

Arthur Gross *From Austria to Wheeling*

Arthur Gross: Arthur Gross. And I was born in Vienna, Austria. My parents came from Romania. My father from Romania. My mother was from Poland. They lived there at the time when it was a part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire as this before WWI. My father served in the Austrian army. He was an officer and was in charge of hospital ... And he lived, we lived in Vienna at that time. I was born in 1915 in Vienna. Later after the War we moved to a small town in Austria near Vienna. My father was a pharmacist and he bought a pharmacy, a store in Austria in that little town. We lived there for about six years and then moved back to Vienna. Where I attended primary schools, high school and then went to the University of Vienna and studied medicine. I had ten semesters, which is five years in medicine when Hitler came. And I had to interrupt my studies. I had one more semester, thirty-six months to go for my graduation as a M.D..

Michael Noble Kline: So, put it in a form of a question then.

Carrie Noble Kline: So, if you could tell us more about your early years. Who were the other kids in your family? What kinds of things did you like to do together? ...

AG: I had one sister. I still have one sister. Who is three years older. And we lived in a small town that's called ... in Austria. Which was right on the Czech border. I attended some, first couple grades in ... in school. My father owned a pharmacy and our house was right, part of the store. We had a big back yard. We had chicken and other farm animal. We had a garden. And we lived -- My sister at that time was sent to Vienna to a school. To a private school because she was advanced and there was no school of that caliber in ... My early years were just growing up in a small town where everybody knows everybody else. Being Jewish, by my religion, there was hardly any Jewish community there. There were only a few families and just occasional services were held, religious services in this town. When we moved to Vienna, we lived in an apartment in Vienna. And at that time I attended my primary grades, further my education. And I walked to school everyday. It was about a fifteen-twenty minute walk from where we lived. And I went then to high school, which is a little bit different than the school system in the United States. Our grades were the first four years were primary grades. And then we took an exam to go to high school. The high school was eight years. It's in the reverse the way you have it here. The first four years in high school are mostly general subjects and liberal arts and so

(50) on. And after the fourth year you decide if you want to go, what we call the ... Which meant a school where you have more math and go into engineering fields eventually. Or else, ... which is more humanistic elements by if you want to go into a profession like physician or lawyer ... You went to the ... And I took that way

because I was going to go to medical school. During those time, you had, of course, to take Latin or Greece. It was a compulsory. And, also, one foreign language. Which in my case, you had the choice of English or French. And I, of course, took English. Not knowing that I am going to need it later on. This -- For the next eight years, as I said, I was in that school. Developed quite a large circle of friends. Austria was a Catholic country. About 90% of the population was Catholic. About 8 or 9% Protestant. And half a percent was Jewish. Vienna in itself had a large Jewish population, of about 10% of the population was Jewish. It amounted to about 200,000 people. It was two million dollar, two million dollar? Two million families lived in Vienna. My life in Vienna was very comfortable. My father did very well economically.

CNK: What did he do?

AG: He was a pharmacist. He had at that time, when we moved to Vienna, he bought this pharmacy in Vienna. And he was the owner and he employed a few people. And we had a very comfortable life. My mother was not working. She, at that time, it was not a custom. And she kept, take care of the house. She had -- We always had help. Household help that stayed with us. And my mother loved to play Bridge. She played Bridge practically everyday of her life. And

(82) and was very good at that. My life was devoted to studying. And, also, I had a very active social life. I was always, and I still am a bug for theater. So, we went to -- I went to plays practically two or three times a week in Vienna. We had a lot of different theaters. And belonged to a literary club that was for young people, more or less. That some of them want to be writers or poets, or anything like this. So, we were active in that group. My father was very active in the Zionist organization, which is a political organization that tried to establish a state. A Jewish state in Palestine. At that time it was not -- Israel was called Palestine. He became Regional President for that organization. It was a very active organization.

CNK: Did you ever attend ... meetings?

AG: Oh yeah. We went to meetings. We were all involved to a certain degree. Not as much as he was, but we all active in it. We done in '38. Ahh, let me back up.

CNK: So, you were born in -- Yeah.

AG: Let me back up. I graduated from high school in 1933. And went to the University of Vienna, medical studies. And I studied for five years until 1938. '30's we was, of course, the year Hitler came to power in Germany. However, we in Austria, even though it was a neighboring country, at that time didn't seem to be too concerned. We were very naive politically. Dependent on the guarantees that were given to us by the various democracies, like the United States and England and France. They promised that they would protect us in case of any attack.

Which, of course didn't work out later on. We have, had time really. If we would have known what was going to happen, to leave the country. And could have saved ourselves, including everything we owned at that time. But, we had -- Like I said, we had all kinds of guarantees. And we had very anti-national, anti-nazi government in Austria. Which is called, was Christian Democratic Party. At that time, one of my idols was Chancellor Dolf, who was very anti-Nazi and very pro-Austrian. And, I, at that time was a very strong patriot for Austria. And belonged to some patriotic organizations there.

- (126) CNK: What did you do in them?
- AG: Well, mainly we went on demonstrations and things like this. And assemblies and trying to support candidates, political candidates. It was a political activist organization, really. My friends in high school all -- Well, --
- CNK: Why are you crying?
- AG: I get instructions. My friends in high school were practically all Catholics. I was the exception of about three or four Jewish friends that I had. And we had very good and close relationships. Some of them lived right next door to me and we saw each other and spend a lot of time together.
- CNK: What did it mean to you to be Jewish in those years?
- AG: In Vienna, the Jews had a very, very prominent status. There was not -- It was pretty, well, equality. There was no -- Very little discrimination. Now in Austria there was all this subtle type of anti-semitism. But, it was not organized anti-semitism. Not a state organized anti-semitism. The individuals that you met. Even though they were agreeable, friendly and so on, there was always an undertone of discrimination, or disassociation of ... with Jews. However, you could economically do whatever you wanted to do. There was freedom. And you could -- There was no restriction as far as professionals are concerned. You could study medicine, or anything. There was no restriction as to the number of Jews. In fact, there were quite a few Jewish doctors in Vienna. So, that part was very agreeable. Of course, that changed in March, '38. When Hitler annexed Austria. Marched into Austria and occupied it. The Austrian army at that time was no match for the German army. We was a small country. The total population of
- (160) Austria was six million people. So, there was no protection. And we did not depend, really, on our army. We thought we would get outside protection from the other countries. Which didn't materialize. So, when the ... came in March, '38, of course, I personally knew that I had to leave. And all our family was ready to leave.
- CNK: How did you know that?
- AG: Because we already knew the example that was going on in Germany. That they already had it for five years under Nazi. And we were informed about that. Except that we were not prepared really for that quick ...

annexation of Austria. So, we were trying to arrange papers for, to go, to leave the country. At that time we had no idea where we could go. In fact, my first choice for immigration at that time was Australia. I wanted to advocate Australia. But, that proved to be impossible.

