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UC SAN DIEGO

Fleeing Fascism

Andrew Viterbi Remembers

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1 hour, 29 minutes, 30 seconds

Speakers: Andrew Viterbi

Transcribed by: Rachel E Lieu

[Holocaust Living History Workshop](#)

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- Time Transcription
- 00:00 [The Library UC San Diego]
- 00:05 Susanne Hillman: It is an honor to welcome you all, and above all Doctor Andrew Viterbi, our first guest of the new year. This is so exciting for me to see this huge crowd of people who want to come to UCSD [University of California, San Diego] and listen to Dr. Viterbi's experience. And since we have a pretty cool program, I don't want to lose any time and introduce the Audrey Geisel University Librarian Mr. Brian Schottlaender, who will say a few words about the importance of what we're doing here, and the Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive. So, Mr. Brian Schottlaender.
- 00:40 Brian Schottlaender: Thank you, Susanne. Hold on one second, we're just going to check the mic. Everybody hear me okay? Yes, I heard mostly yeses, but one no. It's my pleasure to, uh, join Susanne in welcoming you all here tonight, and what an incredible turnout this is. Um, Andy's fame precedes him which is always nice to see. Um, when, uh, Deborah Hertz and I - and I'll introduce Deborah momentarily, not that she needs any introduction - um first became co-conspirators, now going on 10 years ago, in making the Shoah Visual History Archive available to the UCSD [University of California, San Diego] community, little did we know that we would have evenings like this. And I credit Deborah and Susanne for that reality because it was Deborah and her colleagues in the Academy who really saw the Visual History Archive as the foundation for what has now become the Living History Workshops. And we are indebted to Deborah and her colleagues, but most especially to you the members of the San Diego community who have helped us make this a reality. So let me now turn the podium over to Deborah who is the Herman Wouk Professor of Modern Jewish Studies, here at UCSD [University of California, San Diego]. And the, I guess I'll say the mother of the Living History Workshop.
- 02:25 Deborah Hertz: Thank you. Well, just welcome. It's just thrilling for us and as the mother I, I'm very embarrassed that we ran out of food, but you know it's all in a good cause, and by 7:30 you'll be sitting down at dinner. So thank you all come, for coming. What's amazed us about this, is the hunger for local history, which is also historical history, and faraway history, and how they all meet in our town. They all are represented in the Visual History Archive, but to see the thirst for this among faculty, among students, undergraduates, graduate students, has just been quite remarkable. So let me just quickly, um, discuss some of the landmark events, uh, in in Dr. Viterbi's life. Born in 1935 - I hope you don't mind - um, in Bergamo, uh, Italy. Came to the United States, uh, at four. By 1957 had his BA [Bachelor of Arts] and his MA [Master of Arts] in electrical engineering, uh, his Ph.d. from our friendly neighboring institution - the home of the Shoah Foundation - USC [University of Southern California]. Um, the Viterbi Algorithm, which someone

teased me this morning in a meeting and say, Deborah, don't try, just mention it, but don't even try to explain it. Um, so I have your permission to, uh, just state it. Um, in 1985 founded Qualcomm. The National Medal of Science in 2008. The IEE, International Electrical Engineering, uh, Medal of Honor in 2010. And so we bring Italy, [Benito] Mussolini, Primo Levi to your doorsteps. Thank you.

04:13 Andrew Viterbi: Well, thank you very much, uh, Brian and Deborah for that very kind introduction. When I first saw the poster of, uh, uh, uh, announcing my talk, I was a little taken aback. You know, I have no great sympathy for Mussolini. On the other hand, I thought about it a moment and I said, if it weren't for him I would probably be a retired, uh, obscure professor in a very small Italian university, uh, or as it is I'm a an obscure professor in this university - retired from this university, and also from industry, a little less obscure. Anyhow, I will be talking about three experiences, the first is of my own immediate family - my parents and myself - the second is about my wife's family. And there I have the good fortune that Mr. [Steven] Spielberg included among his 50,000 uh, testimonies that of my brother-in-law, whose picture was up there until a minute ago, and whose, uh, testimony, uh, will be played. And then the third is of a, uh, and in this sense it's also - sorry, did I do something? Okay, this gentleman and, um, it's, it's a progression because by no stretch of the imagination am I a survivor. By some considerations, you'd consider this gentleman and his sister - my wife and their parents - uh, survivors in that they survived what could have been the end of life. They were never captured, but they went through harrowing experiences, as you'll hear. And then the third is of my extended family, a cousin through marriage, Primo Levi, who is in fact - or was - one of the survivors of Auschwitz, and probably the the most well written, well described, experience of that horrendous fate.

06:45 Andrew Viterbi: So, let me start with my family and, uh, to do that you have to put yourself in the place of oh, a few thousand - maybe 10,000 - Italian Jews in, uh, 1938. Uh, suppose you were a tenured professor at a state university or, uh, the head of a hospital department, say Department of Ophthalmology, or a civil servant, and you'd been in that position 10, 20, 30 years. You were in your late 40s, mid-50s, perhaps, and all of a sudden you're out on the street. And that's what happened to Italian Jews. It had already happened to German Jews, as everybody knows, uh, but in some sense, the German Jews should have had more warning. You know, Adolf Hitler was obviously out to kill us all. Uh, Benito Mussolini is a very complex person. Make no mistake, he was an antisemite. And he was not an antisemite because he was an ally of Hitler. He was an antisemite from the very beginning but he, uh, collaborated with Jews. He was a socialist before he became a fascist, and much of the Italian Socialist Party of the pre-World War I was, uh, Jewish-led, and even afterwards. But then, of course, and, and let's face it, uh, a significant fraction of Italian Jews were also fascists. That was the way to stop the Bolsheviks. Well, uh, so Mussolini was no friend of the

Jews. On the other hand, he had a Jewish mistress, the the publisher of the fascist newspaper.

08:55 Andrew Viterbi: Well, so come 1938, all these people are out on the street. Now business community fared a little bit better initially, uh, but after a year or two, uh, they no longer - well for one thing, uh, there was a very large, uh, insurance company, The, The Generali - which is still in the news these days - which had not only large insurance clientele, but also real estate, and there the the Jewish members of the, uh, board were all eliminated, were all fired. Uh, the, as I said, the business community still held on for a while, but then they could no longer be owners of businesses. So, they would, in many cases, do what we're supposed to do on um on Passover. Uh, sell the, uh, there, we sell the the bread to to a non-Jew, and there and they sold their business to a non-Jew, temporarily. And in most cases, after the war, they recovered - if not all - much of their property. But professional people and my father - I mentioned those three professions, he was a little bit of all three - he was the head of the Ophthalmology Department in his hospital. He was also an adjunct, or clinical, professor at the University of Parma, and he was a civil servant because they're all, essentially all hospitals were state-run. And as of, uh, this was, uh, I believe sometime in the fall, October, November of 1938. By March 1939 he had to vacate.

