plebiscite...to vote that...as is well known historically, the last few days. And that was turmoil in Austria. The people...the government that was in control prior to that – Schuschnigg's government – almost collapsed, because of a vacuum that existed, because Hitler took away all its power. He took away Austrian power to govern itself.

And the social democrats, the communists and the national socialists, all came up with their individual emblems on their lapels: The socialists had three arrows, the Nazis had this *Hakenkreuz*. And we had to survive in that climate. You did not know what to do and what to expect. I was working on a job at that time already, but I was very interested, I read the paper every day and I was interested what was going to happen until...that Friday, that unforgettable Friday, which was either the 12th or 13th of March 1938. I believe it must have been the 12th because I think the 13th was the day when...the 13th of March was the day when the German troops officially crossed the Austrian border. And when they did, Schuschnigg gave up. He fought them to the last minute, but...I was on the way to a rally in Praterstern of the liberals at that time,

because it was in my interest, of course. And I was told by a friend that came from there already...returned and he said, "Go home, because Schuschnigg resigned and he was forced to resign and the Nazis are coming in." And that was the first thing. That was that Saturday.

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We lived of course secretly with gentiles that did not want to be seen with us, but we were good enough friends that I understood and we were talking. And, openly, I had no other experience than I was taken one time while I was walking in my neighborhood. A school colleague of mine, a fellow that went to...in my own class – a gentile class – he was a Nazi. He came with a group that was roaming the street. They were roaming the street to get Jews, because there where paintings, they had...for the purpose of the plebiscite, they had painted anti-Nazi slogans on the streets and on the wall and they made us wash that off. They took us with brooms, brushes, they gave us soap and forced us to wash the streets, the walls, etc, etc. And that was my personal experience. One time I was taken up to the...I was caught on the street and taken by truck with a friend, a Jewish friend, to the former headquarters of Schuschnigg's party – the *Vaterländische Front* it was called – and that was in my area *im zweiten Bezirk*. They took me up there and they made us – for maybe three, four hours – carry books out to trucks downstairs. Just carry it by hand, and then they let us go.

So, that was the extent up until November, until the *Kristallnacht*, which was November 10th. I don't know, was it 9th or 10th? I read sometimes nine, sometimes ten. I would have thought it was ten, November 10th, but I may be wrong. When I was told that I can't stay home, because they were looking for people...Jewish people, Jewish men, to arrest them in the house, in every apartment they went. And I was told by a neighbor in my building, a gentile neighbor, to get out and to not stay home because...I hid under the bed for a while and I wasn't sure what I was going to do and they sure enough came up and they banged on the door and they said "*Aufmachen! Aufmachen!*" And wherever..."Nobody is here. We come back tonight." When they left – I lived on the fourth floor – they walked away...they walked down, and I had made up my mind. I had a friend of mine who was until that period of time only friends with mostly gentile company. He was by profession...he delivered, he was a *Pendler*. He had a motorcycle and he was delivering films to...movies, which was not typically a Jewish profession, and he had mostly...mostly Christian friends and he had never been bothered. And I thought I would be safe. He lived in *sechsten Bezirk* in the *Luftbadgasse*. And I took a train...a trolley car – *die Straßenbahn* – and I went to the *sechsten Bezirk mit der Stadtbahn* and went to his house.

1/00:10:14

When I came to his house, he had just returned from a temple. He – my friend – and his brother, who was an older brother, they had just returned from a temple, where they were taken, that was burned down by the Nazis, and he told us about it. But that was the first incidence that he was involved in. As a matter of fact, this friend of mine was drafted to the Austrian army. He was just the age – he was 21. He was a year older than I and he was in uniform. He wore the Nazi... Austrian army uniform. Until they had to be sworn in and get the...Hitler emblem...the National Socialist emblem. And they had him on the appeal place and they refused to give it to the Jewish and they were discharged from the army. So, this is the friend that I went to visit. We hardly sat down, we were going to have some coffee, when a few SS men came in from both sides – it was a *Durchhaus*. They came in and they took us in a truck and took us into the Kenyongasse, which was a holding place for...because they arrested so many people, they were not prepared to put them up. So, they...and that place was the beginning of a...where you really could foresee...if you had enough foresight, you could predict what this regime was going to come to, because the brutality that was committed in that place was just incredible. It is indescribable. So much so that a week after that, we were sent to a place, to the Pramergasse, which was a place where they sorted out people to go to Dachau and not...I don't know what the criteria was, but I was sent to Dachau. When I came to Dachau...compared to the Kenyongasse, Dachau was a...*ein Erholungsheim*. I mean it was...the Kenyongasse: During the day, we were in the room and we had to exercise up and down...knee bends. And then we had to go down on the floor. There were 200 in each classroom. And this is one thing that I hold against the Austrian police: The situation was that the police...Austrian police was on duty during the day in the Kenyongasse. That was the order of the way they were proceeding. And at night, at, I believe, it was six, seven, eight o'clock in the evening, the SS...German SS came on. During the day we had, in uniform, Austrian policemen guarding us. And I must in all fairness admit, they were not as brutal as the German SS, but even during the day, we went through...to give you an example: Since I was the youngest in my class, in my group, *meiner Stube*--

**AB:** --you were twenty, right?

**EF:** I was twenty. I was the youngest. I was a skinny, young twenty-year-old. They came and they needed people to bring typewriters from trucks, because they had to register everybody. Everything was by the book, everything was by system and everybody had to be registered by typewriter. They had tables outside in the halls. There were people sitting with tables and keeping...filling out forms on typewriters. So, they delivered a lot of typewriters. So, they picked me and a few others. And I went down...I was chased down – everything was running...run, run, run – and I ran down and I picked up a typewriter at a time, I couldn't carry more than that. I brought it up. When I came back into the classroom, where I came from...after bringing up a few typewriters, I was finished and I was headed back into my classroom. There was a podium where...you know the Viennese classes...there is a podium and then there were the seats for the students. And I was told to get up on the podium. There was a couple of others up on the podium and we had to do exercises. What do you call it? On the elbow...laying down, up and down on the elbows--

**AB:** --*Liegestütze*?

**EF:** No, like this...up and down on the elbows.

**AB:** I think it is push-ups.

**EF:** Push-ups, yes... push-ups, exactly. We had to do push-ups. All of a sudden – I was lying on the floor doing push-ups – I saw boots coming. And the guy came over to me and kicked me and said, “Up! *Steh auf!*” – I got up and he pulled out...he was a *Schupo [Schutzpolizist]*, he pulled out his gun and looked me straight in the eye and he said, “How old are you?” I said, “Twenty.” He said, “How many... gentile girls have you...” – he used different words, I don’t want to say it – “...have you...*haben Sie verführt? Hast du verführt?*” I said, “None.” So, he looked me straight in the eye and then he took his gun, a big *Luger* – you know what they looked like... big – and he hit me on the side and then he said, “*Weitermachen!*” And I laid down on the floor and I continued. I was left alone then. And... they committed cruelties that were incredible: They had a man with a beard, for instance, a Jewish man with a beard, on that podium and they asked two of...*zwei andere Häftlinge* to come up and light matches... had him sing Jewish songs, Jewish chants and they burnt his beard from both sides with matches. It may sound... you know, sitting in these circumstances, may not be realistically understood what the meaning of that is when you see it. It is, today...which is what? 60 years later, it is still inconceivable to me. The fact is, that I saw this man in Dachau. He survived. His face was totally...what do you call it? Pock...

**AB:** *Brandblasen.*

**EF:** Yes, from where the beard was... where they burnt it. But I could not believe that he survived. I said to him, “You survived? I don’t believe that, I was in your *Stube.*” The same... “Yes,” he said, “yes, I live.” – In any case... at night we were taken down to the gym in that school. I am returning to the Kenyongasse. The Kenyongasse to the... when it got dark – I don’t recall when the SS came on – they took us down into the gym and we had to make exercises in the gym. And they beat us with... you know in the gym how you have sticks to exercise, these poles? They went around with those poles and just beat you around the feet, around the legs, around the back. And they made for instance...they picked out...*in meiner Stube war ein...* lawyer...an attorney, he was well known. His name was Engisch. I do not recall his first name. Engisch...and he was conspicuous because he was very heavy. He weighed maybe 300 pounds...he was a very heavy man, but he was a relatively young man. I would imagine he must have been in his 40s. And he was a well-known lawyer in Vienna. And because of that... because he was a lawyer, they made him climb up... because he was heavy. I guess it gave them extra pleasure to make him climb up. You know, in the gymnasium they have ladders...vertical ladders. They made him climb up as far as he could and then hang on the...with two hands. And then they beat him until he fell down.