CNK: Why Australia?

AG: I just had a notion that that's a country that was wide-opened and had a good future, was sparsely populated, was not overcrowded. And, so, economically, I figured there's more chance to get ahead there. But, it so turned out that my father's sister lived in the United States. She was a United States citizen. And she provided an affidavit for me so I could apply for a visa to the United, for an exit visa and an entry visa into the United States. So, that's what I did. Unfortunately, my parents and my sister, both, were under different quotas than I. Because I was the only one that was born in Austria, Vienna. My sister was born in Poland. And my mother was from Poland. My father, Romania. And those quotas were all filled up. And there was no chance of leaving for them. However, because my father had been very active in the Zionist organization, he was able to get the certificate. At that time, they called it "Certificate", to immigrate to Palestine with my mother. And my sister had some -- My brother-in-law, her husband, had some relatives in Paris, so, they were able to get into France. To leave for France. But, that was not really an immigration. It was like just taking a trip and staying there. It was really illegal. ...

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AG: Yeah. In the mean time.

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AG: In the mean time, yeah. My sister had a small child. It was born, baby, was born in Vienna. That was before, I don't even know what year exactly, right now. But, she was just a small child. And they had to immigrate. My brother-in-law and my sister, both, also are pharmacists, by the way. And they worked in my father's store, while we were there.

CNK: Your sister was a pharmacist as well?

AG: Yes. And my brother-in-law is a chemist and pharmacist. He has degrees -- He has Ph.D. in chemistry. He is a pharmacist, too. One episode I might relate is how fast the things moved after the ... It was only couple months after the annexation. We were all home on a Sunday afternoon. There was a knock at the door and these knocks were always very suspicious. And we opened the door there were two storm troopers outside with guns. And they asked for my father. And, of course, we knew that -- We were afraid of the worse. And they asked him to come with them. We had no idea where they were going or what they were doing. So, they left

and you can imagine our feelings at that time. They took him to the pharmacy, which was about five, six blocks from where we lived. And there, and this is the story that I can only relate, that whom my, what my father told me. When they were there they just had some documents all written out. They had my father turning over his store to them. And that he does it on his free will, voluntarily. And I think they gave a token and a few marks so just to make it a legal document, ... And then, finally, after a few hours, they brought him back. In the mean time, we were afraid that we will never see him again.

CNK: What did you do during those few hours?

AG: Just sweat. It was terrible. Nothing we could do, but sit and wait and hope for the best. So, anyhow, this was the end of my father's independence. So, that's why I said they had to leave.

And we left. And my sister left. I was the first one to leave the country because my papers came through pretty fast. There was another episode I can tell you what, how the takeover affected me personally. Like I said, I was -- All my friends were, most of my friends, excuse me, were non-Jewish. Well, a few days after the ... , what three days, I had to go someplace. I don't even know where. And it was not safe to walk. And we didn't have a car. So, I took a taxi to wherever I had to go. Which was into the center of town. And there had been going on

(256) demonstrations continuously. Or, since ... There were people in the streets in uniforms. And I drove by the building by the University was. And there was a big demonstration outside on the street. And one of the guys that I saw from my cab was a fellow that went to school with me. One of my schoolmates. And brown shirt on, the uniform of the Nazi. And he was demonstrating for the Nazi's, of course. So, this drowned everything out. Besides, immediately, nobody stopped talking to you anymore. It was either they did it out of conviction, or they did it out of fear. I'm not sure. Or, both. But, if they were caught talking to a Jewish person, or socializing in anyway, they were in danger of being arrested themselves. So, the whole situation became unbearable. And we were all anxious to get out as fast as we could. Because we were afraid. We knew of a lot of people that, friends of ours, that were taken away and never showed up anymore. In fact, some of my brother-in-law's family was taken away and sent to concentration camp.

CNK: In Austria?

AG: Yeah. From Austria, yeah. There was some concentration camps in Austria. There was some in Czechoslovakia, which is near by. Some of them went to Germany. But, they send them anywhere. At that time, they called these camps, like labor camps. Actually, they told you it was for your protection. It was protection camp. But, they didn't protect you there.

CNK: Everybody knew, too?

AG: Well, most of them had a pretty good idea. We didn't know the details. At that time, we had no idea about the details as far as the ... concentration, or what was going on. In fact, at that time, in '38, I don't even believe the concentration camps were as active. They were really detention camps and they were labor camps, where they were forced labor. But, I think that the killing spree started right after the ... which was in November '39. Was it? No, November, '38, excuse me. After that they started, really, deporting people and torturing them. So, I finally got my visa. And that was a long procedure. You have to get a lot of documents. First of all, because of my age. I was a young person. I had to be sure that I have no military obligation. That I don't own anything. Because you had to leave everything there. And you could buy -- If you had a visa, you could buy steamship tickets for your traveling cost. You could buy your clothing and everything else, but you couldn't take out any cash. It was only about a few dollars. As in ten or fifteen dollars. It was something that just that you could do in taking cash. But, otherwise you could buy your provisions and spend your money that way. But then, like I said, you had to get a certification that you don't owe taxes. That you don't have any other debts. There all kinds of red tape. It was a long procedure. Then you had to deal with the American Consulate, which was another sad story because they were not always up to par. They were subject to bribes and things like this. Of course, in their desperation, people would offer anything to get out. So, you really -- If you had anybody that you knew that had any influence. You used that influence to get visa. I finally got out in September, '38. I went -- I had booked on the Italian line. So, I went to Italy.

(322) CNK: Tell us about leaving, about the beginning of your voyage. What was that like leaving your family? How old were you? About that morning.

AG: Well, at that time, in '38, I was twenty-five years old, twenty-three years old. Twenty-three, yeah, 1915. Twenty-three. And, well, leaving the family was tough because -- On the other hand, I knew that they were able to get out. And that was a consolation because we always had that hope. That one of these days we'll get together again. Which we finally did. But, it wasn't as bad as my wife's family. That was all destroyed in the concentration camps. So, I was really one of the more fortunate people to get out of there. But, it is tough to leave a home where you lived, country where you grew up and that you loved ...

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AG: Okay. Well, I didn't have to sign it to leave. I have to sign it if I would want to stay. But, I can backtrack that if you think it's important. My father who was, like I told you, an officer in the Austrian army. At that time, in the beginning, there was a certain protection. Supposedly a protection for veterans of the first World War. And

children of the veterans had a priority status. So, I came under that group. And at that time, they said if I would sign that I would not leave the country, that I would stay there. They would let me finish my medical studying. I had one more semester to go. But, of course, I didn't sign because I knew what was going to happen to me if I did. And I'm glad I didn't. "Nobody got out alive letter". So, anyhow, then I left for Italy. And we came on a nice tourist boat from Italy. And we had a whole Mediterranean crew because that's the way it was routed to the United States. Stopped at several ports. Actually it was a very enjoyable except for the circumstances. When I finally landed in New York, I was met by my aunt, who lived in New Jersey. And I stayed with her for a few months after I got there. Of course, I tried -- I was always was very independent and I tried to find a job. I didn't want to depend on anybody supporting me.

