

KECK-79/FERRAND

KECK-79

PIERRE FERRAND

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FRANCE (BORN GERMANY), 1940

AGE 16

PASSAGE ON "THE SIBONEY"

ALLEE: This is Debra Allee. I am speaking with Pierre Ferrand. Today is Tuesday, November 5, 1985. We're beginning the interview at 3:15, and we'll be interviewing Mr. Ferrand about his immigration experience from France in the year 1940. This is interview number 079. Okay?

FERRAND: Okay.

DANE: Um, why don't we begin at the beginning, in France?

FERRAND: Okay. The, the beginning is very simple. Uh, my, it is linked with the fact that my father was advisor to

the, uh, Quai D'Orsay, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France on Germanic affairs, and, uh, head of a monitoring service for, uh, German radio propaganda during the '30's. He had a couple of other hats, too. At any rate the Germans, Nazis at that time, let's put it that way, did not particularly like the kind of advice which he was giving to the, uh, had been giving to the, uh, Ministry. And, uh, they did not, uh, among other things, there was also the fact that, that the government of France back in, uh, 1940 at the height of the Blitzkrieg, uh, moved from Paris to, uh, over to past Tours and then to Bordeaux. Now, the funny thing about that was that, uh, my father thought that this was the same thing as in World War One. In World War One there was the, uh, the government also went to Bordeaux. And in Bordeaux, uh, it continued and Paris, uh, there was a, uh, battle before Paris called the Battle of La Marne, and the Germans were stopped there. My father, uh, was very sophisticated in other things. Uh, thought that, uh, the French army, uh, would somehow stop the Germans before Paris again. As a matter of fact, uh, to non-strategists the plan, the war plan, of the Germans looked very much like the, uh, in World War Two, looked very much

as in World War One. The difference was, of course, that it was motorized. (he laughs) Anyway, there was no, uh, Battle of La Marne. But, uh, we had left Paris on June 10th. June 14th the Germans marched into Paris. We had left with, uh, my father had been detached to the Ministry of Information, uh, which was established in, uh, in World War Two, uh, in France. And the Ministry of Information went from Tours to Moulins, to Cahors. Uh, and this was, uh, dissolved in Cahors at that time, that was, by that time the, uh, Petain had asked for an army stationed. We were told that my father was on, uh, the special list of the Gestapo and, uh, that we should leave France immediately.

ALLEE: Where were you right then?

FERRAND: Uh, that, by that time we had gone to the, uh, Ministry of Interior, which had gone to Pan, which is at the, the Pyrenees. Now, from Pan, uh, we got new papers there. My father's an officer of, with the false name. And, uh, the, uh, status as diplomatic courier for my father, he was able to take his wife and us with him, as a matter of fact, and, uh, the

Ministry was evacuated for the very good reason that most of the people who, uh, had worked for him were German nationals. And German nationals, whether Jewish, proven anti-Nazis or not, had been interned by the French in an effort, let us say, to avoid, uh, infiltration by the Fifth Column. The whole thing was, uh, absurd, but it was, it was a kind of fear which existed, also, in England. I have cousins who were, uh, uh, interned in the Isle of Man, and they were dumped on Jewish. (he coughs) So, uh, and this, uh, was a universal fear of the so-called Fifth Column. To my mind, the Fifth Column, uh, was generally not very efficient, and not very important in the fall of France or in what happened. It became, afterwards some of the early people were defeated since one got high positions in Vichy and some other things after Liberation in paris. But, before that, it was a rare minority, sometimes a noisy minority. But the one, not important. Even people like Laval, they were, who my father knew, uh, they were opportunists. And Laval, for instance, believed he could deal with Hitler, could make a deal, he was, uh, all the (?) in France, had the reputation of being wheeler-dealers, horse trades. And he thought he

could horse trade.

ALLEE: He found out.

FERRAND: He found out. Yes. Uh, it was not, uh, by his life he was even, he considered himself a patriot. I do not unnecessarily agree, but that's another matter.
(he laughs)

ALLEE: So you were telling me how it was that you got to accompany your father out of Paris.

FERRAND: Yes. Okay. I, uh, my mother worked for my father in monitoring service, part of the business. Of, was not really business, he was working for the government. Uh, because a lot of this was at off hours, prime time, you know. Radio prime time. When did Hitler speak, well, sometimes at noon, but very often also in the evening, no? For dinner. So my mother took it down and, uh, translated it into French. And I know, uh, I speak German like a native, and I also helped, though I was sixteen. And my brother, uh, he didn't have, uh, technically my father wanted me brother, uh, his family with him, uh . . .

ALLEE: For his work.

FERRAND: For his work. And also my brother was a radio engineer. (he laughs) He had worked in a radio shop. (he laughs)

ALLEE: Is your brother older or younger?

FERRAND: He's older. He's three years older. He's also here. Okay. Uh, in New York, as a matter of fact. Of course, I saw him. So, I kept in, uh, let us say, from Pan he went in a little town, to a little town called Le Pertice, uh, which was on the other side of, uh, the Pyrennes. It's not quite on the Mediterranean, but very close is . . . I don't know whether you know it.

ALLEE: Yes.

FERRAND: Okay. Le Pertice, as a matter of fact, he, uh, that was, uh, shortly after the Armistice and the frontiers between, uh, Spain and, uh, France were closed for several days. We slept in, uh, in a hotel which was partly in France and partly in Spain, and my father chose to sleep in the Spanish part for, if you will, security reasons. He didn't know what, uh, what type of, he didn't exactly trust the people who, uh, had

just come to power. Uh, Petain, Laval, and these other people. Okay, then we went to Spain.

ALLEE: So you got into Spain by sleeping in the Spanish half of the hotel.

FERRAND: Yes. (he laughs)

ALLEE: And leaving out that door.

FERRAND: No, we didn't. We went to the regular, uh, frontier, then when the frontier was opened. And then we went to Spain, through Spain, to Morocco, where we stayed a couple of months. Uh, I wanted to continue my studies in France, Lycee, but, uh, my father, uh, learned that, uh, General Wegan was coming to French Morocco, and while he was in French Morocco he had friends there and, uh, as a matter of fact, ninety-five percent of, uh, the people in French Morocco, the officials in French Morocco, in the town of Rabat, which I like very much . . .

