

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:25,470

2

00:00:25,470 --> 00:00:28,320

My name is Dr. Sidney  
Langer, and I'm

3

00:00:28,320 --> 00:00:31,800

the director of the Oral  
History Project of the Holocaust

4

00:00:31,800 --> 00:00:35,580

Studies Resource Center at  
Kean College of New Jersey.

5

00:00:35,580 --> 00:00:39,030

I'm very pleased that  
Dr. Susan Lederman, who

6

00:00:39,030 --> 00:00:41,880

is an associate professor  
of political science

7

00:00:41,880 --> 00:00:45,540

here at Kean College, has  
consented to come and talk

8

00:00:45,540 --> 00:00:48,630

to me today about some  
of her experiences

9

00:00:48,630 --> 00:00:51,675

and insight into the  
period of the Holocaust.

10

00:00:51,675 --> 00:00:54,070

Dr. Lederman, thank you  
very much for coming.

11

00:00:54,070 --> 00:00:55,617

Thank you, Sidney,  
for asking me.

12  
00:00:55,617 --> 00:00:56,450  
[INTERPOSING VOICES]

13  
00:00:56,450 --> 00:00:57,585  
I was the pushy one.

14  
00:00:57,585 --> 00:01:00,710  
[LAUGHS] No, not at all.

15  
00:01:00,710 --> 00:01:02,640  
Can you tell me a  
little bit about when

16  
00:01:02,640 --> 00:01:06,090  
you were born, what town you  
were born in, the country?

17  
00:01:06,090 --> 00:01:06,690  
OK.

18  
00:01:06,690 --> 00:01:07,680  
Well, all the details--

19  
00:01:07,680 --> 00:01:14,430  
I was born in May 1937, and  
in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia.

20  
00:01:14,430 --> 00:01:17,700  
Bratislava was the  
capital city of Slovakia,

21  
00:01:17,700 --> 00:01:20,760  
which is the eastern  
province of Czechoslovakia;

22  
00:01:20,760 --> 00:01:27,410  
and my family, as many  
Jewish families in that town,

23  
00:01:27,410 --> 00:01:29,880  
was quite a

cosmopolitan family--

24

00:01:29,880 --> 00:01:32,400  
three languages spoken at home.

25

00:01:32,400 --> 00:01:36,240  
My mother tongue is German  
because I had a German nurse,

26

00:01:36,240 --> 00:01:38,280  
and German nurses  
were considered

27

00:01:38,280 --> 00:01:41,310  
to be the best because they  
were most concerned with baby

28

00:01:41,310 --> 00:01:44,140  
hygiene and all those  
important things.

29

00:01:44,140 --> 00:01:46,410  
So German is my mother tongue.

30

00:01:46,410 --> 00:01:49,980  
Hungarian and Slovak  
was also spoken at home.

31

00:01:49,980 --> 00:01:54,660  
As well as, at times,  
English and French.

32

00:01:54,660 --> 00:01:56,180  
Were you an only child?

33

00:01:56,180 --> 00:01:56,680  
Yes.

34

00:01:56,680 --> 00:01:58,832  
I was the only child.

35

00:01:58,832 --> 00:02:00,540

I don't know whether  
that was necessarily

36  
00:02:00,540 --> 00:02:02,220  
what my parents had  
originally intended,

37  
00:02:02,220 --> 00:02:04,410  
but the Holocaust  
I think pretty well

38  
00:02:04,410 --> 00:02:08,220  
curtailed the number of  
children that many families

39  
00:02:08,220 --> 00:02:10,025  
of my parents' generation had.

40  
00:02:10,025 --> 00:02:11,400  
Yes, you had  
mentioned that to me

41  
00:02:11,400 --> 00:02:13,830  
before in private conversation.

42  
00:02:13,830 --> 00:02:17,280  
What was the relationship  
between the fertility rate,

43  
00:02:17,280 --> 00:02:19,080  
the number of children,  
and the stresses

44  
00:02:19,080 --> 00:02:20,505  
associated with the period?

45  
00:02:20,505 --> 00:02:22,650  
I think-- clearly that's  
just my perception,

46  
00:02:22,650 --> 00:02:24,660  
and I don't have any  
scientific evidence

47  
00:02:24,660 --> 00:02:28,110  
to this-- but from  
my own experience,

48  
00:02:28,110 --> 00:02:31,590  
families who were my  
parents' contemporaries

49  
00:02:31,590 --> 00:02:36,120  
seem to, if they had their first  
child around the late '30s,

50  
00:02:36,120 --> 00:02:39,930  
have no further children because  
shortly after I was born,

51  
00:02:39,930 --> 00:02:42,720  
tensions in Europe  
increased considerably,

52  
00:02:42,720 --> 00:02:46,230  
and life became more  
precarious, and I

53  
00:02:46,230 --> 00:02:49,230  
think people chose not to  
bring children into that world,

54  
00:02:49,230 --> 00:02:51,500  
if they had any choice at all.

55  
00:02:51,500 --> 00:02:54,070  
What was your  
father's occupation?

56  
00:02:54,070 --> 00:02:57,240  
My father owned a printing  
shop, a printing plant.

57  
00:02:57,240 --> 00:02:59,430  
It was a fairly  
substantial printing plant,

58  
00:02:59,430 --> 00:03:01,990  
and shortly prior to the  
time that I was born,

59  
00:03:01,990 --> 00:03:04,680  
he bought out a partner.

60  
00:03:04,680 --> 00:03:09,210  
It printed textbooks  
and sheet music,

61  
00:03:09,210 --> 00:03:13,170  
as well as more ordinary  
business kind of printing,

62  
00:03:13,170 --> 00:03:15,660  
and I think it was doing  
financially quite well

63  
00:03:15,660 --> 00:03:17,310  
at the time that I was born.

64  
00:03:17,310 --> 00:03:21,630  
My mother worked part time as  
his bookkeeper, and in terms

65  
00:03:21,630 --> 00:03:22,680  
of--

66  
00:03:22,680 --> 00:03:26,730  
both my parents' background  
was farming, actually.

67  
00:03:26,730 --> 00:03:32,610  
My grandfather on my mother's  
side owned large landholdings.

68  
00:03:32,610 --> 00:03:33,840  
Really, gentleman farmer.

69  
00:03:33,840 --> 00:03:36,360

I remember that he had  
a car with a chauffeur,

70  
00:03:36,360 --> 00:03:39,210  
drove around the farm,  
and the center of the farm

71  
00:03:39,210 --> 00:03:41,840  
was I think a 12th  
century monastery.

72  
00:03:41,840 --> 00:03:45,490  
It was quite an electrified  
farm, even back in those days.

73  
00:03:45,490 --> 00:03:49,020  
He had electric milking  
machines and that sort of thing.

74  
00:03:49,020 --> 00:03:52,440  
My father's farm, my  
father's father's farm,

75  
00:03:52,440 --> 00:03:55,800  
was rural Eastern  
Slovakia, and it

76  
00:03:55,800 --> 00:04:01,860  
was less prosperous and  
less modern, but still

77  
00:04:01,860 --> 00:04:05,190  
a pretty good operation.

78  
00:04:05,190 --> 00:04:07,950  
Can you recall anything  
about the economic situation

79  
00:04:07,950 --> 00:04:10,410  
of the Jewish community,  
what you know?

80  
00:04:10,410 --> 00:04:12,270

I don't know the general  
Jewish community.

81  
00:04:12,270 --> 00:04:14,190  
I can really-- obviously  
I was very young,

82  
00:04:14,190 --> 00:04:18,510  
so my memories of the early  
possibly quasi-normal days

83  
00:04:18,510 --> 00:04:23,010  
are only memories of  
my family's, and there

84  
00:04:23,010 --> 00:04:26,550  
tended to be comfortable  
households in terms

85  
00:04:26,550 --> 00:04:30,960  
of the surroundings,  
and plentiful food,

86  
00:04:30,960 --> 00:04:36,390  
and help, that sort of thing.

87  
00:04:36,390 --> 00:04:39,000  
I'm talking now about the  
late '30s, which would be

88  
00:04:39,000 --> 00:04:41,790  
my earliest memories;  
and early '40s where,

89  
00:04:41,790 --> 00:04:44,220  
although there was political  
tension in terms of sort

90  
00:04:44,220 --> 00:04:47,000  
of comfort of life--

91  
00:04:47,000 --> 00:04:49,500  
food, clothing, that sort of



thing-- those things were still

92  
00:04:49,500 --> 00:04:51,090  
available.