They made us fight each other until one... they paired us up and we had to fight each other until one was bloody and fell down. They stood by, the SS – they had a number of them in the gymnasium – and we had to fight and hit each other until one of us was bloody and fell down. Well, this was every night for about six nights, I believe. The last night, I will never forget it: There were...when we were then told to go upstairs...in the corner, in the gymnasium were maybe hundreds of coats – remember, we wore street clothes because

we were the way we were arrested – coats and hats lying there, in the corner pushed, off people who did not survive and were taken away. From there, after a week...I believe it was about seven days that we were there, and having survived that...yes, I have forgot: The day we were delivered, the Jewish community, *die Jüdische Kultusgemeinde* came and gave us each a sandwich. They gave us a sandwich to eat. I put it in my coat – I had a coat...I was wearing a coat, the way I was arrested – I was in that coat all the time – I put it in my inside pocket. It was salami that was melted... If you believe it or not, if you have ever seen salami melted. What I went through in those days, that was the condition of that sandwich.

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In any case, from there we were taken in the middle of the night to what used to be a horse training center. Or it was oval-like, with straw in the middle. I think it was for horseracing...for parades. This goes back, I believe, in the days of the *Kaiser*, they used to have horse shows there, in the Pramergasse. And we were in the middle in the sand – all of us, hundreds of men were inside. We were resting against each other because there was not enough room to sit down on the floor. And we waited there, without knowing anything what was going to happen. We waited, waited until we were put into groups and sent. And there was a desk outside, if I remember correctly. There were a few – two or three – men sitting there. And you went from the left, from the right. And we were three friends that were taken together: The two brothers and I that stuck together. There was a third one, he was separate. And believe it or not, from the three of us, two of us were sent to Dachau, and one was sent, but freed. He could go home in Vienna. For what reason? Why? No reason whatsoever.

**AB:** They did not tell you anything?

**EF:** Nothing. Just, “Go here,” and you went there and you did not know what that meant. It turned out later that that was the line to go to the train to Dachau. And we had no idea what was happening. We were separated, as they put the other friend... we went on line there and then we were guided out to buses. I think...I don't recall how we were transported, but it was always “*Laufen! Laufen!*” and they always hit us with sticks so that you...they created panic purposely. And we were transported to the train station. I don't... I think it was the *Westbahnhof*...I am not sure. Because it went west to Munich, to Dachau. This was about in the middle of the night already by then, and we finally were...pushed into trains. They were regular trains yet, they were just passenger trains yet. We got seats in the train and were transported. And on the train, we were told where we were going. We were going to Dachau.

Well, I had heard about it, but I had no idea what to expect. I had no, no idea at all. And you know as a young person, you have a certain... at least I have a certain amount of optimism always. And that probably helped me survive. I said to myself, “Well, at least I will be able to see what Dachau looks like. After what I had gone through in the Kenyongasse, nothing could hurt me anymore.” And we arrived in Dachau. It was in the middle of the night. I still remember it was foggy, cold...this was in November, a week after the 10th...

around the 17th/16th of November. And it was cold already – in Bavaria at that time of the year it gets very cold and Dachau is up in the mountains, pretty high. Munich is high and Dachau is higher yet. It is only a few miles outside of Munich. And I came out...we were driven out from the train and had to line up outside in the middle, and we were told, "You are now in Dachau and from here there is no out. You are here...if you get sick, you go to the *Revier*, you go to the hospital, but don't you ever try to get out! Don't you go near the *Stacheldraht* because...it's law that it is electrically charged. And you will be assigned a room and you will find out what is happening as you go along". That was about three, four in the morning, we went – I was assigned to...Block four, *Stube vier*. It was enlarged tremendously by then, because they had to make more room for a lot more. This was not meant for so many prisoners, so they had by then enlarged...there were fresh...new wooden barracks put up and we had straw and double...*Decke*...benches...beds--

**AB:** --*Stockbetten*--

1/00:25:49

**EF:** Yes, and I had a lower one. And I went to sleep – I was young enough, I could sleep...I slept. The next morning, we were taken, we were taken to get showered, get pictures taken, and...get...yeah, when we had the pictures taken, this was the most incredible thing of...of sadism: What people had to think about...that they put in the chair, where you sat...when they took your picture, a needle popped out inside and stuck you in the behind. Could you believe this? I could not believe it. I mean, this is a state institution, you know?. Anyway, we were showered and then brought out from the shower into maybe...I don't know what it is here today...by twenty degrees below freezing, we had to stand out all day. My hands...when I was finished, after Dachau...yeah, I forgot to mention, what will become very significant later...I omit it...I forgot to mention: The ...November...the *Kristallnacht* was on a Thursday to Friday. On the Sunday before, my friend and I – because it was important for every Jew in Austria to show his intention at that time to emigrate...to leave the country – I had a passport. Every Jew...as soon as Hitler came to Austria, we got to know that you better look to it, that you get a passport to get out. So, I had gotten a passport, but I had no place to go. No country would take us legally. There was no way you could get a visa anywheres. I had papers to come to America, but there was a bureaucratic procedure that may take...God knows how long. I had nothing to really show in the passport. And when you went on the street, you were stopped. I looked Jewish and I was stopped and they looked in the passport and if you could not show that you had intention to go someplace, then you may be in trouble. So, I went ahead, my sister...I had a sister in Switzerland...that went illegally over the border to Switzerland – in the beginning, it was still possible to go, so she went and she went and lived in Basel. – From Basel, Switzerland, she wrote to me, that for 100 schilling she can buy a visa, which was not legitimate to go to Paraguay, but it would be a stamp in the passport. If I wanted it, I could get it, I just had to send the passport. "Well," I said, "I have nothing to lose." So, my friend and I both went to the main post office – I will never forget it, I think it was *Wienzeile* where the main...*im zweiten Bezirk*...the main post office. I don't recall the address, but I remember going there on Sunday and putting the passports in the mail to my sister. That was Sunday, and the following Thursday, when everybody that was arrested had their passport in their

pocket, because you made sure all the time to have your passport, I didn't have mine. The ones that had it, they took them away from them, when they were taken in. Mine...they couldn't take it away, I didn't have it, it was in Switzerland. And I had forgotten about it. So, now I am returning to when I...normal days in Dachau were...in those years...that time when I was there...was marching around the block and you never wanted to be caught at the end of a column. If you were at the end, the SS would always beat you up one way or another. So, you were always trying to go in the middle. I discovered that very early. And all we did from morning till night was marching around in snow and ice and cold, all around the blocks, just marching around. We didn't work yet, nothing. In street clothes, just the clothes...we didn't even have uniforms yet – they had nothing. They were overwhelmed by the number of people that they brought there.

1/00:30:29

So, we, I still wore my coat and my plain street shoes and my street clothes, and we kept walking, everybody...and we kept just marching in order, around the block day and night, day and night. We fell out in the morning – I don't know...five, six o'clock in the morning – and we stood in front of the barracks and they came around an hour later with the coffee – you had a canteen, a metal cup, and they gave you a little coffee and you drank a little coffee and then you went to the *Appellplatz*. And you stood there...or you walked around and you walked around the block...just walking columns, walking day and night. As a matter of fact, that was very interesting: When I walked one time, all of a sudden people called my attention. There was the former *Bürgermeister von Wien*, [Richard] Schmitz. He was a prisoner. He was cleaning the street with a...with a rake. He was there also that time. He had been taken as a prisoner. He was the last *Bürgermeister* before that time. And we...this went on for about ...ix weeks. At the end of December...one day – I don't remember when, I tried to reconstruct it but it's impossible – one day I was called, we were standing in front of the barracks, lining up for the coffee, when I was called up. "Fuchs!" By the...we had a *Stubenälteste* that was a...prisoner, and a *Blockälteste*. Those were our...superiors, they were in charge. They were not Jewish, but they were either...they were different categories, each had different...when they had uniforms, they had uniforms with triangular patches. They were either brown – then they were undesirable...socially undesirable, purple – they were religiously undesirable, red – they were socialist...and I think that was it. In any case, these two guys were red. They were socialists before.

This was the end of December. I think it was around the 25th or 26th of December when I was called out from the appeals, from the *Appellplatz*, by name and the *Blockälteste* said, "You are going home" – out of nowhere...to my complete surprise. I had no idea. So, I said, "Really?" He said, "Yes." And with that he hauled out and hit me in the face with the fist. I said, "Why did you do that?" – "What did I do? I show them." He hit me on the other side. It was just an example of the brutality, which didn't mean anything, it was just natural...fun. So, we were taken to the...again, into the room where we were examined by a doctor. We had to sign that we were physically not abused and that everything...we were alright and that we had no problems. Somehow, we had to sign...at that time, the state was still interested in getting whitewashed. Apparently, this was for foreign politics. They went to the trouble of having us signed a certificate that we

were not abused. Now you had very little choice – we signed. And when we were...they said, “You are going to go home and when you come back to your hometown you go to the *Gestapo* immediately, when you come home.” I came from Vienna. The Munich Jewish community came, they took us over at the...*am Bahnhof*. They took us over, they brought us soup and something to eat. And we took a train and the train took a long time then...I think...I don't recall. I came home...it was on a Saturday morning, eleven o'clock, or so. And, of course, my parents hadn't seen me since December...since November. My coat was bloody because...from when this guy hit me...he split my lower lip...here.

