

Interview with Dr. Robert Adler

Conducted by Ms. Laura King

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Transcribed by Raymond Clayton Thomas

LK - Hi, I'm Laura King, and I am the Network Chair for the Jewish Federations of North America, and I'm here today with Dr. Robert Adler. We're going to speak today about the experiences of his father who escaped from Vienna, was helped by the Pope Pius XII, and arrived in the Dominican Republic eventually, saving his life. Dr. Adler, can you state your name and introduce yourself?

RLA - Yes, I'm Doctor Robert Leon Adler. I'm a Professor of Foreign Languages here at the University of North Alabama. I grew up in New York City, where I went to elementary, high school, and college, and I did my graduate work at Washington University in St. Louis before coming here to Alabama.

LK - And today you serve on the Holocaust Commission here in Alabama?

RLA - Yes, I'm on the Alabama Holocaust Commission also, on the Education Committee. I was appointed by Governor Riley a few years ago.

LK - Very nice. If you wouldn't mind, if you would just begin your story about your father's return to Vienna and his eventual journey that began in 1940 to reach the Dominican Republic.

RLA - It's a very interesting story that he began to tell me in little pieces when I was a child, and some I remembered, some I didn't remember, and then he would remind me but generally not talk very much about it. It started, to a large degree, when he was pretty young. My father was the middle child of three; he had a younger sister and an older sister, living in Vienna, right downtown. He was one of the bullyboys in the street, also a mountain climber; he did a lot of things. His father, his biological father passed away when we was very young, I really don't know when or under what circumstances, but his mother remarried so he was living with his mother and his stepfather. When he was a teenager, for various reasons, my dad wanted to be a dentist, his father wanted him to work in the grocery store, they didn't see eye to eye so my father ran away from home and joined the French Foreign Legion for six years, where he fought in North Africa, and he was a guard on Devil's Island, and things like this. After six years, he had disappeared from Vienna, all of a sudden there was a knock on his mother's door, she opens the door, and there he was after six years, she hadn't seen him. He moved back to Vienna, he started a business; he got married, and started a life there. Then came the Anschluss in, I believe it was March of 1938, and things started to happen for the Jews in Germany and in Austria. His stepfather said "don't worry they're not going to bother us because I fought for Austria in World War I." Well he was wrong because things did happen. They were deporting Jews from all over the country. So my father, having been a mountain climber and knowing the passes into Switzerland, was helping people escape into neutral Switzerland when he was caught by the Nazis out in the countryside. He was taken to a feeder camp and he was being transported from a feeder camp to another camp when he escaped from the train, from one of those transport trains, with a German priest. Since he was with a German priest, they decided to seek asylum in Italy in the Vatican and he was able to get in there.

He spent, as far as I know, between 5 weeks or 6 weeks in the Vatican, he met Pope Pius. He told me this several times, that he met Pope Pius XII. It was there that he was able to find out that Rafael Leonidas Trujillo, the head of state of the Dominican Republic, had declared in 1938 that he wanted European refugees to come to the Dominican Republic. There was a community in the central north of the country of Sosua that was primarily European Jews but they had been there for quite a long time and were dispersing so he wanted to refortify the Jewish community in the Dominican Republic and so he wanted up to 100,000 European refugees. It turns out he only got about 800, and my dad was one of them.

LK - He was very lucky then.

RLA - Very fortunate.

LK - I wanted to ask you a couple of questions regarding the time your father was actually at the Vatican. We understand your father was protected there in the Vatican, did he ever indicate how many Jews were also sheltered in the Vatican at that time?

RLA - No. He never spoke about the situation there. He had told me he was there, that he met Pope Pius but that was really as far as it went. He didn't tell me where exactly he lived or how many other people or what the situation was there in the Vatican. But like I said, this is where he found out Trujillo wanted European refugees to come, and they facilitated the visas that were necessary so he was able to get a transit visa through France to go into Spain because the head of state in Spain, General Francisco Franco, one of the reasons he and Hitler didn't get along was because Franco refused to deport his Jews. To him the Jews and the Muslims, the Arabs, were very important to the history of Spain and to the culture of Spain and he wanted to acknowledge that and preserve that and he actually issued an edict stating that any Jew with a shred of Spanish heritage could come to Spain and be safe. And other Jews could pass through Spain on their way to other countries. My father was connected through the connections at the Vatican with the consulate of Spain and was able to get a visa to be able to go through there. So he went from Italy through southern France into Spain, through Portugal. He has a visa for that too.