CNK: Where did you dock?

AG: In New York. New York Harbor. And --

CNK: What was that meeting like? Did you ever meet your aunt before?

AG: No, I haven't. I've known about her and, of course, corresponded with her. But, I never met her before. It was the first time I saw her. It was very -- She was a very, very, ah, how should I say, nice person. Very attached, very close to my father. It was his sister. And she did everything possible to make me comfortable.

CNK: How did you even recognize her?

AG: Well, from pictures and she knew what I looked like and so it was no, no problem. So, then I stayed with her, but I looked for work. And I got a job up in Philadelphia. She was right near Philadelphia, a few, about half an hour, or so, from Philadelphia. I got a job there. So, I commuted and made a few dollars. Very, very little money. But, at least I had something to do. After a few months, I decided I don't want to live anymore with her because I felt it was a burden to her. I got -- I went to Atlantic City and made contacts with Jewish organizations in Atlantic City. And they told me of some of the other refugees that had settled there. And I was introduced. And one was Berthel's brother. And we hit it off and we rented the place together. And I stayed with him and got good friends. There was another short fellow, also from Germany who joined us in that apartment. So, all three of us lived together. And I had some work there. That was so all very sparse. It was easy work. It was very enjoyable because Atlantic City was beautiful. I really enjoyed living there.

CNK: What was it like at the turn?

AG: Oh, it was wonderful. It was -- We lived on the beach. We lived more or less like beach bums. We just had a good time there. None of us made any big money. But, we just about barely existed. Had to watch every penny. Sharing the rent three ways helped. And we bought -- Sometimes I'll buy a pound of bologna and that

will be my meal for the day. So, we had to be very careful the way we spent our money. But, I worked in one of the luxury hotels on the boardwalk. And I did massage at that time. I had a few customers, very few women. Like I said, there wasn't much money there. Then, during the winter season, Atlantic City, of course, was empty. I had to find another place to work. And the logical place was Florida. So, I made contact with a hotel in Florida. Then I went to Florida and did the same work there during the winter season.

(431) CNK: Well, what was your background in massage?

AG: Well, before I left Austria, you see, as I said, I studied, my background was medicine. But, in order to learn some kind of a trade, it was, massage was a part of physiotherapy, really. And it tied in with some of the medical treatments that we used. I went to a school that was one of those "quick" schools. You know a couple or two, three months they teach you the basic fundamentals. And, so, I took Swedish massage. So, I have something that I got my diploma. So, I had something to show what I -- A piece of paper I got to the United States. So, it held me over. It was good that I had something that I could fall back on. So, after a couple seasons there, in Florida, I got draft notice to report into the army. At that time, the draft was in effect. In the mean time, of course, I had met Berthel through her brother. And developed, should I say "hot romance". A romance anyhow. And we were very close and very much in love. And Berthel had worked, has been working Atlantic City at that time. And we saw each other just about daily.

CNK: The microphone picks up the rustling of the paper.

AG: Oh, I'm sorry.

CNK: That's okay.

AG: Okay, I'll put it away.

CNK: So, you developed this "hot romance"?

AG: Yeah, so ..

CNK: Tell us about that.

AG: Well, that -- As I said, we saw each other daily and we had a limited social life because of finances. But, we did go to movies. We went and walked on the Boardwalk and once in awhile we'll splurge and have a beer or something on the Boardwalk. And, so, we had a good time. And, of course, all the time her brother was there, too. And, so, we had a very close relationship. And then when I went to Florida, the first year I was there by myself. And then the second year, Berthel got the job down there, so she came there for the season, too. So, we continued our daily meetings. Then after the second year, like I said, I got the draft notice in the Spring of '41.

Was the Spring of '41 to report to the army. Yeah. Go ahead. She has something. Yeah. Want me to tell you about that? It's fine.

CNK: It's up to you.

AG: Okay. Before I got drafted. Really from the beginning since I arrived in this country I tried to continue my medical studies here. And applied to, for credits for transfer of credits from Vienna. And I did get from the State Department of Education in from New York state accreditation for three years of medical school. So, I would have had only one year of medical school in this country. However, the bad part about that is that you can't get into medical school, even though you have the credit. There was a percentage for Jewish people in Jewish students in medical school. And that percentage was fairly low. And they would not admit any Jewish student. And ...

CNK: Could anybody ... Sorry.

AG: Go ahead.

CNK: Did anybody explain why that was?

AG: No. You just -- Yeah, the explanation was that actually American Medical Association was in favor of that because they did not want, they felt that the profession was overcrowded with Jewish people. There were too many Jewish doctors. And they wanted to limit it to a certain percentage of the population. It is, well, similar to some of the conditions that you find later on. They tried to have a certain percentage in different professions and different religions or races. And, so, it was very tough to get in. It was, for me it was impossible. I must have applied to at least twenty, twenty-five universities and they all -- Nobody came out straight and tell you why they don't accept you. It usually was that a lot of schools wouldn't accept anybody that, what they called it, "advanced standing". Which I would be. They want -- If they would accept you, they would accept you, they would accept you in the first year. Well, I couldn't afford to go through four years of medical school here. So, that left that out. This whole thing didn't materialize. I tried later on. I'll tell you that again. Later in my life, I tried again to get in and I had some unpleasant experiences there. But, anyhow, I don't want to go ahead too far. I, like I said, I was drafted in, of March '41. I was sworn in. Went to basic training in Louisiana.

CNK: How did you feel about being drafted at this point in your life?

AG: Well, once you declare your intention of becoming a citizen. Which I had to do. As a legal immigrant you have to declare that you will become a citizen eventually. Once, you have the same obligations as any citizen. You don't have all the rights. You couldn't vote or anything. But, you have the obligation to serve in case of enemy. Military necessity. So, I was drafted, in fact was drafted almost the same time Berthel's brother was.

We were both one of the early draftees. It was shortly before the draft law was put into effect. I went into basic training in Louisiana, Camp Livingston. Which is the nearest town is Alexandria, Louisiana.

CNK: Now you said you were drafted before the draft law was put into effect?

AG: No. Right after, shortly after the draft law was in effect.

CNK: Okay, I'm sorry.

