Welcome. I am Joseph Preil, Co-Director of the Holocaust Resource Center here at King's College of New Jersey. Today, Thursday, December 17, 1992, we are privileged to have with us Martin Radley, a resident of Westfield, who will discuss with us his experiences before and during World War II and the Holocaust. Mr. Radley, would you tell us where and when you were born?

I was born in Beuthen, Upper Silesia. It was Germany at the time. It's called Bytom now. And it's Polish. July 27, 1924.

And who lived in Beuthen in your family?

My parents, two of my brothers, my grandparents on my mother's side, and two of my mother's sisters with husbands and children.

So all together, how many members of the family would you say lived there -- ?

All together about 20.

About 20 members of your family. How large-- is that a city, Beuthen?

The population of 100,000 people at the time.

And how many Jews were in Beuthen?

5,000 before the immigration started.

What happened to the members of your family during the war? Let's start with your immediate family, well, your two brothers. Who were your two brothers.

My two brothers, my older brother went to Palestine at the time, in 1938. And my younger brother was lucky enough to get out about two weeks prior to the start of the Second World War to England.

When did you get out?

I got out in '39. Let me see. I'll tell you the exact date, May, 8, 1939.

Well, we'll talk further. You'll describe how you and your brothers got out. Now, what happened to your parents?

My parents got killed in the Holocaust.

How do you know what happened to them?

How do I know? I know. Number one, I have a copy of a list from that the Gestapo left behind in Beuthen, telling of all the names of the Jews who were deported and killed. And the addresses where they lived before they were taken prisoner and shipped out.

I believe that would be in these papers that you have collected.

That's correct. It's a copy of the Gestapo list.

What does this say?

I shall take a look. It says [SPEAKING GERMAN]. It means names of all persons from Beuthen, Upper Siliesia, with the Jews which are sent away to camps, more or less.

And what do we have on all these pages?

In all these pages, you have numbers, starting from number one going to almost 1,980 something.

For instance, what's on this first page?

On the first page, it tells you the address where they used to live and the names and the date on top.

What's the date here?

14 of May, 1942. There was a -- Wait. it doesn't say where.

It doesn't say where. Your parents, I believe, are down near the bottom. What was that date, 14 of May 1942?

Yeah.

Your parents are all the way down here. What's this sheet say?

This sheet says June 23, 1942, shipped away. This happens to be my parents, Chechevsky Sigmund my father, and [Personal name] my mother.

So that was May, and this is June 1942. Evidently, everybody in the town was being sent away during that time in 1942. Where were your parents sent? Does it say?

It doesn't say.

Did you hear further about that?

When I was living in England, I got a postcard sent by my father while he was on the train. And it said something in that wording that your grandparents had to leave on a vacation a couple of weeks ago. We have to leave today to go on a vacation. And their postcard was marked a little village somewhere. And I happened to give the postcard to my brothers in Israel.

You don't remember the village?

No.

So you don't know anything about what it means.

[INAUDIBLE] time. I get an idea.

Yeah.

But they said after a five-hour train ride, and we only lived about a half-mile train ride to Auschwitz. So I know they didn't get to Auschwitz. They must have got to Majdanek or Treblinka or something up there.

But you never did discover--

Never knew exactly, no.

What did you say the name of your parents was on that list?

Sigmund Chechevsky

And your name is Radley.

Martin Radley.

How did that come about?

Well, when I joined the British Army, and we were ready to go on the invasion of Europe, and my commanding officer called me in and told me to change my name to a British name, in case I was taken prisoner. And I couldn't think of any name. He opened up a telephone book. On the top it says in big block letters, Radley. As he said, how do you like that name? I said, OK with me, sir. And that got changed.

In other words, if you would have been captured and the Germans would see a German name, you would have gotten special treatment.

Special treatment, and if my parents would have been alive, they would have gotten special treatment too, if they found out who I was.

But if they had spoken-- if they caught you and spoke to you--

They would have found out anyway because of that accent.

So actually, you did a better thing by not being captured.

Yeah, definitely.

So we now have in your immediate family, your two parents who remained in Germany, perished, the three sons, who were shipped away before the war, survive. What happened? That's 5 out of about the 20 members of your family. Do you know what happened to the other members?

They're all on the list, my grandparents and uncles and aunts and shipped out at different dates. I never heard from them again.

