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# Rossetty, Henry oral history interview

Steve Hochstadt  
*Bates College*

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**Interview with Henry Rossetty by Steve Hochstadt**  
**Shanghai Jewish Community Oral History Project**  
*Summary Sheet and Transcript*

**Interviewee**

Rossetty, Henry

**Interviewer**

Hochstadt, Steve

**Transcribers**

Draper, Meredith

Kumar, Sharat

Hochstadt, Steve

**Date**

6/8/1990

**Extent**

1 audiocassette

**Place**

Laguna Hills, California

**Use Restrictions**

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**Biographical Note**

Henry Rossetty was born Rosenfeld in Berlin in 1905. His father, Eugene Rosenfeld, was an opera singer. Rossetty became an electrician and then a band leader in Berlin until 1933. In 1939 he and his wife, Wally, and three other band members took a Japanese ship from Italy to Shanghai. Two days after arrival Rossetty and his band found work. Rossetty sailed to the United States after the war on the "General Gordon," and went to work in Chicago. Eventually they settled in southern California. Rossetty died in 1992.

## Transcript

**Steve Hochstadt:** What I'd like to do is listen to your story of how you got to Shanghai, and what your life was like in Shanghai and leaving Shanghai, all the details that you can remember. I'm speaking to as many Shanghai Jews as I can about their lives, and I hope eventually to write a book about you all.

**Henry Rossetty:** And if you publish the book, I would like to have a copy.

**SH:** I'm afraid to say that it may not be very soon.

**HR:** I intend to live a little longer.

**SH:** Good, good. I'm, right now I'm just collecting information. I have a long term idea about how long it will be, but I'll be glad to do that. So I guess what I'd like you to do is to start at the beginning. Tell me a little about where and when you were born, and, and what your family did, and then about how and why you went to Shanghai.

**HR:** Ja. I was born in Berlin, Germany, in 1905. And my father was an opera singer, and I became a band leader. I had my band in Germany, and in Shanghai, and in Oakland, California.

**SH:** So what kind of a band did you have in Germany? Was it in Berlin?

**HR:** Ja. It was about a ten-piece band. The music that we made was like Lawrence Welk: sweet dance music, light classical and operas.

**SH:** And where did you play? Did you have a particular place that you always played at?

**HR:** Oh well, I started to play when I was 23 years old, that's a long time ago.

**SH:** I mean, did you have a particular night club that you played in or a . . . ?

**HR:** I played in different places. In Shanghai, I played for three years at Wing On.<sup>1</sup>

**SH:** Wing On?

**HR:** Ja, that's a very large department store, and on the seventh floor was a big roof garden with dance. So we played there.

**SH:** Where was Wing On? Was it in the French Concession?

**HR:** No, it was right on Bubbling Well. That's a main street in Shanghai.

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<sup>1</sup> Wing On Co., Ltd., at 551 Nanking Road.

**SH:** So, tell me about what happened when Hitler, when Hitler came, you were already 28, you already had your band in Weimar, in the Weimar period?

**HR:** And I was not allowed to play anymore because I'm Jewish.

**SH:** As soon as 1933 came?

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** So the band was mixed, Jewish and not Jewish?

**HR:** No, mostly they were all Jewish, and the brass section was Philipinos, in Shanghai.

**SH:** So your Jewish band had to disappear after 1933 . . .

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** You couldn't play anymore?

**HR:** No.

**SH:** And then what did you do?

**HR:** Just go for welfare, because I didn't, could save much money, and it was gone pretty fast, when nothing comes to it. So I was on welfare until the day I left with my wife for Shanghai.

**SH:** And how did you find out about Shanghai? Or did you try to go to other places?

**HR:** It, it was the only place in the world where people could go without a passport. I had, my wife and I, we had passport with a "J" in them, for "Jews", and it expired when we crossed the German border to Switzerland. From Switzerland to Naples, Italy, and from there we took a Japanese ship to Shanghai.

**SH:** A Japanese ship . . .

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** Do you remember the name of the ship?

**HR:** Yasocony Maru.

**SH:** And when was that?

**HR:** That was in '39, in September, three months before the war broke out.

**SH:** Yes, just in time. So for those six years from 1933 to '39, you weren't able to work at all?

**HR:** No.

**SH:** Was your wife able to work or did you . . . ?

**HR:** She was a legal secretary, and she worked about the time we left for Shanghai.

**SH:** You went through Kristallnacht, you were there in Berlin during Kristallnacht?

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** Did anything happen to you then?

**HR:** No, but we wanted to go to Brazil, because her brother and his family lived in Rio de Janeiro. But we couldn't get a visa.

**SH:** You tried, you went to the consulate?

**HR:** Ja, ja.

**SH:** And they said no?

**HR:** No, they said, "I'm sorry."

**SH:** Did you try for any other places?

**HR:** Nobody would take us without a passport, without a country. Because if they let somebody in and they don't like them, they can send them back, but not without a passport.

**SH:** So then, how did you find out, did someone tell you about Shanghai? How did you learn about Shanghai?

**HR:** It was the only place where we could go.

**SH:** And you just knew about it? Friends knew about it, or . . . ?

**HR:** No, I, just, I went to the committee in Berlin, and they said, the only place where you can go is Shanghai, because it's occupied by the Japanese, and they let you in.

**SH:** Which committee was this? A Jewish committee?

**HR:** Yes, it was, they called it Hilfsverein. That means they helped Jews to get out.

**SH:** I see.

**HR:** Before they get to the concentration camp.

**SH:** And you knew about concentration camps already?

**HR:** Oh yes, I have known that.

**SH:** Did friends of yours, were friends of yours arrested after Kristallnacht?

**HR:** No, I don't remember anyone who was arrested.

**SH:** I see. And so how did you get the money together to buy the passage?

**HR:** The money was collected on the streets in America, and they sent the money to Switzerland. Then Switzerland sent it to London, England, and from there we get the tickets for the ships.

**SH:** And was the Hilfsverein helping you do this?

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** And then you and your wife . . .

**HR:** We went, oh, the whole band, the four-piece band.

**SH:** The whole band?

**HR:** Yeah, four-piece band and two wives.

**SH:** I see. So you all decided to do this together?

**HR:** Yeah. And when we came to Shanghai, the very next day, my wife met on the street, a friend. Said she worked in a bank in Berlin. And he said, "What, musician is here? I know a place where you can get a job." So we went there and started the next day to play.

**SH:** What, what kinds of preparations did you make to leave Berlin? Did you sell things?

**HR:** Oh, we had to sell all our belongings, because we couldn't take out more than ten German Mark. And that was not much.

**SH:** No. Did you have any way of sending money to someone or . . . ?

**HR:** I didn't have any, I was without a job for years and years.

**SH:** So you just sold your things and had your ten Marks . . .

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** And went to Italy on the train.

**HR:** Yeah, to Naples.

**SH:** To Naples. And who, who else was on the boat with you? Was the boat all filled with Jews . . . ?

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** . . . or were there other people? Just Jews?