(562) AG: And I took my basic training down there, what they called "Ordinance Company". Ordinance means heavy motor equipment. And I am probably one of the clumsiest person too, with a screwdriver or a hammer. So, that was the wrong place for me to try to fix trucks and things like this. It wasn't up my alley. So, began, sometimes being naive helps. I wasn't use to army life and army discipline, yet. So, the first couple of weeks I was down in camp. I had enough nerve to go to the company commander and said I want to transfer out of this unit. And he kind of looked at me crazy. He thought I must be some kind of a nut. He said why you know you have to finish basic training. There's no transferring basic training. Which is thirteen weeks. And he wanted to know why I'm asking that. I said well my entire background in education and I would prefer to be with a medical unit or hospital unit, or something like this. So, he was very nice about it. Anyhow, I had to finish my basic training in Louisiana. And toward the end, a couple of weeks before I finished, I did get to transfer to Station Hospital in Camp Livingston as an x-ray technician. And I was just as happy as can be to get out of there. I was -- So, I spent my time in basic training. I made friends with my superiors there. I had radiologist who was a captain. Who was very nice to me and very friendly. And, in the mean time, Berthel had come down and we had decided we are going to get married. In November, '41 we got married. And, of course, December 7, was Pearl Harbor Day. And, so, everybody was -- All leaves were canceled. We lived at that time in town. We had an apartment, other, a little group, really, in

(610) town with family. And we, I had to report back to camp. And Berthel told you this story. She went to camp too. And was detained there as a foreign alien. Enemy alien.

CNK: What do you mean detained?

AG: Well, she couldn't move to -- They saw that she had a German passport at that time. They, she couldn't move from the room where she was staying on camp. And she had to get permission finally to get back home. Which was a couple days. No, what was it? A couple days? Wasn't it?

Berthel Gross: They called it an enemy alien.

AG: I said enemy alien.

BG: I was an enemy alien ..

AG: So, anyhow, that was one of the little episodes. But, from there I applied to Officer's Candidate School because I didn't want to go -- If I had to go overseas, I didn't want to go as an enlisted man. So, I was sent to Texas for a medical administrative course for officer's training. In the mean time, Berthel had to stay back in Alexandria. At that time, she was pregnant. First child. And I spent, ahh, how long was it, ahh, in, six months? Three months?

BG: I don't know.

AG: Three months.

BG: ...

AG: In officer's training, yeah, three months in officer's training. And Berthel, in the mean time, had the child. And I didn't even -- I was not permitted to go and see her. You can't leave officer's training camp. If you do leave, you are out of it. They won't continue. You can't come back. So, I had to stay there. It was a tough time for her.

CNK: What was like that for you knowing you had a new baby in the world and your wife ...?

AG: It was tough. It was tough.

BG: ...

CNK: What would have been going through your mind then?

AG: Well, I was anxious to go there. It was very, very rough. But, on the other hand, I knew I had to finish the "camp", otherwise, my career in the army would have been over. Not over, I would have been back to enlisted status. And it was a matter of a few weeks before graduation. So, I stayed there. Stayed in the camp and finished it. So, when I saw my daughter the first time, she was a few weeks old. But,

BG: A couple months.

AG: ...

BG: Seven weeks ..

AG: Seven weeks, okay. Anyhow, but, ahh, there's nothing we can do. In the mean time, after I graduated, then I was transferred to, assigned to New Orleans for a six month period. And we all moved there. Berthel and the child. And everybody moved down there to New Orleans for six months. I was assigned to a hospital unit down there. And I became training officer. That was my assignment. That means training for field duty for enlisted men and for nurses. They had to have field training. If they have to go into the front line. From New Orleans, I was transferred to Camp Campbell in Kentucky. And then it was just for a few weeks. It was a short time. And again Berthel moved up there. And again she had a tough time, all the time. I had become a

citizen in the mean time. Because when you go to officer's training you cannot become an officer unless you are citizen. You can be an enlisted man, but not an officer. So, I got my citizenship a little bit ahead of time. Than I -- It normally takes five years. But, Berthel didn't become a citizen. And she was still under the enemy alien status. So, I moved to Campbell. And, of course, these army moves are fast. You don't have a lot of time to prepare. And I found a place. A little garage place to live. It was tough. And she was in New Orleans still. Then she had to get permission in New Orleans to move. She could not move without permission of the, what was it, the Adgington Channel of the state.

(723)

CNK: The what?

AG: Adgington Channel. The office wasn't it? Who did you go to in New Orleans? She had to get permission from him. And finally she came up there. And we lived there for awhile. And I found a place that was a little bit nicer than the one, the garage we had. Was a little apartment in the house. And we moved up there. And, which, I found out later was a mistake. Because I didn't realize that she had to get permission to move even in the same town. We didn't move out of town. But, she wanted to follow me later and leave there. And the District Attorney gave her a bad time. Because he found out that we had changed address without permission. So, finally we got that straightened out, too. And I had to report to Fort Dix then, for going overseas. And Berthel went back to Pittsburgh to stay with her aunt and uncle. And the baby, of course. Oh, we were separated from then, on. In Fort Dix, we stayed about a week, or so. And we embarked on boat to go overseas, which was a troop transport. It was called the "Elle de France". It was French line. It was converted to troop transport. And we stayed in port for about a day or two. We couldn't understand why that ship doesn't move. Finally, found out there was a fire, nobody told us. They tried to keep -- They were afraid of panic on the boat. So, we had to disembark again and wait another couple days. And then on January 1, '44 we left on the Queen Elizabeth to go to England.

CNK: What was this like for you going back to Europe?

AG: Well, I really didn't mind that so much. I was very happy that I wasn't assigned to the Pacific. It worried me to death that some people, like her brother, went to Pacific. And I knew Europe is still a little bit more civilized country and better living condition than to go into the jungles there. So, I was satisfied that I went to Europe. As we landed in England, we had a pretty rough crossing on the Queen Elizabeth. The Queen Elizabeth is a very fast ship. Usually your navy transports have large escorts to protect against submarines. Well, the Queen Elizabeth is too fast for the escorts. It outruns them and the escorts can't keep up. So, what they have to do, is they have to take a, what they call a zig-zag course. They go back and forth continuously. So, they are not a

target for submarines. And we were followed by submarines. We had reports that there were submarines all around us. But, they escaped us. So, we finally, when we came close to England, we finally got an air escort for the ship. And everybody felt better. A little more secure. Well, we landed in England. In the southern part of England. And went to our hospital that we were assigned to. Of course, there was, we didn't function as a hospital. Because there was no invade, there were no casualties here, from the American casualties. So, we stayed there. And we were, again, in training. I had about two hundred to two hundred and fifty nurses that I had to train for field training. And that was a pretty rough assignment for the simple reason that the head nurse outranked me. She was a captain. I was a second lieutenant at that time. Became a first lieutenant later. And here I had to take her nurses out and put them through drills and everything else. And I got a lot of flack from her ... too tough for her girls and all that stuff. So, anyhow, but, we went through it. We got through it. And then developed a fairly good relationship. We stayed there. I remember "D-Day" very distinctly. All these planes going over. We knew something was going to happen sooner, or later. But, we had no idea when. Had no idea. It was a well kept secret. It was no, not even rumors. Actually,

