

NPS-79

ALBERT PREIZLER

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AGE 18

ORAL HISTORIANS NOTE: Mr. Preizler is the husband of Laura Preizler
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NASH: Today is December 27, 1974. I am speaking to Mr. Albert
Preizler who came to the United States in 1947 at the age of eighteen. He
was born in Sigot, Rumania. Describe to me Sigot.

PREIZLER: Well, it was a nice little town. I think we had about a hundred thousand
people. There was one movie, a movie house.

NASH: Who was in control of Rumania at that time?

PREIZLER: It was the Rumanians. You mean like the national leader or something?

NASH: No, I don't mean the name of the leader, I mean who was in control of the Rumanians.

PREIZLER: Yes, I went to school in Rumania until about 1940 when the Hungarians came in and they took over so we were speaking Hungarian in school.

NASH: How many people were in your family?

PREIZLER: I had two brothers and sisters older than I am. I was the youngest. None of them are alive today. I am the only one. But I always dreamt about coming to the United States. I always thought that it was a nice country, everyone was rich, and I always wondered who did the shoe shining. When I got here I found out.

NASH: You were Jewish, how was life for a Jew in the town that you came from?

PREIZLER: Well, it was fairly good until during the war, during the Second World War years when persecution was, of course, widespread. Before that it was fine, there was really not too many problems, but during the Hitler years Jews were taken away, which was the year 1944, when all the Jews were taken away.

Well, after the war I went back for about three months and not too many people came back.

NASH: Was your family taken away?

PREIZLER: Yes.

NASH: Where were you taken?

PREIZLER: We were taken to Auschwitz. Well, I was the only one that was liberated and is today alive. And after that I decided that I did want to come to the United States finally, and I am glad I did. I always liked it here.

NASH: Can you tell us what Auschwitz was like?

PREIZLER: Well, I don't especially like to talk about those years, but I think most people know what Auschwitz was like. I was there about a month and then I was transferred to another camp, and then to Muhlhausen, from which I was transferred to another camp, called Malik. And in April, 1944, we were shipped back to Muhlhausen and that's where we were liberated by the Americans.

NASH: What was that day like?

PREIZLER: Unbelievable.

NASH: I mean, what happened?

PREIZLER: Well, we knew the war was over and everyone started to dream and think about going back home. First, we were transferred to a field camp, which was run by the American Red Cross, and after we were, well, a lot of us were rather sick. And after a month I was well enough to say that I wanted to go home, and so I did, but I didn't find anyone home so I decided to go back to Germany and eventually to the United States.

NASH: Why did you decide to go to Germany?

PREIZLER: Well, that was the place where everybody, it was like a place where everyone was leaving from. And I couldn't leave from Rumania. I had to because that's where all the DP camps were, in Germany. And that's where you had a choice more-or-less, as to just which way you wanted to go.

NASH: You were asked where you wanted to go when you got to Germany?

PREIZLER: I didn't have to be asked, I let everyone know where I wanted to go and so I

finally made it. But I came through the Jewish Child Care Association. At the time Mrs. Roosevelt was acting head of it. And since I was not quite eighteen, I came as an orphan. So, this is where I got the choice just where I wanted to go.

NASH: What was the trip like, do you remember the name of the ship? What kind of ship was it?

PREIZLER: It was a marine ship, it was called Marine Currents. And it took about two weeks and we lost part of the ship on the way.

NASH: How did that happen?

PREIZLER: Oh, a storm was pretty bad, but no one was injured and we got here okay. Most people were sick throughout the trip. It took about two weeks to get here. And then we landed here and we were taken to Yonkers Children's Home.

NASH: You didn't have to go to Ellis Island?

PREIZLER: No.

NASH: Did you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

PREIZLER: Yes, yes, I remember seeing the Statue of Liberty. Well, L. NASH: as soon as we reached the shore we were all just thrilled and happy and waited to get off the boat. And we were taken to Yonkers and we got new clothes, new everything, you know, and then they were giving us a choice as to what to do. And I wanted to go to work because I felt that I didn't want to be supported by charity from anyone.

NASH: What were the other choices?

PREIZLER: Well, going to school, for instance. If the Jewish Child Care Association were willing to pay for, to some people, to act as foster parents so that we could go to school until at least the age of twenty-one, but to me it seemed like it was charity which was not acceptable to me. So I went to work, I got a job.

NASH: Where?

PREIZLER: I worked in a place where they made custom-made men's suits.

NASH: How did you find the job?

PREIZLER: It was through a relative, through friends and relatives. And at that time people were looking for people who knew anything about anything. And I was able to

handle a needle.

NASH: How did you learn that?

PREIZLER: This was from way back home that we knew how to sew in the house. My mother and my sisters used to make shirts, sew, you know. So it was kind of, came natural to me. And I did want to support myself so I thought it was a good way of doing it and I did support myself. I went to school at night.

NASH: Where?

PREIZLER: First to Coney Island and that was a public school.

NASH: And that's where you settled in Brooklyn?

PREIZLER: Yes, well. Finally. First I lived in the Bronx for a little while, and then I went to Brooklyn.

NASH: How did you find a place to live?

PREIZLER: Through friends, through friends. So once I settled in in Brighton Beach, I went to school at Coney Island and then later I went to Washington Irving High School for some time. And then I did a lot of studying at the

house. I did some correspondence courses through the, I think it was the International Correspondence School. Well, I worked all the time and I studied all the time.

NASH: What was the most surprising thing to you about the United States or New York?

PREIZLER: That there were people who were willing to shine shoes, and they did that for a living. Well, everything was big, I liked everything. Later on, I was slightly disillusioned, but only because of the safety in the streets, but other than that, I still really like the United States, I think it is great.

NASH: Were you religious as a child? Was it a religious home and did you pursue it?

PREIZLER: Yes, I grew up in a religious atmosphere. I myself am not that religious. Well, my house, my wife is more religious than I am, and that is up to her, but outside the house I am not.

NASH: Well, of course, I know something about your wife and I know that she probably had a similar experience. How did you meet your wife?

PREIZLER: We met in Brighton Beach through some friends. There were some other people that came from Europe and we got together and eventually, I was

dating her, and in '49 we got married. We were dating for about a year and a half, and then we got married. Now we have three children.

NASH: Well, do you feel that your earlier experiences have some effect on--do you feel completely Americanized?

PREIZLER: Well, I don't exactly know what that means. In most of my life, it seems more than half my lifetime, I have been living here, so I like the United States. So for the most part you might say that. I like this American way of life, as I mentioned before, the only thing I don't like is the safety in the streets, but I like the culture here, I like everything about the United States. The opportunities, just being able to do the things that you want, and having the possibility of doing it is great.

NASH: Is there any kind of cultural something that you have kept from Europe, anything in your life which you follow that maybe some other people who don't come from where you come from do?

PREIZLER: Not necessarily so. I don't think any great cultural things, but tradition itself is what I think, part of the culture that we keep is the Jewish tradition. Not necessarily the Orthodox way, but we believe in Judaism and its traditions and all that.

NASH: Thank you very much.

PREIZLER: You are very welcome.