93  
00:04:51,090 --> 00:04:56,160  
Do you recall the Jewish  
population in the town

94  
00:04:56,160 --> 00:04:57,963  
that you lived in?

95  
00:04:57,963 --> 00:04:59,130  
Only what I read afterwards.

96  
00:04:59,130 --> 00:05:01,210  
I don't have any memory of it.

97  
00:05:01,210 --> 00:05:02,370  
I know that there was--

98  
00:05:02,370 --> 00:05:08,340  
this is an old Jewish community  
with considerable culture

99  
00:05:08,340 --> 00:05:09,610  
and education.

100  
00:05:09,610 --> 00:05:12,720  
I know, again  
because of hearsay,

101  
00:05:12,720 --> 00:05:16,210  
that my parents had a good,  
solid Jewish education.

102  
00:05:16,210 --> 00:05:18,270  
However, the Jewish  
community was fairly well

103  
00:05:18,270 --> 00:05:19,940  
integrated into the community.

104  
00:05:19,940 --> 00:05:24,900  
My father attended  
university in Bratislava.

105  
00:05:24,900 --> 00:05:27,740  
My grandfather had attended  
a yeshiva in Germany,

106  
00:05:27,740 --> 00:05:31,620  
but I would consider  
it a modern orthodoxy.

107  
00:05:31,620 --> 00:05:34,800  
Although my family  
was observant in terms

108  
00:05:34,800 --> 00:05:39,630  
of observing the laws  
of kashrut and Sabbath,

109  
00:05:39,630 --> 00:05:41,910  
in terms of dress  
and integration,

110  
00:05:41,910 --> 00:05:45,660  
it would be sort of the  
modern German orthodoxy.

111  
00:05:45,660 --> 00:05:49,410  
My father participated in the  
social and political movements

112  
00:05:49,410 --> 00:05:54,430  
of his youth in terms of making,  
forging a new Czechoslovakia;

113  
00:05:54,430 --> 00:05:59,070  
and my mother went  
to school in Germany,

114  
00:05:59,070 --> 00:06:01,410  
some sort of finishing

school, and then

115

00:06:01,410 --> 00:06:03,300

did some courses in  
France because that

116

00:06:03,300 --> 00:06:06,360

was the fashionable thing to  
do, and play tennis in Baden

117

00:06:06,360 --> 00:06:07,650

Baden with the King of Sweden.

118

00:06:07,650 --> 00:06:10,200

She was an excellent  
tennis player.

119

00:06:10,200 --> 00:06:11,200

With the king of Sweden?

120

00:06:11,200 --> 00:06:12,648

Yes.

121

00:06:12,648 --> 00:06:13,867

Who won?

122

00:06:13,867 --> 00:06:14,700

She was his partner.

123

00:06:14,700 --> 00:06:15,908

[LAUGHS] She was his partner?

124

00:06:15,908 --> 00:06:16,740

I suppose they won.

125

00:06:16,740 --> 00:06:18,540

I would think the  
royalty always wins now.

126

00:06:18,540 --> 00:06:19,800

Of course.

127

00:06:19,800 --> 00:06:21,165

How large was the town itself?

128

00:06:21,165 --> 00:06:22,213

Do you have any idea  
of the population?

129

00:06:22,213 --> 00:06:22,920

Bratislava?

130

00:06:22,920 --> 00:06:24,670

My goodness.

131

00:06:24,670 --> 00:06:27,030

I think about 100,000,  
but I might be way off.

132

00:06:27,030 --> 00:06:30,580

I haven't looked at  
this for a long time.

133

00:06:30,580 --> 00:06:33,450

Do you have any recollections of  
the nature of the relationship

134

00:06:33,450 --> 00:06:35,490

that existed between  
the Jewish community

135

00:06:35,490 --> 00:06:38,050

and the non-Jewish  
community in your town

136

00:06:38,050 --> 00:06:39,690

as you were growing up?

137

00:06:39,690 --> 00:06:41,490

Only, again, individual cases--

138

00:06:41,490 --> 00:06:43,860

and that I survived  
obviously depended

139  
00:06:43,860 --> 00:06:48,540  
on many courageous acts on  
part of the Gentile community.

140  
00:06:48,540 --> 00:06:51,360  
I could not have survived  
without that kind of help,

141  
00:06:51,360 --> 00:06:54,630  
and that help came  
partly because my father

142  
00:06:54,630 --> 00:06:57,420  
had good friends  
who were not Jewish.

143  
00:06:57,420 --> 00:07:00,840  
And much of that help  
dealt with information,

144  
00:07:00,840 --> 00:07:07,230  
forging papers as well as actual  
help in finding safe houses

145  
00:07:07,230 --> 00:07:08,910  
and surviving.

146  
00:07:08,910 --> 00:07:10,860  
You say that your  
father had been

147  
00:07:10,860 --> 00:07:13,770  
involved in a number of  
secular organizations.

148  
00:07:13,770 --> 00:07:15,850  
Was he involved in any  
Jewish organizations?

149  
00:07:15,850 --> 00:07:16,350  
Yes.

150

00:07:16,350 --> 00:07:19,710

My father had been active in  
B'nai Brith, as far as I know,

151

00:07:19,710 --> 00:07:22,890

way back, and I don't know what  
other Jewish organizations,

152

00:07:22,890 --> 00:07:27,630

but I'm sure synagogue.

153

00:07:27,630 --> 00:07:29,550

But again, I don't have  
any memory of that.

154

00:07:29,550 --> 00:07:31,980

But I know of B'nai  
Brith because I

155

00:07:31,980 --> 00:07:34,160

know he had been a long  
term member of B'nai Brith.

156

00:07:34,160 --> 00:07:35,730

Was it a vibrant  
Jewish community?

157

00:07:35,730 --> 00:07:36,690

Oh, I would think so.

158

00:07:36,690 --> 00:07:40,160

159

00:07:40,160 --> 00:07:42,960

Where did you go to school?

160

00:07:42,960 --> 00:07:45,120

Well, I went to school--

161

00:07:45,120 --> 00:07:48,270

I started school in  
Bratislava in 1943,

162  
00:07:48,270 --> 00:07:50,850  
and that was sort of  
an interrupted year.

163  
00:07:50,850 --> 00:07:55,200  
That was first grade, and  
I was able to start school

164  
00:07:55,200 --> 00:07:58,080  
because I became converted.

165  
00:07:58,080 --> 00:08:01,320  
If I had just been a plain,  
ordinary Jewish child in 1943,

166  
00:08:01,320 --> 00:08:03,365  
even though Slovakia  
was a protectorate--

167  
00:08:03,365 --> 00:08:05,830  
So in 1943, you were how old?

168  
00:08:05,830 --> 00:08:06,330  
You were--

169  
00:08:06,330 --> 00:08:07,185  
Six.

170  
00:08:07,185 --> 00:08:08,440  
In 1943?

171  
00:08:08,440 --> 00:08:08,940  
Yes.

172  
00:08:08,940 --> 00:08:11,370  
I had attended some sort of  
kindergarten of some I --

173  
00:08:11,370 --> 00:08:12,990  
but I honestly can't tell  
you the nature of that

174  
00:08:12,990 --> 00:08:13,532  
kindergarten.

175  
00:08:13,532 --> 00:08:15,620  
I would think would be  
some sort of private group.

176  
00:08:15,620 --> 00:08:16,440  
Right.

177  
00:08:16,440 --> 00:08:21,150  
But first grade was  
1943 through 1944,

178  
00:08:21,150 --> 00:08:24,120  
and that was a somewhat  
disjointed school year,

179  
00:08:24,120 --> 00:08:26,790  
although I did in fact  
complete that year.

180  
00:08:26,790 --> 00:08:31,080

181  
00:08:31,080 --> 00:08:34,230  
Then I was in hiding--

182  
00:08:34,230 --> 00:08:39,270  
1944, Slovakia had  
been a protectorate,

183  
00:08:39,270 --> 00:08:42,090  
so we didn't have  
any German soldiers

184  
00:08:42,090 --> 00:08:44,663  
invade or be on the premises.

185  
00:08:44,663 --> 00:08:46,080  
It was a protectorate



in the sense

186  
00:08:46,080 --> 00:08:48,630  
that it had a pro-Nazi  
government, a government headed

187  
00:08:48,630 --> 00:08:49,650  
by a priest.

188  
00:08:49,650 --> 00:08:52,320

189  
00:08:52,320 --> 00:08:55,932  
In 1944, however, there  
was a partisan uprising

190  
00:08:55,932 --> 00:08:56,640  
in the mountains.