LK - Before you go any further, I know that you brought documentation here today that shows that and I was wondering if you would show that to the camera.

RLA - Yes of course.

LK - Your father's passport from Nazi occupied...

RLA - This one is very interesting the Deutsches Reich, and when we look inside it has the reisepass and it has the red J for...

LK - For Jew.

RLA - Exactly. And his picture inside, with the stamp, with the swastika, so this is an authentic passport for him and it describes where he was, where he had to go. We've got stamps from Italy and the consulate of France in Italy, the consulate of the Dominican Republic in Italy for him to have the visas to be able to go through. This was in September of 1939. Then, in case he had to pass through Panama, he could pass through Panama, he had a visa to go there. Here, through Portugal.

LK - So he was already in Italy in 1939, he had already gone?

RLA - Right. So it was very soon after. So this to a large degree, here we have the consulate in Italy of Spain, getting the necessary documentation to be able to make those travels. Here's the letter of transit through France so he could pass through France and go to Spain. So he had to pass through and get out of the country. Also his entry into New York and it says "1 day in transit" to the Dominican Republic and the next page is from the Dominican consulate in New York allowing him to travel to the Dominican Republic and here his entry on July 13, 1941, into Puerto Plata in the Dominican Republic. This is a city in the north part of the island. So this, to a large degree, shows his travels.

LK - So from 1939 until 1941 to get out of Europe and to the Dominican?

RLA - Exactly. And also, this Austrian passport that was issued in the Dominican Republic. Notice it says Austria up here, it was issued in Ciudad Trujillo, this allowing him to be there...

LK - I'm curious, does that passport also identify him by religion?

RLA - This one does not... Eye color, domicile, hair color, and these types of things, but no it doesn't.

LK - Interesting.

RLA - And here his admission into the United States in September of 1948 because, as I said, in the Dominican Republic he met my mother and it was interesting because my grandfather, my mother's father, was Postmaster General of the Dominican Republic, so it was very curious when they met because my mother didn't speak German and my father didn't speak Spanish so they spoke French when they first met.

LK - That's a nice story.

RLA - Exactly. And he had a business, a trucking business, he was trucking lumber from different places around the country. So since my grandfather was Postmaster General my dad had government connections so he was able to get tires, he was able

to get gasoline, he had a wonderful life there and when she got pregnant with me she wanted to come to the United States because this was after the war and the U.S. is the greatest country in the world, I want my son to be born there, I want my child to be born there and he said no no no I'm not going because he...

LK - So he fell in love with the Dominican Republic.

RLA - Absolutely. He had it made there. But she was who she was and she came to New York. She stayed first with his younger sister who was already in New York with her family, and he came right before I was born. Because I was born in December and here he's leaving in September so....

LK - He kind of waited to the last minute.

RLA - He waited to the last minute, exactly. He stayed in New York and actually never left the country. Yes, we did travel into Canada and places like this, but he never left the country.

LK - So when you went to the Dominican Republic it was with your mother?

RLA - It was by myself first. My parents started sending me to the Dominican Republic to spend the summers when I was seven years old because they wanted me to be aware of that part of my family also. So in New York, I was raised in a Jewish community in a Jewish atmosphere. I started going to Hebrew school at six years old, these kinds of things, but the language is my home pretty much was Spanish, especially when I was very young, and they wanted me to be aware of that part of my family. Also, they wanted to get me off the streets of New York for the summer when I wasn't in school. That was important too so...

LK - You're father having known about those things.

Right. Right. So at seven years old I remember they took me to the airport. I had a sign with name and address of both countries printed on it, and they handed me to the stewardess. I did the seven-hour trip to the Dominican Republic and I remember it precisely because on the way down I fell asleep and I missed breakfast. So even though Pan-American doesn't exist anymore, the airline industry still owes me a meal. So I don't miss a meal on airplanes because they owe me one. But anyway, it was very important to me and I'm very glad they did this for me to show me that part of my family. I lived with my grandfather my aunt who was the youngest of the sisters; there were three sisters and one brother, and my cousin. It was very good to have that and to be able to do that.

