

Mr. Zuckerman, did you wonder at all during the years of 1938 and 1945 where the rest of the world was in terms of their silence?

I'll be honest with you, I did not really comprehend this whole thing to think that somebody is going to come rescue us and talk for us. I could not tell you that. I really was too young. Like I told you, I was preoccupied with my studies. And that was my life. I went to 5 o'clock in the morning till 10:00 at night, and sometimes 11 o'clock at night. I was preoccupied with my studies.

And I really did not-- you know, I knew that I had an aunt in Vienna, my mother's sister. And I knew that she wasn't-- she had problems. Because we were sending her packages, food packages, from Kraków. But somehow she survived. She got to London. And she did survive the war. You know, I met her after the war.

But personally myself, I did not know that someone can come and put an end to this whole thing for us. I really did not know.

We were talking about the DP camps. How many years did you spend in the DP camp?

I spent in DP camp from 1945, May 1945 to May 1949. May 19, May 29, 1949, I came to this country.

What were you feeling during those years in the DP camp?

Well, we never talked about it. Once a year, we had a commemoration, what you called. But it wasn't-- it was very calm. It was no crying, no-- we even erected, we put a monument stone. And I think now the stone lays in Yad Vashem. In Bindermichl in that DP camp.

But we never-- it was very, very calm. I mean, we marched with placards in town, you know. Made speeches and memorial prayers, you know. The [INAUDIBLE].

But it was not emotional at the beginning. I think what it was, like I said, we were young and the hurt wasn't so great. But as you get older, it starts to hurt. As you get older it hurts. The hurt comes, you know.

Were there religious--

You start asking questions why.

Were there religious services in the DP camp?

Yes, sure. We had religious services. We had a rabbi there. We had a chaplain. Unfortunately, he got killed in a car accident. So we had another one. Then we had our Orthodox rabbi, who was, matter of fact, in this country, he married everybody off in camp, in the DP camp. He's now in Borough Park.

And we see him, we see him there. Support him, we see him. We erected a shul for him, a little shtiebel. So a very nice man. A very nice man. He understood the people, you know. Because I think he himself was a victim of the Holocaust. So he understood that we weren't observant as we should be. And he didn't pay too much attention to that, you know.

During the years of the DP camp, did the Allied officials question you about what had happened under German occupation?

No. I think we made-- we gave a little history when we applied for citizenship. And that was all. That was all. We never-- I was never questioned. You know, we had Wiesenthal was in our camp, you know, [INAUDIBLE]. And we had all kind of-- but really, like I said, the memorials and the anniversaries were very low key. We really didn't pay too much attention in the camps for it.

How did you happen to come to the United States? Like I say, I applied when they registered us. When they registered us, when they had the registration for the United States, I registered, just like everyone else did.

And my wife's mother, who has since gone, had three sisters here in the United States. And they helped out, too. You know, I think they sent affidavits. But we really came to the HIAS, help of the HIAS here.

So HIAS did, in fact.

Yeah, HIAS did the whole work to bring the Jews here.

Did you have any thoughts of going to Palestine at the time?

No, not really. Not really. I wanted to go, because you know, like, my wife's family was here. And you look for family in a way. So we came here.

And you came directly to New Jersey.

I came directly to New Jersey. Because we came to my wife's mother's sister and aunt, who lives in Passaic. She still lives in Passaic. We came to her house for a few days. And then we got an apartment in Newark. And we moved to our own apartment with her mother and father. A doctor.

And what occupation did you enter into when you came?

Well, in the beginning, I worked in a factory for a while, in a cloak factory. And then you know, we in the beginning, when we came here, we kept in close touch with the people from camp, from the DP camp. So the friends, you know, we used to come there. They used to come to us. And everyone was looking, searching for a way to make a living.

And somehow, one came up with the idea that we should go into the construction business. And we didn't know much about it. But there were a lot of people who helped us. Because we had the language barrier. And the reading and writing in English was a little hard. But how do you say, we--

Persevered?

Persevere, right. We persevered. And thank god, we became very successful. The first thing we did is when we went into the business of the building business, when we got these subdivisions to build streets and houses. We remembered Schindler. Even though we didn't know where he was. We met him after the war. He was in [INAUDIBLE] a couple of times. But then sort of we lost contact. We didn't know where he was.

So the first thing we did, we named streets after him. And we did that in many, many towns. Today, I think about, I would say, a dozen streets are named in New Jersey after Schindler. And later on, he came here in 1957 for the first time. We met him. And we took him to the streets to show him. And he was like a little baby when he saw his names on the streets. And he was very, very grateful.

He was a man who devoted his life, really, to humanity. He was not interested in business or in money. He always used to come here. And he used to count his children. He said these are my children, nice children. Because what he did to us, you know, what he did, he saved us. That gave him the chance to give us a chance to have a family. And he called it [GERMAN], you know. Was a very humble man. And too bad that he died that young.

We also did arrange for him to have-- we did arrange to have a scholarship in Schindler's name at Hebrew University. Because he was very, very involved with Hebrew University. He loved Israel. He used to come there half-- six months out of the year, he used to be in Israel. So we did that for him. And we're very, very proud of it that we did it. And me and my associates, we worked on it. And it's going on today.

Speak to it.

Yeah.

How did the experience of the Holocaust affect your view of America? When you came to America.

When we came to America, I tell you. We were, like I say, we were busy. You know, I came here with my daughter. My daughter was born in the DP camp. So she was six weeks old when we came. In the beginning, we were, like I say-- we did not-- one thing we were, we're very proud people. We did not ask for charity.

The way of life that, in Europe, the way we had it was you should do everything on your own. You shouldn't be dependent on other people. That was the way we were raised, you know. You have to do it yourself, whether through education or through any other way. But you have to do it yourself.