**HR:** Ja. There were about 200 refugees from Central Europe, the Polish, the Austrian, and the German Jews.

**SH:** And what was the trip like on the, on the boat?

**HR:** We went second class, that was very good on the Japanese boat, and we made music on the boat.

**SH:** Yes. You were allowed to take your instruments out?

**HR:** Ja. I took out my saxophone and my accordion.

**SH:** And what other instruments did your other band members have?

**HR:** There was a violin, a drummer, and a piano player. [laughs]

**SH:** Of course.

**HR:** Oh, Marlene's coming.

**SH:** And so you made music on the boat?

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** Did, where did, did anyone get off the boat between Naples and Shanghai?

**HR:** No. Many tried to go off on Port Said, but they didn't let them get down.

**SH:** Who didn't let them? The Japanese on the boat, or the people there in Port Said?

**HR:** The English.

**SH:** The English.

**HR:** Ja. They didn't let us go down.

**SH:** So you couldn't visit any of these places.

**HR:** No.

**SH:** You had to stay on the boat?

**HR:** No.

**SH:** So tell me about arriving in Shanghai, what . . .

**HR:** I had an uncle who was before in Italy and went to Shanghai. And he was at the pier when we arrived at Shanghai. And my wife and I, we lived for a couple of weeks at his house. He had a bar, and after this we got rooms for ourselves.

**SH:** You had earned some money by then, playing, and you were able to . . .

**HR:** Yeah, I'd, I started in the next day when we arrived and we had a salary that was out of this world! Ten dollars a day per person. When I told my uncle what I got, he said, "If you wouldn't be so, that long, I would slap your face for this kind of lie." And I said, "Here's the contract, ten dollars per person per day."

**SH:** So that was a lot?

**HR:** That was out of this world. He couldn't believe it. He offered me fifty cents for playing in his bar.

**SH:** Fifty cents a day?

**HR:** Yeah.

**SH:** Well, why were they paying you so much?

**HR:** Oh, the Japanese were very generous in giving money for musicians.

**SH:** I see.

**HR:** Because they love music.

**SH:** So, and this job was at this department store. The first job was at the department store?

**HR:** Ja, it was a department store, a high-rise building, and on the seventh floor was a roof garden with dance.

**SH:** And it was run by the Japanese?

**HR:** No, it was run by, no, it was a German Jew, a rich one.



**SH:** Do you remember his name?

**HR:** Goldstein.

**SH:** Goldstein.

**HR:** Ja, and he lives now here in Leisure World.

**SH:** Really?

**HR:** Yeah, that was my boss in Shanghai.

**SH:** I see. What's his first name, do you remember?

**HR:** Martin.

**SH:** Martin? Do you think he would talk to me?<sup>2</sup>

**HR:** I think so.

**SH:** Martin Goldstein. Do you know where he lives?

**HR:** On Avenida Sevilla, but I forget where.

**SH:** I can find that out. Good. So you were soon able to move away from your uncle and have your own place . . .

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** Where did you live?

**HR:** We rented a room, that was all. The room was our home, our bathroom, it was everything. It was just one room.

**SH:** Where was that?

**HR:** In King Chow Road.

**SH:** Is that in the French Concession or in the . . .

**HR:** No, it was in the American Concession.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See interview with Martin and Ruth Goldstein, Laguna Hills, California, June 25, 1991.

<sup>3</sup> Rossetty means Hongkew.

**SH:** The American Concession? Did you want to, you said you made a lot of money, was a bigger place still too expensive for you or weren't there any bigger places to rent?

**HR:** Oh, we were not allowed to live in the international section. We have to live in Hongkew.

**SH:** But that came a little bit later, didn't it? That was after 1943 that you had to, I mean when you just arrived . . .

**HR:** We arrived in 1939.

**SH:** And so you kept playing at the, tell me a little bit about, about your job, about playing in this roof garden.

**HR:** Oh, we had four-piece band, and we played Chinese music, Japanese music. We were not allowed to play American music.

**SH:** No?

**HR:** Because of the war, and we played whatever came up.

**SH:** How did you learn the Japanese and Chinese music?

**HR:** Oh, they have a system with numbers. They write down the key, and then just the numbers. And we were sitting day and night translating it, that we could read the music. And the people send little notes in Chinese what we should play, and the manager said, "Just play number eight," or "Number ten," whatever they wanted to hear.

**SH:** I see. So the people who came to this roof garden were Chinese and Japanese.

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** And westerners too, everybody?

**HR:** Everybody could go there. Because only the Jews from Central Europe were forced to live in Hongkew. The Polish and the others, they could live where they want to.

**SH:** Did you have to, you had to move to Hongkew also?

**HR:** Ja. It was the only place where we could, where we could live, because they didn't allow us to live in the city.

**SH:** Did you have to, so you had to get rid of your apartment in the American Concession and move to Hongkew?

**HR:** Hongkew was the American Concession.

**SH:** Oh, I see, I see. So you lived in Hongkew right from the beginning.

**HR:** Ja, ja.

**SH:** I see, I didn't understand that.

**HR:** 'Til the day we moved to America.

**SH:** Did you have this, were you able to keep your job as, playing in the band, or leading the band, all through the war?

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** So that was not a problem.

**HR:** No. There was a Japanese official who was in charge for the Jewish emigrants. His name was Ghoya, and he was a music lover, because he took violin lessons from my piano, my violin player.

**SH:** I see. So you had a good relationship with him?

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** And you needed a pass to get out every day?

**HR:** Ja, ja. I needed a pass and was able to get to the city. And I played there in a Chinese Ballroom. Hi, my daughter . . .

**SH:** How do you do, I'm Steve Hochstadt.

**Marlene Steele:** I spoke to you on the phone.

**SH:** Oh.

**HR:** My daughter Marlene.

**SH:** I see, I didn't know you were related. I only knew you had a different name. Did the beginning of the war change the people who came to your, this roof garden?

**HR:** No, we were locked in, in Hongkew. And around Hongkew, a suburb of Shanghai, was surrounded by a barbed wire. And we had to make duty. They called it Pao Chia.<sup>4</sup> So one of us

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<sup>4</sup> The Pao Chia was an auxiliary police organized by the Japanese in September 1942. After the creation of the Hongkew ghetto, its guarded the entrances, insuring that refugees had the required passes to enter and exit.

had to stand there and control whoever get in or out.

**SH:** Did you do that too?

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** Did you, did you have to take that job seriously? Did you have to be real careful?

**HR:** Ja, very careful, because if you get something wrong, you went up in a concentration camp.

**SH:** When, when the war came, did you still have the same people coming to your roof garden, to the night club? Or did, were there more Japanese then . . . ?

**HR:** No, it didn't change.

**SH:** It didn't change? Was it mainly for wealthy people to come up there?

**HR:** No, it was not so expensive. And they filled up full, because on the roof garden, it was always some wind coming, and it made it very comfortable, because in the shade hundred ten degrees was not good.

**SH:** Did, did people come as couples to the roof garden, or did single men and single women come to meet there?

**HR:** No, mostly couples.

**SH:** Mostly couples?

**HR:** And beside the bandstand was a table, and there was sitting our wives, because they liked the climate up there, too.

