

Julian Hosnedl

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Born August 15, 1910 in Prague, Czechoslovakia

Interviewer: Sir if you could tell us a little bit about your life prior to the beginning of WWII

Mr. Hosnedl: I was attending business college in Prague until 1936, until the Germans start occupying our country and I was thrown out and since then I was looking for a job. I found a job at this company Shell in Prague that I was working until 1943.

Interviewer: Uh Shell, would that be Shell Oil Company?

Mr. Hosnedl: Yes we had only oil, yes

Interviewer: Shell Oil Company in Prague

Mr. Hosnedl: Yes

Interviewer: Um when the Munich Conference took place and Hitler was allowed to occupy the Sudetenland when did you first hear about that?

Mr. Hosnedl: I was going to work at the time and it was in Prague on the streets when I met the first soldiers coming with their motorcycles, tanks and trucks. That sort of was a real surprise.

Interviewer: So you hadn't heard anything through newspapers?

Mr. Hosnedl: Oh yes we heard, but we didn't believe that we will, we will not fight again and Dr. Benes, that was the president of Czechoslovakia, just left the country and we were left to the decision of how to forces. We had to put our weapons down and surrender and that was when the German military started occupying the country though Sudetenland and they went to Prague and start occupying the airport and all those military places first.

Interviewer: When Hitler first came to power do you remember reading newspapers in the early...?

Mr. Hosnedl: Well I was only thirteen years old (laughs)

Interviewer: There was no worry among the people you knew that this was going to happen at some point?

Mr. Hosnedl: Nobody would believe it you know because you know the system, what he was using in Germany, it was very natural for them and Germany was just in a deep recession and 100,000 people unemployed and the money was deflated and so they were in a desperate situation so the Germans were easy to get behind men like Hitler who got the idea that he will take over one day and he did. He started in 1933 and in '34 and '35 he got everything ready and people were voting for him ninety-nine percent because they were desperate. So I'm not blaming them that they believed what he was saying and he almost did what he promised them. He almost did. He promised them paradise and he almost did. Of course the other nations were paying for it.

Interviewer: Yes sir. When the Nuremburg Laws were first passed, within the Jewish community was there awareness that this was something different? Or did it seem more like more of the same that had gone on in Europe for so long?

Mr. Hosnedl: So many Jewish people, they just suffered. The Crystal Knight and all those things because it started in Germany to hate the Jewish. You know, I am not Jewish, but in Prague and Czechoslovakia, Jewish people were not aware of it because they didn't believe that it would come to Czechoslovakia. England and France left us alone. They did not do what they promised; that they would defend us. Chamberlain got home very happy that we saved the freedom.

Interviewer: Of course that turned out very differently.

Mr. Hosnedl: England was paying for that, very hard and very heavy. If this could happen a different way then France and England would say No, No we will take our promise that they would help Czechoslovakia to defend but there was no war in Czechoslovakia it was in Poland too first, right? So we were left in 1938 completely to Hitler. President Harker took over. He was judged, highest judge so he took over the presidency, but I don't blame him. He couldn't do anything.

Interviewer: How did the Germans behave when they first occupied?

Mr. Hosnedl: Like Germans. We are the first in the world. They took over and our people were standing on the street and I would say most of them crying, even policemen. There are documents that policemen were crying. It was very sad at the time. But the behaving of the military, it was like every other military. You don't ask me how they were behaving prolifically; you know that's different because many people were arrested right away by Gestapo and many people were killed, yes.

Interviewer: Between the behavior of the Vermocht the German regular military and the SS, was there a mark different that people realized that one was bad but the other was very, very bad or did they seem the same?

Mr. Hosnedl: Well, at the time Czech people, most of them; you can't call them 100 percent because in our country there are Germans, Hungarians, and other nations, but I

would say 80 percent of the population was against Hitler. Definitely yes. They knew ahead what would happen when Hitler would come, and it did happen. Heydrich was the protector was killed by partisans and by people sending from England and the population paid for it very heavy, very heavy.

