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Greening, Herbert and Ilse oral history interview

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HERBERT and ILSE GREENING

SARASOTA, FLORIDA

FEBRUARY 19, 1997

Interviewer: Steve Hochstadt

**Transcription: Nicci Leamon
Steve Hochstadt**

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Steve Hochstadt: Please tell me what you'd like to tell me.

Ilse Greening: [laughs] I was born in Hannover, Germany, and had a pretty ordinary life without any discrimination or anything, a very easy life. But my father died early and I started to, I went in already, I went to a commercial high school in order to have a job and I worked for a lawyer. I started when I was sixteen years old, which was very uncommon in those days, but I wanted to be independent.

Herbert Greening: Ilse's family belonged to the upper ten. They had a beautiful home, beautiful house, in Hannover.

Ilse Greening: But that's not important. It's not important.

Herbert Greening: Oh, yeah, you were not average middle class.

Ilse Greening: And my mother's sister had a husband, who was a traveling salesman in the Far East already before the First World War, and traveled, he told us about, he traveled by boat and by Trans-Siberian Railway, and in 1932, I think it was, he decided to settle permanently. He used to come back to Hamburg to his, it was his office, the main office, import-export office called M. E. Emden. He used to fill his orders and then go back, go back to the Far East everywhere. Not only to China. He traveled all over.

Herbert Greening: Singapore, China, and Malaya.

Ilse Greening: And he decided to settle in Shanghai, because it had seasons. So he thought, in business it's better, he was selling piece goods and stuff, it would be better if there was a season for his business. So that, and his wife and daughter finally also went to live in Shanghai, where the foreigners lived a very luxurious life with servants and, since they were making money in foreign currencies, the exchange rate was very favorable and there was nothing they couldn't have. Very luxurious life, everybody. And as a matter of fact, when we arrived in Shanghai in . . .

Herbert Greening: April.

Ilse Greening: . . . April 1939, he, the first thing he said, "We are all on our way to becoming millionaires." That's how good business was. And also very interesting international life, these people.

Herbert Greening: Cosmopolitan.

Ilse Greening: Very cosmopolitan, and your friends, when you looked around, you had friends from everywhere. Or, let's say when you went to the movies. Oh, my uncle supported us in the beginning . . .

Herbert Greening: Six months.

Ilse Greening: . . . and we had a very luxurious home in the French Concession, which they sublet for us for the summer of 1939, so we really knew very little about refugee life, except we had no money, because we only had four American dollars. But, I don't know, when did we move to Hongkou? Herbert tried to have a business, an office in, very close to your grandfather's, but it . . .

Herbert Greening: Never.

Ilse Greening: . . . never went off. So in the fall we decided to move to Hongkou and we lived at the corner of Chusan Road and Ward Road. At the corner we sublet, downstairs from a Russian pharmacist, who had a pharmacist downstairs.

Herbert Greening: We had two rooms.

Ilse Greening: We had two rooms, it was Herbert and I who were newly wed, we had just married before we left Germany, and my mother and my sister. We had two rooms. And our downstairs, our room was also the medical office and we had a little electric stove to cook. My mother, upstairs.

And Herbert joined the, what was it? He comes from Upper Silesia and the people from there sort of had a little club, or they met for coffee, and he used to go there to make contacts, which he did, and he also had friends who sent him patients. And I was looking for a job. My sister was a dressmaker and she found work very soon. People who manufactured blouses and skirts and stuff like that, which, which was sold to the refugees.

Herbert Greening: In Frenchtown.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, it was, no, in the beginning it was in Hongkou. Or was it in French Concession?

Herbert Greening: Avenue Joffre.

Ilse Greening: And I looked for a job. I had worked for a lawyer in Shang-, in Germany, and I looked for a job and finally got a job with Komor's Committee, but the same day I was accepted there, I got a job with the Chartered Bank of India and China, which was one of the, it is now called Standard Bank in England, because they needed someone to, they were getting a lot of refugees customers,

because relatives sent money for their support from, I don't know, from all over the world the refugees received payment, so they needed someone to . . .

Herbert Greening: Or tried their own accounts.

Ilse Greening: No, no, we didn't have co-accounts with, this was a large import-export bank, and I was, my, my salary was considerably more than I would have gotten at Komor's. And I had told them that I know English and French, but my French was not very good, but once in a while they received French letters from other banks and I translated, I managed, but I wasn't that good. But English I knew. But my main job was to help the refugees who came to the bank and on, also I opened all the mail. Whatever mail came I opened and then I had to decide which department they were going to, which was easy.

Herbert Greening: But became critical towards the end.

Ilse Greening: Then, and, but we lived very primitively, very. And my mother, who was, was used to better things, we were young and for us it was an adventure. It did not bother us that we didn't have running hot water and no heat, and not that, not too much to eat. It really didn't bother us much, but for my mother, my mother never complained, never, but for her it must have been very difficult. Don't forget, there was a big difference between those people who lived like your grandparents in the Settlement, a lot of doctors, and my uncle who lived in a high rise apartment on the seventh floor, the twelfth floor. It was considerably . . .

Herbert Greening: The Frenchtown.

Ilse Greening: It was very luxurious, that's where we lived, on the twelfth floor when we came, and they had refrigerators and they had lots of servants, and none of these things we had in Hongkou. It was very primitive, very. But we take for granted here showers and baths and those things that were rare. Sometimes as a treat Herbert used to order hot water for me from the hot water dealer. That is something most people do not understand. I don't know whether you saw that in China.

Steve Hochstadt: I didn't see it, but people have told me.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, but you know that people used to line up for tea in the morning with their teapot and just got, bought hot water.

Herbert Greening: One ladle.

Ilse Greening: One ladle of hot water. Not only Chinese, refugees too, because they had no stove,

and it was, no electric or gas stove, so it was too much trouble to start the coal fire just for tea, and as I said, once, sometimes Herbert ordered a few buckets of hot water for me to have a bath. We had a tub, and we also, oh, when we, there, I forget to say that we moved to more luxurious quarters on Kung Ping Road. There's still the English sign. I don't know whether you saw it.

Steve Hochstadt: The signs on the streets, yes.

Ilse Greening: Kung Ping Road, where we really . . .

Herbert Greening: Had an apartment.

Ilse Greening: . . . had an apartment. We had actually almost the whole house, attached house. We had, downstairs was a jewelry, jeweler's shop, this person . . .

Herbert Greening: A Viennese.

Ilse Greening: A Viennese had a jewelry shop and we had the rest of the house, which was really fantastic. And I have to say all that time we had a WC, a real toilet . . .

Herbert Greening: Which we had to . . .

Ilse Greening: . . . not like, many, many people who didn't have that. We were really lucky people. We had two rooms and a kitchen on the second floor, and then on the third floor, I'm talking European second floor, on the top floor Herbert had a small office . . .

Herbert Greening: In an attic or so.

Ilse Greening: . . . in an attic, and a waiting room. And next to that, another couple rented a room from us and we all had one bathroom, but fortunately it was modern. And there was even, we hardly ever used it, you could make hot water from wood.

Herbert Greening: Yeah, with a wood stove.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, but we very rarely used it. That was also expensive, wood and coal. We had a small electric stove, you couldn't, it's not a stove, it was a small thing with a little, I think it had two . . .

Herbert Greening: Two burners.

Ilse Greening: . . . burners and a small oven, because Herbert needed it for sterilizing . . .

Herbert Greening: No, that was upstairs, that was different. . . .

Ilse Greening: Upstairs?

Herbert Greening: I had another sterilizer to sterilize instruments.

Ilse Greening: But you, well, we didn't get through the war yet. Was it in war time already? After Pearl Harbor?

Herbert Greening: Sure, we started the same year.

Ilse Greening: '41. Pearl Harbor started in '41.

Herbert Greening: No, no.

Ilse Greening: I don't, well, anyway, this was already, and Herbert had a, was already more luxurious and Herbert had quite a number of patients. Many times there was not enough seating and they were standing down the stairs, but yet, however, the pay was very small.

Herbert Greening: The fees were very small.

Ilse Greening: The fees were very small, and he also was reluctant to ask, so even though the people were waiting . . .

Herbert Greening: I was never interested in money.

Ilse Greening: . . . he was, he did not, people offered to pay, but he wouldn't take it, so we were not in very good financial position. But I had a good salary at the bank and I was happy there, which was on, the bank was on the Bund with all the other banks.

Herbert Greening: Number 13, the Bund.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, my sister worked, and I worked, and we managed. We managed, just managed. Until Pearl Harbor. When I, on the day after the bombing, I went to the bank and the bank was manned by Japanese . . .

Herbert Greening: Taken over.

Ilse Greening: . . . something that I have never understood. All the departments, and we had many, it was quite a big bank, all the departments had officers . . .

Herbert Greening: Japanese staff.

Ilse Greening: . . . Japanese and, but the English people were still working there, helping, and it was kind of, it was peaceful. They all, it was peaceful and we were free to go and the English were free to go, we were all free to go. One thing I want to, I forgot to mention. Although the European war was already in progress, there was never any division between the nations. They all, social life between the English and the Americans and the Germans and, was still the same, as if nothing had ever happened.

Herbert Greening: The International Government Settlement, International Settlement Government [unclear] , with Americans, Germans, English, French people.

Ilse Greening: Apart from some of the shipping that did not come in because of the war, it was life as usual, which was remarkable. But life after the Japanese was not as usual. And when they, when the Allied got their orders to go to camp, my boss, the Englishman, insisted that I stay with the Japanese, although I didn't want to. He says, he told, he was very serious and he said, "There are going to be very hard times ahead in war time. You people don't have, have no government to support you and . . ."

Herbert Greening: We were stateless by then.

Ilse Greening: We were stateless, and he said that we, he insists that I keep the job in the bank, because I would be able to go into town, he said, that the food was going to be scarce, and maybe in town I would be able to buy things that I couldn't buy in Hongkou, and he was adamant that I should keep the job, which I hated to keep, but I finally gave in. And I worked and then in 1944 I became pregnant, I wanted to . . .

Herbert Greening: '45.

Ilse Greening: No, Michael, oh, December, oh yeah, it must have been '45, and when I was about six months, or even, I must have been, during the summer . . .

Herbert Greening: We didn't want a child in Shanghai.

Ilse Greening: You didn't want a child.

Herbert Greening: I didn't want a child.

Ilse Greening: But then he always said, "We're going to have a child after the war," but there was no end in sight, and finally I insisted, I wanted a child while I was still young.

Herbert Greening: So I said, after supper. [laughs]

Ilse Greening: That goes in the machine, Herbert. Can it be erased?

Steve Hochstadt: No, it's not so easy. Only you will see it.

Ilse Greening: And then in the summer the bombing started and we were told in the Japanese bank that if there was an air alarm, we would have to go into the safe down below, which, the idea of spending, maybe dying in a safe like that without any air, without any escape, that really . . .

Herbert Greening: Didn't appeal to you.

Ilse Greening: Did not appeal to me. So, in the middle of summer when there was heavy bombing I walked home from, I walked home from the Bund to Hongkou.

Herbert Greening: At that time, at that time you were three months pregnant.

Ilse Greening: No, more.

Steve Hochstadt: And quit your job?

Ilse Greening: I never went back, because by the time I got home, I was absolutely hysterical, because I walked in the, I walked during the bombing and we were not supposed to, and I never went back. But, was I pregnant already when I was incarcerated? Also, during the bombing, oh, I commuted by bicycle to the bank for a while, but not later on. I walked and I took the bus. Anyway, we both had bicycles, we were very . . .

Herbert Greening: Well-to-do.

Ilse Greening: . . . very well-to-do. Herbert made his house calls on the bike and I went to work.

But one day I was out with my bicycle and there was an alarm. And these Japanese trucks were racing up and down and I moved to the sidewalk, I didn't want to be killed by a Japanese, by a Japanese truck. And one of the soldiers said I was not allowed to, they told you not to move, so you couldn't be seen for, I don't know for what reason. Anyway, I moved from the street to the sidewalk, and they said that I had to get to the police station. I was, acted against the law. And I, oh, I met a friend and he said, "Have you al-," the police, he said to me in German, "Have you tried to bribe the guy?" I said, "No," it never, being a good German, did not occur to me, and so he, this friend, offered the policeman money on our way to the police station, but the policeman said it was too late, because we were already in view of the police station, so I spent . . .

Herbert Greening: A couple of hours.

Ilse Greening: It was very dangerous in the police station, because the cells were, what would you say?

Herbert Greening: Lice-infected.

Ilse Greening: Were lice-infected, and you, people died from typhus.

Herbert Greening: It was endemic of typhus at that time.

Ilse Greening: And people died from that.

Herbert Greening: Not typhoid, typhus.

Ilse Greening: Typhus, people, after they had been in those cells, and I was terribly afraid. And this friend who had seen me going to the police station alerted Herbert and also some of the European policemen who were in charge and they managed to get me out. But it was very scary.

Then, when they had the big bomb, the real big bomb . . .

Herbert Greening: In June.

Ilse Greening: . . . in June or July, there were quite a number of casualties and Herbert opened a first aid station in our lane and I helped and the other women, quite a number of other women helped.¹ We

¹ Nearly every refugee remembers vividly the terrifying day, July 17, 1945, when American planes dropped bombs in the heavily settled area of Hongkou. Most can say exactly where they were and what they were doing when the bombers struck. About thirty refugees were killed, and hundreds, perhaps thousands of Chinese and

had prepared by rolling bandages and we also had had a first aid class for that . . .

Herbert Greening: Eventuality.

Ilse Greening: . . . for this eventuality, so we were prepared for that. And most, there were very few, hardly any Europeans. Most of our patients were Chinese, and shrapnel wounds, and . . .

Herbert Greening: But there were some fatalities among the Europeans. I think over thirty Jews died in that . . .

Ilse Greening: But, no, I would like to talk about this first aid station. We did not have any Europeans, we only had Chinese, and that was much appreciated, a lot. Until the Japanese indoctrinated them, the Chinese were very friendly and we had a nice life with them. Unfortunately they were poisoned by the Japanese, because, who were against all foreigners.

So then I stayed home with, when our son was born in December, 1945, and helped in the office. Answered the phone and things like that. And then, oh yeah, oh, you're going to tell about the British Red Cross. Herbert started working at the British Red, after the war, but he will tell about that. And we had money. Not much, but we had quite a nice life, until the Communists came closer and closer. Also, we, Herbert was born in Poland, he was born in Germany, but it became Poland, and he was a Polish quota and we had very little chance to come to the United States. My mother and my sister who were German quota went ahead, but we didn't have any chance so we made some contact with . . .

Herbert Greening: No, they made some contact. Herbert [unclear] .

Ilse Greening: Oh, he wrote to us. You know, you can . . .

Herbert Greening: A fraternity [unclear] .

Ilse Greening: . . . during the war we only had letters through the Red Cross, and this friend in Australia offered to send us a landing permit, so we decided we had to leave the country, because the Communists were getting closer and closer and we finally left for Australia.

Steve Hochstadt: When was that?

Japanese.

Herbert Greening: Twenty-second January of 1949.

Ilse Greening: Do you want to know any more, or no?

Steve Hochstadt: Sure. You went to Australia then?

Ilse Greening: We went to Australia and he had, he had told Herbert that he wouldn't have any trouble to get his medical license. Unfortunately . . .

