Mr. Gottidiener, when we reached the-- toward the end of the first tape that we were doing, you mentioned-- Alex and I suspect that we didn't get the final tabulation of what happened to all the members of the family. So very quickly I want to go over this. Your oldest brother was Leif. He survived.

He did not survive.

He did not survive, but he died of typhus in the Ukraine. His wife--

His wife and five children went to Auschwitz.

They went to Auschwitz.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

The second brother is Alex.

--is Alex. He survived. He was taken prisoner of war to--

Yes, that we have. Just that he survived, and what happened the members of his family?

His family didn't survive. And three children went to Auschwitz.

His wife and three children, Auschwitz. The next is Joseph.

Joseph. He survived in Paris and his wife and three children went to Auschwitz. Yechezkel, Gaza?

Gaza [INAUDIBLE]. His family, his two children and his wife, survived, and he didn't make it.

Eugene, Joseph.

Joseph is the one who didn't make it, and his three children, his wife didn't make it either.

They-- his --

Nobody survived.

Did he go to Auschwitz?

Went to Auschwitz.

So he, his wife, and three children, Auschwitz?

Yes.

Next one is Armin [Personal name]

Yeah. Armin survived. He wasn't married during the war. He married only after the war.

Ruchela died about 1930. Golda, Arlene?

Golda, Arlene, survived, and her two children and her husband also survived.

In fact, one of the children was born after the war.

Yeah.

Yeah. Then Moshe.

Moshe went in 1939 to Palestine. He was taking part in the War of Independence, and he survived.

Now we were at the tail end of the war where you were telling us about the, evidently, a Jew who acted the role of a German commandant or something like that to get the word to the Jews to escape.

This was the second time we'd been taken to this house. It's a district Nazi house, and this, I would say, close to a very high official's clothing. He has this in the car, deserted streets, not a soul in the street. Called beginning of January, and he just came in--

January '45.

'45. He came with a car, and he just came out into I don't know what you call this in English. He was sitting like you hit the horses. He was trying to hit the Jews. I don't want to say he's cursing the Jews. The Jews, I don't want to see them, and we were, just everybody was going in different directions.

And he was putting on an act.

Yeah. Yeah, I think as we found out later, that he must be a Jewish fellow who has stolen all this equipment, and he was just trying to save Jews. Jews' lives.

Did it work?

It did. It's apparently that it worked.

It did. So this is January. When was Budapest liberated?

Actually, Budapest was liberated-- before I give you the answer, [INAUDIBLE] I would want to tell you one more story when I was captured and taken to the sixth district of the police station. This was quite a distance from where the Swedish ghetto was. And there was taken -- also taking another Jew there, and he was in the yard. There was a police officer in the front who was a guard. He wouldn't-- nobody could get out of this situation. And--

Then you were taken there.

I was taken there, and I was taken to questioning. I showed them my--

You were together with members of your family--

No, just alone.

But you were out looking for food.

Looking for food. And I was taken there with other Jews, and I showed them this Swedish original paper signed by the Swedish ambassador, and countersigned with Wallenberg's initials. He started to curse me, says you are a Swedish, guy you are no good Jew. And he cursed me, all kind of things, and he ripped these papers apart.

He ripped them.

He ripped them apart and he have me a kick on all sides, and says, get the hell from me. And while I was standing there and talking to other fellow Jews. I ask him what's going to happen to us. He says, from here you cannot get out because

the policeman is there and watching us, and we cannot get out. From here we are going to go to the-- called [? madness ?] on the Buda side, this was [? madness. ?] Called [Place name] Hungarian, and there was the headquarters for the Gestapo. So from there, nobody is going to escape.

So I must've gotten the idea from God. I was watching what's going on there. And this was actually about noontime, and between 12:00 and 2:00 o'clock there was lunchtime. And the idea came in my head, the policeman was watching this group. Nobody can go out, but on the other hand, this was a regular police station. Anybody came into this police guard through a gate, and there was offices. The offices was-- I don't know how many floors, I'm not sure if it was three floors or five floors or whatever it was.