Interviewer: An entire town destroyed.

Mr. Hosnedl: Yes, Lidice, it was completely destroyed and men were all killed and the women and children were sent to the prison in Germany and the children were Germanized.

Interviewer: When was the first time you heard about Theresienstadt or some of the other camps that...?

Mr. Hosnedl: Well Theresienstadt was a fort built by Austrians for Maria Theresa. They built the fort and they chose that fort as a concentration camp for Jewish people only. We heard of it but you don't read it in the newspaper you just hear of it. But we didn't know exactly what happened there. All we knew after the war but before the war or during the war, I wasn't there, but I was there at least a '38 thru '42 and '43. That was sad because Theresienstadt was sort of a between station to send them to a concentration camp like Mauthausen or Auschwitz.

Interviewer: Where there rumors about the camps in Poland and elsewhere? Did any rumors come to the people?

Mr. Hosnedl: We in Czechoslovakia, at the time it was no more Czechoslovakia it was Bohemia and Moravia, Protectorate Bohemia and Moravia. Hitler didn't let us name our country Czechoslovakia no more; it was Protectorate Bohemia and Moravia. So we didn't hear nothing about those concentration camps.

Interviewer: No radio available?

Mr. Hosnedl: Only from England. The broadcast was short and it was punished by death when they discovered it. So it was very strict. Listening to that broadcast from England was punished by death. So our knowledge of the concentration camp was very little, very little.

Interviewer: Did you have an occasion to find out more about that later?

Mr. Hosnedl: Definitely yes.

Interviewer: And how did that come about, sir?

Mr. Hosnedl: Well I was sent to forced labor to Germany. At the time Austria was Germany so I was sent to Austria and I was working in a company in a warehouse and since I was not the only one they sent many Czech and Moravian people to this town.

The town is big, it was Klagenfurt; it's on the border of Italy and Yugoslavia. It's about 400/500,000 population so it was a big town. So there were other people, Czech and Moravian people.

At the time I would say after several months we start to know each other...

Interviewer: You were working for Shell oil up until a particular time in 1943...how did you lose that position?

Mr. Hosnedl: Because I was sent into forced labor. I had to go because Germany had the young people fighting in the war so they didn't have the labor force. They were looking to get people like me, I was 24 or 23. They were looking for people this age to get the labor force. That is why all the young people my age were drafted, we were forced to go. We didn't have any chance; we had to go.

Interviewer: How did you receive the notice? Was it just a letter in the mail or did somebody come to the house..?

Mr. Hosnedl: Well you had an invitation to the office and the office gave you the order of where to go and who to see and it was all organized ahead and if you don't go they send the Gestapo. So you are actually physically forced to go, so that's why. But I was thinking when I received the invitation I had a friend that was working for them and instead of going to Germany up north, real Germany, I preferred Austria. I asked him to switch the addresses from Germany to Austria, and he did. And that's why I got to Austria because I knew from my friends that Austria is not so hard as Germany. And so that's how I ended up in Austria and working for the warehouse for a whole-sale company carrying bags of flour and sugar.

Interviewer: Now what kind of hours did they have you working?

Mr. Hosnedl: Normal hours. I was hired by the company because they got the order, from the original, so when I went on the train and landed I know where I'm going so I went with the address to Klagenfurt and I went there and they already knew I was coming. It was organized.

Interviewer: Were you fed well...were you treated well?

Mr. Hosnedl: It was up to me. I was not in camp. I was free to find a place to live and cook what I want. It was not restricted. I was a free man, but not free to do what I want. I had to work for the company they send me to. That's right.

Interviewer: Many of the nations that were under the Nazis in WWII, in many of these nations young men joined the SS, joined these various German groups. Did you know any of the people that joined these groups or was that something that happened in Czechoslovakia?

Mr. Hosnedl: Never, no I would say not a single case that would go to Germany as a soldier. Mostly in Norway because Nuremburg laws say they were purer heritage so that's why they attract more for the Norway and Holland. Those were some people that were SS. They were tall and blond. But in our country I would say not a single person. Everybody was hating the Germans.