So we came here, we were poor. But it didn't bother us. Like I said, we were very happy. Whatever I make, we lived on, and it was fine. And somehow, God helped us. Thank god we became successful. Only through hard work. But became successful. So we didn't talk about this whole thing. We never spoke.

We couldn't talk to our children, first of all. They were young. We were preoccupied with making a living. So we never, somehow, spoke about the past. Until really, when the children got older. And really could begin to understand, wanted to know. We started to talk to them. But not in a grand lead. You know, in bits and pieces, in bits and pieces.

Today, you know, like I said, the hurt is much greater now than it was when we were young. Maybe because you put your mind to tort a little bit more, you know? So we told the kids, or tried to tell them. They're creating a lot of organizations to talk about it. to give it to the second, tell it to the second generation.

Because it's something that must be told, it must be remembered. Because it happened in our lifetime. It did not happen 2000 years ago, that you read something. So you have to devote your life, really, and say, this is our first priority. Is that something like that should never happen. Not only to the Jews, to anybody. That one person can get up and everybody would thought he was a prankster. And he could develop into such a tragedy.

So I hope, you know, we live in a free country. And that people will cherish their freedom and just watch out for some guy, or woman, or man, or woman, whoever gets up there and is preaching bigotry or whatever. They should be stopped. They should be right then and there. They shouldn't be allowed to continue. Stopped in every way, which way.

And of course, we have an Israel. So that we have somebody to watch over us in a way, you know.

So you would then say that that was essentially the lesson of the Holocaust to be carried over?

Oh, absolutely, to be carried over. And that's what's happening now, that people are finally talking, finally saying something. You know, before, like I say, we could not talk. And it came sometimes we have a [INAUDIBLE]. We always get in on the subject of what happened to us. But somehow, we talk for a few minutes, I say, let's get off the subject.

And today, it's always going to be with us. Because it's like I said before, because of that mystery that's in our mind, that nobody knows where their loved ones are, what happened. How did it happen? Maybe they're somewhere. It's this mystery that keeps talking. You keep talking about it, talking and talking.

And everyone has their own story. And it's a story without an end. It's things that happened that the human mind is absolutely unable to understand. The way people got killed, the way people got murdered, the way people got saved, you know.

I assume you went to the recent meeting in Washington of the Holocaust Memorial.

Yes, yes, I went to the Washington meeting, which was very, very beautiful. Because we got together, you know.

Although it's not family, but we feel sort of this is your family. This is you.

Did you find people there that you had not seen?

Yeah, I found a couple of people that I didn't see since the DP camp. From the camp, I found a couple of people. But it was very, very, very interesting, and very, very good experience. Like I say, we got it together, you know.

The next gathering is going to be in Sweden?

That's what they say, in Denmark.

Denmark.

That's what they say, yeah. That's what they say. But it's not going to be any more emotional gathering. It's going to be a happy gathering. That's what they want to do. I guess they want to honor the people in Denmark, what they did for the Jews in the Hitler era.

You mentioned before to me during a private conversation that you were planning to go back to Poland.

Yes. What I want to do, I really-- I'm going back, because my wife was hiding by Polish people for over two years. And they were-- by a widow, who her husband built a double wall in the barn. They were supposed to go in there originally for a few days.

I guess my father had a vision not to go to the plaza when they called him. So he went to this woman instead. Because they used to have a grocery store. And they used to come in there to buy. So he went there and he says, can you keep us for a few days? And from the few days became over two years.

So supposedly there, he built a double wall in the barn. And they were sitting on the attic. You know, during when it was OK. But when they saw something not OK, they had to slide down the wall. And I am taking my son, because I really want to show him that.

You know, I want to show him where his mother was hiding. And she wants to see it, too, again. And I want to show him where I was born, what Kraków was before the war. I think it's important.

Sure. Have you had any contact with this?

Oh, yeah, yeah, sure. As a matter of fact, she got awarded a medal in Yad Vashem. And they put the tree up for the righteous [? Ali ?] for her mother. For what she did. I took care of that.

When you came to New Jersey, you were well received by the Jewish community in New Jersey?

Oh, yeah, sure, oh, sure, yeah. Like I say, we were already back to civilization. So I went to daven to the shul. And it was nice.

Was there like a culture shock, so to speak, when you came to the United States?

Oh, yeah, it was a very big shock. The first few weeks, I wasn't myself. I was really in shock. Because I came from a little nothing, you know, to this tremendous metropolis that I haven't seen all my life. I mean, I saw Kraków.

But what I know from Kraków is like I told you. I got up in the morning, went from my house to the shtiebel from the shtiebel I went to the town [? turner. ?] From the town [? turner, ?] I went home. That was my whole going on in Kraków, you know. So when I came here, it was a shock. It took a while for me to get into the groove, what you call.

Any other thoughts you'd like to share about?

Like I said, we raised a family. Thank god, I had two daughters. They're both married. And I have a son, who is not married yet. My one daughter, her name is-- husband's name is Sklar. Her husband works for the firm, in the firm. He's an associate.

And my other daughter, Ruth. My first daughter's name is Ann, Ann Sklar. My other daughter's Ruth, Ruth Katz. Her husband is an attorney. And he works also for the firm. He's an associate in the firm. And my son is also associated with the business.

And thank god we run a pretty nice life. The one daughter has two children, a boy and a girl, Ann. My Ruth and Stephen Katz have also two children, two girls. And we're very happy, very grateful that we could both have a family.

OK. I want to thank you very much--

You're welcome.

--for spending the time today and talking.

All right, thank you.

And we appreciate it very much. And your contribution is--

Thank you very much.

--of the utmost importance.

Very much. I hope it's--

Thank you.

Thank you.