LK - If you don't mind, I just want to go over a couple of questions with you too before we leave that particular area. There was a letter that's in the archive now that was written by a woman named Luciana Zevi and she reports that her family had an audience with Pope Pius XII in 1947 and she claims that her uncle identified the

Pope who was dressed in Franciscan robes and was physically actually in the Jewish ghetto and brought him into the Vatican. She then stated that Cardinal Montini, standing next to Pius XII, immediately silenced her uncle and told him never, never to repeat this story. Have you heard of any similar stories like this?

RLA - From my father, no. But later on this began to interest me and I started to investigate what happened with Pope Pius and with Franco certainly since I study and teach Spanish and have lived in Spain, so I began to see stories that were very similar. My dad never talked about who was there, what other Jews were there, what Pius did with other people. He did tell me that he did meet him personally because he was there for several weeks. He did meet him personally several times.

LK - Did they speak?

RLA - Yes.

LK - And do you remember anything about the conversation?

RLA - Not really. These were not things that he told me specifically about. Especially in later life when I knew more about this because my father didn't pass away until the Year 2000, he was 94. And he was pretty coherent until then, but he absolutely refused to talk about these stories. He didn't want to bring back those memories. And I would ask him again and again because this was important and at that age I knew that he was not going to be around very much longer and I really wanted to know and really wanted to preserve these kinds of stories and he absolutely refused to tell me these. It's very common for survivors to not talk about this because they were horrific memories so those kinds of things I don't know specifically from my father. Now though, through research that I've done and things that I've read, yes I've heard similar stories, but from him personally, no.

LK - Ok. Do you remember or did your father ever say the name of the individual, the priest that brought him to the Vatican?

RLA - No. I only know that he was a German priest.

LK - And did he ever encounter him after he went to the Vatican?

RLA - No.

LK - So once he arrived...

RLA - Once he arrived, I guess they were there together but once my father left there was nothing else....

LK - No further contact.

RLA - Right. And it's curious because I was in the service for three years, I was in the Army, and I was stationed about two years in Heidelberg, Germany and naturally I asked my father if he would come visit me, and no way, absolutely not.

LK - Not surprising.

RLA - Yeah. But a few years before, because I studied in Spain in the 69-70 academic year, I was there for 11 months, and my father told me "do not come home unless you've been to Vienna."

LK - So he still had love for Vienna.

R;A - Exactly. He still had relatives in Vienna, and he wanted me to see them.

LK - And you met them?

RLA - I only left three or four days to go to Vienna, I was sorry. I should have left more time to see that because it was a fascinating place. And I did meet them, and they took me to my father's original home and they explained he was here and he did this and this.

LK - Nice. Very nice. Probably stories you didn't get from your father.

RLA - Exactly. A lot of stories about him being a bullyboy.

LK - So that's how you know he was the bullyboy?

RLA - Uh-huh, yeah I heard stories about him, yeah.

LK - Well the French Foreign Legion sort of gave that away too.

RLA - Absolutely. Absolutely. But he personally, there was no way that he was going to go back to Europe.

LK - Which is again a pretty normal reaction to that. Although I know recently a lot of people, toward the end of their lives, have begun to do that. But I know it's a very difficult thing to do. We understand also that there exists a photograph of Jewish protectees that were hidden and were helping with the evacuation under St. Peter's Basilica. Did your father ever mention where the Jews were hiding or working at this evacuation project at all?

RLA - No, as I said, he never explained to me what he did there besides being there for five or six weeks. He never told me what circumstances, where he lived, what he did during that time, not that I remember him telling me any specifics about what happened there.

LK - You just know that he was at the Vatican and sheltered there.

RLA - Yes, that he was there and sheltered there, whatever sheltered means at that time.

LK - We're aware also that the Vatican was the entity that worked hard to get the transit documents like you were showing earlier, the visas, and they arranged transportation for Jews leaving Europe. One of the eyewitness testimonies was from Monsignor Giovanni Ferrofino, he was 98 and he was a priest who physically worked directly under the Pope and was sent to Portugal to meet with the president to request entry visas into Portugal, and you've just shown me one...

RLA - Yes, visas into Spain, into Portugal, into Panama, into the Dominican Republic, transit visas through France, all these things, and I'm sure that they were facilitated by these mechanisms and organized by the Vatican.