Interviewer: As the war progressed, by 1943, was there any sense that maybe things weren't going quite so well for the Germans as they were before? Did you notice anything about the way the Germans behaved that indicated...?

Mr. Hosnedl: 1943 was full of war. They were winning on all fronts, so their behavior was superior for them. In 1943 they did not lose anywhere. They were still in Russia trying to keep their position there. Not long ago General Frost took care of it. But same as Napoleon, same way. So no.

Interviewer: So in '43 they were still acting like all was well, even after Stalingrad and the Battle of Kursk, perhaps they weren't getting the straight story?

Mr. Hosnedl: After Stalingrad, yes, Stalingrad was the point of the war for Germany and they did not realize it. Because that was when the Russians got help from the United States, with trucks and everything they shipped them; they didn't have anything. Without the help of the United States, Russia would be German today, definitely. They were poor. Stalingrad was surrounded by Germans and Stalingrad was actually dying by starvation. Many, many hundreds of people were dying by starvation because they had nothing to eat.

Interviewer: When did you, or did you ever notice a change in the Germans as the war progressed into '44 and early 1945? Was there any indication that they gave, that they were worried?

Mr. Hosnedl: Well at the time I was not free anymore. I was already in jail, my first seven or eight months in jail, and then they transferred me into a concentration camp dark house so I didn't know too much anymore.

Interviewer: Explain what happened. Now you were working in a warehouse in Austria...how did you...?

Mr. Hosnedl: We created a resistance group of five. Five people know each other, they found each other and we talk and say well let's start. We had one man who had a connection through Italy, because there was already in 1944...it was already progressing, the United Army through Italy. So he said we could help the allies. We were young people, of course, so we were eager to do it. So why not? We hated German, so we wanted to do everything possible so we create a group and we got a task, one each. Find out what kind of concentration of military there is in this place. Find what they are making, what the production is in this plant. So we got certain tasks and we tried to find out. We had one Yugoslavian; he was working in the factory where they were making

parts for airplanes. We found out that they were making parts for fire power and so that's what we did. We wrote everything on a piece of paper and we had a so-called "dead box"; a place where you agree that you will put the message underneath or somewhere and you leave and you don't know who is coming for it. You don't know that person and he doesn't know you. So that's what you call a dead box. We did this for quite a while, so we know that our message went to the allies, because after that we found out that the company that made those airplanes was bombed, and other companies we indicated were bombed. So we knew that it was successful and it was good for us. But one day we were surprised by the Gestapo and they picked us up, so word had to go to them very easily. Later on after that war I could find out more about what happened; one man who was a connection...he got money in Rome and he got drunk and got arrested and they took his ties off and he had the message we wrote in the tie. So the Italian police reported it to the Klagenfurt police and the man started talking and they found out who we were, and we were picked up one by one. It took time but the Gestapo found out and I was picked up one day.

Interviewer: And this was in Austria?

Mr. Hosnedl: Yes in Austria.

Interviewer: When did this operation begin and when was approximately the time that you were picked up?

Mr. Hosnedl: I would say it lasted three months before we got picked up. I think three months we were working together very good. And then the Gestapo picked us up, one by one; we didn't know at the time, and they put us in jail, separate in the jail. It was a Gestapo jail. See, at the time, when I came here to the United States I could not talk to anybody. I could not prove anything and everybody would say "Yea, right. Me too". So I wrote to the city, Klagenfurt, and asked them if they could go to the jail and find out, and they did and they made photocopies of my name.

Interviewer: Do you have that picture?

Mr. Hosnedl: Oh yea, I have that picture.

Interviewer: Could we pause while you get that? I would love to get that on tape.

Mr. Hosnedl: Ok. Let me see if...I have to find it...here it is, it says...that's in German...do we need more light?

Interviewer: The light is good...can you read this for me, please sir?

Mr. Hosnedl: Sure... (reads letter in German)...that's the copy.