191  
00:08:56,640 --> 00:08:58,350  
Actually, one of my  
uncles was involved

192  
00:08:58,350 --> 00:09:01,290  
with that partisan uprising,  
and he and his family

193  
00:09:01,290 --> 00:09:04,780  
died when that uprising  
did not succeed there.

194  
00:09:04,780 --> 00:09:06,310  
They were shot.

195  
00:09:06,310 --> 00:09:08,130  
When Nazi soldiers--

196  
00:09:08,130 --> 00:09:11,400  
German soldiers-- actually  
came into Slovakia in 1944,

197  
00:09:11,400 --> 00:09:16,170

and the whole scene changed,  
both for the general population

198  
00:09:16,170 --> 00:09:17,910  
and certainly for Jews.

199  
00:09:17,910 --> 00:09:22,380  
Prior to that, there had  
been some deportations,

200  
00:09:22,380 --> 00:09:28,260  
but they were generally teenage,  
older teenagers, young people,

201  
00:09:28,260 --> 00:09:29,940  
for supposedly work camps.

202  
00:09:29,940 --> 00:09:32,160  
I'm not sure that they  
necessarily ended up

203  
00:09:32,160 --> 00:09:35,160  
in work camps, but there  
was no general deportation

204  
00:09:35,160 --> 00:09:35,970  
of the population.

205  
00:09:35,970 --> 00:09:38,215  
There were a great  
many unpleasant events,

206  
00:09:38,215 --> 00:09:41,670  
but no deportations till 1944.

207  
00:09:41,670 --> 00:09:45,870  
And then they managed to do  
a very thorough job in that

208  
00:09:45,870 --> 00:09:46,440  
subsequently.

209

00:09:46,440 --> 00:09:50,720  
Now in 1943 and '44, you  
were six and seven years old.

210  
00:09:50,720 --> 00:09:51,300  
Right.

211  
00:09:51,300 --> 00:09:52,880  
And you have vivid memories--

212  
00:09:52,880 --> 00:09:54,690  
Yeah, sure.

213  
00:09:54,690 --> 00:09:57,425  
Can I just take you back for  
a few seconds to the time

214  
00:09:57,425 --> 00:09:58,800  
when you entered  
the first grade?

215  
00:09:58,800 --> 00:09:59,340  
Yeah.

216  
00:09:59,340 --> 00:10:01,080  
In 1943.

217  
00:10:01,080 --> 00:10:04,800  
You said something about the  
fact that you were converted.

218  
00:10:04,800 --> 00:10:08,640  
Prior to that, and I'm not  
quite sure exactly when, but I--

219  
00:10:08,640 --> 00:10:12,790  
from my memory, I would imagine  
it was the spring of '43.

220  
00:10:12,790 --> 00:10:13,630  
It was in Trnava.

221

00:10:13,630 --> 00:10:16,335

Trnava was a town  
about, I would think,

222

00:10:16,335 --> 00:10:19,410

an hour's train ride  
away from Bratislava--

223

00:10:19,410 --> 00:10:22,290

I suspect about 40 miles or so--

224

00:10:22,290 --> 00:10:25,080

and that was the home  
of my grandparents;

225

00:10:25,080 --> 00:10:28,620

and our seamstress came.

226

00:10:28,620 --> 00:10:31,200

I was playing outside  
my grandparents' home--

227

00:10:31,200 --> 00:10:34,860

seamstress came over, and just  
changed what I was wearing.

228

00:10:34,860 --> 00:10:37,140

I'd been wearing some  
sort of a play suit.

229

00:10:37,140 --> 00:10:39,930

Changed me to a dress,  
and took me to a church.

230

00:10:39,930 --> 00:10:42,364

I remember the church  
quite vividly--

231

00:10:42,364 --> 00:10:44,322

it was a Lutheran church--  
and I was converted.

232

00:10:44,322 --> 00:10:46,103

What kind of a dress?

233

00:10:46,103 --> 00:10:47,520

I don't remember  
the dress per se.

234

00:10:47,520 --> 00:10:48,380

I just remember that--

235

00:10:48,380 --> 00:10:48,680

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

236

00:10:48,680 --> 00:10:49,880

I was wondering if there  
was any significance.

237

00:10:49,880 --> 00:10:51,630

No, I don't think there was.  
necessarily a white dress

238

00:10:51,630 --> 00:10:52,130

or whatever.

239

00:10:52,130 --> 00:10:56,850

I don't-- but I do remember  
kneeling on a red plush,

240

00:10:56,850 --> 00:11:00,450

some sort of blanket  
of some sort,

241

00:11:00,450 --> 00:11:03,780

and there was a priest  
there, and he went through

242

00:11:03,780 --> 00:11:07,560

a conversion process,  
and our seamstress acted

243

00:11:07,560 --> 00:11:09,600

as my godmother  
in this procedure,

244

00:11:09,600 --> 00:11:11,640  
and it was a Lutheran priest.

245

00:11:11,640 --> 00:11:14,580  
Now Lutherans were a  
minority in Slovakia--

246

00:11:14,580 --> 00:11:16,620  
Slovakia's  
predominantly Catholic--

247

00:11:16,620 --> 00:11:19,940  
but I'm sure this priest--

248

00:11:19,940 --> 00:11:21,330  
not priest.

249

00:11:21,330 --> 00:11:23,420  
He would have been a--

250

00:11:23,420 --> 00:11:25,341  
yeah, I guess.

251

00:11:25,341 --> 00:11:28,430  
A priest-- a minister,  
would be more

252

00:11:28,430 --> 00:11:31,170  
appropriate-- did this,  
quite consciously,

253

00:11:31,170 --> 00:11:32,510  
was converting a Jewish child.

254

00:11:32,510 --> 00:11:38,400

255

00:11:38,400 --> 00:11:43,640  
The Catholic state considered  
conversions as legitimate,

256

00:11:43,640 --> 00:11:48,210  
and we wanted to treat those who  
converted differently than Jews

257  
00:11:48,210 --> 00:11:50,110  
who did not, and had in fact--

258  
00:11:50,110 --> 00:11:52,680  
I later, read-- negotiated  
with the Vatican for the rights

259  
00:11:52,680 --> 00:11:56,160  
to do that; so it was perceived,  
I'm sure, by my parents

260  
00:11:56,160 --> 00:11:58,530  
that this would be  
a way to protect me.

261  
00:11:58,530 --> 00:12:00,300  
And certainly did  
enable me to start

262  
00:12:00,300 --> 00:12:02,280  
regular public school,  
which I could not have

263  
00:12:02,280 --> 00:12:05,610  
started had I not converted.

264  
00:12:05,610 --> 00:12:06,810  
Did you have any--

265  
00:12:06,810 --> 00:12:08,375  
I know this is  
difficult, going back

266  
00:12:08,375 --> 00:12:10,500  
to when you were four years  
old or three years old,

267  
00:12:10,500 --> 00:12:13,890  
but did you have any

sense of consciousness

268  
00:12:13,890 --> 00:12:19,180  
as a Jew wherein this  
conversion actually

269  
00:12:19,180 --> 00:12:20,790  
created some kind  
of metamorphosis

270  
00:12:20,790 --> 00:12:21,950  
in your self definition?

271  
00:12:21,950 --> 00:12:22,450  
I mean--

272  
00:12:22,450 --> 00:12:23,283  
[INTERPOSING VOICES]

273  
00:12:23,283 --> 00:12:31,430  
I don't know that it changed  
any kind of deep held feelings.

274  
00:12:31,430 --> 00:12:33,668  
I think I still knew  
that I was Jewish.

275  
00:12:33,668 --> 00:12:35,085  
You see, what I  
really knew that--

276  
00:12:35,085 --> 00:12:37,477  
[LAUGHS] I think  
throughout all this--

277  
00:12:37,477 --> 00:12:39,810  
because this was the first  
of many, if you will, shams--

278  
00:12:39,810 --> 00:12:42,790

279



00:12:42,790 --> 00:12:47,620  
deceptions, changes of  
name, that I knew full well,

280  
00:12:47,620 --> 00:12:50,930  
I understood in whatever way  
a child could understand,

281  
00:12:50,930 --> 00:12:53,710  
that what this was,  
for what purpose.

282  
00:12:53,710 --> 00:12:54,760  
You did?

283  
00:12:54,760 --> 00:12:57,173  
Yes, I think I did.

284  
00:12:57,173 --> 00:12:59,090  
In other words, you knew  
that you were Jewish.