LK - Later, he was posted as a Secretary to the Nuncio Archbishop Maurizio Silvani to the Dominican Republic...

RLA - Curiously enough.

LK - Yes, I know that you read my notes earlier so you know this. Monsignor Centioni would travel with the Nuncio at least two times per year from 1939-1945, which corresponds with what you've shown us, to request visas for fleeing Jews. He and the Nuncio would drive one and a half days directly to meet with the General Trujillo with a double encrypted telegram directly from Pope Pius XII that would request a specific number of visas for Jews leaving both Spain and Portugal. He estimates that well over 12,000 visas were obtained by his personal efforts. Now, the figure that actually came to the Dominican Republic that you've researched....

RLA - Was about 800.

LK - Was only 800.

RLA - But as you saw in the documentation, he stopped in several places in order to get there, including New York City. Even though it was a one-day transit...

LK - So we can count these as multiple visas for one individual?

RLA - Or it could be that people during their trip decided to stay in one place and not actually get to the Dominican Republic.

LK - And I think that's probably true because it goes on. The documents that we have show that Monsignor Ferrofino also helped Jews in the Dominican Republic to travel to the U.S. through Canada, Cuba, and Mexico, and some of those remained, so they didn't continue on to the Dominican Republic.

RLA - Some didn't continue and some got there and then went somewhere else.

LK - Was your father aware that it was the Vatican that obtained the travel documents for him?

RLA - Oh yeah. Yes. And it is really evident in that passport because all of these are in Italy.

LK - Makes sense.

RLA - Yes.

LK - So Italy was the country he left Europe from, well from the Vatican prior to arriving from Vienna.

RLA - No, after arriving from Vienna.

LK - Yes, excuse me, after arriving from Vienna he was taken to the Vatican, so he escaped somewhere between Vienna and...

RLA - I would assume that somewhere between a feeder camp in Austria and a concentration camp. It may have been in Germany or someplace else, and that's where he escaped with the German priest. They made their way down to Rome, to the Vatican, because as I said, my dad had been a mountain climber so he knew all the passes, he knew all the routes and all these things.

LK - When your father came to the Dominican Republic did he ever mention that he had any contact with any of the Catholic clergy there after he arrived?

RLA - That I don't know. I would assume because my mothers family is Catholic, my grandfather was a 33rd degree Mason, so he had that kind of thing too. I remember going to mass with them and these kinds of things, and being a high government official, I'm sure he had interactions with church officials in the Dominican Republic. Now, my father personally, maybe, maybe not. He had a trucking business going at this time and, like I said, he escaped by himself with the German priest, leaving his wife and his mother and his stepfather who were deported and taken to concentration camps certainly.

LK - Ok. Another eyewitness testimony that we have was is from Monsignor Giancarlo Centioni, and Monsignor Centioni personally obtained cash and Vatican passports directly from the papal household. It was specifically to help Jews escape to Switzerland. Did your father receive any cash or a Vatican passport for his journey and was he aware where the money or passport would have come from? You stated earlier that he understood that the Vatican arranged the passport, was he given cash or anything to travel through Switzerland? Judging from the passport I

saw, it looked like he went from Italy toward Milan and then cut through France and did not go through Switzerland.

RLA - Through France and into Spain.

LK - Switzerland was not part of his journey.

RLA - No. He was captured helping people escape into Switzerland because Switzerland was neutral.

LK - Yes, I remember in the beginning...

RLA - Well, when I look at those visas they're paid for, some of them are paid for in dollars.

LK - That's interesting.

RLA - Yes this is very interesting because it would be the Vatican who would have access to dollars to pay those kinds of things.

LK - And this leads me to another question that may have something to do with those dollars. Relatives of a lot of the survivors who did travel to the Dominican Republic told us that it was a Jewish relief agency which arranged their transport. Are you aware of a Jewish agency that did handle these issues and can you explain how they would obtain travel documents?

RLA - I'm not aware of it through my father.

LK - Ok, so he never mentioned any Jewish agency.

RLA - No, he never mentioned how he got there, some of the visas have to do with airfare, so he flew to a lot of these places, and who arranged that, who paid for it, and things like this, that I don't know through him.

