

**EI-1339**

**FRED CIGE**

**BIRTHDATE: OCTOBER 31, 1929**

**INTERVIEW DATE: AUGUST 13, 2004**

**AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 74**

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**INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE PH. D.**

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- **GERMANY: BERLIN**
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- **FRANCE: REVEL; ADGA; MASGELIER; MARSEILLES,**
- **US: PLEASANTVILLE, NY; BROOKLYN, NY; ST. LOUIS, MO**

LEVINE: Today is August 13, 2004. I'm here in the Ellis Island Oral History Studio with Fred Cige who came to Ellis Island, and actually was detained here in September (either September 25, 26 was his arrival date) in 1941. He was 11 just a month shy of his twelfth birthday and he came through here with his brother, who, and they had come from a children's home. They were refugee children who came from a children's home in France being sent here to the United States. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and Kevin Daly is running the audio equipment. Okay if you would please say again your birth date and where you were born.

CIGE: October 31, 1929. Berlin, Germany.

LEVINE: And how long were you in Berlin before you left Berlin?

CIGE: I was in Berlin, that's something which I just discovered just yesterday because I found the document of my brother's, that my brother had which pinned the date that he came to Belgium in nineteen-forty... now I'm confused. In any event---

LEVINE: It would be the thirties I guess.

CIGE: Yes, yes. I have it. Give me one second and I will tell you. It's nineteen-, December 1938. I may have left Germany in October or November but it was toward the end of 1938.

LEVINE: Okay. And why don't we say your mother's name, your father's name and your brother's name.

CIGE: Okay, my mother, her name was Sarah.

LEVINE: And her maiden name?

CIGE: Schenkler.

LEVINE: Can you spell that?

CIGE: Yes. S-C-H-E-N-K-L-E-R.

LEVINE: Okay, and your father?

CIGE: Joseph.

LEVINE: And he was Cige. And your brother?

CIGE: Yes. My brother was then called Sigmund. Which, I found, we spelled S-I-G-M-U-N-D but in some of the documents it was spelled SIGEMUND. That was his name. And my sister, the first of my three sisters, was born in 1937 in Germany in Berlin and she, at that point was one year old.

LEVINE: I see, so when you left Europe, did you only have one sister?

CIGE: No.

LEVINE: Oh.

CIGE: Yeah when I left Europe I only-

LEVINE: Had one sister.

CIGE: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: So you were in Berlin and do you remember much about those first, what, nine years prior to leaving Berlin?

CIGE: Certainly.

LEVINE: Oh good. Could you say something about where you lived?

CIGE: (Laugh) How much time do you have?

LEVINE: I got as much time as you want to give.

CIGE: Okay we lived in Berlin at an address which I will never forget which is Weissenburger Straße Nummer Neun which is number nine, Weissenburger Street.

LEVINE: How do you spell Weissenburger?

CIGE: I would guess it was taking the German pronunciation; the spelling was probably W-EI-S-S-E-N-B-U-R-G-E-R Street. We lived there, and I had some, obviously some experiences in that environment. I was born towards the end of 1929 and as most people know, Hitler came to power shortly after that, probably 1932 or 1933. And things began to change. My parents had established a very good life in Berlin. My father was a tailor who had come from Poland, which he had to leave because he had run away from the Polish army at the age of 16. And my mother came from Austria-Hungary. They met in Berlin during what was a good time for Jewish people. We're talking about the early days of the Jazz age. My mother, and I don't have them any more, was reluctant to show people pictures of her wedding because it showed her in wedding dress that was above the knees because that was the right thing at that time. That's how they lived and I'm sure historians know there were Jewish people in Germany from the year 1100 and although my parents were immigrants, they found a home there. We lived what I would call almost and upper middle class life. One of the symbols of how well we were doing was that we had a piano. And we, my father was a tailor. He had what amounted to a tailoring factory, were employing about ten people. On one side of, we lived in an apartment building, on one side of the apartment complex and on the other side toward the right was his factory so we were on the same floor. And we had people working there and I got to see them and meet them and know them. And, as I said, we had a good life until things started to turn and, of course, there's a lot of story and I don't know how much I should get into at this

point. I can tell you some of the experiences that I had where, when I got to be about 6 years old, and 7 years old, things had dramatically changed. We were quite of aware of the fact that we were Jewish. There were signs all over about what "*Juden verboten*" meaning "Jew forbidden": to sit on park benches, to do certain things in public. My father was ki—I did ----there's no sign of it now but I was something of a child prodigy, and my father had a tailoring factory where they used chalk to measure people and to make the suits for them and tailoring chalk. And there was a, on the door into his, what I call factory --- it, really, ---, not really a factory but I guess in a sense it is --- I had written on there: "No talking while you work." I was something like 6 years old at the time and my father was hauled in before the police, the Gestapo because a Jew was not supposed to tell people who were working for him who were not Jewish, not to talk while they work. And they didn't believe that I just did that, that was not my father telling me to do it or he didn't do it. And so those kinds of things where I learned very early that I had to be very careful of what I said and did. And that's just one example of the kind of things that we ran into as children, and became quite aware. I -- I did not have an ordinary childhood. I would say that I grew up at the age of six and lived a mature life from then on.

LEVINE: Now your brother, was he older than you?

CIGE: My brother was a year younger than I.

LEVINE: A year younger.

CIGE: Yes. And, yes.

LEVINE: Are there any particular incidents that happened to him that you remember during this build up of the Nazi time?

CIGE: I don't remember specifically what happened to him. I know that all children became very conscious of the fearful environment that we were living in. It affected him in a different way than it did me.

LEVINE: How so?

CIGE: I just said to you that I grew up, I matured, I became a grown up at the age of 6. My brother regressed. He became very clinging to my parents; his fear was expressed in a totally different way. And it affected his --- oh, his make-up, his personality for the rest of his life.

LEVINE: Were you a religious family?

CIGE: Well, my parents came from religious families. We went to the holidays, I mean to the Synagogue on the major holidays. Unfortunately, my father worked on Saturdays, which was part of the life that they were living. But we had, our food was kosher, our----- you know it was --- the school that I went to was a public school, but it was a Jewish school. There were only Jewish children. I believe, if I remember, I think we were forced into those schools, because they took the Jewish kids and they did not have them go to the same schools but I'm not sure that I remember that aspect. I do remember what happened at one point. Which was that we were taken, and by the way I remember my teacher wearing *tsitsets* (ritual fringes) and a *yarmulka* (ritual skull cap) so that was part of the set up. One day we were taken into the courtyard of the school and all the books were thrown, all the books that were in the school, were thrown into a pile. We were made to stand around the pile of books while the books were being burned by the Germans. And of course that was the end of my schooling in Germany.

LEVINE: And what grade was that?

CIGE: Ah? What grade was that? It's hard for me to say, but it was probably the sort of second year of school is my guess. I have a photograph, I may still have it some place and find it, which showed when I started school which was kind of the ceremonial thing, and there probably is one of my brother too. And I think that was in 1936, which means that I was 6 years old. So I was probably was there until I was 6 and maybe partly into 7.

LEVINE: And aside from school, outside of school did you play with non-Jewish children? With gentile children?

CIGE: No, it's funny that you should bring that up. I, we played outside and there were children who belonged to the *Hitler Jugend*. I don't know if you, that's -- in English that would be "Hitler Youth." They were like boy scouts they wore uniforms, little short pants and uniforms, except that they wore daggers. And one day, about three of them started chasing me, which was a fearful experience. And part of the pattern under which we were living at that point, that convinced my parents that it was no longer safe to live there. My parents had really a different attitude. My mother kept feeling that things would improve, things would change. We'd be okay. But if it were my father's sole decision, we probably would have left Germany even sooner. --  
- If we could, that's another problem. It wasn't so easy to leave Germany.

LEVINE: And do you know what was happening with your father's factory, as the build-up became more?

CIGE: Well I know that, he was hauled into that Gestapo that one time which I told you about. No, I'm not sure, I mean I was aware of things, but it's not something where my father sat down and discussed it with me. I'm sure that between my parents there were conversations that I wasn't aware of.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. And were you aware that people were then trying to get away and were leaving.