And the coat was all full of blood. I was wearing street clothes. So, my mother got scared, but she was glad to see me, of course. And I said, “I have to go to the *Gestapo* immediately. I had to sign.” I went to the *Gestapo*, which was *am Schwedenplatz...nah am Schwedenplatz im...Morzin...Morzin Hotel [Hotel Metropol, Morzinplatz] hat das geheißen. Da war die Gestapo* headquarters. I went in and immediately they made me go through the same games they were playing in Dachau, the SS: I had to stand against the wall – I was a little dangerous guy, I had to stand against the wall and put my hands up against the wall. And they made believe...they searched me and they said, “Now, when did you come back?” I told them. “It is alright. Today is Saturday, by Monday you have to be out of here.” And I was shaven...remember, it was very clear on my face that I had come from Dachau, because my head had been shaved in Dachau completely. They said, “Anybody...any policemen who will see you shaved...and you will be sent back to Dachau if you don't leave.” I had told them...they saw, apparently, why I was released. It turned out I was released because my sister in Vienna, received while I was in Dachau, received the passport from my sister in Switzerland in the mail. And she went to the *Gestapo*...in the *Ausstellungsstraße*, in the police and asked them, I can go to Paraguay, to let me out. And they granted that I could leave for Paraguay with this passport. In the meantime, this passport was just bought. The consul in Switzerland was a corrupt consul from Peru...Paraguay. And he, for 100 schilling, sold as many stamps as you wanted. I couldn't go, I had no place to go.

**AB:** Because the stamps were fraud.

1/00:37:12

**EF:** It was a void...it was not, it was not a legitimate visa. And I knew that. I had been told that. So, here I was on Sunday with no place to go and I had to leave. And the fact was that I was bald and anybody would see that I came from Dachau. Even if I put on a hat, it would be clear sooner or later, and I couldn't take that chance. So, we had heard that people went across the border. So, my friend and I got together. He had...his family, his sister, his older sister had been *Pflegekind in Holland*, in Amsterdam during the First World War...after the First World War, when it took many Jewish kids as *Pflegekinder* after the war. He had been in touch with those people, he knew where they lived. So, he said, “Let's go to Holland. I know somebody in Amsterdam.” I said, “I'll go anywhere.” The story goes, at that time, that if you had ten schilling – that you could have in your pocket – with ten schilling you could go to the border...and no more. So, I took ten schilling and I put on galoshes and I took sandwiches in a bag and I said goodbye to my parents, and we

took a train. We bought tickets to the border and we went to...I have to remember...to Kaltenkirchen in Germany, and from there we went to Aachen, I think...no, Aachen to Kaltenkirchen...one of them was the border. I think Kaltenkirchen was a little town right on the border. We took the train there and came there in the afternoon.

And we went across...we were going to go across the border. The border was...parallel to the border – Austrian... German-Dutch border is *die Maas*. And you have to cross the Maas. And the Maas you have to cross by bridges...two bridges. Venlo...Roeben [Roermond]...forgot the word, these things used to be so...I have forgotten in these years...Venlo and...I don't know what the other name was. These two bridges...when you crossed the bridges the story was: If you got on the other side of the bridge into Holland, then you were safe. The government would let you stay. But the trick was how to cross. We were told there would be a ferry. We waited in the morning for that ferry. We walked all night through the ice and snow to the border. We were fortunate and we came to that ferry, which was on the banks of the Maas on the German side. And there was a pull with a bell. And we rang the bell. We were told we have to ring the bell and then some people came out and said, "There is no ferry going, it is frozen. You can't take it. Are you Jewish *Flüchtlinge*?" – "Yes!" – "Come in!" They were very good, they were Dutch people.

1/00:40:35

I can't remember how this worked out. We got over the bridge. We were driven over the bridge into...by these people that risked their life for us. They were not Jewish, they lived on the border and they knew we were *Flüchtlinge* and they saved our life. My friend and I...he gave them his ring and I gave...I had a ring also...years back...and that was all we had. So, they saved us and took us to that family in Amsterdam. A family by the name of Frank...who were there...Dutch Jews. Native Dutch Jews, and they were very nice. They took us and gave us a room in the basement, a bed to sleep and they said, "Tomorrow we take you to the committee. You will be made legal." We came to the committee – we were refused. They said at this time Jews cannot stay in Holland, "I am sorry, we have too many". So, they took us back to the house and they said, "We will see what we can do for you". They kept us in the basement for about two or three weeks – I don't know – until they arranged with two young men, Zionist young men...from a Zionist organization in Holland, to bring us by car to the Belgian border. They drove us to the border. One drove through legally because he was a Dutch citizen – they could drive through. The other one walked with us around the border, showed us where we met. On the car they drove us into Brussels. We came to Brussels very early in the morning. And we couldn't stay in Brussels, but they told us, "If you go to Antwerp, you can stay in Antwerp." So, they drove us to Antwerp and they drove us to the Jewish committee in Antwerp. And they gave us a home to stay and they said, "You are now legal." They gave us a paper that we were legal refugees in Antwerp. And that was the first breath of fresh...of free air we could breathe, that we were legitimate, out of Germany.

So, we stayed in Antwerp then...I tried to get my...in contact with the American consulate in Antwerp and to my...disaster, I found out that the consul in Vienna...they had my papers from my cousin from America. You needed in those days...you needed what they called an affidavit, which was a guarantee of your sustenance. And he had promised me and he had written it to the consul. And I had registered to go to America immediately when Hitler came, because of this cousin, in March of [19]38. A year later – this was a year later now...or I don't know how much later, after I had been to Dachau and came to Belgium – I was told by the consul in Vienna, that there was no registration number for me available. They had sold it. It turned out...I found out and the American government knew about it. This consul was caught. He had sold registration numbers to people that were ineligible to come – some quotas were filled. This was a quota and I was the Austrian quota – that was by where you were born. And he had sold my number. Fortunately for me, I had witnesses, my friend that went with me to the...to register...his sister was still in Vienna and my sister was still in Vienna. They got from the consul an affidavit, to swear that I had registered. And with the affidavit I got a new number...and I stayed there until the end of August. On September 1st, the German army invaded Poland. September 1st 1938...was it? No! [19]39, September 1st 1939. I heard on the radio that they had invaded Poland. They had bombarded Poland, Warsaw, and I knew war was on. I went to the consulate and they had my visa prepared. Now, of course, I felt much better and, fortunately, I had a sister here who helped me with transport, with the money to buy the tickets, and a friend of mine and I came here. And this in short...in brief terms, is my story, because from once I came to New York, of course, I was a different person, it was a different life. If there is any questions you have, please ask me.

1/00:45:55

**AB:** Yes, maybe we can go back to your family.

**EF:** Well, my family really...is my immediate family. My grandparents I didn't know.

**AB:** Where were they from?

**EF:** They were from Poland...they lived in Poland. And my parents lived in Poland until after the First World War. In 1918, they came to Vienna. We became citizens maybe ten years later. My father applied for citizenship in Austria and he had to pay – I don't know – an amount. And I was born in Vienna already, in 1918. Shortly after they came, my mother was pregnant. They went away, there was no hope, pogroms in...what I heard, but I had personally no experience. I had planned to go to Poland. I had relatives there, my mother had a sister there. I was going to visit there in the year [19]39, I had saved up money to go. I have never been there and it never came about because of circumstances. So, I can tell very little about the past prior to Vienna. My parents arrived in Vienna. When they came they had...we were a big family. We had two brothers...who were half-brothers, from another mother, and five sisters and I. I was the one before the youngest. I had a younger sister. And my father immediately started to work. He had, as I said, he had a trade. He worked as a *Buchbinder* and he worked hard and he built up a business. He was working for a firm

by the name of *Schlesinger*. This was an international *Verlag*, a printing company. That printed all Jewish books, all Hebrew books – prayer books mainly. And he did...he was specialized in that...when I came out of school...in Vienna you only went to school in those days...I don't know how it is today, but in my days, school was up until fourteen years – my *Schulpflicht*. And I finished at fourteen and you couldn't get a job...I could not get a job.

**AB:** What kind of school was it?

**EF:** *Volksschule und Mittelschule*...that was right across from me: One was this side of the block, *vis-à-vis vor meinem Haus und das andere war im Rücken*...the other way...parallel street, the same building. *Die Schöngasse und die Feuerbachstraße* – I will never forget it. Those were the schools I went to for eight years, four years in the *Volksschule*, and *vier Jahre* what they called in those days *Mittelschule*. I never went to higher education – we first could not afford it, secondly, of course unfortunately, circumstances wouldn't permit it anyway. But I was home and I couldn't find a job in those days. I worked for my father in his factory, in his shop, *in der Werkstätte* and I learned to be a *Buchbinder*. And afterwards I got a job with my brother-in-law, a man that married my sister, who had a fur factory. And I learned to do that because it paid more – my father couldn't pay me much – and I worked for him until 1938...until I was sent away and that was the end until I left.

