



My name is Fred J. Mischow. I was born on March 17, 1920, in Bochum, in Westphalen Germany, the son of Max Mishcowski and his wife Hanna, nee Seidemann. I have one sister, Senta. I had another sister, Helga, born 1928, who died at a very young age. I started school in 1928 in Bochum. It was a public Jewish



school. It was a regular school run by the Jewish congregation. When I was 10 years old I entered the public high school. I stayed in the high school until I was 18. I graduated in 1930: If Hitler hadn't come to power I would have stayed in high school until I was 19. I started with my group when I was 10 years old. They were nice to me and I didn't realize there was much Nazism going on. Then my parents enrolled me in a business school, with new kids. They made fun of Jews harassed Jews. So after a couple of months my parents took me out of that school. They didn't hurt me physically. I was pretty strong. But they were very mean to me.

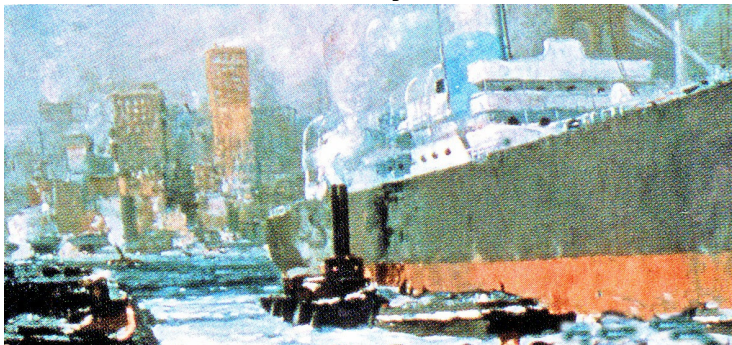


Then, I went to work for my dad who had a pants manufacturing business. I stayed with him and learned the business until I left for the US in October 1937, at the age of 17. My grandfather

Edward Seideman's younger sister, left for America when she was 14 years old. She married a Mr. Morris in New York. In 1925, my uncles Julius and Herman brought her over for a vacation in Germany, to meet the whole family in Germany. Ever since then, my mother corresponded with her and her daughter Pauline Fishbein.



In 1937 when things got tough in Germany, my mother asked her cousin Pauline if she would send an affidavit for me so I could go to the United States, Pauline agreed.



I arrived in New York on October 23, 1937. I was welcomed by the Fishbein family. I stayed with them. Pauline had three brothers: Alex, Max, and Louis Morris. Alex was a teacher. Louis and Max were postal employees. Max Fishbein was a real estate agent. In June 1938 my mother came to visit me. Her prime objective was to secure

affidavits so the whole family could come to the United States. We took a little apartment in Newark together.

She stayed about 6 weeks. When she left she had a commitment that our cousins would bring our family to the U.S.

When she left I thought it would be a year at the most until the family came. But things happened so fast that they didn't get to the United States until August 1941. In the meantime Pauline had sent papers for Uncle Bruno. His wife Ria had a brother and sister here. They sent affidavits for her. So, just after my mother went back to Germany, in late July, Uncle Bruno and Tanta Ria arrived in New York. I went to the boat to greet them along with the rest of my family.

My first job was acquaintances of the Fishbeins who had a uniform factory in Newark. The company was owned by an Italian and a Jew. There were 2 partners. I went to work for \$5 a week. Later I got a raise to \$8 a week. I was a general helper. It was a small plant. I brought material to the sewers. I did errands for the bosses. Things like that.

This was 1937. Things were pretty tough in America. There was still a depression. And one week after I started working there the Italian boss asked me to clean the men's and ladies room as part of my job. I came from Germany. Things were better in my homeland. I said "I don't think I can do that kind of work. I will give someone 50 cents to clean it."

The boss said "Give me the 50 cents. I clean it."



I learned a lesson. After that I cleaned it too, every day. Another lesson I learned. There was an Italian restaurant under the factory. You could get a nice meal for 25 cents. The brother of the boss, a foreman, saw me spending the money. He took me aside and said "For 30 cents I'll bring you a nice meal from home." I said OK. That's how tough things were at the time. There was a burlesque show right next to our factory. The entertainers needed their gowns pressed daily. It was my job to pick up and deliver the garments. I made a few tips.

I worked in the factory until May '38, when I took a job as a waiter in a summer camp for the Jewish Community organization. in the Catskill Mountains. You get \$200 for the season.

I quit the job. They knew I had money my parents sent me from Germany. This was a big factory, employed maybe 40-50 people. They said "Fred, do you want your job back when you come back?"

I said "Yeah"

Loan us \$300 and you get your job back."



When I got back, Bruno and Ria were here. We went to St. Louis. That's where Ria's relatives were. I went up there and asked for the \$300. They said they didn't have it. My cousin Norman Fishbein, who was almost a lawyer; he never passed the bar, went up there. He raised Cain and got the money back.