Interviewer: And this...in English....

Mr. Hosnedl: In English it means that they found the documents. They copied the microfilm and they are sending me a copy of the microfilm.

Interviewer: Good Lord...now the copy of the microfilm...

Mr. Hosnedl: It's right here...the two lines.

Interviewer: And that is your record?

Mr. Hosnedl: Yes that is the record of my number...153119...was on my head. It was from Klagenfurt...I was there. The city Klagenfurt sent me a copy of the list of the people that were arrested there and my name is right here; Hosnedl, Julian...so I cannot lie. Those were the two documents that were signed by a professor at the university who went to the jail and found it in the cellar after so many years. They found it.

Interviewer: Incredible. Now once you were imprisoned by the Gestapo...do you remember the date...or the month?

Mr. Hosnedl: It was in September '44. Because I remember after '44 they started bombing, the US allies. They cleared the jail, lured us in the big horse wagon, and there were 40 people in the wagon, and we went to...I remember the trip because we got only one slice of bread, one big, thick piece of sausage and one piece of cheese for three days. I was starving. Two people died in the wagon, so we stopped and two soldiers came and took them out. The trip was horrible. I remember.

Interviewer: Describe the trip from the beginning.

Mr. Hosnedl: We were loaded and we didn't know where we were going. They didn't tell us where we were going. When we were in the wagon and the train started moving we didn't know where we were going. Nobody told us. And the train stopped on the way because the allied airplane with the big machine gun...I don't know what you call it...stopped the locomotive...so we stopped. They had to send us a new one. That's why it took three days before we went to Munich, and even through Prague.

Interviewer: When you saw Prague...

Mr. Hosnedl: Oh I was crying.

Interviewer: Did you think that you would ever see it again?

Mr. Hosnedl: We didn't know where we were going. I knew we were going to Germany because we went through Prague and up through Munich. We went this way and up through Munich. But when we came through Munich it was the middle of the night and they were bombing. The Gestapo put us up against the wall on one side and they started fighting. We were all, all the people from the wagon, ready to die because they didn't let us go. I don't know what they would do. We finally got to the railroad station and we

went Dachau from Munich at three o'clock in the morning. It was too soon. The train was closed and we saw it and now we had to wait until six o'clock when there was 30 or 40,000 people walking out for work. They would not let us go in.

Interviewer: Now the city of Munich, did it go literally right up to the gates of Dachau?

Mr. Hosnedl: No, I think it's about 30 or 40 miles from Dachau.

Interviewer: But was there any town that was nearby?

Mr. Hosnedl: We went on the train. They lured us in the wagon and the train. It took about three hours to go to Dachau. I know it was deep at night when we came to Munich...

Interviewer: Now Dachau was set away from everything? It was in the woods...

Mr. Hosnedl: No, no. Dachau was a small town, a very nice town. Now it is a big town. But it was a small town and the camp was at the edge somewhere I guess, because there was a field behind the concentration camp where we were working on the plantation. I know behind the electric fence there was a field and the town was on the other side facing the gate. Now it's different. I took Bobbi, my wife, to show her after the war, where I was.

Interviewer: Was a lot of it still there?

Mr. Hosnedl: No it was only the foundations. They took all of the barracks out. There were...28 times 2...56 barracks...40,000 to 50,000 people in the barracks.

Interviewer: And how many people were in each of the barracks?

Mr. Hosnedl: Well I was in quarantine at the end...we had 300 people in one-fourth of the barrack. They were divided into sections.

Interviewer: How big was each barracks building?

Mr. Hosnedl: Well it was quite big. Our section was divided into the bedroom and then the living room, including the bathroom and everything, and that was four times.

Interviewer: When you first stood outside the gates, was there a noticeable smell or something that told you that something terrible was going on here?

Mr. Hosnedl: No.

Interviewer: Nothing?

Mr. Hosnedl: No.

Interviewer: Was there at the end of the war...?

Mr. Hosnedl: No. '44...it was September '44 so it was just before winter.