You never saw them or heard from them after the war. Can you describe the town of Beuthen?

Oh, it was a well-known Jewish community, as you can see by the-- we had three synagogues. This was the conservative. That was the biggest synagogue--

This is your synagogue.

That's my synagogue. Right next door to it, we had the smallest synagogue with the orthodox. And right next door to that, there was a cheder for the ultra orthodox.

Mm-hmm. So it was like a religious mall.

All you see in the picture is the largest synagogue. They used to have two stories, women upstairs, men the downstairs. There was a choir and an organ. As a matter of fact, I sang in the choir for many years.

I see. Now, tell us about life and in Beuthen, in the 1930s when you were growing up.

Well, I went to-- all Jewish children went to a Jewish state school. It was financed by the government. The teachers were paid from the government. It's not like you go to a Jewish school over here. And I found two of my teachers on the list being deported who used to be my teachers.

We had eight classrooms, all Jewish people. And my father was a tailor, never was rich, but we made a living.

Was the fact that you are in an all-Jewish day school, was that as a result of being in the 1930s?

No.

What about if somebody grew up in the 1920s, would they also [INAUDIBLE].

It was the same way.

It was always that way?

Always that way. You started going to gymnasium. You went--

--to the public school.

--to public gymnasiums. They had Catholic schools. They had Jewish school.

So it was all highly religious?

[INAUDIBLE] classes, yeah.

When did you begin to feel any kind of antisemitism?

Right away.

When you say right away, what do you mean by that?

Right away.

You were born in 1924.

Right.

You remember it--

I remember 1933. I remember--

That was when you were nine.

I remember being in the street, and there was fighting going on in the street between the communists and the Nazis. And I got so scared and went home. And I knew it was dangerous for Jews. I don't know how I knew it.

Well, 1933, Hitler had already--

He came to power.

Become chancellor.

Yeah.

But before that--

Before that I know. It was nothing.

You don't remember anything untoward.

Under Hindenburg-- my father liked Hindenburg, was OK.

Mm-hmm. So describe now what you recall now that you're of an age to remember. You're starting nine into your adolescence. What transpired?

Well, what would you like to talk about?

What memories you have of--

I have the memories about the synagogue burning, Jewish building--

When was that?

9th of November 1938.

You're talking about Kristallnacht.

Crystal Night, yeah. What happened? What happened in your town?

In my town, what happened? I remember being at home. It was early in the morning. We had a neighbor lived in the same house, Mrs. [? Kreutzberger, ?] who knocked on our door and came in the morning and telling us that the synagogue was on fire.

That's the first you heard about it.

The first I heard about it, right.

And what happened?

And my mother and father woke us up. I think, no, my older brother was already gone then. He was in Palestine. Woke us up. They packed suitcases-- they didn't know what was going to happen-- made sandwiches. And then eventually, my mother said, look, my parents live right across from the synagogue. And they talk to me and said, well, you're the least Jewish looking from all of us. You go and check out how the grandparents are.

So I did. I went over there. And I saw the synagogue burning. I looked out the window. I see Jews being arrested both in front of the synagogue. I also see-- later I saw trucks picking them up. After a couple of hours staying with my grandparents, I went home again. And I saw store windows being smashed who belong to the Jewish stores-- belonged to Jewish owners and plundered. And all at once somebody shouted, there goes a Jew. I run for my life.

I'm on this square called the RIng. And there was a public toilet in the center. I run right down there. I locked myself in. I stayed there for maybe two hours till it seems to me it was all clear. And I went home again. When I got home, I told my parents everything was all right. My grandparents are still in the house.

But I saw furnitures turned over in our apartment and laundry all over the floor and said, what happened here? Well, we had three SR men came to the house.

SR?

SR. SS was the Storm Troopers. SR was the Brownshirts. They came to the house. And they were supposed to break everything. But we were lucky enough one of them was my father's customer from even before Hitler came to power and still was. And he stopped the others from breaking things because he said that's good Jew. He said, good Jew. Don't do any harm to him. So we were lucky.

And do you recall what happened after Kristallnacht?

After Kristallnacht, my father couldn't work in his profession anymore. He could only work for Jews. But there wasn't enough Jews around to do suits. Nobody wanted a new suit at that time. It was too much other problems. So he couldn't make a living.