ALLEE: Was that where you were staying in Morocco?

FERRAND: Yes, in Rabat. Uh, were de Gaullists, the only one who was not a de Gaullist was General Naugez, who was

the resident General, the head of the, uh, protectorate. Which had the status, uh, it had the status of a French protectorate. He went, he, uh, went, but General Wegan, as I aid, came to, uh, to, uh . . .

ALLEE: To Morocco.

FERRAND: To Morocco and we were told that his mission was to stop the refugees and, uh, re-patriate as many as possible and possibly send them to, uh, Germany and various other places . Uh, so, uh, we were advised to leave. My father went to, uh, the, uh, U.S. Consulate in Casablanca and he was advised by the, uh, he explained the case to him. My father had been in, uh, United States in '38, on special mission for the French government. As a matter of fact, what he did, that is another of his hats. Uh, he did a program of twenty-four, uh, half hour programs, radio programs on life in the institutions of the United States. Uh, with a young CBS man, was delegated to help him. Uh, the young man was Norman Colven, you may have heard of him.

ALLEE: Oh, I think so.

FERRAND: You have. Okay. Norman Colven was, uh, remained a very good friend of ours. Uh, I'm not in contact with him, but my father was very much.

ALLEE: So your father went to the U.S. Consulate to . . .

FERRAND: He went to the U.S. Consulate, thank you, he went to the U.S. Consulate and he explained to him that he, uh, that we were on, uh, we had changed our name to avoid, if you will, the Gestapo and how we were, and explained exactly who we were and, uh, what my father's credentials were. We had the credentials, as a matter of fact. So the diplomatic courier type papers with official seal contained, uh, authentic passports. (he laughs)

ALLEE: I see. You had put him in a, you'd sort of hidden them.

FERRAND: He had put them in the diplomatic courier, uh, envelope . . .

ALLEE: Pouch, yes.

FERRAND: Or pouch. (he laughs) Uh, so, uh, the consul said, "I can, can give you a transit visa. I cannot give

you a visitor's visa. Uh, it would be possible for the Counsel in, theoretically it would be possible for the, uh, Consul in Lisbon to give you the, uh, visitor's leave, uh, visa. Or even, but don't wait for him. Uh, he is, uh, visitor's leave, uh, visa. Or even, but don't wait for him. Uh, he is, uh, xenophobic and, uh, uh, you would just be wasting your time. So we had a transit visa. Now the question was, transit to where? Well, that was easy because my father's connections at the, uh, French protectorate people. We got the, uh, visa for French Morocco, not French Morocco. French, for La Martinique. Uh, and, uh, okay, we went to, uh, we went to Casablanca. As a matter of fact, we went to Casablanca at the same time Humphrey Bogart was there. (he laughs)

ALLEE: Really? (she laughs) I don't think he was never there.

FERRAND: Of course he wasn't.

ALLEE: Did you go to Rick's? Did you see Ingrid Bergman?

FERRAND: I didn't see Ingrid Bergman. No, uh, as a matter of fact, we went to Casablanca at the same time Humphrey

Bogart was there. (he laughs)

ALLEE: Really? (she laughs) I don't think he was never there.

FERRAND: OF course he wasn't.

ALLEE: Did you go to Rick's? Did you see Ingrid Bergman?

FERRAND: I didn't see Ingrid Bergman. No, uh, as a matter of fact, my, uh, late wife looked, everybody said looked very much like Ingrid Bergman, and she had been an actress but, okay. From Casablanca we took a trip, uh, to Lisbon. Now, the only, the boat which was available was, something like between one fifty and two hundred tonner, very small boat. There was about eighty or ninety people in the hull. Uh, we were privileged, as a matter of fact, that's the story of my life, we were privileged and, uh, slept on, on top, on the deck.

ALLEE: ON the deck itself.

FERRAND: Uh, which was full of tar, by the way. We had, we had bought some food because they weren't feeding anybody. Uh, but quite frankly we didn't eat for three days we

were so seasick. But we escaped the hell of the hull. As a matter of fact, when the ship was, uh, arrived in Lisbon, everybody, uh, who did not have a British or a French passport was, uh, detained by the Portuguese authorities, number one, I don't know what happened to them. Uh, and, number two, the ship itself was condemned as unseaworthy. It took three days, this trip, and despite the very calm seas, and at that time I wasn't particularly subject to, uh, seasickness. I was seasick all the time, it was a miserable time.

ALLEE: This boat went to Lisbon, or from Lisbon . . .

FERRAND: From Casablanca to Lisbon.

ALLEE: From Casablanca to Lisbon.

FERRAND: Right. In Lisbon we waited for a, uh, trip to the United States for two-and-a-half months, and we left on the second of this, uh, second of this, uh, second of, we arrived here in the United States on the second of December after a ten, uh, day trip on the S.S. Siboney, of the American Export boat lines which, uh, I think, was torpedoed in '43 or '44.

ALLEE: Can you tell me the name one more time?

FERRAND: Siboney.

ALLEE: Siboney?

FERRAND: S-I-B-O-N-E-Y. That's, as a matter of fact, the, uh, battle of the, uh, War of 1898, the Spanish American War. (he laughs) Somewhere in Cuba. (he laughs) I think a bay, if I remember well.

ALLEE: I wasn't familiar with the name.

FERRAND: I would have to check that. (he laughs) But, uh . . .

ALLEE: How was that trip, on the S.S. Siboney?

FERRAND: Well, we weren't seasick, my brother and I, and we brought food to our mother and father, who weren't feeling too good on the ship. This was a winter trip. It was longer than, uh, trips where, on, uh, the big, on the really big boats. My father had taken his first trip in, to the United States, on the Normandy. It was faster. (he laughs) That was a ten-day trip. Oh, I do not remember very much about the trip except that we were feeding our parents, uh, who were, uh, spending their time on deck, in deck chairs and

not moving because they weren't feeling too good.

(he laughs)

ALLEE: But you didn't have to stay in the, in the hold of the ship, or in the cabin this time?