**SH:** It sounds like you always had enough money from this job to, or is that not true?

**HR:** No, it was an inflation, and we got our salary fourteen days in advance, because the next day we had to spend it, otherwise it was not worth any more. They had four or five different currencies, when they went up to the billions, they started a new one again.

**SH:** I see. So your salary started off as a lot, but then it wasn't.

**HR:** We had to spend it the next day, otherwise we couldn't buy anything anymore.

**SH:** When did that start, the inflation? Do you remember?

**HR:** In '39.

**SH:** In '39 already. So it looked good for a while but then . . .

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** Did you have trouble making ends meet? Did you have trouble getting food or . . . ?

**HR:** We got every day from the Committee, a bowl of soup and one little white bread. And that was it.

**SH:** Was that at, at one of these kitchens or at the Heim?

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** And did you, did you eat it there or bring it home?

**HR:** Well, we took it home.

**SH:** Took it home?

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** So that was one meal, and then the other meals you had to do yourself?

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** Were you able to get any food at the roof garden? Did they serve food there?

**HR:** At the roof garden we had, part of salary, our dinner. And it was enough that I could take something home for my wife.

**SH:** I see. Did you worry that you wouldn't have enough money to pay for food or rent?

**HR:** No.

**SH:** No?

**HR:** I was always, always able to work, and it was just enough to stay alive. I was down to hundred sixteen pound.

**SH:** Really?

**HR:** Ja. I am now hundred seventy-nine. Many people starved to death.

**SH:** Really?

**HR:** Ja. We were a little over 20,000 refugees and only 18,000 made it.

**SH:** Was it mostly the older ones who didn't make it or . . . ?

**HR:** No. It just happened to one who didn't have enough to eat, who died of starvation. We were lucky that we were musicians.

**SH:** Since it was a good thing to be a musician, did lots of people try to become musicians . . .

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** . . . to get jobs, and how did that work?

**HR:** They mostly got the drum, because that doesn't need much knowledge of music.

**SH:** And then they would try to look for a job with their drum?

**HR:** Ja.

**HR:** Was it easy to find work as a musician or as a, as a new musician?

**SH:** No, we were about two hundred twenty musicians.

**SH:** Really?

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** Playing in night clubs or . . .

**HR:** Bars and dance halls, and our band, five people, organized a musicians' union.

**SH:** I see, tell me about that.

**HR:** Because the people didn't like to pay much, to pay much for musicians. So we said the minimum wage is the equivalent of two bottles of beer.

**SH:** Minimum wage for one day?

**HR:** Ja. So two bottles of beer, that was the minimum wage.

**SH:** And was that accepted by the night club owners or the . . . ?

**HR:** Ja, ja, they accepted it, because they did need music.

**SH:** Did you ever have to go on strike, or anything like that?

**HR:** No, we were not allowed to strike.

**SH:** I see.

**HR:** We could say, "We quit," but not "We strike."

**SH:** I see.

**HR:** But we got along very well, because the owner of the establishments, they are just in the same boat like we were.

**SH:** So Mr. Goldstein also had to go back and forth from Hongkew every day?

**HR:** No, because the place where we played was in Hongkew.

**SH:** Oh, this, this was in Hongkew, I see.

**HR:** Roof Garden Mascot.

**SH:** Now I'm, that's different then, you said this . . .

**HR:** There was Hongkew, and then were the Garden Bridge and then the city of Shanghai. And we could go over the Garden Bridge only with a pass that we get from Ghoya.

**SH:** Now this Roof Garden Mascot, that's . . .

**HR:** . . . was in . . .

**SH:** . . . was in Hongkew?

**HR:** . . . in Hongkew.

**SH:** But you had said there was this department store on Bubbling Well Road.

**HR:** Ja, that was in the city.

**SH:** That was, that's where you started playing?

**HR:** No, I star-, that was later.

**SH:** That was later, that was after the war?

**HR:** No, during the war.

**MS:** You had three jobs then.

**HR:** Eh?

**MS:** You had three jobs when you were in Shanghai, right?

**HR:** Ja.

**MS:** The Roof Garden, and then a second job, where was that at?

**HR:** It was a bar, but I forgot the name.

**MS:** And then you had one in Shang-, in the city right? That you had to have a pass to go back and forth.

**HR:** Ja, ja. And after the war I played three years in, at Wing On.

**SH:** I see.

**HR:** To the day we went to America. And we were able to come to America, because President Truman sent 2,000 affidavits without a name to Shanghai, for people who had the chance not to go on welfare. So, as a musician, I had no trouble. We got two certificates to come in.

**SH:** How did you find out about those 2,000 affidavits?

**HR:** Oh, it was published. We had a Jewish paper and they published it. And there was a place in Hongkew, whenever a letter came in that they couldn't read, they sent it to the committee and they got the Shanghai paper . . .

**MS:** All of these here, have you seen them?

**SH:** I've seen some of those, but not all of them.

**MS:** Okay, you're welcome to take them and copy them and return them.

**SH:** Oh, that would be wonderful.

**MS:** These are his and they're all super. This one has a picture of Henry and his band on the back of it. And there is Henry and that's his band.

**SH:** Tabarin.

**MS:** Excellent, excellent articles.

**HR:** It was in Tabarin, a very famous restaurant, with dance.

**SH:** Here it is, Tabarin Tanz, Capella Leisten Rossetty.

**HR:** Leisten was a violin player, and I was a saxophone-accordion player.

**MS:** That was Henry's band. There are some excellent, if I can find the, well, you'll have an



opportunity to go through them and read them. Just some real good articles in it.

**HR:** But I would like to have them back.

**SH:** Oh, certainly, certainly.

**MS:** These are his only copies.

**SH:** I'll be glad to do that. And this is . . .

**MS:** That's the map of Shanghai.

**SH:** With the new names, or the old, this has the, the western names or the, yes, this has the western names. This is nice.

**HR:** And we played 'til eleven o'clock, because at twelve o'clock, they closed the Garden Bridge.

**SH:** So you had to leave then?

**HR:** And sometimes we couldn't make it 'til eleven o'clock, and they put us in jail.

**SH:** Really? More than once?

**HR:** Ja. And at the jail, we took the time to translate the Chinese source into our five-line system.

**SH:** So it wasn't that bad being in jail? You knew you'd get out the next day?

**HR:** No, only you had to stay until six o'clock, then they opened the bridge again.

**SH:** I see.

**MS:** You told him about the concentration camps that they had already built?

**HR:** Ja, they built already, not concentration camps. They built already . . .

**MS:** Gas chambers . . .

**HR:** . . . ovens.

**SH:** How do you know that, did you see them?

**HR:** No, I didn't see them, but the German consul after the war made it public that they built already gas chambers to kill all the people, the Jewish people. But the emperor of Japan said, "No killing, but I agree, put them in a ghetto, but don't touch them." So we owe our lives to the emperor of Japan.