Herbert Greening: Because I had worked for the British consulate in Shanghai taking care of one of the internment camps.

Ilse Greening: After the war. But it didn't turn out that way, because the Australians had all these returning . . .

Herbert Greening: Veterans.

Ilse Greening: . . . servicemen who had priority. They had priority at the universities and they had priorities with housing, which was natural. So, it was quite, much more difficult than we expected in Australia. I found a job, I worked for the city . . .

Herbert Greening: In Brisbane.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, we tried to settle in Melbourne, no, at first we went to Brisbane, and, where this friend lived, but Herbert was told right away that they wouldn't accept any, and they called them bloody foreigners.

Herbert Greening: Everybody who doesn't have the stamp "made in Australia" is a bloody foreigner.

Ilse Greening: Used to be. They were very anti-foreign. Not only anti-foreign, but anti-Catholics and anti-everybody.

Herbert Greening: But they were not anti-Jewish. There was no antisemitism.

Ilse Greening: Not that we felt. No, there was none, but the British they hated. So I worked in the city mission and, but we only stayed in Brisbane for six weeks it was, yeah.

Herbert Greening: About.

Ilse Greening: Well, in any case, it's, the details are not that important. We finally settled in Sydney, where the possibilities were better, and Herbert was accepted at the university and, they did not recognize his German . . .

Herbert Greening: Diploma.

Ilse Greening: . . . diploma. And I had a small child and couldn't possibly go to work anywhere, so I learned from a friend, I learned how to string pearls, and we had quite a nice business, beads, they were not real pearls, they were imported from Czechoslovakia and . . .

Herbert Greening: Sydney was called Pearl Harbor.

Ilse Greening: [laughs] They were very fashionable and they needed workers and I worked at home because I had the child, and at night when Herbert came back from the university, he even helped with the beads, and we made a living. But I was very unhappy in Australia. I didn't like, I didn't take to the people at all. They were . . .

Herbert Greening: Uncouth.

Ilse Greening: . . . unfriendly, and my whole family was in the States and I was really very unhappy. When I was doing my pearls and they were playing a sad song, I cried, which I never, ever did and have never done after. So I, behind his back, I went to the American consulate and I said, "Please, reactivate our emigration, we want to leave here." And it came and I finally had to tell him that I didn't want to spend my life in Australia, I wanted to come to the States. And we lived happily ever after.

Steve Hochstadt: When did you come to the States?

Herbert Greening: Now we're here.

Ilse Greening: In August of . . .

Herbert Greening: '51.

Ilse Greening: . . . 1950.

Herbert Greening: 1950.

Ilse Greening: And everything was much simpler here. I worked for the same bank, for the Chartered Bank on Wall Street, and Herbert, well, he will talk to you about that. That's it.

Steve Hochstadt: Could you say something about your life before going to Shanghai and about your family's decision to go to Shanghai and how that worked?

Ilse Greening: Well, it was really, first of all I have to say, like most people I was brought up German. My father, my father served in the First World War and we were, he came from a religious, very Jewish home, but, and we were observant to a certain extent, but we were Germans first and we really were brought up German. And my father died in 1933 and my mother and my sister and I were alone. And I went to *Lyceum* and then I went to commercial high school in order to prepare for the job. As I said before, I never . . .

Herbert Greening: May I interject? For other people, Shanghai was the last choice. For us it was the first choice. Because of Ilse's uncle.

Ilse Greening: Not only because of the relatives, but also because we did not have any other choice. And also, like my, Herbert's father or my boss, who was a lawyer, people never expected Hitler to last.

My boss, even in November, after *Kristallnacht* when we got engaged, my boss who was a very intelligent, well informed person, said, "It's a pity you have to leave so soon, because Hitler is not going, it's not going to last." So did Herbert's father and many, many people. So everything was sudden and we knew we had to go, so we went in a hurry. But people were very innocent, in our circle, I don't know how it was, but, and I have to say that I personally never, never suffered any discrimination. Never a single remark ever about Jews and antisemitism, I didn't know.

Steve Hochstadt: Your family didn't have any bad incidents during *Kristallnacht*?

Ilse Greening: Yeah, yes, our business, no, long before. We, we moved from Hannover to a small town, Peine, which is half an hour from Hannover, where my father bought a business. And he, there was already anti-, anti-Jewish . . .

Herbert Greening: Open antisemitism.

Ilse Greening: . . . feelings and also, people were told not to, I guess I was talking about personal, this was really, I was a kid, and people were told not to buy from Jewish merchants. But my father put all his medals from the war on a board and he put that in the shop window, and it says, "*Der Dank des Vaterlandes ist Euch gewiss.*" He was, because we were so German, he was deeply hurt.

Steve Hochstadt: This is in 1933, now, after Hitler took power?

Ilse Greening: 1933, and my father killed himself because he, it was just too much for him. Yeah, that was in 1933. So then we moved back, we moved back to Hannover. I guess I was wrong in saying I didn't suffer any discrimination, but I thought about school and about my friends, etcetera. On the contrary, after my father died, I was told that the teacher in school told the other kids that they have to be especially nice, I found out later, that they had to be especially nice to me.

Steve Hochstadt: Had your, how did this decision to go to Shanghai, how was that made in your family? Was it your mother?

Ilse Greening: After the *Kristallnacht*, we sent a telegram to Shanghai to my uncle, whether we would come, because there was a lot of pressure then on the Jews to leave the country. And he wrote a telegram back, "Welcome." But then there was the question, we were not married, and my uncle really thought we shouldn't get married. I don't know the reason for it.

Herbert Greening: He said there were wives in Shanghai.

Ilse Greening: Yeah. [laughs] So, but my mother, oh, we finally, I told my, we were friends, but not, not serious friends, and I told my mother that Herbert did not have any chance to leave the country. He didn't know anybody, the few people he contacted never answered. So I said to my mother, "What's going to happen to Herbert? He has to stay here." And then she said, "He can come." And then she asked me whether we intended to get married, and I never had given it any thought. So we finally decided to get married before, because my mother thought it was a small ship and . . .

Herbert Greening: It was immoral.

Ilse Greening: Hmm?

Herbert Greening: Immoral.

Ilse Greening: No, not, my mother thought it would be better if we got married, so we got married in December, 1938.

Herbert Greening: Without a rabbi.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, there were no rabbis available and we just had a registry wedding. Much later when our son was six months old, we had a religious. That's it.

Steve Hochstadt: Could you say something about the preparations to leave? The packing, or deciding what to take, and . . . ?

Ilse Greening: Well, that, we did, that, it was at the time when you, that there were no restrictions, when we were packing. We, my mother had some jewelry, we had expensive china and silverware and all that. We, I think we did not take advantage of the freedom. We took certain things, for instance, we only took one sofa for four people. You did not think rationally in those days. We just, someone, when we finally were packing, a *Lift*, someone came from the authorities to check what we were putting in, but he was very, he had been in Shanghai for, a long time ago, and he didn't really care what we put in. He was very lenient. And we just, I don't know, you cannot explain.

Herbert Greening: We were in a sort of panic [unclear] .

Ilse Greening: Yeah, people were in a daze. But we, my mother, her good china and her jewelry, we had no restrictions.

Herbert Greening: Sewing machine.

Ilse Greening: Yes, the sewing machine. When we got to Shanghai, they wanted duty because they thought it was a new machine, but my mother had had it forever. That's right, the sewing machine we took. No, we did not, lots of people took, came to Shanghai with lots of money, but we were innocents abroad. We only had the four dollars and when it was time, when the District was first planned, we had to move from Chusan Road, no, that was not the reason. No.

Herbert Greening: No, that was not the reason.

Ilse Greening: But we needed, we needed larger . . .

Herbert Greening: We needed an office.

Ilse Greening: We needed a house and an office, so we started to sell some of the belongings, the china and all that was bought, most of it was bought by Germans. For instance, we had a very beautiful . . .

Herbert Greening: Precious.

Ilse Greening: . . . precious silver coffee and tea set, on a, which must have been very valuable.

And I don't know who did the buying. In any case, those things, those very expensive things were bought by Germans. Not directly, through dealers, and we were able to buy half of that, half of that so-called house in Kung Ping Road. That's what enabled us to, I don't remem-, most of the stuff that I had received as a wedding present, china, dishes and a lot of things. There was a German . . .

Herbert Greening: Actually, we didn't buy the house, because the houses were Chinese property. We could only . . .

Ilse Greening: You couldn't buy the land in Shanghai, in China. You couldn't buy the land, you could only buy the building. And we had, there was tax on that, on the building. Now what, oh, yes, there was a German jeweler on Bubbling Well Road, I think, who bought most of the stuff. Indirectly. I don't know the name any more. But the Germans were very influential in Germany, in Shanghai, German school, university and . . .

Herbert Greening: Medical school.

Ilse Greening: . . . medical school. There was a French university . . .

Herbert Greening: French Club.

Ilse Greening: . . . American, they all did a lot, all the nations did a lot for the Chinese. And very good university, very good. That's it.

Herbert Greening: So, I was born in Königshütte, Upper Silesia, in 1912. When this part of Upper Silesia became Polish . . .

Ilse Greening: Would you like something to drink?

Steve Hochstadt: That would be very nice.

Ilse Greening: Club soda or coffee . . . ?

Steve Hochstadt: Juice, coffee would be fine.

Herbert Greening: When this part of Upper Silesia became Polish in 1922, my parents moved to Hindenburg, which is also Upper Silesia. There I met Doris [unclear], she was my *Tanzstundendame*, dancing lessons girl. I went to high school there, graduated from high school in '31 and went to Bonn Medical School. Medicine was not my first choice. I wanted to be a dentist. After a short while, I saw that I didn't have the dexterity and called my father that I wanted to switch

over to medicine. I didn't think I had it for medicine, but in my fraternity I saw kids who were much more stupid than I was. So I said, "If they can do it, I sure can do it, too." So I switched to medicine and it came very, very easy to me. I was a good student, a good learner without studying too much. In Germany there was so-called academic freedom, you could change university any time you wanted. So I first stayed for two semesters in Bonn and went to Berlin to meet a girlfriend. Then I went back to Bonn and did my *Physikum* in Bonn. Prior to the *Physikum* I was told two weeks before that I had to ex-matriculate. All Jews had to get out of school. But there was a special legislation in Upper Silesia called the Geneva Convention, according to which we were treated like political minorities, the Jews, so I could keep on going to Bonn. I went to Bonn, finished my *Physikum*, and after that it became sort of difficult for, for us, and I moved to Breslau, which was closer to my parents. I wanted to be closer to them. In Berlin we already had, how shall I say, protest, protest parades against the Nazis. Didn't help much.

Steve Hochstadt: What year did you move to Breslau?

Herbert Greening: To Breslau? I moved in '34 and finished medical studies in Breslau. There we noticed antisemitism in school. We were not allowed to sit in the lecture, lecture halls, we had to stand at the back, behind the seats. At all we were not allowed to touch German women and men, which made it difficult in obstetrics. In obstetrics we had to pass a seven-day in-school test, but we only had the theoretical part. We never touched a woman. We saw a delivery, but we never took part in it. I finished school Christmas '36 with very, very good marks, except in bacteriology, where the director of bacteriology was a top Nazi and he made it difficult. There were only oral examinations. There were four guys, forty students and one professor and he grilled you for about three to four hours. I passed, I graduated in December of '36. In January, I got a job as an intern at the Jewish hospital in Hannover. Since, it was a small hospital, sixty beds. Each day Jewish . . .

END SIDE A, TAPE 1

BEGIN SIDE B, TAPE 1

Herbert Greening: . . . [unclear] was one of my students, that's how we met. After finishing my internship, I became assistant at the same hospital and I wrote, and I wanted to emigrate and I wrote to our former family doctor, who in the meantime had emigrated to America. Never got an answer. Another patient of mine, whom, who he thinks I saved his life, promised to do something for me, but also an empty promise. Then we were going steady and Ilse came one day and asked would I go with them to China. I said, "Of course I will, I'll go anywhere." So we got engaged in November of '38

and my mother gave me as a present, or [unclear] gave me as a present, an electrico-, electrocardiograph, which I was not allowed to take along. The Nazis said, "You want to go from house to house with your electrocardiograph and show off with our German science," so that was out. But a retired physician gave me all his office equipment, which I took to China, which I used all those years, and I still have those.

Steve Hochstadt: Were you affected at all by *Kristallnacht*?

Herbert Greening: I was in the hospital. In the morning of November 9, we were, I was in the operating room, we were doing a breast. The Nazis came into the house, into the hospital, and the nurse in charge of the operating room said, "You can't go in there. They're operating and you are not sterile." So they never came to the operating room. And that night I hid in the basement and in the evening I got a call from my medical chief, I have to make a house call for him. The first house call in my life. How can I go? I couldn't say no, there was a sick guy, and I had to go and see him. So I put a hat on, put it over my eyes as deep as I could, as I could and took the streetcar and made a house call. Everything went well. In the morning we heard about the synagogues and the destruction. My 9th of November.

And then came the preparation for going to China. I had my instruments, I had an examining chair, and examining, what do you call it? I had a complete office outfit and nowhere to go.

First, in Shanghai, Ilse's uncle rented for us that beautiful apartment in Frenchtown, but I couldn't make a living. I opened a practice, nobody came. I was 26 years old. I didn't know anybody. Uncle's partner said to me, "There's one big trouble with you, and it will getter, and it will get better with every day, you'll get older." I mean, I had only hospital experience. German medical education is very different from the one in America. It's strictly theoretical, science. They teach you how to think for yourself, but not a hand-on like here. So I had to learn. I didn't know a damn thing. I knew theoretical stuff, I knew, but I didn't know how to treat a cold or take [unclear] anyway. And I got myself a handbook of tropical diseases and started to, to study. After six months in Frenchtown, I said, "We have to get away from here. Here I can't make a living. The Jews are in, in Hongkou, *Landsleute* of mine in Hongkou." So we moved there, that Ilse told you about, and there I, I had a very good practice, I must say, and collected a lot of experience. Twice a week I went to a leprosy clinic. In China, lepers are not isolated, they live with their families. We didn't have much medicine either at that time, actually no medicine, only the old fashioned chaulmogra oil. So anyway, I saw lepers, C-H-A-U-L-, chaulmogra. It's an injection that was used, without any effect I'm sure. A Dutch physician was in charge of the leprosy clinic. I learned. It was a great experience. And he wanted me to go to the interior, get a job in the interior. I was interviewed for a job in the interior by a mission, Catholic mission. They wanted to pay me fifty dollars a month, board and lodging. I said, "What about my child?" So I said, "Without my child's security or teaching or school, I can't go." So we kept this practice in Shanghai in the attic and I was very, very busy. I

enjoyed it. The fee was very low, it was about one tenth of what doctors got in, in Shanghai, compared to Hongkou.

Steve Hochstadt: Thank you.

Herbert Greening: I was a very bad money maker. I don't understand anything about money. I enjoyed medicine, I enjoyed the challenge of medicine through all my life. Ilse was the money collector. Ilse and her money.

Ilse Greening: The little there was.

Herbert Greening: Yeah. And of course I saw a lot of stuff that I've never seen before or after. Like malaria, typhus, cholera, typhoid. And I enjoyed it.