FERRAND: No, no. That was not, no, this was, uh, no, that was different. We didn't, in the first area that, uh, less pleasant a trip either. We didn't stay in the hold of the ship. Unfortunately I, uh, fortunately I wasn't seasick on trip number two. Well, as things went, the ship cast anchor beyond the Narrows. I didn't know that. I was living in Staten Island years later. (he laughs) And, uh, on the immigration officials, uh, swarmed on deck with, uh, funny uniforms. I thought, uh, they were, uh, they were particularly distinguished by wrap collars. I don't remember the color. And, uh, buttons (he laughs) and caps. And, of course, lines were formed and I remember filling out a form in which I was testifying that, uh, oh, it was such things as I had never been in an insane asylum, that, uh, I was not a prostitute, that, uh, I was not going to overthrow the government by, uh, force or violence, that I was neither an

anarchist or a communist and things like that. This, to my sixteen-year mind formed with French logic, which is not necessarily the best one but anyway . . . (he laughs) Was, sounded a little bit naive. I didn't not feel that, uh, that people who really wanted to overthrow the government by force and violence would testify to it in writing, uh, on a piece of paper, uh, when they came into the country. Well, I learned later on, of course, much later on, that, uh, the purpose of this is to furnish documentation for such things as prosecution for perjury, and that was, uh, this is par for the course for the way the American justice system sometimes works. For example, Dillinger and income tax evasion. After that, for murder, murder. But, uh, let us say, was just a strange custom. (he laughs)

ALLEE: When the ship docked, or, not docked . . .

FERRAND: It did not dock at that time.

ALLEE: Dropped anchor . . .

FERRAND: It dropped anchor, yes.

ALLEE: Um, did you go and take a look at the Harbor and see

the Statue of Liberty and all that stuff? Did you have any thoughts, before you got the form to fill out, did you have any thoughts?

FERRAND: I saw, I saw the Statue of Liberty at that time, and I had seen its little brother, which is on one of the bridges of Paris, if you know it.

ALLEE: I don't know which bridge.

FERRAND: I, I do not recall exactly which bridge it is, but it's one of the bridges. Let's say, I could lead you there. (he laughs) Well, we'll have to check on that one of these days. (he laughs) It's easy. But it has a small, let us say, more or less, uh, man's size or a woman's size, Statue of Liberty. You have never seen it?

ALLEE: I don't remember seeing the one in Paris.

FERRAND: Okay. That's the little sister.

ALLEE: What did you think of the one in, what did you think of the big sister when you . . .

FERRAND: Well, let's say, uh, despite that fact that I do not think that, uh, Batholdi is the equal of Rodin as a

sculptor. I rather liked it, uh, let us say, as a symbol rather than as a work of art.

ALLEE: That's what it is.

FERRAND: Yes, of course. (he laughs) And, well, in later years in the U.S. we were quite, we were neighbors and quite friendly with the, uh, woman called Herthe Pauli. Herthe Pauli, uh, and, um, her constant companion, who was Vladimir, he was a German poet of considerable distinction, a very wealthy man. Herte Pauli, he wrote a book called I Lift My Lamp, which I happen to have here, that I was re-reading, on the s. Uh . . .

ALLEE: Why don't we, for the moment, get back to you on, at age sixteen, on the ship. (he laughs) Seeing the Statue of Liberty and then filling the form.

FERRAND: Uh-huh. Yep. Okay, I filled the forms and, um, I had no problem, uh, um, testifying that, um, I was of good moral standing. I hadn't lived a long, uh, long enough to be particularly immoral. (he laughs) And, uh, uh, my, uh, political convictions were, let us say, anti-Nazi. (he laughs) And very pro-

French. (he laughs) So, uh, and I had absolutely no interest in overthrowing the United States government by force and violence. And as, as the line went on and on, uh, came nearer to the immigration officer sitting there at the table. Notice that, things went pretty routinely and there was, uh, little question. It was very different when my father came, because my father, my father was asked what his name was and he said, "No, that's not my real name." "No?" The immigration officer was a little bit nonplused. He did not, he was wondering, these foreigners don't understand, so, he continued his questioning and said, "You want to go to La Martinique?" My father said, "No, I don't want to go to La Martinique. La Martinique is Vichy-ite, and I have good reason to believe that if I get into the power of people where, where, uh, owed allegiance to Vichy, I would be, uh, sent back to France and probably to Germany, to the good graces of the Gestapo. Besides that, he was cut off. There was a conference between two officers of the immigration department. At that time was very dependent on the Department of Labor, as a matter of fact, Mrs. Perkins who as far as I know was never active in immigration matters in any sense. Uh, but

anyway, uh, the conference between the two officers was obviously that we should be sent to, uh, Ellis Island for further investigation.

ALLEE: Can we stop a minute and turn the tape? End of side one.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

ALLEE: Beginning of side two.

FERRAND: It's, of course, for instance, a man called Berthold Jacob was, had been an associate of Carl von Ossietzky. Uh, Ossietzky was a Nobel Prize winner for peace who died in a German concentration camp and, like Carl von Ossietzky, he was, uh, particularly disliked by the Germans, uh, by the Nazis, because he had written about German secret re-armament during the Weimer Republic and then continued with German secret re-armament in the '30s. Berthold Jacob was captured once by the, uh, Germans when he was in Switzerland. That was in 1925. My father helped orchestrate the, uh, campaign to, uh, get pressure on the German government to, uh, have him released. Um, uh, this

campaign was, he wrote an essay and published a pamphlet. The essay was, the pamphlet was called Why Is The World Silent? and, uh, he ended the pamphlet, silent means consent to barbarism. The, uh, let us say, the pressure was effective in 1936, uh, early 1936. The, uh, Swiss authorities, who had been lackadaisical about it, protested and that was early in the Nazi regime. Uh, the Germans decided that the, uh, that a better course of valor or wisdom at that time for the cause, if you will, was it, uh, allow him to go. And he went to France. He escaped through the Valient Fier organization, from Marseilles to Lisbon. Uh, after that, the Germans marched into France. And in Lisbon, shortly, uh, a couple months after we had left Lisbon, he was captured by the, uh, Germans, and died in the tender arms of the Gestapo. So these things existed. And in 1941 nobody, but nobody, was going to protest against this type of things any more in Europe. The Portuguese weren't, were not, the Portuguese were neutral and did not, let's say, they were not particularly anti-refugee or anti . . . Only were, as a matter of fact, relatively pro-English. But they were neutral and they certainly did not want to have any, uh, the wrath of the Germans on them. So

they didn't protest at that time.