**SH:** Do you want to turn your tape over or . . .

**MS:** This is a poem that I had read, that I thought was really interesting. You won't want to do it now, but it's, it's a cute poem. These are good articles.

**SH:** I've seen only a couple of these. You seem to have almost a whole set?

**MS:** I don't know how many of them, if he has a whole set or not. This is all that he has.

**SH:** You know, they're not doing this any more, they've run out of money because the, this fellow I met, last Passover, there was a reunion, a sort of a reunion in Shanghai. And he went on it, and I went on it, too, and so I met him and talked to him about . . .

**MS:** Mr. Pollack?

**SH:** Yeah. And . . .

**HR:** There was a thing that is not very well known, because it was a very big inflation. And the Jap-, the Russian Jews who lived in Shanghai, they sent money to Switzerland, and they sent money to Shanghai to keep us alive by feeding us.

**SH:** Why did the money have to go to Switzerland and then back?

**HR:** It was not possible to bring it right to Shanghai. It has to go over Switzerland . . .

**SH:** I see.

**HR:** And they saved their money because, after the war, they got what they spent for us to stay alive.

**SH:** They got it back?

**MS:** They got it all back, every cent. He has been interviewed, I don't know if you have met Nina, and she, she also is writing a book on Shanghai.

**SH:** No, I don't know of her.

**MS:** She wrote a book. Henry where did we put her book?

**HR:** I don't know.

**MS:** That isn't about Shanghai, that's, that's . . .

**SH:** So she's writing a novel about Shanghai, too?

**MS:** Yeah, but it's a fiction, as is that one.

**SH:** And you think she's talked to a number of people?

**MS:** She talked to us, and she copied papers, and we told her about the Goldsteins, who live just over, and I imagine she talked with them. And I just wanted to make you aware, if you didn't know about it.

**SH:** I see. No, I didn't know about her, I am going to write, and she's writing this book now?

**MS:** I only know that she did the interviews with the intent. Not that there isn't room for more than one book, there certainly is.

**SH:** Well, I'm doing, I'm doing something a little different, so I think there's plenty of room.

**MS:** There's plenty of room, plenty of stories.

**SH:** There's actually several novels about Shanghai.

**MS:** And they write about a couple in here, men that wrote a novel, we don't have it, I'd like to get it.

**SH:** Deliverance In Shanghai.<sup>5</sup>

**MS:** Yes, that's it.

**SH:** You know most, I've talked to a number of people who were in Shanghai, about that novel who've read it and they don't like it.

**MS:** They don't like it, I haven't seen it so I don't, I can't . . .

**SH:** They don't like it, because they say it's not . . .

**MS:** It doesn't do it.

**SH:** It's not what their memory is. Thank you.

**MS:** I think she's in Huntington Beach, isn't she?

**SH:** Yes, that's what it says.

**MS:** That's just for your information.

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<sup>5</sup> Jerome Agel and Eugene Boe, Deliverance in Shanghai (New York: Dembner Books, 1983).

**SH:** Good, thank you.

**MS:** And as we say, you're welcome to use whatever information is there.

**SH:** Well, copying those will be helpful. Tell me more about your daily life in Shanghai, when you weren't playing, what did you do with your time? Did you have friends or how did . . . ?

**HR:** We always had a job to do. And during the day I played chess with my drummer, and the chess figures I made myself out of this yarn, you know the spools?

**SH:** Yes, you carved them from the spools?

**HR:** Ja, I made the chess figures out of it.

**SH:** Did your wife work, or was that not necessary?

**HR:** No. She was a legal secretary, and in Shanghai she was very, very ill. She was twice paralyzed from the neck up, down.

**SH:** With what disease?

**HR:** They never found out, it was a trouble with her spine. At hundred ten degrees in the shade, she was laying below a box that was filled with light bulbs to give the heat.

**SH:** And that helped to get rid of this?

**HR:** Ja, she was twice paralyzed for three months.

**SH:** And was she in the hospital during that time or at home?

**HR:** She was at home.

**SH:** So this light bulb setup was in your house or in your apartment?

**HR:** Ja. I was married fifty-nine years.

**SH:** And was Marlene born in Shanghai?

**HR:** No, she's American. I adopted her.

**SH:** I see.

**HR:** She was an angel, taking care of my wife. She was day and night in the rest home taking care of her. And I love her for that.

**SH:** Probably for other things, too.

**MS:** That's enough for that.

**HR:** She doesn't like to hear it.

**SH:** How did things change when the war was over?

**HR:** It didn't change much.

**SH:** No?

**HR:** No. And we made quite a lot of money, because my violin player was perfect in ten different languages. And he spoke perfectly Russian. And [unintelligible] had to sign for the drinks that they had, because they give the money to the violin player. And we made quite a lot of money.

**SH:** So you continued playing after the war was over. When the war was over, did you think that you would leave Shanghai or stay?

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** You didn't want to stay?

**HR:** No, I didn't want to stay.

**SH:** Why not?

**HR:** Because the climate is murder. They even don't have wallpapers, because it is so damp, they would just fell down. At hundred ten degrees, and ninety percent humidity, it's not very comfortable.

**SH:** No. So did you think about going to any place besides the United States? Did you think about going back to Germany?

**HR:** No, I never would go back to Germany. But I tried to get to Brazil, because her brother and his family lived in Rio de Janeiro. But I couldn't make it. And there was an official from the Joint,<sup>6</sup> Mr. Jordan, and he said to me, "Go to America. From America it is very easy to get to Brazil."

**SH:** I see.

**HR:** But you can't make it directly.

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<sup>6</sup> The Joint Distribution Committee.

**SH:** Why couldn't you make it directly?

**HR:** They don't let us in.

**SH:** I see. They just said, "No visa."

**HR:** But I didn't want to go to Rio, too hot. So we stayed there 'til we had the chance to come to America.

**SH:** Did you, before Truman sent these passes over, did you try to come to America? Try to get a visa somehow?

**HR:** It was impossible. There was a Catholic church over there, and they said, "If you convert to Catholicism, you can go." And I said, "No country is nice enough to change my Jewish faith."

**SH:** Did anyone change?

**HR:** No. Nobody.

**SH:** Doesn't sound plausible, like it would've worked anyway.

**HR:** We suffered so much, we wouldn't give it up.

**MS:** Henry has been very, very lucky all his life. He knew when to get out of Germany, he was there at the right time when somebody had the money for passage for six, he had four people in his band, there were two wives. He gets over there, he has a job the next day, and he's been very lucky all his life, which we're eternally thankful for, where others weren't that lucky.

**HR:** Knock on wood.

**SH:** Marlene said about this passage for six, that the, you said that money had come from Switzerland and to England . . .

**HR:** Ja, and my drummer had a relative in Hamburg working at the traveller . . .

**SH:** Travel agency?

**HR:** Travel agency, and she got twelve passages. Six for us, second class, that was unusual. And six for people to take out of the concentration camp.

**SH:** And how did she get those, just because of her connections?

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** But she knew you wanted to go and she got the six for you.

**HR:** Ja.

**MS:** Wally had a girlfriend that was German, who was working at the post office and she got the message through that they were looking for Henry, and to leave immediately. And if they hadn't left immediately, they would have been taken.

