

You were speaking about your experiences--

The Bound Brook high school and I made the tape for my friend's son. And he took it into his class and then he wanted to know when did I start to speak. I had a long talk with myself, a lot of soul searching, and I said I cannot let the world not know what went on. No matter how it tortures me and how it kills me. I owe it to the ones who didn't survive. I feel like my fellow survivor [INAUDIBLE] myself feels.

I have to do it. I cannot expect people who were not there to do it for me. So I do-- it's not easy. I have nightmares the night before. I had terrible nightmares [? less ?] [INAUDIBLE] when I was coming here. But I know I have to, as long as I'm alive and as long as I'm wanted, I will go and speak about it.

There is more than just that reason. The revisionists that are coming, that are out, are trying to deny that the Holocaust never happened. It's easy for a professor to sit down or for a writer write a book, but if I go into a classroom or to a adult group and say, "Don't tell me the Holocaust never happened." If you could put me back to the age of 14, if you could give me back my home, my parents, my education, my health, then you could tell me that the Holocaust never happened, but not until then. This is why the urgency is there. That I would hope and pray that more and more of my fellow survivors will come out, and speak, and tell their story.

On the campuses, anti-Semitism is rampant again. The skinheads are confronting survivors, including myself. I was speaking at [? Manual ?] High School one day and a teacher did not tell me, until I was walking into the classroom, that Mrs. Feldman I have a couple of skinheads and I hope they will behave.

How do you prepare yourself? I just went in, started my presentation, gave it, and when I'm speaking to students the most important part is the personal one on one "question and answer" period. So I asked the teachers to allow me so much time for each presentation. That's very important. And lo' and behold, one of the skinheads got up and says to me, "I'm a skinhead. Are you afraid of me?" And I looked him in the face and I said, "I'm only afraid of God and you are not God." And he slithered into his seat and he had no more questions for me. He sat there quietly and listened to the rest of answer and question period.

Of course, this was very unique, you know. I mean, could you go into a group of skinheads and confront them? I don't think anyone could expect, from a survivor especially, to go into any groups and confront them on one on one. You could talk about it, teach about it, lecture about it, and hope that it will sink into the ones who are listening and they will confront their fellow skinheads or revisionists.

There was an episode right here in Plainfield, I don't know if you heard of it or not, that revisionists got into the library and into the books he put leaflets without the librarians knowledge. And as the students would take out books to read they would take it home. There were the anti-Semitic-- [INAUDIBLE] were 64 questions pertaining that the Holocaust never happened. This is the important reason why survivors have to get up and have to speak and tell their stories.

I'm not saying my story cause I want anyone's sympathy or anyone's pity. Never ever. I don't want that. I just want the world to really know what has happened. And as long as the survivors are alive we could tell it person to person. Once we are gone, thank God for people like you two who take your time and energy and devote it to make tapes and teach it. And it will continue to go on the teaching of what really happened during the Holocaust.

What about the question, Margaret, of your own faith, your own belief? Was it--

Never wavered. Never. My husband would question me, in the beginning especially. How can you go to shul? How can you want to have a kosher home? How can you stand there and daven and fast all day in Yom Kippur? What you went through? I think that's what kept me going though.

I am a believer in God and I think, without his help, I wouldn't be here today. I'm also one of the chosen people and this was my plight to suffer through the Holocaust. I survived. I question that many of times. I feel guilty a lot that I'm here and my loved ones are not here. To be in a free country such as I live, to have my children. It's difficult in the bar

mitzvahs, and the bas mitzvahs, and the weddings, and the [INAUDIBLE]. How do you tell a child you don't have a grandmother, you don't have a grandfather, you don't have an aunt, you don't have an uncle from your mother's side? These are the deep ones that will never heal. Never.

I went back in 1972 to Hungary after a lot of soul searching. Why did I go back? Cause my father's brother who survived was still living and he didn't want to come out to America. I wanted to send affidavit and money and everything, he didn't want to come. I find out later why. So I saved up enough money and my husband and I closed our business and we went away for three weeks. We went to Hungary and Israel. That's the first time we went [INAUDIBLE] into Europe.