11:04 Andrew Viterbi: Well, uh, in January of 1939, we picked up and left this medium-sized town where we lived, Bergamo, a town about 30-40 miles from Milan, near the lakes, and moved to Genoa. Partly because, in seeking a visa, it was better not to be in the public eye, and uh, my parents, uh, or my father in particular, uh, struggled to get a visa, had trouble getting the Italian immigration visa to the United States. So for his good luck, and mine and my mother's, he had a connection in Switzerland, a very famous professor of ophthalmology Dr. [Alfred] Vogt, who was the inventor of the slit lamp, which is a major, uh, fundamental, uh, ophthalmological instrument, and had been his professor in a sense, and was close to the US [United States] Consul in Switzerland and Zurich. And through, through that, and through letters of recommendation - because in order to get a visa you also have to have, you have to be on the quota, and have a letter recommendation, that you were, you would be, a valuable asset to the United States. And, uh, we got in on the, uh, visa, or the, the quota for Italian citizens living in Switzerland, which was a stretch but it worked. And I later found out, recently, that it was not unusual. People did that as a way to get in without going through the fascist government, which you had to do in Italy.

13:11 Andrew Viterbi: So, uh, as of, uh, we had steamship tickets. Incidentally, as good, uh, middle-class Europeans, yes we were going to America but we still had to have our summer vacation. So that was in Genoa. Where, uh, why Genoa? Well, first of all, it has nice beaches, but also my grandmother lived there. So we spent a little time with her, and we were all set to leave on the, uh, first of September 1939,

which is an interesting date. Well, uh, walking on the beach - and my father was very affable and he made a lot of acquaintances - and he started talking to a lady who, um, apparently was very knowledgeable because she was the girlfriend of the German Consul to Genoa. And she commented that something big is going to happen September 1st, which apparently a lot of people knew about. And so my father got very worried, ran down to the, uh, to the travel agency, and got us changed from the *Normandy*, which was a French line, to the *De Grasse*, which was a smaller ship, which was leaving 15 days earlier. It had a longer transit but would get us there on the 27th of August 1939. So that was three days before the war started. Of course, Italy was not in the war. Italy did not join, did not attack France actually until May of 1940, and there again everybody knew about it, uh, somehow. It was one of those uh secrets that got out early, and, um, so we could have left later but it would have been a lot trickier.

15:13 Andrew Viterbi: So um arriving in New York, I was four years old, my father was 57, my mother was 45, and they had to start all over again. Starting all over again in a language that they didn't know. They, they took Berlitz courses. Berlitz is what today is Rosetta Stone for the younger generation, and, uh, then my father had to take the, all the medical boards all over again at age 57. And luckily for me, he chose to do it in Massachusetts, and we moved to Boston. And I say luckily because I, I think the educational system in, in Boston and Cambridge, was a little superior. But then again, I'm biased. Um, so actually I went to kindergarten in New York, and it was a bit of an experience because I didn't know a word of English. But I was four years old. It's awfully easy to pick it up at that age. So within six months I, I could understand what the teacher was saying. Until then, we didn't get along at all. And, uh, but of course, uh, there were a lot of, uh, refugees like ourselves. Uh, there were, and there were, it was uh just like today - Manhattan was - an ethnic melting pot. And, uh, I believe there was many, well there were a lot of other kids who were probably going through the same thing.

17:03 Andrew Viterbi: By the time I got to Boston I was already, actually I was ready for second grade, but they put me in first grade and I immediately went and told the principal that your schools aren't nearly as good as the New York schools. How I had the guts or the chutzpah to do that, I don't know - but I did. And, um, actually I was in Brookline, because we, uh, we hadn't settled yet. And uh, Brookline was a very avant-garde, had very novel ideas on education, and so I felt that that wasn't quite as good as the old reading and writing and phonetic system of New York schools. But I gradually got to appreciate Boston, both the elementary and then the secondary school. I went to Boston Latin School, which was the oldest school in the country - 1635. And from there it was fairly easy entrance to MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology]. It wouldn't be so easy today, I'm sure. But at that time we got, half our kids, my graduating class of 200 and some, half of them got into Harvard, and about, uh, 20 percent actually went to MIT. Uh, but um, so uh, the rest was not so hard. Um so that, that's my refugee experience and

really I had no, no hardship, uh, other than the fact that you know, we were fish out of water. Uh, very few friends. Uh, there was an Italian Jewish community around Harvard Square. It wasn't all Jewish, but it was all anti-fascist. And uh, the most famous was, uh, professor Gaetano Salvemini who was a socialist, a very well-known anti-fascist, and was the Professor of Italian and Italian Literature and Culture at Harvard. Uh interestingly, he was succeeded by H. Stuart Hughes who, among other things, was the, uh, candidate for US President on the Peace and Freedom Party in the [19]60s, I think. And he was also after he retired from Harvard, he came here to UCSD [University of California, San Diego] and did some teaching, and wrote a book entitled *Prisoners of Hope: The Silver Age of the Italian Jews*, which uh, uh, among other, and it was really about, uh, half a dozen, uh, Italian Jewish writers. Uh, probably the most famous being Primo Levi, another one being Carlo Levi, uh who's not as well known today, Alberto Moravia and uh Giorgio Bassani. You may not know Bassani, but you know *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis* because of the uh of the film by that name, and uh, [Vittorio] De Sica - it was last the last of De Sica's films, and a quite a masterpiece.

20:49 Andrew Viterbi: Um but, uh, but my parents had a hard time. They had a hard time, no question. My father was able to re-establish a modest practice, uh, of ophthalmology on Commonwealth Avenue in in Boston. Uh, partly because, you know, starting at age just about 60 and uh, uh the way, the reason that he was able to actually was that in 1941 most young doctors were being called up to the service. And then there was also a large Italian community, uh, that had come, oh, from the time of the earthquake in Messina, Sicily 1906, and also from the very, the impoverished conditions of especially of Sicily, but also southern Italy, and even northern Italy. And so, he managed to make enough money to put food on the table, and my mother worked. My mother worked as a seamstress to help cover expenses. Um, there was some bitterness. We went back to Italy once while my father was alive, in 1948. That's when I met Primo Levi for the first time. It was my Bar Mitzvah actually. We had no family in the United States, and so we went back when I was 13, in 1948. And, but, Italy was just rebuilding from the war, and uh, uh it was a feeling that there wasn't much, um, no, no form of apology for what had happened.