Ilse Greening: Smallpox.

Herbert Greening: Smallpox. Gastrointestinal diseases. Dysenteries. I loved it. Then, after the end of the war, a friend of mine who had worked for the Consulate, actually a German diplomat . . .

Ilse Greening: For the British Army.

Herbert Greening: . . . for the British Army, came to me and asked me would I want a job with the British consulate. And I got a job taking medical care of one of the internment camps before they were . . .

Ilse Greening: Repatriated.

Herbert Greening: . . . repatriated. And that was not only a nice job, but a nice salary. There I stayed until we left Shanghai.

Ilse Greening: And the Air Force, you worked for the Air Force, Royal Air Force.

Herbert Greening: I worked for the Royal Air Force, that was part of the job. I even got a uniform. Then we, another fraternity brother searched for us in, after the war, and found us in Shanghai, and he sent me a landing permit to Australia. We went to Brisbane, where they didn't let me in at all. I mean, medical school. I tried Melbourne, they said I have to go five more years, ten semesters. And then in Sydney they said they have give me the *Physikum*, I have to do three more clinical years. After three more clinical years, there would be a lottery. There would be twelve students every year

admitted to practice.

Ilse Greening: And you were 36 foreign students.

Herbert Greening: And we were 36 foreign students.

Ilse Greening: That's when I decided to leave . . .

Herbert Greening: That's, that's . . .

Ilse Greening: . . . because we already had wasted ten years in Shanghai, I didn't want to wait around there another maybe two years or . . .

Herbert Greening: I mean, in Australia, I would have had very good prospects. Another fraternity brother promised me partnership and I could have, would have joined him right away. And so then Ilse got the visa for America and we went to America.

Steve Hochstadt: And how did you get into the medical profession in America?

Herbert Greening: Well, here I had to pass first a language exam, and then a license exam for New York. So I took a cram course, a refresher course . . .

Ilse Greening: Another, also an immigrant doctor . . .

Herbert Greening: And once the first test I flunked in anatomy. Anatomy was my speciality, I mean, I was just . . .

Ilse Greening: You were overconfident.

Herbert Greening: . . . overconfident. And the second time three months later I passed it. In the meantime I had a job as a house doctor in a small hospital in New York. And one of the older practitioners had watched my work and came to me whether I want to join him, first as an employee, associate, and after a year he would give me partnership. So I jumped into that. I had Ilse, I had a baby, I had mother-in-law and Ilse was pregnant, so I needed a job. And in a year he really pumped me and worked me very, very hard. Only, I didn't have a day free during the whole week. I had an evening free on Tuesday night. And if there was a delivery, I had to do that, or else you didn't do any deliveries. After a year and a half, I became a partner with fifteen percent, twenty percent, twenty-five percent, going up to fifty percent. After seven years, the practice became so big that we had to take a third guy. After another ten years, the old guy retired and I became the boss, and was the boss until

80-something.

We started to come to Florida in '82 for a couple of months. When we went back, I went back to work. And I did it until I got a stroke in '94.

As I said, medicine was not my first choice. In high school I wanted to go into theology. I studied Talmud, I studied Gemara, we studied Buber and we studied Rosenzweig, and I really enjoyed it. But after a while I went to the rabbi, I said, "Rabbi, I don't think I can become a rabbi." "Why not?" "I don't have the faith," I said. He said, "Don't worry," in German, "don't worry. You just keep the tradition, the faith will come." I said, " [unclear] but not for me." So then I started to think about dentist. A teacher of mine said, "You should become a journalist." I said, "What should I live on?" Good thinking. And then I started to think about a dentist. Dentistry school lasts only eight semesters. Medical school twelve semesters. A burden on my parents. So I did that. And then, as I couldn't do dentistry, when I called my father, he said, "I never liked dentistry," he said. So he said, "You have to make up your own mind, what you want to do." And then I went into medicine and was happy ever after. That's the story.

You ask me questions.

Steve Hochstadt: A question I'd like to ask is about, if you could say something about, for example, the Ward Road Hospital, or about how medicine was organized in Shanghai.

Herbert Greening: You have to look at it with the eyes at that time. At that time, maybe it was the best that could be done. Looking at it from day, from today, it was a dump. But that was, it was war, Shanghai was an isolated city, we didn't get anything from the outside as far as medications concerned, only what was in store in Shanghai could be sold at very high prices. We had to do with medication made in China, copies of foreign medications.

Ilse Greening: Japanese.

Herbert Greening: Pardon?

Ilse Greening: Japanese.

Herbert Greening: Japanese medication, which were easily available. But a hospital is only as good as the doctors are and the doctors were quite good. Except some of them.

Steve Hochstadt: Would you say again what you told me about delivery of your child in the Ward Road Hospital?

Herbert Greening: Well . . .

Ilse Greening: No, I don't think you . . .

Herbert Greening: There were three babies dying from exposure to cold. The heating in the new baby department was very primitive. They had what they called electric suns. I don't know whether you know what it is.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, like, they have here, too.

Herbert Greening: Pardon?

Ilse Greening: Lamps, electric lamps, heating lamps.

Herbert Greening: Electric heating lamps, yeah, electric heating lamps. And there was a short cut in the electricity and three babies died. And so I said, not for my son. And we delivered him at home with a friend of mine.

Steve Hochstadt: When did that happen at the Ward Road . . . ?

Herbert Greening: In December '45.

Steve Hochstadt: So that was after the war that that happened.

Ilse Greening: No, but what happened in the Ward Road, I, that happened before.

Herbert Greening: No, at the time Michael was born.

Ilse Greening: No, it was before. It was before. . . .

Herbert Greening: I [unclear] . . .

Ilse Greening: It must have been in the winter, well, that was winter, yeah. It was very, it got very cold in Shanghai. The wind used to come from Siberia and the houses were very, very poorly built. One-brick walls . . .

Herbert Greening: One-brick.

Ilse Greening: . . . and no heating, no central heating.

Herbert Greening: We heated with, with oil.

Ilse Greening: Charcoal.

Herbert Greening: [unclear]

Ilse Greening: No, that was, those people who could afford coal, they would . . .

Herbert Greening: Briquets.

Ilse Greening: . . . briquets, but these briquets were made by Chinese or even we made, sometimes made our own from coal dust . . .

Herbert Greening: Ten percent coal dust.

Ilse Greening: . . . and the rest was dirt. So there was never, there was never much heat.

Herbert Greening: And no air conditioning in the summer, and summer got quite hot. Air conditioning we had in the banks. [unclear] they come here.

Ilse Greening: No, but there was another one just now.

Herbert Greening: They come [unclear] .

Ilse Greening: But also once the fire, first of all the fire was not very hot, but once the fire was out, it got very, very cold, because, even here it gets cold, because the houses are not built . . .

Herbert Greening: The doors.

Ilse Greening: . . . like in other parts of the country. Gets cold here, too.

Herbert Greening: Gets cold in Maine, too.

Steve Hochstadt: Yes. How did you, in your practice, how did you come acr-, how did you get medicines during the war?

Herbert Greening: Chinese medicines, Japanese medicines. I started on homeopathy, I studied homeopathy and made myself homeopathic medicines.

Ilse Greening: Injections with urine.

Herbert Greening: I injected urine, that was supposed to raise the antibody level. We injected own blood, that too was supposed to raise the antibody level.

Ilse Greening: And what about that diabetes?

Herbert Greening: One of the refugees worked on, she was a doctor, started to make anti-diabetic medication out of . . .

Ilse Greening: Potatoes.

Herbert Greening: No, not potatoes, out of corn. Out of corn. And I don't know how it worked out. I never used it.

Ilse Greening: And the rich people still had Bayer they imported. Everything you can imagine . . .

Herbert Greening: You could buy anything.

Ilse Greening: . . . was available in Shanghai in the black market, whether it was coffee or butter or imported medicine, was always available to those people who could afford to buy it. There were lots of Chinese who were, and Europeans, but a lot of Chinese, too, who were in that kind of business.

Herbert Greening: We lived on tea in the morning, and bread and soy milk and bacon and lard.

Ilse Greening: When I was pregnant, I drank soybean milk and I ate soybean cheese, which now everybody thinks is ideal, but this was a matter of . . .

Herbert Greening: Soybean is the cow of China.

Ilse Greening: There was milk, but it was very expensive.

Herbert Greening: But as I said, what Ilse said, Shanghai was an experience for us. We were young, it was a wonderful adventure.

Ilse Greening: And we also went into the Chinese quarters, before the Japanese occupation.

Herbert Greening: Before, before the Designated Area.

Ilse Greening: We mixed with the Chinese, we were interested in their life, we had, we had Chinese friends, we all, once a Chinese friend . . .

Herbert Greening: I had Japanese patients.

Ilse Greening: . . . took us into a Chinese temple, where we had vegetarian dinner. We did mix more with Chinese than the average . . .

Herbert Greening: I went into the Chinese quarter with my Chinese friends, and they pretended I was a doctor from the city government and I had to revise the books, so they showed me the books and the prostitutes and everything. That was interesting.

Ilse Greening: Did you talk about the leprosy?

Herbert Greening: Yes. In the leprosy clinic we did skin biopsies. Since the skin is insensitive, anesthetic, you can just pick up the skin, cut it off with the scissors and then sort of shred it and dye it and put it on the microscope and diagnose the leprosy. That was good. Once I showed, showed to Ilse a leper in the subway, in the street car.

Ilse Greening: He says, "Two persons away from you a leper is sitting." I was not too enthused [laughs] about that.

Herbert Greening: And when I came home from the clinic, first they said, "You can't eat at the same table we eat."

Ilse Greening: We were ignorant. We didn't know. My mother and I decided, and I wasn't going to sleep in bed with him, you know, until he explained to us that it wasn't . . .

Herbert Greening: You have to sleep with a leper to get it. It's not very, not very contagious.

Ilse Greening: No, I think we made, we had more contact with Chinese, also . . .

Herbert Greening: And we enjoyed it.

Ilse Greening: Also we were friendly with a Chinese doctor who had studied in Vienna and spoke German fluently . . .

Herbert Greening: Better than we did.

Ilse Greening: . . . and he brought another friend of his who spoke German, we all spoke German, and they spoke very good German. Sometimes I was embarrassed, because they had very good vocabulary.

Herbert Greening: The majority of my patients, of course, were refugees. But I had some Chinese patients and I had some Japanese patients.

Steve Hochstadt: Could you say something about the first aid station that you set up after the bombing?

Herbert Greening: After the bombing, yeah, we set it up in our courtyard, sort of, and what we did was bandage them up, because all we had . . .

Ilse Greening: No, you removed the shrapnel.

Herbert Greening: I removed shrapnel without anesthesia, and bandaged them up and sent them to the central station. And the central station was Dr. Didner.²

Ilse Greening: But word must have gotten around because they kept on coming, the Chinese. And they were very grateful, very appreciative.

Steve Hochstadt: Was that near where the bombing took place?

Ilse Greening: No, that was on Kung Ping Road, about two blocks up. We were on Kung Ping Road and the main bombing was about two blocks up.

Herbert Greening: The reason for the bombing was that the Japanese had installed small weapons factories in our, in the Designated Area, and the Japan-, the Americans wanted to get them. That we were just in the path of them, it was our bad luck. And that was in June '45. June '44.

Ilse Greening: '45.

Steve Hochstadt: It was in '45. How did the creation of the Designated Area affect, affect your

² Dr. Samuel Didner, a refugee from Graz.

lives?

Herbert Greening: All right. We had to get passports, I'm sure you have seen them.

Ilse Greening: We were fortunate, oh, no, we were renters in Kung Ping Road, in that, and we decided, actually as far as housing was concerned, we were not affected, because it happened that we lived . . .

Herbert Greening: We lived already in . . .

Ilse Greening: Not like those, many of those people, like, many refugees lived in the French Concession and in the International Settlement. For them it was disastrous, because they had to give up comfortable apartments or houses and move into very primitive, very, I mean, even, you have seen it, but most people, we knew people, doctor friends of ours, who had to have the so-called honey pot in the middle of their living room, and many times you were sick, because a lot of people had intestinal disease, and there you were sitting in the middle of the living room, and there was no other place. So for those people it was a big change. We were not affected since we lived, lived in the Area already, which was accidental. The only thing was we decided to buy the house. That's why we sold all our, a lot of our belongings. What was I going to say about that? For instance, we had friends, they lived in one small room and her, there was only room for one bed, for one narrow bed, so the wife put a board on the bath, on the tub, on the tub, which happened to be in that room, and she put a board on in and then a mattress and she slept on that, and of course those were all people who were used to better things. But there was not enough housing for all those refugees who came, had to live in the Settlement.

Steve Hochstadt: You went in and out of the Designated Area.

Ilse Greening: Yeah.

Steve Hochstadt: Did you have to visit Mr. Ghoya to get a pass?

Ilse Greening: Oh yes, everybody did. Everybody did.

Steve Hochstadt: Could you say something about your experiences with Mr. Ghoya?

Ilse Greening: Well, since I worked for a Japanese bank, you know, it was after the, it was after Chartered Bank, it was Mitsubishi Keiko, I forgot, no, it will come back to me. Mitsubishi Ginko Bank. I also have to say that I had to learn Japanese, because we were . . .

Herbert Greening: And we tried to learn Russian.

Ilse Greening: . . . 25 girls in that bank, in that Japanese bank. The manager spoke German quite well, and some of the officers spoke English, not too well, but none of the girls spoke any foreign language. So one of the Englishmen, before he went into camp, and I went to a Japanese class. And this teacher was using a fantastic modern method and we learned very fast. So in the bank, we ate all, we ate, food was scarce and they offered a lunch, so-called lunch, and I ate there out of desperation, it was terrible. But I sat with the girls and I had to speak Japanese, there was no other way, so, but I must say I learned very fast. This teacher was unbelievable. No, but, what we were . . . ?

Steve Hochstadt: So it was no problem for you to get your pass?

Ilse Greening: No, when I went to Mr. Ghoya, I did not have any problem. I was scared. You know, everybody was scared, and we were standing on line and you never knew what mood he was in, whether he was, he hit the man, especially didn't like tall men because he was a short guy, and it depended on his moods. But I . . .

Herbert Greening: I never had any problems.

Ilse Greening: No, because of, I guess because it was a highly reputable bank, so, no, I never had any problems.

Herbert Greening: I first got a 24-hour passport, and that was curtailed to 12 hours later on. But I always, the 12-hour passport I always had. And I had Japanese patients.

Ilse Greening: Yes, but the thing is, when you went to the Japanese you passed, remember you went across Ward Road to go to visit a Japanese, but that was not within that time limit. He, because, you couldn't refuse a Japanese. You couldn't tell him, besides, he wouldn't understand, "I cannot come to you because my pass has expired." Oh, I was scared until he came back at night.

Herbert Greening: Two snapshots from Shanghai. It's a dentist.

Steve Hochstadt: This is a dentist, I see.

Herbert Greening: A street dentist. That's a food carrier. I'm sure the food carriers you saw.

Steve Hochstadt: Yes, this is very interesting. Is this a picture that you took?

Herbert Greening: Yeah, I took it and I processed it, too. I developed . . .

Ilse Greening: From a coffee can, or what.