**HR:** So I was not home the next three days.

**SH:** Who would've taken you, I . . . ?

**HR:** The Gestapo!

**SH:** They were coming to arrest you?

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** And you knew this?

**HR:** I knew it through a friend of my wife. She worked at the post office and got the telegram that they should arrest me.

**SH:** I see. And so she saw, she was Jewish or not Jewish?

**HR:** No, no, she was not Jewish.

**SH:** But she knew you.

**HR:** She was a very dear friend. And she called my mother, and my mother called us, "Get out of your room, because they want to catch you."

**SH:** Should we close the door?

**MS:** Would you like a glass of cran-raspberry?

**SH:** That would be lovely.

**SH:** So why were they coming to arrest you?

**HR:** Because I'm Jewish.

**SH:** But why right at that moment?

**HR:** I lived in Berlin in the same house where the Gestapo had their office. So I could see them, but I have known in advance and was not home.

**SH:** By the time you knew you were about to be arrested, you already had been looking for these

tickets?

**HR:** Ja. I had the tickets already.

**SH:** You had the tickets. And so where did you go for the . . .

END SIDE A

BEGIN SIDE B

**HR:** [unintelligible]

**SH:** And so for those three days you went to her place?

**HR:** Ja, her place.

**SH:** Thank you.

**MS:** Want some, Henry?

**HR:** Ja, thanks.

**MS:** Did you tell him about where you went before? When you were trying to find a way out?

**HR:** Ja, before this, right when Hitler came in power, I went to Estonia. In Germany I was not allowed because I'm Jewish. In Estonia I was not allowed to play because I had a German passport. [laughs] So I spent about six weeks in Estonia . . .

**SH:** Is this in 1933?

**HR:** '39. And went back to Berlin and there I got an offer for a ten-piece band to Luxembourg, between France and Germany. I said, "Thank you very much, but no. If I go out of Germany, I go out of Europe." And that was the right thing to do.

**SH:** Yes. Did you try to, did you talk to other members of your family, your parents about going to Shanghai? Or brothers and sisters?

**HR:** No, I had only my mother, and she was killed in Riga, gassed in the train.

**SH:** She didn't want to go to Shanghai or . . . ?

**HR:** She said she will come with the last train, but she missed the last train. So they arrested her and killed her.



**MS:** His mother looks remarkably like him, his father, did you tell him who your father was?

**SH:** You said your father was an opera singer.

**HR:** Ja. He was in a concentration camp. But he got out alive, and what became of him, I don't know.

**MS:** That's his mother, doesn't she look like him?

**SH:** Yes.

**MS:** Remarkably so. This here, she put into that. Do you want to tell him about that?

**HR:** Ja. This is the last letter . . .

**SH:** Can I take it out?

**HR:** . . . and a penny and a little bit of salt. Salt means something to eat every day.

**SH:** Oh, I see, this is just for space and that's a letter.

**MS:** That's her letter. Is it okay to read that, Henry, or is that too painful?

**HR:** Well, it's in German . . .

**MS:** Do you speak German?

**SH:** Yes.

**MS:** Can you read that?

**SH:** And she gave this to you as you were leaving?

**HR:** No, she sent it to Shanghai.

**SH:** She sent it to Shanghai.

**MS:** There's two letters, Henry.

**SH:** I think that I'm afraid to tear this.

**MS:** To read these, yeah.

**HR:** If you want to make any pictures, I have a Polaroid.

**SH:** I have a camera here too, actually. Thank you. I think I'd better leave this.

**MS:** Yes, leave well enough alone. Did you tell him what happened to the passport when . . . ?

**HR:** Yes, we had to get our passports at the Gestapo.

**SH:** When you were leaving?

**HR:** Ja. We came in and he called us, "Here are the passports, and get out!" So we stand at the wall at the other side of the room, and I looked at the passport and I said, "Wally, there is something wrong. There is no "J" in, and there is no Israel and Sarah as additional names." So I went, back and he said, "It's good you came, because if you would have left, we would have called all the ports where you can leave Germany, and then you would end up in a concentration camp."

**SH:** So they had made a mistake?

**HR:** No, they didn't make a mistake, they made it on purpose.

**SH:** I see, to try to trick you?

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** And so they fixed the passport then?

**HR:** They put a "J" in and the additional name and then we could go. And we left. I think it took only two days that we got the train to Naples.

**SH:** And did you feel safer when you were in Italy after . . . ?

**HR:** When we crossed the German border, we took out our instruments and made happy music [laughs] in the train.

**SH:** Could you tell me about coming to the United States, then, when you finally got your visa to the United States?

**HR:** Oh, we came on, on an American war ship.

**SH:** Do you remember the name?

**HR:** What was the name? "General Gordon."

**SH:** "General Gordon." And when was that?

**HR:** That was in '39.

**SH:** No, coming to the United States.

**MS:** No, coming to the United States.

**HR:** That was in '56.

**SH:** '56?

**HR:** Ja, we spent nine years in Shanghai.

**SH:** In '46? Wait one second . . .

**HR:** '39 to '46.

**MS:** Let me think, '56 . . .

**SH:** And so where did you land in the United States?

**HR:** In San Francisco. And there the committee gave us a room in a hotel for a couple of weeks, and gave us a choice, either Chicago, or St. Louis, or here in the south, what's the name of it . . .

**SH:** Long Beach? San Diego?

**HR:** San Diego.

**SH:** Why did they pick those places? Why were those the choices?

**HR:** There were, the Jewish committees in these cities were willing to take care of us.

**SH:** I see.

**HR:** So we said, "Chicago is the worst place to live in, but the best place to make a living. Let's go there." So we came to Chicago, and got a room for two weeks, and then I got a job learning how to repair accordions. Because as a musician I know how they have to work, and I worked for almost eight years at the company, Chicago Musical Instrument Company.

**SH:** Did you try to get jobs playing?

**HR:** No.

**SH:** No.

**HR:** They said to me, "Musician is good for a sideline, for weekends, but you don't get in a band for playing every day."

**SH:** Why not? Too many other musicians?

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** But this job repairing accordions was a good job?

**HR:** It was a good job.

**SH:** And so, please.

**MS:** This is an album that he took through the years. That's when they were on the ship, the four men and two wives. These are the pictures. And then the Shanghai pictures are very tiny, but there are some there that you can see, maybe with a magnifying glass.

**SH:** Oh, I see.

**MS:** If you're interested in those.

**SH:** Yes, I'd like to see them.

**MS:** Is this the roof garden Henry?

**HR:** Ja, Roof Garden Mascot.

**SH:** Mascot.

**HR:** In Shanghai.

**SH:** Your wife's name was Wally?

**HR:** Violet Wally.

**MS:** When she came her name was Wally, tell him that story.

**HR:** Her name was Wally and the immigration officer on the ship said, "Wally. Who is this, your father or your brother?" "No," I said, "It's my wife. In Germany, it's a girl's name." They didn't know that.