So eventually, he made a living by recommending Polish Jews who were not called in the beginning when they shipped them to Poland, but they came out later. He met them at some small shul, because the other one was burned down, at the morning prayers, brought them home, let them stay in our house, got some Germans who were smugglers and took him over to Poland. And went and made a living on that they obviously got paid for.

They wanted to go to Poland.

They wanted to, yeah, because they had no chance in Germany. At the beginning when Hitler made them go, they couldn't take anything but 10 marks with them. So whoever had nothing got arrested and came down. And whoever had something tried to bring it out with them, and they came later by themselves then.

You said that your oldest brother-- what's his name?

Kurt. Well, Jonathan now. He changed his name.

Kurt when he lived in Germany. Jonathan now that he's in Israel.

Yeah.

You said that your older brother left in 1938 for Palestine.

Right.

Now, how old was he when he left?

He was about 15.

About 15. That means your parents saw to it that he leave.

Yeah.

How did your parents work it out that the three boys actually got out of Germany before the war?

First of all, when we were starting from 1937, '36, we all belonged to a Jewish Zionist organization.

Which one?

It was called Hakoah at that time. You ever heard of Hakoah?

Hakoah?

Hakoah.

Does that mean the power or the strength?

Well, that was the organization. And we belonged to that. And through that, my brother went to Hakhshara in Germany near Berlin somewhere. He had to pass a test on the farm. And he got the OK, and went to Palestine. Later on, England took in a lot of children, like 10,000 or 20,000. And I was lucky enough to have an uncle there who found sponsors for me first and then for my younger brother. And we got out there.

Was that part of what was known as the Kindertransport?

Kindertransport, right.

Did you call it that at the Time

Yeah, it says here Kindertransport.

Where does it say?

I think it says here. Yeah, [GERMAN].

Let me keep it here, and you read it.

It is a piece of paper from the Jewish community in Beuthen. And it says, [GERMAN]. It is--

Confirmed?

--confirmed that the youth Hans Martin Israel Chechevsky living in Beuthen, [GERMAN] in connection with the Kindertransport to England on Tuesday the 9th of May, emigrates, and he needs for this purpose a pass. And it is needed to give them a pass so he can leave the country.

And this was in May 1938.

In May 1939.

May 1939.

[INAUDIBLE] and I left on the 8th.

Yeah, just a few months before the war broke out.

Yeah.

And your younger brother came what?

About three weeks before the war broke out.

Shortly after you came, three months later, let's say.

Yeah.

So your parents probably spent a lot of energy on getting this to come about.

Yeah.

And did many of the children in Beuthen get out this way?

Usually not, really. Only the ones in my age, more or less--

And actually be able to manage a bit on their own.

Usually when--

Teenagers, teenagers. So if they weren't with their parents, not many of them survived?

Survived. That's correct.

All right, you came to England, and you are now, I guess, 15 years old.

Yeah.

What happened? Did you go to school? Where did you live?

No, no, I came to London to the East End, and I came to a family, like husband and wife, who had a glass shop, and they trained me to be a glazier. The day I came, they let the maid go. They gave me her room. I was both maid and glazier. They taught me.

An apprentice.

Yeah, the worst day was Friday night for me. Friday during the day. The worst day because Shabas is coming. So you have to go on your knees and scrub the floors. You have to clean the oven. You have to wash the windows. You have to fix the floors.

You did all this?

The shiksa, yeah.

But you did this for how many years?

I did this for about two years.

It was a difficult life for you?

Well, I still was alive. I had my life.

Did you realize that at the time?

Later, later I realized that.

At the time how did it feel?

At the time-- at the time, I felt depressed.

The whole time?

Yeah.

And did you saw your brother at this time?

I did, yeah.

How often did you see him?

Well, he lived with distant relative who had a grocery store in the beginning, and then war broke out, and he was evacuated in the British countryside somewhere. He was 12 years old. And after a while, I got a letter from him that he met German Jewish people. They're going to make him bar mitzvah. I'm sorry.

It's all right, and that's how he became bar mitzvah.

Yeah.

Now, you say you were there with that family. You were in London for two years. What happened after two years? You're 17 years old. What happened then?

Afterwards, I left them because I was already skilled glazier, according what I knew, I was skilled glazier. And I got myself a job somewhere as well, and I got a furnished room.

You became independent?

Independent, yeah.

