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Nathan Snyder oral history interview by Chris Patti, October 23, 2009

Nathan Snyder (Interviewee)

Chris J. Patti (Interviewer)

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[Transcriber's Note: The following oral history interview contains mature content.
Researcher discretion is advised.]

Chris Patti: Okay, this interview is for the Florida Holocaust Museum. Today's date is October 23, 2009. The interview is with survivor Nathan Snyder. I am the interviewer; my name is Chris Patti. We are in St. Petersburg, Florida. The country is the United States of America. The language is English, and the videographer is Jane Duncan.

All right, my name is Chris Patti. Today's date is Friday, October 23, 2009. I am conducting an interview with Nathan Snyder. The interview is being conducted in St. Petersburg, Florida, in the United States. The language is English, and the videographer is Jane Duncan.

Okay, Nathan, I am going to ask you to say your name and if you could say it and spell it.

Nathan Snyder: My name is Nathan Snyder. It used to be Schneider. And my date of birth is 5-21-26 [May 21, 1926]. I live in (...) St. Petersburg, Florida (...).

CP: Nathan, could you spell your first and last name for us?

NS: N-a-t-h-a-n S-n-y-d-e-r.

CP: And your name at birth, it was different. Could you spell your name at birth for us, as well?

NS: Yes, Schneider. S-c-h-n-e-i-d-e-r. Schneider.

CP: Thank you. And were there any other names that you've gone by in your life?

NS: Yes, Rubi Wisberg. That was a name which I survived after the war, under the name Rubi Wisberg, because I run away from the Russian army. (laughs) So, I lived under Rubi Wisberg until I came to Israel. In Israel, Rubi Wisberg disappeared.

CP: Can you spell Rubi Wisberg for us?

NS: R-u-b-i W-i-s-b-e-r-g. Rubi Wisberg.

CP: And what's your age at the moment?

NS: Uh—

CP: Your current age?

NS: At that time?

CP: No, today.

NS: Today, my age is eighty-three.

CP: Okay. And can you tell us the city and the country that you were born in?

NS: I was born in Stănești, S-t-a-n-e-s-t-i, Bucovina, B-u-c-o-v-i-n-a. At that time was Romania. And then it became Russia, and now it is Ukraine.

CP: Great. Thank you very much. And I want to start today with—if you can give us a sense of your childhood.

NS: I was born in Stănești, and I was raised in a very Orthodox house. My grandfather was like an ascetic, a holy man. I used to go to the synagogue in the morning and the evening. And they used to wake me up in the morning at three o'clock to say *Tehillim* [Psalms]. I used to wear a yarmulke, and I had the payos [sidelocks] behind my ear—until the Holocaust started.

CP: Can you tell me, like, your everyday life? Was it nice growing up?

NS: Yeah, it was nice to grow up. We had a lot of friends. Unfortunately, all those friends got killed by the Ukrainians on June 28, 1941. We had a manufacturing store for clothing and hats and shoes and all that. And most of the customers were Ukrainians. I used to go to the Hebrew school—*cheder*, they call—and also the public school. And in 1938, I went to Czernowitz [Chernivitsi], which is the capital of Bucovina, and I went to—it's called Academy of Commerce [Chernivitsi Trade and Economics Institute]—like a university, you know—until 1940 when the Russians came in, and then I went to Russian school. In forty-one [1941], Germany attacked Russia, and then the Holocaust started.

CP: Can you describe to me what your town looked like, and who made it up?

NS: There were five hundred people, and there were all kinds of businessmen and handymen and butchers and shoemakers, and traders with cattle and workers in the forest and all that. So, it was a nice town, and it was peaceful. Had no problem until 1940, when the Russians came in, and then they started deporting most of the Jews, who were a little bit rich. They called them bourgeois. And they started to deport them into Siberia. If they had deported us, my father wouldn't have been killed. (laughs) Unfortunately, they didn't deport us, because we were not on the list at that time.

CP: Was the population in your town—was it mostly Jewish people, or—?

NS: Mostly Jewish people.

CP: Can you tell me a little bit about your family, about your parents and grandparents or siblings?

NS: My parents—my mother—my father wasn't Orthodox; he was a Conservative Jew. My father was in the First World War. He was an officer in the Austro-Hungarian army, in the cavalry. And I remember he had a nice, beautiful sword in the closet, and told me not to touch it, because I will hurt myself. Beautiful sword. And it didn't help too much that he was in the Austro-Hungarian army, you know. Unfortunately, he got massacred by the Ukrainians—supposedly so-called neighbors.

I think the Ukrainians were worst like the Germans. The Germans at least machine gunned you; the Ukrainians massacred you with hatchets and knives. And the way I was told later, they used to put a man in sacks and beat him with sticks. Barbarians don't do that. And they blame the Indians—they scalped the (laughs) Americans? The Indians were civilized, comparing to the Ukrainians. And, unfortunately, some of the Ukrainians run away when the Russians came in 1944. And where did they come? United States of America, Australia, Canada, South America, because they claimed to the Americans, "I'm anti-communist. I'm anti-communist." [The Americans said,] "Oh, so you want to go to America? No problem."

They discovered many criminals living in United States. In Philadelphia, there was a whole street with Ukrainians. And some of them came from the same province from where I [came from]; I betcha there were some criminals there, too. But Americans were very hesitating to—they didn't have too much proof, you know. When they caught one who lied—but the United States, they deported them, and where did they deport them? To the Ukraine. What did the Russians do? They hanged them. Because they were against—they were collaborating with the Nazis, but not too many; most of them survived and still living in the United States. A lot of them are in Canada. A lot of them are in Argentina.

CP: Can I take you back to ask you about your mother? Can you tell me a little bit about your mother, things that you remember?

NS: My mother was a religious woman. She used to celebrate Friday night with lighting the candles and saying the *Barukh*—the prayer over the candles—and we used to make prepare for Shabbos—you know, for Saturday night, Friday night. The original—you know, gefilte fish and the chicken soup and so on. And she was a very religious woman, and a very dedicated mother. She saved my life.

CP: That's right. Yeah, well—um—

NS: She saved my life by covering—by sitting on me.

CP: Yes, and I look forward to getting to that. Before then—you had siblings, is that correct?

NS: A sister.

CP: A sister. Can you tell me about her?

NS: She's younger by four years. And we lived in the ghetto together, and then she moved to Israel. She lives now in Israel, in a (inaudible) next to Haifa.

CP: Do you remember any—do you have any memories of friends from growing up, in your childhood, before the war?

NS: I know their names, but they've all been massacred, all killed by the Ukrainians. Finkenstein, Rosenberg—there are a lot of—Bamberger—there's a lot of Jews, but they were all killed by the Ukrainians. Massacred—not killed, but massacred.