LK - Ok, we do know that there were Jewish agencies operating in the area, like the Joint Distribution Committee...

RLA - So it's likely that one of them helped him, but I don't know for sure.

LK - Have you ever contacted the Joint Distribution Committee to see if there's anything on your father in the archives there?

RLA - No I haven't yet.

LK - Would you like me to check on that for you?

RLA - Absolutely. I would like to know more of this story because here, Pope Pius was crucial in all of this, and his personal activity and what he set up within the Catholic Church definitely helped so many Jews, my father....

LK - Your father wouldn't be alive without his intervention.

RLA - Exactly. But there were so many others, Trujillo also...

LK - And I'm just kind of curious if Pope Pius XII also worked with some of the agencies as well.

RLA - Very likely. He certainly met with Franco and had influence with Trujillo also, so he was, as the Pope, in contact with these kinds of high officials in catholic countries like this.

LK - So there was no question that without his influence there would have been no escape to the Dominican Republic...

RLA - There's no question for me about that. It had to be through him and the organization that he set up.

LK - Would you like to show some of the photographs of your father?

RLA - Certainly, I think this one is an important one inside this passport of him because here he's got a stamp with the swastika and there it is. My parents' wedding picture, I do have a larger version at home that's framed.

LK - So you had that made I guess from this photo?

RLA - I don't know. I think so, that it was made from this.

LK - When you visited your relatives did they share photos with you too?

RLA - Yes they did, they showed me, and of his parents. He did manage to get some pictures out. It may have been also from his younger sister who was in New York. This is his mother and his mother and his stepfather; these are two pictures of his mother and his stepfather. So he was able to obtain these pictures, and I had them in my home, I haven't seen these in years and years and years, I forgot I even had them.

LK - Well it's fortuitous that you found them.

RLA - And that I found them this morning as I was looking for things to bring here. Very curious.

LK - When your father was in the Dominican Republic, did he have any contact with others that had escaped to the Dominican Republic?

RLA - Well it's very likely because he was in Sosua, in this town for a short time in the north, but then when he met my mother his life changed pretty much. Also, as I said, he had a trucking business and was very involved with that, so chances are that he had less contact with Jews in that community. But there was a pretty strong community there and I'm sure he had contact with them.

LK - And today? What is it like there today? Do you know?

RLA - It's a small town. It's still a small town at the end of a dirt road.

LK - I'm just curious how many of the people that came are actually still residents in the Dominican Republic today.

RLA - I'm curious about that too.

LK - But there's no people that you are aware of that you're in contact with in the Dominican Republic that had similar circumstances as your father?

RLA - Well not that I'm in contact with. There are some and a couple of years ago at one of the colleges in New York they did an exhibit, but I wasn't able to contact them at the time. But I still do have the contact information of the people who set that up and I'd like to contact them to see what kinds of things they have.

LK - Well, I may be able to help you with some of that.

RLA - Ok.

LK - I'll just get some information from you and there are people that can do a lot of that tracking down and that keep archives of the Jewish people and where everyone went.

RLA - Exactly. Because there were so few, as I said there were only about 800 who came during this period, so chances are that there are records there of their activity.

LK - When your father came to the United States, how did he spend the rest of his life, what did he do?

RLA - Well, he was already in his mid-40s, so he actually went into the garment business with his brother-in-law. He became a garment finisher. He only worked for his brother-in-law a very short time because he didn't want to work for his brother-in-law. He worked for a couple of other companies until he retired. Then when he retired from the garment business, he went to work for Kennedy Airport as a security sergeant because he spoke German, he spoke Spanish, he spoke Portuguese, he spoke Italian, he spoke French, so being able to speak so many languages, he was

optimal for this kind of activity. He worked in that at least ten years, if not longer, at Kennedy Airport.

LK - And probably the French Foreign Legion background didn't hurt either.

RLA - It didn't hurt. Exactly. He was pretty much a go-getter. Unfortunately, he smoked for sixty years, his doctor, who was my cousin Rita's husband, said that if he hadn't smoked for sixty years he would have lived to about one hundred and twenty. This way, he died at only ninety four. But the last years he had emphysema, pleurisy, various diseases from having smoked for such a long time. But he was pretty active right to the end. He even got married again because my mother passed away, she was very young, she was forty seven when she passed away. She died right before I turned thirteen, right before my bar mitzvah, so he remarried at 82.