Interviewer: Now let's go back to when you were first captured...were you interrogated by the Gestapo?

Mr. Hosnedl: Oh yes.

Interviewer: And what was the interrogation like?

Mr. Hosnedl: It was...the Austrian Gestapo was not bad. I only got hit once or twice, but otherwise they were not brutal. The man, he asked me what did you do and of course I didn't tell him the truth. We didn't tell them everything that we did. He wanted to know a lot of things and I told him I did not remember. He took a paper he had in front of me...and I will never forget...he sits in front of me in a beautiful desk and when he asks and I said I don't remember he said did you write this and "No"...he took the paper and threw it in front of me and asked again. And I see my report that I wrote and he said "listen Julian, it takes me three weeks before I will prove it that you did write it" and he asked did you write it and I said yes I did write it and that was my last day. Since then I never saw him.

Interviewer: And they simply kept you in the jail until they transported you to...?

Mr. Hosnedl: Every other prisoner could go outside to work and I wasn't allowed. They were afraid. No, I was in jail 7 months. Many people went off, but I was still there. I was the oldest.

Interviewer: Did you ever see any of your fellow operatives again?

Mr. Hosnedl: Yes I did, after the war. After the war I visited a friend of mine in Budweiser, you know Budweiser...that's original beer, yes?

Interviewer: Yes I know Budweiser.

Mr. Hosnedl: Yes. So I went from Prague with train and I visited him in Budweiser. And we talked...memories. The other two were from Moravia and I did not see them and one was still from Czech Republic and he died very soon. I don't know why, he was with me. He was named Carlisle. When we got to the camp, then you stand and you have to wait and they take you to that building where you will get your paper. They didn't get my paper because the paper didn't go with me, all the papers from the jail. They didn't get it, and that's when my brain started working. They asked me what was my occupation because that's the prison; it's all done by the prison. So I said I was a cook, and that saved my life.

Interviewer: And you said cook because...?

Mr. Hosnedl: Because I was starving to death. I was thin already, but I was starving, I didn't eat for three days. And I was thinking "My God, the paper didn't come with me so I can lie"! So I said cook. And I had never cooked before.

Interviewer: So you learned very quickly?

Mr. Hosnedl: Yes sir. They sent me to the kitchen for the SS. But they didn't let us cook. They had Belgian cooks that would cook. They didn't let the newcomer cook. They sent us down to the cellar to clean up the ladles and prepare everything. But after several days an SS officer found out I was the cook and he asked me for an interview. He asked where did I cook and I said the YMCA in Prague and he said I know the YMCA Prague. Of course I had never cooked there, I had only eaten there. And he said that's a good place so you will go now to the remote control concentration camp in Austria in the high mountains. They took me and one more and we went through the night and we end up in the high mountains. I wish you could see it because it is a very beautiful place. I went to see it last year with my brother. My brother is in France and he took me in his car to see it. It's a beautiful place.

Interviewer: I had an occasion to go to Austria when I was stationed in Germany and we went from Garmisch across the border and that whole area down through Innsbruck. It was....the flowers hanging out of the window boxes...it was beautiful.

Mr. Hosnedl: Yes and those mountains...

Interviewer: Yes, most beautiful place on Earth.

Mr. Hosnedl: Yes it is beautiful. My brother was amazed. We ended up and the camp, the place I was before. There was a hotel surrounded by barbed wire. There were guard towers and prison officers all in uniform, and we served them for three days and then they sent me higher in the mountain to people that lost their homes from bombing...but that was not true. The Gestapo told me the people lost their homes by bombing but that was not true. They were children and a few men and women who were related to all the people that had anything to do with or had association with Hitler.

Interviewer: So they were all family of Hitler?

Mr. Hosnedl: Yes they were protecting them against the German population because they would kill them, they said. At the time people were ready to kill Hitler. But they were prisoners and I was cooking for them.

Interviewer: So you were sent from Dachau to this place, because of the story that you were a cook. So did you become a very good cook?