Everywhere you went up there what I was -- I got the idea. He said to go and the policemen wouldn't let me go through. I will just go up into the offices, and take a look what's going on there. The police didn't care about it. If I went up there, he didn't think about it. So it worked and I was-- suddenly, I had left the whole group, and I went up to the offices, and I saw written this all these ranks and all these names, and you are out for lunch.

Suddenly, since this was practically the front that actually the war was going on, the army and the police were working together. Suddenly, I saw that a Hungarian soldier. I figured myself. I'm -- I had a few pennies and I would say a few Hungarian currencies, not too much money, but very little money. I asked him-- I was pretending I am peasantry. Said tell him that I'm from the provinces and I know where is a bar, I would like to have a drink. If you would like to show me where it was.

Thinking it's better to go out together with him, with the policeman in front of me, this way I am more secure. So we went to the bar. He says, I know where the bar is. And he came out and showed me the bar, and we ordered a drink, a beer or something, and suddenly, the alarm came. The alarm came, probably the bombs, the bombers are coming from Italy the Americans or English. And he says, I'm sorry I have to have to go back and I have to run back. I said to myself, who needs it, who needs you anymore?

So then I run to the surrounding headquarters, of one of their offices and I told them what's going on. I says, we are trying to do our best we can and they know about everybody's problems and problems you're helping. But I was able to go back to my family.

You got new papers.

No, I didn't-- actually, I had copies made before this had been destroyed, and had photocopies made. Photocopies has been authorized again in the end of the year. this is the same as all the years.

In other words, what the Nazi ripped up was no loss if you could only get out of the police station?

Yeah.

Very interesting. And you know to have copies made?

I made copies and I used the copies, and then it has been legalized.

In other words, you weren't using the original.

The original had been destroyed.

That's what he destroyed. And all right, this is January '45.

This is before this, this was still the Germans were in the Hungarian Nazis were in power. This was the end of December, beginning of January, something like that.

When did the liberation actually take place?

This city. The fights are going from street to street. The whole city was near the Danube. We reached very primitive, really primitive force of the Russian army. I believe it was January 17th, if I'm not mistaken.

What happened to you then?

Then suddenly, we were still hungry. We were, figured the [INAUDIBLE] is coming with the Russian side because we were told all along that the communists, and the capitalists, and the Jews were sent back to the same unit. This was Hitler's propaganda. And as long as we hear this propaganda day and night, we little by little started to believe it. And when Russia came in, we [INAUDIBLE] on them and we figured we are all brothers. And they turned out to be [INAUDIBLE] brothers. They didn't care about us. They used to-- raping the Jewish women the same as the Gentiles, it didn't make any difference to them.

But prior to this house where I was liberated, we were in another Swedish house. And we know in this Jewish home were some kind of food left there. And we were so naive that we were under the impression these people are not going to come back. So we're taking a little food, stealing a little food, or taking a little food under the belief that the people are coming back with all the clothing and everything that they are coming back and they will need that.

So our first reaction was we were-- of course when Russian came in, they just came in like an army and opened up all the stores. There was no Jewish store or the banks, everything was just opened up and the mob went in there. And for example, the streets weren't cleaned. There was no electric supply, plus a city that was practically not destroyed, but under siege for months and months. So this was snow. The snow still hadn't been cleaned. So people are going in with their footsteps to meet some--

[INAUDIBLE]

[INAUDIBLE]. So we were going into a store. Store what we opened up, we were taking a slide, and then we went into this ministerium. We were taking a big bag about, I would say, 50 or maybe 100 pounds, between 50-100 pounds of wheat. We went into the store and we were taking a how we can make it from this wheat. How we can make a little bit of flour. Not too fine flour, whatever we could make in order then my mother took this thing said-- she was able to bake a little bread. But the bread was very rough.