**SH:** So they changed it to Violet?

**HR:** Ja.

**MS:** She changed it.

**SH:** Oh, she changed it?

**MS:** They said, "That's a man's name, not a woman's name." And so they talked about it and she always liked the name Violet, so she took the name Violet.

**SH:** I see. Oh, thank you. Now here there's this picture of the Central Beer Hall, on Nuen . . .

**HR:** No, that was a picture from the bar my uncle had, where we spent the first couple of weeks.

**SH:** I see. Nuen Chang Road, fourteen. And could you tell me about this bar that he had. Was that a good business for him?

**HR:** Oh it, the bar was very small, and the people who came there were only Japanese soldiers.

**SH:** Japanese soldiers.

**HR:** And I learned how to sing Japanese.

**SH:** In that bar?

**HR:** In that bar, and they loved it.

**SH:** Did you sometimes play music in that bar?

**HR:** Ja, I played a couple of weeks there, and then I got the job in the Roof Garden Mascot.

**SH:** Was he able to keep this beer hall open during the war, during the whole time?

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** And did he come to the United States too?

**HR:** He lives here! Just a couple of blocks . . .

**MS:** That is Mr. Goldstein, a good friend.

**HR:** That's Mr. Goldstein and his wife.

**SH:** Oh, I see.

**MS:** We'll give you their name and number if you are interested in talking with them.

**SH:** Now is Mr. Goldstein your uncle?

**HR:** No, he's a friend.

**MS:** Just a friend.

**SH:** I see, just a friend.

**MS:** Kind of ironic they all ended here.

**SH:** Now this, the Dachgarden Mascot, was on top of the Broadway Kino?

**MS:** He made that album for his mother, to try to talk her into going over.

**HR:** Ja, I made it for my mother, but I couldn't send it . . .

**SH:** I see.

**HR:** . . . because of the war.

**SH:** And this is the trip over there. Hong Kong. Here it says, "*Moment-aufnahmen aus sorgloser Zeit.*" You felt good on the trip over because you were getting away?

**HR:** We are passengers, we were not refugees on this ship.

**SH:** Now this is the ship to Shanghai or to . . . ?

**HR:** Ja, to Shanghai.

**SH:** You weren't worried about what was going to happen in Shanghai, or were you worried? What did you think was going to happen?

**HR:** We had only one thing in mind, get out of Germany, get out of Europe. That was the only thing we were concerned about.

**SH:** Did you think you would be able to play music in Shanghai, before you, you thought that it would be alright?

**HR:** Music is international. You can live everywhere when you are a musician.

**MS:** That's what I'm talking about, his luck, that one particular Japanese man, that was so evil, liked musicians. He liked Henry, because he was a musician and he would allow him to get the pass to go in and out to work. And the others didn't, sorry.

**HR:** No, Hongkew was surrounded by barbed wire.

**SH:** Now, yesterday I met a man named Max Ackerman, and his brother played the violin.<sup>7</sup>

**HR:** Ackerman, I can't remember.

**SH:** And they told me, Max Ackerman told me, that he and his brother went to Ghoya's house one

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<sup>7</sup> See interview with Max Ackerman, Los Angeles, June 7, 1990.

time to play the violin. And then you say also, that was the first that I'd heard that he was a music lover.

**MS:** There's a cartoon in there about somebody going and playing that violin for him. I wonder if it's him.

**SH:** I don't know.

**MS:** You'll see it when you go through.

**SH:** When you were coming to the United States on the "General Gordon" . . .

**HR:** Yes.

**SH:** . . . what did you think about? Did you think you were coming to a place where you didn't know very many people? Were you . . . ?

**HR:** No, I went to the committee and they said, music is a nice sideline for weekends, but as a professional for playing daily, impossible.

**SH:** So did you, how did you feel about coming to the United States? Was that . . . ?

**HR:** I didn't want to come.

**SH:** You didn't want to come?

**HR:** No. But Mr. Jordan said, "Go to the United States, you can go from there to Rio very easy."

**SH:** So it was just that you thought it would just be a way station on your way to Rio.

**HR:** Ja, but when came here, we liked it so much, we forgot about Rio. [laughs] We went to visit her family three times, but we didn't like to live there.

**MS:** Did he tell you about her brother marrying a Jewish, I mean German princess, duchess?

**HR:** Ja, my . . .

**MS:** Wally's brother.

**HR:** Wally's mother was a, how you call it, a baroness. So she is now living, still living in Rio.

**SH:** I see. How did you get from Chicago to here?

**HR:** On the train, on the Zephyr.

**SH:** I mean, did you move here? Did you retire here? Why did you come?

**HR:** Well, they told me, it's the worst place to live, but the best place to make a living.

**SH:** In Chicago.

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** But I mean, but then from Chicago, you got, you came back here to Southern California. Why did you, how long did you stay in Chicago?

**HR:** Nine years.

**SH:** Nine years. And then why did you leave?

**HR:** I didn't like the climate and I loved California.

**SH:** So what did you do? Did you find a job here or just move here?

**HR:** Ja, I found a job here as a, I learned how to repair accordions. It was a training job.

**SH:** And is that what you did here in Southern California, too? Repair accordions?

**HR:** No, here in Southern California I didn't work at all, because I got pensions as refugee from Germany.

**MS:** He hurt his back . . .

**HR:** I still get the pensions.

**SH:** You still get the pensions.

**HR:** Ja. And it's enough to make, without worries to live.

**MS:** That's the Germany pensions.

**SH:** What do you think now about this time in Shanghai that you spent? What did it do for you?

**HR:** I hardly think about it, only when I get an interview. Otherwise I forget it.

**SH:** Why?

**HR:** It was too hard time. Not enough to eat and the climate was lousy. So we love it here. When we came here and went to Chicago, our wish was always to get to California back.

**SH:** I see.



**MS:** The Goldsteins will say the same thing. They don't like to talk about it, they don't want to think about it, they want to forget it. It's very hard to pull things from them, it's like, block it out. Henry is starting to open up now.

**HR:** Ja, he had a night club and I played for him. And we became very close friends.

**SH:** Do you still play for yourself?

**HR:** No, because I had a house in Oakland and a mobile home in Palm Springs. And the time I spent in Palm Springs the last seven years, they broke in our house in Oakland fifteen times. And stole everything what was worth taking, and what was not worth they smashed up.

**MS:** We can get him to play a piano occasionally. If it's at a party or something, we can get him to play the piano, but he doesn't play the radio, he doesn't listen to music. It's surprising. He goes dancing three nights a week, four nights a week.

**HR:** Four nights.

**SH:** Is that right? Four nights? Where do you dance in the club house here?

**HR:** Club House Two and Club House Five. They have wonderful bands, and they played the music I used to make fifty years ago.

**SH:** Are there other things you remember about Shanghai, special things that happened to you or incidents?

**HR:** You understand a little bit Jewish?

**SH:** A little bit. I understand German very well, Yiddish a little bit.

**HR:** We had a job in Shanghai in the garden restaurant, with dance. We were a ten-piece band. And one day, it was a typhoon and since the dinner was part of our salary, the owner said, "The garden is closed, but you go over, there's a restaurant. I called them and you get your dinner there." So we went over and were sitting at a round table, ten piece. And the Chinese waiter came to the table and said, "*A gutn evening. A voos be liben sie zu achlen?*" We almost died laughing, because he learned Jewish, because the owner was a Russian Jew.