Mr. Hosnedl: Yes, I know cooking today. Well, I had some base from my mother. My mother didn't have girls; she had only two boys, so she taught me how to cook so I was cooking before. It was my hobby and it is still my hobby. I do like to cook.

Interviewer: Describe a typical day at Dachau. What did you see from some of the other inmates? What was it like?

Mr. Hosnedl: I remember several things. Next to us was a camp with priests, all kinds of priests from all denominations. We were in quarantine but the priests were free; they could go where they wanted in the camp, but we could not. We were asking through the window for tea, but they didn't give us any. They were afraid. Second I saw someone that had stolen something and they hung him up high from the barracks. There was a special spot for this purpose and they hung him there for two or three hours and he was crying. It was bad. Then I saw two French brothers sitting in the barracks and they died. They were not willing to live anymore. My task was once a week to take the dead from the bunks, because we were sleeping five and there was room for only three. So obviously from those people one or two would die so we would have to take them out and undress them and drag them to the bathroom. The commandants of this quarter of the barracks, they are green and black; that means their triangle was green and black...criminals are black and antisocial are green. They were in command and they gave us the task of what to do. Every day we had to un-blouse each other. I had to take off my clothes and we would exchange for others. Across the camp was a hospital, but nobody wanted to go to the hospital.

Interviewer: Going to the hospital meant..?

Mr. Hosnedl: It meant that you would die. They were trying all kinds of things, they did research. They put people in cold water to see how long they would survive. It was all research for the military.

Interviewer: And they researched other things? Pressure experiments?

Mr. Hosnedl: We didn't know this at the time.

Interviewer: What other besides the antisocial and the criminals and political badges...did you see any other badges? Were there homosexual..?

Mr. Hosnedl: Homosexual were pink. And Jewish were yellow. Yellow with the Star of David.

Interviewer: What was the greatest percentage of people that you saw?

Mr. Hosnedl: Red.

Interviewer: Red. Political prisoners.

Mr. Hosnedl: Yes, but not in the beginning. When Dachau was first built it was the master concentration camp, everything was clean and beautiful. Most of the people there were communists and criminals.

Interviewer: Did you see gratuitous brutality by the SS or did they have a system that was under control? Did they stop their own people from mistreating prisoners whenever they wanted or did this go on all the time?

Mr. Hosnedl: I'd have to say in the camp where I was, in the quarantine, the brutality was only if you didn't do what the criminal wanted you to do then you got hit.

Interviewer: And were these called capos? And they did whatever they wanted?

Mr. Hosnedl: Yes capos. They were the generals for the room.

Interviewer: Were you ever called to testify after the war?

Mr. Hosnedl: Yes. SHO A, I am a member even though I am not Jewish. They send me from Spielberg, the director. They asked me.

Interviewer: So your total time at Dachau was...?

Mr. Hosnedl: At Dachau I would say a year and a half including prison.

Interviewer: Where were you sent after?

Mr. Hosnedl: It was Plaine, I was sent there in November. It was very cold.

Interviewer: November of 1944.

Mr. Hosnedl: Yes.

Interviewer: When did the end come where you were? What were the circumstances of you being freed?

Mr. Hosnedl: Well then end of the war was in May and we didn't have it yet. The US army came with a tank and they saw the hotel with the barbed wire and they stopped. We were looking through the window and we were afraid but they didn't do anything. They didn't see any shooting. The guards had already taken their uniforms and went home. We received a piece of paper that said we were free.

Interviewer: So when the Americans came that first day, what happened?

Mr. Hosnedl: Well they came and open the gate and a bunch of French officers came out and welcomed them. We were prisoners, we were nothing. Those were military people. They were celebrating and we were just watching. We didn't go out. There was a

French general that was very fond of me that would talk to me. He was an ambassador for the Czech Republic before the war so we talked. He was married to a Czech woman so he knew Czech and we would talk. But otherwise they loaded a box full of gold teeth and watches and took it on a bus to France. We were witnesses. We saw it.

Interviewer: Now these teeth and watches they were taken...?