ALLEE: So . . .

FERRAND: So these things existed. (he laughs)

ALLEE: They existed. And your father was . . .

FERRAND: Quite aware of it.

ALLEE: Quite aware. Yeah.

ALLEE: And we were quite aware of it because, as I said, I had, uh, I had helped my father here and there, and translated.

ALLEE: So we are at the point in your story where they've decided that you have to stay on Ellis Island for a while.

FERRAND: Right. Well, so, I could see Ellis Island from afar, and it looked like gingerbread architecture to me. Let us say, uh, very different from, uh, uh, if you will, Sacre Coeur in Paris, in, uh, shape. I thought it was somehow of the same family. I know it was a brick, it was not a white building. It was brick and, uh, uh, building, and red and all that type of thing

but, well, this, between Sacre Coeur and a railroad station. (he laughs)

ALLEE: I see.

FERRAND: It was, uh, it, so we went and we were put in Ellis Island and I saw the back of the Statue of Liberty. I'll have something to say about that later. And the, uh, building, uh, we stayed, let us say, uh, considerable, uh, day after day in the Great Hall. The Great Hall was not the kind of Great Hall you see in the number pictures of Ellis Island in its heyday, all these barriers, uh, looked at me a little bit like cattle barriers. (he laughs) Well, anyway, it was empty except for a number of chairs and some benches and a few tables, which were at a premium. It's, of course, a huge hall and with these huge windows. Very soon after it was, the entrance there, I called it the, uh, the old hall, the House of the Dirty Windows, because they were dirty. There was accumulated grime, if not of centuries, certainly of years, on the windows. There was, let's see, I found very, uh, a very curious and ingenious contraption for opening and closing certain parts of it, I think a system of

levers and pulleys, if I remember well. I thought that was an example of what I had heard about, uh, Yankee ingenuity. We had read a lot of Jules Verne. (he laughs) And Jules Verne was a poor American even after he had written the book. (he laughs) And, um, the, uh, if you clean the windows off, the paint off, or part of the pain, it had these big cross, uh, sticks, or whatever you call them.

ALLEE: Mullions.

FERRAND: Yes, yes, Mullions is the correct word, cross Mullions and part of the pane you could clean it off, and then you had, of course, especially at, uh, towards the evening, and it was December, uh, the most finest sight of the New York skyline that you could imagine. And it was way far away, of course, very dirty looking water. (he laughs) We went, there were about, uh, eighty people, uh, in Ellis Island when, all staying in this hall.

ALLEE: Were you sleeping in the hall too, or did you behave . . .

FERRAND: No, you did not sleep in the hall. The, uh, if you

know pictures of Ellis Island you know that there is a first floor with galleries around, and off this, uh, off this, uh, uh, parapet, gallery, whatever you call it, open gallery, there are various offices and, uh, dormitories. On the side of the hall, there's a staircase leading to the woman's dormitories. On the other side of the hall there's a staircase leading to the men's dormitories, and never the twain shall meet. Whether married or not, uh, you stayed, although the stay in the Great Hall was coeducation.

ALLEE: Did you go outside the building at all?

FERRAND: No.

ALLEE: They didn't let you out?

FERRAND: They did not let us out. We were in this hall day after day. Uh, we went up to the, eh, uh, dormitory, I think, about six o'clock and, uh, the lights were open, was on all night in the dormitory. The reason why the lights were on was very simple. That's for, uh, supervision purposes, if you will. We were not, uh, technically we were not prisoners or deportees. Our status was not clear. We were, the official

label, I think, was passengers. Uh, as a matter of fact, uh, we were counted about five days, uh, five times a day. Every time you went, as a matter of fact, exactly five times. When we went down the dormitory, when we went to the refectory, uh, three times a day and when we went up to the dormitory. The count was big, uh, slate, next to, uh, we saw it each time when we passed to the refectory where we were eating, and the typical count was something like, uh, forty men, sixteen women and children and five others. I was wondering who the others were. (he laughs) The others, uh, it turned out, I learned later on, were, uh, Orientals or such. There was no Chinese quota at that time, since, basically, if you will, since the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, it's only during, uh, in the middle of a war when, in '43, when the Chinese became, uh, our allies. Other than that there was the, uh, General's quota of a hundred granted. Okay?

ALLEE: How many days were you there?

FERRAND: Uh, since December 2, 1940 to March 30th, 21st, 19, uh, '41. The, uh, guards were surly, bored, at least

this was how I may do them an injustice. they may have been marvelous people. (he laughs) But that was the impression I had then. They were surly, bored, unfriendly. They did not mistreat us. They were watching us. They were in corners of the hall.

ALLEE: Were they armed?

FERRAND: What?

ALLEE: Were they armed? Did they have guns?

FERRAND: I do not know whether they, uh, uh, they had guns. I don't think so. I do not think that was necessary. We were all, were very, we were a peaceful group. None of us, as far as I know, were interested in throwing, overthrowing the government of the United States, that, of course, I know. (he laughs) But I do not remember any guns. Uh, I may be mistaken. But I was not afraid of violence as such.

ALLEE: What did you do all day? You were sixteen.

FERRAND: Well, I read. I, uh, I read and I, uh, well, I may, uh, have always been a rather relatively shy person. I don't know why I am doing this now. (he laughs)

But, uh . . .

ALLEE: Well, I'm glad you're doing it.