22:53 Andrew Viterbi: Okay, let me move on to a, uh, more of a survivor story. And that's the story of my wife's family, who came from Sarajevo. Now Sarajevo is in, as everybody knows, today is in Bosnia. At that time, it was still Yugoslavia. Um, had become Yugoslavia by the combination of Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Slovenia and, and Macedonia. And all those countries, that have split apart now, uh, and that was done by Woodrow Wilson at the end of World War I. Well, it was actually mostly Austro-Hungarian Empire, which had collapsed, and Woodrow Wilson thought that the way you should organize countries is according to language, and he was dead wrong. He'd do it in accordance to religion, and there were three religions, uh, Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox Christianity, and uh, and

Islam. And each one now has its own country Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia. Um, in any case, in, in the 1930s and up until 1941, Sarajevo was a city of about 80,000 inhabitants, 20,000 of whom - about a quarter - were Jews. And they had been there for a very long time. Uh, just as the Italian Jews had been there for a very long time, and been there for hundreds - and in some cases - maybe even a couple of thousand years. But in Bosnia, you could trace it to 1492, to the expulsion from Spain, and they were Sephardic for the most part. There was also an Ashkenazi, a smaller Ashkenazi contingent that had come down, uh, from Austria since it was part of the Austrian, Austrian-Hungary.

24:58 Andrew Viterbi: Uh, so it wasn't until, uh, the spring of 1941 that, uh, conditions became intolerable. Until that time, they were Yugoslav citizens like everyone else, but Germany invaded in 1941. My father-in-law actually was in the Yugoslav Army for a little while. It was quickly defeated and the, uh, the family wisely, uh, made their way west towards the Italian lines so I'll let Al Finci, my brother-in-law, tell that story, and then I'll come back and say a little bit about Primo Levi, my connection with him and, uh, and also I'll talk about a couple of the, uh, stories in *The Periodic Table*, which is probably one of his best, and um, and I think also Professor Hertz will say a few things about Primo Levi.

26:08 Al Finci [from a video recording]: It was December. It's cold, damp, foggy - a lot of fog in that part of Italy - and but they immediately found us in some temporary accommodations and eventually found us a house that belonged to a land-owner and placed my family, with my grandparents, and my uncles, who were single. And next door to us was the tenant farmer who worked on the land while the landlord lived in some other community, not too far away, but not in those premises. So we had reasonably nice accommodations. Another aunt of mine lived down, down the street, maybe four or five houses down the street with an Italian family, and she was there with her husband and two sons, and, um, and that's where we were. Again, we could not go to school, nobody could be gainfully employed, but we felt reasonably safe with the Italians.

27:24 Debbie Helman [from a video recording]: How many Jews were in your group that went to this village?

27:28 Al Finci [from a video recording]: There's eighteen of us and we were all related, in one way or another.

27:33 Debbie Helman [from a video recording]: And the village has how many people?

27:35 Al Finci [from a video recording]: 300 people.

27:38 Debbie Helman [from a video recording]: So, this family whose home that you live in, did not reside in the home themselves?

- 27:44 Al Finci [from a video recording]: They did not, but next door to us were the tenant farmers, who were wonderful to us.
- 27:48 Debbie Helman [from a video recording]: Do you remember any of the family's names
- 27:50 Al Finci [from a video recording]: Oh sure, of course, I do. The father of them was a guy by the name of Sylvio Ponghilini, p-o-n-g-h-i-l-i-n-i. And he was just a wonderful guy. His wife's name was Emma, and he had one son who worked with him in the fields and, and a wife. They all worked in fields. I mean, that's, that was the way of life in these, in these villages. And they were absolutely wonderful to us. When we left Split [Croatia], the propaganda in Split was that people were starving in Italy. So, and, and again - the thought of this whole war starting in April of 1941 is that we were in the days of Blitzkrieg, and no war was going to last forever, and in six months everything was going to be over. So, when we went to Italy they said, well you know, you just got to bring some flour to tide you over. And we bought this flour, and paid an arm and a leg for these sacks of flour, that we brought with us to Italy. And incredibly, the Italians would let us do that. Our mattresses that kept going with us, were still with us. And, and, Emma Ponghilini - the wife of the tenant farmer - looked at these sacks and says, what's in there? We said, flour. She said, what do you mean flour? And she looked in there, and the flour was virtually black because it wasn't properly sifted, but you bought it you could make some kind of bread with it. She said I'll trade you this. And she traded this to flour for pure white flower, and she took out a sack. We said, so what are you gonna do with it? She said, this we're gonna feed to the pigs. So the area, that whole area of that village was in the granary of Italy. And so, not only that there was plenty of flour, and some great pasta that they would make, but the parmesan cheese is made in that particular area, and you have many opportunities to go and see the cheese being made and eaten, fresh and aged - and so forth and so on.
- 30:14 Debbie Helman [from a video recording]: This home, uh, your father paid rent for, monthly?
- 30:21 Al Finci [from a video recording]: Yes. Theoretically, we received some kind of an allowance from the Italian government, which was basically a pittance. We paid. We were able to pay the rent, and it was fine, and we could still afford it. And, and again, still no school but some Italian Jewish organization, uh, got in touch with us - an organization called DELASEM [Delegation for the Assistance of Jewish Emigrants] - d-e-l-a-s-e-m. And they were financed by the American Joint Distribution Committee, and they were able to provide me with books, in Italian, so I could study algebra and history, and geography, and things of that sort, and rather than sort of just rotting away. But in the wintertime, there's really no place to go because it was so cold and damp. You couldn't even see in front of you because it was the fog was so thick, and I remembered that the old folks they play poker all the time. So what did the young kids do? Play poker, all the time, so

much so - including myself, and I was playing with my cousins - that I can't stand cards anymore. So you'll never find me with a deck of cards, but it was like all the time. In the summertime, we would go to the river and swim. And the big joke was that we would cross the river, swim across the river, and we would wind up not only in a different municipality but in a different province which theoretically was very inappropriate for us to do. Nobody cared and we were together with Italians and very friendly with them. And, and all of that continued throughout 1942, and until September of 1943 when Italy surrendered. Italy surrendered to the Allies in early September 1943, and there was a great deal of joy. And suddenly, even the Italians who were the big fascists and so forth and so on, are suddenly celebrating, uh, the fact that they were no longer allies, allied with the Germans.