In the summer camp at the J.C.

I was a waiter in the girls camp. I met a girl from Newark. We got along well together. There was another German waiter who also liked the girl. We had a fight over her. When our boss found out about it he fired both of us. (I won. I was pretty tough.)

I didn't want to go back to Newark. I was ashamed for my relatives. There was a resort town nearby. Milford Pennsylvania. I went to the biggest hotel and asked for a job. The head salad chef said he could use somebody, but he couldn't pay me. He would give me a bed and all my meals. It was hard work. Your hands were constantly in water, oil. But my boss was a nice man. A week after I came the hotel went bankrupt. When the new owner took over, my boss told him I was on the payroll for 10 to 12 dollars a week.

At the end of July I quit so I could pick up Bruno and Ria at the boat. I met them at the end of July, 1938.

I went with Bruno and Ria to Scarsdale New York where their sister and brother in law were butler and cook at a millionaire's house.

They were telling us, on the way to Scarsdale about a German refugee named Rindskoff. He owned the finest restaurant in Scarsdale. The Engels took us there, from the boat. The minute Rindskoff heard I was a waiter he hired me as a waiter in his cocktail lounge. He took me aside and said "Fred, they



are stealing me blind down there. Watch the bar tenders and waitresses. Find out what they are doing."

I took the job at the cocktail lounge. In the meantime Rindskoff wanted to sell the restaurant. Ria's brother-in-law, Eric wanted to buy it. He had a few thousand dollars. He was waiting for Bruno. But Bruno was too new to the country. He said "let me learn the language first." So they didn't buy it.

Things were bad in New York. We heard the furthest west you go, the better things were. Ria had a brother in St. Louis. The Engels had once worked in St. Louis. So we decided to go there. So Ria and Hedy went to St. Louis and got jobs, Hedy as a cook, Ria as an upstairs maid. They worked for a millionaire family named Swift. A week later Bruno, Eric Engel and I came to St. Louis aboard the Pennsylvania Railroad. We arrived at Union Station in early October 1938. We arrived Erev Yom Kippur. At that time everyone knew about Rabbi Isserman. We were green horns. Eric Engel thought we should meet the rabbi. Rabbi Isserman went to Germany in 1934. He traveled extensively, talked to a lot of people. When he returned to the US he wrote a book "Sentenced to die: The Jews of Nazi Germany." And nobody believed him. The Jews in Nazi Germany thought the Nazis would go away. I remember that we Jews in America heard stories about November ninth, but we didn't understand what happened.

So we arrived in St. Louis on Erev Yom Kippur. We got off the train, took a cab to the old Temple Israel Building. We arrived at 5 PM. Yom Kippur started at 8PM. We said we needed jobs, shelter, food. The Rabbi was very polite. He didn't know what to make of us. He said he couldn't do anything.

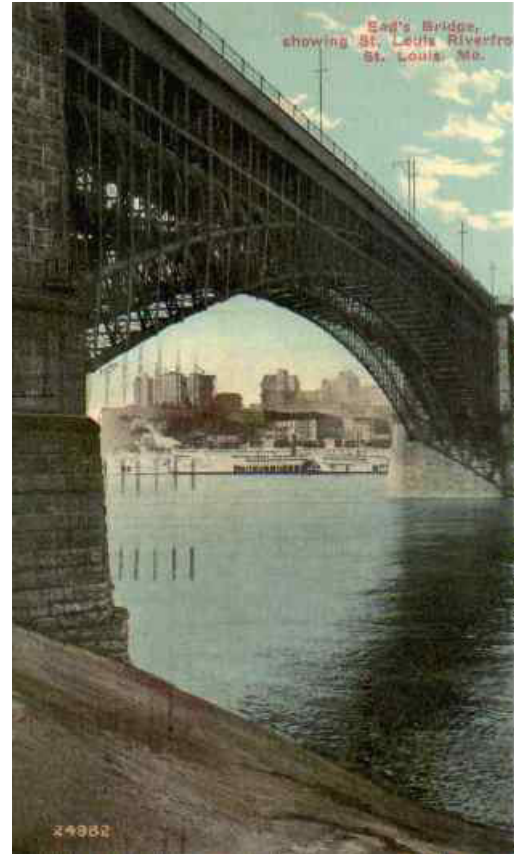
We stayed a couple of days with relatives of Tanta Ria. The next week I looked for work. I went to all the hotels and asked if there were any bus boy jobs. The next day I went on Washington Ave and asked for work. I got a job at \$5 a week. That evening I came home and found a telegram. The timekeeper from the Park Plaza hotel said they needed a bus boy. Come over right away. I worked for the Park Plaza and never collected my pay for that one day's work. I worked there until the summer of '39 when I got a job at Westwood country club as a bus boy. The salary at the Park Plaza was 7-8 dollars a week, plus tips and food. At the Park Plaza I met Mrs. Stix, the wife of Stix, Baer, and Fuller. She gave me a note to Otis Hemmingway, the black, head waiter at Westwood, and he gave me a job. I lived out there in a barracks. They gave you food. You couldn't spend the money because you weren't paid until the end of the summer. I liked that.