Mr. Hosnedl: They were taken from the concentration camps.

Interviewer: The Germans just left it?

Mr. Hosnedl: It was for them. Hundreds of boxes were guarded by the Gestapo and when they left there was no more Gestapo.

Interviewer: So the French officers, they just simply took it?

Mr. Hosnedl: For days later they loaded them on a bus and they went home.

Interviewer: And what happened to you?

Mr. Hosnedl: We could not go. The officers said the roads were out and bridges were gone and we could not go. We had to stay until they loaded us on a Jeep and they took us down to the city and we were traveling from one camp to the next. The Americans didn't know what to do with us.

Interviewer: Did they feed you well?

Mr. Hosnedl: Oh of course. Since I was in a kitchen as a cook they asked me to go help in the kitchen. I was helping in the kitchen and I got a uniform and I was helping to feed the GIs at the Munich Airport. It was something I had never seen in my life, so much food wasted. They wanted orange juice so they would cut the orange in half and squeeze it and then throw the orange away. There were other prisoners with me and we couldn't believe that they would throw it away. You know we were starving before. There was so much waste.

Interviewer: How long did you spend doing that and what happened between that time...?

Mr. Hosnedl: I saw the American doctor and he told me I could not go because I was too thin. So I stayed there about a month and a half with them and got better and finally I said I want to go home. That was in June.

Interviewer: What American unit were you with?

Mr. Hosnedl: AAA Battalion. Anti Aircraft Artillery.

Interviewer: But they took very good care of you?

Mr. Hosnedl: Yes. They loved us.

Interviewer: Did you first think about going to America because of meeting them?

Mr. Hosnedl: That stayed with me for 20 years later.

Interviewer: So you came here 20 years later?

Mr. Hosnedl: Well I escaped in '68 and this was 1945. I went home and stayed in Czechoslovakia and got the business and the communists came and took everything from me in 1948. Then everything became communist.

Interviewer: So you had a business?

Mr. Hosnedl: Yes wholesale.

Interviewer: So they took everything from you?

Mr. Hosnedl: I didn't have one cent.

Interviewer: How would you describe the difference between how the Germans acted and how the Communists acted?

Mr. Hosnedl: Close together. One is left, one is right. See Hitler learned from Stalin. Stalin killed hundreds of thousands of people in 1918, 1920 and Hitler took sample from this. He was not the first one to do it. Stalin did it first.

Interviewer: Between 1948 and 1968 did it ever get better?

Mr. Hosnedl: '48 and '68...No. I was working of course, then they sent me, because I was an office rat they called us, I never was a communist so they called everybody who was not communist and who worked in an office an office rat. 77,000 people from offices were forced to go to production, any kind of production. So I was without work. I found work in gas, they make gas from coke and I was driving and loading the coke on the truck and was working one year. When you work with the gas you cannot wash it out. So my mother called me after a year and said come home, they are hiring here. So I went home and got work as a lathe operator. I had never in my life seen a lathe before and they put me in front of a lathe and said you do this, and you do this. So I did it for two years. They sent me to school to be an apprentice lathe operator. So I was a lathe operator in 1968 when I escaped, I had enough when the Russians invaded Prague. My marriage was no more so I said goodbye and I went to Austria. From Austria I called my brother in France and he said come here so I went to France and in Paris we didn't understand each other. He changed and I changed and we were arguing so I left and I found the Canadian Embassy and they said come. So I went to Canada. They paid for

everything; my flight, my schooling for English because I didn't speak English at all so they sent me to school for 8 months and they paid me every week 37.50 and I saved 20 dollars from those 37.

Interviewer: In dollars what were you making in Czechoslovakia usually?

Mr. Hosnedl: That's in crowns; you can't compare it in dollars. I would say in 1938 and 1940 was the same as here. We had good salaries. In communist country they make money but they pretend they pay you and you pretend you work.

Interviewer: During the whole 20 years did you think about America?

Mr. Hosnedl: Yes but I didn't have any chance to get here. That was an Iron Curtain. You couldn't go anywhere.