CIGE: Yeah. I was also aware, I was there, I guess "The night of broken glass."

LEVINE: *Kristallnacht*

CIGE: *Kristallnacht*. I saw stores smashed in. I mean, as I said, there were signs all over that you couldn't go to certain places---- they wouldn't let Jews in. There were signs on park benches you couldn't sit there. We used to go the park on weekends, and there were other signs all over, things were happening all over. There was an incident and I just can't remember it right now but there was something that affected my father, something somebody did- besides the one that I just recited to you. So there were things all around us which I was very aware of.

LEVINE: Yeah, so why did the family leave Berlin when they did?

CIGE: I don't know. I wasn't in on the conversation between my parents, but it's at one point they decided it was time to go, which was not really a safe thing to do in one sense because the Germans were picking people up and putting them into the death camps. In another sense, they wanted to get rid of the Jewish people because they wanted to make Germany *Judenrein* which means, "clean of Jews." Now what made my parents decide at which point that it was necessary to go I don't know. As I said to you before, we had things in Germany. I mean I was a boy who had a tricycle, which not every kid had in those days. At my eighth birthday party, which was in our home, we had invited guests and we had a ventriloquist ----- with a dummy. We had a show put on. We had something that was very rare in those days----- somebody my father had hired, played a movie on a projector. Which, you know, the -- we -- we --had things. In the house in front of which we lived

had double-decker buses going by. You know, the environment before things got bad is hard for people to understand. The Jewish people were the doctors----- they were doing very well. We had one doctor, he was world famous, his name was Dr. Boa, I'll never forget that.

LEVINE: B-O-A?

CIGE: B-O-A, yeah. I think that's how he spelled it. And --and -- and it was just, the whole thing turned. And I can't tell you why it happened. I mean why it happened, we left at that moment in time. But, you know, my parents obviously made a decision toward the end of 1938 that we should get out of there.

LEVINE: Yeah. Do you remember getting ready to go?

CIGE: Yes.

LEVINE: What do you remember about that?

CIGE: Well, I remember that it was a tearful separation although I was being assured all the time everything would be okay. And you have to understand that my father was a very strong person, and someone who we relied on. And if he said something, there was no reason to doubt it. And so when he said we'll be okay, we'll be fine, I believed every word of it. Because there was no reason ever to doubt him.

LEVINE: By the way did you have any grandparents that you had contact with in Germany?

CIGE: The grandparents that I had was my father's mother who lived in Poland, who was still alive, along with several of his sisters. His brother lived in

Berlin. And my mother and my brother and I --- had, earlier, probably in about 1937-1936, but it was probably 19 --- had taken a trip to Poland to visit my grandmother. I think it was 1936. So she was alive. And my mother's father lived in Berlin, in what was considered the orthodox section of Berlin, *Grenadier Straße*, that's the name of the street, the main street in that area. And of course we visited him quite often and saw him from time to time.

LEVINE: Could you spell the street? Sorry.

CIGE: Probably spelled G-R-E-N-A-D-I-E-R.

LEVINE: And so, did you have much contact then with your mother's father?

CIGE: Well yes we went there often. He had married a second time, a younger woman who lived with him, helped him. He was a *Shokhet*. Do you know what I'm saying? Okay?

LEVINE: Say it for the tape.

CIGE: Well I don't know- he's someone that killed chicken in a Kosher way. That was his job. Yeah we saw him quite often.

LEVINE: What was he like and how was he to you as a grandfather?

CIGE: I had trouble understanding, he was warm, but I had trouble understanding him. Because his German wasn't that great, he spoke basically Polish, I guess, our mother speaks their languages too. But it was just being with him that was the important thing it's not that we had any profound conversations.

LEVINE: Right. What were you speaking and what were your mother and father speaking at that point in Berlin? What language?

CIGE: I was speaking German. I was born there. I spoke German, that's the only language I knew at that time. My father spoke German, and Russian, Yiddish and German. He picked up three more languages as life went along, but that's what he was speaking at that time.

LEVINE: And your mother?

CIGE: My mother spoke German and Polish --- and Yiddish.

LEVINE: I see- and Yiddish. So did you know Yiddish at that point?

CIGE: Yeah. I heard it it's not something that I used, but I heard them talking it. I was aware of it. Yiddish and German are very closely related, so I didn't have a hard time understanding it.

LEVINE: And how about like the overall German culture? Was that something that your mother and father were involved with?

CIGE: I'm not quite sure I understand your question.

LEVINE: What I mean is, aside from the Jewish community, sort of the larger German music and whatever theater- is that something that they...

CIGE: I don't really remember any of that. My parents were really very much involved in their work. I know that we, as a family, we were very close and we did things as a family often. They had some friends that they were in contact with but, you know, I don't-- my father—okay, one of the documents I found, was somewhere -- I don't think I have it with me---- was my father

belonged to – to ---the Zionist organization, which at that time was a declaration that you would go to what was then called, not Israel but Palestine, that you would one day go to Palestine. He -- this was a declaration to go to Palestine at some point. So this little booklet that he belonged to that. Now he may have belonged- if it weren't; for that booklet that was in the documents, I wouldn't know that. And I'm sure that there were other things that he was involved in that I'm not cognoscent of.

LEVINE: Right, okay. So when you left, did your mother and father try to sell things or did they leave with just what they had? Carried? Or how did they go?

CIGE: Well, first of all, we went in three phases, the family. My father and I, my father and I escaped first --- from Germany into Belgium. My brother ---, I was eight years old at the time. My brother, let me think about this now, about the timing, because we know that- he was just eight years old when he went so, I must have been closer to nine years old. He, and my sister, now he was eight and my sister was one, were the only ones, yeah he was 8 and she was 1, the only ones that came into Belgium legally. My mother put them on the train to be met in Brussels by my father. There's a scary story attached to that. And then my mother escaped and we were reunited in Belgium. Now as to -- valuables, my parents had left most things behind. They just left them. But my father had hired smugglers to smuggle us into Belgium, these were professional smugglers that was what they did. And in ----- after we, my father and I were smuggled into Belgium, he arranged with them for my mother to give him some valuables which they would smuggle out and bring to my father. Those valuables never made it to my father so that not only did we leave things behind but there was jewelry I presume and I don't know what other things, these people made off with. And my mother, we had to hire different smugglers now to help my mother smuggle into Belgium.

LEVINE: How were you smuggled? Do you remember how you got out?

CIGE: I remember very vividly, that's not something you forget. My father and I, and I've written some little things about this, as I said to you I've written very episodes of my life. My father and I left Berlin by train and wound up in *Köln*, which we know as Cologne, in Germany. And we were there with the knowledge ----- which I think he imparted to me in Cologne but I don't remember specifically----- that, with the knowledge that we would be escaping Germany. In Cologne, I had some experiences. I'm not going to go into that at this point. Anyway from there, my father and I took a train to *Aachen*. That's another city closer to the Belgium border, that's spelled A-A-C-H-E-N. From there, my father kept making phone calls back to my mother using coded language so that my mother and he could speak but anybody listening couldn't know exactly what they were saying. From *Aachen* we were transported to the boarder. And that was a scary experience.

LEVINE: What were you transported in?

CIGE: I don't remember. I think it was a train that took us from *Aachen* to the border. I'm not sure.

LEVINE: So by then you were aware though of what you were doing. It was probably even more frightening.

