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A= Fred Poll

A2= Barbara Poll (Gattin)

A: there was a boy on the road, every 8 or 10 or 12 year old could do what he wanted to a Jew, he could hit him, rob him, whatever he wanted, total freedom to do anything, the police didn't prevent anything, nothing, that was the frightening part of before our departure. I think that wasn't the case in Germany.

A2: *Ich bin bis 38 allein um sieben Uhr morgens 40 Minuten in die Schule gegangen. Ich habe mich immer umgedreht, aber so war es...*

F: I'll give you the chance to say the things you feel we've maybe forgotten about which you feel are important, we'll do that right at the end

You came back from Europe to NY, maybe you can tell us briefly about your further life story, for example about your career

A: Yes, at the end of October when I came back I started looking for a job, and then I worked for three years in a job for the Optical industry, and then I had a go at my boss to try and get a proper rise in wages, which he didn't give me thank goodness, and he then said if the work is the right thing for me then I should only work free-lance, and then in November 48 I became self-employed and the shop still exists on the 55th street, we sold it 12 years ago, I'd been expanding it constantly, this business with the glasses is all very well, but others can do that for me, I have to do something that really interests me instead of sitting with women and discussing whether they want a brown frame or a black frame, and this hurts and it hurts here, and I then started dealing with Optical instruments/"Oftamologisch",

F: with those you can determine for eg. whether you need glasses?

A: Yes instruments for opticians, and I was then very lucky to get in touch with a Swiss firm, and that then became a world hit, and I had competition from 4/5 other firms here, and I thought I didn't have much chance, I had a small shop and the others were all bigger here who were all trying to make it, but the director of the Swiss firm was here and I went for a few meals with him and maybe because we both spoke German, or maybe he recognised my talent and my ambition, in any case I got the necessary contracts with the firm and then the business really boomed and I earned my few dollars

F: And you then sold the shop 12 years ago?

A: Yes, 12 years ago

F: Did you run the shop together?

A: Yes my wife worked in her department of the shop, and the last 2/3 years I wasn't in such good form, I have an incurable illness, and I also had a heart attack, but on the whole I'm OK now, I was recently in Europe, I can't complain about my life, we had a lot of luck, a lot of the time we contributed to that luck, but if I hadn't have left Vienna in April 1939, I don't know what I would have done in Vienna, with the Nazis

F: Vielleicht noch 2 Fragen: die erste Frage betrifft ihre Identität. Sie stammen aus einer jüdischen Familie aus dem Burgenland, aus Österreich, also aus Europa, haben Zuflucht in den USA gefunden. Ich nehme an, sie sind amerikanischer Staatsbürger? Wie würden sie mir ihre Identität beschreiben?

A: Well, exactly like you said. I'm an American citizen of Austrian-Jewish past.

F: And your relation to your Jewish roots? How can you explain it to me? Is there any change after you learned about what had happened in the Holocaust? Has the Holocaust changed your position towards the Jewish religion or towards your Jewish family heritage?

A: Ob ich ein besserer Jud geworden bin?

F: Sie haben gesagt, sie stammten aus einer Familie assimilierter Juden? Hat das an ihrer Einstellung zum Judentum selbst etwas geändert?

A: Eigentlich nicht, nein. Maybe a little bit. If anything, if anything contributed to that, it is the creation of the state of Israel, nicht? That's what generally was the – and is – the primary aim of I would say 80% of the Jews in the world today that Israel remains in existence.

A2: *Die Beziehung zu der Familie ist starker, und zu unseren Kindern und zu unseren Eltern hier...*

A: Because of the Holocaust, you think so?

A2: *Absolutely.*

A: Maybe, that they...

A2: *Wir haben eine sehr enge Beziehung zu unseren mittelalterlichen Kindern und Enkelkindern, die alle erwachsen sind...und sie zu uns.*

A: We have 5 Enkelsöhne.

F: Wieviel Kinder haben sie, darf ich fragen?

A: Wir haben einen Sohn und eine Tochter, und fünf Enkelsöhne. Unser Sohn ist Arzt, ist Kardiologe in Philadelphia, und unsere Tochter ist Anwältin in Connecticut. So...

A2: *Die Beziehung ist sehr eng, aber im Allgemeinen mit allen unseren Freunden...*

A: It is difficult for me to say whether I would have the same relation with the children with Holocaust or without Holocaust.

F: Did you ever think about going to Israel?

A: Visiting or settle down? To settle there? No, no. There was no reason. I mean, we were very comfortable here. We had most of our family settling here. If live here would have been such very difficult or if we would have had more hopes to live in Israel, then perhaps, but that wasn't the case.

A2: *Our roots were transplanted here, die Gräber unserer Eltern und von der Familie, das ist jetzt hier...*

A: Ja.

F: Few weeks ago, you have been in Austria. When have you been there for the first time after the war?

A: In the fifties. I don't know exactly which year.

F: In the fifties. And you visited only Austria, or also Eisenstadt?

A: The first time...the first time was Switzerland, when I was back, I met my friend from Eisenstadt in Switzerland. When I heard that he survived Mauthausen, then we met in Switzerland. But then after that, I did visit Eisenstadt.

F: What were your feelings during your first visit to Eisenstadt?

A: It was of course a strange feeling. It was a strange feeling, because the last time I left the area there was big sign in Kleinhöflein "Juden betreten diesen Ort auf eigene Gefahr", so not to see these things for me, and to be a free person again was a tremendous feeling, you know? But my feeling towards the population wasn't any better.

F: Did you ever an invitation by Austrian authorities to visit Austria?

A: No, they don't. In Germany they do that, in big cities. I don't think Austria had that program...but older people.