(785) the rumors started flying a little bit before "D-Day". But, it was all proved to be wrong. Because they purposely put out false information to just, so people should know when it actually happened. I remember all the crossing on the Channel on "D-Day" because we saw all these planes going over our place and crossing the Channel. By evening that day we started to get our first casualty. At that time, we were set up as an operating hospital. And they came up, they came in fast and furious. We got the first train, it was late at night. And I remember I had to meet the train. I was in their administration at that time. And we went down in ambulances and meet the train and bring the casualties back to the hospital. It was, it was tough to see the way they came in and how fast. We were glad we were able to do something. So, we stayed there for, I don't know exactly how long, two or three weeks after "D-Day". Our unit left because there was another unit there to operate the hospital. But, our unit -- I was with the general hospital unit. We went to France. We crossed the Channel. And we went the same route as they, invading first through Omaha Beach. Then had all these celebrations there. A couple of years, a week ago, or so, on "D-Day". I saw all these places, I went through. That St. Mary ... I remember especially, it was the first town liberated. And we drove through that town during the night and it was terrible, the destruction there. But, we went through, of course, we had to go very slowly because there was still troops ahead of us. They were pushing the Germans back at that time. And we had to wait until they liberate Paris. Because we was suppose to go into Paris. So, we moved slowly. In the mean time, we, of course, stayed in tents on the way up there. And lived in the field. So, when we finally got into Paris, we were,

we couldn't believe it. It was such a difference. That lifestyle. We went to a prominent hospital there, which is a French hospital, but was occupied by the Germans during their occupation. And since they had left, we took over their hospitals. It was just like living in paradise. You had prominent buildings. And you had beds to sleep in. It was really unbelievable for us. So, we all moved in there. When I say we, we were an advanced group that moved in there and got everything ready. The main body of our hospital came in a couple of days later. And the advanced group were all the second lieutenants and first lieutenants and enlisted, some enlisted men cooks. And some -- And everybody to get ready for the hospital. So, we took our rooms there in the hospital. We didn't have any assignment. And then the "big boys" came in. All the majors and colonels and generals. They saw where we were staying and said oh, no, they'll take over. They pulled rank on us. Said you find other quarters. You can't stay here, that's for the field grade officers, majors and up. So, we walked into town. We knew there

(835) there were places available. The town, by the way, is a suburb of Paris. And a very ritzy suburb. All the rich people use to live out there. It was like a bedroom community for Paris. It was about twenty, thirty miles from Paris. So, we walked out and walked up and down the street. And we saw houses there, when I say we, there were about six of us. Six officers. And we found one place there and it looked nice. And we walked in and it was available. So, we moved in there. There we really lived like kings.

BG: ...

AG: Huh? What?

BG: ... makes the War sound like fun.

AG: Well, it -- I can't complain about from Paris on. I can complain about everything up to that time. Once we moved in there it was really a very easy life and nice. We had beautiful accommodations and food and everything. Anyhow, I became Registrar of the hospital, which is an administrative function. That is record keeping. All the records ... Like a medical records department where you would have in any hospital here. And we had quite a few patients. In fact, we almost filled up. And after a few, a year or two, it wasn't quite a year, we received a group of German prisoners of war. They were assigned to different work functions. Must have been about, I don't know, roughly say, seventy or eighty, probably, that were assigned to our hospital to help with the running of the hospital. And they were put up in a large tent, a large field tent. And they had a separate administration. They had their own cooks and they prepared their own meals. Took care of their ... their .. had nothing to do with maintaining them, except -- Well, since I was the only one there that spoke German, I was made commanding officer of that group. So, I was in charge of them. And what I had to do is

deal with the senior officer in their group. The senior German officer and I. I told him what we want him to do and gave him the job assignments and any other orders. It was up to him to get his group ... We never had any serious problem with them as far as -- That's one thing about the Germans, they are very conscious of command. And they'll do whatever they are told to do.

CNK: How were they treated?

AG: They were treated very well. They were treated very well. There's never been any kind of punishment, or anything like this. As long as they behaved. Like if somebody tried to escape then it's a different thing. But, otherwise, they were well treated.

CNK: Now, that commanding officer who you worked with, did he know that you were Jewish?

AG: Oh yeah. I guess so. I don't know. I didn't make a point of it. But, it wouldn't make any difference because I was in charge. He didn't have anything to say, or anything that he could object to. No, like I said, they were treated very well. And I hardly ever -- I don't remember of any complaints, really. And sometimes they had a right to complain, if they wanted to. I had one funny episode there when we finally, I'm going way ahead now, after the War. Toward the end of the War, they were told to, we were told to move the whole group to another location, to another assignment. So, we moved them. We had the trucks lined up. We got them on the trucks to get -- There's one guy, of the German group, who furiously waves to me. Like this, Come here! Come here! I ignored him. I didn't know what he wanted. So, finally I couldn't ignore him any longer, he got really hysterical. So, I took him off the truck. And I said, "What is it?" So, he showed me his papers, which I didn't know about. He was working for the American army in the German compound to learn if there's anything going on, any secrets. He was an undercover ah, and he didn't want to get shipped out with the others. So, we almost goofed there. But, I took him off the truck and explained to the -- what happened. The other people in that group didn't know why I took him off the truck. They would have killed him probably, if they would have known. But, after "VE-Day" we got -- We had nothing to do actually. We were deactivated and got our orders for reassignment to the United States. At that time, the War in the Pacific was still going on. And I was afraid I was going to get shipped out to Pacific after all. So, in the mean time, while we were waiting for our papers to go through and our orders for reassignment, we had nothing to do. So, they would give us leaves. Passes. And at that time, I went to Switzerland. My sister joined the War. Had lived with my brother-in-law and their children. They had a couple more then. I had lived in Switzerland. My brother-in-law was working for ..., which is a chemical, pharmaceutical-chemical firm. And they did fairly well there. And I went there to see them. It was the first time I seen them since they left Vienna. Or, since I had left Vienna. So, I was glad to see