LK - Wow. Did you have any brothers and sisters?

RLA - No. I'm an only child. When I came out my parents took one look at me and said we're not making anymore of those.

LK - I don't believe that, but ok. I saw your pictures so I know that's not true. So when did you become interested, I know today that you're on the Holocaust Commission here in Alabama, so when did you become knowledgeable of basically what happened in the Holocaust and about your father?

RLA - I think it was pretty much, well first my experience in Spain because I spent my senior year studying in Seville and the Jewish heritage of Spain is very important, just like the Muslim heritage. So you see it, you feel it. I got interested in flamenco music and flamenco is very Jewish and Arabic, you know all of this, and gypsy. So that started to come out and I started to see things, but then definitively it was in graduate school in St. Louis.

LK - And how old were you at that time?

RLA - I was twenty-one and a lot of it had to do with my dissertation supervisor because he is Jewish and he had a similar story. His parents left Germany and they went to Cuba and he was born and raised as a child in Cuba, so he was interested.....

LK - Did they come through the Vatican as well?

RLA - No. They went directly to Cuba. He started talking to me about this, "oh we have a similar story", and that's where I started to get interested in asking my father about various things.

LK - How did your father take that?

RLA - Generally speaking, well, he didn't want to talk about it.

LK - So the first time you approached him, he was saying go away.

RLA - Yeah, essentially go away, I've told you stories, that's enough, I don't want to bring back those memories. And that was right until the end because when I graduated with my Ph.D., I sent him a plane ticket to come to St. Louis because this was going to be my last graduation, and he came to St. Louis and he met my dissertation supervisor, Dr. Joseph Schraibman, and they started talking about that period of time. Joe would say this and this happened in this and this place, and my father was there so he talked about this and later on in the evening, in the hotel room he told me "I'm sorry that I talked about those things because it brought back those memories".

LK - Was he visibly depressed afterwards?

RLA - I wouldn't say depressed, but he just didn't want to talk about it.

LK - He didn't want to allow himself to go back.

RLA - Because it was horrific. It's the most horrific experience we can imagine, that kind of brutality.

LK - And what of the rest of your father's family? You said some are actually in Vienna today, or were in the 70's.

RLA - There were some in Vienna, distantly related cousins, things like this. His younger sister and her husband were in New York. They have both passed away, but they have three children, I have three cousins from them. My cousin Lenny, who was the oldest, he and I grew up on the same block until we were six years old. He still lives right upstate New York in Monsey. He and his family are orthodox. The eldest sister, she went to Australia and had a family there. She and her husband have passed away but we still have cousins. I think there are two or three girls...

LK - So she stayed in Australia?

RLA - She stayed in Australia, right. She had gotten a letter of transit from him, and that's a story also because he had obtained a letter of transit to go to Australia, and he was getting ready to go, and she was intending to marry and said, "Please, please, please let me have your letter of transit, let me have your letter of transit, let me have your letter of transit". She drove him crazy and he said "Ok, I'll let you have it but when you get to Australia send for me". Well, when she got to Australia she sent for Phillip, her husband, and my father was stuck in Austria, in Vienna and....

LK - And had to look for another way out.

RLA - Exactly. Had to look for another way out.

LK - So, I'm assuming since he was helping so many people escape, that he eventually planned his escape and not what it turned out to be, this incredible journey that he ended up on that took from 39-41 to finally reach the Dominican Republic.

RLA - Exactly.

LK - Going back to you serving on the Holocaust Commission, just a brief question about that. Have you told the other members your personal story?

RLA - I have told my story. We have had on the commission since I've been on it, two holocaust survivors, there's one who's still on the commission, Max Herzel, he's the treasurer. I'm also on the Education Committee so I've been invited....

LK - This is the Holocaust Education Committee?

RLA - Yes. That's part of the Commission and we travel around and speak in schools and organizations and things like this, so I've done that a number of times. Also, every year on the Day of Remembrance we have a commemoration at the legislature in Montgomery. The last few years, Governor Riley has come to speak, and precisely in this publication *Southern Jewish Life* from June 2010, a picture "Riley addresses Alabama Holocaust Commemoration, and there's a picture of Governor Riley speaking here and then survivors or family of survivors come up to light candles in memory of the Holocaust victims, and I'm standing right here. So, this is a very interesting and very moving event to be there in the legislature with legislators, with survivors, with people who are interested in this. There are even schools that come and bring students to witness this, they're up in the balcony and things like this, so this is a yearly commemoration and it's a very important one, a very moving one. The community here is aware of this, they have this cut out on the bulletin board in the Temple, and someone wrote ROBERT.