My daughter was 15. My son was almost 13. So they were old enough to understand. On the flight into Switzerland I was fine. Once I had to change and go on the Hungarian aeroplane in Switzerland I became a little bit of a basket case. I said far and back on the airplane. I didn't want to get off the aeroplane [INAUDIBLE] in Budapest. My [INAUDIBLE] had a hard time getting me off it. I did get off it because of my children. [INAUDIBLE] that you don't show your children as much as you save them from any hurt.

I went on the bus because the aeroplane stays far out at the airport in Budapest then you bus into the terminal. Once again, I sat on the bus all the way in the back. And as the bus was coming to that terminal, although I never was at the airport in Budapest because I never flew as a child, but my uncle was there up on a balcony with his wife and I looked up there as the bus was passing and I saw my father standing there.

Now I tried to control myself because of my husband and my child-- children and my husband really didn't want to go to Hungary. He was afraid something was going to happen to me and I forced the issue. But with some crying on the bus and developing it into a terrible migrant headache I remember I did get off the bus. I had a very, very long crying reunion with my uncle. [INAUDIBLE] into the hotel in Budapest. I had two rooms reserved. One for my children and one for me. I wouldn't let those kids go out of my room for nothing. They had to sleep in my room. I wouldn't leave them out of my sight.

I remember my uncle the next day getting the chambermaid to open my room before we were awakened. Sneaking in, sitting down at the edge of the bed, and just looking down the four of us in one bed. Crying and just soothing my children's legs. What must have gone through him was just unbelievable. I hired a driver to go to the outskirts of Deutschland to show my children exactly where I lived and to go to carry the rose to the cemetery for my two grandfathers. And I was put myself into a more and more depression as I went along.

We stopped in one place called Miskolc, which is the second biggest city next to Budapest. My father used to go there a lot to buy stuff for the store and used to take me with him, and I wanted to go into a couple of stores and buy some, of all things, embroidered tablecloths. So my daughter should have in her trousseau when she gets to be a bride. We went into the certain store that my father used to go. Torture. I tortured myself. That's what I did.

I had to be a translator between two languages, and I had to make sure that my husband, who is very open-minded and likes to talk and ask questions, make sure that he doesn't ask anything or says anything against the Hungarian government. My driver I didn't trust. You know, you have to be careful. And when I came back, my son didn't want to come shopping so I stayed on the van with the driver and my aunt, and my uncle, and my daughter, and my husband. And I went.

When we came back, of course my son couldn't sit long enough, wandered off the bus with my aunt, and found the synagogue. This was the synagogue where my father went davening quite a bit. And my uncle said, well, your aunt will stay with the driver and take him for a cup of coffee because I don't want him to see that I'm Jewish that I'm taking you to synagogue. This was in '72. OK. I said, I don't care how you do it, but as long I find- my son find it and he wants to go, I have to go. This was just before his bar mitzvah.

We went into the synagogue to find a [? shammash. ?] Everything became blurry to me but my son walked into that synagogue and got on that bema and started to belt out any prayer that he remembered. He was not far from his bar mitzvah, and the [? shammash ?] and whoever was around had tears in their eyes that Judaism is still living on. It was

unreal. I had a good cry and lot of memories came flashing back to me.

We went back under, then, and drove into the town where I actually lived. First, we went to my father's hometown and went to the cemetery. And my uncle takes me to this place, there's no gravestones or nothing, and he looks up at the sun and he says, "This is where your grandfather's grave used to be." It's completely level. I couldn't argue with him. I said my kaddish, said my prayers.

Now people from the town came out from their little houses and took me for my father's sister. I looked a lot like her. She's a very good looking woman, except she had darker hair. And of course I had to tell him, "No, I am Joseph's daughter." I didn't want to have any contact with them. I felt they didn't help. They didn't try to help us when our chips were down. So I got back into the van. They were coming with a bouquet of flowers. I remember just ending it and I just couldn't be bothered.

We went into the town where I lived. First, we stopped at my public school. I couldn't go into the building for nothing. I saw the building from the front, I went into the courtyard. My children saw it. And then went on the street where I used to live. And God, what a sight.