FERRAND: But, I have generally kept to myself. My, uh, I did, let us say, very soon after that, after I arrived I became friendly with a young man. Uh, Saul Kaplan, he was Polish and whose, his father was in the United States. He had, he was the, uh, had been an industrialist in Lublin and he had been, uh, sent to England by his father before the outbreak of World War Two. His father had come to the States. HE was very well-to-do. His mother stayed in, uh, Lublin to wind up the family business. He was caught by the beginning of, the war in Poland, the blitzkrieg against Poland, but managed to, uh, take a trip all the way around, uh, the world to Shanghai. He finally landed in, uh, San Francisco. More or less at the same time that his son landed in, uh, Ellis Island. He had been in the, uh, British public school. Red-cheeked, apple-cheeked young man, my age, awfully national. And, uh, let us say, he had a solely British accent. Was very much pro-British. (he laughs) His father wanted him up out, out of Great

Britain. That was when the Battle of Britain was going on, for obvious reasons. But my father, uh, his father could not pick him up because the, uh, immigration authorities had notified, uh, had been notified that the mother had been detained in, uh, in San Francisco. The problem was possibly a matter of, I do not know what the legal problem was there. The problem seemed, seemed to be that, uh, the, uh, mother could not be picked up, could not be released, because her son was detained and the son, uh, could not be released because the mother, the mother was detained. It took about, it took four-and-a-half months to clear that up. So, uh, Kaplan, he's dead, became, uh, an instructor in Cal Tech. A nice person, a nice young man, I think, a library in Cal Tech named after him, his father was wealthy enough to do that. (he laughs) A lovely person. Okay, we played chess together and discussed, uh, the beginnings of World War Two. I was a little bit dubious about, uh, English aid, and he was defending the British.

ALLEE: Did you speak English by then, or you were . . .

FERRAND: I had learned English in, uh, Lycee, in France. That

did not mean that I spoke English very well, but I managed. Uh, I had gotten prizes for English. That doesn't mean anything either. (he laughs)

ALLEE: Well, it's different when you actually have to speak it.

FERRAND: Yes. But I managed, and I learned pretty fast. Uh, and he was a friend, a friend of my age. My brother, let us say he was in, he reminded me yesterday, as a matter of fact, was in more or less hot pursuit of, of, uh, two girls who were also in Ellis Island for a little while. With her parents they were Poles, a couple of young girls. I was two, let us say, I was sixteen and it was, uh, the first co-educational institution I attended, as a matter of fact, was Ellis Island. The schools in France were not co-educational. Well, I was pretty shy. (he laughs) And, uh, was not, uh, I was, let us say, one thing that I did discover was that there was a library in Ellis Island. That was very important to me. A lot of people were talking to me from time to time, were talking to us, Saul and I, we became inseparable, in Ellis Island anyway. We remained friends until he

died. Uh, and, uh, I r one, I think he was a German refugee, very solemnly preaching to us, while we were playing chess, "Don't get addicted to chess.

Addiction to chess is bad. Let us say, many a life has been destroyed by that." (he laughs) Frankly, I never got very much addicted to chess. (he laughs) I'm not a particularly good player. I'm not that interested.

ALLEE: And the story of how you got off Ellis Island . . .

FERRAND: Okay. The first, uh, visitor who came to us from Ellis, uh, Ellis Island, was a man called Albert C. Gratinsky. Albert C. Gratinsky had been the, uh, Polizei president or, uh, Police Commissioner of Berlin, during the Weimar Republic, during part of the Weimar Republic. He was on the drop dead list of Goebbels, because Goebbels had been the Gareleiter of Berlin, let us say, the leader of the Nazi party in Berlin itself and, of course, his, uh, stock in trade was to cause, uh, to have the stormtroopers battle the Communists and molesting other opponents and Jews and so on. And Gratinsky was not Jewish. Uh, his job was to try to keep order in the city. Uh, and besides

that, he was a social democrat, a very decent fellow, even though he was a police president. (he laughs) and he told us that my father was on a list of, my father and family, were on a list of, uh, people who were supposed to be given emergency visas. He had, we were on that list, that he had heard that the Gestapo had caught up with us and, since the list was very limited the, uh, our name had been crossed off.

ALLEE: The Gestapo had somehow . . .

FERRAND: Caught up with us. In other words, that we, as, uh, we had been caught by the Gestapo, by the, uh, by the S.S. in, uh, during our flight from France.

ALLEE: You mean, the people in the United States thought that, I don't think I understand.

FERRAND: Okay. You have here a list of people, uh, German politicians, intellectuals and so on, of, uh, generally of some prominence, were supposed to get, uh, be given priority treatment. The priority treatment, at that time, because the process of getting an immigration visa took two or three years at that time, consisted in a visitor's visa, of which the

requirements were not as stiff. Now, there's a lot to be said about that. You don't want the history of the immigration here. (he laughs) I know about it, but, uh . . .

ALLEE: So they thought you had been caught.

FERRAND: Yes.

ALLEE: I see.

FERRAND: The immigration visas, the visitor's visas, uh, the list for this priority, this priority list was very limited. I think that eventually, uh, the figure had seen eventually three thousand people plus, possibly, families. I do not know how it worked. Of this, in various books I've seen, about fifteen hundred or, less than half, eventually made it to the United States. And one of the reasons is because the, uh, now this was supposed to be an emergency speed priority list. Breckeridge Long, who was the Assistant Secretary of State under which the visa department was at that time, gave, had given instructions to the effect that to avoid fifth columnists, uh, among the dues and other certified

anti-Nazis who had already been screened, mind you, and screened by people like Gratinsky who had been the police commissioner and certainly, uh, was not a, uh, an amateur in screening. Uh, that, uh, these were to be separately investigated by the counsels before being given a visa.

ALLEE: But you had been already crossed off the list through an error.

FERRAND: Yes, so it didn't apply, uh, any more. Right?

ALLEE: So what did you do next?