And then prior before the liberation, before the Russians liberated us, we were bombing Russian troops. The Russian plane was bombing a supply house, was actually was a school. And I was the one who was a young fellow, and I'm going into the cellar, and giving out all this food was there to do to save this food for the things, but my way of thinking was, how can I take something along home? Because we, we were really hungry and there was all kinds of dried carrots and you name it. Everything was there. From food from meat and everything was there.

So it didn't work because everything was, I was hiding, it was cold, and I had a coat, was sticking out was too big of a pieces. And the gendarmes who took us there was it taking us back home because 4 o'clock, I said to them, it was dark in the cellar, was no more. And there was a bunch of leftovers. We're not thinking about anything. So when I went home, and we were liberated several days later, I said to my brother and to another Gentile fellow, let's go there. There's probably some leftovers there. And I'm the only one who was in there and I know it was there, and this was [INAUDIBLE].

This was everything was [INAUDIBLE] you couldn't get money. It was so dangerous to go on the street that we took along from luggage. The luggage on the Buda side. From one of the-- if Budapest wasn't an island, it was still Germans and Nazi occupied. When I went in this cellar into the basement, the luggage was [INAUDIBLE] cold. [INAUDIBLE] shot. A shot at them from the German side, and went through the hole through the [INAUDIBLE] and made a hole [INAUDIBLE]. So practically their life was so unsafe still there, and everything was in danger, and things that It was very dangerous to go to the street, but we were carrying so much food home, because there was so much leftover there.

Everybody there, from this food, we made it practically a base, and we were able to go to the baker and said, for 1 kilo of meat, how many kilo bread are you going to give us? So we made a deal. My mother was more observant. She was

eating only-- I was able to get butter or anything, but was close to -- we thought it was just gave us a pot of base to start up. This was a miracle, but it just happened to me that I think only God's, -- things was happening --

So this was the final days--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

--as the Germans were getting out and the Russians were coming in. After the Russians came in, how was life in Budapest?

It was stable. I mean, nothing was going. Everything was-- there was no supply, electric supply, and we got to just--

You didn't feel liberated?

I didn't feel liberated, and we were just still -- As a matter of fact, the Russians were crazy, these troops, about the [watches, watches, watches. I've seen German soldiers who had watches from here to here. All the way or their foot was filled up with watches.

Germans?

No, I'm sorry. Russians.

Russians.

And they're stealing watches. And they're coming in my brother-in-law, who was actually coming from the Munkacs area, he called himself as a Czechoslovak and the Czechoslovaks were allied to the Russians. So he put a sign up. He put up Czechoslovakian colors on his door. They didn't care. The Russians didn't care.

But we have-- the Germans are out, the Russians are in. The war is over, right?

The wait was over until the Pest side was liberated. The Buda side was still not liberated.

But it a matter of--

A matter of resource, [INAUDIBLE].

Yeah. After the war, what happened to you?

We were, we were going into the Jewish ghettos, the Jewish places, and we have seen mountains and mountains of bodies.

Of?

Bodies. Dead bodies.

Bodies.

They were dying there, you know, what to do with them during the war. Older people. You have just--

Whose bodies?

Jewish bodies.

In Budapest?

In Budapest in the ghettos.

Oh, in the ghettos.

Yeah. Bodies just piled up. And, of course, there was somebody who was starting to organize minyan. There was some kind of get together by Jews, but there was no organization as such and we were just still concerned about how are we going to get food, and food, and food. And we had to wait a number of months until the spring came because the war was going on. The war wasn't ending until May of 1945.

And what month are we in?

We are in-- in January, we are starting to liberate. And by January the 17th, and I would say, it was March or end of March when we were able to get back to the town of the Debrecen area.

So there were still four months of war?

I would say from January to the end of March-- three months, easy-- we were able to move and get back. Meantime, we were occupying another apartment there, and there wasn't the cleanest place of the world, but we had a roof over our head.

So while the war was ending, you were in the middle of chaos.

Middle of chaos.

And you did find that many Jews were dead. You said bodies and bodies in the ghetto.

Oh, tremendous amount of bodies. I don't know how we started.

But the Jews who were alive were trying to reorganize themselves.