- 32:53 Al Finci [from a video recording]: But that happiness was really short-lived, uh, because, uh, the Allies just stayed in the south. Never were able to move up, uh, up to, up to Northern Italy very fast. And before we knew it the Germans occupied Northern Italy and, and revived a new fascist government that - it was called the Republic of Salò - Salò being the name of the city where the central government was, and suddenly we were in this village, like sitting ducks. Everybody knew who we were, and we knew that if we stayed there, we would be caught by either the Germans, or the Italian fascists, and that would have been the end of us. So my mother said, we gotta get out of here, and, uh, for a while we were hiding in the vineyards. And we said, how long can we hide in the vineyards? I mean, sooner or later you know, they're gonna find us here.
- 34:03 Debbie Helman [from a video recording]: Night and day?
- 34:05 Al Finci [from a video recording]: Night and day, absolutely, night and day. There was a little shed in there where we could go in at night. But September, it was not cold. So it was easy to sleep outdoors, but we knew that the bad winter is coming, and there was no way for us to stay there. So we arranged to go into the city apartment where, to some friends, we were able to rent an apartment. Actually, a few apartments because now some more aunts of mine arrived from different parts of Italy. There was more of us, and, but we were able to find an apartment where my immediate family lived and an uncle of mine.
- 34:49 Debbie Helman [from a video recording]: Before we go there, back in the village, do you remember the family who owned the home and their name?
- 34:57 Al Finci [from a video recording]: I don't remember the name. I remember the landlady very well. She was a widow, didn't have any children, and she did not spend much time in the place. She would come maybe once every two, three months
- 35:11 Debbie Helman [from a video recording]: What was her name?
- 35:12 Al Finci [from a video recording]: I don't remember her name.

- 35:14 Debbie Helman [from a video recording]: or the address of the?
- 35:16 Al Finci [from a video recording]: There was no address. As a matter of fact, it was just a street and, and that was it. Everybody knew everybody else. And we went there, after the war once, and again you don't need an address. It was just a very, I mean, there's 300 people living there. There aren't too many streets, so, just a main drag. That was about it.
- 35:37 Debbie Helman [from a video recording]: Okay so, um, once you realized you were sitting ducks, and couldn't stay.
- 35:45 Al Finci [from a video recording]: We, um, mostly to my mother's efforts, we wound up in a city apartment, found this apartment with a family consisting of a widow and, and, she had two daughters and a son. One daughter was married but elsewhere. But one daughter and son lived with her, and we were able to rent the, I think, about two or three rooms in their place. And that's basically where we stayed. Lady's name was Contini. She stayed, lived in the street called Corso Carsi, Number 66. I still remember the number in the city apartment, and we never told them we were Jews. We told them that we were Italians, that we were coming from a large Italian city, and we were running away from the bombings that, by then, were all over Italy. Because you got Allied airplanes bombing strategic cities in Italy, and we felt that there were a lot of other Italians, from those cities, who were doing the same thing. So basically, that's what we told them. I'm sure that, although all of us spoke good Italian by then, that the Italian had some kind of an accent, and so they must have known that everything was just not so. But they operated on the, uh, don't ask, don't tell theory. So that's where we were. And in addition, uh, my father, and my uncle never went on the street. So that obviously had to be suspicious, in one way or another, but again they never asked. And we lived with them, like a family. We ate together, and the old lady cooked all kinds of goodies for us, and, um.
- 37:44 Debbie Helman [from a video recording]: How were your living quarters?
- 37:47 Al Finci [from a video recording]: Adequate. They were adequate. It was just the way an Italian family lived, and they treated us well, and so it was nothing that I would consider dingy. The worst thing that we ever encountered in this period, um, was in Montenegro, where - in our first apartment - I woke up and I was itching all over the place. Well, it turns out, there was lice in the bed, and so forth, and so on. And we eventually got that cleaned up and taken care of, but basically our, um, our facilities were good. I never had any, up to that point in time, never had anything where I'd say, you know, we're living like pigs or anything of that sort. So uh, Parma was difficult, and it was difficult because we were learning - virtually on a daily basis - that the Germans and the fascists were raiding different sections of the city looking for POWs [prisoners of war] who escaped, from POW camps, were looking for pilots who were shut down and were being hidden by Italian families,

and they were looking for Jews. So basically, uh, we knew that sooner or later they could well get the area where we live. And so, if you sit and wait, it may not be a pretty picture.

39:37 Al Finci [from a video recording]: So we attempted to get away from Parma, and we concluded that there were basically two possibilities - one was to go south toward the front lines and cross the front lines to the part of Italy that was occupied by the Allies. We knew that there were certain areas, particularly in the mountainous areas of Abruzzi, where there was not much going on, and there was not much fighting going on, and the area wasn't strategically important. And if you could cross the mountains in that part of the world, you could get to the area that was already liberated. Another possibility was to go north, find some guys that would take you cross - help you cross the Alps in the middle of the night - into Switzerland. And basically, we somehow or other found out about an Italian individual who was arranging these - I'm calling them trips, but they were basically escapes - into Switzerland. And two of my uncles decided that they wanted to go south, and see if there was a way of crossing the mountains in the Abruzzi, and they took the train. Both of them spoke absolutely fluent Italian. They all had false papers, which were provided to us in the municipality of Sissa which is the Gramignazzo, related to Gramignazzo.

41:25 Debbie Helman [from a video recording]: By whom?

41:26 Al Finci [from a video recording]: By the Italian mayor, and the secretary of the city council. He gave us, uh, identity cards. He gave us stamps, official stamps, and they say, you do whatever you want, or whatever name you want. And, and that's how I became, in that period of time, Giovanni Orsini, and my father was Giuseppe Orsini, and my mother was Elena Orsini, and my sister was Ernestina Orsini. So we were all Orsinis for a period of time. My uncles, I don't remember what name they had. They went south. They found some possibilities of crossing the lines, and they were on the way back. And somewhere between Florence and Bologna, they found they were at the railroad station waiting for a train, and there were two Germans, probably Gestapo people, and a woman with them. And they were sitting on the railway station, and they kept looking at my two uncles. One eventually came over, asked for documents. They showed them the false papers. They looked in order and the guy went back. Kept looking at him, and the woman kept looking at him and talking to them. And finally, they all came over and they arrested them. They put him in a detention camp that was not far from Parma, from where they would, where they would round up the Jews, and from there taken to Germany. My younger uncle got tonsillitis, and incredibly, they took him - he was an individual destined for the gas chambers - and they put him in a hospital. He had a tonsillectomy, and we found through a communist nurse that was taking care of him. We were able to send him clothes, and she took the clothes to the bathroom. He went in in his prison pajamas to the bathroom, put on his clothes, his

overcoat, his hat, and walked out of the hospital with a nurse's daughter waiting for him. And that's how he miraculously escaped being sent to Germany. And this uncle of mine was sent to Germany from Italy, and obviously was never heard from anymore.