FERRAND: Well, my father had quite a number of contracts in the United States. He had been in contact with the State Department and different departments because the immigration department was, of course, under the Department of Labor before, uh, in '38 and '39 and '40 and he had been, uh, in contact with, uh, a lot of radio people. Uh, the reason for that is that his analysis of German radio propaganda, agreement of the german, of the French government, were also sent to various people like, uh, uh, a young correspondent who became famous later on, Ed Morrow of CBS. (he

laughs) He was the last one who visited us in Paris, as a matter of fact. Uh, to, uh, stay over, when he wasn't in Berlin. And people like that. H.P. Kaltenborn and so on. So he was known to quite a number of people. He was also known to, uh, let's see, uh, people like Baron Robert de Rothschild who, uh, had made it to the United States. Uh, he was the head of the Rothschild banking family, in Paris, in France. And, uh, the head of most relief organizations, that had been there who, most refugee relief organizations in France also, are Jewish. He sent us a letter. I have this letter still. Later on he gave us an affidavit which, uh, which, uh, on December 17th he sent us a letter, or sent a letter to the Immigration and Naturalization Service saying, testifying for what kind of background my father had and that he knew him and, uh, that he, uh, was certainly not a fifth columnists. And, uh, uh, later on he was, that's to say, as a matter of fact, he gave us an affidavit which was not acceptable to the, uh, Immigration, uh, Department for various reasons. One of them is that, that while he was a resident of the United States by that time, he was not a citizen, and the second thing is that they did not believe in, uh,

in people how were not related and they also, as a matter of fact, some consuls didn't even believe in people who, uh, were related, such as brothers and sisters who had no legal obligation to support. That was the, uh, law of, the ruling about public . . .

ALLEE: We've run out of tape again. End of second side. Will be continued on tape two. This is an interview with Pierre Ferrand, number 079.

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

ALLEE: This is tape two, continuation of the interview with Pierre Ferrand, number 079. This is Debra Allee, and it's November 5th.

FERRAND: The . . .

ALLEE: The various people who had written on your forms . . .

FERRAND: Right. And, uh, Baron Robert de Rothschild, and the fact that, uh, let us see, his affidavit that he would not pick, uh, that he would take care that we would not become a public charge was not accepted by the immigration authorities. Uh, the, uh, as a matter of fact, as you know, uh, some consuls did not take the

affidavits of brothers or sisters because they have no legal obligation. An affidavit, these affidavits had moral obligations, but you could not enforce them. Catch 22. (he laughs) Uh, Catch 22 comes in, as I explained, because, uh, uh, you could not have, let us say, under the contract labor clause, you could not have a, uh, a job or a promise of a job in the United States. So you couldn't, it was a very difficult to prove to some consulate minds that, that, uh, and I can understand their dilemma, from their point of view, that, uh, some of the, uh, a family or a person would never become a public charge. That is another issue altogether anyway, and we weren't there yet. So the way, uh, I explained the delays we, uh, why it lasted for three-and-a-half months, was that my father got quite a number of people intervening for him and now, uh, the, the problem about interventions in a bureaucratic environment is that intervention is a piece of paper. Uh, it is either a letter or a memorandum of a telephone conversation or something like that. Okay, this letter or memorandum has to be investigated, another memorandum. Then the investigation has to be evaluated by the superior officer. So the file gets thicker and thicker and

thicker. The more interventions there were the thicker the file went. And what I call the law of bureaucratic gravity operates, uh, thick files sink to the bottom and not touched. And the reason for that is very simple. Two reasons, one is that bureaucrats, or at least some bureaucrats, are even human. If they see a thick file they are horrified. That will take a long time. Let's do something easy first.

ALLEE: That is what happened to your dad.

FERRAND: Also, the second reason is that, uh, let us say, uh, bureaucrats, uh, very often in the bureaucratic organizations you are measured by the number of cases you are proceeding, or tapes. (he laughs) So, uh, under these circumstances, the law of bureaucratic gravity is a natural law and I personally demand credit for its discovery. (he laughs) Okay, this being out of the way, uh, the fact was, of course, from a strictly bureaucratic point of view, we arrived there, uh, with the false name, false birthrate, passports were authentic. They were issued by the proper authorities. We did not go to have them fabricated anywhere else. (he laughs) But these

were passports, at that time we had passports of, of the German, of the french protectorate of Morocco.

ALLEE: In the false names.

FERRAND: Yes. And, uh, of course, at the time of said visa, the difficulty of getting that type of visa changed to anything, because the process was you had to, under normal circumstances, you had to go through a consul. As a matter of fact, when I eventually immigrated I had to go, uh, to Montreal overnight, spend a day at the consulate there and then come back. That was all pre-arranged. But the law was that you could not immigrate when you had a visitor's visa or any other kind of visa except an immigration visa. You could not get an immigration visa, except by going out of the country. These were procedures. Of course, there were bureaucratic procedures which served one purpose, to restrict immigration.

ALLEE: They're still in force.

FERRAND: I know. (he laughs) Among some groups of immigrants, for some groups of immigrants, but not for others. But that's another question we won't get

into. (he laughs) All right. Uh, by that time, we realized that we were privileged. All things, keeping these things in proportion, we knew that waiting, let us say, if you had to wait for, uh, for instance, a visitor's visa, uh, in Lisbon, there would be a real risk of us being caught by the Gestapo as my father's friend Berthold Jacob had been caught. Uh, and, uh, as a matter of fact my, one of the reasons, uh, why the Nazis didn't like my father was that he had written in 1936 a book, analysis, of German radio propaganda. Uh, this was the first, uh, reasonably comprehensive book on the subject. Uh, called Goebbels Conquers The World. It was not exactly pro-Goebbels. (he laughs) Okay. So we realized that we were privileged. We realized that, uh, we, uh, that the alternative was waiting, uh, in danger somewhere in Europe, or Morocco or wherever. Uh, and we will, we did not really feel in danger there. We were annoyed, if you will, there, but, uh, we were not going to bad mouth the situation, or bad mouth fate or feeling sorry for ourselves. And, uh, as a matter of fact that, uh, in the library of, uh, Ellis Island I found, one of my favorites, uh, spent my, uh, many hours, uh, reading that Petit Larousse Illustre,

Nouveau Petit Larousse Illustré. That's the French encyclopedia dictionary by an excellent author. It's both a, if you will, a Columbia encyclopedia. And this, oh, with great joy, I found, again, and I saw there the, leafed through it, and I saw the motto of Liberia, and this inspired me for a motto, and the arms, drawing the arms of Ellis Island. It's the only artistic, let's say, achievement in terms of painting or drawing, I ever made. The, uh, field was iron bars, uh, there were two crossed jail keys, and the motto was that of Liberia, with slight changes and punctuation marks. The motto is, uh, of Liberia is: "The love of liberty brought us," three points, "here!" Exclamation mark. (he laughs) That shows my irritation, if you will. By the second month or so, third month, I was annoyed. We were, speaking of the food, the food was institutional. It was not particularly good. Nor is the food in most pensions or whatever, yeah? Uh, one thing which, uh, we found particularly horrendous, I do not know whether it was quite justified, uh, was the coffee. We were all certain that the coffee was drugged with saltpeter, sodium, or something like that, to keep lust under control. (he laughs) This may not, however, be

true but, uh, I understand that this type of thing goes on in my prisons or detainment centers.