CIGE: Oh yeah definitely. And we were also aware of the fact that even though the Germans had wanted to get rid of the Jewish people, number one, we were not ----- didn't have any legal documents to leave or to arrive any place. And number two; they could on a whim just send us to some horrible place. Yeah, my father and I were examined. We were taken at the border station, and at one point after they got through checking us out, they had my father

and me standing out side the border station and they knew what we were going to do I'm sure. And I'll never forget there was a guard there and he had a gun with a bayonet on it. And just kind of, I guess for his own fun, pointed it at my father's stomach, and then pointed it at my stomach ---- and my father--- they had across the road t, there was a---- do you know when you go on a turnpike, they have these stops, food places and things, I forgot what they call them, stop stations or something. They had one across from this guardhouse --- guard station, and my father said could he go over there. They took all the money he had away from him; except for ten marks they said he could keep that. And then I think they said he had to spend it, so we went across the way, and according to my father's prior arrangements, we went in there briefly and then came out and went around it to where there was a barbed wire fence. And my father helped pushed me over, climb over and then he climbed over and then we escaped into the no-man's land and walked around quite a bit. We were supposed to be met by this smuggler, there were two men, two that met us, and they decided that my father and I should be separated. So I had to go with one of them and the other went with my father. The one that went with my father spoke German, did all the talking. The one that I went with didn't speak German. So I couldn't even have a conversation. I didn't know where I was going, I was afraid I might not see my father again because we were going into brush area, no place that I knew, nothing that I knew, strange area. The whole thing was very, very frightening.

LEVINE: Wow. Okay can we just pause here; Kevin's going to turn the tape. We'll check and see if Brian is outside.

CIGE: Okay.

LEVINE: Wow.

END OF SIDE A TAPE 1      BEGINNING OF SIDE B TAPE 1

LEVINE:    Okay we were talking about you're being separated from your father, just having gone over the barbed wire fence and going into the brush.

CIGE:      Yes.

LEVINE:    So then what happened?

CIGE:      Well what happened is that I had to follow this man. I had no choice. I didn't know where we were going. And eventually we came to a house where there was, I guess it was a kind of a truck-like automobile in front of it. And the other man and my father were already there and we were reunited. And from there we were driven to Brussels. This was part of the smuggling operation.

LEVINE:    Is that why you went to Brussels? I mean is that why you went to Belgium? Because the smugglers could get you there? That was...

CIGE:      I can only guess because it's not something I ever discussed with my parents, and I'm not sure I know. But, from what I know of that time, there were not too many ways to get out of Germany, you know. I think some people may have wound up in Shanghai or in other places where they were allowed to come in. They wouldn't, I mean even, okay ---- th -- between the laws that the Germans had and between the fact that most countries didn't want Jewish immigrants, it wasn't easy to go. And so the choice was to go illegally to the closest place. I'm sure, I say I'm sure --- I don't know, but I think my parents may have considered Poland, may have considered other places, but this apparently seemed the most feasible. That's just a guess on my part; I wasn't there in on their discussions on the subject.

LEVINE: I see. And could you talk about your brother and your young sister. What was their journey out of Germany like?

CIGE: Okay, well, my father ---- let me just lead you to where we were. My father and I were taken to a place where other illegal immigrants were. We lived in an attic of a house where they took us to. And the attic had other illegal immigrants in it. Now I could tell you a little bit more about what happened there or we could go to your question.

LEVINE: Well yeah why don't you talk more about being there because your brother and sister came after you had been there a little while?

CIGE: Yes.

LEVINE: Okay.

CIGE: Yes, what happened was that we were in this attic environment and my father and I had to be very careful in Belgium because we were afraid of anybody in a uniform. If we were caught, we might be sent back to Germany, which is one of the fears that we lived with. And one night, my father got up during the night and he found on the floor a little medallion and it turned out that it was an insignia of a Gestapo. Which meant that one of the men that was there apparently illegally was with the Gestapo. So my father quietly told me to get the few things that we had and we left the place quite quickly. And he explained to me afterwards what had happened. We, he found another place, and we found what amounted to a small apartment over a butcher shop. So that's where we wound up living for a little while, well, living for the rest of the time. I wasn't, obviously I wasn't involved in the conversations with my mother, the coded conversations. But my parents arranged for my mother to put my brother and my sister on the train in Germany to come to Belgium. You have to remember at that time that

my brother was 8 years old and my sister was 1 year old and the two were going by themselves. He was in charge of watching this baby sister of his and among the documents that I found ----- and as a matter of fact only looked at closely yesterday ----- was the document which took care of his passage into Belgium. My brother's passage into Bel ----- legal documents. So these are two came in legally. What I hadn't mentioned to you before when you asked me about the religious aspect, is that my father and I had gone to the synagogue in Belgium, which is a place that I felt comfortable at because I couldn't speak French or Flemish at that time, and at least they were doing Hebrew prayers that I was familiar with. And, but -- what we were conscious of also was that the synagogue was one of the two places that was most dangerous to be because if the police were going to be looking for you, for illegal Jews, not the Belgium Jews, they might find you there. Well my father went to the station to pick up my brother and sister who were coming in on the train, and obviously the station was the other place which was not a very safe place to be. And one of the few times that my father went someplace by himself and didn't have me go with him because I think he was afraid, I don't know that for sure but it's a guess. What developed afterwards is that my father almost was not able to get my sis--- my brother and sister. And they would have wound up in Antwerp because that's where the train was continuing to, but there was a woman there who took the kids under her wing and I don't remember all the details except that the last minute he found them. So now, they came with us. The third step was my mother illegally leaving Germany for Belgium. My father and I had a difficult time at the border, which I didn't go into too much detail on, but my mother's was even worse. There was a woman, and I'm trying to remember whether it was when I was there or my mother was there----who had swal ---- it was my mother, who had swallowed a diamond that she was trying to smuggle out and they were checking all the other women in ways that I don't want to describe. And it was just a very, very difficult time and then we had trouble, as I said, with the smuggler. She had the most difficult

time. But we were eventually reunited in Brussels and we lived in this little apartment over a butcher shop. And my father had started to, he was a tailor and whereas he ran a company in Germany, was now doing, and he did, obviously did sewing himself on the machine and other things, was doing tailoring in Belgium and making things ---- ends --- meet by that. And as time went on, I picked up French much faster than he did, and I think that's because children just learn another language faster than adults do. And I became his interpreter. So that began our life in Brussels.

LEVINE: In Brussels did you go to school?

CIGE: Yes. At some point I started going to school in Brussels. But as I said, there was the language difference and the environment and the culture. It was just completely different and I had to try to adjust to that. And I think eventually I did, and started learning things. So I probably, and I can't give you an exact date, but my guess is that it was probably around ----I don't know if it was the beginning of 1939 or toward the fall of 1939 ---- that I started school there.

LEVINE: So, can you remember your impressions of Brussels? You're, just what was so different to you as a young child, as a nine year old?

CIGE: Yeah, the life was not nearly as luxurious as what we had in Germany. And we were always conscious of what's going on in the world. But I began to relax somewhat and live the life of a nine-year-old boy. And had, you know, made friends in the school and began to have a, I would say happy, but, you know --life, but conscious of other things.

LEVINE: Were you, was your school Jewish children in Brussels or it was a mixture?

CIGE: No, it was a mixture yes. In fact that's one of the things that struck me because there was a lot of Christian symbolism. There was a lot of Christian attitude. It was almost as if we were attending a Catholic school. It was a public school but the separation of church and state that we have in this country just didn't exist there. And so, you know, they celebrated things that I found a little strange. You know you bringing this back I haven't thought about it for years.

LEVINE: So then what terminated your stay in Brussels? What happened?

CIGE: What happened is that one day the sky was full of bombers, German planes ---- darkened with bombers. And they started bombing the city. And we ran into the street because we were told it's not safe to stay in the houses. And of course I don't know how much safer it was in the streets. But the Germans were bombing all around us and sometimes very close to us. And there were explosions all over. And it became clear, because I found out from my parents that the Germans were either going to invade Belgium or were invading Belgium. And not far from where we lived was the *Gare du Nord*. This was the station, the train station, the Northern --- the North Station. And so we took whatever goods we could carry and left the other things, again left things behind. And headed for the station. And not right away obviously, but eventually wound up in the freight car of a train that on it's journey, eventually, after crossing the boarder (which was also an experience), took us into France. And we wound up in Southern Central France in Revel. I was told *Oradour sur Glane* [site of WWII massacre] but it's developed lately that it wasn't Revel.

LEVINE: Are you saying Brevel?

CIGE: Re, R-E-V-E-L

LEVINE: Revel? Okay.