They started, yeah, but it took them very, very long. Of course, the bridges between Buda and Pest were destroyed, and the army put up some kind of a bridge just in between. They're putting up a middle of the winter. Was a terrible time.

How did you get back to any sort of normalcy?

Then we went back to March, we went back to our hometown. We were able to survive, we got back our licenses.

To Hajdunanas?

Hajdunanas. Also, in Debrecen, we had two cellars [INAUDIBLE].

What did you find in your hometown?

Nothing. Our house was-- Russians are using it as barns. Horses they were putting up there, that kind of stuff.

What did you do?

We didn't even go back to his old house.

Who went back? Your mother?

My mother, my sister, my brother-in-law--

And the child.

And also Armin.

And Armin.

Yeah.

So a brother, a sister, a brother-in-law, yourself. That's four adults and your mother is five. What did you do in the home then.

So we heard there was a doctor's house, a Jewish doctor's house, Dr. [? Schraeder. ?] We took his house because nobody was-- the Jews people had been coming back.

Originally how many Jews were in Hajdunanas and what was the general population?

The population was about 22,000, something like that. And the Jewish about 10% or 8% Jewish.

22,000 general, and--

About--

Maybe 2,000 or so are Jews. And how many Jews came back?

Very few came back, and little by little they started to come back, and, of course, the Gentile population, they gave us also some help.

When you came back?

Yes, some but not --

How did they greet you when you came back?

There was no greeting as such, but we were able to organize to go into most of the Jewish homes. We were left open, and we were able to put together a bed and put together and sleep there. Little by little, we were able to get back our licenses from things there and we started to open up our wine business.

You went back into business.

Same business. We went back to the same business.

It worked.

Yeah.

So you were able to make a living.

Yeah, but see it didn't go like that because the war was still going on. The Russian troops were-- supply was still going on to Germany. So my mother was Slovak born. She spoke to Slovakian and the Russian language has something in common. It's a Slav language.

Did the general population speak to you about your experiences?

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

--afraid because the Jewish people took over in a way the police. Also in Debrecen they had a lot to say and they felt guilty, very guilty.

So didn't want to talk?

They spoke, but they were taking-- they stole a lot of Jewish property.

So they kept it?

Sometimes the Jewish overheard police officers had to take them by force. Take them back. And some of them we got back, and some not.

But you did-- your family did business with the general population. How was the relationship--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

We started to do business again, and we were able to go into areas. It was very hard. Today, the railroad did not operate. Nothing operated normally. Nothing was near, near normalcy, and we were there for a number of, I would say, years.

Now this is 1945. You're in Hajdunanas. How long did you stay after the war?

We were there until 1948.

You remained for three years.

Yeah.

Where did you go in 1948?

1947 we saw this communist regime, the Russian troops in the population, or the elections. weren't going good for the communist. The Communist Party took over, and they are cooperating with the German because they're Russians. They took over the police force. And the police force was everything. Police force was everything, and little by little, we saw that we are -- we are going to liquidate and get out of it. As a matter fact, as a Russian high officer told me in Yiddish, get out from here as soon as you can. Get lost.

And that's what you did.

That's what we did. In 1948.

In other words, you saw that communism was going to take over in Hungary, and you left.

We saw. Yes. Little by little--

Where did you go from Hungary?

We were able to-- as a matter of fact, I got married. Very, very--

In Hungary.

In Hungary.

In Budapest.

In Budapest in November of 1948. I met my wife in the summer of 1948, and we got engaged. we? Got married November. December we separate. We were able to forge passports because we were dreaming about we get regular passport, but it didn't work. Had to go through the black market and buy some.

And you were able to leave.

Leave through Czechoslovakia. Also, we're very, very complicated.

Where did you settle finally?

Finally, we went to Vienna, and Vienna we went-- we threw away this whole-- these forged passports. We went to the British zone. We told them we are here from Hungary. They gave us temporary stateless papers, in our own name, and we were able to get back to normalcy.

Who of the family went to Vienna? You and now your wife?