LK - Are you a member of the local temple?

RLA - Yes. I've been President of the congregation for a couple of years also. I'm not now but I have been a few years ago. Yes, the Jewish community here is important to me also. We do events like this and speaking also.

LK - I'm just curious also given the fact that historically Pope Pius XII has been vilified in many, many articles and historical books, I'm just curious what other survivors that serve with you on the commission, what was their reaction to your story, to hear that the Pope had helped your father?

RLA - Well, their reaction first was surprise and then understanding because had Pope Pius publicly declared against Hitler, it would have been disastrous for the Catholic Church. So this way, he was able to maintain the network of the Catholic

Church in these countries and be able to help Jews. He was enough of a statesman and aware enough to know that if they had declared against Hitler....

LK - Then Hitler would have declared war on them.

RLA - Absolutely. In one of the examples of this....

LK - And Hitler was planning to declare war on them. It was the understanding that after the Jews, the Catholics would have been next had he been able to continue.

RLA - And evidence of this is that my father escaped with a German priest. So there was a German priest on the train getting transferred to a concentration camp so the Catholic Church was, to some degree, under the gun or at least the Nazis had their eye on the Church.

LK - Sure. They definitely had their eye on the Church. And historically, even recently, you're seeing more and more of those documents and testimony to show that that was coming. That as soon as they had finished the so-called Jewish problem, the Catholics were next.

RLA - Yeah. They were going to be part of the final solution.

LK - So even though and probably, historically, and there's reasons to support that Pope Pius XII was, prior to ascension to the Papacy, that he already had been speaking out against the Nazis. There's documents, but the ends justify the means in this case. He was able to save lives and understood that had he stood up, chances are those lives would have gone, so he had to make a terrible choice from the sound of it.

RLA - And my feeling is absolutely he did the right thing.

LK - And lives were at stake, so he, I'm sure that the Catholic Papacy feels the same way we do, life is precious...

RLA - And in this passport you can see the connections...

LK - It tracks along with all the documentation we already have that talks about the journeys people took thanks to the Vatican..

RLA - And the heads of state who were influenced by the Pope and by the Church.

LK - So, in your opinion, we owe Pope Pius XII....

RLA - A great debt.

LK - A great debt and gratitude and we should definitely recognize, historically, what the real facts are rather than allow the constant vilification that has taken place.

RLA - Absolutely.

LK - Well, I thank you for telling your story.

RLA - Thank you. Thank you for letting me do that.

LK - It's a pleasure and I hope that this will help to set the record straight.

RLA - I hope so because Yad Vashem is a very important entity and has a lot of our respect and recognizes people who have done so much for the Jews in the world.

LK - Yes. The program to recognize Righteous Gentiles because what we have to remember, even in all the horror we experienced at this time, there were good people.

RLA - Absolutely.

LK - And as always, the worst people always make the headlines and the people who are quietly preserving the world, basically by their good deeds, largely go unnoticed or untold and in this case untold for obvious political reasons, it couldn't be told. I thank you for your courage and willingness to speak up.

RLA - Thank you.

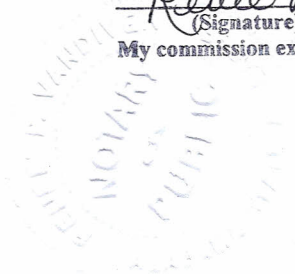
LK - Thank you very much.

I certify that this is an accurate transcript of my declaration.



Robert Leon Adler, Ph.D.

Subscribed and sworn to before me in my
Presence, this 27th day of October
2010, a Notary Public in and for the
County of Standards State of Alabama
Rebecca P. Landon
(Signature) Notary Public
My commission expires _____



NOTARY PUBLIC STATE OF ALABAMA AT LARGE
MY COMMISSION EXPIRES: June 5, 2012
BONDED THRU NOTARY PUBLIC UNDERWRITERS