ALLEE: It was an explanation for why it tasted that way.

FERRAND: Exactly. It was very convincing to me, anyway. (he laughs)

ALLEE: So your father finally, uh . . .

FERRAND: My father finally, uh, let us say, decided that perhaps there was some truth in the American saying that nice guys finish last, and he started to tell people, he, uh, talked to his friends in the newspaper and radio world and how they, uh, and he, uh, well, he was quite inventive. He may have invented that. He said, well, "If I started a hunger strike would you, could you write something about it in the press?" They said yes, and he did. The hunger strike was something of a joke. We brought him, uh, food from the refectory. He was not a big eater anyway. Uh, but he did not go to the refectory. Well, uh, and my mother, who was quite a lady, she was a quiet person, five feet small, dainty and, let us say, softspoken, she started, uh, let us say, to go, very quietly,

whether it may, whether making, without making any kind of, uh, hysterical display about it, she started to count the guards who were counting us. Loudly. Or not that quietly, in the sense that she did it at, uh, in normal conversational tone, you know, so that they could hear it. She did not shout it. So the guards got worried and she was put in the, uh, uh, infirmary. Two days after my father started the hunger strike he got a message from, uh, the head of, the Commissioner, I think it was Byron Rule at that time, uh, "Why don't you stop this?" He said, "Well, I will stop this if, uh, uh, I'm released. There's no reason for detaining us. You should have enough evidence in your file." Uh, I could mention another thing before that. That, uh, back in, after two months, uh, in Ellis Island, we were allowed to go out, uh, uh, from Ellis Island, as a matter of fact, in the company of a man from the State Department who had been sent down to interview us. This man from State Department went to, uh, uh, got the whole family out, the Midtown Hotel, for lunch. Uh, and he was trying to persuade my father to, let me say, to report him on conditions in Morocco and, uh, Lisbon and similar things. My father had been in, let us say, he had said that he had been in

contact here, uh, in France he had been in contact with the Deuxieme Bureau and the Secret Service, he had been in contact with the Secret Service in Lisbon.

ALLEE: He wanted, sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt. Go ahead.

FERRAND: What? No, if something is not clear . . .

ALLEE: No, I think you were about to say what I was about to ask you, so . . .

FERRAND: Well, he wanted him to, uh, report on conditions, my father. My father said, "Gladly. If I'm released. I'm not speaking as a detainee." So we were brought back to Ellis Island. Uh . . .

ALLEE: so how long did the hunger strike have to take?

FERRAND: It took about three days. My father, uh, let us say, there was a newspaper article, not a couple of newspaper articles. They were not very accurate. Newspaper articles normally aren't. But they were, uh, speaking of being a refugee. Let us say they were a rather, uh, soft sister type. But they annoyed, uh, the blazes out of the authorities, of course.

Bureaucrats do not like that, that type of publicity. So, uh, but the first thing, we got a hearing, and this is the first hearing, my father had gone to hearings, and without us, the kids. By the way, I want to go somewhere if I can.

ALLEE: Oh, okay, sure. (break in tape)

FERRAND: Uh, with the French government. As a matter of fact, queerly enough, Sarah Delano Roosevelt, the mother of the president. (he laughs) But this is, this complicates the thing even further, you know. That's too much background.

ALLEE: Okay. Well, why don't we start, and start again with, where . . .

FERRAND: Are you ready?

ALLEE: Yes.

FERRAND: Okay. Uh, the first hearing we got, as I said, this is the first hearing, not, uh, after the hunger strike, and the first hearing on record in which my father didn't go alone, or with my mother, we kids were there, too. Was, uh, shortly, let us say, on the

third day. And, uh, my, uh, uh, there were three people on the podium, and chairs like this, rocking, up, down, up, down, also in uniforms, high up. There was a witness. The witness was trying to tell the story that, uh, my father had, uh, who was, uh, while in the employ of the French government had, uh, promised him certain, to fix, uh, certain papers and that my father took this money and didn't deliver. My father, uh, said, "I had never seen this. I had helped quite a lot of people, uh, in France, refugees in France. But, uh, I have never taken money for this." This was an attempt, obviously, to, uh, discredit my father, and he took it as such and he accused the man, he was very angry. Uh, with the men, the commissioners talking back and forth, back and forth, and saying absolutely nothing. Commissioners, inspectors, by the way. Senior inspectors. Uh, he, uh, said, uh, accused the man of being, having been sent by the French, by the German Consulate, who had also had the papers. And, as a matter of fact, that turned out to be the case. But we did not, uh, know it for certain until we got, of course, this was, this was a matter of anguish and distress. I adored my father, to see him accused of something akin to

corruption or moral turpitude was something horrible, and these, uh, commissioners, say, rocking in their chairs and saying absolutely nothing. I remember the rocking, back and forth, back and forth. This made me angry, very angry. And I still am angry about it.

(he laughs) Matter of fact, within a week of this, we were, we were released on a visitor's is a without, as far as I know, a further hearing.

ALLEE: Um, once you were, well, once you were released where did you go?

FERRAND: Well, the first thing we did is, uh, we had, uh, we got an apartment, uh, in New York. As a matter of fact, one of the things that impressed me when I, uh, finally landed in New York and remember, felt that from my French perspective the houses are on stilts. (he laughs) So, shortly thereafter I was, it's see, my father had gotten in contact with, uh, uh, HIAS. We were out of money at that time. By the way, one of the things which had happened before and I had forgotten, my father was, uh, got the visit of people from the American Export Lines. They were telling us, "Why aren't you getting the list," and "Do you, are

you doing . . ." Then my father said he would gladly get the list. American Export Lines, under the law, had to pay for our stay on Ellis Island. We were not there on taxpayer's money. Well, did I tell you about the poet laureate of Ellis Island who I met there?