CP: Can you describe to me before the war happened, some things that you would do with your friends, like as a child?

NS: I used to have a bicycle. We used to play football, soccer. We used to go to a—we had a little river there; we used to go bathing, in the nude. (laughs) And it was nice, peaceful. Our house was a big house. We had about twelve rooms. We had a big garden, about two acres of a garden with all kind of vegetable. We had trees—prunes, plums, pears, apples, cherries. And the funniest thing is in 1941, when the Ukrainians took over the town, they didn't let the Jews out of their houses at all. My father crawled one night and took all the jewelry and put it in a leather—I think a leather briefcase—and buried it underneath some shrubs. And it's still there, apparently.

CP: Wow.

NS: I've never been back to there. I've never been back to that place to see the mass grave, but it must be still there—all the jewelry and the gold watches and all that. It's still buried there. So, if I would ever go back, I will go the first thing there and look for the briefcase, for the leather briefcase, if it's still there.

CP: Can you tell me a little bit more—you talked a little bit about school and what school was like.

NS: Oh, yeah. I went to Hebrew school, and I went to the public school. Actually, public school, they used to always [be] using profane language. “Christ killers”—you know, Jews, because they used to beat us up. We used to beat them up. But always it was tension between the gentiles and the Jews there; it means mostly Ukrainians. That was before the war. But, we tolerated it, you know.

CP: Where did these children who were saying these things—where did they get this? Like, where did the anti-Semitism come from, do you think?

NS: Anti-Semitism existed in the 1800s. They had pogroms in the Ukraine in the 1800s, you know. We had a peaceful town, and, you know, there wasn't any tension between too much there, until the Russians came in 1940. They occupied Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Bessarabia, which is Moldova, and Bucovina. Peacefully they entered, you know.

CP: Were the teachers in the public school—were they also—?

NS: No Jewish.

CP: No Jewish?

NS: No. No.

CP: Were they—did you experience any anti-Semitism from your teachers?

NS: Yes, yes.

CP: Can you tell me about that?

NS: Well, they instigated the “Jews are Christ killers,” you know. The people—those Ukrainians were not too smart people; they believed everything. You know, “Christ killers—oh, yeah, they killed Christ.” But, you know, it's funny. The worst time was Christmas time, New Year. The Ukrainians used to—didn't let the Jews—oh, this is

before the war. They used to dress like a goat, and a guy was behind with a—what they call that?

CP: A whip?

NS: A whip. Believing that the goat is the Jew and whipping them, you know. That was before the war. So, so much they were engrained anti-Semitism there. I remember that. That night, we never went out on the street.

CP: So, you just had to stay home while this was going on?

NS: Yeah, yeah.

CP: When you were younger, did you make—

NS: We went to *cheder*; it means the Hebrew school after the school. We had a rabbi who was from Hungary with red hair. And he was a sadist, because if you didn't do the homework he used to drop our pants and with a tree—a willow tree (laughs)—hit us over the behind. So, we did a joke on him, because he fell asleep one day. One of the guys' father was a shoemaker, and he had glue, and we put the glue under his beard as he fell asleep. He couldn't pick up the whole table. He start to holler and scream, so then his wife came in and took a scissor and cut off his beard. (laughs)

Number one, number two, we went in the outhouse. We didn't have washrooms like here. We nailed him there in the wash (laughs) with big nails. Nailed him there, into the washhouse. He hollered and screamed and hollered and screamed. So we played—he was mean to us, so we were mean to him.

CP: Okay.

NS: I mean, that's what I remember, those things. (laughs) Yeah.

CP: I'm interested in the goat scene that happened; you said it happened around Christmas?

NS: Around Christmas time—New Year's time.

CP: Okay, New Year's time. When you were young, did you realize the symbolism of this?

NS: Yeah, sure. We knew that they do this because they hate the Jews. But we never realized they would be able to massacre the Jews. We thought, you know, the hate is there, they keep it to themselves.

CP: Can you talk to me about when things started to change from just the normal childhood and when did things start to turn into—you know, when did, like, the Holocaust begin?

NS: Nineteen forty-one, when the war started on June 22 when Germany attacked Russia. The couple Russians who were there took off and the Ukrainians took over the town. They took over the town. They already planned that, to kill the Jews, but we didn't know that. But they didn't let any Jew out of the house. And that happened—a week later, you know, June 28, on a Friday—no, a Saturday—they rounded us all up in the courthouse, and Saturday night, twelve o'clock, they start killing them. Massacred them.

CP: So, once the Ukrainians took over, were you scared immediately?

NS: Yes, we were scared. We didn't know what was going on, but we didn't realize there would be killing, you know. We thought they would just take over, because they are Nazi lovers and they are nationalists. But we didn't realize that they were going to go to massacre.

CP: Can you tell me more about that night when they took you over to the courthouse, like what happened that night?

NS: They rounded us up all in the courthouse. In the courthouse, you couldn't escape because you had these heavy grates there, you know, on the windows. And then, women, children, men—all of them in a big, big hall there. And midnight, they came in and start going by the name. “Rosenberg, Yusuf” and “Rosenberg, Buvi,” his son, have to register. People didn't know, so they went. They took them about a half a mile to a warehouse—not a warehouse, where you keep grain. What do you call that?

CP: Silo?

NS: A silo, yeah. Undressed them, and from there they marched them another half a mile, and this is where they killed them, under a mountain there. And then they came back and they took father and son, father and son, all the male.

CP: And they said it was to register?

NS: To register. People didn't know. Of course, if they would have known they could have rebelled. You could have hit them over the head or something, or fight back. They did the same thing with the Germans. They said, "You have to take a shower. Here's a piece of soap, go inside," and then they gassed them. How demented. You know, the Jews were innocent. They didn't know. They were naïve, naïve.

CP: So that night when you're all in the courthouse, what was happening with your family at that moment? Like, what was your father doing; what was your mother doing?

NS: Well, my father took off his watch, took off his ring, gave it to Mother, and kissed her and said goodbye. We didn't know he's not coming back; [that] they are going to kill him. But then, as for me, my mother says, "He went already." I was there, underneath the hassock. I was under the hassock.

CP: So, your mother hid you? How did that work?

NS: There was another guy, a very skinny guy who crawled up in the fireplace in the chimney, all the way up to the chimney to the roof. He escaped, too. A skinny guy; he went up, you know, and he escaped. So, that's it, no one else. Only women and girls were left. They planned to kill the women and girls next night. But, in the meantime, the Romanian troops came in. Hungarian-Romanian troops came in. They stopped it, because they see this barbaric massacre. They stopped it. War is war. You shoot you, you shoot me. But massacring human beings? They stopped that, and then they deported us. They took us all, marched us to a ghetto, to Czernowitz, about fifteen miles, twenty miles.