How long did you spend your life as an independent civilian?

Till I joined the British army.

When was that?

That was-- let's see now. I'll tell you exactly.

What is this booklet? 9/12/1940. September 12, 1940 I joined the army.

What is this book?

This is an alien certificate of registration. When you lived in England as an alien, you had to have one of this book every time you moved. You had to register with the police.

All this is in here?

All this is in there.

That was when you moved out of the apartment or the residence that you were the helper of the glass and on the floors.

Yeah, I have to register.

This had to be registered here. And the last registration is you're going into the army?

Correct.

On the last page. Recruiting center Euston-- E-U-S-T-O-N.

Yeah, part of England. Enlistment [INAUDIBLE].

That's also in London?

In London.

Euston is a section of London?

Section of London, right.

All right, and now, you're in the army. That was the date.

The date was right there. The last one. What date was it?

9/12/43.

Yeah.

September '43 you went into the army. Now, that means you're in the army. You went in about nine months before D-day.

Yeah.

What part of the army were you in?

I was in the pioneer corps. Pioneer corps.

What does pioneer corps mean?

Pioneer corps means, actually, it means pick and shovel people. They did the hard labor, shoveling things like that, unloading ships in Antwerp, I remember.

Who were the people in the pioneer corps.

They were all German, and Austrian Jews.

All Germans and Austrians. How come?

That's the only part of the army you could join, volunteer, at that time. Later on, they opened it up to all different parts of the armed troops. Yeah, like my brother was in intelligence somewhere.

Oh.

Later on.

I get it. In other words, since you were German, in order to make sure that you weren't a spy, they gave you this job, and you were nowhere near where anything of intelligence to the Germans would be of interest.

Only later. As a matter of fact, a lot of the people who joined the pioneer corps volunteered after being shipped to Canada. When war broke out, the English didn't know the difference between a German Jew and a non-Jew. And as a matter of fact, some of them were even loaded on the same ships with German prisoners of war who came to Canada.

After a while, they got smart. They found out the difference, and whoever wanted to volunteer for the British army, they let free and sent them back to England. And the pioneer corps consisted of a lot of people like that who came back from either the Isle of Man, which was also a prison camp for German Jews or Canada.

Now, you were in the pioneer corps.

I was in the pioneer corps.

Throughout the time that you were in the British army?

Throughout the time, yeah.

And did your work always consist of pick and shovel?

No, no, we had the guns too. You know, in emergency, we were called in the front. We did--

I mean, is there anything of interest that you can tell us from September '43 when you were inducted until May 1945 victory in Europe day.

Actually not much. I know we did we did-- in France, there was a lot of rain at the time when the invasion was, and a lot of trucks got stuck. So they called the pioneer corps to put the gravel and sand there, and we worked there. Lay down when the V1 and V2 were flying in Antwerp and Brussels. We went to Antwerp. We unloaded ships with food and stuff. And we also, at night, we rescued people who were buried from the V1s and V2s. We didn't get to the front till we got to Belgium and then Holland. That's when we first saw German soldiers.

And do you have anything to relate about that time?

Well, not really. Not really.

All right, where were you when the war ended?

When the war ended, I was in a part of Germany near Bremen.

And what do you recall from that period of time?

From that period of time, we were stationed there. And there was a non-fraternization order. You couldn't speak to Germans or whatever. It didn't matter with us anyhow. Anyway, we were disbanded. Our company was disbanded being that everybody spoke German. In English though, we always went to separate different units as interpreters.

Interpreters for whom?

For the unit. Whoever wanted you there. As a captain or major, I was--

You served as an interpreter?

Interpreter at the Bergen-Belsen.

Oh, at the concentration camp.

At the concentration camp. I was interpreter for the British rabbi who was in charge there. And when he didn't need me, I was with the captain of my unit or major. Whoever else needed me.

Do you have any experience of-- how long were you then in Bergen-Belsen.

I was about a year there.

You were there for a whole year. You came in shortly after--

After liberation. About two or three weeks later.

And you were there for the time that the-- what were they doing with-- what were we doing with Bergen-Belsen at the time?