ALLEE: No, you didn't.

FERRAND: Okay. Another one, besides my friend Saul, whom I associated with, was a Chinese. I don't know how old he was, but he claimed to have been the Secretary to the Secretary of Sun Yat-sen. So Sun Yat-sen's revolution, being of 1912, he must have been nearly as old as my father. He didn't look it. I learned from him that he was one of the others on the list. Uh, daily list. And he was here on a student visa. I thought I had said that.

ALLEE: No, you said it on the phone to us, but you haven't said it on the tape yet.

FERRAND: I see. Okay. Uh, he had a student visa and he had a student visa for twelve years. Going to the New School For Social Research. He had written several books. Several books had been published, were

published. And, uh, as a matter of fact, he wrote in quaint English which somehow was effective. Grammatically, uh, haphazard. Uh, and, as a matter of fact, he asked me, uh, when, while I was in Ellis Island, I was sixteen, I was interested in poetry among other things, I still am, he asked me to correct some of his poems with my French high school English, if you will. (he laughs) But anyway, uh, his immortal verse, and this is why I mentioned the Statue of Liberty at one time and the impression I had of, uh, that. The immortal verse, was one poet, one long poem, called Address To The Statue of Liberty. Statue, turn your ass, let us pass. (he laughs) I believe that Chang, um, he finally immigrated, by the way. He was one of the hundred, uh, in '43. He was found by my other friend Saul several years later in Los Angeles, managing the Graumann's Theater, Chinese Theater in Los Angeles, in Hollywood. Uh, he's probably dead by now. Anyway . . .

ALLEE: So back to you in New York

FERRAND: Right.

ALLEE: The houses on stilts.

FERRAND: Yeah. And I was told, we went to one, uh, I think it was HIAS, uh, Hebrew Immigrant sheltering association, uh, society, whatever, service. I don't know what the "S" stands for, but it doesn't matter. (he laughs)

ALLEE: Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society.

FERRAND: Society. Yes. And they told me, uh, go to school. And I had read, uh, Jules Verne, and one of his extraordinary, and wonderful voyages, was Deux ans de Vacances, the two years' holiday. I did not think that my two years' holiday was particularly amusing, extraordinary or wonderful, so I was quite ready to go back to school. They gave me a list of, uh, three schools. One was the High School of Commerce, the other was Haaran High School, the third was High School of Science in the Bronx. I went there alone. Uh, at the High School of Commerce I found something weird, completely weird, in my experience. Uh, apparently the admissions, at least, the student council, and they didn't like me. They said, "Go somewhere else." And I went to Haaran High School and they accepted me. I graduated from Haaran High School a year-and-a-half later with the highest Regent marks

of the school, Regents examination marks in English and American history. Not in French. My French was not too good. Not in German. My German was too good. I got the medal in Spanish. (he laughs) Okay. So this is, uh . . . What else do you want to know?

FERRAND: Uh, once you got here, uh, did you find it in any way a problem being a foreigner in New York or that kind of feeling? Did you have an adjustment to make? Did you feel you needed . . .

FERRAND: I had been a foreigner before, as I explained to you.

ALLEE: It's true, yes.

FERRAND: So, uh, I accepted the fact that, uh, that I was a foreigner, that I had to be a guest of a country. That I was a guest, I was a visitor, and we were aware of this. As I say, my, uh, my, I was, uh, a city boy, so reasonably sophisticated, I was not a, and, uh, my father moved in, hadn't always moved in various intellectual circles. As a matter of fact, he personally despised intellectuals. He was one himself, but . . . (he laughs)

ALLEE: We need to turn the tape. This is the first side of

tape two.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

ALLEE: Beginning of the second side of tape two.

FERRAND: Okay. What do you, could you stop for a second?

(break in tape) Let us say, I personally am, it just so happens that, uh, according to Nazi rules I am Jewish on both sides of my family. I happen to have one daughter, who is in Palestine these days with four grandchildren there, in Israel. She's very religious on some of the things, because my first wife was a very religious woman. I have two children, two other children, who are not religious and, uh, I'm not religious. I happen to be married to a, uh, my second, uh, wife, after my first wife died, was a, uh, I married her in Chicago, is a woman from Wichita, Kansas, Protestant, a very nice person. I am happily married. I was happily married before. But that's, that's all, uh, a long story, and not relevant to . . . Oh, well, it is relevant, in one sense, but it's not, it would complicate things for this purpose.

ALLEE: Okay, uh . . .

FERRAND: To my mind. I don't know what you think. If you insist, I can . . .

ALLEE: No, it's okay. Uh, I just had a couple of questions about, about you yourself, so . . .

FERRAND: Go ahead.

ALLEE: Okay. Um, you had a long journey here and a long, and frustrating, it sounds like, wait to get here.

FERRAND: Uh-huh.

ALLEE: Um, and I can see that you've thought about it a lot.

FERRAND: Yes.

ALLEE: Uh, but now that you have been here for so many years and have become a U.S. citizen, how do you see it all now? You've chosen to stay. You didn't go back.

FERRAND: That's right. I chose to stay and, uh, although I do not think that, uh, America is a Tokyo, nor is any other country. I think of America as, uh, something like Churchill's comment on democracy. The worst of

all regimes except for all the others. (he laughs)
Uh, I feel that, uh, there is much of value in
America. I'm familiar with its history and
traditions, and I've made it a point in studying it.
I think that, uh, America can learn certain things
from Europe but, let us say, Europe can certainly
learn certain things from America. Uh, and I suggest
that we never should stop learning.

ALLEE: Well, I think that's enough. As we've said, we could
go on for two more tapes. But thank you for this
tape.

FERRAND: Okay.

ALLEE: This is the end of the interview with Pierre Ferrand,
uh, tape number 079, interviewer Debra Allee. It is
now five minutes pas five.

FERRAND: Hmm. Getting late in the day.