In the meantime, Alex came back in end the '47.

Yes.

From Russia.

He came with you?

He came over to Vienna. The whole family came.

Who came to Vienna? So--

Everybody came to Vienna.

Everybody was in Hajdunanas?

Yes, but everybody in Debrecen and --

How long were you in Vienna?

Vienna we were there from 1948 to 1957. We came to America.

So you were in Vienna for about nine years?

Nine years, but we went back. We went back to Vienna. We had those over [INAUDIBLE]

You went back in '57?

'57 we went back, we came to Brooklyn, in '57 we went back.

In '57 you came to Brooklyn.

Yeah.

And you went back. When did you go back to Vienna?

I was here about two months.

Two months, and the whole family went back to Vienna?

My wife and my two children went there.

m not your mother and brothers.

No.

So why did you go back to Vienna?

Because I made a nice living there and I saw the people and my family struggling there. As a matter of fact, we had to support them from Vienna to America because every business we went in, in Manhattan or everywhere, they lost the money. So finally, my brother, Alex, got involved a with to Rabbi [Personal name] because he had to-- he was living in Brooklyn. He was commuting to Cranford, I believe, and then apparently he saw the Jewish community here in Elizabeth, an orthodox community. And he liked it.

He didn't like this commuting everyday from Brooklyn to Cranford. And he got known Rabbi [Personal name] who introduced him to the [Personal name] to Markowitz and he made a partnership, and he started to-- since he had the know how, [INAUDIBLE] Markowitz and Weisberg didn't. So we had to send them from Europe some money in order to put up a certain amount of money, but the bigger part was given from Markowitz and from Weissberg. And this was the matchmaker was Rabbi [Personal name]

All right so this was about 1957 or so.

This was in '56.

'56.

But they were asking us for American money [INAUDIBLE].

You came here in '57, and you went back in '57 to Vienna.

Yeah.

How long did you remain in Vienna then?

I was partially in Vienna. Vienna and partially since I had a branch in Munich, and also in Italy, I was living mostly in Munich and sometimes in Vienna.

So what happened that you finally came to America?

Because those papers, the green paper, some call it the green card, was only good for one year to leave the country. You can be extended for another year.

What papers are you talking about?

I mean when I came to America,

In '57?

I got the green card.

Yeah.

The green card. They will say you can leave the country for one year. Within one year, you can always come back.

Well, you left for longer than a year.

Then there was another way to extend this to stay if you go to the American consulate.

Oh.

And he has a right to give you another year.

Uh-huh.

So in 1959, we came back again and we stayed here all of us for a short period of time, only a month or two. We went back again. And then we saw this going back and forth because I had to send the children. There was no Jewish schools. I was very much-- wanted my children should have Jewish education and in Vienna there was no organization as such. So we were able-- forced to send my daughter to Switzerland where there was regular Jewish schools. She was boarding there as a small child. That was normal in my book.

So finally we gave up in 1959 and 1960, 1961, we came over, and says this is not working. And we came first to Brooklyn, and then we finally we actually opened up the job here in New Jersey. And we went to the construction business.

So you came here because of the-- your brothers found or developed an opportunity, you wanted the Jewish education.

I wanted my children to go to school.

You wanted the Jewish community and the leadership of Rabbi [? Taitz. ?] You have-- tell us about your children.

Children, they're growing up people nowadays. My son who attended here Jewish education center and so did my daughter, who was older. She finished here.

They're married?

Both married.

They have children?

My daughter has four children, and my son has five. And--

What do they do, your daughter and son?

My daughter is a social worker.

Yes.

And my son-in-law is a lawyer.

Your son?

My son-in-law.

Oh, your son-in-law. All right.

Her husband. And she finished here in the [INAUDIBLE]. She wrote the first nine grader. She started to develop

[INAUDIBLE] at the high school. And my son, who went, after finishing high school, went to Baltimore in the yeshiva became a rabbi, and he's still sitting in Baltimore. And he has his own organization called [INAUDIBLE], and he is very active under [INAUDIBLE] Rabbi [Personal name] together.