that everybody was okay there. And then we went, finally, to Marseilles. And we were from Marseilles, we would be sit there for a week. In Marseilles, that was the worst time for me. It was worse than anything else. We had nothing to do. You go crazy. We were waiting for orders for, to get back. I mean for a ship to take us back. At that time, they evacuated all the people. So, we finally got back to the United States and I was sent to a camp. In the mean time, while we were waiting all that time, the War in the Pacific had ended. So, I was glad we were not reassigned. But, then I was told when we got back, if I want to re-enlist or stay in the army, they offered me a promotion and all that stuff. And I said no, I've had enough. So, I went home. And the first time I saw my daughter again since I had left. And at that time, she was what three years old? Yeah. She was about three years old. It was a long time until I was reunited with my family. So, now I'm closing to the time, how I got to Wheeling. We, I looked for work. I had to have a job to support my family. And I went to the Veterans Administration in Pittsburgh. Because that's where they lived. And asked what kind, if they can find something for me. So, they said -- First, they offered a job as an x-ray technician. I was trained in x-ray. X-ray technician in a hospital in New Castle in Pennsylvania. Well, I was glad. I'll take anything just to get a job. So, they swore me in. And I accepted a job and they told me to report for duty in a couple days. Two or three days. I report for duty and they tell me they made a mistake. There is no job as x-ray technician in New Castle. About the same days, we opened an office in Wheeling, West Virginia, just now. And they have a position there for an administrator. Medical administration. So, I was happy to take that. In fact, the guy told me this is the first time happened to them. That somebody got a promotion before they ever started work ... why this job paid more money. So, we came to Wheeling. And that's how we came to Wheeling. At that time, the office opened at down on Chapline Street. Was called the Methodist, no, it wasn't. It was called the Fidelity Building. It's the Methodist Building now. And we had a couple floors. It was a fairly large size office. About 120, 130 employees. The medical section was very complete. We had an x-ray department. We employed a medical director and contracted with about three or four physicians to work there. And psychologists and, of course, clerical personnel. So, I was in charge of the whole department. And was very satisfying job. It was great. After about almost three years, demand for the veterans care had diminished. Because the majority of the veterans were taken care of at that time. And there was -- So, they cut down the staff and they left just a skeleton staff here to run administrative details. And the medical part was practically all eliminated. And they offered me a transfer, if I want to go into somewhere else. By that time, we really had established a little bit of a social life here. We had friends here. We had joined the Jewish congregation. And we didn't want to leave. We liked it here really. So, I said I'll try to find something around here, something to do. Friend of ours came

(990)

over and one time we were sitting at home. And he said, "What are you going to do?" I said, "I don't know, I'm looking for something." I wanted to stay in medical administration. In fact, I had talked to some people in hospital about hospital administration. And I didn't get very far. So, they didn't hire. They didn't want me for some reason. Anyhow, he said why don't you try to come into my business. He had a furniture store here. Pretty big size operation for a small town. So, I said, "Well I really never considered retail business, it wasn't my first choice, but I have nothing to do." He says, "Well you have no contract or any obligation. Try it for a few weeks. Try it. If you like it fine. If you don't like it there's no, you can always leave. No hard feelings. So, I said, "Okay." So, I took that job and I stayed there for forty-two years.

???: ...

AG: Well, I just, I'm still there. I'm still there.

CNK: It's not the end of the forty-two years.

AG: It's not the end of the forty-two years. It's a beginning. And I also had -- I mentioned before I had some other episodes. I'm going back now to the time before I started Wheeling. When we lived in Pittsburgh, I made again some attempts to go back to medical school, since I wasn't sure if I'll find a job. And I applied to University of Pittsburgh. And at that time, I was still on terminal leave from the army. So, I still wore the army uniform. I was not discharged yet. And I applied and talked to the dean and he told me right off the bat. He says he can't take me because I'm foreigner and because of my Jewish background. And I said, "Why would you consider me a foreigner, I'm a citizen?" I said I was in the army. He said, "Well, you served in the army, they gave your citizenship. That was your reason for serving in the army." So, it made me quite mad. And I got a little testy with him because I figured I have nothing to lose. But, that was one of the bad experiences. Well, really their prejudice was really blatant. So, come back to Wheeling now. And my wife mentioned we had second child in May, what's the year now? What, when Al born? '48? '48. Be '48, we had the second child. And it was a very bad time for my wife. She had a lot of problems with delivery. And he was born premature and had to be in an incubator for about six weeks. So, we got through that. At that time, we also had problems with flood. We lived on the Island here. In fact, we lived in about three, four places on the Island. We moved everytime we thought we find something a little better. We moved. And the last place we had was a first floor apartment with some steps going up to the apartment. And the flood came, the Ohio River, we were not use to floods. People on the Island had the floods practically every year. But, we weren't use to it. So, we moved out at that time. We moved out at that time. We had water right into our livingroom that came all the way up. And we moved out here to the, what they call, the Pike section, Woodsdale. And had a nice place, had a house and

really felt very much at home. But, we liked Wheeling. We liked this town. We loved Oglebay. We made good friends here. We found people very, very friendly. Very -- We didn't run into any problems here. It was a very pleasant community. Besides, it offered a lot of cultural activities, which we enjoyed. We enjoyed theater. We enjoyed art shows and concerts and so on. So, we felt very much at home and it was one of the reasons we really originated and want to move to get another job. Since, I, even after I worked at the furniture store there were a couple times, occasions, where somebody told me of an offer to move somewhere else and do better financially. But, after talking it over and considering the pluses and minuses, we decided we'd rather stay here and forego few more dollars and live comfortable and enjoyable life. And we still since then, have been very happy here. And that's been a long time.

???: ...

AG: What?

???: ...

AG: Well, I think -- It's just .. down to it. A story I don't forget.

CNK: I think you're doing fine.

AG: I think that that -- I don't know if you want to know anything else.

MNK: Were you happy in your job at the furniture store ..

AG: Yeah, I found -- I had no idea what retail business is. I had never been any business. My whole background was academic. So, it is really an eye opener. It was very interesting. I was put into a position where I was right away into management. Which I had training periods for management. But, I became a buyer and I found it very fascinating, very challenging. There a lot of problems. There's a lot of business. And continuous competition with other stores and with your own store your competing to improve. You have to make figures from one year to another. You always have to do a little bit better. I mean that's the pressure of it. But, it is very interesting work ...

MNK: So, you weren't, you weren't disappointed, unfulfilled?

AG: No. Not at all. No. No, I would have left if I was -- I can't work anywhere where I don't like it. And so, I stayed there. And the reason I left really, I would have stayed on if they would still be in business, but they sold to another outfit. And I didn't want to stay with the other outfit and that's when I left and went into retirement. Besides, I was old enough for retiring.

(100-Tape II)

CNK: When was that?

AG: That was in four -- In '92? '92, yeah.

CNK: What was the name of the store you worked for?