Herbert Greening: I made an enlarger from an old camera and two coffee cans.

Steve Hochstadt: This was not your idea of how you wanted to be a dentist.

Herbert Greening: [laughs] No.

Ilse Greening: But, you see, the Chinese had very . . .

Herbert Greening: Do you see the stream of teeth? Don't see them too well.

Steve Hochstadt: Ah, yes.

Ilse Greening: The more teeth you had, the more successful you were.

Steve Hochstadt: That's an amazing picture.

Herbert Greening: If you want a copy of that, I'll have it done.

Steve Hochstadt: I would very much like a copy of that.

Herbert Greening: Sure, I'll have it done.

Steve Hochstadt: When was that picture taken?

Herbert Greening: About '46, I would think.

Steve Hochstadt: So, after the war was over.

Herbert Greening: Oh, yeah. During the war you didn't dare to take photographs.

Steve Hochstadt: Of anything. That was something that would have made you afraid to . . . ?

Herbert Greening: Oh, yes.

Ilse Greening: After, after the war we also took trips to, down the river, down the Huangpu River to . . .

Herbert Greening: Kowchow.

Ilse Greening: Somebody had a little café there, a Chinese, we used, especially when our son was little, to give him a little treat, we used to go down the river to, I don't know, half an hour? Down the Huangpu River towards the ocean. And we could walk around. That was a big treat, because for so long we were so confined. Also before the war, Herbert had a patient outside the city, refugees who had a pig farm. And we used to . . .

Herbert Greening: In the country.

Ilse Greening: . . . yeah, we used to go out. How did we get out there?

Herbert Greening: Walking.

Ilse Greening: We walked? That I don't remember.

Herbert Greening: A big pig farm.

Ilse Greening: Then after the war, this man used, when the first American ships came in, he used to buy their waste.

Herbert Greening: Food waste.

Ilse Greening: For . . .

Herbert Greening: To feed the pigs.

Ilse Greening: To feed the pigs. But with the, with the waste, he also got large tins of fruit, like peaches.

Herbert Greening: They were opened, but not finished.

Ilse Greening: They were not, once they opened these big containers, they were not allowed to keep them on the boat, and so with the waste, he brought all these tins and he, since there was no refrigeration, he distributed among the friends and we really were in heaven. All that good stuff,

canned stuff, we used to have, so-called feed.

Herbert Greening: And then when the Americans came, there was a hospital boat.

Ilse Greening: Oh, yeah, that's the most important, that's really very important.

Herbert Greening: St. Olaf.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, a hospital ship.

Herbert Greening: Hospital ship.

Ilse Greening: And we went, you know, we were so excited when the Americans came.

Herbert Greening: And thirsty for knowledge for things about what happened.

Ilse Greening: So we were waiting . . .

Herbert Greening: At the pier.

Ilse Greening: . . . we were waiting, the people, the soldiers came off the boat and we were standing there and one of them said, "I would, could you help me? I would like to buy a camera." Oh, no, he said, "I would like to buy a camera, where would I go?" I don't know why he would buy a camera in Shanghai. Maybe Japanese. Anyway, we said, "Well, you know, they take advantage of the Americans here. Why don't we go along with you and try to . . ."

Herbert Greening: "We know how to deal with the Chinese."

Ilse Greening: ". . . try to find an honest dealer?" So, he said, "You people have a German accent, where are you from?" So I said, "Where are you from?" Well, he was from New York. His parents came from Schlüchtern, a town near Frankfurt, and I said, "My grandmother came from Schlüchtern also." A strange coincidence. And he knew my family over there. And we became friends, but not, we helped him with his camera, but he also took us on board the hospital ship, which was very, for Herbert, most interesting, because we didn't have any penicillin . . .

Herbert Greening: He gave me the first bottle of penicillin.

Ilse Greening: Also, that was when I was pregnant, he gave me flannel pajamas, which were in the

supplies, which were marvelous for me over the winter. He gave us butter, apples, apples . . .

Herbert Greening: And sulfadiozine tablets. One of the sulfa products. The sulfa products came out in '37 in Germany by Bayer, and . . .

Ilse Greening: But the penicillin was the most exciting.

Herbert Greening: We had only sulfa products in Shanghai. We didn't have any injectable antibiotics, or antibacterials, and that was the first penicillin I saw. In a milky fluid, a suspension.

Ilse Greening: That was very exciting. And they came, of course, all these friends, like his friend from the British Army . . .

Herbert Greening: He was a fraternity brother.

Ilse Greening: . . . and this guy, they were hungry for family, and we invited them to our place, but food was a problem. One of them, I said, "What would you like to eat most?"

Herbert Greening: He was an Austrian.

Ilse Greening: Frankfurt? No, when I was, my mother made potato salad. Potatoes were very scarce, we hardly ever had potatoes. We had sweet potatoes, but not regular potatoes, because the Japanese were, closed the city, and they controlled whatever came in, and I guess they must have taxed it, too. So whatever came into the city was controlled by the Japanese, so we, that's why really we had the shortages. And this, yes, he wanted potato salad. My mother, so we finally got potatoes, but mayonnaise or things like that were out of the question, so my mother made mayonnaise from flour? I don't remember. Anyway, she made it, and the other one wanted dill potatoes, which, I don't know whether we had dill. In any case, they loved it in our house, because for the first time they had home cooking. But they did bring stuff, you know, they did bring . . .

Herbert Greening: And they had family.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, they loved to be in our house. And my mother managed to feed them. I don't know how, but she did.

Steve Hochstadt: Did the hospital ship, was the hospital ship used by . . . ?

Herbert Greening: Americans, for American troops.

Steve Hochstadt: Only for American troops. The refugees couldn't go there to be treated?

Herbert Greening: No.

Ilse Greening: No, no.

Herbert Greening: Oh, no. We had three hospitals, three. We had the refugee hospital on Ward Road, we had General Hospital, and we had the hospital in Frenchtown, Great Western.

Ilse Greening: Yes, but there was another French, there was another refugee hospital, Chaoufoong Road.

Herbert Greening: On Chaoufoong Road, yeah, another refugee hospital. I never set my foot in there.

Steve Hochstadt: What was the Country Hospital?

Ilse Greening: Country, that was the one . . .

Herbert Greening: In Frenchtown?

Ilse Greening: No, in, on, not far from, on Great Western Road. That was fancy place.

Steve Hochstadt: I've heard mention of that.

Ilse Greening: That was a fancy place. After the war.

Herbert Greening: I went there once. I had a patient there. I don't know.

Steve Hochstadt: And what was the General Hospital? Was that in Hongkou?

Ilse Greening: No, at the border on the . . .

Herbert Greening: At the river, next to the Post Office. You know where it is?

Steve Hochstadt: Yes.

Herbert Greening: That was the General Hospital.

Ilse Greening: Between the Post Office and the Embankment Building, where all the refugees, many refugees first lived. On that same, very close to the Garden Bridge.

Herbert Greening: The General Hospital was maintained by nuns. They were not too, they were not nice. I brought one . . .

Ilse Greening: But they were not allowed to see a human, a naked man.

Herbert Greening: No.

Ilse Greening: I mean, [laughs] what good is it?

Herbert Greening: I brought a Chinese guy in, the son of Mr. Wu, with an acute appendicitis. The guy didn't have any money on him. So, "I wouldn't even consider admitting you." So I don't know where Mr. Wong got the money from.

Ilse Greening: The General Hospital was, was more for everyday people, every, you know, general, for the general public, but the other one, what was the name of it?

Steve Hochstadt: The Country Hospital?

Ilse Greening: The Country Hospital was fancier. Was for the people in the International Settlement and in the French Concession. I visited somebody there once, after the war. During the war it was out of the question. But the refugee hospitals did the best they could.

Herbert Greening: At that time, yes, limited resources, limited everything.

Steve Hochstadt: Herbert, could you say something about whether there was any organization for doctors in Hongkou?

Herbert Greening: [unclear] we had a circular, a journal, I can't remember . . .

Ilse Greening: And he, Herbert was never a joiner, he's not a joiner.

Herbert Greening: I've never been a joiner. The boss of the medical profession was a Doctor Friedrichs.

Ilse Greening: In Hongkou.

Herbert Greening: In Hongkou.

Steve Hochstadt: And how, how was he the boss, or why was, why did he have the position?

Ilse Greening: He was older, I think, because of his age?

Herbert Greening: He was older, he was ignorant . . .

Ilse Greening: Now, Herbert, that's not true. That is not true.

Herbert Greening: Okay. You want cases?

Ilse Greening: No.

Steve Hochstadt: You didn't like him much?

Ilse Greening: You don't think you had cases that did not succeed?

Herbert Greening: He had more. [laughs]

Ilse Greening: No.

Steve Hochstadt: Did he have a position? A formal position?

Herbert Greening: Yeah, he was in charge. I don't know how he came to that. He was a very nice man, very nice gentleman. He was the administrative type, you know. He knew his stuff. And he saw amoeba in every microscope.

Ilse Greening: So, it's better to find it than not to find it.

Herbert Greening: But they were not there.

Steve Hochstadt: Are there any other doctors who you think were important in Hongkou?

Herbert Greening: Well, one of the important ones who was not in Hongkou was Dr. Reiss. Dr. Reiss was a Hungarian and he was a big shot.

Ilse Greening: He wrote books, too.

Herbert Greening: Pardon?

Ilse Greening: I think he wrote, he was, he came to the States . . .

Herbert Greening: He was a specialist in leprosy and tropical skin diseases. After the war he came to New York and became a professor in New York. Very well known man. Among the refugee doctors, there was a surgeon Wiener, a surgeon Marcus, the one I knew and used.

Ilse Greening: Marcuse.

Herbert Greening: Marcuse.

Ilse Greening: Please, can you strike that what he said about the doctor? It's uncalled for.

Herbert Greening: Dr. Friedrichs?

Ilse Greening: Yeah, no, that's not for you to say.

Steve Hochstadt: Did you ever hear of a Dr. Arthur Peretz?

Herbert Greening: Moment, Peretz, yeah, but he was not a doctor.

Ilse Greening: There was one Peretz who was . . .

Herbert Greening: Married a Cohn daughter.

Ilse Greening: . . . who was active in the Committee, but he was not a medical doctor.

Steve Hochstadt: No, this was my, my grandmother's cousin, who was also a doctor in Shanghai . . .

Herbert Greening: At our time?

Steve Hochstadt: Yes. One thing that I know about him was there was a big scandal, because he had an affair with the wife of the, of an English diplomat. But this is not someone you ever heard of. I don't think he went to Hongkou, because he was in Shanghai earlier . . .

Herbert Greening: Then they didn't go to Hongkou, like your grandfather.

Steve Hochstadt: He also didn't have to go.

Herbert Greening: No, like Ilse's relatives, they didn't have to go. He left early for America. I would like you to have [unclear] .

Steve Hochstadt: There was, after the war was over, were you anxious to leave Shanghai right away, or not?

Herbert Greening: Let me think.

Steve Hochstadt: Thank you.

Herbert Greening: After the war was over, they thought, it's going to be terrible.

Ilse Greening: Also the money sit- . . .

Herbert Greening: The Japanese would be in top position, the American and the Allies wouldn't be here yet, and we would expose to everything they wanted to do with us. Nothing of that type happened. It was very quiet.

Ilse Greening: We were scared.

Herbert Greening: We were scared like a . . .

Ilse Greening: You know, to be left with the Japanese, maybe they were furious about the ending of the war. We were really scared.

Herbert Greening: Oh, one story I have to tell you. We were walking on the Bund and I said to Ilse, "This guy there is a classmate of me." Crazy. So I called him, yes, he was. "What are you doing here?" "Oh, I'm working with the German consulate." "What are you doing there?" "I'm a photographer." And then we invited him once and then . . .

Ilse Greening: No, he said he went, he does photo-, his job is photography, and he goes to outside of Shanghai and to the country, to the border, and he takes photos. And he was very eager to meet with us. I don't know whether this was accidental, we'll never know, but that was at the time during the European war, when my boss at the bank had told me . . .

Herbert Greening: The Germans were deep in Russia.

Ilse Greening: . . . that my boss, and the Englishman had called me one day and he said, “You are, you open all the mail . . . “

END SIDE B, TAPE 1

BEGIN SIDE A, TAPE 2

Ilse Greening: . . . at the English bank, I opened all the mail. For reasons I really don’t understand, they let me open all the mail. Many of the letters were marked “Private and Confidential”. And when the European war started, the, my boss called me and he said, “I would advise you to be careful with whom you associate, because it’s quite possible that people are after the kind of information you get in those letters.” So when Herbert, when Herbert, when we met this guy, German guy, he was very eager to associate with us. Very. So I, I said to Herbert, “We have to try to get rid of him, because under no circumstances can I associate with him.” So finally, he insists, he did come to the house once.

Herbert Greening: Yes, with a rickshaw.

Ilse Greening: Yes, he came to the house once, and once Herbert went to his house. He lived very luxuriously . . .

Herbert Greening: In the French Concession.

Ilse Greening: . . . in the French Concession . . .

Herbert Greening: With a Chinese . . .

Ilse Greening: . . . with a Chinese concubine, girlfriend, and . . .

Herbert Greening: With precious silk carpets on the wall, beautiful silk.

Ilse Greening: . . . and he was some rich guy. But finally we got it through to him that we did not want to associate with him. We couldn’t. But he, I, to this day I don’t know whether it was, he was just happy to meet a friend or whether this all was intentional. We didn’t know, but later on, after the

end of the war, it, we found out . . .

Herbert Greening: We read in the papers.

Ilse Greening: . . . we read in the paper that he was a very . . .

Herbert Greening: That he was a chief of the Gestapo in Shanghai.

Steve Hochstadt: What was his name?

Herbert Greening: Kahner, K-A-H-N-E-R.³

Ilse Greening: And then after the, when we lived in New York already, another classmate, a Jewish classmate came to visit from South America, I think Sao Paolo, so he said, “Guess whom I met in the street in Sao Paolo?”

Herbert Greening: Abdul.

Ilse Greening: His name was, they called him Abdul, “I met Kahner. Wasn’t that a coincidence?” So Herbert said, “Did he tell you that he met me in Shanghai?” Not a word. You know, it would have been natural for him to say, “Here you were my classmate, guess whom I met in Shanghai?” No, not a word. And only the other day we were talking, I wonder what ever happened to him. He probably lives in South America somewhere. But did he want to meet us? Was it intentional?

Herbert Greening: No, I don’t think so. Because he met other Jewish people afterwards, remember? And he associated with them.

Ilse Greening: No, I don’t remember.

Steve Hochstadt: Did you have any other associations with Germans?

Herbert Greening: In Shanghai?

Ilse Greening: Yeah, when we lived in Frenchtown, next door.

³ Major Gerhard Kahner was head of the Gestapo in Shanghai from 1940 to 1943.

Herbert Greening: Oh, next door was the animal importer.

Ilse Greening: He was an animal catcher. He brought wild animals for zoos in Germany.

Herbert Greening: And his girlfriend, was she German?

Ilse Greening: Yeah, she had married a Chinese at the univer-, his wife had met, was at the university somewhere in Germany and met a Chinese and they got married, and she came to China, but there was a lot of discrimination and the child, the children of these mixed marriages were always, had a terrible life, because they were so discriminated against.