My uncle wanted to bring out my next door neighbors who still alive. I said, don't you dare. I don't want to talk to them. I don't want to see them. I went into the courtyard because people are living there and you had pigs and everything running around there. And I went to the door, to the front door try to go inside it and something just pulled me back. I couldn't go into that room for nothing. I'm sorry. Call it whatever you want but I just did not have the strength to walk into those rooms.

I came out. I remember it was a very rainy night the night before and everything was covered with mud. It's over all our shoes and whatnot. So we stopped in the courtyard that the cows used to go. I used to pump the water and there was a basin and full of water. I washed all the mud off my children [? shoes and ?] then I got back in the car and then went to the next cemetery that my mother's family was buried. And that gravestone of my grandfather stood there as if it was waiting for me. I remember going up to it, I remember embracing it, and then I really passed out. Of course, my son-- I remember coming through. I remember them calling me and I came out of it and it was a terrible experience. You can never go back home. Never.

I got back into the car, went into the hometown where my uncle lived. Couldn't stay with him in his two-room apartment because it didn't have enough room, so he made reservations. It's a hotel now, but it used to be a nuns' convent. The nuns used to be small, little rooms with the beds are like, you know, boxes almost with a basin in a room and my son wanted to go to the bathroom at night I wouldn't let him out. I just could not leave him out of my sight. He had to relieve himself in the basin.

I remember laying on top of my husband all night long. I was just scared that they're going to bang on the door again and they're going to, you know, get everyone together and this is it. Because they take your passport away and they hold it overnight. Wherever you're go in Europe. They do it even today, but my husband wasn't used to anything like this and he just fell apart. They took our passports now they're going to put us into jail. Well, none of that happened. Going back to Budapest, my driver was driving and he got pulled over by police car, and, of course, my husband once again started in with me screaming, "I told you not to come here. Now they found us." But the reason he got pulled over, he didn't give courtesy to the cops car. There was a general in the car and he passed that instead of letting them pass.

Well, that passed and we got-- on our way back to Budapest, we stopped in the Black Mountains-- Black Forrest in a beautiful restaurant and had lunch there and then continued back. Once I got into Budapest somehow or other, the hysteria diminished a little bit. I was able to cope. My uncle stayed with me with his wife in the same hotel. We spent 10 days with him.

We went to the synagogue in Hungary, and once again, my uncle said I'm not going to go with you. Because, you know, that's when I find out why he didn't want to come. He was in charge of a Jewish organization in his region and always was a [INAUDIBLE]. And he helped a lot of Jews get out of Hungary and he didn't want to be recognized as a Jew or as a non-Jew or anything. So it was like living the life of an atheist, but that day he decided. It was Shabbos, I said I'm

going to shul and I went to the Dohany.

It was the synagogue, the biggest synagogue in Hungary, and he came with me. Going through those gardens there where you have all the graves, you know, the burial with the Hungarian Jews right there. Have you been to Hungary?

Yeah.

And they have a big wall with all the names of the people who died with the outside candle on it. It's very, very emotional and meaningful. Went into the synagogue, listened to the rabbi through the service. All the tourists are really collected from all over Hungary into this one synagogue. The whole wall was kept with all the tourists. It was very meaningful for my children and myself. And stayed in Hungary for the 10 days, then we flew back to Switzerland. And I must tell you that, if I did not go from Switzerland to [INAUDIBLE] Israel to Israel for another 12 days and regain my sanity. I think I would have come back and gone straight to [INAUDIBLE] a clinic. It left me drained emotionally and physically.

But being the type of a survivor as I am, I talked myself into a lot of things and we spent wonderful visit in Israel. Saw a lot of things, went to Yad Vashem, cried a lot, but to be amongst my fellow Jews and see that the world is still the world for them and for some of us, it helped me a great deal. And then we came back here and, of course, my lecture tour became even stronger then because then I could relate with my past completely and for the future. You have any questions?

Do you?

No.

I left you dumbfounded, huh?

Yeah.

I'm sorry.

In a nice way though. Thank you very much.

Thanks for having me. I appreciate whatever you're doing.

Thank you. It means a lot to us too.

Thank you again. Nice to be with both of you.