CP: Can you tell me about that, when they came in and they stopped it? What was actually happened?

NS: We didn't know. We saw from the window on to the road, which is like a couple

hundred feet. We saw troops coming through on horses, you know. And then they came to us, to our place, and took us out from there, the women and children and me. The Ukrainians were wondering, how come I escaped? They took us out, and they marched us to a ghetto.

CP: Do you remember anything about the march?

NS: Yes. No bread, no water, no nothing. They just marched us into the ghetto in the big city, which is about fifteen miles from there, the Romanian troops, soldiers. And they were not cruel at all. I think they let us have some water some place, in a fountain or something. But no bread, no food. And when we came to the ghetto, they put us in the ghetto, all of them, mostly those who survived. In little towns, where there were five Jewish families, ten Jewish families, the whole—everybody was killed. But for us, we were almost five hundred people—you know, big town. Stănești was a big town, like Bradenton. A big town; it wasn't like a little village.

CP: So, you were with your mother on this march?

NS: My mother and my sister.

CP: Your mother and your sister.

NS: And in the meantime, while they rounded us up in the courthouse, every house was plundered, emptied completely. Took out all the furniture, everything. Nothing was left, even light fixtures. Everything. They just naked all the houses. The Ukrainians took everything out. They carried all the night. The whole night they carried away; all the Jewish homes were emptied.

CP: When did you learn that everything had been plundered?

NS: When we came out from the courthouse. My mother tried to go to the house; there was nothing there. Empty. I mean, the Romanians let us go in; they said, "Go take a look." There was nothing there. They took everything out.

CP: Can you tell me about your arrival in Czernowitz?

NS: They marched us to the ghetto. And when in the ghetto—you know, barbed wire surrounded all that. They rounded up all the Jews from Czernowitz, because the Czernowitz Jews were not killed; it was too big for the Ukrainians to come and kill. There were almost a half a million people there, half a million Jews. And we were in this big ghetto; it was like fifteen square miles—big ghetto with barbed wire all around. And we stayed there, and then they started deporting to the concentration camp.

CP: And you knew that people were being deported?

NS: Yes. But my uncle, who was a textile engineer, they needed him to manufacture parachutes and uniforms. So, they give him a stay, but he says, “On one condition: I have my sister-in-law,” which is my mother, “and the two kids,” me and my sister. And we stayed. They didn't deport us.

CP: So, once you arrived into the camp, how did that work? How did you get integrated into that community? Did you just have to have to find a place?

NS: I used to go, under the wire, out and go—I used to go from the ghetto, under the wire. I used to dig underneath and go under the wire. And I had a friend; his mother was Jewish, his father was a general in the Romanian army. But, he felt more Jewish. He had papers—I.D.s and all that. I didn't, so he gave me a little silver swastika to put around here. So, when they stop us on the road—he used to say, “Here is my I.D. and this is my friend,” and I used to say, “Like this,” and they let me go. (laughs) That's the Germans, the Germans patrols.

And we used to meet girls, go to the movie. (laughs) We had a—I was stupid, you know, young, because if they caught me, they would shoot me on the spot. But when they saw the silver swastika—I have a couple pictures that I took and crossed off the swastika, so when I came here to the United States the Americans will say, “Oh, he's a Nazi, not a Jew.” So, I took and scratched off the swastika.

CP: Wow. How often would you sneak out of the ghetto?

NS: All the time.

CP: Yeah?

NS: Yeah. We used to sneak out, and we used to go in the cornfields and get some corn and bring it in to the ghetto. And some apple trees; we used to take apple from the tree and bring it in. I was outside a lot. That silver swastika saved me a lot.

I remember I went with my friend, who was half Jewish—we went to the movie, and the movie playing was called *Jud Süß* [1940], a propaganda movie. It shows how the Jews—you know, with the long nose with the beard—raping a gentile girl, you know. So, the people all stood up and says, "Kill the Jews! Kill the Jews! Kill!" I was there. I says, "Oh, my God, I hope they don't find out I'm Jewish!" (laughs) The propaganda instigated the people. The propaganda was done by [Joseph] Goebbels. But, you know, the movie was called *Jud Süß*, a caricature of a Jew with a long nose and a beard raping a gentile girl. A blond girl, you know, to instigate the population.

I went through a lot of adventures. And then we used to go on the street and they said, "*Halt! Papiere, achtung!*" So, he showed his papers. And I didn't have any papers, but I had this here, so I said, "*Heil!*" He says, "You can go." Fooled them again. (laughs)

CP: Wow. Amazing.

NS: It's amazing. Yeah, I went through so many— (laughs) I can't even imagine.

CP: When you saw the film, the propaganda film, were you angry when you were seeing it?

NS: I was scared. I was scared. And we used to go to other movies. It was Mickey Mouse and some other movies, you know—but this was a propaganda movie.

CP: Can you tell me some more about your friend that was outside of the ghetto?

NS: He was my good friend, you know. He used to bring us fresh bread from the bakery, and butter and eggs. His mother was Jewish, his father was a general, but he felt Jewish, you know. As a matter of fact, I have a picture with him together marching on the street, and a guy making money took our picture. It was an instant picture, so they—I have the picture with me. And that was under Nazi occupation. Oh, yeah, I was an adventurer, too.

CP: Can you tell me about any other adventures that you remember from those days?

NS: Another adventure?

CP: From camp days?

NS: Oh, yeah! Once, I didn't have any papers. The Nazis arrested me and took me into the Gestapo house, because they didn't believe only to this little—I had no papers. There, they had me clean a toilet, which is clogged up, with my hand. My friend—his father was a general in the Romanian army—he went there, and he says, "He is not a Jew, he's a Christian. Didn't you see the Nazi emblem? So, let him out from here!" Well, he was a general, so the Nazis says, "Okay." So, I went out from there and took a good shower. (laughs)

I'm just telling you adventures, you know. They could have shot me and killed me. Many adventures happened, you know. You know, when you're young, you go in trouble and make—I have adventures, all kinds.

CP: Do you remember anything else about Czernowitz or about life there with your family?

NS: No. Ghetto was every day less people, because they deported them to the concentration camps. They went by numbers. They had to fill up like six hundred—a train with six hundred or eight hundred. Out they go, and go to the concentration camp. But we were saved, because my uncle was a textile engineer, so they didn't deport us.

CP: How were you able to survive under those circumstances?

NS: Like I said, we had—I used to bring in corn, bread, eggs, milk—forget about butter; there was no butter—potatoes and carrots and all kinds of vegetables. So we survived there slowly, you know, smuggled it into the ghetto. The ghetto had barbed wire all around, you know. But we used to go under the wire—dig out and go under the wire. (laughs)

CP: So, are there any other stories that you can think of about that time?