At the time, we were not in the real concentration camp at the time. The concentration camp was wooden huts, which was about three miles away. We came. There was stone buildings, two-story buildings. And during the war, it was used by the SS and by soldiers as a camp. When they liberated the Bergen-Belsen camp, they shipped the people who were still alive to the stone buildings which were very civilized. And they had a hospital there. As a matter of fact, they had two hospitals there. People died every day anyhow on typhus and overeating because they all starved before, and when they saw food, they grabbed anything and got sick and died.

Did you speak to survivors?

I spoke to a lot, yeah.

What made impact on you?

All the experiences. I talked to people who were in the Warsaw ghetto, escaped through the sewers. One young guy who was about my age at the time. He was about 19, 20, told me all the stories that happened before the book was written, Mila.

Mila 18.

Yeah, right. He escaped through the sewer, and then he went to the partisans. Later on, he got caught anyway somehow. But he was sent in the camp. Now, most of the people who were liberated in the Bergen-Belsen used to be in Auschwitz. When the Russians came close to liberating Auschwitz, the Germans marched them all the way to Bergen-Belsen.

How great a distance is that?

I would say at least 500 miles. It took days and weeks for them to walk. A lot of them didn't survive the march. They died on the road. On the side, some of them were shot.

At when they described the march, did they describe that as their worst experience of the war?

I wouldn't say the worst. I wouldn't say the worst. But as soon as somebody couldn't make it anymore, the Germans shot them. Some people tell me they remembered, at one time, the liberated before they got to Bergen-Belsen, they were sleeping on a farm at night in a barn. And when they got up in the morning, they didn't see the SS guards anymore. They, they couldn't believe it. The S guard is gone. They were afraid even to leave the barn. They didn't know what to do. It so happened that the Russians got close, and they left them there.

And that was their liberation.

That was their liberation.

You didn't see these people.

No, I saw them later in Bergen-Belsen.

Well, how do they come to Bergen-Belsen? They were free in Poland.

No, that wasn't Poland. It was Germany at the time. They were marched all the way--

Oh, oh, and the Russians came and liberated them in Germany, right. And why did they go to Bergen-Belsen at that time?

There was so much traffic there in Bergen-Belsen in the first year after liberation. People came from Poland looking for relatives. People left Bergen-Belsen looking for relatives to Poland, to other part -- People were traveling from one camp to the other one. There was different places with Jews who were liberated left. And the traffic was big, enormous. People looking for people from the town, for relatives, what happened. How do you-- Jews in the barn didn't know where to go. Eventually, found out a lot of Jews live in Bergen-Belsen, and so he went there. I mean, it wasn't like a concentration camp anymore.

You really, during that year, had no daily routine. When you woke up in the morning, you didn't have a job.

I had a job. No, not nine to five. I had the job. The rabbi called me and says, we have some funerals to do. I used to come and meet him.

There were many funerals?

In the beginning, there were every day, 10, 20, 30, which were survivors who died of typhus.

--at the door of death when liberation came.

Yeah.

And there were quite a few of those.

Yeah, it got smaller as time passed by. But there were every day many.

All right, that was the first few weeks, you would say.

The first few weeks. Well, I came three weeks later. Two, three weeks later and then went on for another couple of months maybe. But actually, Bergen-Belsen was not a extermination camp. You probably know that because I remember going to the old camp and look on. There was just a few [INAUDIBLE] for single bodies to be burned.

It wasn't mass production.

It wasn't mass production. The Jews just got the there by the Russians coming closer. They put them in.

And the purpose of the survivors remaining there was what? Some of them were there for a whole year. Why were they there so long?

Some of them were there for many years. Some of them got married there.

Why were they there so long?

They didn't know where to go. It was time some of them went to the States. They had to wait for papers. There they were taken care of. That was the UNRRA, the UN. There was food distribution from the Jewish organizations like HIAS and other organizations. And there was houses for them to live in.

So it was an in-between period in their lives, in between the terrible years of the Holocaust, and the years of freedom when they would come to the United States or to Israel.

Correct.

And if they were in Bergen-Belsen, they might have remained there for a long period of time.

A lot of young people went in the beginning to Sweden. Sweden opened their doors, and they let in thousands of young people. And they left on trains. I remember that.

And how did you feel about your daily experiences at that time?

It was every day something else, I mean, what I saw. It was very hard to take. As a matter of fact, I never told you that.

One day, I spoke to some guy who was liberated, a young guy, and he said, oh, in my block, I got a guy living. He was from your town. I said, yeah, I'd like to meet him. OK, meet me here tomorrow, the I'll bring him here. OK.