F: There is a program from the...

A: Don't forget that I'm only 81. They hope that by the time they get finished with their program, many die, and they don't have to pay for it. So...

F: Your parents lived here in New York after 1945. Did they or you ever try to get restitution on the properties you had in Eisenstadt?

A: They didn't, no.

F: They didn't try, or...

A: There was no law. My father died in 1954, and my mother died even earlier. And there was no law to apply for any restitution. The only thing that he applied for – and which he got – was his pension. He got a small Austrian pension, which they continued to pay.

F: Did you get anything from...some people could get compensation when they got expelled from schools...

A: I think we got 2.000 dollars. Last year we got 7.000 dollars.

F: What do you think about the way the official Austria has treated the Austrian Jews? The discussion about restitution started very late in Austria, only from the late 80s the official Austria started to deal with its share of responsibility for the Holocaust. Before that, authorities and historians – and many people – saw Austria as a victim of Nazi Germany.

A: They said that they were the first victims of Germany.

F: What do you think of that?

A: Well, that philosophy has improved somewhat. The official policy of the Austrian government has improved. What I find not improved is the attitude of the Austrian people.

F: You have been in Austria several times since then. Sometimes in Vienna, sometimes also in Eisenstadt, and possibly also in other places....

A: Two years ago we were in Gastein.

F: How do you experience being in Austria, as an expelled person, interacting with the people?

A: Well, it's different in every case. But generally, generally I have the feeling that a good percentage of the Austrians would go along again with a program like the Nazis. Anti-semitic, for sure. The killing, I don't know. But anti-semitism in one form or another is there. It cannot be any other way as long as the Pfarrer in the church tells them almost every Sunday that the Jews have killed Jesus Christ. How can...when I was in school, how can my classmates, after having had this talk, play soccer with me. For instance? I mean, I am one of the Jews that killed their God. And that has existed for 2000 years. And we cannot change it now. The change can come...I mean, some of the popes have tried to...you know, with certain speeches and certain...but I don't think it did much good. It is so deep ingrained in the people, that the Jews...many people don't even know why, why they are anti-semitic. They heard that...even though there are hardly any Jews around anymore, but the Jews – like I said before – they have the money supposedly. I don't know. That's a phenomenon that...

A2: But in reality there is also a lot of poverty amongst Jews...

A: Of course there is. Of course, but the others don't look at that. They only see the rich ones, they only see the rich ones.

A2: For example, in Germany, they said that all the banks belonged to Jews, which was not true. It was not true, there were a few private banks.

A: All these... So that's my feeling, unfortunately towards my former Heimat, homeland...the people.

F: How would you define your "Heimat" now?

A: Well, it is the "Ex-Heimat". It is a place where I was born, where I was raised, where I had good times, and where I also had worrisome times.

F: And what is your Heimat now?

A: My Heimat now is the USA, my adopted Heimat.

F: My last question, concerning September 11. I mean, you found refuge in America, and I guess you feel free and safe here? How did you feel after September 11?

A: Well, terrible, I mean terrible...sad, depressed, scared. How can I feel? The same as anybody else.

F: What did you do on that day?

A: What did I do on that day? Yeah, we watched the very early news. We watched at 8, 8:30, we watched the news. And I think it was already...

A2: *It was a beautiful day, the weather was marvellous, and all of a sudden this little plane flew into the WTC...*

A: I was already not well at that time, so my life is changed. I'm a little slower, I don't have a heavy schedule every day. So, maybe I got up a little later...but we watched television all day long. We couldn't believe it...I was crying all day. I mean, I was crying for various reasons. First of all, these poor 3.000 people. And you know, if they would have waited another hour, there could have been 30.000 people, because in these two buildings, every day there are a lot of people there. But I felt hurt, I felt hurt in my pride that that was possible. Regardless of whose fault it was, it was certainly our government's fault, that they let these people in through the borders at the airports to hijack four planes, I mean...it's unbelievable. But I guess I didn't feel any different from what you felt possibly. We were trapped here because the traffic was closed down, but that didn't enter my mind.

F: Is there anything else you want to tell me...or what you want to say?

A: No, I can only...since I said so many bad things about Austria, I would like to say something good and compliment the current Austrian government for their efforts to make amends in their approach to this problem. I mean, they have made attempts to...it is still a long ways off, but nevertheless they have...Vranitzky was very open and good, and...do you think about the population?

F: The Austrian population? Every years there are polls asking the people what they think about Jews, and every year approximately 35% percent say that they wouldn't want any Jewish neighbours. And that – 35% - is a very high percentage. It shows what you said, that there is a large number of people who think in this old categories...

A2: *where are these polls taken?*

F: *These are representative polls, taken all over Austria.*

A: And do they say why?

F: Ah, that is not asked in this poll. But they do it every year what opinion people have, and how it changes. And these polls show me that most of the elder people...but on the other hand, beginning from 1989, when the Waldheim discussion began, there was also an opening in some parts of the population. For example, with historians, politicians and intellectuals. At the moment we also have a higher level of awareness for this problem in the general population that before. We have now more school projects and other activities connected to this issue. On the other hand, it is also possible in Austria for a party like the Freedom Party to increase the number of their voters even more. (allgemeine Gespräche über österreichische Innenpolitik) And that is a sign for me, that not much has changed since the fifties. Its also not only the

older people, who still have this ideology and vote for Haider and his party, but also a lot of younger people.

A: I'm surprised that anti-semitism should be an issue altogether, even now. How many Jews live now in Austria?

F: It is not only anti-semitism, it is also hostility towards foreigners in general...

(discussion about Austrian politics and Haiders subtle use of anti-semitic stereotypes)

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