CIGE: And we wound up in, I don't know what you would call it, but a kind of an outdoor settlement. We lived in tents. We lived in, you know, in a forested area, in the plains, just out in this area. Where we as immigrants were, and I don't know whether we were just dumped there or what it was, but this is where we lived. And in a sense, it was, again, my --- my childishness taking over. It was not a bad thing because we ran around outdoors and we took long walks and they had vineyards not far from there, and we visited the vineyards. And we lived in that settlement, I can't think of another word, for I guess, I don't know how many months. I've tried to create a little---- because I have some definite dates but not all. And I've tried to set down how long we were in various places ---- my guess, that we were there about a month. Yes.

LEVINE: Were they all refugee families and people that were in the settlement?

CIGE: Yes, yeah. And it's -- it's a, you know as I say, there were various ways to look at it, but we tried to make the best of it. And our parents- yeah, I calculated that we were there about a month. And then one day we were rounded up and told, and as I say I was a child, and not everything was told to us. And it was as much to protect us as anything else; it's not that we weren't old enough to understand things. But we were rounded up and taken down to the city itself and put on a train which wound up in Agda, one of the concentration camps in Southern France. Now there are people that aren't aware of concentration camps in Southern France and I want to make a distinction between death camps, like you know Auschwitz, or Bergen Belsen or others, and these. There were also camps where living was very extremely hard and difficult and dangerous. But there were no systematic killing procedures, you know, there were no gas chambers as such. But to my knowledge there were about seventeen of these in Southern France,

which I learned afterwards. My parents wound up in four of them. Yes you were saying?

LEVINE: Were they work camps?

CIGE: Yes, yes. The camps separated----- the men were in- well what do I call it? --- they were in separate sections and the women and children were in separate sections and there were also gypsies, and they were also separated.

LEVINE: And so you were with your mother and brother and sister then, in Agda.

CIGE: I was with

LEVINE: in Agda

CIGE: yes.

LEVINE: And what was it like, what was a day like? Could you describe a typical day there for you as a nine year old?

CIGE: Yeah. A typical day was that we, as boys, played together, played games, tried to do things to keep ourselves busy. And we hung around for meals and those kinds of things. But we tried to be children. We were aware of the situation. There were guards; we were surrounded by barbed wire. And I mean among the things is --- I learned how to knit. Now, how many 9 year old boys or 10-year-old boys learn how to knit. Because there were women there who were knitting, and so you know you sat down and said okay let me show you how to do this. We did something else which I guess for most people is hard to understand. And that is, several times, a couple of boys with guidance and approval of the parents, escaped. What we did is

we dug holes underneath the fence. And we were small enough so we could crawl through those holes. Then we put cardboard on top of the holes so you couldn't tell that they were there. That was towards the back of the camp where guards were very seldom seen. And we wound our way into Agda, the city. And when we had money, we bought some things that we brought back -- food for our parents. I mean I'm not talking about hundreds; I'm talking about a handful of kids. I'm not talking about a lot of children. And there were times I have to admit that we stole some things. I mean they were out door markets. And so we'd ---- in my experience I must have done this about three or four times. And also got the opportunity several times to visit my father in the men's section, all of which were strange and scary experiences. The men were not treated as well. In our area, we were in ----- we lived in barracks- it turned out that these were military barracks from the First World War turned into this camp. And we had straw on the ground. And there was a section, family would have a section of that and live in that a -- on that area and sleep on the straw; which we got used to, it wasn't bad. The men on the other hand, had - - what would you call them -- levels of wood that they had and they slept on those. And there was nothing soft underneath. They just had that hard wood to sleep on.

LEVINE: It's almost like a wide shelf kind of.

CIGE: Yeah that's exactly what it was. And you know, generally speaking this is what we, --- the kind of life we lived. There were some interesting experiences that we had. One day, of course I don't know if I'll get into what we ate and how we ate, how we went to what you would call the bathroom but there was no such thing there. But one day, we -- you know what they did is they brought food in on trucks and you lined up. Most of the time the food turned out to be turnips, that's what we ate most of the time. Once in a while there was some kind of a soup, and even that had turnips in it. One

day we were thrilled we had some meat in the soup that we ate. Except it turned out that we wound up with food poisoning. And so there was a lot of feces all over the place because there wasn't much you could do. So that was one of the experiences I won't forget. And that's how we lived in this camp. That's you know a brief summary of it. It's not...

LEVINE: Were people dying?

CIGE: I'm sure, yeah. And it was not unusual for men to disappear. In other words, you know, it's not that they had gas chambers or anything but one day, we found out that somebody's husband or brother is gone, just like that. No more.

LEVINE: And they hadn't escaped?

CIGE: No. And one of the other things, they had punishments there which were visible and we were aware of. Mostly for the men. One of the things they did was they shaved the middle of the head like this all of you know. As if they had taken an electric razor, which they didn't have that at the time, and gone through and made a band in the middle of the head. That was an initial form of punishment so they'd know this is a bad guy, okay watch this guy, okay, because he did something he wasn't supposed to do. Anyway...

LEVINE: What was the work your father was doing in there do you know?

CIGE: I don't know.

LEVINE: Can you remember any of the conversations you had when you escaped those three or four times and saw your father?

CIGE: No, no. The main object was just to sneak into town and I even went with somebody else. We would separate and meet. I mean we did some things that if as an elder when I look ---- adult when I look back, I would not have done. But we, I'm not sure, somehow I think that the guards, 'cause we had to come around toward a side of the front of the camp, I'm not sure that the guards didn't see us but just ignored us. We were kids, after all. And in town we didn't have much problem because we spoke French, so it's not that we were speaking German, they knew we were --- So it was two things. One it was helpful to the adults, and secondly it was something exciting for a kid to do. And this is one of the things that we did.

LEVINE: Were the guards French or German?

CIGE: French, yeah. But I'm sure, I'm not sure but I presume, that they took orders from the Germans. This is Vichy France, this is unoccupied France, which by the way did not treat Jewish people very well, probably worse than they would have been treated then in the occupied area. There is a reason for that. Well, as we know the Germans ----- I mean the French army ---- did not put up much of a resistance when the Germans invaded. And when the Germans didn't go into what they called unoccupied Vichy France, the French down there were trying to prove that they were just as good at what the -- at -- at their anti-Jewishness as the Germans were. Whereas the French who were in occupied France were under the thumb of the Germans, were better to the Jewish people than these people, the French in the unoccupied.

LEVINE: So you mentioned your mother and father were in four of these work camps in Southern France. Did you remain in the same one and they taken away?

CIGE: They didn't ---- they -- they went to the others after I left. Actually we were all in Agda when I was in Agda. After my brother and I were taken to the

children's home in Masgelier, my parents were shifted to another camp, camp called Rivesaltes. But it was when we wound up in the United States that they were shifted to other camps.

LEVINE: I see. Okay well, why don't you talk about the time, the day or whatever that you left for the children's home, when you --- you and your brother?

CIGE: Well, yes. A woman came to the camp, now how much my parents knew in advance I don't know,. But she came to the camp and my parents apparently had agreed that this wo – we would -- my brother and I would go with this woman and she would take us someplace where it would be safe and things would be better for us. We met in a ---- one of the barracks, like a little office, where we sat down and we talked and they told us that we would be okay. Now, I'm not sure of this because I haven't been able to find the book yet, but there is a book out by a woman, called I think it's Evette Samuels, who wrote ----- either she wrote or it was written about her----- but I think she wrote how she saved children out of Rivesaltes which is the camp that my parents went into. The camp --- I have a feeling she is the same woman. The camp that we went into, Agda is a minor camp. It was not one of the bigger camps or well-known camps and I have some information about it, but mostly we are told that there is not much information about this camp. So this woman rescued children. I have a feeling it's the same woman. I've always called her my rescuing angel but if it isn't her than it's another woman who came and rescued us. As I say I have the feeling that she's the one. Then she brought us to this children's home with my parents' approval called Chateau de Masgelier. And that's where we were brought, and found other children there. Now one of the reasons that my brother and I were chosen we were told, is because I was sick. had problems, I had stomach problems. had pains in my stomach pretty often if not constantly. My brother we were told had lung problems. And she was taking two sick children to this children's home. Now- okay.

