

You had been telling us when we stopped the tape that the war had ended. You went back to Poland. You did not discover any--

Survivors.

Survivors. You and your friend--

Jerry.

Jerry. And you wanted to go to Czechoslovakia. Why did you want to go to Czechoslovakia?

Well, actually we wanted to go to Palestine at that time, Israel.

And you came to Czechoslovakia, which was in the Russian zone.

Yes, it was.

And what happened to your decision about going to Palestine then?

I had met a friend of mine who I worked during the war with in the ghetto, and he mentioned to us a young boy's transport going to England, and the opportunities in England for further educations are excellent. We decided at that point to go to England because there was a war that was in Palestine, and we did not even know that we can go to Palestine because it was all illegal to go from the city where we were going-- to Pilsen-- from Pilsen to Israel. So we decided to go to England.

So it was your desire for education. Right. Right.

You made the decision to go to England.

Right, right.

And you did get the education?

We did get the education.

You were in England during what years?

'45 to '52.

I assume that you had completed your education.

I went to high school. I attended college for two years. I became an accountant. I had an opportunity for very nice positions in the English community of London. I was offered positions. The people, the organization that took care of us or helped us to come out of the rot was extremely helpful to--

What organization was that?

That's Bloomsbury High -- Jewish Refugee Committee I believe of Bloomsbury house.

They helped you?

Tremendously. They had tremendous people who helped us in every single respect. In any direction you wanted, you could go, if you had the ability. You had your test-taking. if you qualified to go to school, they sent you to school.

Among the group of 300 boys and girls-- I am talking only about our group, which was the first group-- a number of these young men and women became professional people in England still today-- doctors, lawyers, dentists, veterinarians, professors in colleges and accountants and businessmen.

Right. And with all that support and encouragement--

From the Jewish Re--

You decided to come to the United States.

For one reason only. There's still a longing to be with the family.

And you knew there was family here? Which family was here?

That was my aunt and uncle, which was my mother's sister.

The ones who had been in Portugal from Germany and then came to New York.

Right, right.

And you located each other during those years?

Well, until about 1940-- let me just give you a little bit of background how I knew it. Until about 1940 or so on, we were receiving some packages from Germany, from my aunt and uncle, into the Å Æ³dÅ° ghetto, '40, '41. That's right.

That's amazing.

That's right. There was a state of war between Germany and Poland.

That's correct.

And they sent packages?

Right. Well, Poland was already invaded.

Oh, the war was over?

Over. And subsequent to that, we have learned that they're having affidavits to go to America. I also knew that one of my cousins in 1938 went out with a Kindertransport to England and Canada. I had sent out a letter to a friend, my friend's uncle in the States, and asked him to check if there is a family by that and that name.

And sure enough, within five days, I had a letter coming to England that yes, we are in New York City, and one of my cousins is in Canada, the one that left with the Kindertransport. And from then on, they very much insisted that I do come to the States.

That was an amazingly quick development.

Yes, and I was meditating, because I went to school in England. Anyway, I was very happy in England, but I was all by myself. And I guess I was young, and I thought I wanted to see and be with my family. And eventually, in end of 1951, December '51, I decided to come to the States, and I have stayed with them, with my family.

They were in New York.

In New York City, right.

And you came here about-- what was the date?

January, '52.

January, '52, you arrived.

That's right.

In October '52, I was in the Armed Forces of the United States in Korea.

Well, that was quick.

That sure was. I was drafted.

Yeah. And you married here?

I married after my return from the Armed Forces.

When did you marry?

1955.

And your family consists of?

One daughter and two grandchildren.

One daughter and two grandchildren. Where do they live?

They live in Westchester.

And you live in Verona?

In [INAUDIBLE].

When did you move to Verona? What brought you to New Jersey?

Another story. When I got married, I was working as an accountant, Chartered Accounting, which is an English company. During an audit, auditing as an accountant, I was offered a position with a leather company in New York City. Subsequent to that, within six months, the company went bankrupt and there was a buyer from Oklahoma.

And they offered me a position to go to Oklahoma with the company as the general manager and office manager, and I went. And my daughter was born in Oklahoma. And I spent 12 years, '55 to '67, in Oklahoma, in a very small town without any Jewish environment. The closest Jewish environment was Wichita Falls, Texas.

What time in Oklahoma were you in?