NS: In Czernowitz?

CP: Mm-hm.

NS: No. We just survived until March 1944. Oh, yes! We were not in the ghetto anymore, because my uncle was a textile engineer, so we were in like an apartment building in a basement, and this is where we stayed. So, in that apartment house—see, in Czernowitz, the apartment houses are like this, and that big courthouse.

Some SS came there, about ten jeeps with SS, parked over there. I speak German, so I used to go out, and he [the SS officer] says, "*Alkohol?*" I says, "No problem. No problem." My uncle took rubbing alcohol, regular rubbing alcohol, and put in caraway seeds and brown sugar, made a good liquor. (laughs) I used to go out to the SS, "*Alkohol!*" They gave me cans of meat, cookies, so-called chocolate. SS, they never thought I'm Jewish, because I spoke German.

He says, "What are you?"

I says, "*Volksdeutsche*"—you know, *Volksdeutsche*; it means belong to the German culture [ethnic German].

[He says,] "Where is your father?"

[I say,] "On the Eastern Front."

[He says,] "Where is your mother?"

[I say,] "My mother is dead. I'm orphan."

[He says,] "Oh! You want to volunteer?"

I says, "I'm too young."

CP: How old were you at that time?

NS: At that time, fourteen. I'm too young, but I traded with the SS. They didn't know I'm Jewish. (laughs) I gave them rubbing alcohol. I should have put poison in it. So, that's one—I'm just telling you what kind of adventures, you know.

CP: That's amazing. You mentioned that, after a time, you were able to leave the ghetto, because your uncle worked—

NS: Yes. We went in a basement; we lived in a basement.

CP: Do you remember how that worked? Like, did you have to just pack up your stuff?

NS: We had no stuff, nothing. We just went there. We had a couple blankets and some clothes, and we lived there. We had a couple beds there with straw mattresses, and we lived there.

CP: Did you have to sneak out of the ghetto, or were you allowed to leave because of your uncle?

NS: No, we have to leave because of my uncle.

CP: Okay.

NS: So, they didn't deport us. And the way we got food is I used to adventure out and bring food and so on.

CP: So, you were pretty much providing for your family at that time.

NS: Yeah, yeah. And March 24 or 25 [1944], the Russians came in. But before the Russians came in, the Germans went around with a loudspeaker, mostly SS, and says, "Go to the warehouse next to the water, next to the river, and take anything you want, because we are going to blow it up. We don't want to leave it for the Russians." So, I went. I speak German. I had black pants, a crew cut, white socks. I looked like a young German *Volksdeutsche*. (laughs). I went there. They gave you a big bag, and I went in the warehouse. Unfortunately, in that warehouse was shoe department, but they were all left shoes! All left! Boots, everything was left.

CP: Uh-huh.

NS: Nothing right! But I put in there, and also some cleats, cleats for the shoes—there in the winter you need cleats. I filled it up, and then they says, "That's it. In five minutes we blow up the warehouse." So, I took that bag, and then I found a guy who was with me in school, a Ukrainian. He says, "You know, the Germans lost the war. The Russians are coming in. I know you are Jewish, but I won't betray you." He went left; I went right.

I go with my bag home and the first thing, the German SS stopped me, "*Hände hoch!*" I dropped my bag. The cleats made such noise like hand grenade. He said, "You're a Jew?" [I said,] "*Volksdeutsche! Heil Hitler!*" [He said,] "Ah! Go." You know the Germans; they'll let you go and then they shoot you from the back. I went, but nothing happened to me.

CP: Wow.

NS: Then I came home, and we lived—from that bag, we lived about three months. The shoes, we give it to a shoemaker (laughs) and he took off the leather. And the cleats, we sold them—everything. And then, two days later, the Russians came in, Mongolians. The first thing they says, "*Gde Nazi? Hitler ofitser?* Where are Hitler people?" Mongolians, I remember, with (inaudible). And they says, "*Evreï?*" You know, you don't say "Jewish" [in Russian]. "*Evreï? Evreï?*" They didn't care. They were looking for Germans. They went through. Then came another patrol and another patrol and then a truck with soldiers and they says, "They are going to give you some weapons, some automatic weapons. Round up any German and any Nazi or Ukrainian hiding in basements."

So, we rounded up a lot of them. We took them to the main plaza, which is called the *Ringplatz* in Czernowitz. And the Russian put up a truck with a machine gun, (laughs) machine gunned them all. Killed them all. We didn't do it; they did it. But, we rounded them up. Then we went around with the automatic [weapons]. My mother says, "You have a headache, put on a white (inaudible). Don't go. You're dangerous. I says, "I'm not have a headache, and I'm not dangerous. We have to do the job, that's what we are going to do—revenge."

So, we went out and looked around patrol in each basement for Nazis, because some of them were hiding. And also, *Hausmeisters*—you know what *Hausmeisters* are? Superintendent from big buildings; they were collaborating with the Ukrainians and the Nazis. They were also taken out, and they met their fate. Romanian, the Russians did not kill. They took all their shoes and their pants and their underwear, kicked them in the ass

and says, "Go home." (laughs) The Romanian. Only the Nazis and the Ukrainians they killed.

CP: And so, you belonged, then, to this—

NS: It was a group; we were like thirty, forty Jewish guys with automatic weapons looking for Nazis.

CP: Wow.

NS: We controlled the city, actually. But we did not go outside the city, because we were afraid of those murderers—the Ukrainians who were hiding in the woods—so we didn't go out. But in the city, big city—Czernowitz is a big city. Czernowitz is a city like Tampa, big city.

That was 1944, March. Then three weeks later they said, "Everybody has to go to the army now. You have to go to the army." [I said,] "No problem." I volunteered. What do I volunteer? Mine fields. I didn't know. They said, "It's a course of four weeks, and then you'll graduate and you're a sergeant. Give you good food and good uniform." After four weeks, they threw us in the mine fields. I took out between seventy-five to eighty mines a day, crawling. Guys are blowing up left and right. I used to take out the mines, throw it back, take out the incendiary; looks like a cigar. We had a little satchel, put it in here.

So, and my mother and my uncle and all, they lived in Czernowitz, you know. So, one day I brought home a whole satchel with those incendiaries, and I put it in a guitar, hung it on the wall. My uncle picked it up says, "What the heck? This weighs like about fifty pounds!" He shook it out and says, "What, are you crazy? Incendiaries?" He buried it someplace. I'm telling you, (laughs) crazy things.

CP: So, can you tell me—

NS: And then, the Russians recruited me. Then I went into the army. That was in forty-four [1944].

CP: Can you tell me more about how did you actually—um, so you had to detect these mines just by hand? Can you describe that for me? Like, how did you detect them?