LEVINE: Could you spell the name of the home? Chateau...?

CIGE: Chateau Masgelier, M-A-S-G-E-L-I-E-R.

LEVINE: Okay and then the name of the camp that your mother and father then went to.

CIGE: Rivesaltes, R-I-V-E-S-A-L-T-E-S.

LEVINE: Okay we're going to pause here and put on another tape.

END OF SIDE B TAPE 1      BEGINNING OF SIDE A TAPE 2

CIGE: (whispered) How long is this going to take?

LEVINE: Not too much more. Okay, we're starting here now with tape two. Let's see I forget what kind of angel you called this lady from the children's home. But can you remember that meeting with her? When you and your brother were in the office...

CIGE: Sure, sure. I don't remember what she looked like but I remember her being there and I remember my parents being there.

LEVINE: Did you feel at that time that this was a good thing that you were going to be taken even though you were leaving your mother and father?

CIGE: I can't tell you what my emotions were at that time. All I can tell you is that I had every confidence in my father. If he said it was going to be a good thing then I just accepted it. But I'm sure that I may have had some concerns, some ambivalence, but I don't remember that ---- just knowing who I am.

LEVINE: But you took a liking to this lady, you felt...

CIGE: Yeah, sure.

LEVINE: So were you and your brother real close at this time?

CIGE: Oh yeah. We were always close but he, how can I say this? He was a very insular person. He was more fearful than I was, and I think -----not even remembering, but I would guess ----- that the separation must have been a terror for him.

LEVINE: He wasn't one of the boys who snuck under the fence and went into town.

CIGE: Oh no, no.

LEVINE: Okay, so how did you leave the camp with this lady? What did you...?

CIGE: I'm not sure. I don't remember that aspect. I remember, you know, being in the children's home, arriving there and being there. But I don't remember that aspect of it, no.

LEVINE: Can you say something about your impressions and your description of the children's home?

CIGE: The children's home, let me tell you first when I got there, because I had stomach problems, I wound up in, I forgot what they call it-

LEVINE: Infirmary?

CIGE: Infirmary, right. And my stomach problems kept me from joining the rest of the kids right away. And I was given *Zwieback* (easily digested toast) for the first time. And other little goodies which I --- because I was sick, 'cause I found out later they didn't have ---- the rest of the children didn't get these. Anyway, the home was a healthy environment. We were kept busy, we learned things as I, you know, we helped by growing things outside. I learned how to dig into the soil and plant seeds; and we just grew things. We all carried little knives, little daggers, because this old castle, there were snakes all over the place and that was supposed to protect us from the snakes. So we learned how to play games with the knives. Wonderful thing about is was we were, every night, we were told a story, read a story. And the one that I vividly remember is they read *Les Miserables* to us. And in a way, we related to the people in *Les Miserables* because of course this is a man who is being hunted down for having stolen a piece of bread and we were hunted down a good part of our lives. So it, it was, and we were read the story, I mean a part of the book every night and then we said the *Shma*, a prayer, and then we went to sleep. And we also said a little prayer before we ate. It was a Jewishly run place and we felt comfortable there. I had never known about showers before, they had showers there. It was just very, very healthy environment and -- and, you know -- and we communicated. We wrote to our parents and they wrote to us. There was not always the good, what can I say, communic ---- meaning the letters didn't always wind up in one place or the other, but most of the time, yes. And so somewhere at home, I still have letters that I received from my parents from, initially from Agda, and then from Rivesaltes. And it was just a very, very healthy and happy experience.

LEVINE: Just out of curiosity what happened to the gypsy children? Were they taken too do you know?

CIGE: No I have no idea what happened to them. All I know is that they had separate compound for them. What you had is the division of the Jewish --- -we had maybe two or th ---at least two or three compounds of Jewish children and women, and maybe one or two of the Jewish men. And then you had the gypsies, the women and children and the men in separate compounds. I can't tell you how many, I knew there was one in between, you know, so I was aware of it.

LEVINE: So how long were you at this children's home roughly?

CIGE: It wasn't roughly. It was nicely. (Laughs)

LEVINE: [Laughs] Yeah, it sounds like it was.

CIGE: I did, yeah,--I -- I ---- based on some of the things, I did some calculations because I know that the Germans invaded Belgium in April 1940 and I was in the United States in September 1941. And the eighteen months I was in Revel before we got to Agda for about a month, and then in Agda I calculated about nine months, because in the little diary that I wrote ----- and I mean this very tiny diary ---- I wrote down that I was in Masgelier for seven months. So that I knew for a fact and we were --- also have in there that I, on the way to the United States, we were in Marseilles and I was there for one month. So, by way of my calculations I was in Agda about nine months.

LEVINE: So you were in the children's home about seven months, you say, right, and then I guess you went to school there.

CIGE: In the children's home? [Laughs] Not really.

LEVINE: No?

CIGE: No, no.

LEVINE: They didn't have a school.

CIGE: No, no. What they did is they read to us and they kept us busy. But there was no school per se. You might be interested in the fact that OSE ran a number of children's homes and one of them, I mean I've learned this subsequently, is called "*Shaban*" [ph]. And a young woman, whose father and uncle were children there, has done a- what's the word?

LEVINE: Documentary?

CIGE: A documentary, thank you. I was going to say movie but it's a documentary about their existence. Now "*Shaban*" was also run by OSE and I saw that, in fact I have a tape of it at home. Their existence was considerably better than ours at *Masgelier*. The people around there were much nicer to the children, did things for them. We were pretty much on our own. I'm sure there was some help by local farmers. But they may have had classes, and I don't remember that. They may have had. And they had ---- I think they did --- and they had a life that was a little bit better than ours. I'm not complaining about *Masgelier*. But we did not have any schooling there.

LEVINE: What does OSE stand for?

CIGE: OSE is an acronym and it's spelled O-S-E.

LEVINE: And it means...

CIGE: It stands for French *Oeuvre de Secours des Enfants* which means roughly "Organization for Saving Children." It was, it has, ----- I can't give you the

exact fact,---- but it has existed, I think it started in Poland really, but it existed for a long time; maybe fifty years, maybe even longer, I don't know. And it ----- it ran these children's homes, Jewish children's homes; in France before all of this started happening and for some reason they let them continue to run those homes. And in fact even today there are OSE children's homes being run in France. And we who are the, you know the children that came to the United States and formed a kind of informal organization, forgot the name they use ---- the or----- the--- the ---- you know, the re--- the official organization is still in France running children's homes.

LEVINE: Okay so, were there any incidents or experiences with your brother, you as the older brother? Did you sort of be responsible for him there?

CIGE: It's funny that you should ask me that question. Because we can now go to the point where my parents showed up, having received a "*Laissez passer*", which is the document that allowed them to travel from the camp to the children's home. And with the fact that my brother and I, --- they had approved that my brother and I had been chosen to come to the United States. And, what was your question again?

LEVINE: You as the older brother?

CIGE: Oh okay. And without going into the longer history of it, my parents sat down with us in this children's home, saying that they had approved the fact that we would come to the United States and turned to me and said that I should take care of my brother and told my brother, who's one year younger than I, that he had to listen to me, which created some difficulties. But he, you know, my parents apparently did not feel that he was capable of making the right decisions or taking care of himself, and gave me the responsibility. And by the way, here again, my father said, you know, even though we

were going to be going to the United States, that we would be reunited again and that we would be safe and that everything would be okay. And since I always relied on what he said, I felt fine.

LEVINE: So, then, where did you go how did you go? What was the experience of leaving the home? And how many children went with you?

CIGE: Well to the best of my knowledge, at that time, and I may be wrong on this, there were ----- no, there were a couple of others from the camp, I think, that came from this children's home, rather, that came. But it was children from other children's homes altogether and they were mostly from other homes. And we were brought together and taken to Marseilles. And it turned out there were fifty-one of us children. So we were taken to Marseilles with the knowledge that we would be coming to the United States. Yeah.

LEVINE: And so is that where you sailed from?