In 1939 everything in St. Louis was segregated. The waiters, managers were black. The cooks were white. When it came time for our meals, I couldn't eat with my boss. It disturbed me, and made a lasting impression, that I couldn't eat with the people I worked with.

I worked hard, day and night. The money was good.

At Westwood I met Willard Levy, the owner of Angelica Uniforms. He said "This is no work for a Jewish boy. I want you to come and work for my company."



It sounded good. When the summer was over I didn't go back to the Park Plaza. He put me to work in the stock room for \$11 a week. As a bus boy I made \$25 a week and meals.

So I went back to the Park Plaza and asked if I could just work the dinner hour. They let me work from 5 to 9. I was 18 at the time. I bragged at work that in the 4 hours working as a bus boy I made twice as much as I did at Angelica. Everyone heard that. Willard Levy called me in. He said "Fred, I wish you wouldn't brag about the money you make as a bus boy. It makes these fellows jealous."

Every few months I got a raise. Slowly I found out that the fellows I worked with, who were married and had children made 13 dollars a week. Those were starvation wages. At that time Earl Gibbons was organizing unions in St. Louis. He talked to my comrades about joining. We joined the warehouse workers union. I played soccer with the fellows I worked with. I was invited to their house. When they asked me if I wanted to join the union, I said "sure."

When Willard Levy found out about it he was furious: He called me in and told me to come to his house at Lake Forest that night. When I arrived he gave me a lecture. He said he befriended me at Westwood. He gave me a job. I was going to become somebody in his company. And now I betrayed his trust, joined the union; went against him. Then I found out what he wanted. He wanted me to spy on my fellow workers who was organizing and things like that.

I said "Willard, I can't do that and I don't feel right working for you anymore."

So I quit and started working as a full time bus boy again at the Park Plaza. Later I became a room service waiter at the Chase. I joined the Hotel restaurant employees union. The money was good.

Q: Did your family send you money from Germany that you were able to send back to them when they were in Belgium?

A: When I went out, in '37, you could send out 40 marks a month. Whatever my mother could legally send out, she sent out. I sent some back. They were also helped by HIAS and other agencies.

Q: Did you hear from your family in France?

Fred: I'll tell you a story. While I was working at the Park Plaza I got a wire from my father. It came right after the Germans went into Belgium. The wire said: "Max, Hanna, Senta, Helga, Rosa, Willi OK."

That night, after I left work there were a couple of FBI guys waiting for me. They had a copy of that wire. They took me to their headquarters and interrogated me. They thought the wire was a coded message. I was able to explain what the wire meant. They accepted my explanation and drove me home.

When the family came to Marseilles I heard regularly from them. I knew they were leaving for Martinique. The next I knew I got a wire from Morocco saying they were interned.



I didn't hear from them again until they got to New York. They called me. I was a waiter at the Chase. I was living with a German family. Mrs. Frank. There were 6 fellows. She gave us meals, packed a lunch, and gave us a room for \$7 a week.

I took off. I took the bus with Uncle Bruno. He was traveling salesman. It was hard to contact him. I finally found him in a little town in Tennessee. I moved to Newark, lived with my folks, and worked as a counter clerk in a hamburger restaurant.

My sisters were deathly ill with typhoid. We stayed in New Jersey until my sisters got out of the hospital. Then I brought my mother to St. Louis. We rented an apartment on Maple Ave. Then my father came with my sisters.

I was classified 1A in 1941. I was ready to go into the service. Then my family arrived. I went to the draft board and explained that I was the sole support of my family. I was reclassified 3A, and my service duty was deferred for 2 years.



I was very sports minded. When Hitler came to power the Jewish community was very sports minded. I learned boxing, wrestling, soccer. I was best at ping pong. I was the champion of the whole region of Westphalia. Second best: We had a Maccabia for all the German Jewish sports club. I took the bronze medal in the decathlon. I was very good in soccer. The first team took me from the youth team. I didn't box or wrestle much.

My folks wanted me to either a doctor or a rabbi. When I was a child we had a big house with a cook, governess, and maid. Our cook, Mrs. Neiwald, was with the family for many years. When she got married they gave her a third floor apartment. She lost her husband and only child



during WWII. When Marion's parents opened the dime store they sent Mrs. Neiwald a ticket and she came to the U.S. She stayed for a year, but she was homesick for Germany. So after a while she left.

I played with lots of kids from school all the time. We had a big yard. The school was only a stones throw away. And we always played in

our backyard or on the school grounds.



Fred weds Audrey Hoffman

Senta Ria Hannah Stefi
Levi **Audrey** Marion Grete