AG: Reichart. A very good furniture company. Yeah, they, at one time, owned ten stores. Then toward the end, business got a little bad. Say they got rid of five. When they sold it they still had five stores. And after, I was retired for about six months, I found out that's not for me either. I couldn't sit home. So, I started looking for part-time work. And, again, I tried to get back into the medical field, that still was my first love. And I applied to some, talked to some of the people I knew in hospital administration here and I couldn't, nothing materialized there until we went out to a social event. See, it always to pay to go out to social events. And I met a young lady who was assistant administrator at new hospital called Fox Run Hospital in St. Clairsville, which is a children's psychiatric hospital. And she knew my story. Somebody else had talked to her about me. And she said, "What are you doing?" I said, "Well, I'm looking for something." She said, "Why don't you come out and see us?" I said, "Okay." I never gave it a thought. It's a brand new hospital. I didn't know what I could do there. So, I went out there and they offered me a job right away. I told her I don't want to work full-time. I work only three days a week, which is all I want to work. And I, also, had several other conditions. We go to Florida for about six weeks during the winter. And I told her that that's another condition I would have to get off. I know they wouldn't -- You normally don't get six weeks vacation in any place. So, they agreed to everything and they were very nice and I'm still there. I love it there.

(137)

CNK: What do you do there?

AG: I'm in public relations there. I do follow-up care when the children are discharged. I about, two months, approximately two months. Six weeks to two months. After they're discharged, I call the parents or the guardian or whoever is in charge of the kid and find out how they are getting along. So, you follow-up and see how successful you were in your treatment. If they're better, if they're worse or what happens to them. And you get some very fascinating stories. Some happy, some sad. And I do three calls on follow-ups, after two months, after four months, after six months, those three, and find out the progress of the kids. It's very interesting.

CNK: Hmm. Yeah.

MNK: Another question I had, was I thought you gave a rather streamline version of the flood story. Now weren't you -- Because somebody said you were taken out in a boat.

AG: Yeah. I was then -- Well, I would have to backtrack again. But, I worked for the Veterans Administration, the manager of the Veterans Administration was a colonel in the National Guard. And he more or less convinced me to join the National Guard. I was in their inactive reserve before that. But, so, I joined the National Guard

there and in that case it helped because the National Guard helped people in the flood. And since I had an "in", I called them and we had that thing ... Berthel had been taken out by some friends of ours who moved out. And then I, the boat came and when I couldn't get out anymore because the water was up to the steps. On top of the steps and they took me out in the boat to get me to dry land.

CNK: What kind of a boat?

AG: Just a regular -- The boats that they had for our rescue work and so on. The National Guard has boats for the river and some for working. They own, they have a bunch of boats.

CNK: Did you ever question that you might be rescued?

AG: No. I was with too many people around there. I figured if worse comes to worse maybe I could swim. But, if -
- What? Huh?

BG: I don't want ...

AG: What do you ...

CNK: Do you want to ask another question?

MNK: No.

AG: There was at one time a program that Council of Churches was administering, that depict one family of the year for the religious family of the year. They always had different nominations. And we were picked at one time and featured in newspaper articles as the religious family of the year. Well, I can also go back to the case of my children. My ...

CNK: Well, wait a minute, what did it take to be a religious family of the year?

AG: I don't know. I think some people who knew us must have told them about us. Well, we are not real strict, but observant. I go to services every Friday night, to the Temple. And we observe holidays and customs, certain customs and so on. So, I don't know. I guess you have to, also, live a fairly clean life to be, not be in trouble with the laws or anything else. So, I don't know. Yeah?

CNK: Did you have to be active in "citizenry" ...

AG: Well, we were -- Actually I should mention that I was appointed to the Human Rights Commission of Wheeling. The first Human Rights Commission that was established in Wheeling.

CNK: What did they do?

AG: They, at that time, it was the time where civil rights was a very active issue. Well, we had housing discrimination here, which since then was abolished. In fact, when I was on the Commission, we passed ordinances so the City Council abolishing that thing. Because at that time, a black dentist had moved into a

white neighborhood and there were protests and petitions put up by the white neighbors. They wanted to buy him out just to get out of there. So, we stopped that. There was several issues there. Job discriminations, of course and all these other civil rights issues at that time. It was quite a few, I don't know exactly the year. But, it was an appointed commission by the mayor. And I was on the first Commission. But, different religious, religious denominations. A Catholic, priest and different people. The Chairman of the Commission was a lawyer. James Horanzo he was the first Commission Chairman and I served with him. We, also, I might mention, we have mentioned before that we have two children. A daughter and a son. Both educated here in Wheeling. Went through the primary and high school years here in Wheeling. And had quite a large circle of friends. And then went to Ohio State University for undergraduate work.

CNK: Both of them?

AG: Both of them. And my son then went to law school at Georgetown University. And my daughter went -- No, she didn't have graduate work, that's right. She be, she went into business. And, yeah, sales and administration. Well, she did sales in first job was -- And then, what?

BG: She was a market major.

AG: Market major, okay. And my son now lives in California. My daughter, Columbus, Ohio. And they're both married. And they both have children. Each has two children. Each, one boy and one girl. My daughter's son, my grandson is married and lives in Cincinnati. And my son's children are still small. One is six and one is twelve, going on twelve.

BG: ...

AG: Huh?

BG: ...

AG: Rachel, my granddaughter, she's in Washington DC.. And she, right now, works with the Justice Department. She is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania. So, that's the family history.

CNK: Amazing.

AG: Well, okay.

BG: ... want to stop ...

AG: Yeah.

(268) CNK: What would qualify you to be a religious family of the year? And what your involvement was in the Jewish community and how the Jewish community has changed here in Wheeling?

AG: We really joined the congregation when they were still in the downtown location. The old Temple it was called Eoff Street Temple. Which was a very old building, a very pretty building. It was shortly after we came to Wheeling. And then when we moved out of this section later on. They built a new building out here in the Woodsdale section. And we continued to be active, my wife and I. And in religious school in training, teaching. And I, also, became president for period of two years for the congregation. I was on the board for quite a few years, for several years. I don't even remember how many. Quite a few. And ...

CNK: Twenty?

AG: I don't know if it was twenty or not. It was for a long time. And I was chairman of various committees, mainly of Worship Committee and Religious School Committee and Education Committee. And those were my interests, really. So, we keep on -- We're still active. I still attend services every Friday night when I'm here. If I don't attend service, I'm either out of town, or I'm sick.

CNK: Hmm.

AG: So, and we attend, of course, regularly. I holded a service and celebrate all the other holidays. So, ...

CNK: What --

AG: Yeah?

CNK: What does it mean to be a Jew having come over Europe? Having escaped the Holocaust, just barely? What does it mean to you to celebrate those traditions?

AG: Well, it means a lot to me. I -- There are two ways to go when you come from the Holocaust. Either you say, "What in the heck do I need that for and I don't want to have it happen again." And you deny everything. And you turn away. Or else, you become stronger in your faith. And I think that's the way I chose. I think that more conscious of being a Jew. Because of all the suffering that people had to endure because of their religion. And I think that I'm one that always maintains we should never forget. That we should let other people know. Not only other Jewish people. I think the community of the world as a whole should always be remembered and reminded of what happened here. So, things like this don't happened again. Unfortunately, right now, it is happening again when we look at Bosnia and some of the other countries. But, it really needs to be kept in mind. That not forgotten. So, --

CNK: What about this movement? Isn't there a movement among some people who are trying to say the Holocaust didn't exist to absolutely erase it from history?