Steve Hochstadt: By the Chinese.

Ilse Greening: By the Chinese, and especially the families.

Herbert Greening: And the so-called Portuguese that were said to have come from Macau.

Ilse Greening: No, some of these mixed were called Portuguese. I don't know why. Whether they came from Macau or whether they were just called Portuguese, but they had a very . . .

Herbert Greening: They couldn't get any higher positions in the bank, for instance.

Ilse Greening: We had some in the bank and they never advanced.

Herbert Greening: Never advanced.

Ilse Greening: Never. Also, one of the Englishmen had married a Thai princess and he also was socially not accepted.

Herbert Greening: And the guy, the man from the English consulate who was married to a Portuguese, remember, he couldn't get anywheres in the consulate.

Ilse Greening: No, that was very strict . . .

Herbert Greening: Very class conscious.

Ilse Greening: The English were very strict class conscious, very. It was very painful situation.

Steve Hochstadt: Could you say something about your social lives during the war? What you did,

able, what you were able to do for fun?

Herbert Greening: For fun.

Ilse Greening: Depends whether it was war time or peace time?

Steve Hochstadt: Either one.

Herbert Greening: We went, we had a number of fraternity brothers in Shanghai, it was the German fraternity, KC, *Kartell-Convent deutscher Studenten jüdischen Glaubens*.

Ilse Greening: You understand?

Steve Hochstadt: Yes.

Herbert Greening: *Deutscher Studenten jüdischen Glaubens*. For us religion was religion, no race, nothing, and we met on Sunday mornings *Im Weissen Rössl*, and had a glass of beer or something to eat or something to drink.⁴

Ilse Greening: The men.

Herbert Greening: The men, all men, not women. And then there were coffee houses, *Dachgarten*.

Ilse Greening: Oh, we went out a lot.

Herbert Greening: We went out a lot.

Ilse Greening: *Im Weissen Rössl, Dachgarten*, have you heard *Dachgarten*? We went to the movies.

Herbert Greening: Went to the movies, then refugees established a theater. We knew the soprano, Rosl Albach and, Rosl Albach-Gerstl. She was the wife of a dentist, who was a fraternity brother. Then there was Glasser, tenor. He used to be . . .

Ilse Greening: A cantor.

⁴ "Zum Weissen Rössl" was located on Ward Road.

Herbert Greening: . . . a cantor in Germany. And they put up sort of musicals. And there was a theater where they put up serious stuff, like, where we saw the, with the Japanese coming in, remember?

Ilse Greening: No. I, before the war, in Shanghai there was an opera house, a concert hall, it was at the end, it was near the French Club on, what was the name of the street?

Herbert Greening: French Club, on Seymour Road.

Ilse Greening: No, no, French name. And I had a friend who was a critic for the newspaper and he invited me to the opera. His name was Karn. There was a lot going on.

Herbert Greening: Little Friedl.

Ilse Greening: No, no, Herbert, we don't want any gossip. No, no, no gossip.

Herbert Greening: It was a . . .

Ilse Greening: No, Herbert, no gossip, please.

Herbert Greening: But a lot of dirt, a lot of prostitution, of which you've heard I'm sure.

Ilse Greening: And a lot of women associated either with American soldiers, or during the war, not a lot but some, some with, a few with Japanese. Not too many. But it was not, many times it was the need to, for bread. You know, it wasn't fun or anything. They needed to support their families.

Herbert Greening: One patient I had, she admitted to me that she was a prostitute for Japanese only, and she hated it, but it was a good income.

Ilse Greening: It was more surprising because most of the women were from middle-class Jewish families where you didn't expect it, but the, when we, we traveled on a German ship to Shanghai, and the offi-, one of the officers, the German officers, was friendly towards us and we talked to him a lot. And he said, we started in Hamburg with a German liner, and he said, "Wait until we get past the Suez Canal. The people change. Oh, my job is much harder, because for reasons I cannot explain to you, people get out of hand."

Herbert Greening: The brakes came off. The social . . .

Ilse Greening: Once they leave Europe, he said not only passengers . . .

Herbert Greening: Social prohibitions.

Ilse Greening: . . . but also the officers . . .

Herbert Greening: The crew.

Ilse Greening: . . . and the crew, they all go wild. It must be the climate or something. And that's what happened in Shanghai, too. People sort of, their lives went out of bound. Many.

Steve Hochstadt: Could you say a little more about that? I'm not interested in names, but just this idea.

Ilse Greening: Yes. That's what prepared us, on the boat, and it was a small boat, we were only 35 passengers, so nothing was hidden, but the married women used to go to the cabins of the doctor or the officers, and it went, they went wild. And he said, he has no explanation, it happens on every trip. And in Shanghai, of course, a lot of people, women needed to make money to eat, but probably a lot of them enjoyed it, too. There's no explanation for that. And of course all those middle-class people, European people, they were horrified, but it happened. Must be the climate.

Steve Hochstadt: Somebody told me they thought that there were more divorces in Shanghai among refugees than there would have been in Europe.

Ilse Greening: Well, in Europe, that's just like comparing the situation here now. It changed. In Europe many, many people stayed married because of convention, but if they had their choices, they would have divorced.

Herbert Greening: So the husband went to Berlin, they went to Breslau, apparently to, for buying stuff.

Ilse Greening: Our fathers, they went for buying, all had small business, a lot of Jews had small businesses, and they went to Berlin for buying trips, just like the people come to New York to the garment, and they had a little fling. And that enabled them to go back to their homes. That's why there were no divorces. But I don't think that a lot of people were divorced. They were just going their separate ways.

Herbert Greening: They were just strained, strained.

Ilse Greening: And was difficult to get, for people my mother's age, it was very hard to get used to

those situations.

Herbert Greening: If you have any biological needs, as one of the guides told Ilse . . .

Ilse Greening: Yeah.

Herbert Greening: . . . we will come.

Ilse Greening: Do you want coffee?

Herbert Greening: No.

Ilse Greening: It was, for us it was interesting. We were young, I was 19.

Steve Hochstadt: What was the name of the ship that you went on?

Ilse Greening: “Oldenburg”, my mother came from Oldenburg, yeah, it was a small Hapag freighter. And there, I was, I have a, I don’t even know where it is, I made a report, I wrote a report about the trip, but in German. And this officer, who was very friendly to us, came to me once and he says, “You have to be more caref-, just be on your guard, because so-and-so is a Party member and he is a Gestapo man,” on the boat. There were several Germans.

Steve Hochstadt: So one of the non-Jewish officers warned you?

Ilse Greening: Oh, he was fantastic, yeah. Every morning, we had a little window towards the gangplank, and every morning he came and we discussed everything. Yes, he was pro-Jewish. The captain, too. The captain, also.

Steve Hochstadt: Were all the passengers Jewish refugees?

Ilse Greening: No, there were quite a number of Germans. Also, there were several German women who had been evacuated from the Far East, from Singapore and Colombo, but also from Shanghai especially. Was it, 1937 was the war between the Japanese, and they had, the government, the German government had forced them to evacuate with their children, their wives, they were, on this boat, they were coming back. But that didn’t keep them to have flings on the boat also. They even invited some of their lovers to the house, when the husbands came aboard. So, it was a different life from Hannover, believe me.

Steve Hochstadt: So how did your mother manage to make this transition?

Ilse Greening: My mother amazes me. Absolutely amazing. Absolutely amazing. My mother had a traditional upbringing. Her father was well-to-do, she went to finishing school, and she married my father, my father went into the war, she was alone. But never once did I hear her complain about things. We had a very big house in Hannover, very big, and servants, a chauffeur and a governess and a cook and a maid, and suddenly my mother had to, we had to do all this ourselves. And never once, she was fantastic.

Herbert Greening: She was a great lady. The best years of my life.

Ilse Greening: [laughs]

Herbert Greening: She lived with us for 22 years and I was always right. A great lady.

Ilse Greening: But the worst part was, since Herbert never asked for money from the pa-, even when the patient offered, they eventually got a bill, but they still didn't pay it.

Herbert Greening: There was an inflation at that time.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, inflation, also by the time they paid, money was not worth anything. But we needed money badly to eat, so my mother had no choice. She used to collect, which must have been hell for her. She went to the patient and asked for money.

Herbert Greening: To pay their bill.

Ilse Greening: To pay their bill. Must have been terrible, but she never complained.

Herbert Greening: Not even about the bed bugs.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, bed bugs, we had too. My sister, one day my sister said, she can't sleep at night.

Herbert Greening: No, she complained about itch.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, she can't, she said, "I can't sleep at night, because I itch all over." So Herbert gave her [unclear] . . .

Herbert Greening: [unclear]

Ilse Greening: . . . which is good for. So, but one morning she said she couldn't sleep and she was reading in bed, and a little buggie was running across the book. That's when we found out that it wasn't a rash, but we had bedbugs. That was a shock for my mother, oh [laughs] that we had bedbugs.

Steve Hochstadt: Was that right in the beginning, soon after you landed?

Ilse Greening: No.

Herbert Greening: In the first apartment in Chusan Road.

Ilse Greening: No, no, it was Kung Ping Road. And once we went to the movies . . .

Herbert Greening: In Shanghai.

Ilse Greening: . . . in French Concession, and somebody had a bug.

Herbert Greening: Yeah, we saw it.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, that was, that was worse than most things for my mother. But I assured her that we were not the only ones, other people had bedbugs also. And that's where Mr. Moss came in. Whom did you call? Herbert Moss.

Steve Hochstadt: So, tell me a little about Herbert Moss, about, was he known among many people as a person to . . . ?

Ilse Greening: That was already, he was the second generation from Berlin. His father had already been an exterminator. Oh, yes, we needed him more than a doctor. Yes, he was very important. I don't know whether he had any competition, but we only knew him.

Herbert Greening: He was a patient.

Ilse Greening: And then, when the Americans came, he . . .

Herbert Greening: He was big business.

Ilse Greening: . . . even busier. I don't know whether he went on the ship. I think he said he went

on ships and he did a lot of work for the Americans with being an exterminator. And when he came back here to . . .

Herbert Greening: Indianapolis.

Ilse Greening: . . . Indianapolis, he was very successful, so you don't have to be a college professor or a doctor to make, to have an important job.

Herbert Greening: As a matter of fact, I think he made more than both she and I made.

Ilse Greening: Yeah. [laughs] Oh yes, very important. So you met a lot of interesting people. We also met, through my uncle who lived in the French Concession, we met a lot of very interesting people. Very.

Herbert Greening: Chinese, Russians.

Ilse Greening: Very. Yeah, we had Russian friends, Chinese.

Steve Hochstadt: I know what I wanted to ask you. You said that you had thought about working for the Komor Committee. Can you tell me anything about the Komor Committee and how they worked, or who was important there?

Ilse Greening: Well, one important branch of this committee was the kindergarten. I don't think you mentioned that.

Herbert Greening: No, I didn't mention that.

Ilse Greening: Herbert was in charge, on Kung Ping, near our house on Kung Ping Road they had a kindergarten, which was very important because, you know . . .

Herbert Greening: Every morning I had to look at the kids, look at their throats, feel them whether they have a temperature, and I became known as a pediatrician, which I never was.

Ilse Greening: That was part of Komor. This Mr. Komor established the Committee, it was in the Cathay Mansion, no, Cathay Hotel, downstairs. That's where I applied. What they really did, I don't really, I can't tell. I was supposed to be a secretary there. I don't know what . . .

Herbert Greening: One who knows all the answers are is Eva Kantorowsky, she knows all the

answers.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, she knows a lot.

Steve Hochstadt: Could you tell me more about the kindergarten? How often you went there?

Herbert Greening: I went there every morning. There must have been thirty, forty kids. They passed by, I look in their throat, touched them to see whether they have a temperature . . .

Ilse Greening: They got food there, too.

Herbert Greening: And they got food there.

Steve Hochstadt: This was during the war, in the ghetto period?

Herbert Greening: It was during the war.

Ilse Greening: It was very important.

Herbert Greening: And I enjoyed it.

Ilse Greening: I don't really know, I don't, but they must have taken care of people.

Herbert Greening: I don't know where they got their money.

Steve Hochstadt: Were you paid to do that?

Herbert Greening: No, oh, no. Definitely not.

Ilse Greening: That was another source of patients, you know, the mothers came in the morning and they met him and they would eventually . . .

Herbert Greening: Become patients.

Ilse Greening: . . . become patients. You had to do all those things.

Herbert Greening: It was the ethic compared to what they do here.

Ilse Greening: [laughs]

Steve Hochstadt: Who did you deal with, was there some other doctor on the committee that you dealt with to get that job, or to report to?

Herbert Greening: No. It's actually a patient got it, Dina got it for me. A friend of ours and patient, close friend. She got the job for me. I don't know how she got it.

Steve Hochstadt: What's her name?

Ilse Greening: No, no.

Herbert Greening: You can't contact, she's in an old age home and very deteriorated.

Steve Hochstadt: No, I wouldn't want to contact her.

Ilse Greening: No, no, no.

Herbert Greening: And it is not important.

Ilse Greening: I'm trying to think.

Herbert Greening: What?

Ilse Greening: About the, I don't know, what else, but they were, I think Komor was before the other committees.

Herbert Greening: Yes.

Ilse Greening: It must have been in the beginning already, in the Embankment Building, that he did work. Also, another thing we did not mention, we were very friendly with the head of the Jewish Volunteer Corps. The captain, he was a captain, his name was Noah Jacobs, an Englishman, who had converted . . .

Herbert Greening: You know about the Volunteer Corps?

Steve Hochstadt: Yes.

Ilse Greening: My uncle, my uncle who sponsored us, he was in the French Concession in the

Volunteer Corps. They had, they went to weekly . . .

Herbert Greening: Trainings.

Ilse Greening: . . . trainings and meetings, etc. I don't think they would ever be able, have been able, not my uncle at least, would have been able to defend us, I doubt that. But . . .

Herbert Greening: I think this volunteer business came up after the Boxer thing.⁵

Ilse Greening: Well, this Noah Jacobs was the head of the Americ-, of the Jewish Volunteer Corps.

Herbert Greening: President of [unclear] .

Ilse Greening: He was a very influential man. He worked for BAT, British American Tobacco, which are very influential, they are in Richmond, Virginia now, and they are in the financial pages. Recently they have been quite a bit, I don't remember in what connection.

Herbert Greening: They were the leading manu-, cigarette manufacturer in Shanghai . . .

Ilse Greening: Yeah.

Herbert Greening: . . . and the Chinese smoked a lot of cigarettes, still do.

Ilse Greening: And Ruby Queen . . .

Herbert Greening: Ruby Queen.

Ilse Greening: Yes, he was a big shot in the BAT. He was a converted Jew, he was in love with a woman and . . .

Herbert Greening: A Russian girl.

Ilse Greening: . . . asked for, with a Russian woman, and asked for her hand in marriage and her mother said, "No," her son, her daughter would not marry a non-Jew, so he converted. Very nice story. He was, we were very friendly with them. He was interned in, across the river . . .

⁵ Herbert Greening is referring here to the Boxer Rebellion, a Chinese nationalist uprising against foreign influence in 1899 - 1901.

Herbert Greening: Pudong.

Ilse Greening: In Pudong. You know, Pudong was a . . .