- 44:00 Debbie Helman [from a video recording]: So, what was your family's plan for escape?
- 44:06 Al Finci [from a video recording]: Well, at this point - obviously - the, the, the possibility of going south disappeared, and we contacted the individual who organized these escapes to Switzerland.
- 44:19 Debbie Helman [from a video recording]: Do you remember the network?
- 44:20 Al Finci [from a video recording]: No, I don't, and he's an individual who helped a lot of Jews. And I mean, I can see his face in front of me right now, but I really don't know his name, if I ever knew his name.
- 44:33 Debbie Helman [from a video recording]: Did he work as an individual, or with a group?
- 44:36 Al Finci [from a video recording]: He, to the best of my knowledge, he worked as an individual. Although he had a bunch of guides, who were peasants and knew the mountains very well.
- 44:46 Debbie Helman [from a video recording]: Did your father pay him?
- 44:49 Al Finci [from a video recording]: Yes and the price basically was whatever you got left. And this is how you really know what the price of freedom and liberty is, and, and basically at that point, all the money went. But the guy took us from Parma to Milan. In Milan we changed railroad stations, wound up going by train to Como, Lake Como, then a boat to one of the villages, walked up the mountain into one of the homes of the villagers, and we stayed there until about 10 o'clock at night. And then, about four individuals took us - carried our bags, incredibly - and took us to the barbed wire, lifted a barbed wire. As a matter of fact, I got a little scar on my finger because the barbed wire caught the vein in here, and I was bleeding profusely, but we were going, and there was five of us. It was my parents, my sister, one of my uncles, and myself. And my -
- 46:08 Debbie Helman [from a video recording]: Is that the same uncle who walked out of the hospital?
- 46:10 Al Finci [from a video recording]: The same uncle who walked out of the hospital, that's correct, and we kept walking. My father and I were much in front and suddenly we heard in German, halt, hier ist Schweiz, which means stop this is Switzerland. And my father, who was a very strong individual, suddenly took off

and jumped one of the guys. I asked him, what did you do? And I said, well he says, I heard what he said, but I didn't know whether he was a German, and he was just trying to fool me. And I was going to get close to him and see whether he had a swastika or a Swiss cross. If he had a swastika, it was going to be the survival of the fittest. If he had a Swiss cross, I was going to kiss. It was a Swiss cross, and he kissed him. And the guy was totally stunned, absolutely stunned. And they picked us up, helped us with the bags, and took us to a detention center in the village of Mendrisio, which is in the in the Canton of Ticino, in Switzerland. And that morning, uh, there was a whole group of people. Uh, there were two Moroccan soldiers, both black, who were POWs, who escaped and they were sort of moving at night and eventually made it to Switzerland. We had some Italian politicians who were condemned to death in absentia, they were with us, and there was another small group of a Jewish family.

47:52 Debbie Helman [from a video recording]: Okay, we'll stop there and change tapes.

47:55 Andrew Viterbi: Well, Al did a good job. Uh, just in case you hadn't caught it, that was [Steven] Spielberg's project, the Shoah Foundation - which is now the Shoah Foundation Institute of USC [University of Southern California], my alma mater. And he, it's one of 50,000 testimonies, and the originals are all stored in a mountain - in a vault in a mountain - to be kept for eternity. Those are the digitized versions which will also last but, uh, we wanted - or not we, but Spielberg and his people wanted - to make sure that the originals would be preserved forever. Well uh, there's a few things I should fill in. I started out by saying that, uh, his parents and actually it was his grandparents that that were the most savvy, because uh, uh, his grandfather was a a large, uh, coffee merchant, had done business with all of Europe, and knew the difference between Germany and Italy. And so, we should, and, and as what may not have been clear is the Italian Army, such as it was, came down along the Dalmatian Coast, along the the Adriatic Coast, and took, uh, not all of Croatia - because part of Croatia at that time it was called Dalmatia - and uh, it was you've all been to Dubrov- many of you, I'm sure, have been to Dubrovnik, that's Dalmatia. And, uh, that was, um, all the way down to Montenegro. Uh, and in fact, the conditions in Montenegro were not at all good. They were very dangerous, even there were a lot of Partisan uh, uh, attacks on the Italian soldiers. So it was dangerous to be there. They moved up to Split, as he said, and that's where they were actually imprisoned by the authorities, and then taken over to Italy - but under very good conditions, as you saw.

50:11 Andrew Viterbi: The other episode that he didn't mention, but is very striking, is that he mentioned that they went from Parma to Milan by train, and then transferred to a train to Como. Well for a while though they had to be in the railroad station in Milan and, lucky for the family, he came down with a terrible nosebleed just as the German, uh, troops, sentries, guards were coming through. So a nurse saw this, probably also suspected that they were all there and in a

great risk, and she grabbed the whole family, took them down to the infirmary, uh, took care of the nosebleed, and by the time they came out the Germans had left. The German soldiers had left. So without that. So was that an act of God? Who knows. Anyway, uh, the rest, uh, their sojourn in Switzerland wasn't great, but it saved their lives. And then after the war, they came down to a, um they were penniless by this time, uh, but there was still some family money that was ultimately extricated. And for a while, they were in a DP [Displaced Persons] camp, displaced person camp, in the southernmost tip of Italy. I want to say a little bit though about Italy, and then I'm going to lead into uh, uh, a comment on Primo Levi.

51:55 Andrew Viterbi: Uh, the uh, AI's description of the Italians is very accurate. There were very many uh, who went out of their way to save lives at their own peril, the peril of their own lives. But it was not uniform. It is not, I mean, it is not to be said that the Italians were all, uh, angels or saviors. Uh, for 5,000 Lira you could turn in a Jew. Five thousand Lira at the time was about uh \$250. But of course, I'm talking 1943 dollars, so it was probably like a couple of thousand dollars and people would jump at it. Not all, a small percentage, but out of the 40,000 or so Jews that were living in Italy, and, and a number of them were foreign Jews - like my wife's family - uh 800 - I'm sorry - 8,000 were deported. Many of those were from Rome because the Roman Jews thought they were protected, they were protected by the pope. It didn't work out that way, although a lot of church people did - both priests and nuns - did hide and protect Jews. But in any case, so it, and, and, and, keep in mind also that, uh, it wasn't just the Nazis. The Nazis had these allies, the republic of Salò. Uh the, uh, a great many Italian soldiers after the armistice, or after the surrender, refused to go with the Germans, and many perished in German concentration camps also. But an equal number - perhaps more - did go with the republic of Salò, and some of those, uh, particularly police, or military police, was, had the job of going, hunting up the Jews, and not just in Rome but throughout Northern Italy, which is where most Jews were. So that's, it's a, it's a mixed story. Nevertheless, there was a great deal of heroism and after 1943 there was also an insurrection, a partisan movement, which - although it was not terribly effective until the end - it did, there were great acts of heroism.