Interviewer: In '68 how were you able to...?

Mr. Hosnedl: Well when they occupied the country everybody was disgusted. We didn't believe it. The guards at the borderline would send people through and I had a passport so they let me go. So I went to Vienna on the train and then to Paris.

Interviewer: And so from Canada, how to Clarksville?

Mr. Hosnedl: Well from Canada, I didn't have any girls, so we were looking for girls. Canadian girls are very strict, so we went to Detroit across the tunnel. Boys looking for girls and we found a singles club and we were dancing and she grabbed me and never let me go. Bobbie.

Interviewer: So that was Bobbie? That's how you met her?

Mr. Hosnedl: Yes. I met her and we got married one year later and we had a good time together and now I am taking care of her. She was working as a plant secretary. I didn't know at the time what she was doing. She will tell you if you ask her I asked if she was a movie star! She was very blonde and pretty. That's her version. My version is that she grabbed me and never let me go! But we have a good marriage. I love her. So now I'm taking care of her. We have long term care. So I pay the girl 40 dollars a day to take care of her.

Interviewer: Any children? Grandchildren?

Mr. Hosnedl: We have between us none. She didn't want any. She said I am too old. But I have six grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Interviewer: In Czechoslovakia?

Mr. Hosnedl: Yes. I have three sons. The youngest son, I promised him when I was leaving that I would take care of him, so in 1971 I bought him a passport for 5000 dollars and they took him from Czech under a different name and he's close to Cooperstown. You know, baseball hall of fame?

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr. Hosnedl: Very nice place. He built a bed and breakfast close to Cooperstown. He married a girl he met in Paris. Then she divorced him and he has two children with her. One girl is in Brazil. She studied in the Amazon rainforest. And the other is still in college. Then he married a Pilipino and he has two girls with her. Very beautiful woman.

Interviewer: I'm married to a Pilipino woman.

Mr. Hosnedl: Really?!

Interviewer: Yes. For 28 years. So all in all, from the darkest times for you in the war, this is all that you could imagine?

Mr. Hosnedl: The United States is something. You don't know what you have as Americans. Americans don't appreciate what they have.

Interviewer: Unfortunately that is true.

Mr. Hosnedl: If they could keep the democracy pure as it was before and not allow those politicians to do such a...I don't know what to say. One man cannot decide what everyone wants. That's why the democracy is better than one man. One man was Hitler and Stalin. It never works.

Interviewer: But fear sometimes, I think the Germans fear; man comes along sometimes with an answer that seems very easy and it sounds good and they don't think beyond where it will go.

Mr. Hosnedl: That is a history in Germany. If you go back to the Hindenburg, Germany was always military. Just to be a soldier; one day that was their only occupation.

Interviewer: When you went back to Germany, did you find it hugely changed, you know, the people, the way they acted?

Mr. Hosnedl: We went the first time back to Germany after the war with my wife when she could travel. We were looking for Dachau and they couldn't find it. They didn't know where it was. They were ashamed and they are still ashamed and I don't blame them. It's very strong. I do not hate the Germans at all. This is the advantage of the United States. No one can say I am German or I am Czech or I am Latino. Everybody came from somewhere. Isn't that nice?

Interviewer: It is. With the few minutes that we have left would you like to add anything else?

Mr. Hosnedl: Keep America going democracy. That is the most important part. It is the best country in the world. That is why so many people want to come here and they are here. 11 million people illegal and they want to stay here.

Interviewer: We go through cycles here like other places. We have our ups and downs and we try. This message of yours is very important that the young people will see it. They need to know this and I thank you very much for your time.

Mr. Hosnedl: You're welcome. I have experience with Nazism and Communism and none of them is worth to preserve it. It does not work. It's not real. Many people think it's a good idea. No it's not. You know in our country we had a saying "who doesn't steal, cheats his family". You had to steal. That's bad.

Interviewer: Sir, thank you very, very much.

Mr. Hosnedl: You're welcome, welcome.