So, that is how much I can tell about my parents. Unfortunately, I didn't have a chance to get to know anybody. My grandparents...my grandfather died in Poland yet before 1918, before they came to Vienna. I heard...they told me – I was a baby – my grandmother came with them to Vienna and she passed away shortly after they arrived in Vienna – in 1919, 1920, I don't remember – very shortly after that. So, I never had the pleasure of having grandparents. I only had parents, but we were a large family. And from that large family...my sister in Switzerland never got out. My youngest sister went to Israel, my older sister went to Israel...three sisters were in Israel and a brother, the oldest brother. And one sister and I, and my other brother came here. And that was the end of a family. Unfortunately, today...there are only two of us left, my youngest sister and I.

1/00:51:12

**AB:** Are you still in contact?

**EF:** My sister, of course! She is in Israel...she is in Israel. As a matter of fact, I just spoke, my nephew called me. I am in touch with her. And that is the story. I have mixed feelings as I indicated here before...when you are young, life is beautiful regardless what and...as you get older you can forget many things but, of course, many things you can never forget.

**AB:** Maybe you can tell me...in your family life, was it a strict education? Your father and your mother?

**EF:** My family life was...by necessity – we were eight children. And they were not...my father was...with one man providing for eight children was very difficult. So, they were not strict, but they were strict with themselves. They weren't strict with me, but they were very disciplined people. And my sisters and brothers were raised disciplined and...it was a good home and I have nothing but the warmest feelings for the background that I was given in those early years. I have really never knew how much...your life is directed in certain directions in early years...how much you are formed...your life is formed in early years. While, they were...my father was religious, reasonably religious for himself. He was never a disciplinarian, as far as I was concerned. He didn't like that I mingled with too much mixed company because, in those days, even Jews had suffered enough. They knew anti-Semitism and my father knew. But he had given me free reign. I had all kinds of friends and did all kinds of things, I played soccer, and I rode a bicycle and I did all the things everybody did. That from his historical background Jewish boys never did. He did not understand it, but he was not a dictator. He never...did more than admonish me for doing it...tell me it wasn't right to do it, but he never physically did anything in terms of punishing me. And those things you don't forget...you remember. And I remember that home with the warmest feelings. It has, as I said, a lot to do with how I raised my children and how my life has gone on from there.

**AB:** What about the politics in your family? Was your father--

**EF:** --there was no politics at all. My parents were not political. I personally was, because I was interested in current affairs, in what they call current affairs today. I was interested. I was a member of a Jewish Zionist organization that was very liberal...very leftist, as a matter of fact. They said it was a leftist organization.

**AB:** How was it called?

**EF:** *Hashomer Hatzair*, which existed in Israel...in Palestine in those years, and did much work. In those days they had very difficult times...from the Arabs and from the British, and this organization was very active in fighting for a Jewish homeland. And I was very impressed with their...and it was an intellectual background that I enjoyed. We had reading together, we had studies together. It was a real high-level intellectual exercise and I enjoyed that organization for that reason. We had a representative from Israel...it was called a *Shaliach*. That was a Jew that came from Austria, from my neighborhood, as a matter of fact, from a family that I knew that had emigrated a long time before. And he was sent to us back by the organization to teach our group certain things about *Kibbuz*. Maybe you have heard of what *Kibbuz* is: Community living, the advantage of community living and the advantages of changing for the Jewish people, from being tradesmen, to back to the ground, back to workers. And that basically was the milieu that I grew up in and where I derived my interest in daily activities. And as mentioned, I was old enough to read the paper. I read the paper every day...and I read the paper and I had known that there was a meeting in years back, in my neighborhood, where Hitler spoke in a beer hall. And I knew from talking to my friends what they...but it was strictly theory. It was academic because we never paid much attention to it. Man is so basically...most people are so basically self-centered that, when we heard of German Jews that were driven away in 1934, when we didn't know from anything...they were not understood...they were totally misunderstood by people...by Jews in Vienna who didn't know what was ahead of them and was coming

later. And that is unfortunate, the story of mankind, that man does not learn until he learns it on his own experience.

1/00:57:16

And that directed me into interest and I recall very vividly...I was old enough at that time to understand what was going on and I read that a delegation was directed by Hitler to come to Berchtesgaden for a meeting. And the paper wrote – I used to read a liberal paper, which was the *Abend* – and they wrote that this was very bad because this is a *Diktat[ur]* and it was known what was to be expected. And when the outcome of that meeting was that he accepted an interior minister [Arthur] Seyß-Inquart who later became a...I forgot what his function was. It was a big man, Seyß-Inquart. I think he was the Ostmark...he was the leader of the Ostmark. *Österreich* was the Ostmark. So, he was a common crook, a *Verbrecher in Wien, der Seyß-Inquart*...and he was called to Germany and he became...he was an illegal Nazi. And when Schuschnigg came back, he knew what he had done. And the next thing was, we found out that was a plebiscite. And of course there was no question which side we were on. Although, I was not for Schuschnigg before, because – as I said – he was part of a government, which was a reactionary government in Austria...which, unfortunately, brought on this problem in Austria...maybe, maybe not. In any case they were very rightish, in fact, Austria had a...I don't know, I think it was [Ignaz] Seipel. Seipel was a chancellor after the war, who was a Catholic cardinal, I believe – and it was catholic run. And the Catholic church...I must tell you in all honesty, I understand there is a dispute even today...the Catholic church did not want to reveal...release any paper for publication regarding the pope in those days. Because we had a cardinal in Vienna – Cardinal [Theodor] Innitzer, I will never forget it – and when Hitler came, we Jews were waiting – with baited breath we were waiting – what is the cardinal going to say in his mass. You know the Austrians are strict Catholics and they were believers. And we thought that humanity would somehow take hold, but the cardinal didn't say a word. They were never excommunicated. Hitler was never excommunicated, he never received the spiritual punishment of a church, the exile, the banishment of a church that he should have. And this cardinal was very active, from what I understand from later reading, in [helping] many of those illegal murderers escaping to South America, to Argentina, etc. The rest is history.

1/01:00:35

**AB:** The importance of being Jewish for you is...was--

**EF:** --I am. I am Jewish...and I will be Jewish for the rest of my life. And my son is Jewish and my daughter is Jewish.

**AB:** But you are not religious.

**EF:** I am not religious. I am an atheist. I am Jewish, I became an atheist. If a man like my father...you know, Elie Wiesel has said that in his book, that at one time that's the feeling he had – I never got over that feeling: He could reconcile himself. Good for him, I couldn't. I have to this day...I am 83 years old, and I was twenty years at that time...and when I see the end that my parents, who were law-abiding, honest, good human beings...were condemned to that kind of an end, then there is no God for me – there cannot be anybody. And I have no interest in any superior being...being made up for the sake of some people that need a crutch to hold on to – I don't. I believe I have been strengthened with my experience. I am prepared: whatever happens, happens. I have lived my life. I have lived much longer than I thought I would and I cannot reconcile. I support my community here, the Jewish community center. Every year there are considerable dues...I have been paying every year...as a matter of fact, when I moved here twenty some years ago, I continued for a long time in two temples to pay my dues because I believe for some people it is important. I respect the respect my father had for the religion and for his sake. I will pay tribute to that religion, for the people who want it. For me personally, there is no religion. Unfortunately, there is a...there is a negative to this and that is my children...without me ever proselytizing my beliefs or my...my total disbelief, they sense it. It is not what you say to your children, it is what you do. And I sense that my son has gone in the same direction, although he did not have my experience. But when you don't give an example then, apparently, that is what happens. And he has learned more from me as an example than he has from what I have said and what I have done. So, I cannot change history. This is the price faith has to pay and I have no regrets.

## **Ende von Teil 1**

## **Teil 2**

**AB:** There is another thing, which would be interesting for me. Did you experience any kind of anti-Semitism before the *Anschluss*?

**EF:** Well, that is interesting that you ask me, because there was anti-Semitism – there is no question. And my feeling, if you ask me, I would tell you as honestly...and nothing personal...I appreciate the effort you put in and anyone, who they have called afterwards a *righteous gentile*...you have heard of that?

**AB:** Yes.

**EF:** I appreciate that very much. And on a personal basis, as I said, my best friends were gentile boys, but when my name in Vienna...because my parents had just come from Poland when I was born, my first name was Mendel, M.E.N.D.E.L., which was a typical Jewish name in Vienna. – When I experienced anti-Semitism, mostly, before 1938, was when my name was read in class. There was an...undertone, you know, *was Kichern heißt* in German...they "*hähä*". [Lacht hämisch.] But that was negligible because I had a lot more positives, I must say. I was accepted. I may be very selfish. It may be a very selfish point of view that I am expressing. Personally you ask me a question and to be perfectly frank, at that time I had a minimum...I knew I was different – as I indicated before, my name indicated to anybody that I was Jewish, of course –,

but other than that, I was...I participated in soccer games, I was part of a team, I played...we...we did many things, we...I lived near the Danube, the *Donau*, and the Lobau. Have you ever heard of it?