54:46 Andrew Viterbi: And that brings me to the story of Primo Levi. Primo Levi was a chemist. He was an industrial chemist. I - as I think I mentioned - I first met him in 1948. It was only two years before he returned from Auschwitz. It took him a year to return from Auschwitz because the, as you may know, Auschwitz, uh, was liberated in January 26 - tomorrow is the, uh, is the anniversary - of 1944. I'm sorry, 19- sorry, January 26 of 1945, by the Russians. And uh, the Russians were liberators but they were also chaotic and somewhat savage. And uh, they didn't kill Jews but they, you know, they, they did, they helped. They they provided some food, but mostly the prisoners who got out, and they were very few, and I'll mention how - maybe Professor Hertz will mention how he got, how he survived - um, but

they were on their own. And eventually, he got on a train which took him to Eastern Europe into, deep into Russia, and it took him a year to get back. Uh, so that's the industrial chemist, uh, Primo Levi. When he got back a year later, he married my first cousin. Uh, did you have something or did you want me to comment?

56:19 Deborah Hertz: I'm not talking. You're talking.

56:21 Andrew Viterbi: Okay, all right. So, uh, you saw a picture of, uh, Primo, uh, when he was probably had recently returned, or he could even have been before. He graduated from the University of Turin with a degree in chemistry in 1940. Initially, he couldn't find a job. He was Jewish; he couldn't work. Eventually, he gravitated to a job that was offered to him by a Swiss citizen who worked for a pharmaceutical company in Basil, I believe, and had a laboratory in Milan. Uh, he was a Swiss citizen but he spoke Italian. I, I should mention in, in Al's interview he said that when they arrived in Switzerland, it was really Italian Switzerland. So the people all spoke Italian, and the culture is almost identical to that of the Lombardy, of Milan. So this guy, though had uh cover because he was a Swiss citizen, and so he could hire Jews, Not that he really was looking for Jews, but it wasn't a big deal. Don't ask, don't tell. And uh, he uh, his this, of course, is a, is a sketch that was done very late in his life. I don't know by whom. This is, uh, a poster for his book. His, the title of his book was actually *If This Is a Man*, meaning - how can human beings live in such a degraded state, and but the original title for the English translation was, *Survival in Auschwitz* because it was felt that that title wouldn't sell. Um, later on though, uh, it he became well enough known that he, it was written under his own name. And then the other, after that it says *The Truce*. Is, this really was a double edition. An edition of, of his survival in Auschwitz, and then of, uh, the period that, uh, that it took for him to get back to his home. The almost a year that he spent, uh, largely in, in Poland, in the Soviet Union. And by the way, which was made into a movie, uh, starring John Turturro. It was not a great commercial success, and it was Hollywood. There were some things that were a little inaccurate, but still, it was a pretty good movie. Um, is that it?

59:25 Deborah Hertz: Oh, for my slides?

59:26 Andrew Viterbi: Yeah.

59:27 Deborah Hertz: Almost.

59:28 Andrew Viterbi: Okay, *If Not Now, When?* Is, is his only, um, excursion into into fiction. Uh, it's actually a very good book, was not well-reviewed, but it, only he could have written a book about Polish Jewish partisans, and how they survived in the forests, and as they came out of uh, uh, out of the horrors of those times, and made their way eventually to Palestine. Um, *The Drowned and the Saved* was, I think, the last, uh, book that he wrote. He wrote a lot of, uh, of short stories. A lot of

them were science fiction in fact, but *The Drowned and the Saved* is almost a, uh, a revision of the original *If This Is a Man*. It's, it's about Auschwitz, and it, it's more philosophical. Um, and this is of course, uh, one of the guard towers, must have been at the end of, uh, at the time of liberation. He was saved by, by the fact that, uh, he was very, very ill. He came down with, um, typhus or typhoid fever, and, uh, he was in the infirmary as the Russians were approaching. And the Germans left the very sick to die, presumably, and took everybody else on the death march. And so, his closest friends pretty, many, most of them died on that death march. He, uh, he barely survived, and then, uh, gradually made his way back into full life.

1:01:31 Andrew Viterbi: Um, I will say a few words about *The Periodic Table*. This is, I think, his third major work and it is, it's a collection of of short stories. It's, it's really very interesting. As I said, he was a chemist. After the war, uh, he struggled for a while and ultimately became the director of a paint production factory, and remained that way until about 1975, where he became fame was famous enough for his literature that he devoted full time to it. But in this, *Periodic Table*, he takes about 20 elements and weaves short stories around them. Uh, for the most part, they are episodes in his life. In a few cases, they're, they're science fiction, and they're very, very, uh, uh, very clever, very, very interesting science fiction. He also wrote quite a number of science fiction stories under a pseudonym, um, or nom de plume - [Damiano] Malabaila. But eventually, it's being, they're all being reprinted and translated under his name, which is better known. Um, but the two that I want to mention are *Phosphorus* and *Gold*. As I said, each, uh, each short story is an is was either a science fiction, in some cases, but in most cases, it was episodes in his life.

1:03:16 Andrew Viterbi: And there's two successive, uh, stories; one is called *Phosphorus* and the other is called *Gold*. Now the elements in, in some cases were really, uh, activities that he performed as a chemist, and, uh, others were just events that happened around him, and really but all of them had some effect, or some, uh, philosophical connection with his own experience. So the one on phosphorus was really a, a, a job he had. As I said, this, uh, this Swiss gentleman, uh, from the pharmaceutical company hired him to extract phosphorus. Well, he had a theory, a cockamamie theory that had been expounded by some, some famous but, uh, long discarded German, uh, professor, uh, who believed that you could cure cancer with phosphorus - with injections of phosphorus. So this pharmaceutical executive believed, hired him to extract phosphorus from various uh, uh, vegetables and, and other, uh, natural substances and inject them in, uh, well into rabbits that had already been so prepared for cancer. And of course, it was a fiasco. But the total fiasco happened because they had each one in a different cage, and they were all labeled. Well, one night - this was in Milan - one night there was an allied bombing which, uh, destroyed all the cages. So the rabbits went all over the place, copulating, and the next morning they came in and they didn't know which, which cage to put them in. But meanwhile, uh, there was under

underneath this rather funny story, it was the reality of what life was like in 1943. Pre-armistice, it was [19]42, [19]43.

1:05:53 Andrew Viterbi: He was working in this laboratory and he fell in love with a girl, but couldn't touch her because she was an Aryan, and Aryan was the Italian word for non-Jew. That was, it came from the Germans, Aryans, and so he got very close to her but, uh, couldn't, couldn't, uh, go any further. And um, then the the immediate next story is called *Gold* and uh, um, while he's in, in this laboratory - and the rabbit experiments have all failed - at that point Italy surrenders, not because of the rabbits. But uh, so, uh, he gets together with a lot of other young people, who for 20 years have been indoctrinated into fascism, but there are some elder statesmen who start explaining to them that it's all a lie and all a fraud. And of course, they knew that, as Jews, they were any way out of the system, but they didn't know how bad the system was, and how it had corrupted Italy, and ruined it, and everything else. So uh, gradually they all get together, uh, Jews and non-Jews, and join a partisan brigade that hides out in the mountains - in the Piedmontese Alps - up above Turin, and they are totally unprepared. There's about 30 or 40 of them, and there's 20 revolvers and one lupara, which is - not a machine gun - kind of just a rifle.