NS: Crawling with a knife. If you feel something hard, could be a stone; but if you feel something hard—there is an anti mine, anti-person mine. They look like a box like this. Inside was a white—a yellow piece of cake, like soap, and there was a hole with an incendiary like a cigar inside, and a spring. Once you touched the spring, (makes explosion sound). Takes off your legs, your hand. And this is what we removed, so many.

And one day—our commander was a Cossack. There were two kinds of Cossacks: the Ukrainian Cossacks who fought with the Nazis against the Russians; then there were Russian Cossacks who fought—who were loyal to the Soviets. This guy was a Cossack, dressed in a Cossack [fashion] with the knives and hair and all that, tall guy with black hair.

So, he called us in. We were like about eight or nine or ten Jewish guys. And he says, "My name—you know what my name is? Vasiliĭ Grigorovich. Grigorovich, right? My name is Chaim Schwarzkopf. I'm a Jew. The reason why I am dressed like this is because when the Germans capture me, they won't kill me [because they think I'm a] Cossack. My family got killed in Kiev, in"—what is it called, Yadi Bar? In Kiev, they killed all the Jews in a valley—Babi Yar. "My family—my wife, my kids, my sister, my brothers, my uncle. I'm here to take revenge on the Germans. So, you should know that I'm Jewish. As soon as the war is over, I go to Israel." And he started to talk in Hebrew, "*L'shana haba beyerushalayim*," so we knew he's Jewish. He said, "Don't tell nobody; this is my secret. As soon as the war is over, I go straight to Palestine." At that time, wasn't Israel, was Palestine. It was 1945. And so, that's another thing, you know.

CP: Can you tell me—how did you end up talking to that—you said he was a colonel?

NS: No, he was a general.

CP: A general. How did you end up talking to him?

NS: He called us in and he told us that his name is not Vasiliĭ Grigorovich. "I'm not Cossack; I'm a Jew." His name was Chaim Moishe Schwarzkopf. And he says, "*L'shana haba beyerushalayim*." He says "*L'shana haba beyerushalayim*." He was Jewish. All his family was exterminated in Kiev, Babi Yar. So, he's there to take revenge on Germans. As soon as he gets a German, he doesn't take him prisoner. [He said,] "I execute them."

CP: Was he hiding his Jewish identity because there was anti-Semitism?

NS: Because if the Germans captured him, they wouldn't kill him because they would think, "He's a Cossack; he's not a Jew."

CP: Okay.

NS: But whenever he caught a German, no prisoners. He didn't take no prisoners. He shot them. He took revenge to what happened to his family, the whole family. You know, they killed almost a half a million Jews in Babi Yar in Kiev, in a big valley. You know what the story is? You don't? They rounded up all the Jews, the Nazis, and machine gunned them all in Kiev in 1941 or forty-two [1942]. And his family perished there, too. So, he took revenge on the Germans.

I went through a lot of things, believe me. And then after we finished with the mines, they sent us to the front line: Poland, Hungary, Slovakia. So, I figured—in the Russian army, there were a lot of guys who survived the war, because they were going one mile forward and five miles backward. (laughs) They were traveling. You know, it was such a mish-mash. One mile forward with a train, another train goes back, they used to go back five miles. Survive the war.

But I went—I wanted to take revenge on the Germans, so I went in the army with the Russians. But no more mines; this is the regular infantry, you know, behind tanks and so on. The Germans—you know, the funniest thing is why the Russians intimidated the Germans, I'll tell you the reason why: because one of the commissars used to take out this saber and say, "*Za batyushku Stalina! Hoorah!*" Like, the Chinese and the Russians used to say this hoorah. The Germans pissed in their pants. They got up like this—white flags. They came in masses, a hundred thousand. The Germans were like fifty thousand. Naturally, the Germans lost the war.

CP: Can I ask you—

NS: I want to tell you something: In the army, we had Ukrainians who said to me, "You are a stinking Jew. You know that when I come in the front line, I'm not going to kill the Germans. I'll kill you from the back." So, I told the sergeant. The sergeant was a Ukrainian, too. He says, "Nah, never mind." So, I went to the *polkovnik*, the colonel, and I reported to him. He says, "Who was that?" I says, "That guy over there." He says, "Really?" He called him over, pulled out his gun, (makes shooting sound) shot him. Like that.

CP: Wow.

NS: Yeah.

CP: Shot the man?

NS: Shot the man on the spot.

CP: Who was a—

NS: Who told me that he would kill me, instead [of] kill the Germans.

CP: Wow.

NS: And he wasn't a Jew. He was a Russian, a colonel. He says, "You, come here. What did you say?" He said, "I hate Jews." [The colonel said,] "Really?" (makes shooting sound) Boom! Dead!

CP: Gosh!

NS: Oh, yeah.

CP: Besides that man, did you experience more anti-Semitism when you were in the army?

NS: Oh, yes. Oh, yeah, a lot of anti-Semitism in the Russian army. Mostly [from] Ukrainians, not Russians. Ukrainians. But we were mostly in with Mongolians, Tatars, Cherkes, mixed up together. And they are not Jew haters (laughs) because they don't even—they never seen Jews before, (laughs) you know. But the Ukrainians were the Jew—were the haters, you know. We had Mongols, Tatars, Cherkes, Kazakhstan, all kinds of—Russia had so many provinces, you know. But they were not Jew haters, only the Ukrainians. From nature, Ukrainians—from the 1800s they had problems in the Ukraine. They hated Jews.

CP: Can I ask you to—I'm really interested in—so, right after liberation, you went in—you were liberated by the Russians, and then you joined this militia. How was that organized? Were people—can you tell me, like, how that militia was formed?

NS: Well, the Russians gave us automatic weapons, you know, with the disk? They says, "Go hunt for Nazis, Ukrainians, or Poles who are Nazis, who collaborated with the Nazis, and round them up." And we round them up. And then the Russians machine gunned them all—the Soviets.

CP: What was your feeling? What were you feeling when you were doing that?

NS: Nothing, nothing. I was glad they did it.

CP: Yeah?

NS: I was glad they did it. But the funniest thing is when they got the Romanians, they took off their pants, took off their shoes, left them in underpants, kicked them in the ass and says, "Go home." (laughs) The Romanian soldiers; but the German soldiers, Ukrainians, some Poles, too, and there were some Nazis from Belgium, from Holland, from—all kind of Nazis, you know, volunteers. The Russian didn't take no prisoners.

CP: How long was the militia going around before you started—before you entered the military?

NS: Maybe a month.

CP: About a month?

NS: Yeah.

CP: And what did you—

NS: And then (inaudible) came and it was already—officially, you know, but for a month it was a no-man's land. So, we were actually the power there.