**AB:** Sure.

**EF:** You have heard of the Lobau?

**AB:** Yes.

**EF:** We spent so many Saturday nights with my friends. There were sports...they were working children and young men, and they had very little money, but they had...they liked sports and they were very athletic. And we used to go Saturday night...we were at the Reichsbrücke. I lived ten minutes away from them. My father's factory was right by the *Brücke...die Wehlistraße*, where he had his *Buchbinderei*, so I was very close. I walked across with groups...we went across, we had blankets, we slept in the Lobau, from Friday to Sunday. And we were friends and we were very good friends and I can name names now and it is 60 years later...what is it 60? Over 60 years! I can tell you names of friends I had...that I was good friends with gentile boys: A Franzl Gardener...there *war der* Eddie Hutsch, Czech – many Czech though...the Czech influence was very strong in my neighborhood. – Eddie Bubl, *der war der Sohn von den Schuldiener*...across the street. I mean, we were close friends. We played together, we lived together...I was not made to feel different, I must admit. And maybe that hardened me, maybe that gave me some spiritual...I don't know. Maybe it is the opposite...I really don't know. I was very balanced and, to be frank with you, whatever happened – maybe it is my nature – but I survived it. And I had a minimum of bitterness, to be perfectly frank. I have wonderment of how human beings can do what I saw with my eyes...and that conditions can be created for innocent people that I saw with my own eyes, I couldn't believe. But personally, I was very well balanced in my early years. And I felt no...maybe it was selfish of me, because I had heard that there was anti-Semitism. I personally – in the area I lived, the street I lived – was accepted. We had a man in the building, who was a police detective, an *Inspektor*, in Vienna in the *Ausstellungsstraße*. And they...in those days it was a strict caste system. There was a high caste and a lower and a middle. This man was very honored. If you were a high officer in the police department in those days, you were a big man. He was friendly with my father. They met on a Friday night in the bar on the corner and they had a glass of beer. And my father – mind you – had a beard...a short beard, but he had a beard. And his name was Zacha. Z.A.C.H.A. – I will never forget it. They were the elite in our area...*Inspektor Zacha*. My mother gave my father an argument, he came home late from work and he said, "Yes, we were *im Piatschek*." – this was on the corner...a bar. "And *er hat mir ein Bier gekauft*."

2/00:05:51

So, we were told...I was told until the end by my friends, "Nothing will happen to you." In all honesty, I maybe...what I am saying may not correspond with what many people say...that feel differently. There are two opinions, but I want to give you an honest answer to a question. I don't pretend that I had any problems

and maybe these people really meant it. That people like us...knew my father was a working man, he had a big family, he worked for his life, had big responsibilities. They knew it because we lived very close – it was a working neighborhood and we had good friends. You went one to the other...to the house. And they did not have any idea what Nazism really meant. As a matter of fact, my direct neighbor...my immediate neighbor – I lived...*Tür 25* and *nach Tür 24, oder 26*, the next door – was a man who was an unemployed man for a long time and he had young children. When Hitler came he disappeared...he just disappeared. His wife came and said, "I don't know where he is. I don't know what happened to him." It turned out, six months later: He came and he said, he had been sent to Dachau because he was not...he didn't want to work. So, that's how I found out the first time...yes, I heard about Dachau. I had never heard about Dachau before. What I am trying to bring out is that we had very close friendships...my father, my mother and my sisters. My sisters less because girls were more inclined to stick with the Jewish company, you know.

But I had a bicycle, and I was a boy and I played soccer and I was a street boy and I did everything everybody else did. I participated and I was no different than anybody else. I spoke the same way and there was no difference. So I have, in all fairness, I must say, whatever occurred was unfortunately...number one, I believe the Catholic Church had much to do with it because these peoples were raised as very strict Catholics. And just like we have today the problem with Muslims: If you are a Muslim, you believe in the same...in the same rights and the same liberties that...whether you are Jewish or Catholic or whatever. They did not, and the Catholic Church in Vienna, in Austria, is much to be blamed for what has happened in Austria. I don't know if they could have avoided it. I am not sure, because as it turned out later, it was much larger...it was a problem of much larger proportions than we knew. We measured it by our own personal experience. But when we found out later that he wanted the whole world, of course, nobody believed it. He stated it clearly in *Mein Kampf*. Nobody read it to that extent, that you believed this was reality. But it became reality. And I believe in all fairness these people had no idea when they...when this friend of mine participated in exercises with the SS, in secret, and next day he went with me as a friend and went out with a Jewish girl on the Saturday night to a dance. He had no idea of the significance...or what it was. And I don't want to whitewash anyone – it is not my purpose. But I am honest, I am frank and I tell you for your purpose, for history, for whatever you...you know whatever...history will be kept, that Austria is...the Catholic Church in Austria has much guilt to bear on what has happened. Whether they could have avoided it or not, I am not sure.

2/00:10:28

**AB:** Maybe we can go on to the *Reichskristallnacht*. You told us--

**EF:** --the *Kristallnacht* was...the worst in my life. It was unbelievable. And I...to this day, so many years later...don't forget. You forget many things, but when you concentrate, many things come back to your memory. We had...every night there was torture, in the gymnasium in the Kenyongasse...and that was the highlight of German brutality, until that day. It was completely unforeseen, came harder...it had never...I had

never heard of this kind of torture that I had seen. People were beaten, people were burnt, people were... I mean any possible torture. And some survived and some you never heard from again – they disappeared that night.

**AB:** What happened to the other members of your family? Because--

**EF:** --my family? My brothers were hidden. I don't know what they...where they were. They were still in Vienna, both of my brothers, but they were not taken. One lived in *sechsten Bezirk*, he lived in the Gumpendorferstraße and, apparently, he got away with it because he...people didn't know, and the other one lived *im Prater*. As a matter of fact, I think he lived by the...in the Wehlstraße and somehow he got away. I have no idea how he got away with it. When I came back, they were still in Vienna, but the following year, while I was in the emigration, one went to Italy illegally, and another one went to Israel on a certificate from the British – at that time there was still the British there. He emigrated legally. They were both married. One...the oldest one had a very good position, a very lucrative, very...paid very well. The other one had a nice business, a good business *im zweiten Bezirk*, a delicatessen store...very good store, which was taken over and taken away from him. And...he never saw...never heard anything. He passed away a number of years ago – both are dead now. As I said, there is only two of us left. My sisters...four of my sisters and both of my brothers are gone. So, what is left is myself and my youngest sister in Israel. The Austrian government has made an attempt, it seemed, a few years ago...when I found out that this chancellor...when I read some mail I received, that there was an attempt made to correct the...impression that was given the world, that Austria was a victim – which was totally untrue because...if you want to speak of reasons why, that is one thing. But the fact is, when Hitler marched into Austria, he came in my neighborhood am Sternplatz [heute Praterstern], which is *am Praterstern*, which is the border between the second and a...a very important place...You know the Praterstern? That was the *Tegetthoff-Denkmal*. He came there in a parade and I was in Vienna. This was right after...this must have been March...he marched in on the March 13th and it may have been the 15th, 16th, a few days later. It was unbelievable, the...well, you must have seen pictures of the welcome he received.

And that was a fact: There was no neutrality. I did not meet someone that was against him. And I was in touch with a lot of...the best I got was sympathy. They said, "He is right, but you are right, too. You...nothing will happen to you. You will be safe." – they misunderstood. I will grant them that...many. But I believe that was a small minority in general. The majority was highly anti-Semitic. I tell you honestly, I have a friend of mine here that says – for whatever it is worth I have not expressed that, but I have sympathized with that sentiment – that the Austrians are born...they have anti-Semitism in their mother-milk. And there is much to be said for that. Because I believe tracing it...thinking about it intellectually, I believe there is no such thing. It comes consciously from education, and education that they were subjected to was mostly the Catholic Church, and the Catholic Church in those years was...Jesus was murdered by the Jews...a Jew was a...and you know about Oberammergau...about the *Festspiele*?

2/00:16:40

**EF:** And that was in those days the atmosphere, in which these people grew up, where they formed political opinions, and the economic desperation of being poor and hopeless...created this kind of an atmosphere, in which he was received as a hero that was going to save Austria. I must admit that a few friends, as I mentioned to you, could not find a job for a few years. They were sent to Germany – they were members of the party – came back six months later in uniform and they were...you know *was a Herrgott* is? They came in those green uniforms, you never saw that with those pith helmets, that the...*Schupo*...German *Schupo* wore. They came back in the *Schupo*-uniform. And they were looked at as gods and, as a matter of fact, I...Hans Fletsch – I still know his name – he lived in my house. He said to me, “If you want to go someplace with the *Straßenbahn*”, because he figured I looked Jewish and you could be accosted and could...anything could happen, he said, “If you want to go, tell me and I will go with you, I will take you.” That is a fact, I can’t forget it. He went with me. I had to go to...I don’t remember...some place – he went with me. We stood on the platform – they couldn’t sit, so I stood with him. He said, “*Steh, bleib hier mit mir.*” He went with me on a trip and went back with me. But socially at home, he couldn’t associate with me. Nobody could see him, he would not be seen, he told me, “You must understand, we had thought that we couldn’t associate with Jews.” They underwent a six-month training in German and they got a job. They came back and they got a job. Now you figure, that a man that was home for three, four years and didn’t find a job, didn’t work...there is nothing more demoralizing than not working. He came back as *ein Herrgott*...that, of course, it is understood.