CIGE: No.

LEVINE: How did you? Where did you?

CIGE: No, no we were in Marseilles for a month and, obviously, I don't know all that went on because they didn't confide everything. What I did know is that if any child was 16 years old or older, he or she would not be able to go with the children. And from the identification card that's we had it indicates that my brother and I were supposed to go on a ship called "Indiasa" [ph]. Well, we didn't. We were held back and my feeling is that we were held back because there must have been some children who were about to be 16 years old and they probably wanted to have them go. And so we stayed in

Brussels longer and we eventually went on a different ship called the "Serpa Pinta."

LEVINE: Okay now can you say anything about that month in Marseilles? Any recollections of that? Any recollections of that...(papers rustling in background) Oh wow, "Serpa Pinta."

CIGE: Not really, you know. We were taken around to various places, shown various places. I remember being taken to a place called *Notre Dame de la Garde* which was a Cathedral or a Church that stood out over the harbor. It was a high place, we were taken up, you know it's almost like being taken up to the Statue of Liberty. And we were shown Marseilles, we were shown the Mediterranean, you know the, ---- yeah, I remember that aspect but I don't remember too much more except for the fact that we were there about a month.

LEVINE: Was it a pleasant month?

CIGE: Yeah kind of. But you know again...

LEVINE: You were uprooted...

CIGE: The knowledge that we were going to be separated from our parents that we were, you know ---- and I have written this little diary and in it, yeah, this is the dates I have down here. But I must have written somewhere, ---- what did I do with the thing itself? ----- the fact, yeah...

LEVINE: Your little diary, was it begun in Marseilles?

CIGE: I th --either that or on the ship. I don't know. I – I --- I ---It's --- this is. You know, it's titled *Le Voyage du L'Europe en American* you know *Amerique* and it says, I don't know if you want-

LEVINE: Yeah go ahead.

CIGE: Well some of it, I'm not ----- *Au mois du Juillet nous sommes quittés Magalier*. that means In July we left Magalier. *La maison d'Enfant ou je vivais sept mois*. At the children's home where I spent seven months, *Que je n'oublierai jamais* I will never forget. *Nous sommes d'onc alles á Marseilles en passant á Toulouse*. We went to Marseilles passing Toulouse. *Ou nous les Quakers Americains attendaient*. Where the American Quakers waited for us. *Ils nous donne'rent*. They gave us photographs for the papers that we needed. *Aprés un mois* and I'm kind of skipping, *on part pour Lisbon*. After a month we left for Lisbon, where we stayed three days. And it talks about embarking on the ship. It talks about handkerchiefs and crying. *J'ai pensé la dernie're heure encore*. And it talked about thinking about the last hour there. "*Je me disais*", I said to myself "*Adieu L'Europe*. *On pensant je ne reverai plus*" thinking I'll never be back. Anyway that's...

LEVINE: Did you know anything about the United States? Think anything? Expect anything?

CIGE: No. I did have (laughs), OK, I did have some images in my mind. Let me tell you what I mean.

LEVINE: Okay.

CIGE: When we were in Germany. We had go seen some movies. It's not like in the United States today but we did get to see movies, and the movies that we saw were cowboy movies. One I'll never forget Tom Mix, *der Held von*

Texas. You know of Tom Mix, did you ever hear of him? "The Hero of Texas" that was the name of the movie. And then of course we had seen pictures of New York with skyscrapers and things. So what I expected this country to be was cowboys and skyscrapers and things...

LEVINE: Sky scrapers (both chuckle)...Would you say your experiences when you met up with the American Quakers and anything about that organization and how you were treated by them.

CIGE: I can't say, I don't remember specifically. I know that I have a lot of respect for the Quakers because they paid for some aspects of this, I don't know how much of it. They helped Jewish children to escape and they didn't ask anything for it. And unlike some religions which I don't think I'm going to mention, their intent was not to convert anybody to their religion. Their intent was simply to save some Jewish children in this situation. So I have always had a great deal of respect for them.

LEVINE: Were there particular Quaker women or men or anybody who took charge of you?

CIGE: I don't remember?

LEVINE: You met up with them in Marseilles, is that where you first encountered them?

CIGE: No. It was before we got to Marseilles. It was, --- what did I, I just read it. No, it was before we got the Marseilles. Then, of course, the JVDTA...

LEVINE: [superposed]] Well you went from the camp, I mean from the home...

CIGE: Yeah...

LEVINE: Then did you go directly to Marseilles from the children's home?

CIGE: Yes, yes. But this is on route that we stopped.

LEVINE: Oh, okay.

CIGE: Yeah. In Toulouse they met us.

LEVINE: Oh in Toulouse, right, okay. So then were the same individuals that went with you then as far as...

CIGE: I..

LEVINE: You don't remember. Okay so from, you went Toulouse, Marseilles, and then did you go to Portugal from Marseilles?

CIGE: Yeah, we were put on trains in Marseilles, excuse me, on a train in Marseilles and we went through Spain. And that was also an interesting experience.

LEVINE: How so?

CIGE: Well, we stayed overnight in Spain. I think it was near Madrid in a convent, ---which was an experience. Because, as I said to you, well maybe I didn't, as a Jewish kid in Germany and in other places, I was always conscious of the fact that the Christians were against me. You have to understand that--- -- I spoke to you about Cologne before. I saw this giant cathedral, I was afraid to go near it. Because in Germany you didn't distinguish between Nazis and Christians, because the Christians were Nazis and the Nazis were Christians. So the whole idea, you know that Christian is somebody

that didn't want to kill you was not something that I could understand. So now we were put up overnight in this convent. And they were just so nice to us it was hard for me to grasp. They were so wonderful. And the strange thing is it turned out they knew we were Jewish children and they were trying to find Kosher food for us. (Laughs) So the whole idea that the Christians were trying to please us as Jews and our Jewish desires was something that I, --- it took us a while to understand. But they were very nice to us and we stayed there overnight, and went on to Lisbon, Portugal.

LEVINE: Wow, I'm glad you had that experience.

CIGE: Yes. (Laughs)

LEVINE: So then did you stay long in Lisbon before the ship came in?

CIGE: I don't remember how long we stayed there; I think we immediately got on the ship. I think it was there when we got there.

LEVINE: So this is the Serpa Pinta?

CIGE: Yes.

LEVINE: And what was the voyage like? I guess you read something but...

CIGE: Yeah the voyage was interesting in a lot of respects. And of course I tried to keep in mind not just what I read to you which was that some day, you know, I don't, I didn't think I'd ever come back to, to Europe. So the idea of my being separated and being separated even more so further away from my family, my parents, is not something I particularly thrilled about. But I also had some interesting experience, some of which I've scribbled down. First of all, we left Lisbon and went to Casablanca, North Africa. That's

where the ship took us next. We were not taken off the ship but it was interesting to stop there and see what was going on. And this ship was loaded with cork. It was a tra--- you know, freighter, basically. And I mean it did have places for us to sleep but these were not luxury accommodations. So we were in Casablanca and from what I'm reading there we, yeah at six o'clock we arrived there. We rested there,----we rested! --- we stayed there, I'm reading the French I'm using the same word----- we stayed there one night. And then the next day around noon we left. So now we were on the ocean for ten days according to my little book here. And, I remember some very interesting experiences. The----, one of them was that we saw dolphins at the front of the boat jumping up. So that we would watch the dolphins jumping. The food on, (laughs) on the ship was not very diverse or very good. I remember, I think it was----- was it cucumbers? Yeah it was cucumbers that we constantly were given you know, on there. But it was interesting. It was nice. And after ten days we arrived in Bermuda. Which was also an eye opening experience. We did not go onto Bermuda but they boarded the ship, but the British did. Now you have to understand the British were at war at that time. Portugal was neutral but the British soldiers came aboard. And the soldiers wore uniforms with short pants. And we had never seen adults in short pants before so that was also an interesting experience. And they came aboard and I guess everything was okay. We were in Bermuda for two days and then we wound up going to New York --- which is pretty much what I have in here.

LEVINE: Do you know what prompted you to keep your little diary?