Herbert Greening: A fisher village.

Ilse Greening: There was nothing there, just fields and farm-, a farming area . . .

Herbert Greening: And water.

Ilse Greening: . . . which now is, they're going to have tremendous buildings and factories, etcetera. Well, Noah Jacobs was interned in Pudong. And it was already after the war, for the Jewish holidays, remember, I cooked food, we took a sampan across to bring him holiday food. [unclear]

Herbert Greening: But remember, you brought also something for the bank people, didn't you?

Ilse Greening: Oh yes, my people from the bank.

Steve Hochstadt: While they were interned there, during the war?

Ilse Greening: No, he was, this was already after the war, when we went to Noah Jacobs.

Steve Hochstadt: After the war was over.

Ilse Greening: Yes, all the camps just like Ash Camp where Herbert worked, they were open, but people had to find a new life and . . .

Herbert Greening: Had to find shipping.

Ilse Greening: . . . so while they were waiting for shipping or evacuating or whatever, the camps were open, like Ash Camp where Herbert worked. And that was already after the war, it was Jewish New Year. But my people from the bank, the . . .

Herbert Greening: Manager.

Ilse Greening: . . . the manager and all the other employees, we collected, it was hard enough to get things, but we collected cigarettes and stuff and we sent them for, for Christmas, etcetera, little things.

We didn't have much. Also, there was another camp within the city, I don't, was it on Bubbling Well, was Ash Camp on Bubbling?

Herbert Greening: No, it was on Yellowstone. Was it Yellowstone?

Ilse Greening: Well, they said, they told us that in the camp, in those camps, in those internment camps for the Allies, Chinese used to throw packages across the wall, over the wall for them, many was done.

Herbert Greening: It was the street where the [unclear] .

Ilse Greening: Oh, I have another thing I have to tell you. While I was working for the Japanese in my old English bank, there were quite a number of, most of the Chinese employees were old timers like me, and especially I was friendly with two older men. And we were not allowed to listen to short-wave radio, that was penalty, penalty, I don't know death, but anyway it was forbidden. But every morning these two got me into the, into a corner and they told me everything that was happening outside.

Herbert Greening: We only had the Japanese radio station, German radio station, and a Russian radio station, and only the Russian radio station told us the truth, they gave us the battles, who lost, who won, and that was the reason that I started to learn Russian. I wanted to listen to the Russian radio station.

Ilse Greening: But you were, it didn't get that far. But they had shortwave information, these two. I never asked how and why, and they gave me information.

Steve Hochstadt: What kinds of things did you find out, then, from them?

Ilse Greening: Well, about battles, you know, during the war.

Herbert Greening: What was going.

Ilse Greening: What was won and what was lost.

Herbert Greening: But one thing they didn't know, that was birth control.

Ilse Greening: [laughs] That has nothing to do with the . . .

Steve Hochstadt: Did you then, were you then able to tell those stories to other people that you

knew?

Ilse Greening: No, only my family. No, I would not, no. We were plenty scared. The Japanese were not easy to get along with.

Herbert Greening: They were not gentlemen.

Ilse Greening: No, no, no, I did not. But before Hiroshima, we were walking along the street and a man we knew . . .

Herbert Greening: East Seward Road.

Ilse Greening: . . . he called us into, he was standing in front of his apartment or shop, and he called us in and he said, "The war is going to be over very soon," and he told us about the bomb. We didn't know that, he told us about Hiroshima.

Herbert Greening: Mr. David?

Ilse Greening: Yeah.

Steve Hochstadt: How did he find out? . . .

Ilse Greening: He must have . . .

Herbert Greening: He must have had a radio in Didner's house. St. George apartments.

Ilse Greening: Some people, we were not that brave.

Steve Hochstadt: Could you tell me about the Russian radio station, about, and about learning Russian?

Herbert Greening: There was one, I don't know if I know his name, there were, some other guys and I had Russian lessons. I was very good in memorizing the alphabet, I could write Russian script, and we learned some of the vocabulary, but we didn't have it, I didn't have it for long.

Ilse Greening: No, and then you only knew the, you could from the broadcast, you could only tell if, you know . . .

Herbert Greening: *Prikaz*.

Ilse Greening: . . . *Prikaz*, and then certain towns or . . .

Herbert Greening: Would sound familiar.

Ilse Greening: He put two and two together, and with, he couldn't understand it, just the gist of it.

Herbert Greening: A little bit.

Ilse Greening: So then, and I hated this man, the announcer, it was a horrible sound, this *Prikaz* Russian.

Herbert Greening: You don't like the Russian language, period.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, so I said, "Why do you always have to put on this station?" And he says, "I want to know, I have to know when the war is going to be over." That's why he was listening to the Russian, which you couldn't understand anyway. So I said, "When the war is over, people are going to shout it in the streets, we won't have to listen to any radio," and that's what happened.

Steve Hochstadt: This was your own radio?

Ilse Greening: Oh yes, we had a radio.

Steve Hochstadt: So you could have a radio, just not a short-wave radio.

Ilse Greening: That's right.

Herbert Greening: A beautiful radio, in a Chinese box.

Ilse Greening: Carved box then.

Steve Hochstadt: Who else was taking the Russian with you? Why would other men be taking Russian?

Herbert Greening: Who was Hans, another fraternity brother.

Ilse Greening: I don't remember any more.

Herbert Greening: There were ever more than I, than Hans and I.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, I know there were more people.

Herbert Greening: But I don't know.

Ilse Greening: Well, you had to do something to pass the time. We played *mahjong*, and we, yeah, we played *mahjong*, did we play . . . ?

Herbert Greening: Quite a lot.

Ilse Greening: What else did we play?

Herbert Greening: We didn't play cards.

Ilse Greening: Especially there was, for many years there was a curfew at night, but then how did the other people get home who came to our house? I don't know.

Herbert Greening: They must have gone home before curfew.

Ilse Greening: We had to do something for entertainment, you know. We were so confined.

Herbert Greening: *Mensch, ärgere Dich nicht.*

Ilse Greening: *Mensch, ärgere Dich nicht*, yeah, do you know that here? Oh yeah, that we played, too.

Steve Hochstadt: Oh, that's a game? I don't know that game.

Ilse Greening: Oh yes? Well, you were not young in Germany. All German kids learned that.

Herbert Greening: Our kids know it.

Ilse Greening: And, yeah, we played cards and *mahjong*.

Steve Hochstadt: I wanted to ask you about the fraternity, because I don't, I wanted to understand, did the fraternity only exist at one school?

Herbert Greening: No.

Steve Hochstadt: Or is it an, it's a national group?

Herbert Greening: It's a national group.

Ilse Greening: Strictly German. I mean, they were Jewish, but, and they stick together. Only this week we found out someone is living here. Very close-knit . . .

Herbert Greening: Just last month.

Ilse Greening: At all, was it at all big universities?

Herbert Greening: Yes, it was founded in 1896.

Steve Hochstadt: *Kartell-Convent der Verbindungen deutscher Studenten jüdischer Glaubens*. So this is from, formed in 1896. And it includes Jewish students at all universities?

Herbert Greening: Yeah, only Jewish students. You can have that if you want.

Steve Hochstadt: Oh, thank you. Did that mean that every Jewish student at a German university belonged to this fraternity?

Herbert Greening: No, could belong to it.

Steve Hochstadt: Could belong.

Herbert Greening: Because we had this [unclear] , there was a [unclear] this fraternity, and [unclear] it accepted both Jews and Christians, non-Jews, but the Jews were in the majority. I don't want any more.

Steve Hochstadt: So even if a student went to another university, they might be in this fraternity.

Herbert Greening: I was, I went to Berlin, to Bonn, and to Breslau. In Breslau it was already Nazi time, and it didn't exist any more as a fraternity. But we'd visit as friends, we still met and sat together.

Steve Hochstadt: Well why did you, could you tell me more about the meeting with fraternity brothers in the Weisse Rössl?

Herbert Greening: We had a real fraternity after the German model. We met every Saturday night at the house of the fraternity and had a “drinkfest”, we drunk plenty, beer mostly. We had a house where we had lunch every day, we paid for that extra, and we had to pay a fee for being a member and that was adjusted according to the money we got from our parents. In the fraternity we had one guy who was telling us about discipline, another guy who was telling us about religion, another guy about physical activities. We had to learn boxing, we had to learn fencing, we fenced three times a week, saber and, not épée, yeah, épée, not épée, I don’t know what it is called in German.

Steve Hochstadt: Foil, is it . . . ?

Herbert Greening: Foil, I don’t know, and that was important. Being in good physical shape, being well dressed. In Berlin we had to use a cane for self defense. And you, there was a lowest stage where you had that so-called *Fuchs*, and after a year I think you had to pass a certain test and you became a *Bursch*. And there were three guys in charge of the, each local fraternity, and *Erstchargierter*, *Zweitchargierter*. I was *Erstchargierter* once and I was dismissed because we had gotten an invitation to take a parade, to take part in a parade in Bonn, but we were supposed to march as the very last fraternity, and I had thrown out the letter, because I didn’t want us to be the last, that was against our honor. But they threw me out nevertheless. And they were a close-knit club, actually. A little bit conceited, very aware of their Germanism, being very German, but good Jews, religious Jews mostly, not, not, I would say liberal, on the liberal side. Still, many of them went to Israel, many of them became good Zionists. I am one of them who did not become a Zionist. I still feel very German still, I can’t help it. German education, German culture, German literature, German art, it sits there, we can’t help it. [laughs]

Steve Hochstadt: And then you met as a group also in Shanghai?

Herbert Greening: We met as a group in Shanghai, we met as a group in New York, you always be meeting. Now, we’re of course talking about the good old times.

Steve Hochstadt: And you met at the Weisse Rössl, is that the name of the . . . ?

Herbert Greening: We met in Shanghai in the Weisse Rössl.

Steve Hochstadt: Once a week, you . . . ?

Herbert Greening: Every Sunday morning.

Steve Hochstadt: How big was the group who met?

Herbert Greening: In Shanghai there was Gerstl, the dentist, the other dentist, the third dentist, and . . .

Ilse Greening: David.

Herbert Greening: David, then we had six to ten.

Steve Hochstadt: What was David's name? Is that Heinz David?

Ilse Greening: No.

Herbert Greening: No.

Ilse Greening: He's not an . . .

Herbert Greening: He was a pharmacist.

Ilse Greening: His daughter lives in California, she was born in Shanghai. What was his, Siegfried.

Herbert Greening: Siegfried, yeah, but nobody called him Siegfried. [Unclear] he was a very well known dentist in Berlin, Ilse went to see him. He was a card.

Ilse Greening: He was a dentist to film stars and actors, and he always talked, when I went for treatment he always talked about them. Very important people. And then he told me once, he was a, you know, some people were German but he was . . .

Herbert Greening: A real *parvenu*.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, no. So he, once he said he was a member of the Royal Hunting Club, and I, you know, I never even heard of it, I didn't know, so he took me into his bedroom and he showed me the clothes, the hunting, red hunting jacket, and there was still blood on it from Berlin, God knows how many, you know, some people are silly.

Herbert Greening: He was very German.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, he was very German. You met a lot of different people in Shanghai, you know, and because we were so closely together, you also got to know them better than casual. It was

more than casual, the acquaintances. And we made some very good friends. Most, you were, whoever tells you, it, everybody . . .

Herbert Greening: Shanghai friends stuck.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, and, yeah, they stick with you somehow.

Herbert Greening: We look back to Shanghai, we liked it.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, we thought for us it was a great experience.

Herbert Greening: We would have never experienced all that we did experience in China. We went back in '88 to show the kids.

Ilse Greening: Our children liked it a lot, too. You must have liked, it was interesting. But I think it is important to go with someone who has been. Did you go with anybody?

Steve Hochstadt: Yes, the first time, actually both times I was with other people who had been in Shanghai . . .

Ilse Greening: Yeah.

Steve Hochstadt: . . . and they were able to show me things.

Herbert Greening: When did you go? When were you there?

Steve Hochstadt: I was there in 1989 for about a week, and I was there in 1993.

Herbert Greening: When in '99, in '89, we [unclear] .

Ilse Greening: We were in '88.

Steve Hochstadt: In '89 I was there in, I was there in April and May, I saw the beginnings of the demonstrations, I saw the very beginnings of the demonstrations. And then in '93 I was there just for a few days in Shanghai.

Ilse Greening: It is important to, because to go, that's why we decided to go with the children be-, and also last summer we went to Germany, well, to show our children where we come from, because

once we are gone, everything is, you, they have to know. And especially in Shanghai where everything, a lot changed. Not the ghetto, though.

Steve Hochstadt: No, not yet.

Ilse Greening: Our nephew, my, I have one sister, wants to go in April, but I don't think it's a good idea.

Herbert Greening: Especially for him. He does San Francisco in half a day.

Ilse Greening: You know, he's one of the . . .

Herbert Greening: Typical American traveler.

Ilse Greening: But he says, he told me he knows the addresses where his parents lived and I sent him a picture, he was born in the Ward Road Hospital. When we came back, we sent him a picture of that, we sent him several pictures. Well, he can also take a guide, I'm sure there are guides who . . .

Herbert Greening: Sports was big among the refugees in Shanghai.

Steve Hochstadt: Did you do any sports there?

Herbert Greening: I didn't.

Ilse Greening: Never, he never did.

Herbert Greening: There was a soccer club which was very good.

Ilse Greening: They still stick together, the soccer people.

Herbert Greening: We met with the trainer.

Ilse Greening: Meyer, Leo Meyer who was the head of this, and he went back, and some of the, there were Chinese soccer players. He had a Chinese group also, and they had a fantastic reunion there. Yeah, he's very good to interview, Leo Meyer.⁶

⁶ Leo Meyer was a well-known soccer player in Shanghai, and a teacher at the Kadoorie School.

Steve Hochstadt: He lives here in Florida, doesn't he, someplace?

Ilse Greening: No, he comes, but he lives in Riverdale.

Steve Hochstadt: I see.

Herbert Greening: Leo Meyer.

Ilse Greening: Leo Meyer, oh yes, he, and he also had a lot of Chinese friends, because of the sports.

Herbert Greening: And he knows a lot of people. We actually didn't know that many, except for the patients.

Ilse Greening: We knew people.

Steve Hochstadt: Herbert, I wanted to ask you about other members of your family who, when you were deciding to go to Shanghai, did you have conversations with other members of your family about that?

Herbert Greening: Yes, in December 1938, on Christmas time I took Ilse to Hindenburg to meet my parents. They had to leave their own apartment, they lived in the apartment of . . .

Ilse Greening: Their daughter's in-laws.

Herbert Greening: Of, of my sister's in-laws.

Ilse Greening: Because their apartment was destroyed and the store also.

Herbert Greening: Yeah, and, Ilse met them and . . .

Ilse Greening: No, but what about when you first told your father you wanted to emigrate, when was that?

Herbert Greening: I wanted to emigrate in 1934. I told them I don't think that we will have the money, that we go to medical school, and it won't be possible.

Ilse Greening: Talk a little louder.

Herbert Greening: So he said, don't worry about the money. I don't know where he took it from.

Ilse Greening: The small business, it, financially . . .

Herbert Greening: So I said, I have an offer from a fraternity brother to become a partner in the university bookstore in Ankara. He said, "Forget it, Hitler will be out in two . . ."