285  
00:12:59,090 --> 00:12:59,790  
Oh, yes.

286  
00:12:59,790 --> 00:13:01,760  
And you knew that you were being  
converted to another religion.

287  
00:13:01,760 --> 00:13:01,823  
Yes.

288  
00:13:01,823 --> 00:13:03,110  
Was there any discussion  
that took place

289  
00:13:03,110 --> 00:13:04,193  
prior to this conversion--

290  
00:13:04,193 --> 00:13:06,978  
Oh, I think there was a  
definite understanding.

291

00:13:06,978 --> 00:13:08,770

We could not help but  
have an understanding

292

00:13:08,770 --> 00:13:10,480

that one was living  
through a crisis that

293

00:13:10,480 --> 00:13:12,900

was precarious to be a Jew.

294

00:13:12,900 --> 00:13:15,620

The changes about the  
nature of Jewishness before,

295

00:13:15,620 --> 00:13:18,790

that you had asked me before,  
what were my earliest memories,

296

00:13:18,790 --> 00:13:21,040

and among my earliest  
memories is first of all

297

00:13:21,040 --> 00:13:23,680

that my German  
nurse had to leave.

298

00:13:23,680 --> 00:13:27,940

One of the first edicts that  
came with the protectorate

299

00:13:27,940 --> 00:13:30,730

was that Jews could  
not employ Christians,

300

00:13:30,730 --> 00:13:32,890

and my German nurse  
was Christian,

301

00:13:32,890 --> 00:13:35,950

so she had to leave  
our employ, and we only

302

00:13:35,950 --> 00:13:39,220  
could have Jewish servants, so  
I got a Jewish nanny as opposed

303

00:13:39,220 --> 00:13:40,425  
to this German nanny.

304

00:13:40,425 --> 00:13:41,800  
And how old were  
you at the time?

305

00:13:41,800 --> 00:13:42,040  
Two.

306

00:13:42,040 --> 00:13:42,580  
Three?

307

00:13:42,580 --> 00:13:43,768  
Two.

308

00:13:43,768 --> 00:13:45,310  
Do you remember her  
actually leaving?

309

00:13:45,310 --> 00:13:46,870  
I remember.

310

00:13:46,870 --> 00:13:49,630  
She was my primary caretaker,  
and I remember her leaving,

311

00:13:49,630 --> 00:13:51,550  
and I must have overheard  
some discussions.

312

00:13:51,550 --> 00:13:54,470  
I have a sense of that.

313

00:13:54,470 --> 00:13:56,620  
And there were times  
of tension, and there

314

00:13:56,620 --> 00:14:01,023  
were tense train rides to  
go and visit grandparents

315

00:14:01,023 --> 00:14:02,440  
in different parts  
of the country,

316

00:14:02,440 --> 00:14:05,640  
and a lot of upheaval  
and discussion;

317

00:14:05,640 --> 00:14:08,895  
and among the other edicts  
that I remember vividly

318

00:14:08,895 --> 00:14:11,770  
is that Jews could no  
longer just live in--

319

00:14:11,770 --> 00:14:13,010  
we lived in a house.

320

00:14:13,010 --> 00:14:14,000  
It was fairly spacious.

321

00:14:14,000 --> 00:14:16,930  
Two other families moved in  
with us, Jewish families,

322

00:14:16,930 --> 00:14:18,790  
so all the furniture  
that we owned

323

00:14:18,790 --> 00:14:20,290  
had to be moved  
from the first floor

324

00:14:20,290 --> 00:14:24,333  
to the second floor, where we  
occupied much smaller quarters,

325

00:14:24,333 --> 00:14:26,625  
and the other families moved  
in with all the furniture,

326  
00:14:26,625 --> 00:14:29,820  
so you have an  
image of furniture

327  
00:14:29,820 --> 00:14:33,120  
on top of furniture, many  
more people in the same house.

328  
00:14:33,120 --> 00:14:35,730  
And you knew why  
they were moving in?

329  
00:14:35,730 --> 00:14:38,560  
It was discussed-- I don't know  
that I necessarily sorted that

330  
00:14:38,560 --> 00:14:41,620  
logically, but I clearly  
associated the fact that we

331  
00:14:41,620 --> 00:14:43,282  
were Jewish, and this is--

332  
00:14:43,282 --> 00:14:44,740  
Jewish people  
couldn't have radios,

333  
00:14:44,740 --> 00:14:46,970  
and Jewish people  
couldn't have furs.

334  
00:14:46,970 --> 00:14:49,630  
That's another thing-- I had  
a lovely little fur bunny

335  
00:14:49,630 --> 00:14:51,490  
rabbit, fur coat,  
and was very warm,

336

00:14:51,490 --> 00:14:54,910  
and that disappeared, and it  
had to disappear because Jews

337  
00:14:54,910 --> 00:14:56,830  
could not have fur coats.

338  
00:14:56,830 --> 00:14:58,360  
I later found out  
that my parents,

339  
00:14:58,360 --> 00:15:00,940  
instead of turning  
over all these things,

340  
00:15:00,940 --> 00:15:05,530  
had put them behind the  
coal bin in the basement.

341  
00:15:05,530 --> 00:15:07,060  
And much later--

342  
00:15:07,060 --> 00:15:12,520  
1940, between '44 and  
'45, apparently, Nazis

343  
00:15:12,520 --> 00:15:15,100  
came to our house.

344  
00:15:15,100 --> 00:15:18,070  
People who had been in the group  
that had been rounded up before

345  
00:15:18,070 --> 00:15:19,882  
told us that after the war--

346  
00:15:19,882 --> 00:15:22,090  
and they thought we were  
hiding behind that coal bin,

347  
00:15:22,090 --> 00:15:26,590  
and what they found was only  
furs and the other things

348  
00:15:26,590 --> 00:15:30,610  
that were being hidden.

349  
00:15:30,610 --> 00:15:33,700  
My parents had made an attempt  
to try to leave Czechoslovakia

350  
00:15:33,700 --> 00:15:38,410  
before World War II broke  
out, when after the problems

351  
00:15:38,410 --> 00:15:40,780  
in Vienna and-- well, in  
Germany and then Vienna,

352  
00:15:40,780 --> 00:15:42,120  
the Anschluss--

353  
00:15:42,120 --> 00:15:44,620  
they made a concerted  
effort to try to get visas

354  
00:15:44,620 --> 00:15:45,610  
to the United States.

355  
00:15:45,610 --> 00:15:48,850  
My father had a  
brother and uncle here,

356  
00:15:48,850 --> 00:15:52,810  
and we even had boat tickets,  
but Hitler moved too fast,

357  
00:15:52,810 --> 00:15:54,655  
and our silver didn't make it.

358  
00:15:54,655 --> 00:15:55,980  
[INTERPOSING VOICES]

359  
00:15:55,980 --> 00:15:59,862  
Our silver survived the

war in the United States.

360  
00:15:59,862 --> 00:16:00,820  
And that was what year?

361  
00:16:00,820 --> 00:16:01,596  
That was in 19--

362  
00:16:01,596 --> 00:16:02,310  
'38.

363  
00:16:02,310 --> 00:16:03,250  
'38?

364  
00:16:03,250 --> 00:16:06,580  
Early '39, but by the time  
all the visas came through

365  
00:16:06,580 --> 00:16:09,910  
and whatever, it was too  
late-- borders were closed.

366  
00:16:09,910 --> 00:16:12,440

367  
00:16:12,440 --> 00:16:14,540  
What were some of  
your recollections

368  
00:16:14,540 --> 00:16:18,710  
going back again to the  
conversion and going to school?

369  
00:16:18,710 --> 00:16:21,320

370  
00:16:21,320 --> 00:16:22,500  
Did you ever sit down in--

371  
00:16:22,500 --> 00:16:24,230  
There were German  
soldiers then, OK?



372  
00:16:24,230 --> 00:16:26,140  
Just the local  
population, which--

373  
00:16:26,140 --> 00:16:28,728  
there were sufficient  
Nazis among them

374  
00:16:28,728 --> 00:16:29,770  
to make it uncomfortable.

375  
00:16:29,770 --> 00:16:33,770  
It is the Slovaks, the  
Nazis among the Slovaks,

376  
00:16:33,770 --> 00:16:37,550  
that had incorporated  
all these edicts.

377  
00:16:37,550 --> 00:16:39,650  
I don't remember much  
about first grade.