CIGE: No, I don't. And as I said I haven't looked at in years. So, yeah.

LEVINE: So, when you got to New York, do you remember coming into the New York harbor?

CIGE: Oh there's no way you can't not remember.

LEVINE: What was that like for you?

CIGE: Well, the---the most memorable and emotional experience is seeing the Statue of Liberty, about which I've written several things; the effect it had on all of us. So that was a grand experience. And of course the whole idea that we were now in the United States. We had not---- you know, I had seen the skyscrapers in the movies and in my mind. I had not seen so many cars. We saw cars zooming by. That's not something we had seen before. And of course, then what happened was that the doctors or whoever they were boarded the ship in the harbor. And they examined me and I had stomach problems and fever. And they decided that I go with them. And none of the other kids were taken off the ship; I was the only one that I'm aware of. And taken to Ellis Island where I stayed at the hospital for about a week.

LEVINE: Okay just before we turn the tape can you say, so we have it on the tape something about your feelings seeing the Statue of Liberty?

CIGE: Well it's---it's --- it was, first of all I never expected to see anything that big. It was something which was overwhelming to us to see. And it,--- I'm not--- you know, I don't know if I can put it into words. It was a symbol to us, I'm not sure that I expected to see it or that I knew that it was there. So here was this giant statue looking at us and it was just the overwhelming aspect of it. I didn't know it's history at that time, course I learned a lot since then, and I didn't know the symbolism connected with it. But it was just something that inspired all of us standing at the guardrail to look at it, to see it. Now the other thing is that I told you that somebody else came on board and took our pictures, the children. One of the pictures was taken from off

the ship and it wound up in a publication. So we---I have this picture of the children, including my brother and me, arriving in the United States.

LEVINE: Wow. Okay we're going to pause here, turn the tape and then we'll conclude.

END SIDE A TAPE 2

BEGIN SIDE B TAPE 2

LEVINE: Okay so we're talking about you being taken from the ship, the only child to be taken from the ship, because of your stomach ailment. And taken to Ellis Island and put in the hospital.

CIGE: Yes.

LEVINE: Now your brother was not with you.

CIGE: No.

LEVINE: So were you taking your responsibility seriously? Were you concerned or were you just feeling so sick that it wasn't an issue?

CIGE: The biggest concern I had was that I might be sent back to Europe---- I wouldn't be let into the country because I was sick. I---I I don't know that I gave much consideration of my, you know, my brother's c--, you know concern about him, because a kid all the kids seemed to be under control. Everything was going well for them.

LEVINE: I see. So one the one hand you must have felt some reluctance to leave Europe because your mother and father were there.

CIGE: Yes.

LEVINE: On the other hand you were afraid you'd get sent back.

CIGE: Yeah. No when I say sent back I thought sent back to the camp.

LEVINE: Okay. so what happened in the hospital here?

CIGE: What happened in the hospital is that I was in a strange place in a strange land, the language I didn't understand. And I, you know, was put in kind of a cot, and the only thing that made an impression on me, the whole experience, what there was----that there was a man who was also there who befriended me and kind of took me under his arm and took care of me, saw that I was going to be okay. And you know, how can I say it? It just, he just took care and saw that I was okay. And he gave me a quarter, American coin which I had never seen before, and which I kept for a long time. I don't know what's happened but I kept it for a long time. So the --the--the what he did for me in making me feel comfortable in the place made all the difference.

LEVINE: Now was he an employed person here or a patient?

CIGE: No, he was a patient.

LEVINE: Did he speak your language?

CIGE: Yes.

LEVINE: So how long were you in the hospital?

CIGE: I'm not sure but my impression is that I was there about a week.

LEVINE: And then what happened?

CIGE: Then what happened? One day I was told that I was going to be leaving. And I was taken to New York City, and what was another eye opening experience because I was driven in Manhattan with all these giant buildings that I couldn't get over. Now I was close to the buildings. And I was driven to upstate New York, to a children's home in upstate New York, where I was reunited with the other children.

LEVINE: Including your brother?

CIGE: Including my brother.

LEVINE: Now were these Quakers that were doing this here?

CIGE: No, no this was under the auspices of, I don't know who handled it here, it may have been HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant aid society) ----it may have been the children's home, I have no idea. All I know is that I was taken upstate New York to this children's home and which turned out to be, and I didn't know it, a town called Pleasantville, New York.

LEVINE: And, now could you communicate with your mother and father when you were in Pleasantville?

CIGE: I don't remember whether I did or not. I may have written to them but I'm not sure.

LEVINE: How long was your stay in Pleasantville?

CIGE: I'm not certain about that either. My guess, maybe about a month. But I'm not certain about that.

LEVINE: Okay now did you have any family in the United States?

CIGE: Yes, yes there was some distant family that my parents had. And I tried to contact them. And, you know, it just, there was nothing that worked out.

LEVINE: Was the children's home meant to be just a very temporary place?

CIGE: No, it had children there from the United States, American orphans. Had American orphans in there too, and we were there. And there was a distinct difference between us. We watched them play a game called baseball which looked stupid as hell to us -----knowing things like soccer, where everybody runs around and here people are just standing there swinging at a ball, and they're just standing there, and it didn't make any sense. But that's another story. There were a lot of experiences there including the religious aspect, which was a novelty for us. And upsetting for me and maybe some others too because we wound up in a- we didn't go to temple on Friday night, we didn't got to temple on Saturday, which is not unusual because in our experiences, you know, it was----but on Sunday they took us to temple. And then as we approached they were playing an organ. Now you understand what I said to you before about Christianity and the Nazis, so the idea that we were approaching a place where the organ was playing was not all-together settling. And then as we approached it they told us to take our hats off. So, that was a very, very upsetting experience in this children's home. And as I say, we ate foods we had never eaten before.

LEVINE: Like what? Remember?

CIGE: Yeah, like sweet potato. We--- I had never eaten sweet potato before. Corn, to my knowledge, our experience, corn was given to animals, human

beings didn't eat corn. So, you know (laughs) those kinds of things. It was a different world.

LEVINE: So where did you go when you left the children's home?

CIGE: My brother and I ----- now you have to understand, that my brother and I kept being chosen. From the concentration camp, we were taken out; from the children's home, the two of us were coming to the United States. Now the two of us were sent to St. Louis, Missouri, separated from the other kids.

LEVINE: Why St. Louis?

CIGE: You're asking the wrong person.

LEVINE: So you didn't know why or?

CIGE: No, no. A long train ride to St. Louis. There were a lot of train rides in my life, up to that point. We wound up in St. Louis.

LEVINE: There's a title for your book.

CIGE: Yes. I know. (Both laugh).

LEVINE: Yeah, go ahead. So you got to St. Louis...

CIGE: To St. Louis and we were put in the charge of a Jewish children's society at a children's home. And we were placed with foster family. But, because I make a habit of these things, I spent the first week in a hospital in St. Louis.

LEVINE: Your stomach?

CIGE: Yes, a Jewish hospital in St. Louis where they diagnosed it as what they called a "nervous stomach." And then we were placed with a temporary family. There was no intention of keeping us with this family until we found a foster home for us. And then my brother and I were placed in a foster home with a family, the Wolff family, W-O-L-F-F. And that was our first full time foster home.

LEVINE: And how were you treated there?

CIGE: We were treated beautifully there. The man had served in the War, and spoke German, which was very helpful. They had one son and they were just very good to us. I began school; I was 12 years old now. And since I had missed so much schooling they decided to put me in the first grade. So I was 12 years old, the other kids were 6 years old. That was my first schooling in this country. It was a very, very good family, and I learned things and they opened the world for us. I was in communication with my parents. But my brother and I had problems with each other after a while. We were with the family a couple of years, maybe a year and a half something like that. I don't know, you know how to say this, but my brother--- I'm like, as I said to you earlier,--- where I grew up very fast, he regressed into himself, dealt with things in a different way. He had what I would consider emotional problems. So we were then separated and put in separate foster families. Did you stay with this one or did he?

CIGE: No, no we were both taken...

LEVINE: Went to different...