A guy comes. I never met him before. He told me his name. His name was Friedrich. That was his second name I said did your parents have a store with good goose feathers that was near the synagogue going downstairs. Yeah, how do you know? I remember that store is Friedrich. He was originally a Polish Jew. His parents and family was deported after the Kristallnacht. And somehow, he lived in Poland and lived through the camps.

And he's talking, and he tells me that he has a sister that married a guy by the name of Rudy Weiner and they immigrated to Brazil. And I said, that's my mother's cousin. Rudy Weiner And we didn't know the address. Anyway, he couldn't write a letter because the civilian maid didn't go through yet. I wrote a letter addressed to Mr. Rudy Weiner, Sao Paolo Brazil. I got a reply The letter got there.

Really? And was it the cousin?

It was the cousin, and it was his sister. His wife was his sister. He was out within three months. They got him out.

Because of the connection that was made? Oh, because if you had family on the outside, and they--

It was easier to get out.

And they vouched for you, you would get out. Phenomenal story. Are there any other incidents that you can recall that stand out in your mind of that year that you were in Bergen-Belsen?

At one time, sometimes I was in the old camp and on guard duty at night. 24 hours on, 24 hours off. That was the two, and we couldn't leave anybody in but journalists. And that was before the whole camp was burned or something.

Did you speak to Germans after the war?

I did. They didn't know from anything. That's what they claim. They never were Nazis. They didn't know from anything.

You would go up to a German and say, what do you know about what took place?

Yeah.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

There was a town of Bergen, which later when I was demobilized, I lived in the town for a while. I lived in a house that owned by a bakery. A baker own it. He said, I never knew about concentration camp. The first time I knew he says when they marched the people from Celle. Celle was a town near Bergen-Belsen where they came and marched them past Bergen into the camp. That's the first time she saw prisoners.

Have you had any dealings with Germans since the war? You know, today's 1992. Have you ever gone back?

Yeah, I've been back.

For what reason?

First of all, my wife was invited to go. She was born in Berlin, and she was invited by the German government. We stayed there a few days. And we also-- my wife has a distant relative who stays in Berlin, now lives in Berlin, and his parents, his father, was a doctor in Berlin. They immigrated to Palestine at the time. He couldn't make a living there after the war. First thing he did. He went back to--

Berlin.

--to Berlin with his whole family.

Did you find any difference in the Germans recently as compared with after the war?

Recently, I haven't been over there.

Well, when you went with your wife to Berlin.

Yeah. they were all very friendly. Very friendly like nothing happened.

But in terms of not knowing about it, do you find that that remains. No, I don't think so. I think they all got educated reading books, and they heard about it. And I think they believe it happened. They know it happens. From the parents, I'm sure the younger people know from the parents and grandparents. Do you think there's a difference between the way the older people view it and their children and grandchildren?

I think so. I think so.

You sensed that when you were there?

I sensed it, yeah. As a matter of fact, I'll tell you a story which is hard to believe. My younger brother who lives in Israel goes every year to some kind of march to Jerusalem with a bunch of people. I don't know what it is. Do you know about that march?

Is that for Independence Day?

I don't know. I don't-- some kind of a march. I think it may be Independence Day. He was somewhere in Jerusalem one year, and he noticed some tourists have paper from sandwiches or whatever in their hand and looking to get rid of it in the garbage can. And he noticed there were German tourists. He went over, and he spoke to them in German. Give me that piece of paper. I'll put it in the garbage can for you. Oh, you speak German. And they started talking. It's so happened though, those people, they're from the same town he married his wife from.

Which town is that?

It is Obersfeld, or something like that, in Germany, from the same town. And they're so interested, and he invited them to the house, and they came over. And they talked, and my brother's wife's mother was at that time still living in that time. She was half Jewish. My sister-in-law is half Jewish.

This older woman--

She was still living. Oberhausen, that's the name of the town.

Oberhausen in Germany.

In Germany. They were from the same town. Now, we got to get in touch with your mother and everything. They got in touch with her. He owned some kind of a factory. Very well-to-do German. Young generation, was about no more than 40 at the time. It was like 10 years ago. Maybe more 10 years ago. I give so much to charity, that I don't know where the money is going. From now on, I want you to come every year and visit your mother. They sent tickets for maybe 10 years in a row. Come and visit.