**SH:** I see. What other things other stories, or other things that happened to you stick in your mind?

**HR:** I couldn't think of something.

**SH:** Do any of these rings come from Shanghai? These are very nice.

**MS:** Tell him about the rent money, one time Wally on the bus with the rent money.

**HR:** Oh. I had in Shanghai a radio that I brought from Germany. And every morning I could hear in Shanghai, Berlin. And then the Japanese came and said, no more short waves, so they cut off the tubes and left it there. They said, I have to bring the radio to the office and they will confiscate it. And we brought the radio there and I told them, "Look, I am a musician and I love Japanese music, and this set is made with special loudspeakers to bring out the Japanese music," and they let me have the radio. [laughs]

**MS:** Oh, that was the radio, but tell them about the rent.

**SH:** That's a good story.

**MS:** Remember the rent? When Wally lost the rent on the bus?

**HR:** Ja. We had to bring the radio, it was like that, and we brought it to the street car and when she gave to me the radio, they stole out of her pocket her purse where the money was to pay for the rent. And when we came home the cat ate the liver that was once a week that we could afford. [laughs]

**SH:** So once a week . . .

**HR:** That was Friday the 13th . . .

**SH:** I see, so once a week you could have liver?

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** And what did you eat the other days?

**HR:** What we got from the committee, a bowl of soup, mostly water.

**SH:** So you were able to keep your radio, though, with this story?

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** And did you keep listening to Berlin?

**HR:** Ja. And when they cut out the tubes, we were able to hear what's going on in Europe, because the Russians had a sender. And they brought it in German and in English and in Russian, what happens there.

**SH:** So you knew what was happening with the war?

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** What else can I ask you? About, about your religious life in Shanghai, were you active?

**HR:** We had a temple, the temple was originally a movie theater. And for the high holidays, they rented it to the Jews and they made the service.

**SH:** And then all the rest of the days it was a movie theater again?

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** And where was that?

**HR:** That was in Hongkew.

**SH:** And so you went to temple on the High Holy days?

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** Otherwise you didn't?

**HR:** I am not very religious, but I wouldn't change my, my faith.

**SH:** Was that true of most of the other Jews who were there?

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** That they would go on the holy days but otherwise not?

**HR:** Ja. Who is he, I don't know. Marlene, do you know this boy?

**MS:** The next door neighbors' boy?

**HR:** What?

**MS:** The grandson from next door? You didn't find him? He's under there, let me get him.

**SH:** Oh, is this the cat?

**MS:** Yeah, this is the orneriest cat that ever lived. He is just a mean cat. You gonna come? You're gonna bite me.

**HR:** And Marlene saved my life, because when my wife died . . .

**MS:** Shh, Shh. That's not, not to be talked about, okay?

**HR:** She took care of me . . .

**MS:** That's not what he's here for, Henry.

**HR:** She was day and night at the rest home, taking care of my wife and when she died, she took care of me. She saved my life. But it is true!

**MS:** But it's not necessary. So shush!

**SH:** Do you keep in contact with other people whom you met in Shanghai, besides the, Mr. Goldstein?

**HR:** No. They are the only one I know.

**MS:** Henry, didn't you go to one of those reunions?

**HR:** What?

**MS:** Didn't you go to one of those reunions?

**HR:** In Oakland?

**MS:** Yeah.

**HR:** There was a reunion of Shanghai people, and we went there.

**SH:** Was that good to see all those people again? Did you see people who you knew before?

**HR:** There was one guy who was very, very famous on the old twenty dollar bills and they signed it.

**SH:** Blumenthal?<sup>8</sup>

**HR:** Ja. Oh, you know about him?

**SH:** Yes, he was there at that reunion?

**HR:** Ja.

**MS:** Wally and Henry went back to Berlin. She wanted to see Berlin, and they invited them back and paid all expenses.

**SH:** When was that?

**MS:** How long ago was that?

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<sup>8</sup> Michael Blumenthal, former Secretary of the Treasury.

**HR:** When was that, '56? '59? Something like this.

**SH:** And the German government paid for you to . . .

**HR:** Paid for everything. And they even gave us cash for daily expenses.

**SH:** And how did they find you? How did they know where you were?

**HR:** Oh we, they had, there's Arolsen, [unintelligible] a place in Holland where they have all the papers, who went to Shanghai, who died there, who came to America. And they have known that we lived here.

**SH:** Tell me more about this place in Holland. What was the name of it again?

**HR:** What is the name? The HIAS.<sup>9</sup>

**SH:** The HIAS in Holland have all that information?

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** I see, well I'll have to go there I suppose.

**MS:** Would you like a cup of coffee?

**SH:** No, thanks.

**MS:** No? Some more cran-raspberry?

**SH:** I would love a little more of that, thank you. Well, Mr. Rossetty, is there anything else, any other special things you can remember?

**HR:** No, it was so far back.

**MS:** Henry, would it help to flip through your picture book to see? Would that, you haven't looked at this in an awful long time. Is there anything there that would bring back a memory, you think?

**HR:** No.

**MS:** No? You don't want to even look.

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<sup>9</sup> The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (also known as HICEM) played a key role in alerting German-speaking Jews to Shanghai as a possible refuge. HIAS helped Jews get out of German concentration camps and funnelled considerable funds to penniless refugees in Shanghai.

**SH:** Actually, I didn't see all the pictures, maybe I, does this book itself come from Shanghai?

**HR:** From Shanghai.

**SH:** You made it, you said that he made it there.

**MS:** He made it.

**SH:** There are some children?

**HR:** Ja, from my drummer.

**SH:** That's you?

**MS:** Maybe with the, you can see.

**HR:** Ja, that's me with my bicycle.

**SH:** Is that how you travelled in Shanghai, with a bicycle?

**HR:** Ja.

**MS:** The Goldsteins had their daughter in Shanghai, didn't they?

**HR:** Ja, she was born in Shanghai.

**MS:** She was born in Shanghai.

**SH:** Here it says, for Mascot, "*Die Drei H.*"

**HR:** Three H Band.

**SH:** Heinz Werner, Henry Rossetty, Herman Kalinoff.

**HR:** Kalinoff is now in Vienna, his home town.

**SH:** "*Die führende Unterhaltungsstätte Hongkews. Mascot.*" Now was this during the war or after the war?

**HR:** No, that was during the war.

**SH:** 57 Wayside Road. Here it says, "*Henry, der kühne Springer.*" You're swimming here in a Hongkew *Bad*.

**HR:** Ja, there was a swimming pool in the Japanese section of Shanghai. And Chinese couldn't go in, only Japanese and refugees. And they had a very large hall, with a bench around the wall.

And they were laying golden watches and money and everything. I talked to the lifeguard, who was also a German Jew, "How is this possible? Nobody steals something?" He said, "No, because if they catch them, they cut off their hands." So nobody steals.