378  
00:16:39,650 --> 00:16:49,340  
I do remember some training for  
air raids, but I really can't--

379  
00:16:49,340 --> 00:16:50,522  
I don't remember much of it.

380  
00:16:50,522 --> 00:16:51,230  
I don't know why.

381  
00:16:51,230 --> 00:16:53,740  
I can't tell you that--

382  
00:16:53,740 --> 00:16:55,610  
any kind of vignettes.

383  
00:16:55,610 --> 00:16:57,620  
I remember vividly

my father walking me

384  
00:16:57,620 --> 00:16:58,790  
to school the first day.

385  
00:16:58,790 --> 00:17:01,912  
I also remember that for  
some reason, the school--

386  
00:17:01,912 --> 00:17:03,620  
physically, the school  
in which I started

387  
00:17:03,620 --> 00:17:07,310  
was not the school which  
I ended the year in.

388  
00:17:07,310 --> 00:17:09,888  
I don't know why the  
whole school got shifted,

389  
00:17:09,888 --> 00:17:11,180  
whether there was an air raid--

390  
00:17:11,180 --> 00:17:11,940  
I don't think so.

391  
00:17:11,940 --> 00:17:17,990  
I think most of the air raids  
occurred in, till fall of 1944,

392  
00:17:17,990 --> 00:17:19,500  
but I do remember that.

393  
00:17:19,500 --> 00:17:21,589  
But beyond that, I don't  
have much memory of it.

394  
00:17:21,589 --> 00:17:23,547  
Do you remember anything  
about the relationship

395

00:17:23,547 --> 00:17:25,651  
that you had with students  
in the first grade?

396  
00:17:25,651 --> 00:17:27,609  
Do you remember anything  
about the fact that --

397  
00:17:27,609 --> 00:17:32,100  
Not particularly, no, no.

398  
00:17:32,100 --> 00:17:35,100  
I also don't think that  
schools generally in Europe

399  
00:17:35,100 --> 00:17:38,420  
tend to be quite as  
social as schools do here,

400  
00:17:38,420 --> 00:17:42,280  
and one's friends tended to  
be people in the neighborhood,

401  
00:17:42,280 --> 00:17:44,300  
and you went to school,  
you went to school,

402  
00:17:44,300 --> 00:17:45,842  
and those were not  
necessarily people

403  
00:17:45,842 --> 00:17:47,960  
with whom you were friends.

404  
00:17:47,960 --> 00:17:50,120  
Because I remember  
that later on,

405  
00:17:50,120 --> 00:17:53,330  
when things were if you will,  
after the war, that there--

406  
00:17:53,330 --> 00:17:55,460

I don't have any  
particular memories

407  
00:17:55,460 --> 00:17:58,450  
as focusing on schools  
as those of my friends.

408  
00:17:58,450 --> 00:18:00,400  
Friends came from other areas.

409  
00:18:00,400 --> 00:18:00,950  
Right.

410  
00:18:00,950 --> 00:18:02,600  
Now how long were  
you in the school?

411  
00:18:02,600 --> 00:18:03,200  
I know you mentioned--

412  
00:18:03,200 --> 00:18:03,330  
[INTERPOSING VOICES]

413  
00:18:03,330 --> 00:18:05,488  
That would be a regular  
school year, more or less.

414  
00:18:05,488 --> 00:18:07,280  
It might have been a  
shortened school year.

415  
00:18:07,280 --> 00:18:09,780  
Probably-- it was an interrupted  
school year because, during

416  
00:18:09,780 --> 00:18:13,220  
the middle of the  
school year, there was--

417  
00:18:13,220 --> 00:18:16,250  
my parents decided that  
it might be a good idea

418

00:18:16,250 --> 00:18:18,380  
to get me to Hungary.

419

00:18:18,380 --> 00:18:20,270  
My mother had a  
sister in Budapest,

420

00:18:20,270 --> 00:18:24,440  
and it looked as if Hungarian  
Jews would be more protected.

421

00:18:24,440 --> 00:18:27,740  
And the pretext to  
getting us to Hungary

422

00:18:27,740 --> 00:18:29,760  
was that supposedly I  
had inflamed tonsils,

423

00:18:29,760 --> 00:18:31,430  
and that the operation  
for tonsillitis

424

00:18:31,430 --> 00:18:35,360  
would be better in Budapest,  
so we made the long train trip

425

00:18:35,360 --> 00:18:41,540  
and visited family in the  
eastern part of Slovakia, which

426

00:18:41,540 --> 00:18:43,190  
is sort of the way  
to Budapest, and I

427

00:18:43,190 --> 00:18:46,790  
do remember vividly being in  
Budapest, which had been bombed

428

00:18:46,790 --> 00:18:50,840  
considerably, and being with my  
aunt in a hotel, part of which

429

00:18:50,840 --> 00:18:53,420

was bombed out, and  
my father decided

430

00:18:53,420 --> 00:18:56,052

that he wouldn't do that,  
and he brought me back.

431

00:18:56,052 --> 00:18:57,760

He feared for his  
safety and [? yours? ?]

432

00:18:57,760 --> 00:18:58,830

Yes.

433

00:18:58,830 --> 00:19:02,750

That was one of those fortunate  
decisions that, I think,

434

00:19:02,750 --> 00:19:05,560

had a great deal to do with  
the fact that I'm alive.

435

00:19:05,560 --> 00:19:07,220

And this was still 1943?

436

00:19:07,220 --> 00:19:11,935

This was '43, yes;  
and because, as you

437

00:19:11,935 --> 00:19:14,950

know in terms of the history,  
Hungarian Jews did not

438

00:19:14,950 --> 00:19:17,770

fare so well either, and I  
think my aunt might have had--

439

00:19:17,770 --> 00:19:23,050

my aunt ended up leaving  
Hungary, coming to Slovakia,

440

00:19:23,050 --> 00:19:25,910  
and actually, she did end  
up in a concentration camp,

441  
00:19:25,910 --> 00:19:29,840  
and perished four days after  
her camp was liberated.

442  
00:19:29,840 --> 00:19:32,080  
Do you remember any  
discussions in the family

443  
00:19:32,080 --> 00:19:34,840  
at the table at home  
about what the plight was?

444  
00:19:34,840 --> 00:19:35,440  
I don't--

445  
00:19:35,440 --> 00:19:37,607  
Again, it's so hard to ask  
these questions because--

446  
00:19:37,607 --> 00:19:41,140  
Well, I don't remember  
that many specifics,

447  
00:19:41,140 --> 00:19:45,040  
but I certainly do remember that  
these things were discussed,

448  
00:19:45,040 --> 00:19:47,710  
and obviously there was a  
great deal of discussion

449  
00:19:47,710 --> 00:19:50,770  
of how to protect me.

450  
00:19:50,770 --> 00:19:55,290  
In 1944-- summer of 1944,  
slightly before the whole

451  
00:19:55,290 --> 00:19:57,280

uprising business started--

452

00:19:57,280 --> 00:20:03,670  
my parents placed me with  
this family of our seamstress,

453

00:20:03,670 --> 00:20:06,970  
who had been my godmother  
in this conversion,

454

00:20:06,970 --> 00:20:09,610  
and that whole family  
went to a small village

455

00:20:09,610 --> 00:20:13,030  
in Slovakia, really quite  
a rural little place,

456

00:20:13,030 --> 00:20:16,190  
to spend the summer, and I  
spent the summer with them.

457

00:20:16,190 --> 00:20:17,110  
Summer '44?

458

00:20:17,110 --> 00:20:18,310  
Summer '44.

459

00:20:18,310 --> 00:20:20,950  
And my father only  
visited me once,

460

00:20:20,950 --> 00:20:22,420  
and I remember very  
much the day he

461

00:20:22,420 --> 00:20:25,100  
visited-- it was a rather  
idyllic day, it was beautiful.

462

00:20:25,100 --> 00:20:28,290  
I know-- he'd said afterwards  
it was sort of like a break



463  
00:20:28,290 --> 00:20:31,190  
in incredible tension  
because meantime,

464  
00:20:31,190 --> 00:20:33,670  
there had been deportations  
[? enough ?] where there was

465  
00:20:33,670 --> 00:20:37,000  
really a constant daily--

466  
00:20:37,000 --> 00:20:39,340  
every moment, a tension  
as to whether you would--

467  
00:20:39,340 --> 00:20:40,330  
[LANGER COUGHS]

468  
00:20:40,330 --> 00:20:43,150  
--survive, and I was in  
this lovely little village,

469  
00:20:43,150 --> 00:20:46,930  
with fresh milk from  
a cow, and fishing,

470  
00:20:46,930 --> 00:20:51,290  
and all these very  
idyllic sorts of events,

471  
00:20:51,290 --> 00:20:54,430  
and the plan had been for  
me to stay in this village--

472  
00:20:54,430 --> 00:20:57,515  
and as a matter of fact, I did  
even start school in the fall

473  
00:20:57,515 --> 00:20:59,890  
in this little village, and  
some clothes were made for me

474

00:20:59,890 --> 00:21:02,680

so I'd look just like the  
other village children--

475

00:21:02,680 --> 00:21:05,870

and several events  
caused some problems.