CP: I'm interested in what was that like, going from having to live in a concentration camp and being (inaudible)?

NS: I'll tell you what: somebody told us, "In that church are hiding some Ukrainians and Nazis." A church. So, we went in the church and we found them there; they were laying between the pews on the floor. Then, we said, "*Hände hoch!*"—I mean, "Hands up." So, I got up all of them, put them in a group over there, and the Soviets (makes shooting sound), machine gunned them all. They killed so many, a lot of Cossacks who fought with the Nazis against the Soviets. Some committed suicide; they didn't want—

The English and Americans had a pact: every time they catch them, send them back to Russia. And they put them on cattle trains and send them back to Russia. Some committed suicide; they didn't want to go back. As soon as they came there to Russia, they opened the cattle van and they machine gunned them all. They were Nazis, collaborating with the Nazis against the Soviets. Cossacks, Ukrainians, Poles, Dutch, Swedish, I don't know, Norwegians, Greeks, all kinds of Nazi collaborators. So, the Soviets took good revenge, you know, but they did a lot of damage to the Germans, and the Ukraine.

CP: For you, when you were part of that militia, was there satisfaction?

NS: Absolutely. I remember my mother took out a white handkerchief, put it in my hat, and says, "You are sick." I says, "You make me for sick? I'm not a coward." I took it off and I went. She says, "For my sake, don't get killed." [I said,] "Don't worry about it. I won't get killed." (laughs) She didn't want me to go in danger. Mother, you know. I was at that time eighteen years old. I remember (laughs) she put the handkerchief [and said,] "Say that you're sick." (laughs) You know how mothers are. I reminded her once, in Israel. She says, "Yeah, I tried to save you, because I thought you were going to go in danger." I says, "No danger. We were in charge. (taps his chest) Not them."

So, I had some satisfaction, you know. And you know what they did with all the bodies? They threw gasoline and burned them all. They didn't bury them.

CP: Which bodies?

NS: The Germans, Ukrainians, whatever they rounded up in that plaza. Threw gasoline and burned them all. They didn't want to bury them. Oh, yeah. I can write a book. That's right.

Mp3 file 1 ends; mp3 file 2 begins.

CP: Okay, Nathan. This is tape two of our interview with Nathan Snyder. When we left off, we talked about the time in the militia, and then you also talked about your time in the Russian army. I was wondering if you could tell me about how you left the Russian army, the story behind that.

NS: I just walked away.

CP: You mean you didn't finish your time; you just left the army?

NS: Yeah, because I figured that later—if I wait later, I won't be able, because they took everybody back to Russia. So, I left, and I took on the name of Rubi Wisberg. I went to Romania, and I lived there under the name of Rubi Wisberg. And in 1948 when Israel was born, I was hiding in the the Israeli Embassy, under the name of Rubi Wisberg. The ambassador—the first Israeli Ambassador to Romania was Ehud Avriel.

Going back to that, Ehud Avriel in 1946, forty-seven [1947], trained us in the mountains in Romania for the future of Israeli commandos: knife throwing, hand grenade throwing, walking with a pack of stones over wires, jumping wire, dropping from a tree like a parachute. He trained us there. And then, I was hiding in the Embassy. The one who trained us became the ambassador. It was funny. And I lived there until 1951.

In 1951, I got a visa under Rubi Wisberg to go to Israel. I couldn't take nothing with me. I still have the document with the picture, Rubi Wisberg. Document is called a visa—a certificate, you know. And then I came to Israel, and as soon as I came to Israel, Rubi Wisberg disappeared and Nathan Schneider became Nathan Snyder.

When I came in Israel in 1950, I was in a *shar aliyah*, it's called, a camp of immigrants. This is when I met my wife. My wife was a nurse, and I was there in the camp police—and also part-time postmaster (laughs)—all kinds of jobs in *shar aliyah*. And then I went to the border patrol at Lebanese border. And then I applied to the Customs, and because I speak Hebrew, I was accepted as a customs officer. I worked in Haifa, in port, Haifa Port. Haifa Port was a closed port. By the gate all around was barbed wire. By the gate were the MP [military police], port police, and Customs. And I worked there to the day I came to the United States.

CP: Before you tell us about your trip to the United States or when you came to the United States, can you tell me about meeting your wife? Do you remember when you first met her?

NS: Yes. She was a nurse and I was in that police, you know. She didn't want to meet me, because she thinks that I am a bum. I had my hair slicked down like—what his name, the guy from the movie? You know, the guy in the movie, has his hair done back like this? Anyway—

CP: John Travolta?

NS: No, no, no. I had a leather jacket. And finally she met me because we start to talk in German. And we met in fifty-two [1952].

CP: So, she must have liked you.

NS: Huh?

CP: She must have liked you.

NS: Yeah, sure. Fonzie is his name—guy, Fonzie.¹ Yeah.

CP: Oh!

NS: And they told her, "Don't marry him, because he likes a lot of girls, you know." But any girl I met was my cousin. "Who is that girl?" [I said,] "She is my cousin." "Who is this girl?" [I said,] "My cousin." I had a lot of cousins! (laughs) But anyway, we married in fifty-two [1952].

CP: What was life like in *shar aliyah*?

NS: It's a camp. They had Jews from all over, from Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, and Iraq, from everywhere. From Sudan, from everywhere. Yemenites. Everywhere.

¹ Arthur "Fonzie" Fonzarelli, a fictional character from the television show *Happy Days*, which aired from 1974 to 1984.

CP: Can you describe, like, the living conditions for me, paint a picture?

NS: People lived in tents. But, I didn't live in a tent. I lived in a British housing project, because we were like the police, you know. But the regular people lived in tents, and from there they were taken out to Beersheba, Sinai, (inaudible), and the desert, you know. Populated them, and gave them housing and all that. This is why the Jews are there in Israel: immigrants. There were immigrants from everywhere, from every corner of this earth.

The funniest thing is the Yemenites came with two, three wives. So, the government says, "You cannot have that." So, he wants to choose his younger wife; she's thirteen years old. "Sorry. How old are you? Sixty? You get the older wife, who is forty." And the other one went in a kibbutz, and they went in the army and became Israelis—you know, lifestyle.

And then I was in the Customs and I worked there until 1951. I came to the United States in fifty-eight [1958]. I came to the United States in fifty-eight [1958]—wait a minute. I met my wife in fifty-one [1951]. Oh, yeah, I worked in the Customs. Yeah. And I remember when I went to told them that I am leaving for United States, because my mother-in-law lived there, he says, "You just caught a big smuggling ring, so you deserve to get a thousand dollars, and we give you—you are the grade thirteen, you are going to be grade fifteen, and if you come back you get all that privileges."