1:07:56 Andrew Viterbi: But, it turns out that all of this was unnecessary anyway because one of their group was a traitor, was a, was a spy, and turned them in, and so they were all taken. Um the, they were taken by the Italian soldiers of the Republic of Salò and, uh, Primo was told uh, are you Jewish? Uh, if you are then I'm gonna turn you over to the Germans. If you're not I'm gonna shoot you right now. So anyway, they put them in a - this particular episode is called *Gold*. Why is it called gold? It's very peculiar. He's put in a in a cell and his cellmate is not a partisan at all. He's a, taken as a petty criminal. He's a, um, he's involved in smuggling, uh, but that's not his main occupation. His man main occupation is panning, is panning for gold in one of the rivers of northern Italy that flows into the Po [River] called the Dora [Riparia]. Doro is gold in Italian, and the Dora is, supposedly had, gold in it coming down from the hills, very, very, very little - but enough that, uh, he could eke out a living. And he tells Primo, as he, you know, is in the cell, uh, he says, well he says, I wouldn't tell you this but given your condition - meaning he's about to be taken away, and, uh, deported to Germany - uh, I might as well that there's a little corner of the brook where the gold is most plentiful. So, so this tells you, not so much gold, but maybe the fact that he is such a doomed person. That all of this, the underlying story both the story of *Phosphorus* and the story of *Gold* - he is a, a non-person already. And then, of course, Auschwitz. And if you haven't read it, uh, *If This is a Man* is just remarkable. It's been it's never been made into a movie, but it, there has been a Broadway production, a very brief one, by a South African who started in Cape Town, I think, and then did it in London and in New York, and it was overwhelming.

1:10:54 Andrew Viterbi: So that was Primo Levi. By the way I, I met him in [19]48 but we knew about him. He was already famous in the family since [19]47 because that's when he wrote the first version of *If This is a Man*, and he couldn't get it published, couldn't get it published. In Italy he self, uh, he paid for a thousand copies. We got one of them. It wasn't, that was 1947. It wasn't until, uh, 1958 I think that he found a publisher in Italy. And then, in the [19]60s it was translated and became a major piece of literature for the world. Um, I might also add that in 1947 my father read it to me. My Italian at the time was not was good enough orally, but I, I hadn't taken French and German, and Latin enough, and didn't, didn't, was not comfortable enough with foreign languages to read Italian. I've come a ways since then, but my father read it to me and uh, together we put, we came cobbled a, a small translation of the first chapter. Which, he then, took to a famous Rabbi in Brookline, Massachusetts - Joshua Loth Liebman, who had been published, published a book called *Peace of Mind*, I think - and said, well can we get this, uh, translated and published? Thing is, nobody wants to hear about the Holocaust; it's 1947. So for better or worse, the whole world has heard about it, and should always remember it. Thank you for listening.

1:13:05 Susanne Hillman: Are there any questions for Dr. Viterbi? Please.

1:13:13 Speaker 1: What role, if any, did the Americans, and the American Jewish community play during this period of time?

1:13:23 Andrew Viterbi: Well, as you heard in Al's, uh, interview, the Joint, the JDC [Joint Distribution Committee] was already sending money to relief organizations. And keep in mind, until 1943 Italian Jewish relief was able to operate, uh, and, and then, uh, they, uh, they probably provided most of the livelihood for the refugees that made it into Switzerland. Uh, how much this was kept of it, I don't know, but, uh, and it wasn't. Uh, interestingly, uh, the Finci family was much better off in Italy up until 1943, than they were in Switzerland for that year and a half, but I won't go into the details. Uh, what about the the the activity, or the attitude of the American Jewish community before and during World War II? Well, a lot has been written about it. I, I just would comment that you can't rewrite history, and you've got to stay with the spirit of the times. We have to remember that in the [19]30s there was a, a terrible depression in this country, with unemployment probably at the 25 percent level, and more than that, there was a lot of antisemitism, and Jews were not anywhere near the, uh, the level of acceptance, respectability, and, uh, and influence that we are today. So yes, it was Bernard Baruch, for those of us who are old enough to remember that. There was, uh, Judge [Felix] Frankfurter, Judge [Louis] Brandeis, but they were isolated and didn't, they didn't get involved very much. I think Judge, Judge Brandeis did, but Frankfurter, I think stayed out of it. So uh, I've forgotten the name of the gentleman, but it was, his name was Kook, who came and tried to, uh, to get the government to understand what was happening in Europe, in the the Holocaust.

- 1:15:58 Audience members: Peter Bergson.
- 1:15:51 Andrew Viterbi: No, no, no, not Herzl. No, no.
- 1:16:00 Audience members: Bergson!
- 1:16:04 Andrew Viterbi: Bergson, yes, thank you. And uh, but uh, he, he had a hard time getting attention, and the attitude was, you know, keep a low profile. So uh, how were the American Jews towards the refugees that were streaming in? And you know, the Italians were actually, there were about 2,000 Italian Jews that came, but there were probably - I would imagine - 50,000 German Jews, and an equal number of Polish Jews. Um and uh, in fact, I remember a story my father would tell me, that he was walking through Central Park shortly after we'd arrived, and there were two Jews arguing vehemently. One was probably a German, and the other one was a, uh, a Pole, and they were arguing as to whether Hitler or Stalin was worse. We had no doubt it was Hitler, and also that Roosevelt was our savior. There again there, you can't rewrite history. In those times, uh, that was the best we could do. Thank you.
- 1:17:20 Susanne Hillman: Do you have a question, over there?
- 1:17:22 Speaker 2: Actually, it's a comment. Yeah, for your possible interest, it's not such a cockamamie idea to treat cancer with phosphorus. P32, which is a radioactive isotope of phosphorus, is used, or has been in the past years, to treat certain cancers, particularly ovarian cancer.
- 1:17:40 Andrew Viterbi: Thank you, thank you. I just, uh, I just comment on what's in this book. [laughter] But I'm sure that we've come a long way. That's about 70 years ago.
- 1:17:55 Susanne Hillman: Another question?
- 1:17:57 Speaker 3: [unclear]
- 1:18:05 Andrew Viterbi: Well yeah it's, it has nothing to do with the refugee story. I just, by, uh, let's see, I guess I entered college in 1952, by then we were full-fledged citizens. An interesting story though, we didn't start out very well because, uh, we landed in 1939, took out what was then called first papers - which is really, uh, permanent residence. You have to wait five years to get citizenship, which I think is still the story now. Um, but come, uh, December 7th of 1941, suddenly we were enemy aliens, which and, and uh, my father, and mother, and I. They took me down to the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] office in the Old Customs House in Boston, and we all got fingerprinted. And I thought, well but if we're Jews, and we're running away from those people. It didn't matter that; we were enemy aliens. Uh, nothing happened to the Italian Jews, or the German Jews other than the nomenclature. Oh, they took my father's, uh, camera away from him, cameras, uh,

shortwave radios, and firearms. He had neither of the others, but he had a camera that he was very proud of because he took pictures of his little boy, bought it when I was born. Anyway, uh, so um, uh, the, um - oh what happened after it? Well, uh, so we got our citizenship in 1945. Actually, uh, about three weeks before the end of the war and, uh, you know, then I was just just an American kid and I, uh, I went to college.