476

00:21:05,870 --> 00:21:09,245

The first one-- again, we walked  
to a Lutheran church at some

477

00:21:09,245 --> 00:21:11,620

point in the summer because  
the village was predominately

478

00:21:11,620 --> 00:21:14,500

Catholic, and the only Lutheran  
church was a couple of villages

479

00:21:14,500 --> 00:21:16,300

away, and we walked there--

480

00:21:16,300 --> 00:21:20,950

and-- I recognized at this  
little Lutheran church,

481

00:21:20,950 --> 00:21:26,020

there were two of my friends,  
sisters from Bratislava, also

482

00:21:26,020 --> 00:21:28,990

Jewish children, and we  
spoke to one another.

483

00:21:28,990 --> 00:21:30,432

And obviously none  
of us children

484

00:21:30,432 --> 00:21:32,140

thought it was  
particular, but I remember

485

00:21:32,140 --> 00:21:33,515

there was a great  
deal of tension

486

00:21:33,515 --> 00:21:35,680

afterwards among the people  
who were sheltering me

487

00:21:35,680 --> 00:21:37,930

because, you know,  
what if people noticed

488

00:21:37,930 --> 00:21:39,430

that I hadn't known them?

489

00:21:39,430 --> 00:21:42,660

Obviously everybody's cover  
would have been blown.

490

00:21:42,660 --> 00:21:44,140

Did you know why?

491

00:21:44,140 --> 00:21:46,510

I didn't at the time, OK?

492

00:21:46,510 --> 00:21:49,980

But something was said to me  
afterwards, to be more careful.

493

00:21:49,980 --> 00:21:55,360

And the other time that  
I made an error that

494

00:21:55,360 --> 00:21:57,610

cut short this whole  
thing in the village

495

00:21:57,610 --> 00:21:59,950

is that German soldiers  
in the meantime

496

00:21:59,950 --> 00:22:03,050

had come to Slovakia  
to fight the partisans,

497  
00:22:03,050 --> 00:22:05,050  
and some German soldiers  
appeared in the village

498  
00:22:05,050 --> 00:22:07,480  
and asked directions in German,  
and I was the only peasant

499  
00:22:07,480 --> 00:22:10,210  
kid who understood German.

500  
00:22:10,210 --> 00:22:12,400  
German soldiers didn't  
think anything of it,

501  
00:22:12,400 --> 00:22:14,910  
but some of the villagers  
started talking,

502  
00:22:14,910 --> 00:22:18,843  
and so I left the village.

503  
00:22:18,843 --> 00:22:20,260  
And then there  
were some questions

504  
00:22:20,260 --> 00:22:23,410  
as to what to do with me  
and where to place me.

505  
00:22:23,410 --> 00:22:25,380  
Let me take you back  
just for one more second.

506  
00:22:25,380 --> 00:22:28,210  
The seamstress took  
you into the village.

507  
00:22:28,210 --> 00:22:28,997  
Yeah, her family.

508  
00:22:28,997 --> 00:22:30,580  
Do you have any idea  
why she did that?

509  
00:22:30,580 --> 00:22:32,390  
I mean, what her--

510  
00:22:32,390 --> 00:22:33,933  
She had very close  
ties to my family,

511  
00:22:33,933 --> 00:22:35,850  
and I think out of the  
goodness of her heart--

512  
00:22:35,850 --> 00:22:38,110  
and I'm sure that  
there were financial--

513  
00:22:38,110 --> 00:22:42,520  
that this was not a financial  
burden to them in that sense.

514  
00:22:42,520 --> 00:22:45,130  
My family had sufficient money,  
and I guess sufficient friends

515  
00:22:45,130 --> 00:22:49,990  
with whom money was kept  
among the Gentile community,

516  
00:22:49,990 --> 00:22:53,740  
that one could  
pay for my upkeep.

517  
00:22:53,740 --> 00:22:55,330  
But in terms of  
why she did it, I

518  
00:22:55,330 --> 00:22:59,380  
think there were many  
cases of Christians

519  
00:22:59,380 --> 00:23:06,580  
who risked a great deal to save  
the lives of those who could.

520  
00:23:06,580 --> 00:23:10,930  
One of the potential sites  
for where I was to end up

521  
00:23:10,930 --> 00:23:12,465  
was a Catholic orphanage--

522  
00:23:12,465 --> 00:23:13,840  
there were Catholic  
nuns who were

523  
00:23:13,840 --> 00:23:16,990  
taking in Jewish children--

524  
00:23:16,990 --> 00:23:19,902  
but my mother hadn't  
seen me for a long time.

525  
00:23:19,902 --> 00:23:20,860  
I was going to ask you.

526  
00:23:20,860 --> 00:23:26,940  
And so she asked that I be  
smuggled back into Bratislava,

527  
00:23:26,940 --> 00:23:28,690  
to the city, from--

528  
00:23:28,690 --> 00:23:30,760  
first from the village,  
we went back to Trnava

529  
00:23:30,760 --> 00:23:34,520  
and then they got me back to  
Bratislava; and at that time,

530  
00:23:34,520 --> 00:23:37,570

my parents were living  
in a bombed out factory.

531  
00:23:37,570 --> 00:23:39,670  
They were in hiding,  
and they were

532  
00:23:39,670 --> 00:23:40,990  
in this bombed out factory--

533  
00:23:40,990 --> 00:23:41,170  
[INTERPOSING VOICES]

534  
00:23:41,170 --> 00:23:42,180  
--an apartment building.

535  
00:23:42,180 --> 00:23:42,880  
In '44?

536  
00:23:42,880 --> 00:23:46,840  
In '44, and I remember I stayed  
with them for a couple of days

537  
00:23:46,840 --> 00:23:49,210  
because my mother hadn't  
seen me in all this time,

538  
00:23:49,210 --> 00:23:51,010  
and again that  
was one of those--

539  
00:23:51,010 --> 00:23:54,181

540  
00:23:54,181 --> 00:23:55,100  
who knows?

541  
00:23:55,100 --> 00:24:02,090  
Luck, because in the meantime  
someone had turned in the nuns.

542  
00:24:02,090 --> 00:24:03,860

The nuns were taken  
to concentration camp,

543  
00:24:03,860 --> 00:24:05,690  
all the children were taken  
to concentration camp,

544  
00:24:05,690 --> 00:24:06,898  
and that was the end of that.

545  
00:24:06,898 --> 00:24:10,310

546  
00:24:10,310 --> 00:24:14,390  
Then I ended up in Bratislava.

547  
00:24:14,390 --> 00:24:16,700  
How long were you with the nuns?

548  
00:24:16,700 --> 00:24:19,280  
I was never with the nuns.

549  
00:24:19,280 --> 00:24:20,840  
Instead of taking -- you know--

550  
00:24:20,840 --> 00:24:21,820  
[INTERPOSING VOICES]

551  
00:24:21,820 --> 00:24:24,216  
That was one of the plans.

552  
00:24:24,216 --> 00:24:25,880  
I see.

553  
00:24:25,880 --> 00:24:28,520  
But before that plan  
could be actualized,

554  
00:24:28,520 --> 00:24:34,010  
it was decided that we'd have  
a reunion, family reunion.



555

00:24:34,010 --> 00:24:37,700

And so then the next  
year, and then there was--

556

00:24:37,700 --> 00:24:39,560

the rest of the war  
I spent in hiding

557

00:24:39,560 --> 00:24:44,690

with a Christian family who  
was originally Hungarian,

558

00:24:44,690 --> 00:24:47,510

lived in Bratislava, just  
staying in my hometown,

559

00:24:47,510 --> 00:24:50,630

but on the other side  
of town, and they

560

00:24:50,630 --> 00:24:53,090

were willing to take me.

561

00:24:53,090 --> 00:24:57,830

They had originally rented  
a room for my mother's aunt,

562

00:24:57,830 --> 00:25:00,560

a young aunt-- they were  
almost contemporaries in age--

563

00:25:00,560 --> 00:25:01,580

and her husband.