I says, "My mother wants to go; my wife wants to go, because her mother is there." She sent us the tickets and the affidavit that we won't be a burden to United States government. And we left. We arrived in here in November 14, 1958, in New York. My brother-in-law picked me up. And that started a new life in the United States.

CP: And you said—you remember the name of the boat that you took over here?

NS: *Israel*.

CP: The *Israel*.

NS: *Israel*. It took us fourteen days. We stopped in Athens, in Naples, in Palma de Majorca, in Palma de Minorca, Gibraltar, and then straight across the ocean.

CP: Can you tell me about life when you first arrived in the United States?

NS: Yeah, sure. I shoveled snow and made twenty dollars. And then two days later the snow melted and my profit went in the drain. Then I got a job in an old-age home, washing pots and pans. And my partners were a Jew and a black guy. The Jew had no neck. He had a head like a watermelon. We didn't talk; we washing pots. The black guy was a big, tall guy, like six foot five [inches]. Later, when we were sitting down eating lunch and I could talk a little bit English, he told me their story.

The guy who owned the nursing home was a parole officer; he took them out from jail. I says, "Why are you here?" He says, "Well, I killed my wife. I was a seaman"—the Jewish guy. He came home, find his wife in the bed with somebody else. He took a hatchet and killed them both. So, he got life. How about the black guy? The black guy said, "I also found my girlfriend in bed with somebody else, and I killed her, too. Strangled her." So, they were two criminals, two murders, I worked together. But, we were friendly. (laughs) I was very proud. (laughs)

Then, I was advanced to dishwashers; you know, I became advanced dishwashing. Dishwashing was much easier: you take the dishes in the machine, you take it out, you dry it off, all that. And the guy who was in charge of the dietary department was a guy who was also on parole. He also killed his wife. And I became a waiter, waiting the table. The people spoke Yiddish, Russian, German, Polish, all kinds of people there.

I was working as a waiter for about three months, and suddenly the guy in charge of dietary department got caught in a bar. He broke his parole. He went back in jail. So, Joe Paul, who was the president, the parole officer, says, "Tell me, greenhorn, do you want to take over the job?" [I said,] "Sure, I'll take over the job." [Joe said,] "Have you ever done this before?" [I said,] "Sure, I did it before, in Israel." [Joe said,] "Okay, you got the job." So, I became in charge of dietary department. From the salary of thirty [dollars], I was making eighty dollars a week. That's a lot of money.

I was working there, and he had also a beef business—you know, getting beef from the beef companies and cutting it in briskets and delivering to doctors and lawyers and luncheonettes and diners and so on. The guy who was doing—the delivery guy went to Korea, Korean War. He says, "You silly greenhorn, do you know how to drive?" I says, "I drove a Jeep." [He said,] "No, I will teach you. Come in my Cadillac." He took me around in the parking lot, and says, "Monday morning, we go there [to the Department of Motor Vehicles]. Whatever they ask you, you say yes." I says, "Okay." So, I came there and they asked me all kinds of questions. I says, "Yes, yes, yes." [They said,] "Very good, you passed the test." He knew the guy there, (laughs) from the traffic, you know.

So suddenly, I have a job delivering meat, collecting money, delivering meat. I used to get up at five o'clock in the morning. His [Joe's] brother-in-law used to pick me up at five o'clock from the northeast—I lived in Philadelphia—and took me in there and then I worked exactly till four o'clock. That's it, and then he took me home. I worked for a year and a half. The salary wasn't bad. It was like ninety dollars a week, five days a week. Saturday and Sunday was off.

A year and a half later, I said to the guy, to Joe Paul, "I never got a raise. How about a vacation?" [Joe said,] "You want a vacation? Do you know, when I came from Russia I ate orange and a piece of bread a day, and I had a horse and a wagon, and you want a vacation?" I says, "Why not? I am entitled. This is not slavery." He says, "No vacation. What are you going to do with the money?" [I said,] "I want to buy myself a little car." He says, "A greenhorn wants to buy a car? I had a horse and carriage! He wants a car!" I says, "I'll tell you what, Mr. Paul, I quit." And I quit.

Friday, I got my money. I came home to Julia, and Julia says, "Why are you so (inaudible) in your face?" [I said,] "I quit my job." [Julia said,] "How could you quit your job? You have me and two kids to support." I says, "Don't worry about it. I will get a job." I got a job. I was taking care of an invalid. I was taking care in a warehouse. I was taking care—I don't know. I had about three or four jobs. I made money. My family never starved.

Then, I saw an ad in the paper [for] a nursing home. It was called—on Snyder Avenue, and it was called—I forgot. Anyway, [they wanted] somebody speaks many languages, especially Yiddish. So I went there and told them, "I speak Yiddish and German and Russian." He says, "I want to hire you, but you have to work seven days a week, five hundred dollars a month." "It's done." And I worked there for him for about twelve years.

CP: Wow.

NS: There, I was the executive director. I running everything: the dietary, the cleaning, the hiring, the nurses' aides—not the regular nurses, because I wasn't—and maintenance and everything. And I worked there. So, one day we had to strip the floors, the dining room floor and all the hallways. I saw an ad in the paper, a guy by the name of Jack MacIntyre, an Irish guy, and he came over and he said, "I'll give you a price." I remember he told me fifteen hundred dollars. I says, "Fine. When is the crew going to start?" "Tomorrow night."

Tomorrow night, I was there. He was sitting in the dining room talking to the nurses and drinking wine. So, I called him up and says, "Mr. MacIntyre, your crew—you're losing money. Your crew is drinking wine and sitting with the nurses in the dining room. You sent the wrong crew in here." He says, "Okay, I am going to fire them all and I'll bring another crew." I said, "You're going to lose money. Fifteen hundred dollars, it will cost you four thousand dollars exactly."

He came over and says, "Would you like to work for me?" (laughs) "How much you make?"

And I says, "Five hundred dollars a month."

"I'll give you a thousand. Come work for me. But I want to take over some hospitals. You have some nursing home experience. Can you work for me?"

I says, "Sure. I work for a thousand dollars. I'll work for you."

"Can you start tomorrow?"

I says, "No, I'll have to give notice. I cannot leave the guy like that." So, I went into—Dr. Zweig was his name, Zweig, and I says, "I'm going to leave. I give you notice."

He says, "You don't have to give me notice. You can leave today."

"Thank you very much." So, I left and I came to work for Jack MacIntyre. And I took over—I remember it was St. Anthony's Hospital—no, St. Francis Hospital [St. Francis Medical Center] in Philadelphia. I worked for him. I got thousand dollars a month, and I was very happy. I made good money. And then, he took another hospital and another hospital and another hospital and I used to spread out, and then I became the vice president of the company. And he raised my [pay], and I says, "No more money. Twenty percent of each dollar. Twenty cents of each dollar is yours."