But those are exceptions that I mention to you to be balanced...to not be partial. I don’t want to be partial, although I have every right to be partial and have the necessity to be partial. But life, 60 years later...you go through a lot and you learn a lot and hopefully mankind has learned something from that. And that’s why I cannot understand that, to this day, a [Jörg] Haider can become so strong in Austria where the history clearly shows where this leads...this philosophy leads. And again, fortunately...you know, I went back 30 years, 40 years later...I don’t know, one time I went to Germany. And from Germany I drove...I rented a car and I drove to Salzburg into Austria. And I stopped in Salzburg in a hotel, a very nice hotel, and I spoke to the clerk – and this is in the 60’s, 70’s...I don’t recall. And in my passport, which is an American passport...it says, “Born Vienna, Austria,” but I was still so militant that I said, “I don’t speak German. I speak English.” – I had been in the army here, I had learned, I spoke English enough to converse. Especially when I went into Austria I said, “I am not going to give them the satisfaction of speaking German.” And I stuck to it.

And it was interesting: You go through the border from Germany to Austria and they hold the...and they get the passport and the guy looks at it and he says, “You are American?” – I said, “Yes.” – “You were born in Austria, weren’t you?” I says “Yes”. So, we drove on and we went into Salzburg to this hotel. I think it was *Österreichischer Hof, an der Salzach*. We saw the *Festspiele*, we saw...beautiful. And we stayed in a nice hotel and there was a man...the man behind the desk...the desk clerk, who was a very nice young man and he hadn’t known anything. And he looked at the passport. And I had spoken English and I was young and I dressed modern and he had American...I guess there was a difference in how you dressed in those days. And he said, “You are Austrian, you were born in Austria, how come you don’t speak?” I say, “I do speak, but I don’t like to speak.” – To put a perspective on this, you age and you...perhaps become soft and you see certain things differently and then reality catches up with you when you see this didn’t go away. It still exists.

And, apparently, man does not learn...and man will not learn. So, hopefully the people who have the right thinking and the right feeling will be in the majority and we will not go through problems like we have had before. And I do appreciate your effort and what you are doing. And I hope whatever is worthwhile is selected here out of this interview and is used for the right purpose.

**AB:** I hope so as well. May I ask you some more questions?

**EF:** Sure.

2/00:22:44

**AB:** After you came back from Dachau, you had to go to--

**EF:** --I had to leave immediately.

**AB:** Did you stay in contact with your family? From Holland--

**EF:** --yes, from Belgium.

**AB:** How did you do it? With--

**EF:** --mail. Yes, there was regular...there was peace, yet. This was at the end of [19]39 and [19]40...no...the end of [19]38! The *Kristallnacht* was [19]38 and in the beginning of [19]39...until September 1st [19]39, when they bombed Warsaw, it was peace and there was mail – and I corresponded. And my parents were still living there, where they were, and they remained there until I came here to America. They couldn't go anywhere. Everybody went somewhere...eight children...everybody went, only my parents stayed. You saw in the email. In the end they had...I couldn't help them, I stayed in touch with them from the army here until 1941, from America – there was still ways...through the chaplain that I was able to send mail to Austria. In 1941, which was after we already were at war...America was at war with Germany. I don't know how, this may be through the pouch, army mail or whatever. – And I stayed in touch with them until June or July [19]41, when a letter came back. And as I found out now from this...on this...what it says here. [Nimmt einen Zettel.]

**AB:** The letter from the *DÖW* [*Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes*]?

**EF:** Yes, they have a deportation transport number...to the ghetto on November 2nd. They have the date exactly: November 2nd.

**AB:** So, you found it out only two years ago.

**EF:** No!

**AB:** Oh, you told me: only two months ago.

**EF:** This year, two months ago! I spend hours in Israel, they have a film...you can look through...what they call that micro--?

**AB:** --microfilm.

**EF:** Yes, microfilm. And you look through every *Lager*...I looked through to find traces and I couldn't find them. I was in Vienna *bei der [Israelitischen] Kultusgemeinde* and they couldn't find them...I couldn't find them. I went...sent to the *Staatsarchiv*. – and the Austrians are so exact with the archives, everything is archived. They found out I was in Dachau – they know exactly when. They told me they know exactly when I was there and how long...to the day, but they couldn't find out what they found out here. That they were transported from Vienna and that there was a mass transport that took place... “5000 Jewish victims from Vienna arrived in large...between October 16th and November 4th, 1941.” And they couldn't find out what happened.

2/00:26:01

**AB:** So, only the *DÖW* was able to show you--

**EF:** --they found out. Now, don't tell me that knowing Austrian order, they did not have documentation of that transport, when the Germans ordered that transport, how it came about...what happened – nobody knows. There is nobody that...there is no record. Somebody destroyed these records, just like the records of my father's factory disappeared. Somebody walked in there and took it. There were big machines. My father saved his whole life and paid off these machines. There were machines as big as this...you know in those days you used to cut books by hand. When you had to cut a thick book like this...Hebrew books, this thick – you had to cut it. So, there was a machine that was that big, that developed power where you cut. And then there was a press that was just as big, where you pressed covers. And the covers...he bound very expensive books, certain very exclusive books that they read in certain higher learning of Hebrew. And no trace...and no one found out, now who took over the apartment? Who took over the factory? There is no record. Now the building stands there, I'm sure. Because my building is there – I was there. I saw there is a plaque there. The building was bombed by the Americans, I think. And my daughter wanted to see it. We went up to where I lived. But there is no trace, no one could find out what happened. So, they gave us now a...final pay-off of 7000 dollars. Now that does not...yeah, that reminds me of an incident: You know, my wife was born in Berlin. And we met here, and she was young and she left Berlin, she was twelve years old. Yet the Germans found it important enough to invite her and me as her husband. And we went to Germany on a trip. They took us there and they were very nice, very hospitable both, they showed us around. That was a time when it was a divided Germany. They chauffeured us, they gave us tickets to the opera, they treated us as guests. So, I wrote to the Austrians and wrote, “Don't you think you owe me at least to...do the same that the Germans do? My wife was in a concentration camp. I paid for it.” So, at first they wrote, that they cannot do anything.

Then maybe five years later, they invited me. And I kept that because this is something I will never forget. [Holt den Brief hervor.] And I don't know what the hell I did with it...here, I have it here. This is interesting: They invited me to come to Germany. Now, the invitation is the kind of invitation that is not very friendly, let's put it this way. The invitation reads very clearly. There is a paragraph, "Sollte es Ihnen, aus welchen Gründen auch immer, nicht möglich sein, diesen Termin wahr zu halten, gibt es dafür keinen Ersatz und ihre Vormerkung bzw. Einladung erlischt. Leider sind wir zu einer solchen Maßnahme aufgrund der vielen Wartenden veranlasst." *Das war...das Datum...* what was left was very few...I don't remember the year...[19]99. Now there were in [19]99 from...[19]38, that's what? 33 years...imagine how many are not here anymore, how many are left...percentagewise...to send me this kind of invitation. So, I would like to put this on record, if they like it or not and whether it is worthwhile or not: I resented the fact that they sent me an invitation where they told me very clearly, "Für eine etwaige Begleitperson bezahlen wir die Transferkosten und Veranlassung der Buchung für das Hotelzimmer." That means that they let her sleep with me, "Für die Bezahlung vom Flugticket und das Hotelzimmer muss diese begleitende Person ausnahmslos, auch wenn es sich um ein Ehepaar handelt, selbst aufkommen."

2/00:30:53

Now that was in 1999. I wrote them back – I tell you the truth, I was very upset – and I wrote back, "First I would like to thank you for the invitation to visit Vienna. As a former Austrian citizen, born and raised in Vienna, I have some thoughts, which may be of some interest to you: I was born in Vienna in April 1918 enjoying life in a free environment until the sudden end in March 1938. I was deprived of a normal life in the city of my birth on the Crystal Night, November 10th, 1938. As a Jew I was reported to the Nazis by a school college and sent to Dachau. On December 1938, after being released from Dachau, I had to flee Austria at night into temporary asylum in Belgium, where in December [19]39 I was finally able to emigrate to America and establish a permanent home. I left my parents in Vienna, never to see them again, since they were sent East and were never heard from again. In the invitation to visit Vienna you attached very stringent conditions. I must assume that the purpose of this invitation is...someone's intention for me and others invited to, somehow, renew our feelings for our former home. As much as I appreciate the good idea, I wonder whoever is in charge of the program really has an understanding and sympathy for the person invited. It was 1939 and I was twenty years old when I left my home in *Wien*. 60 years have gone by, when today I receive this invitation to come for a visit. I am now 81 years old, married for 55 years and I am told in very stern words, 'Come alone, we can't afford to finance your wife's transportation and hotel.' I cannot understand this insensitivity to my feelings. Do you think I would leave my companion of 50 years...56 years at home because I am financially unable to meet the cost? What is the motivation behind this offer? If this is a matter of economics, how many people are still alive and able to use this invitation? I believe this is supposed to be a friendly gesture on the part of the Austrian authorities. At this time, 60 years after the *Anschluss*, when surely not many former *Wiener* are still alive, this offer should be a little more understanding and generous. I believe with the attitude demonstrated in this offer, the message conveyed is not of genuine feeling of

welcome. Sincerely, Emanuel Fuchs.” – I never received a response. It means nothing, but I felt better. I had to get that out of my chest, because I believe it tells something about people today – this is in 1999 –, how people feel in 1999, 60 years later.