564

00:25:01,580 --> 00:25:05,150

But before my grand-aunt  
and her husband

565

00:25:05,150 --> 00:25:09,680

could go and take up  
residence in the room,

566

00:25:09,680 --> 00:25:11,660  
they were caught in  
one of the dragnets.

567  
00:25:11,660 --> 00:25:15,595  
And as they were being  
marched to the station,

568  
00:25:15,595 --> 00:25:16,970  
they were going  
through a market,

569  
00:25:16,970 --> 00:25:18,680  
and my aunt told  
her husband, listen,

570  
00:25:18,680 --> 00:25:21,050  
I'm going to try to  
get out of the market.

571  
00:25:21,050 --> 00:25:22,610  
Why don't you try to--

572  
00:25:22,610 --> 00:25:25,940  
and she risked, and he did  
not, and she survived the war.

573  
00:25:25,940 --> 00:25:31,950  
But in any case, they no longer  
needed this particular place,

574  
00:25:31,950 --> 00:25:34,280  
so she went with me to  
these people and asked,

575  
00:25:34,280 --> 00:25:37,590  
could I stay with them instead?

576  
00:25:37,590 --> 00:25:39,520  
And because I spoke  
fairly good Hungarian,

577  
00:25:39,520 --> 00:25:42,830

and because I had blond  
hair and blue eyes,

578  
00:25:42,830 --> 00:25:46,190  
they were willing to risk it.

579  
00:25:46,190 --> 00:25:49,550  
And I lived the rest of  
the war with them in this--

580  
00:25:49,550 --> 00:25:52,280  
they lived in a small  
apartment house.

581  
00:25:52,280 --> 00:25:57,320  
He was a writer, and  
crippled by polio,

582  
00:25:57,320 --> 00:25:59,760  
and they had no children.

583  
00:25:59,760 --> 00:26:01,490  
And I was supposed  
to be their niece,

584  
00:26:01,490 --> 00:26:03,380  
from an area where  
there was fighting,

585  
00:26:03,380 --> 00:26:04,830  
and I lived under  
an assumed name,

586  
00:26:04,830 --> 00:26:07,767  
and to make sure that I got  
the story right, we practiced.

587  
00:26:07,767 --> 00:26:10,100  
They woke me up several times  
in the middle of the night

588  
00:26:10,100 --> 00:26:14,940  
to make sure I would give

them my assumed name,

589

00:26:14,940 --> 00:26:18,590

so that there wouldn't  
be any question,

590

00:26:18,590 --> 00:26:21,060

and there were German soldiers  
living the apartment house,

591

00:26:21,060 --> 00:26:23,610

and I was not to  
understand them.

592

00:26:23,610 --> 00:26:27,970

I had to pretend I couldn't  
understand German, because that

593

00:26:27,970 --> 00:26:30,280

would have given me away too.

594

00:26:30,280 --> 00:26:31,750

I'm having difficulty  
comprehending

595

00:26:31,750 --> 00:26:32,500

all that behavior.

596

00:26:32,500 --> 00:26:33,180

[LAUGHS]

597

00:26:33,180 --> 00:26:36,090

How the age of six years  
old, seven years old--

598

00:26:36,090 --> 00:26:37,780

When I had my own  
children that age,

599

00:26:37,780 --> 00:26:39,940

I could not imagine that  
they would do that either.

600

00:26:39,940 --> 00:26:42,610

601

00:26:42,610 --> 00:26:45,270

But you knew--

602

00:26:45,270 --> 00:26:47,160

I did not know the  
nature of the risk.

603

00:26:47,160 --> 00:26:50,400

I really did not know what would  
happen to me if they took me

604

00:26:50,400 --> 00:26:54,010

away, but I knew that  
it wouldn't be good,

605

00:26:54,010 --> 00:26:56,590

and I knew it would be terrible.

606

00:26:56,590 --> 00:26:57,330

And so I knew--

607

00:26:57,330 --> 00:26:59,773

You knew that the potential  
for taking you away

608

00:26:59,773 --> 00:27:01,440

would have been because  
you were Jewish?

609

00:27:01,440 --> 00:27:06,393

Absolutely

610

00:27:06,393 --> 00:27:08,060

There must have been  
a tremendous amount

611

00:27:08,060 --> 00:27:11,180

of stress and anxiety that  
you yourself experienced.

612  
00:27:11,180 --> 00:27:13,893  
Yes, I'm sure-- there was,  
but there was also the added

613  
00:27:13,893 --> 00:27:14,810  
anxiety at this point.

614  
00:27:14,810 --> 00:27:18,380  
There were aerial  
bombings periodically,

615  
00:27:18,380 --> 00:27:20,540  
so there was also that anxiety.

616  
00:27:20,540 --> 00:27:22,160  
My parents would visit me.

617  
00:27:22,160 --> 00:27:24,140  
My parents were in hiding  
again all this time,

618  
00:27:24,140 --> 00:27:29,480  
different places, and they  
would visit on a night

619  
00:27:29,480 --> 00:27:34,360  
where there was no moon because  
of course, there's blackout.

620  
00:27:34,360 --> 00:27:37,400  
And one time they  
came, and there

621  
00:27:37,400 --> 00:27:40,910  
were some neighbors visiting  
us, and when I opened the door,

622  
00:27:40,910 --> 00:27:42,800  
my parents were there.

623  
00:27:42,800 --> 00:27:44,420

I pretended I did  
not recognize them.

624  
00:27:44,420 --> 00:27:49,860

625  
00:27:49,860 --> 00:27:53,040  
That was an unrehearsed thing.

626  
00:27:53,040 --> 00:27:54,600  
Yes, I clearly  
knew, and I clearly

627  
00:27:54,600 --> 00:27:58,020  
understood, and  
had to act on it.

628  
00:27:58,020 --> 00:28:00,990  
And I can't tell  
you what brought

629  
00:28:00,990 --> 00:28:06,140  
that perception of the  
reality that was there,

630  
00:28:06,140 --> 00:28:07,730  
but it was there.

631  
00:28:07,730 --> 00:28:09,698  
When you were in hiding  
with this family,

632  
00:28:09,698 --> 00:28:10,990  
you went to school at the time?

633  
00:28:10,990 --> 00:28:11,490  
No.

634  
00:28:11,490 --> 00:28:13,330  
No school, and  
things were somewhat

635

00:28:13,330 --> 00:28:14,830  
disrupted at that  
point, and I don't

636  
00:28:14,830 --> 00:28:16,570  
think there was a great deal  
of concern about children

637  
00:28:16,570 --> 00:28:18,403  
not going to school  
because this was already

638  
00:28:18,403 --> 00:28:19,700  
towards the end of the war.

639  
00:28:19,700 --> 00:28:23,110  
We were liberated in  
April by the Russians,

640  
00:28:23,110 --> 00:28:27,580  
and I started there probably  
about October of 1944,

641  
00:28:27,580 --> 00:28:29,390  
liberated in April.

642  
00:28:29,390 --> 00:28:32,350  
So I'm sure that--

643  
00:28:32,350 --> 00:28:34,200  
OK.

644  
00:28:34,200 --> 00:28:37,610  
How long were you separated  
from your parents at that time?

645  
00:28:37,610 --> 00:28:39,220  
Before you said --

646  
00:28:39,220 --> 00:28:41,370  
Well, I don't know  
exactly what month I



647

00:28:41,370 --> 00:28:43,320

started in that  
little village, but I

648

00:28:43,320 --> 00:28:45,630

assume that it was  
about June, and I

649

00:28:45,630 --> 00:28:50,370

had seen my parents for a  
brief visit about October,

650

00:28:50,370 --> 00:28:52,010

and then next April.

651

00:28:52,010 --> 00:28:53,620

In the next April?

652

00:28:53,620 --> 00:28:56,520

So not quite a year.

653

00:28:56,520 --> 00:28:59,300

What happened when you were  
reunited with your parents?

654

00:28:59,300 --> 00:29:02,460

Well, my parents-- as I said,  
my parents did keep contact.

655

00:29:02,460 --> 00:29:06,820

They did manage to visit  
me roughly once a month,

656

00:29:06,820 --> 00:29:11,850

and also managed-- they  
kept track of my doings

657

00:29:11,850 --> 00:29:14,220

because somebody who  
lived in that building

658

00:29:14,220 --> 00:29:16,920

had a little store, and you  
know there were an awful lot

659  
00:29:16,920 --> 00:29:19,260  
of people who knew about this.