We used to clean the rugs, clean windows, do hospitals. I was very happy. I made about seventy-five, eighty thousand dollars a year, but I worked seven days a week. I worked for the guy fourteen years. He was a drinker. J&B [scotch], he liked the J&B. He used to say, "Listen, you're a smart goddamn Jew." I say, "You're a smart goddamn Irishman, but you are a drunk. You drink a lot." (laughs)

So, one day he said to me, "You know what? [For what] I am paying you, I can hire four college graduate guys." I said, "You can hire six of them." And that gave me an idea. I have to leave him. You know what I mean? They're say when you are drunk on your tongue, you talk from your lung—when you're drunk on your lung, you talk on your tongue. I says, "He can hire four guys. I'm going to leave him and go on my own business." (laughs)

And this is when I went in my own business. I left him, he says, "You cannot do that." I says, "Yeah, I can do that. I'm leaving you." So, he sued me. He sued me because I'm stealing jobs from him. He lost the case. He came to court; he lost the case. And, I went to business, in cleaning business. I had hospitals, department stores, office buildings, and school districts. And I built it up in eight years to four and a half million dollars sale.

I had a partner; his name is Lou Silver. He had a degree in business and a degree in psychology and a degree in a criminal pathology. A lawyer and a drunk. He was on drugs. He on drugs. I didn't realize because I am not familiar, you know, but he was first of all smoking and then snorting. So, we went in business. We had five hundred and fifty employees.

CP: Wow.

NS: Five hundred employees and fifty managers and supervisors and district managers. So, one day in eighty-four [1984] the secretary said to me, "Mr. Snyder, don't you check your books? I see checks with his signature and not your signature. He's stealing money from you." My son was in law school at that time. We went in on Saturday and Sunday and we took out every single file. We came up with \$165,000 that that guy stole.

CP: Gosh.

NS: Monday morning, I confronted him. Lou, he had a Jaguar, and I drove a Jaguar. We wanted to be jaguars. So I come in the car, and we drove. I said, "You drive. Lou, why you stabbed me in the back?" He says, "What do you mean?"

"You're a thief! You're younger like me, and I consider you like a brother, like a son. You stole \$165,000 from the business, falsifying my name."

He start to cry. He said, "Your insurance is only—it's ten million and mine is two million, so I am paying more so I took out the difference."

I said, "Bull. We don't have a contract on that. You're a thief." We had forty-nine contracts. I says, "We cannot be in business anymore. We have to sell the business, and I don't want to split. Sell the business. You get your share; I get my share."

So, finally, he paid back \$140,000. He got the office building. We had a small strip mall with offices and buildings; he got that, and I got the rest of the money. And March of eighty-four [1984], the business was sold to Mackey Corporation. Mackey Corporation is a subsidiary from Allegheny Beverages, multibillion dollar, and they bought us. And I went and renewed all the contracts, so they got all the renewed contracts. He says, "What happened?" I said, "We are merging." I had to lie.

So, finally we sold the business. His wife, because he was a drug addict, threw him out from the house, divorced him, remarried. He had two girls. He wind up being a bum on the street.

(Mrs. Snyder speaks in the background)

I got most of the money, and I came to Florida. I bought my son a house, my daughter a house, and I came to Florida. I bought a boat. I came to Florida and here I am. Eighty-four.

Mrs. Snyder: Did he tell you the story about the shoes?

NS: Yeah, the shoes, the left shoes.

Mrs. Snyder: Yeah, the left shoes. (laughs)

CP: Oh, yeah. All the left shoes. (laughs)

NS. So, that's the story. I'm here. Okay. I'm here in Florida. In eighty-four [1984], I came here. I bought a condo.

Then this incident happened with this biker, who beat the hell out of me and broke my hip. I have a plate in here with a rod with four screws in my bones, and I have to use a cane and a walker. And after two years—he got probation for two years. No jail time, because it goes by points because he had no record. He was twenty-two years in the army, but he had no records. So, my daughter told right in court, "The judicial system stinks in here." The judge says, "I have to go by the points. You have no record." But he got two years probation. But he has a record. Probation is like a record. Right? He makes one bad move, he goes in jail. That's the end of it. That's the end of it. His name is George Hall. A biker.

CP: Can I ask you, Mr. Snyder, what does it mean to you to be here today when you have been through so much and have such an amazing story? What does it mean to you to be here today?

NS: I'm very happy that this gentleman, and this lady, and you, and the other people who took pictures and all that recorded everything. But, I want you do something for me. You're going to be a doctorate in what?

CP: In communication.

NS: Why don't you write a book? Put together a book. You know, the book can be a good seller, bestseller. From the day I was born to this day here—that's a nice, nice story, isn't it? Yes.

CP: It's an amazing story.

NS: But, why don't you do that?

CP: Okay.

NS: You know, you have a talent. He's going to be a doctor. A doctor gynecologist—I mean, no.

CP: (laughs) Okay. Is there anything else that you would like to say about your story or your children?

NS: I'm happy to be in the United States. It's the land of opportunity. If you work hard, you get the results. If you're lazy, you don't get nothing. And I worked hard. I used to work three jobs, four jobs, work—I used to work from five o'clock in the morning till two o'clock in the morning just to keep my jobs happy. And I used to have luncheon with administrators from hospitals, administrators from school district. They were very happy with me. The day I told them we're merging, they says, "Don't tell me that you're leaving." I says, "No, I'm just merging." Naturally, I left. I had to sell the business.

And now my partner, or ex-partner, sent me a letter. He said he went to his rabbi and the rabbi told him that he should send me a letter of apology. He send me a letter of apology. "I was wrong. I stabbed you in the back. I was a thief. You don't deserve that. Please forgive me." I have the letter.

So, I said, "Okay." I talked to my son, to my daughter, and to my wife, they says, "Send him back a letter." And I said, "I forgive you. But I give you advice. I am not American-born. If I be American-born, you would have been given a bullet to your head. Don't do things like that anymore, stealing from a partner. So, I forgive you." His wife divorced him, threw him out from the house, remarried again, and he wind up—somebody told me—the insurance guy told me he saw him with a long trench coat. He looked like this. (demonstrates) He's on drugs, apparently. He became a barfly, with prostitutes and so on.

CP: Can I ask you one final question, which is—

NS: Yes.

CP: —a message for future generations that you have?

NS: The future generation, it's work hard, be honest, and tell your story so the future generation can learn a lesson, because history repeats itself. If you ignore history, it will happen again. It can happen again. I mean, Holocaust can happen again. That's what I want to say. And with that, I conclude. And thank you very much, and thank you very much, and thank you very much.

CP: Thank you.

NS: Yes.

End of interview