CIGE: Yeah, went to separate families and we stayed with those separate families for a while. My second---in my schooling was an interesting situation because we now moved to another area. Because every time I wound up

with a separate foster family, I moved not always in conjunction with the schooling. And I made a very good friend, someone who,----- in those days, they did it more than now----- was held back classes several years, he wasn't promoted. So here was somebody who was roughly in the same grade level I was although maybe one year ahead, and about my age. And he introduced me to a social life that I didn't have before with somebody my own age. Now he had his own emotional problems, but that's another story. And then my brother and I were moved to a third set of foster parents, actually the fourth if we count the one that we were with temporarily. But lets call it the fourth then to keep it clear. The fourth set of foster parents where I stayed with the son and daughter in law of the family that he stayed with. They were related, and initially they didn't live together, but then they moved next door to each other. So my brother was in the house next to me but we were in separate families. And then, we lived with them for a while. And of course there are lots of events, stories I could tell you about but then we moved to the fifth family which was also a very good family. The second one and the fifth were the best. Those were, we were together in both of those but the people were very good. And, I was with this family and I wound up in high school by then. I was trying to catch up my education, I took the fifth and sixth grade at the same time, went to summer school and other things. And my brother, by the time he wound up in eleventh grade in high school, I quit school and joined the army. And I continued on with the same family. These are called the Zemlicks, the Zemlick family. And, this and I'm sure you don't know this part of the story, but I'm going to tell you an interesting aspect of the story. We were in communication with our parents this whole time. And through the help of distant relatives, for my parents had moved from place, from camp to camp and also had moved from France to Switzerland and then back to France and wound up in Limoges in France where they lived and where my two sisters, my two other sisters were born. This was in 1943 now.

LEVINE: This was also a camp in Limoges?

CIGE: No, no

LEVINE: Oh so they were out by then.

CIGE: They were out. They were out by then. It was 1943 they were born, yeah. The war was still on but they were out of camp. Because they had somehow gotten to Switzerland. It's a long complicated story. In any event, yeah, we lived with the Zemlicks and, where was I going?

LEVINE: You were in communication with them

CIGE: [interposed] With my parents.

LEVINE: and they were in Limoges, and they had two more children...

CIGE: Right, and what happened is through distant relatives, they were able to come to this country. So they arrived in this country and in, with the distant relatives who lived in Rockaway, Queens, New York. And my brother and I came up to see my parents from St. Louis, my brother from the, he was still in the army at the time. I was 21 years old now. The last time I had seen them I was 11 years old. So now I saw my parents ten years later after we all had gone through some interesting experiences, and the sister that I had left, when I had seen her last was 3 years old, was now 13 years old. But the other ones were 8 years old, that I'd never seen before. They were twins. And my brother and I came up, eventually. First we visited them, then we came to live. Now my brother, as I said, developed emotional problems. Among his thoughts- well I don't want to get into that.

LEVINE: Okay.

CIGE: So, we eventually came, my parents moved to Brooklyn, Brownsville area. And my brother and I came up to live with them, and we were reunited in Brooklyn.

LEVINE: So you were now 21 when you came to Brooklyn?

CIGE: Mm-mm.

LEVINE: And what did you do then?

CIGE: Well, I had had several jobs in St. Louis and my background; somehow I had wound up in furniture stores and other places doing collection work. And that became my resume. So when I came to live in Brownsville there was a furniture store several blocks away and I got a job doing collection work for the, there were two stores, they had different names but it was the same company that owned them. And I also registered in Brooklyn College at night. In St. Louis, I had gone to a teachers college because there were no charges. And there were two aspects, teachers college and community college. The community college was two years. I registered for that because I didn't think I wanted to be a teacher. And I had taken a year and a half there. There I had to go during the day and work at night and on the weekends. Here in Brooklyn, Brooklyn College had classes at night, and they didn't charge----except for the books. And I was, and you had to have, (chuckles) my wife just reminded me I had forgotten, you had to have an average of ----what was it 3.3? I had to have a B+ average to go there. And I made that. So I started going to Brooklyn College at night and working during the day. My father got a job as a tailor, but not nearly the kind of thing he was able to do in Europe. He worked in a place where he just did, adjusted the clothes you know.

LEVINE: Alterations.

CIGE: Alterations, yeah.

LEVINE: So did you have a goal in mind, I mean is there some career you wanted?

CIGE: I majored in English, and the reason I majored in English is because I fell in love with the language. I spoke German. I spoke French, but I just loved the English language. And I loved the literature and decided that I wanted to do something with that. Now I would have wanted to write but by the time I graduated which was in 1960, I was married and I already had one child. It took me eight years to get my bachelors degree. And I couldn't make much of a living writing. And in Brooklyn the only teaching jobs they had available----- by the way I started minoring in education because there was nothing else I could do with my English----- was in slum areas where I was afraid to go. And so I had my degree and continued to do the work that I was doing. My day job.

LEVINE: And did you become, did your mother and father ever become citizens?

CIGE: Yes they did. Yes, I have documents of their being citizens. I have, I think, my father's.

LEVINE: And you?

CIGE: And I? What, became a citizen?

LEVINE: Separately?

CIGE: Oh I became a citizen in St. Louis before I came up. When I was 21 years old.

LEVINE: Oh okay.

CIGE: (Chuckles) No the reason that's-----I'm laughing is because I was going to school and in order to get your citizenship they ask some questions. And so he, the person, the man there asked me could I explain to him about the government. The question was how is the government? And I was taking a class in political science. So I said well, the United States government ---- we have a president who is elected by the people, and we have a judiciary which is separate, we are divided, and I went into explaining it; he said "That's enough I don't want to hear anymore." (Both laugh)

LEVINE: And so your brother became a citizen by joining the army I would imagine.

CIGE: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: Yeah. Okay why don't you mention your wife's name and her maiden name?

CIGE: I have to remember that, right? Yeah her name is Sandra, and her last name, her maiden name is Berg, B-E-R-G.

LEVINE: And you have children, why don't you say their names.

CIGE: Yes, I have a son named Brian, Brian Mitchell, and I have a daughter, Hillary Beth.

LEVINE: Okay. And what would you say you're most proud of or that has given you a great deal of satisfaction when you look back over your life?

CIGE: Well that's a hard question to answer. I wish I'd been prepared for that, I would have given it some study and consideration. Well, about my education first of all. And that is the fact that I missed a lot of schooling. I missed what amounted to six years of schooling. By the time I graduate high school I was only two years behind. And I went to school at night and got a bachelors degree in English that took me eight years. And then I got a masters degree in finance that took me six years. And that didn't finish my education until I was 36 years old by which time I had two children. So the idea of working all day, going to school at night, and working to get my education is one of the things that I consider an achievement, an accomplishment on my part. But of course raising, having a family, meeting a wonderful woman, marrying her, having two great kids, and now six great grandchildren, not great-grandchildren...(Both laugh)

LEVINE: Not "great-grandchildren"...

CIGE: Very good...

LEVINE: Good grandchildren.

CIGE: Good grandchildren. Yeah and I think the other thing is, and I've never even thought of that until just now, is that after all the experiences that I've had, to come out of this with a degree, no I wouldn't s---, of normalcy which is no more or less than the average person. And I say this because my brother had lots of difficulties. My brother never got married, could not maintain social relationships. So that the experience, you know one of the things about the holocaust we don't talk about, we talk about the people who were killed physically. We never talk about those who were really damaged in other ways. And I'm very, very lucky in that having experienced what I did, that I have led the kind of life that I've led; that I was able to do some of the

things, and that I've enjoyed the fortunes that have come my way, the good luck and the wonderful things that have come my way.

LEVINE: Okay well that's a beautiful place to end unless there's something else that we haven't covered that you think you would like to talk about before we close.

CIGE: Not unless you have another question.

LEVINE: No, I just want to say that we will have some documents and or photos on file too. And I just want to thank you for a most wonderful interview.

CIGE: Thank you.

LEVINE: I appreciate it. Okay I have been speaking with Fred Cige and it is the 13 of August, 2004 and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I'm signing off.