And that was just because-- excuse me-- he said I'll take the paper, and throw it out for you. Interesting, very fascinating. You remained in Bergen-Belsen until you were discharged from the army?

I mean, for about a year. Later on, I was stationed in Hanover.

And what was your responsibility in Hanover?

[INAUDIBLE] to have a different unit.

But not with the survivors anymore?

No, no, but I met a lot of survivors who lived there started opening a community in Hanover. A big community from survivors mostly.

Did any events stand out in your mind from that period?

Oh, I was still in the army. I went on leave to London, and I went to a house called the Bloomsbury House. Bloomsbury, you ever heard of that?

That's where the literary house, I think.

Well, I don't know. It was the Jewish refugee organizations were stationed there during the war. And I heard they have a list of survivors.

This is in London?

In London. And being in leave, I had nothing much to do. I don't have any family in London, only my brother who was at the time in the army too already. So I went to Bloomsbury to look through the list if I can find somebody from my family. But I didn't. But I lived in a furnished room before I went in the army with people from Hanover. Also refugees who had the house there, and they rented me a room.

And they were talking about the family from Hanover who they left behind. The names. I knew everything. So I just happen to find the wife's brother and son liberated from Bergen-Belsen. Of course, I couldn't tell them fast enough. And when I go back, I went to see them. They lived already in Hanover, and the old address where they used to live, and their little store. [Place name] was the name of the street.

[INAUDIBLE].

Yeah.

What--

Knochen means bones. It means bones. I don't know what the [INAUDIBLE] is for. That was the name of the street. Well, I came there once, and I came in. I said, I know your sister. I know your sister-in-law. The boy had a sister was living in London, and I lived with-- the family name was [? Patchesty. ?] And I lived with your aunt there. Anyway, I got them corresponding. They lived in a store. When I came there, the old man who was the father was so skinny, he weighed maybe 90 pounds. The son was already OK. Eventually, they found the sister. Another sister was in the camps, and the mother in Sweden. The whole family was intact.

That's phenomenal.

Yeah.

You didn't find many such families.

No, you didn't. But there was exceptions.

Did they remain in Hanover, or they came over to England?

They went to Israel.

Israel. And the ones from England also?

No, they stayed in England. They stayed in England. But this family, first the father and son went over to Palestine, Israel, and then the mother and daughter came over to join from Sweden.

How long were you in Hanover?

I was demobilized in 1945.

Oh, this was-- you were doing this as a civilian?

1945, I was still in the army then.

You say-- if you were demobilized in '45, does that mean you're out of the army?

Yeah.

Then why are you still in Bergen-Belsen and Hanover?

I didn't want to go back to England. I wanted to come to America.

Oh, so you remained in England.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

In other words, you found work to do.

I remained in Germany.

And you were working. You were being paid at this time.

I was working for the British occupation so army.

I see. And how long did that last, this period?

Till I immigrated to the United States, '48. No, '51, sorry. '48 was my children were born. '51.

So you married in Germany.

I married in Germany.

You met your wife in Germany?

My first wife was from Czechoslovakia. A survivor too. And she had this son which was hidden by a girlfriend in Czechoslovakia. I adopted him. He was five years old. I was like 21 years old at the time. And then we have two more kids. And my wife died in '69.

Oh, and you married--

I married Anette.

Anette in '70 or whatever.

Yeah, right.

So these three children are from that marriage. All right, and you came here in '51.

'51 is right.

And did you have to know anybody here in order to come here? How did you get papers to come over?

The HIAS brought us over.

The HIAS had arranged that you had papers?

The HIAS got us over. When I was demobilized, I didn't want to go back to England because I met my wife there, and I married and I couldn't bring her over at the time because I was still a German citizen while being in the British army and considered an enemy alien. And they wouldn't give me permission to marry my wife because she was Czech. She was an alien. I was an enemy alien. So I had to wait for them to change the laws. I also had to wait-- I could have been demobilized maybe a year earlier. I had to wait for them to change the laws to get the local release. And that took me another six months long in the army.

So you were working your way through the red tape.

Yeah.

And in '51, do remember the date that you arrived here?

Yeah, I think I have it somewhere. Maybe I have at home. I didn't bring those papers with me I don't think. I don't think so.

Well, you know what time of the year it was.