**AB:** You arrived in New York?

**EF:** I arrived in New York in November 19...let me think back...1939, as a matter of fact, a year after...almost to the day, I think, I have arrived in November 1939.

**AB:** How was it to see the skyline and the *Statue of Liberty*?

**EF:** It was a great thing. It was a...something that I had dreamed of and I had given up my dreams...that it would ever materialize. I had heard about America, I had been a fan of American films in Vienna. And in those days we were progressive, we did a lot of things on the style of America. America was an ideal for us in those days...for young people living like Americans. Those were the days of Broadway melodies and Fred Astaire...I don't know if you have heard of him? But those were the heydays, the beautiful days of good living and free living, and American idols were very important to me as a twenty-year-old. So, when I arrived here, I have seen the realization of my dreams and furthermore, I was very fortunate, one of the very few that were lucky enough. My brother-in-law that had given me a job in Vienna and taught me to be a furrier, was in business already. He had come here a few months before me and he had started a little business. And when I arrived, my sister came to the ship.

2/00:35:35

My sister came to the ship when I arrived, with my cousin...my American cousin that sent me the affidavit. And they picked me up and I went to them and stayed with them for two days. And then they let me go back to New York, where my sister lived, and I went to work the next day, to my brother-in-law's factory and I worked there for a few years until I went into business for myself. And it was the greatest time, we enjoyed it. Of course, we had...unfortunately, I didn't enjoy the freedom too long, because I was here a year and a couple of months and I was drafted to the army. And I was one of the first ones that were drafted into the American army. I was inducted in January 1941, after arriving here in November [19]39 – so, you can imagine that is what...that is fourteen months that I was here. And I was sent to a camp in Texas. It had certain advantages: First I learned English very fast, secondly, I became an American. I became americanized and I saw the country. I was sent to...from New York, I was drafted in Brooklyn where I lived with my sister, and from there I was sent to Texas, where I opened a camp...the camp wasn't even open. America had demilitarized. I don't know if you know the history after the First World War. America had completely demilitarized. There was no militarism here and we came into the camp and we did drill, as a private in an infantry. I drilled with a wooden rifle. We had no guns. It took...maybe six months until we got real rifles. They came in cartons in wax...in oil, and we had to unpack them and clean them. And that's how we got rifles.

And we opened that camp and we stayed there, and then I came to Texas and then I stayed there a few months for basic training, and then I was sent to California. And, strange as it sounds, but I...clearly had indicated I speak German, I came from Austria. And the American army was at war in the East...in the Far East, in Japan, and I was sent to Saint Louis, which is a point for embarkation for the army to go to the Far East in California. And I was selected in the middle...while we were training and doing exercises, I was called before the lieutenant and asked about my language and he sent me to the G.S. [General Service], which was a liaison officer. I was sent to the brigade headquarters. So it is strange, you asked me about my living here...it is strange, how things are, I guess one arm is as bad as the other. I had a good time, I enjoyed it. They were very good to me here. I had a problem at first because I had to explain to people...because this was before the war and I was drafted in an Italian section and Mussolini at that time was the dictator of Italy. And they had very strong allies here in America with the Axis. And they said to me, "You must have done something wrong." They wouldn't believe it when I had told them that I had been in a concentration camp. They insisted, "There must be..." – they couldn't understand...the world didn't understand yet. As I indicated this of speaking in 1941, before Pearl Harbor, of course, when things changed. But I was there in the summer of 1941 and I was there with these boys and we were good friends. We all became good friends in the army, but they...when we talked politics, about...they were very much...very sympathetic to the Axis. Because they thought here, where they came from...in their home about Italy and about Germany...and you know about conditions here in New York in those years: There was fifth columns here from Germany that were very influential, and that had its effect. So, I had good years, fortunately, I was able because I contracted a virus in Europe, as a kid. We were sent to California where the climate was very adverse, and I couldn't take the climate and they gave me a certificate of disability discharge so I was discharged and I came back and I--

**AB:** --when was it?

**EF:** In 1942. And I had an opportunity to come back here and I went to work. And I worked and then I went into business. And I...since then have supported myself in good style and, fortunately, I get a pension. And I live good and I have no complaints. America is being good--

2/00:40:54

**AB:** --what kind of business did you make? I think it was fur--

**EF:** --no, I changed. While I was here, I changed. I went into the jewelry business because my brother, my older brother, had a connection into the jewelry business and he got me into it, when I came back from the army. And I saved a little money. I financed...going into the jewelry business...into a store...opening a jewelry store. And I let my wife go to the store. And I was married already and I continued working to make sure I had a living. But it worked out fine in a short time and after I left the fur line and went to the store and I became a jeweler. And I have been a jeweler ever since.

**AB:** That's great. You changed your name then.

**EF:** Of course, I changed my name here, when I became a citizen, in the army.

**AB:** Just because--

**EF:** --well, my name was easier. It was...it sounded better and I had no more reason...in Vienna, when we became citizens...it is interesting that you ask me because it says something about...my...thinking. When we became citizens...you know the act of becoming a citizen is an official act. In Austria, you had to pay a lot of money, and had to pay a lawyer, and had to pay taxes, and amongst other things you can have the opportunity to change your name. And my parents asked me, "You want to change your name?" And I said, "No, I am staying!" because I had been...as a child...I had been teased about my name. I was stubborn enough, I said, "No, I'll keep my name". So, I kept my name all through, until I came to America. When I came to America, I became a citizen, in the army. They gave me the opportunity, they swore me in – it was a very meaningful ceremony...with guys in the army, you know in uniform – and they swore me in and I thought it was appropriate at this time that I do change my name to Emanuel, which is a more generic name. You know it is not a typical Jewish name – I didn't have to resist any anti-Semitism, I felt. It says something about my change, at least to me...maybe I am using it, but it does say to me that I had felt liberated. I didn't have a reason to stubbornly oppose.

**AB:** You have children, right?

**EF:** Yes, I have. I have two children. I have my oldest, a daughter...who is a professional – she is a librarian. And I have a son who is a professor in a university. He is a chemical engineer and he teaches chemical engineering at the University of Reno, Nevada. Unfortunately, it is far from here, we see them twice a year. And he is married – he has a wife who is a doctor – he is married and he has four children, small children. And we see them twice a year. It is a long trip for us so, it gets more difficult.

**AB:** It is nice in Nevada?

**EF:** Yes, it is beautiful. He lives in Reno. – I don't gamble...and before, when I was...you know before he was there professionally and I went to visit him, when I went to this Las Vegas. We never went to Reno...I went to Reno once, that was only when I was discharged from the army. I came...that's why I was in Reno and that has been years ago. But I used to go to Vegas and I used to gamble and play a little...I didn't gamble, but I played a little. Now, that I go to visit him in Reno, he is on business and he picks me up, I stay in a hotel. And the hotel in these places, they have machines right in your home, they bring it almost to your room. You can't escape it. – I escape it, we have no interest. My wife and I were there seven days, we don't put in a nickel. It was not...because...it was principle. But we just not...are not interested. We go there on a visit...a family visit, and we enjoy it. As you can see, I have been active ever since. I got many awards. I was successful.

2/00:45:14 [Übergang/Schnitt.]

I became executive director of the *New York State Jewelers Association* when I sold my business...and I started a new career. I was 65, believe it or not...started a new career. And I worked there and I got plaques and I got medals and I got pictures and I got write ups. This is a CEO [Chief Executive Officer] over there of *Tiffany*, this guy and this was our president, this lady. [Zeigt Fotos.] And I was the executive director of the association. So, I finished my life. Three years ago I resigned and I enjoy it. I now have a place in Florida where I go for the winter, and I do the best I can with the problems you have...you know, when you are not well, when you get older. It's not that...it's not easy anymore. I have physical problems, my wife has physical problems and we do the best we can and we live out our life. And we let the future in your hands.

**AB:** Maybe the last thing, because you told me before...before the interview: The story of your Austrian visit. The way how you met this...your *Schulwart*.