1:20:02 Andrew Viterbi: I went to MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology]. I got a master's, and then family resources were very limited so I, I had to go to work. And I, I landed a what turned out to be a very interesting job at Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, which belonged to Cal Tech. And three months after I came in 1957, the Russians launched Sputnik and JPL got the job to do the communication and tracking for the first US satellite Explorer 1. So, I was part of that group, and then I did a few other things, moved, got a Ph.D. meanwhile, at USC, moved over to UCLA, spent 10 years there, started a company with Irwin Jacobs and some others, moved it down to San Diego - came down in [19]73 - and then, that was Linkabit Corporation. We sold it in 1980, uh, stayed on for five years which was some feat because larger corporations are, get very bureaucratic, and then, uh, oh half a dozen of us left and started Qualcomm. You probably know about that. [laughter]

1:21:34 Susanne Hillman: There's a question here.

1:21:36 Speaker 4: Wasn't there a restriction on how many Jewish people Harvard and other Universities took as students?

1:21:42 Andrew Viterbi: Uh, not any longer. Well numerus clausus, it was called - the closed number. Uh, it was enforced in medical schools for longer than it was in undergraduate colleges. By the time I got to college, there wasn't any at Harvard. I can't speak of the other Ivy Leagues, and certainly not at MIT. And I don't think MIT ever had any such number. Uh, medical schools - I'm not a physician - but my guess is by the late [19]50s that was gone too. And by 1965 it was illegal. By the way, you couldn't buy a house in La Jolla either. [laughter] J.J.

1:22:32 J.J. [Jean-Jacques] Surbeck: Thank you. A lot of people assume that if you made it to Switzerland you were safe automatically, but that wasn't the case. It really depended on the guards because there were a number of cases where the guards actually sent the refugees back, and they ended up back in Germany. In your case, you were lucky, but I think, I think it's also important for people to know that it wasn't a, a summer camp on the other side. It was not fun, but the Swiss didn't really treat you that well. They saved your life, but they didn't treat you well.

1:23:01 Andrew Viterbi: All right. Mr. Surbeck brings up a very interesting point, and he had Swiss citizenship too, so he would know. He wasn't born yet, obviously but, um, in the early days, uh, particularly coming from Germany, but also from Italy, uh, the

Swiss Guards did not automatically let people in. In fact, I have a cousin - another cousin through marriage - who did get in, but only after a struggle - not a physical struggle - but a uh, uh, quite a group of, uh, also political, um, refugees - Italian political refugees, parliamentarians, I think - and he had come over the mountains, and they wanted to deport them, and only by making phone calls to very important people were they able to turn that decision around. Those who were sent out, I've heard a number of stories, many were just picked up by the Guards and sent back. I heard one story in the old age home, the old the Jewish home for the aged, in Milan, the lady who told me that her sister, uh, had, had been so pushed over the border, came upon an Italian guard who looked at her and says, you look just like my mother. I'm certainly not going to turn you in, and he sent her on her way. And apparently, she survived. Now how did the Swiss behave?

1:24:44 Andrew Viterbi: Well, if you had money it was no problem. I had an uncle, and an aunt, and a cousin, a cousin who actually had gone to Switzerland, uh, in the late [19]30s because he was entering college. If you were already in college by 1939, they'd let you finish, even though a Jew. But if you weren't, you couldn't go to college. You couldn't go to high school; you couldn't go to elementary school; you couldn't go to kindergarten. But, uh, I had a cousin who, uh, was just about to enter college. I don't know, in fact, no even in high school - he went to high school in, uh, forgotten where in German Switzerland. And then they sent him to Lausanne - to which is now one of the primary engineering schools of, uh, Europe - the uh, The École Polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne, and uh, and he had a great time. He, he wasn't a great student but he was a very good bridge player. He made a lot of money on bridge, and, but his parents had enough money that they could get along. But my wife's family, as Al said, they had spent it all in getting out. And uh, so, what they did in her immediate family - father, mother, uh brother, sister - uh, they were all split up. After the, uh, the initial period of decontamination is 30 days of, uh, what do you call it? Quarantine time. Uh, they uh, the father was sent to a work camp. The mother was sent to, uh, a hotel where she washed dishes, but it was a hotel where they were all refugees, but they all did menial labor. And uh the brother, the young, the young man, the the gentleman you who was then a young man. He was about 15 or 16, was sent to a boarding school run by Catholic priests. He didn't get along. He was not a bad student, but he kind of bridled at the, at the regimentation. And when he was 16, they threw him out, and he went to a work camp. But he was happy because in the work camp were all his cousins, and they were all good communists, and they all loved [Josip Broz] Tito - another story.

1:27:13 Andrew Viterbi: But, uh, my wife had the hardest time of all. She was only uh, 10 years old when she crossed the border, and they sent her off to live in a home with three sisters, and a mother in Melide, which is a suburb of Lugano, Italian Switzerland. The sisters were very good to her, but the mother was horrible, and she didn't want any part of her. And, uh, so, uh, and, and it wasn't so much the

way they treated her. They didn't treat her badly, but the fact that they pulled her away from her mother, father, and brother, and uh, uh, for no reason. Uh, and uh, at the end, well why this family? Well, they had asked to harbor a Jewish child. And they were hoping, I mean, here were three - which then you would call spinsters - unmarried women, and they wanted a child. You know, it's not unnatural. Uh so, at the end of the war, they were rather reluctant to let her go, but, uh, unquestionably my mother-in-law would never have accepted that. So yeah, so it was a mixed bag. On the other hand, you know it was a matter of life or death, and that was the better.

1:28:44 Speaker 5: Was she reunited?

1:28:46 Andrew Viterbi: Oh yes, yes. It was a, I think they were separated for not more than 13 or 14 months. It was a nice little village. In fact, it's a village which today has a tourist attraction called Swiss Miniature. Some of you may have been. Right on lake, uh, Lake Lugano.

1:29:13 Susanne Hillman: Well I think we allow, um, individuals now to, um, talk to Dr. Viterbi, so that those of you who have to leave, you can leave. I would like to thank Dr. Viterbi very, very much.