Yeah, it was about when me and my kids-- it was in June.

In June '51 you arrived with your three children.

Right.

And where did you go?

I came to New York on Lafayette Street was HIAS headquarters. They put us in a hotel somewhere near 14th Street for temporary till I found a job with a glass company. Then they found us an apartment on East 34th Street, which was not like it is today. It was more less a slum at the time. Cold water flat.

And how did you get over to New Jersey?

After being working a couple of years in New York, I was reading a trade paper called the Glass Digest, and somebody advertised a glass business for sale in Newark. And that's how I got over to New Jersey. I bought that business.

So you had a business opportunity.

Yeah.

And it worked out well for you?

[INAUDIBLE], yeah.

And then as the years went by, you moved on to Westfield.

Correct.

But the business remained in Newark?

The business remained in Newark, and I bought a house in Cranford first. Later on, I opened another business in Cranford, which I had till about six years ago.

At which time you retired.

right.

OK, and before we end, I'd like to ask you some general questions.

When did you start talking about the Holocaust, and with whom? You always talked about the Holocaust. You started with the survivors in Berlin.

It was the survivors more or less. And it was my wife. My children, they were never interested. They didn't want to hear about those things.

Really? Until today?

They still don't want to hear about it. They never asked me, what were my grandparents like?

How has the Holocaust affected your outlook on life, and your understanding of human nature?

The Holocaust taught me whatever happens, you still have your life. It happens. That's all. Like that my first wife passed away. And it was bad enough, but I already lost my parents too so-- monetary values, I don't have any anymore.

You mean, you don't have value--

I don't value monetary values.

Materials--

I lost more in --

And now, it's material possessions are what's important to you when you think about what's happened to life in your time, and what you've seen. Has the Holocaust affected your faith and religious observance in any way?

I don't think so. I don't think it affected me because I was just this religious when I was a child. I used to sing in the choir. I used to be every Saturday going to synagogue to sing in the choir. And today, if I have time Friday nights, I go with my wife to the temple too, and we observe Shabbos and the large holidays.

Do you have any other recollections of particular significance you would like to comment on?

Well, I remember at one time when I was in Bergen-Belsen yet that I saw all at once a big crowd of people in the street and fighting one person, hitting one person. A lot of people. I came there--

Who are these people who are doing the hitting?

Survivors, survivors. And I asked somebody, what's going on here? They're hitting this guy. Yeah, he was a kapo in one of the ghettos or something and a policeman. And he wasn't good to the other Jews, and they almost beat him to death.

A fellow Jew?

A fellow Jew, yeah.

Did you discuss this with them?

I talked about it, but I couldn't help him. They were just out of control.

And finally, what happened to him?

He was pretty well beaten up so he had to be taken to the hospital.

And they were convinced they were doing the right thing?

They were convince, yeah.

And what did he say? Did you ever--

We didn't have a chance to talk to, this guy.

And you didn't speak to him after that? Was that the first you heard about kapos?

That was about the first I heard about Jewish policemen as kapos.

You hear more about it later on?

Later on, I did. Yeah.

So how did you--

Later on, I did.

How do you view it?

With mixed feelings because some of the Jewish policemen had the job. And they were trying to save people too. Like in the ghettos, when the Germans order the big shots that were in charge of the ghetto, tomorrow we want 3,000 people at the Umschlagplatz. They picked out the oldest, the sickest, and somebody had to do the job.

But it was a no-win situation.

Right.

Whatever you did was no good. If you meant well, you meant well. But it would--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

The Jewish policemen had their job to go and arrest them and bring them down there.

Which remains a source of controversy until the present day.

I think to myself, what would I have done if I was in that situation? I don't know.

Did you ask the survivors that question? What would you have done?

Probably not. I don't think so.

And it was very emotional. Everything is emotional about that. So that was the story really of the existence of the people at that time. Whatever they did was impossible.

It wasn't wrong. It wasn't right either. I think to myself in the position. If I was there in the camps, and I was the age where they make me policemen, and I got the order I go and arrest this and this people, I don't know what I would have done.

It was better to be in the British army.

Definitely.

All right, thank you very much. It was very helpful to us to get your perspective as a German-born citizen into Britain, and a British military person finally here in America and in New Jersey.

I'm glad I've been able to visit.

Thank you very much.

Thank you.