Frederick, Oklahoma, 4,000 people. It was a difficult way to start a life, but we got accustomed to it and we liked it. But as my daughter was growing up, though I am traditionally not a religious man, I wanted my daughter to know that she's Jewish. If we would have stayed there, I don't think she would know that she's Jewish. I think there would be definitely-- not that I am that much against intermarriage if you find the right person, but I still wanted her to marry or to mix and be amongst Jewish people.

I have felt it is proper and right, and we have moved back to the East Coast, to New Jersey. And my daughter attended a

Hebrew school. She knows how to read.

Which school?

In Elizabeth, the Jewish Girls' Yeshiva.

The Jewish Educational Center right here in Elizabeth.

Right. My daughter can read Hebrew. My daughter can pray. I think she's doing better than I am. I know she is doing better than I am. She has never imposed on us any religious restrictions though was she was going to the yeshiva. She was influenced, though, I feel.

Influenced for life?

Yes. And today, she's got two children. She's got a very nice, traditional Jewish home. The children, my grandson is 5 and 1/2. He knows what it is to be a Jew. He goes to a Jewish synagogue, any services we attend. My granddaughter will be starting Jewish education. We are very aware of being Jewish, though we are not strictly, daily religious.

But we do what we do know, and we do bring up this to my daughter, which I am very, very proud of my daughter and my son-in-law, that young people today, they're away from Jewish environment, I guess under some of my influence, though again, I'm saying I'm not religious.

But I feel that you don't have to be religious to be a good Jew. Doesn't have to be religious, but if you are not, you are not. But still, you know that you are Jewish and you want to have your children, grandchildren, to know that they are Jewish and be proud of it.

Did you have that feeling about being Jewish in Lodz when you were growing up?

Don't know. I couldn't tell you.

It could be that you have a stronger such feeling as a result of your experiences.

I am inclined to agree with you on that point. I have carried a certain feeling about my mother and father, that they did not teach me Hebrew. I do not know how to read a book of religion. I read it in English. I don't understand Hebrew. I felt bad about it, and as a matter of fact, several years ago, I had an interview in London with the Christian Science Monitor.

And I said to them, no matter what I have missed in my life, I was trying and I am going to give it to my daughter. And then I think possibly one of the reasons that I have sent her to the yeshiva, yes, I blame in a way, at times, my parents, thought they did not give me a Jewish education, the knowledge of Hebrew.

I cannot read today Hebrew. I do know the alphabet. I picked it up myself after the war. I feel bad about it. I find however, today, that I enjoy reading in English. I go to the synagogue on the high holidays. We do not visit as a tradition. Generally speaking, I don't go throughout the year. Once in awhile, I may go because my wife is urging me to say the mourner's Kaddish.

So I do go. She has lost her parent. I will go to the synagogue when my brother-in-law is an officiating rabbi. But otherwise, I don't. But I am conscious of not having the knowledge of the Hebrew language and the Hebrew prayer. But I compensate in English.

Yeah. How has the Holocaust affected your outlook on life and your understanding of human nature? Part of your outlook on life, you've been talking about. What had it told you about human nature? Have you learned anything, you think, along those lines?

I'll give you my opinion. Men are bad. Human beings are bad, generally speaking. And I guess I say this because of what I went through. I think people are selfish. People are greedy. People are intolerant to other people. I feel that way. I expressed my opinion in that way, and I think we in this world are suffering, not only as Jews but many, many other nationalities.

I think money is the root of all evil. I think the preaching of religion is not helpful. I can use stronger words. By segregating one religion from another, I think it costs us a tremendous amount of animosity between people, religion. I do believe in God. There was a period of time I did not believe in God.

And you weren't taught to believe in God.

Not only that, I have interpreted it in a different way. I have said to myself, if there is God and he saw what has happened during the years of 1939 to '45-- and I'm not talking anymore about the adults, but I am talking about the innocent children, infants, how they were slaughtered, how they were killed for no reason whatsoever. And if there is a God, then why didn't he stop it? It took me a long time.

How did you answer it?

How did I answer it? I guess you get all that, and you have to have a certain recourse to something. You have to have some hope, and you go back to God. I'm going to relate to you one example. I was in Korea for two years, of which I was several months on the frontline, in the fire direction center.