**EF:** This was not in a visit, no. When I went on a visit, he died the day.

**AB:** No, I mean--

**EF:** --when I came back from Dachau, my mother told me, "Edi Nemitscheks Mutter hat mir gesagt, er will mit mir reden. Edi will mit mir reden." – Er war der SS-Mann. Er war schon damals ein Sturmführer. Whatever, so, I said, "Ok, *ich gehe runter zu ihm*,"...or he comes up to me, I don't remember. I went to his house, I think, *er hat im zweiten Stock gewohnt...im vierten Stock*. So, he was very sympathetic. He was an SS man, as I said, and he sat in the black uniform and he came from a very humble background...Czech people. He had a job – he is the one that had the job, that worked as a machinist – and he was my best friend. And he worked every day and in the evening...we spend the evenings together and weekends together. He went with me to affairs, where we went with Jewish girls and he danced with the Jewish girls and it was...it became so...that much more incredible when he came all of a sudden as an officer of the SS. I just couldn't believe it. I said, "Edi! Was...wo kommst du her? Wie bist du dort dazugekommen?" He said, "Du kannst dich erinnern, jeden Donnerstag bin ich spät gekommen – wir haben Übungen gehabt. Und mein Chef hat uns geholfen immer und er war ein Offizieller in der Partei und er hat uns...aber dir wird nichts passieren. Hier dein Vater war bei...wir brauchen keine Juden, die arbeiten, wir suchen nur Juden, die sind Spekulanten, wir suchen..." You know...you heard of the...what they used in those days. And that was the incidence. So, I have two...I have that one where...I came from Dachau and he called me and he sort of explained to me...he felt guilty. He explained to me, he would have *Dienst in der Polizeikommissariat den Tag...am 10. November* and *hat gesehen den Heidi...hat er geheißten*...I have forgotten already. He named names of boys that went to school...of classmates and he said, "He hit Jews and he hit Jews," and he tried to show me that he was sympathetic – there was this one.

And then there was another one who was also a very good...my best friend. We were young, we had good friends. Der Edi Ruschowitz, der war auch ein tschechischer...[h]at am Dach gewohnt in meinem Haus. Und der war...der war...ein Jahr älter wie ich, glaube ich...oder zwei Jahre älter. Und der war immer sehr judenfreundlich. – I mean, I knew it...we were aware that we were Jews...we were different. And he was always...whenever he could, he showed sympathy. And he was not a Nazi, he didn't go to the party or

anything. When I came back, *als ich zurückgekommen bin nach Wien*...years later, I don't remember what year...this was...it must have been...I think it was in [19]76, because my daughter moved to England...it was in [19]77. She moved to England in [19]76. My son-in-law, who was an engineer, took a job in England and she moved there. She bought a flat and we came to visit. They came to Europe, to the continent, we met in Vienna and she wanted to see where I lived. So, I had a car. They got in the car and we drove. I stayed at the *Hilton im dritten Bezirk* and we drove *zum Zweiten im Prater, in die Schöngasse*, where I lived. And I showed her and while we were standing there by the car – we were four – and we were standing and I showed the house, “*Vis-à-vis ist die Schule* and *am ersten floor ist der Schuldiener*,” – so wie es war schon damals in Wien...die Leute haben rausgeschaut damals aus dem Fenster. He was sitting *am Fenster* like this and *er hat da rausgeschaut*. Und dann hat er gesagt, “Kenne ich Sie? Was suchen Sie?” So, I told him. Meine Tochter war school teacher in those days, she had just graduated college. She was a teacher here in America before she became a librarian – I told them, “Ja. Sie kennen meine Familie?” – “Wie heißen Sie?” – Sage ich: “Fuchs”, und der: “Fuchs! Fuchs, ich kenne Sie!” Ist er rausgekommen mit der Frau, mit den Kindern...I don't remember who. Der Sohn...ein Sohn war ein Schulkollege von mir, der Edi...wie hat er geheißen? Bube...und der war nicht da. “So, der muss schon nicht mehr...” – that was 30 years after the war. [19]76...yes, 40, sure. So, he must have died, he wasn't there. Aber der Vater war da. Der war noch immer Schuldiener. And we talked. Und er hat gesagt, “Ja, ich kann mich erinnern an Ihre Eltern. Ich kenne Ihren Vater. Sicher kenne ich Sie!” So, he opened the school and showed my daughter the school. She was interested as a teacher. Und dann sage ich ihm: “Kennen Sie...können Sie sich erinnern an Edi Ruschowitz?” – Sagt er, “Sicher kann ich mich erinnern an ihn! Wollen Sie ihn sehen?” – Sage ich, “Ja.” – Sagt er, “Ok, fahren Sie rauf auf der Vorgartenstraße.” Ich weiß nicht, ob Sie...kennen Sie sich aus da? Da wo der 11er Wagen [Straßenbahn Linie 11] geht?

2/00:52:14

**AB:** Ja, ja, die Vorgartenstraße.

**EF:** Da samma raufgoan [sind wir raufgefahren] in der Vorgartenstraßen. Und er hat mir...gegeben die Nummer. Und ich habe geparkt *the car*, wir sind alle vier reingegangen...wir kommen da rein, sehe ich da steht der...*bulletin board* und da ist ein...Partezettel drin. Und ich gehe hin, ich sage: “Wir sind hingefahren um ihn zu sehen! Er hat mir gesagt, er ist da, er wohnt da.” Wissen Sie? Fünfzehn Minuten bevor hat er mir gesagt, er wohnt da und ich komme hin zu ihm...Edi oder Eduard Ruschowitz, wie sie schreiben auf dem Partezettel. Und ich sage Ihnen, “*My God!* Das kann ich...I can't believe it. Look at the date! He just died a few...couple of days before.” Ist eine Frau dazugekommen, sagt sie, “Ja, ja, ich kenne ihn. Ja, der ist gerade gestorben, war ein feiner Kerl. Heute wird er beerdigt”. Als sie mir dieses gesagt hat, habe ich mich umgedreht. Ich sage Ihnen, ich war...heute kann ich allein nicht verstehen, warum ich so *upset* war. But I was so shook up, that I said to my daughter, “I am going out, please let's go!” I went out to the car and we got in the car and they saw that I was shook up, because he...was an exception. He was not a Nazi. He was

really a good guy, you know...a good guy and we were as close as brothers. And I was there, I came there on the day he was buried.

**AB:** It's unbelievable.

**EF:** It's something that you don't forget. So, in my life...you know, you can write a book. And it may interest you, but it is certain...it has a lot of interesting subjects.

**AB:** Yes. I think we could finish here. I thank you for--

**EF:** --my pleasure. I thank you for your time.

**AB:** Thank your for your openness--

**EF:** --listen, you spread the word. You are an intelligent man – you would not be doing what you are doing – you have the right thoughts. It is your generation...that can make the world a better place. There have to be more like you, it has to come from you, because coming from us...even my children are condemned in history to be partial. But you are not partial, you have the world at your fingertips. You are free, you are not a Jew...today you are not a Muslim, so you have a freedom of expression, of an opinion that is neutral, that is objective, I believe. And it is an intellectual position that you have, that hopefully can spread to more people. And influence the government, if you have any pursuit in the government. Unfortunately, they lost a generation – Austria – that was very constructive. They are your loss because they have contributed to culture, to education...I don't have to tell you...to science, to medicine – Austrian medicine was tops – and they destroyed it. They must bear the fruits of that labour, you know? So, this is unfortunate for your generation, but you can bring it back. I for one wish you luck and I wish you all the best. Learn a lot what America is about, because I have learned a lot. Do you want to know the truth?

2/00:56:22

I was a liberal in my early youth. Jews...to be honest with you, maybe I am prejudice, but we Jews – because of how we suffered in the diaspora – are liberals, because you have got to be liberal, you have known prejudice all your life. In any case, I was raised...I raised myself as a liberal, I always had liberal ideas. "Live and let live," was my belief. And here in America, to be honest with you, I learned how much I had to learn, how much I had to go to become a liberal...to really become a democrat. Austria has a long way to go, all the countries, maybe with the exception of England. I spent some time in England, the British are really marvelous. They are the nearest thing to the Americans, they come from the same place and America is the home of the free – truly, honestly. And there is no better life for anybody then when you give everyone – I don't care who...we were prejudiced, I had no interest in a Jew coming from the East, how chauvinistic you get, you know – you try not to be, but human nature is bad. You have to fight human nature, you have to fight the bad instincts that are born in you. Because America has made a big effort in that direction. America has achieved really...the nearest thing that I know...like Churchill said, "It is a lousy

system, but show me a better one.” It is a fact. It has a lot of faults, but the fact is that, after living here from 1939...when I came here, the end of [19]39, to today, I can tell you that this country...unfortunately, I never thought I would live to the day that we would be insecure in this country, with what happened. Because I thought this was paradise...the nearest thing to mankind’s paradise. So spread the word. At your age I was in the middle of turmoil, so you enjoy your life--

**AB:** --at my age you were in the military--

**EF:** --yes, I was in the army, but after what I went through. So, I don’t have to tell you. You enjoy and get the best out of it. Enjoy it here, it is a beautiful country. Unfortunately, you are here at a rough time, it is bad...it is bad with what happened here. But America has to watch it, because you know what happened: Fanaticism.

**AB:** Well, let’s hope the best. Thank you again.

**EF:** My pleasure, good luck to you.

**[Ende des Interviews.]**

Interview mit Emanuel Fuchs am 3. November 2001, Cliffside Park, New Jersey/USA, geführt von Andreas Barth, Austrian Heritage Collection, Signatur AHC 2060; URL: [www.austrianheritagearchive.at/interviews/person/373](http://www.austrianheritagearchive.at/interviews/person/373)