AG: Yes, it's, yes that is a fanatic, extreme fringe group. And my personal belief is that they do not really believe it themselves. Because there's too much actual physical evidence of what happened there. You can just look at

the graves. And you look at the skeletons that are buried. And you know. And you look at the ovens that's still in their locations where they used to be as memorials. So, there is too much physical evidence to really, to bother to deny it. I think that most people, the majority cannot believe that things hadn't happened. Where these people maintain that the Holocaust never happened and that the whole thing is a hoax, really out of their mind. I mean that is not a rational group that should be taken seriously.

CNK: Do they have the power to be destructive and "mis-educate" children?

AG: Oh, sure they have the power. Any power, any fringe power has the power to do a lot of harm in educating. I mean, regardless if it's extreme right, extreme left of the -- Extreme fanatics in any kind of ideology have very dangerous and have to be watched. And I hope that the majority of the people do not believe it. I mean it's the same thing if you are going to different occults. To me this group, like the "Skinheads", or any of the other extreme groups are the same as any occult group. They are just brainwashing people and they know "dog gone" well that, they are not, what they are doing is not right. But, it is a group that is aspiring to power. Unfortunately, some people believe it. And easily brainwashed.

(385) MNK: ... could you comment on what changes have occurred within the Jewish community in Wheeling ...

AG: In Wheeling?

MNK: ... during your time here.

CNK: And if you would also start with what happened to the Eoff Street Synagogue, the Temple.

AG: The Eoff Temple was finally torn down. It was an old, old building that needed an awful lot of repair. And the repairs were not really cost-effective. They would have cost more than building a new building. So, they finally tore it down. And the Lincoln-Mercury agency is now in its place and where it was located.

CNK: When was it ...

AG: It's right next to the Cathedral, the other Cathedral.

CNK: Mmm, hmm. When was it torn down?

AG: In ahh -- I don't know what year. This one was in '54 I think. This one.

BG: ...

AG: The new one. You can talk.

CNK: It's okay ...

AG: You can --

BG: I have something for you to look at ..

CNK: How has the Jewish community changed in your life here in Wheeling?

AG: Well, when we first came there were two congregations. The Reformed which was the Eoff Street Temple downtown. And then the Conservative congregation which was out in Woodsdale section on Edginton Lane. The movement of the population was towards the suburbs at that time. And the downtown location became really cumbersome location. Besides, the building needed a lot of repairs which were very costly. And it was almost cheaper to build a new building, a modern building. And build it in a location where the population has settled. The Jewish population had settled, which was in the Woodsdale section. The congregations have changed because there was a general decrease in population. Not only Jewish population, in general population in the Wheeling area because of economic conditions. And the number of Jewish families has drastically decreased over the last few years. It became, came to a point where the congregation, we could not afford two congregations. And we finally in the late '70's, we combined congregation of Conservative congregation and the Reform congregation into one.

CNK: That's a very extreme event.

AG: ...

BG: ...

AG: ...

CNK: Of the synagogue and the Temple.

BG: I don't know it but ...

AG: I think about '78, I'm not sure. Anyhow, late '70's.

BG: I don't know exactly ...

CNK: You want to start that sentence again?

AG: The two congregations decided to combine because of the low membership in each one.

CNK: But, conservative --

AG: Conservative and the Reform. And they combined and maintained the building of the Reform congregation. Because it was a newer building and location. And, also, it was a compromise as far as ... concerned. We are using it for our regular services to Reform Prayer book. But, we do have on Saturday morning and on the High Holiday one section of traditional of Conservative service. In order to take care of the members who prefer the Conservative rituals.

CNK: I imagined, was it more heartbreaking for the Conservative ...

AG: It was both. There was very strong opposition in both congregations to that thing. And that was for the extreme group. There was an extreme Orthodox and the extreme Reform did not like it and opposed it. But, the

majority was in the center. They agreed it was a necessity because of, you could not, we couldn't maintain two congregations. We just didn't have the membership.

CNK: Were you on the board when that decision was made?

AG: Yeah. I was on the board and went through all the fights. But, we finally agreed to a compromise and it has worked out. Actually, this is not unique. It is happening all over the country. Because this combined congregations are in a lot of cities. In some of them it works and some of them it don't. There were some that had to split up again because they couldn't get along. But, here it has been worked out and it is working very well.

CNK: Was this distressing to you personally?

AG: No. I really wasn't. Because I was one of the center people. I was never an extremist in Reform or in Traditional, either way. And I didn't think it was that important. If you have certain rituals that are, to me, of just rituals and not meaningful, you can be, you can observe your religion in either way. Either way you want to as far as rituals concerned. One went a little more Hebrew. The other one went more English. But, to me these are really minor details. It doesn't make any difference. So, it was not very distressing to me.

MNK: It sounds like a metaphor though for the kind of assimilation of Jews that's going on in the American melting pot, if you will or --

AG: Well, I think if you talk of assimilation, of course, I don't think that assimilation of the Jews and the Reform, or, is as important as the tremendous amount of intermarriages. Now, that's where the Jewish community has been losing out. Because of intermarriages we lose a lot of members of the Jewish community. And the children usually are brought up in a lot of cases in the Christian faith. So, that's where the future of Judaism is in danger.

CNK: In fact, do you see it where Jew is more prominent in Wheeling social life in the earlier days.

AG: There was always, not an official anti-Semitic order. But, there was what we called the five o'clock shadow. It was after five o'clock there was a supervision. ... socially. You worked in business and professionally it was fine. You got along alright. But, when you went home you were two separate worlds. You didn't -- There was not too much socializing. There are few, very few families who are socializing a lot between the Jewish and non-Jewish community. But, the most of it was in your community. Was in the Jewish community. Well, when you belong to an official organization like I belonged to the Legion at one time. The American Legion, or so. There's not officially any segregation. But, like I said, once you get out of the congregation then in your personal life there's not much contact.

CNK: So, in the context of the American Legion did you feel a distinction as a Jew?

AG: Not while you are there. Of course, while you are there you go to meetings and all kind of business. You don't have too much socializing. Where I feel difference is when you go out to a dance and some senses you say well how many Jewish people are here? How many non-Jewish people are here? And the Jewish people sit at one table. And the non-Jewish sit at another table.

BG: You want to stop that ...

AG: Yeah, okay.

BG: ...

CNK: Can you start again with the Wheeling ...

BG: I don't think we should get into that ...

AG: I don't know if there's a point in ...