They were bombing-- they were artillery-- at which point I did not believe in God, but I had to jump into a bunker to protect myself. And I said to myself at that point, oh God, please help me. So there is something about it. That's how, I guess, as soon as you grow older and as you grow up and as you have children and grandchildren, you want them to know there is something above and beyond us, and that's how it all came about.

Very interesting. In your opinion, what should be taught to young children about the Holocaust?

Children should be taught how to tolerate other people, how to live with other people. I think they ought to know what has happened during the Holocaust. I think they ought to know that the Jews as a nation were victimized because they are Jews.

And because of that, with the state of Israel in existence today, I guess that's part of the end result of the Holocaust, that we do have a state, that Jews are proud to have a state, and it's something to go back to. But I think primarily, we have got to be able to tolerate, accept people as they are, which is extremely difficult because generally speaking, I think people are bad.

I don't say majority of people, but people are bad. A lot of them are inhuman. They have no respect for other human fellow beings, none. And you have to teach your children to be proud of what they are, not to hide their religion, not to be proud of what they are and bring them up in a way, but at the same time, to be able to accept other thoughts, other ideas in order to be able to live together as human beings in harmony.

I think that we cannot go and we cannot permit to happen what has happened in the years of 1939 to 1945. I don't think we have a real problem with that, not that that doesn't mean it may not happen again when you look at the world today. But I think we have to teach our young people, our youngsters, to know what the world is all about.

Finally, when did you start speaking about the Holocaust, and to whom?

Not too long ago, I started speaking about the Holocaust. I don't know whether it's five years, maybe longer. As a matter of fact, my daughter who is married with two grandchildren, 33 years old, knows very little about my past.

But she'll see this tape.

My wife doesn't know much about my past. She knows about the camps, that I was in camps, but she does not have the details as I mentioned here. I'm more active now than I was. I know when I mentioned it, I do feel what I said just a little while back, my grandchildren and my outlook to life-- we have got to be proud of what we are. We have got to tell people what has happened. We have got to try to prevent what has happened.

And I think we can only prevent by talking, to some extent, to the people, to explain to them what has happened, that it should not happen to anybody else, not only to Jews. It does not have to refer to Jews. Things are happening today in Yugoslavia. Things are happening in Somalia.

Things are happening, possibly will be happening-- I hope I am wrong-- in Russia, if Russia falls apart. It's happening today with anti-Semitism in Russia already. It happens in the Arab world today, that fall. In my opinion, for little reason, the Jewish people of Israel, of the world, are being looked down upon and oppressed and suppressed for, in my opinion-- maybe I'm a little biased about it-- but there's no reason for them to demand and treat and talk the way they do about the Jewish people, which most of them are survivors of horrors.

You said you started speaking five years ago. What happened that you started speaking?

I'll say it plain and straight. Straight I guess I grew up.

That's a fascinating answer. And why didn't you speak until five years ago?

I'll give you just a thought. Maybe I wanted to hide it. Maybe I didn't want anybody to know about it. Maybe I wanted to be part of every other human being in the United States. I did not want to be maybe recognized as a survivor. Very right. If you want my example, [INAUDIBLE] what I have just said. And that's a fact of life.

In 1967, I came back from Oklahoma to New York City. I got a position with a very nice company, spent 20 years. The man that was in charge of this company--

1967 back to New Jersey?

Yeah, from Oklahoma.

You mean to the New York area.

Yeah. I got the new position with this company. The man that was in charge of the company was a Jew from Berlin who was also a survivor. I was his assistant. He was much older than I was. He always talked about his life during the War, though he had three children. We became very, very close.

Amazingly enough, and he was talking-- I have never discussed with him my past. He only knew that I was born in Poland, that I came from England. I have never told him that I was in any camps. And he was always-- many survivors do, by the way. They talk about the past. He was talking on any conversation, you know what happened here, I was here and I was there.

And I used to say to him, you know, I know, I know. And I know. I think it took him about close to one year to come to me and say, Paul, how is it that you always say, I know. Well, I said to him, Harmon, now that we are closer to each other, I went through the same thing that you did, but that just stays between you and me.

I did not disclose my background, what has happened to me, to many people. Whether it was right, I don't know. I can only say that much. Five, six years ago, I guess I have grown up.

Well, we're fortunate indeed that you changed your way and are talking about it. And I think that this was a very important recording session for us. Your story is important, and many of the things you said are very important, I think, to your family and to all of us.

Probably, yes.

So thank you very much and good luck to you.

OK. Thank you.