**SH:** And were you able to go to this bath often?

**HR:** Yes. Ja. As often as we could afford to get there, because it was a long ride.

**SH:** I see. Did many refugees go to swim there?

**HR:** No, no.

**SH:** Because it cost money? Did it cost money to get in, too?

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** Now who is Hildegard Orlowsky Rager?

**HR:** Orlowsky? She was a very famous, how you call it? She was singing.

**SH:** With your band?

**HR:** Ja, no, as a floor show.

**SH:** I see. And she was also a refugee.

**HR:** Ja, and she was very well-known in Germany.

**SH:** I see. Here in the Oceana Dancing Garden. What was that?

**HR:** It was a garden restaurant, also in Hongkew.

**SH:** Did you play there often?

**HR:** No, only once.

**SH:** Only one time.

**HR:** There was a strange story there. At this time, I was fainting very often.

**SH:** Why?

**HR:** No blood to the . . .

**MS:** Hungry.

**HR:** . . . and one day I fainted and they brought me to the hospital, and the doctor came, made a very serious face. "Does it hurt here, does it hurt here?" And he said, "You have a bad appendix." And I said, "Oh no!" He said, "Why do you say, oh no?" "Since my twelfth year I don't have any more, they took it out." The other doctors who were beside him, they started laughing.

**MS:** They never did find out what was wrong, they decided it was from hunger.

**HR:** I hurt my spine.

**MS:** You hurt your spine, way back then? I thought you didn't hurt your spine until Chicago.

**HR:** Oh, I hurt it the first time in Germany. I fell from my bicycle and . . .

**MS:** When you were younger?

**HR:** Ja. Since then I have the trouble. Now I go three times a week to a chiropractor.

**MS:** At eighty-five, you're doing pretty good, Henry. [laughs] We laugh, because Henry eats all the wrong things, and drinks all the wrong things, and smokes all the wrong things, and he's more active, he wears me out! [laughs]

**SH:** Well, dancing when you're eighty-five is pretty good. I hope I can dance when I'm eighty-five.

**HR:** Oh, and I'm considered a very good dancer . . .

**MS:** With all the ladies at those dances that don't have partners, they . . .

**HR:** They don't let me sit down, they come and say, "Dance with me."

**SH:** I believe that. What happened to Mr. Leisten?

**HR:** Mr. Leisten? He died.

**SH:** Did he come to the Untied States also?

**HR:** No, he went back to Germany.

**SH:** He went back to Germany?

**MS:** He died in Germany?

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** Did you talk to him about why he went back? Seems like a strange thing to do.



**MS:** Not many did.

**HR:** No, there were not many going to Berlin back, or to Germany.

**MS:** When Wally and Henry went back, Wally didn't like it. She wanted to get away from there. Too many memories, she didn't like it.

**HR:** No, we went to Berlin, and went through the Wall, the Russian looked at, under the car, whether there are some magazines. And then they opened up the glove compartment, and I had a purse there with more money for the bridge. "You didn't tell us about that." I said, "I forgot, it's only a couple of pennies." "We will accept your explanation." So we went through to the cemetery where our relatives were buried, in East Berlin.

**SH:** Is that why you went back to Berlin?

**HR:** No, we went back because they paid for everything.

**SH:** Oh, that's right, that's right.

**HR:** But we went to East Berlin to see the graves. And we found them.

**SH:** What do you think about Germany reuniting?

**HR:** I don't care. As long as they send my pension, I don't care. [laughs] But I think it is wrong to set East Germany and West Germany. That's the wrong thing to do.

**SH:** To put them together?

**HR:** Ja.

**MS:** No.

**SH:** Or to have them separate? You think it's wrong for them to be separate?

**HR:** Ja.

**MS:** They were nervous, because they were giving all the East Germany people money when they came over, that that would effect their pensions. And most of the German Jews that are receiving pensions felt the same way, from what we heard when we went to Passover. But it hasn't come to pass, so everything is, they're happy now.

**HR:** There was a very famous official from Germany, Wiedemeier.<sup>10</sup> They even called a street after his name. He saved us.

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<sup>10</sup> Rossetty says that he was the German consul in Rio de Janeiro.

**SH:** How did he do that?

**HR:** Because of the money they sent.

**SH:** I see. Could you tell me a little more about your musicians' union? Were you, were you in charge? Or who was in charge of the union?

**HR:** Our band.

**SH:** Your band was in charge.

**HR:** Ja. We organized it and made the minimum wage of the equivalent of two bottles of beer.

**SH:** And did your union have meetings often?

**HR:** Ja, we met.

**SH:** And what did you do in your meetings?

**HR:** Talking about the conditions we are working.

**SH:** Someone told me that there was a, a philharmonic orchestra from the refugees.

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** Could you tell me a little about that?

**HR:** Oh, we played in this movie theater where they had the show, and they played the Orlof, that's a famous opera.

**SH:** So you played in it too?

**HR:** Ja. And the funny thing happened. During the play the, how you call this, they fly around in the dark?

**MS:** Bats?

**HR:** Bats. And he stayed in front of the stage and said, "That's a mistake. We don't play, if you play Orlof, and not an opera from Strauss."

**SH:** "Der fliegende Maus" or *wie heißt es?* I see. So this philharmonic orchestra just met a few times, or played every once in a while?

**HR:** Oh, we played together there very often, because every time was something else going on.

**SH:** And did you play for free for the refugees? Or did they have to pay? How did that work?

**HR:** No, they paid us, not much, because it was not much worth, because of the inflation. But we got along.

**SH:** And who organized that orchestra?

**HR:** I don't know. I don't know.

**SH:** Well, I don't have any more questions.

**HR:** I was glad to inform you what I know about.

BREAK IN RECORDING

**HR:** We can't use musicians in Israel. If you would have a trade, would be fine. Wonderful, here's my certificate, I'm an electrician. Oh, are you a member of the Zionist organization? I said, "No." "I'm sorry, then you can't go."

**SH:** Was this from Shanghai that you were trying . . . ?

**MS:** No, from Germany . . .

**HR:** No, that was in Berlin.

**SH:** Oh, I see. This was, so you had tried to go to Israel, too?

**HR:** Ja.

**SH:** And they wanted you if you knew a trade and were a member of the union, or a member of the Zionist organization. Did you think about going to Israel from Shanghai after the war?

**HR:** No.

**MS:** There was a lot of anger there.

**HR:** I wanted to go to America, because of the chance to get to . . .

**SH:** To Rio.

**HR:** . . . Brazil. But when I came here, I said, we both said, that's our home and nothing else. We went three times to Rio and we were glad coming back to America.

BREAK IN RECORDING

**MS:** Your real name, tell me your real name.

**HR:** My father's name was Eugene Rosenfeld, stage name Rossetty.

**MS:** 'Cause it sounded Italian.

**SH:** I see.

**HR:** And when we came to get our citizenship, I told the judge I wanted to have only Rossetty.

END SIDE B

END OF INTERVIEW