END SIDE A, TAPE 2

BEGIN SIDE B, TAPE 2

Herbert Greening: . . . Ilse, my father thought that [unclear] a rich bride . . .

Ilse Greening: I was an heiress, he thought I was an, I was an heiress.

Herbert Greening: But she wasn't. But they liked Ilse, or they said they liked Ilse, and that was that.

Steve Hochstadt: Did your parents consider going to Shanghai?

Herbert Greening: We sent them a landing permit for Shanghai.

Ilse Greening: In those days, you know, the days of going just like that, when we went there, they were over. You needed a landing permit. Many people bought landing p-, I don't know from whom, from other refugees, I guess, but I, we went . . .

Herbert Greening: The kosher way.

Ilse Greening: . . . the regular way, and I had to go, I took time off from my job at the bank and I went to the government. I had to stand in line and fill out things, it took quite a long time, the legal way, it took quite a long time. But we sent them, but they . . .

Herbert Greening: It was apparently too late.

Ilse Greening: Also, I don't think my father-in-law would have considered, even if they got it. He was too . . .

Herbert Greening: We got letters from them and afterwards we found out that in '48 they were taken to . . .

Ilse Greening: Forty . . .

Herbert Greening: '38.

Ilse Greening: No, '42 I think.

Herbert Greening: '42, yeah, in the autumn of '42 they were taken to the *KZ*. Because [unclear] with them before. And Mother let us know between the lines what was happening. I have a sister, she was a real RN at that time, and she went to a hospital on . . .

Ilse Greening: The Isle of Man.

Herbert Greening: . . . Isle of . . .

Ilse Greening: Isle of Wight?

Herbert Greening: Isle of Wight. She had a boyfriend in Hindenburg for the past ten years, whom she married before going to South America. She lives now in Atlanta. My mother's family was a very large one, my grandmother had sixteen children, eleven of them lived to grow up. Left over are just a couple of cousins, two or three.

Ilse Greening: And my, my grandfather, my father's father, my father had a family tree made, and my, his family lived in this area in . . .

Herbert Greening:

Ilse Greening: . . . Germany since 1600. And I remember my grandfather had the papers to prove those things, which unfortunately do not survive.

Herbert Greening: And Ilse's grandfather's house is still there, the same way that Ilse remembered it.

Ilse Greening: We went, both my, both my grandfathers, but my grandfather was, that's his family, lived in that area, which is [unclear] since 1600. Whereas my mother's father emigrated from Poland to evade the draft and came to northern Germany and became very successful. So that's what we did, we showed the children everything.

Herbert Greening: And now they want to go back where I come from, they want to go back to Silesia to the town where I was born, which was called then Königshütte, which is now called Chorzów, and they want to go to Breslau, which is now called Wrocław, where I went to med school, and they want to go to Berlin to see the Pergamon and Nofretete . . .

Ilse Greening: Your university.

Herbert Greening: Yeah, Breslau . . .

Ilse Greening: In Berlin.

Herbert Greening: I graduated under the special law, Geneva Convention, in Breslau. I was the last Jewish student to graduate.

Ilse Greening: They were, they were exempted from the laws for, I don't, I never really understood the reason.

Herbert Greening: That goes back to the First World War.

Ilse Greening: Those people from Upper Silesia did not go under the Hitler laws as far as Jews are concerned, they were separate, because of the Geneva Convention.

Herbert Greening: There was no, there was no *Stürmer*, for instance, in Upper Silesia.⁷ It couldn't be distributed.

Ilse Greening: They were protected. But, is the machine still on?

Steve Hochstadt: Do you want me to turn it off for a moment?

Ilse Greening: Yeah.

BREAK IN RECORDING

⁷ The *Stürmer* was a violently antisemitic newspaper published by Julius Streicher.

Ilse Greening: We were, patients of Herbert invited us for coffee and she must have seen, I looked that she had very strange and, dishes, and they were the type of people I knew had better dishes. So she must have seen the look in my eye and she said, “Oh, you know, don’t think this is all we have. We have everything, all the good dishes and the silver, etcetera, but we didn’t bother to unpack it.” And another patient of Herbert’s, they had two sons that were growing and growing . . .

Herbert Greening: Were the same, Ilse.

Ilse Greening: No, the other one was Lefkowitz or something, those were Wolff. So, and they were not dressed well, and these people I knew had lots of money, and I asked her once, you know, why they dress so shabbily. She didn’t unpack the clothes. They had tailor-made suits, the boys, but she wouldn’t let them wear them. I mean, she was stupid because the boys were growing. People thought they were only in Shanghai for a little while and most, many of them also didn’t have the room to unpack, but many people, they sit on their [unclear]

Herbert Greening: Especially people in camps, people who didn’t have anything.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, well in camps it was out of the question. In camp everybody only had a small cubbyhole, they couldn’t. But those were people who had their own rooms, but they never unpacked.

Herbert Greening: Their own house.

Ilse Greening: House, yeah.

Herbert Greening: They, actually the ones we are talking about, their name was Wolff, he had a bakery, and . . .

Ilse Greening: He, they, he was doing, they were doing very well.

Herbert Greening: He delivered to the jail also, and he got the extra . . .

Ilse Greening: Stamps.

Herbert Greening: . . . stamps for the rations.

Ilse Greening: Oh yes, one thing, the rationing was terrible. We, during the war, everybody, not only those people in the camps or in Hongkou, everybody, flour and sugar especially were rationed.

Herbert Greening: You can buy the brown flour.

Ilse Greening: Yes, but it was terrible, the flour was inhabited by all kinds of weevils and the sugar was very wet and, . . .

Herbert Greening: [unclear]

Ilse Greening: Yeah, but that doesn't mean you couldn't buy it, you could buy everything if you had money.

Herbert Greening: Black market.

Ilse Greening: But my mother managed from this rubbish stuff, she still baked cakes, and [laughs] . . . We took everything with a lot of humor, but we've been talking about it, it must be because we were young, and it was more an adventure than anything else.

Oh, now they're coming [unclear] . . .

Steve Hochstadt: You said that after the war, when the Communists came closer, that you were quite worried about them.

Ilse Greening: First of all it was the money situation, the conversions from one currency to the other was unbelievable, you know, you never knew how much money you had, because then they'd change to another kind of currency and . . .

Herbert Greening: And we were afraid of the Communists, we didn't know what they would bring.

Ilse Greening: We had enough, and they were anti-foreign, there's no doubt.

Herbert Greening: And anti-Jews, too.

Ilse Greening: I don't think, I don't, I think it was all, all foreigners were included. They made it quite clear they could do without the foreigners.

Steve Hochstadt: When you say they, you don't mean the Communists, now, you mean . . .

Ilse Greening: The Communists.

Steve Hochstadt: I see. What about the Chinese in Shanghai?

Ise Greening: They were indoctrinated, they were on, they became anti-foreign, too. I don't know whether it was through their, probably newspapers.

Steve Hochstadt: So you could feel that, that people around you were not as friendly?

Herbert Greening: Yeah, we felt that we had to get out of here, out of there.

Ise Greening: And then, you probably know that the people, the poorer people did not buy a newspaper, they used to go to, there were places where the daily newspapers were displayed on [unclear] . . .

Herbert Greening: I'm sure you've seen that.

Ise Greening: . . . and you could see that a lot of people just never read a paper, they just went to these places to read the paper. Oh yes, it must have been systematic anti-foreign propaganda, because we could feel it. That has changed.

Herbert Greening: And when we were there, they were very friendly. Of course, we were customers, right, so they have to be friendly, but they talk about the bad times, about the Cultural Revolution, they were telling us how bad it was for them, too. But now everything was good.

Ise Greening: Yeah, in 1988 they were sort of blooming. They were . . .

Herbert Greening: A lot of foreign importers there . . .

Ise Greening: Yeah, and also the guides that we had, they always emphasized that, how bad the times had been, and how good the times are now. But that was only temporary, unfortunately.

Herbert Greening: Medical, medicine I learned in China, no question about it. By reading, we didn't get any foreign journals, we had a local journal and I always tried to keep up.

Steve Hochstadt: A local journal in German or in English or . . . ?

Herbert Greening: I don't remember.

Ise Greening: They had a lot of medical books, any kind of books, but they were all . . .

Herbert Greening: Copied, photocopies.

Ilse Greening: . . . photocopies.

Herbert Greening: Plagiarized.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, whatever you wanted, you could buy cheaply. It didn't look very good, but . . .

Herbert Greening: And print was poor. But all the German basic lectures, text books you could . . .

Ilse Greening: Because they needed them at the universities, too. The Chinese want to learn, and are able to learn, in the worst way, very . . .

Herbert Greening: Very gifted, they are very gifted for languages, the Chinese.

Ilse Greening: And willing to study hard, very. Chinese are like Jews in many respects, in many . . .

Herbert Greening: Family structures.

Ilse Greening: . . . family lines and education and all that. We felt quite close to them.

Herbert Greening: Once you are their friend, you're their friend for life. It's quite difficult to get close to them, but once you have them, they are good, very trustworthy.

Steve Hochstadt: And you were able to make these contacts with Chinese through patients?

Herbert Greening: Oh, yes. Through patients not so much. I don't know, for instance, Gene.

Ilse Greening: Gene we knew, this friend of Herbert's who worked in the British Army in the interior, there were two of them, they were officers in the British Army. After the war they came and they lived at the British Consulate.

Herbert Greening: One was a Viennese, his father was an x-ray specialist in Vienna.

Ilse Greening: And he had a Chinese wife.

Herbert Greening: He met her during the war.

Ilse Greening: She was a doctor also, and through her we met people, educated people.

Herbert Greening: And she had connections with the Communists.

Ilse Greening: She, she was pro-Communist, she was a . . .

Herbert Greening: Gynecologist.

Ilse Greening: . . . gynecologist, and she told us from the very beginning that she thought that the future of China is with Communism, they needed it badly because the poor people were really unbelievably poor, and under pressure. And she was convinced, she studied in Vienna, too, and she spoke German fluently, and she was a highly educated person, but she was convinced that Communists had to come to China, it had to, to free the poor people.

Herbert Greening: She was pro-birth control.

Ilse Greening: Yes, she had birth control . . .

Herbert Greening: Seminaries.

Ilse Greening: Yes, and clinics, which was very rare in those days. Now it isn't, but she . . .

Herbert Greening: Nowadays even stricter laws, one child, period.

Ilse Greening: She really, and through her we met some very interesting people.

Herbert Greening: She was also connected with the Friends.

Ilse Greening: No, that was another group, the Quakers. . . .

Herbert Greening: She was also connected.

Ilse Greening: That was the one in St. Joseph School, that was somebody else. But then we found out they were Communists, had Communist meetings, too, the Quakers. They did a lot to help the Chinese, the poor Chinese, but it was also . . .

Herbert Greening: Like a Peace Corps, they acted like a Peace Corps. You never end talking about it.

Ilse Greening: No, there's no end to, we could talk forever.

Herbert Greening: Would you mind if I gave him my tape?

Ilse Greening: I don't mind. I think it's terrible.

Herbert Greening: If you want it.

Steve Hochstadt: You were also interviewed by the Spielberg people?

Herbert Greening: Yeah.

Steve Hochstadt: Are there any other special incidents or moments that you remember, stories that you have to tell?

Ilse Greening: We, we also knew, what we called, what did we call the people from Baghdad? Arab Jews, didn't we call them Arab?

Herbert Greening: No.

Ilse Greening: You know there was a big, big community of people from Baghdad, who were very big in business. In the beginning they were also big in the opium business.

Herbert Greening: That's how they came to China.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, and we knew quite a number of them, too, we were friends. Also some of them were patients, some of them were friends, but they were different from us, quite a big difference. Interesting.

Herbert Greening: But now I don't know which one is who.

Ilse Greening: Oh no, don't, I don't, I'm going to burn mine.

Herbert Greening: I don't think you should.

Ilse Greening: One thing we did not do much was going to synagogue.

Herbert Greening: In Shanghai?

Ilse Greening: No. Because . . .

Herbert Greening: No, although the rabbi was our patient.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, that's one thing.

Steve Hochstadt: Thank you.

Ilse Greening: Are you sure it's yours?

Herbert Greening: Yes, it says so, inside.

Ilse Greening: You took the thing off.

Herbert Greening: No, [unclear] did.

Ilse Greening: I haven't even looked to see mine. We just went to, I went, maybe, I don't even remember attending religious services, I don't. All I know is one year there was, Shanghai is very low, you know that, it's below sea level and when a, when the storm came, a typhoon or, there was lots of water, and once we had to go by boat to the synagogue, the Eastern movie house on Muirhead Road, was the movie house, that's where they, that I remember, once I went. And we, some Chinese used to carry the parishioners on their backs, they were waiting on the other side of the road, they carried them on their backs, and some people went by little boats into the synagogue. That's the only time, I do not recall any other time.

Steve Hochstadt: Did that have something to do with Shanghai, that you weren't going to . . . ?

Ilse Greening: Yeah. I don't know, no, I don't think so. We, although my grandparents were very religious, and I had the feeling, but I was never one, we were never one to attend services too much. And Herbert even less than I. And our, our son not at all, our daughter, yes, she goes. I can't even remember what it looked like inside. Oh, we went to the movies a lot, yes. [laughs] That was escape. I don't know, probably after you have gone, I'm going to remember a lot.

Herbert Greening: One story I have not told you, how they threw me out of B'nai B'rith. The

patients of mine told me I should become . . .

Ilse Greening: Louder, louder.

Herbert Greening: . . . I should become a member of the B'nai B'rith. Okay.

Ilse Greening: Your father was and my father were members.

Herbert Greening: Yes, our fathers belonged, too. And then there was a collection for Palestine. At that time, I don't know whether it was the Stern gang or the Jabotinsky gang, and I said, "I refuse to give you any donation."

Ilse Greening: For illegal, it was for illegal arms.

Herbert Greening: For pre-Israel. I said, "Number one, it's illegal. Number two, I am drawing a salary from the British government for working for the British Red Cross. It's not ethical for me to give you money against my employer." They threw me out. I've never joined again. Because they didn't respect my honesty, my ethical feelings about it.

Ilse Greening: But I think that, you probably have heard that many times, that Kadoorie and . . .

Herbert Greening: Sassoon.

Ilse Greening: Sassoon were very . . .

Herbert Greening: And Abraham.

Ilse Greening: No, but mainly Kadoorie and Sassoon were very influential, first of all they were very influential in New York, in Shanghai, but also helped the Jews a lot, a lot.

Herbert Greening: They . . .

Ilse Greening: Building the school and all the activities, and always providing money and that, they did a fantastic job.

Herbert Greening: We called them Baghdad Jews.

Ilse Greening: Baghdad Jews. And the Jewish, when the first immigrants came to the, who were

staying at the Embankment Building, the Jewish Volunteer Corps collected all the blankets and the camp beds and all that, they did a lot there.

Herbert Greening: And the Russian Jews also helped. There were five thousand Russian Jews there.

Ilse Greening: And other Russians also, non-Jews, a lot of Russian non-Jews. No, they . . .

Herbert Greening: Ilse's uncle dealt with the Russians.

Ilse Greening: My uncle imported mainly, his business at that time was British piece goods he imported . . .