What does he do in that organization?

He's-- in the organization, he's mostly-- in a way, he's trying to bring back those lost Jews, bring them back to Judaism.

I see. There are a few questions I'd like to ask you as we conclude this interview. When did you start talking about the Holocaust and with whom?

A very hard question. We try to not to scare the children or our children, and as the newspapers and the world came out with more and more, so we were able to tell. And little by little, we told the story to our children But in general, we weren't anxious to tell it. Let's put it this way.

You weren't anxious to tell your children.

I wasn't anxious to tell them about the trouble we went through in what --

Because--

Because we didn't want to scare them, and we didn't want to see that they should be scared of the-- the Jewish people are in such a big trouble. But they found out anyway, little by little.

When you spoke to the children, how did they receive it?

Apparently they know most of [INAUDIBLE], because they found out from other sources, and the were usually upset, but either they didn't want to show it completely or it's a common-- was common knowledge at the time already.

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

So affecting us in a way that-- when we were liberated, physically we were in terrible shape, and emotionally it was in a terrible shape. We had nightmares, but somehow, because you look back after so many years, it's close to 50 years now. It is just you go through these -- good providence to help us to overcome this very hard times, extremely hard times. If not his help--

So your outlook on life is that if you were saved, it was because of--

Upstairs.

Divine guidance was with you.

Divine guidance was helping us.

And how do you look at human nature that human nature could do such a thing?

Apparently the humans can be worse than the animals. And I'm afraid that this is not the end of the world. I'm afraid this is-- everybody says we are talking to somebody. I heard stories that some people were claiming that this didn't exist.

We are here. We went through this whole hell. We saw it with our own eyes. We are witnesses and why we are still here, we are talking about that it doesn't exist. Didn't exist, it didn't happen.

Now that you've begun to speak to your children and to others, what should be taught to children and to your children, to your grandchildren, and to American students about the Holocaust?

I feel it is a tremendous responsibility of the Jewish community here to let them know not only the Jews, but also the whole world, and all of the populations, regardless whether it is not only American, but all over the world what happened to the Jews. Because I think this never happened before.

So you feel more strongly about talking and teaching about the Holocaust today than you did right after the war?

I certainly do. After the war, I was busy with physically and emotional problems. Since this has been-- we have put distance, we can see it more clear.

Yeah. I understand. Has the Holocaust affected your faith and religious observance?

Provided we've been able to observe these things, also I try to eat kosher as long as I could for a number of years. And then little by little was just eating something which wasn't-- was not traif. And as soon as we had an opportunity, we went back to more normal [INAUDIBLE] in an orthodox sense. And I feel this is the only way to go, because I'm afraid of what's happening here in America with this assimilation and intermarriages. It's the only was we can save the Judaism is that we are going to keep your faith and our religion and we maintain our order. I believe, we are told all those thousand years.

So you're more convinced than ever is what you're saying that you want to see to it that it's observed and that it's given over to the younger generation.

I feel very, very strongly about it.

You were telling me before we came here about something precious to you that you held on to.

Yes, I--

Through all your difficulties. If you ask me how I did it, I couldn't answer this question, but I was able-- as you know, every Jewish man he gets Bar Mitzvah 13 years he gets what's called a [Itfellin And I was able, when I got 30 years old, I got the same tfellin in Hungary. And so I didn't anywhere to hide it. I was able to use it as much as I could and I still have it here. This is precious to me. No money in the world could buy from me.

I keep it. I was told it's in good shape. Of course, I bought myself another one since it's that old. This was in 1933. Now we have 19-- almost 1992. We are talking about 60 years, close to 60 years. Close to 60 years. So it's not the best shape, but I have it, and I bought another one since that time.

I'm sure it's going to remain in the family for many, many generations.

I hope so.

Well, thank you very much, Mr. Gottidiener for coming down this morning and sharing these experiences with us. I'm sure it's something that's going to be very important for us and I think for the members of your family too.

Thank you very much. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to tell you my side of the story.

Thank you.