Herbert Greening: British woolens.

Ilse Greening: . . . for woolen suits and coats, and his customers were Russian, were Chinese on Yates Road, you know, did you, where all the tailors were, etcetera? A lot of Chinese, very rich Chinese bought the piece goods, I know because for a while I worked in my uncle's office.

Herbert Greening: As a secretary.

Ilse Greening: I was [unclear] and some of these wool merchants lived in our building. But also a lot of the Russian furriers bought piece goods from them, but also tailors, very big companies.

Herbert Greening: And we were invited for, by their groups . . .

Ilse Greening: Not unions, what do you call it?

Herbert Greening: Guilds.

Ilse Greening: By their guilds, they invited, when we first came, the Chinese invited us, and always big dinners.

Herbert Greening: And they licked the chopsticks up and gave it to you.

Ilse Greening: That was a special honor. I wasn't too keen on that, but you had be polite. And then, I don't know whether someone, anyone told you about gambling.

Steve Hochstadt: No, very little. Tell me, just tell me.

Ilse Greening: Yes, there was an, well, it was out of the . . .

Herbert Greening: I didn't, you went with Uncle.

Ilse Greening: No, you went once with, outside in, these gambling casinos were run by, I don't know by whom they were run. Anyway, if you called up, they would send a taxi for you. These things, of course, were out of the question, because we had no money, but we knew lots of people went. And you were wined and dined and they were, the casinos were housed in very fancy houses, and, but I have to say the Chinese are gamblers at heart. They gamble for everything, whatever. We had a friend, she woke up one morning, the lane, you know, where all the houses in one, her whole lane had a new owner. Her owner had gambled away the whole, those were Russians, though, they were not Chinese.

Herbert Greening: One Chinese customer I think lost his house.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, they, very . . .

Herbert Greening: You know, a nice looking guy, you liked him.

Ilse Greening: And we went, oh, my uncle also was a gambler. I mean, not in that way, but he liked to go to dog races, which they have here, too. And after work, while I was working for him, we used to go to Didi's café which was on Avenue Joffre, the very, the thoroughfare in the French Concession.

Herbert Greening: Didi?

Ilse Greening: Yeah, Didi.

Herbert Greening: No, it was in the beginning of . . .

Ilse Greening: Didi, no, was on Avenue Joffre.

Herbert Greening: Chocolate shop, I mean, it's a chocolate shop.

Ilse Greening: No, no, no, it was Didi's. And many of his customers and friends used to come there in the late afternoon for . . .

Herbert Greening: [unclear]

Ilse Greening: . . . for cof-, I don't know whether they drank cof-, I don't think they drank alcohol,

coffee and slot machines.

Herbert Greening: Gimlets.

Ilse Greening: Slot machines. That was around the corner from the French Conce-, from the French Club, I guess. Those people, nobody we knew was a member there, but I guess they did the same thing.

Herbert Greening: We went there for a theater performance once.

Ilse Greening: Yeah. And they were, and at night when you walked through the streets anywhere in China, you could hear the people playing *mahjong*. They loved . . .

Herbert Greening: The clicking of the tiles.

Ilse Greening: You could hear the noise. They loved to gamble.

Herbert Greening: Yeah, I went with Uncle to jai alai.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, jai alai, [unclear] and oh, the most important thing, we once went to an opium den.

Steve Hochstadt: Could you tell me about that?

Ilse Greening: Well, it was devastating experience. It was a small room with bunk beds, very primitive, wooden, just wooden slats, one on top of the other. And there they were, smoking.

Herbert Greening: It looked like an old fashioned hospital ward.

Ilse Greening: Worse. Worse.

Herbert Greening: Old fashioned, before our time.

Ilse Greening: And terrible looking people, because after . . .

Herbert Greening: Like emaciated.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, emaciated, after you were an addict, you could tell in the street who was an addict.

Herbert Greening: And you could smell it.

Ilse Greening: Yeah. You walked at night through the street, I said they played *mahjong*, right, but you could also, when you passed a house where they were smoking opium, you could smell it. And the Chinese used to use this sign, that means “Here they are smoking opium.” You could tell. But in this opium den, it was . . .

Herbert Greening: It was third class.

Ilse Greening: Low, you know, coolies, low class people, because the rich smoked at home. We had a neighbor right across the street from us. And then, they looked half dead and the smell permeated the room, and . . .

Herbert Greening: Permeated, semi-darkness, mysterious.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, real scary. I don’t know where they, they looked like the poorest of the poor.

Herbert Greening: We went there with Walter. Walter [unclear] was with us.

Ilse Greening: Yeah? But very, I don’t think that you can find many refugees who went to these.

Steve Hochstadt: No, nobody’s ever told me this.

Ilse Greening: We also went to Das Kah. I can only give you the streets how they were called before, but they all, that was Avenue Edward VII, which was, ended at the Bund, was the French Concession, was a big Chinese business and at one corner, maybe you saw it, a big theater, very big. We have lots of pictures, but they’re all in New York. And we went for a performance there in . . .

Herbert Greening: Real Chinese theater.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, Chinese theater, the people eat and the people drink and they talk and they take part in whatever . . .

Herbert Greening: Action there is.

Ilse Greening: . . . whatever, that’s called Das Kah, means “Big World”, the theater. I don’t know, we went to lots of places, I had forgotten.

Herbert Greening: No, we had a good time. Sometimes an empty stomach.

Ilse Greening: That was very interesting, but also the opium den. And unfortunately helped by the foreigners, the people, a lot of them were addicted.

Herbert Greening: And once we went to a nightclub, where you fell asleep. [laughs]

Ilse Greening: Oh, the foreign, there were no Chinese, only for foreigners. On, all the way at the end when Jessfield Park, Farrel's Nightclub, it was run by a foreigner, and we were invited by somebody, we couldn't afford it ourselves.

Herbert Greening: He was a Viennese architect.

Ilse Greening: He was an architect.

Herbert Greening: Bauer.

Ilse Greening: Yeah. And he invited us, because, I couldn't, I was twenty years old, I don't know why, but I was so tired, I cried, I wanted to go home. And then they had these taxi dancers, big dance halls, where Chinese girls went, I don't know whether it's for dancing only . . .

Herbert Greening: Yes.

Ilse Greening: . . . but you had, Herbert went with . . .

Herbert Greening: I'll tell you the story in a minute.

Ilse Greening: Yeah.

Herbert Greening: I get a call from a bar in Frenchtown. My cousin Helga was a bar girl there. She said, "I have two guys here and they don't want to drink. One of them are sick."

Ilse Greening: American servicemen.

Herbert Greening: American soldiers from a boat in the harbor. I said, "Well, let them come to my office." I had an office on Hong Kong Road, that's off the Bund. The guy comes there, these two guys, and one has a urinary obstruction, secondary to gonorrhoea, he couldn't pee. So there's only one

thing to do, stick a catheter in and empty the bladder, which I did there, and I gave him sulfa as an injection.

Ilse Greening: And they paid well.

Herbert Greening: And they, number one, they were very grateful, they paid well, and I had to go out with them. And they took me to one of those dance halls, and they gave me ten dance tickets, and I should dance. And they ordered for me a coke and rum, that was the drink at that time, coke and rum.

But then I said, "I have to go home," so they took a rickshaw for me and drove me from the race course area to Hong Kong.

Ilse Greening: And also, the etiquette requires that you give the girl more than one ticket. You, at the cashier you buy so many tickets, but it's not nice to give the girl only one ticket, you have to give her two tickets. And a lot of, that was a very busy place, and a fun place. Like we saw in the Chinese movie.

Steve Hochstadt: Was that after the war was over, this story?

Ilse Greening: After the war.

Herbert Greening: Because the American troops were there, but they were, yeah, they were soldiers, and they were not allowed to say that they got gonorrhoea, because they had to go to the pro shop first for condoms before they went ashore, and they didn't go to the pro shop, so they had sex without condoms.

Ilse Greening: But those girls, these girls, the taxi girls went with them also? Or were they only for dancing?

Herbert Greening: They were only for dancing in this place.

Ilse Greening: But there are lots of other places.

Herbert Greening: Opposite the, opposite the race course.

Ilse Greening: Yeah. That's where I saw "Gone With the Wind", in the movie hall.

Herbert Greening: Lots of stories.

Ilse Greening: And right now I don't, it will probably come to me, maybe I can write it down, more adventures.

Steve Hochstadt: Well, these have been very good adventures that you've told me. I appreciate it very much.

Ilse Greening: But those people, these two addresses I gave you, you will get different . . .

Herbert Greening: Especially from Hans.

Ilse Greening: . . . different, very, especially from the one in South America.

Herbert Greening: Eva Kantorowsky.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, but she wouldn't do it, because she helped that other man to write a book.⁸

Herbert Greening: She's a very lovely woman, by the way.

Ilse Greening: But she was kind of sheltered in Shanghai.

Herbert Greening: She had good jobs.

Ilse Greening: Oh yes, that I remembered when I was in the kitchen, the job in the bank I got from a woman my age. She spoke French better than I did, English and French, and she got the job before, oh, she had gone into the bank to apply for a job and she had gone to apply to a Swiss company that imported drugs and all kinds of, a big Swiss company. And of course they were interested in her French and English and German, and she got the job, which was paid more, she got higher pay, although I was paid very well. And she told me about the job in the bank, she said, "Listen, I went to apply at several companies and there's an opening at the bank. I have the job now in the Swiss company. Why don't you go to the bank and apply?" That's how I got the job. And the one at the Komor I got through that Bauer, who was the director there.

Herbert Greening: And we became very good friends with those people. He was a journalist, he had worked before the war for Reuter, right? And when the war came to an end, he wanted to leave Shanghai.

⁸ Eva Kantorowsky was one of the main sources for James R. Ross's book, Escape to Shanghai: A Jewish Community in China (New York: Free Press, 1994).

Ilse Greening: No, he, during the war, he worked for Reuters.

Herbert Greening: Yeah, and during the war he worked . . .

Ilse Greening: He worked for Domei.⁹

Herbert Greening: . . . for Domei.

Ilse Greening: And they wanted, and she worked for the Swiss company, they both worked very, had good jobs even during the war.

Herbert Greening: By that time we were already in Australia.

Ilse Greening: And she, he, they applied for emigration to the United States, and he was refused because he worked for Domei during the war, but, they didn't know because the Japanese, just like me in the bank, the Japanese never let you do anything important. You were, they never . . .

Herbert Greening: You were a gopher.

Ilse Greening: . . . and especially in a news agency, I think what he did, he received the German newscast and he translated it into English, or vice versa, I don't know, but that's all he did. He never did, in anything . . .

Herbert Greening: And after the war he worked for the American [unclear] .

Ilse Greening: Yes, he worked, right after the war he worked for the American . . .

Herbert Greening: Press.

Ilse Greening: . . . press. He had a very important job. And then he applied for emigration and they said, "No," because he worked, so Herbert said to him, "Why don't you fight it? Everybody knows you only had an inferior job at Domei, and now they let you, the Americans let you work in this important office where, and you can pull some . . ."

Herbert Greening: Because he knew consulates . . .

⁹ Domei was the official Japanese news agency.

Ilse Greening: He knew a lot of people through his work with the Americans. One word from them, “No,” he says, he wouldn’t beg for it.

Herbert Greening: Willie Rosenberg [unclear] .

Ilse Greening: He wouldn’t beg, so they moved to, they live in . . .

Herbert Greening: Yeah, but . . .

Ilse Greening: No, that goes too far. And they live in Rome and he worked again for Reuters in Rome and she worked for FOA, a food organization in Rome.

Herbert Greening: United Nations.

Ilse Greening: Yeah, for the United Nations. So there are a lot of people all over the world . . .

Herbert Greening: We know.

Ilse Greening: . . . we know.

Herbert Greening: And some of them we, we correspond . . .

Ilse Greening: Yeah.

Herbert Greening: . . . Ilse corresponds, she the writer.

Ilse Greening: There, when you think of it, you met a lot of interesting people.

Steve Hochstadt: So do you think that your outlook on life or on the world was changed by being in Shanghai instead of having been . . . ?

Herbert Greening: Oh, yes.

Ilse Greening: Definitely. And I’m grateful for that. You know, we would have settled in Hannover . . .

Herbert Greening: Or another small town in Germany.

Ilse Greening: Another small town and, well, my parents . . .

Herbert Greening: I would have been the *Pillenbeutelwiesendoktor*, country doctor.

Ilse Greening: You know, my, of course even in those days, I have to say that my parents traveled. They went to Italy and Switzerland and Holland, I mean, they did travel, but still our life would have been limited to a certain area. And I'm happy we went to Australia, we went to Hong Kong and Singapore, and we know all those places.

Herbert Greening: We are still traveling.

Ilse Greening: And we're still traveling.

Herbert Greening: Last year we went to [unclear] .

Ilse Greening: Of course, with the changing times now we would have traveled also, but our outlook and meeting so many interesting people, oh yes, we grew a lot, a lot. Where did you learn German?

Steve Hochstadt: In Germany. I went to a, you know about the Goethe Institutes that, so I spent two summers in Germany learning German, and then I've lived in Germany for three years at different times.

Herbert Greening: Where?

Steve Hochstadt: In Berlin a year, Dusseldorf, and Mainz.

Ilse Greening: We were in Mainz, in the church.

Herbert Greening: Stefanskirche. Was it Stefanskirche?

Ilse Greening: Stefanskirche, yeah. Were you ever? With the Chagall windows? What a place.

Steve Hochstadt: Well, thank you very much, both of you.

Ilse Greening: A pleasure.

Herbert Greening: It was a pleasure.

Steve Hochstadt: Many good stories.

Ise Greening: Much better than this.

[laughter]

END OF INTERVIEW

Ilse Greening, née Braunsberg, was born in Hannover July 11, 1919. She began working for a lawyer at age 16. Herbert Grünberger was born in Königshütte on December 13, 1912, and moved with his family to Hindenburg in 1922. He studied medicine in Bonn, Berlin and Breslau, and graduated in 1936. He became an intern in a hospital in Hannover. Ilse and Herbert were married in December 1938, and took the freighter "Oldenburg" to Shanghai in April 1939, with Ilse's mother Erna and sister Eva.

In Shanghai, Ilse's uncle, Bruno Italiener, helped them rent an apartment in the French Concession, but they soon moved to Hongkou, where Herbert set up a medical practice in Kung Ping Road. Ilse worked in the Chartered Bank of India and China. After Pearl Harbor, the Bank was taken over by the Japanese authorities. Both Ilse and Herbert attended the Chinese wounded by the American bombing of Hongkou in July 1945. Their son was born in December 1945.

They left Shanghai for Australia in January 1949, changing their name to Greening, and arrived in the US in August 1950. Herbert joined a medical practice in New York, and their daughter was born. After retirement, they moved to Florida. Herbert Greening died on April 30, 2004.

This transcript is part of the Shanghai Jewish Community Oral History Project, an effort to collect and transcribe interviews with Jews who lived in Shanghai, directed by Steve Hochstadt at Illinois College in Jacksonville, Illinois. The interviews are housed at the Ladd Library at Bates College in Lewiston, ME. The transcript was prepared with support from the Littauer Fund, the Memorial Fund for Jewish Culture, Bates College and Illinois College.