660  
00:29:19,260 --> 00:29:24,390  
Obviously they-- one had  
to trust to their goodwill,

661  
00:29:24,390 --> 00:29:29,250  
and my mother's aunt, who  
looked Aryan and was not

662  
00:29:29,250 --> 00:29:34,050  
known in Bratislava, risked  
going out to the store

663  
00:29:34,050 --> 00:29:37,430  
and to periodically find  
out that I was all right.

664  
00:29:37,430 --> 00:29:42,030

665  
00:29:42,030 --> 00:29:43,930  
Now you say you were liberated--

666  
00:29:43,930 --> 00:29:45,990  
In April of 1944

667  
00:29:45,990 --> 00:29:48,640  
--of 1944.

668  
00:29:48,640 --> 00:29:49,930  
What happened then?

669  
00:29:49,930 --> 00:29:53,630  
Well, one of the things.

670  
00:29:53,630 --> 00:29:56,170  
First of all, my

parents were in hiding.

671  
00:29:56,170 --> 00:29:58,840  
My aunt and my mother  
had rented a room

672  
00:29:58,840 --> 00:30:00,970  
from a man whose family  
went to the country

673  
00:30:00,970 --> 00:30:02,650  
to escape the bombing.

674  
00:30:02,650 --> 00:30:06,100  
My father lived in that  
room, and this man never

675  
00:30:06,100 --> 00:30:08,273  
knew that my father was there.

676  
00:30:08,273 --> 00:30:10,690  
He did not even know after  
liberation because they did not

677  
00:30:10,690 --> 00:30:16,600  
want him to realize the kind  
of risk he was placing--

678  
00:30:16,600 --> 00:30:19,170  
he had been placed in.

679  
00:30:19,170 --> 00:30:22,360  
That room that they had rented  
was literally two blocks away

680  
00:30:22,360 --> 00:30:24,450  
from our original house.

681  
00:30:24,450 --> 00:30:26,380  
I'm sorry-- this is a room?

682  
00:30:26,380 --> 00:30:29,170

My parents, my parents  
and my mother's aunt,

683  
00:30:29,170 --> 00:30:30,780  
lived in one room.

684  
00:30:30,780 --> 00:30:31,510  
OK.

685  
00:30:31,510 --> 00:30:32,590  
In that period of hiding?

686  
00:30:32,590 --> 00:30:34,300  
During that period of time.

687  
00:30:34,300 --> 00:30:37,250  
This man-- come the  
liberation [INAUDIBLE]

688  
00:30:37,250 --> 00:30:39,640  
I had to spend about three  
or four days in the cellar

689  
00:30:39,640 --> 00:30:41,543  
because of the fighting  
you know, Russians.

690  
00:30:41,543 --> 00:30:42,335  
And when you said--

691  
00:30:42,335 --> 00:30:43,660  
And when that was over--

692  
00:30:43,660 --> 00:30:44,230  
Sorry.

693  
00:30:44,230 --> 00:30:48,210  
They told him the story,  
said my father had just come,

694  
00:30:48,210 --> 00:30:50,890  
and they are really

Jewish, and that they've

695  
00:30:50,890 --> 00:30:52,810  
got this child across  
the city, and he

696  
00:30:52,810 --> 00:30:54,970  
volunteered to come and get me.

697  
00:30:54,970 --> 00:30:58,880  
And he was the one who presented  
himself the day after and said,

698  
00:30:58,880 --> 00:31:01,345  
I've come to bring  
you to your parents,

699  
00:31:01,345 --> 00:31:03,220  
and I remember walking  
through the city where

700  
00:31:03,220 --> 00:31:04,340  
there were still--

701  
00:31:04,340 --> 00:31:09,140  
there were still corpses  
from the fighting--

702  
00:31:09,140 --> 00:31:11,000  
and joining my parents.

703  
00:31:11,000 --> 00:31:16,412

704  
00:31:16,412 --> 00:31:18,890  
I know this is  
difficult, but this

705  
00:31:18,890 --> 00:31:20,550  
is a man you had never seen--

706  
00:31:20,550 --> 00:31:21,050

Right.

707

00:31:21,050 --> 00:31:22,820  
--before, who was all of  
a sudden coming to you

708

00:31:22,820 --> 00:31:23,750  
and saying, he was  
coming to take you--

709

00:31:23,750 --> 00:31:25,458  
Obviously, I would  
assume that the people

710

00:31:25,458 --> 00:31:27,980  
with whom I stayed, there must  
have been some arrangement.

711

00:31:27,980 --> 00:31:28,890  
I don't know.

712

00:31:28,890 --> 00:31:33,117  
Like you know, there were no  
telephone lines up, I'm sure.

713

00:31:33,117 --> 00:31:34,200  
Was there any discussion--

714

00:31:34,200 --> 00:31:35,890  
I mean, during this time  
when you were with his family

715

00:31:35,890 --> 00:31:37,780  
in hiding, about  
what was going on?

716

00:31:37,780 --> 00:31:39,610  
I mean, why were  
people getting killed?

717

00:31:39,610 --> 00:31:42,118

718

00:31:42,118 --> 00:31:43,660

There was a great  
deal of discussion,

719

00:31:43,660 --> 00:31:46,133

and a great deal in  
terms of like what?

720

00:31:46,133 --> 00:31:48,050

I mean, did you understand  
what was happening?

721

00:31:48,050 --> 00:31:48,800

I mean you said--

722

00:31:48,800 --> 00:31:49,740

Oh, I knew there  
was a war going on.

723

00:31:49,740 --> 00:31:51,430

OK, you say now that  
you were walking--

724

00:31:51,430 --> 00:31:53,555

And I knew who the good  
guys and the bad guys were.

725

00:31:53,555 --> 00:31:54,170

[LAUGHS]

726

00:31:54,170 --> 00:31:55,540

I mean, you were saying--

727

00:31:55,540 --> 00:31:57,920

you saw corpses  
lying all around.

728

00:31:57,920 --> 00:32:03,730

Not -- but I remember one or  
two what looked like corpses--

729

00:32:03,730 --> 00:32:05,940

I mean, we didn't go  
that close to look,

730  
00:32:05,940 --> 00:32:11,900  
but this was so soon after  
the fighting was over.

731  
00:32:11,900 --> 00:32:14,240  
Right.

732  
00:32:14,240 --> 00:32:14,840  
OK.

733  
00:32:14,840 --> 00:32:15,790  
You know, there was a lot--

734  
00:32:15,790 --> 00:32:17,240  
it's incredible  
what people pick up.

735  
00:32:17,240 --> 00:32:18,100  
I mean, one of the things--

736  
00:32:18,100 --> 00:32:19,660  
there was a lot of  
discussion that--

737  
00:32:19,660 --> 00:32:22,840  
there was a lot of fear of the  
Russians as liberators, too.

738  
00:32:22,840 --> 00:32:25,450  
Rapes-- I didn't know what rape  
was, but there was obviously

739  
00:32:25,450 --> 00:32:27,070  
a lot of fear among  
women as to what

740  
00:32:27,070 --> 00:32:30,580  
would happen when these soldiers  
came, because Budapest had been



741

00:32:30,580 --> 00:32:33,100

the last city, big city,  
prior to that liberated,

742

00:32:33,100 --> 00:32:35,390

and Budapest had a  
long siege-- six weeks.

743

00:32:35,390 --> 00:32:36,640

So there was a lot of concern.

744

00:32:36,640 --> 00:32:38,980

Would we have enough food?

745

00:32:38,980 --> 00:32:40,652

How awful would be the fighting?

746

00:32:40,652 --> 00:32:42,610

There wasn't that kind  
of stand for Bratislava,

747

00:32:42,610 --> 00:32:44,100

and the soldiers--

748

00:32:44,100 --> 00:32:47,950

the pillage and rape  
was not nearly as severe

749

00:32:47,950 --> 00:32:50,320

because after all, these  
were Slavic friends

750

00:32:50,320 --> 00:32:52,433

that we were liberating  
as opposed to the Russians

751

00:32:52,433 --> 00:32:54,100

liberating Hungary,  
which was considered

752

00:32:54,100 --> 00:32:58,120

an enemy country for Russians.

753

00:32:58,120 --> 00:33:00,640

But they were fairly primitive  
people, these Russians,

754

00:33:00,640 --> 00:33:07,420

and the jokes that we have  
about Russians wanting watches

755

00:33:07,420 --> 00:33:12,480

up and down the arm wasn't  
so funny when some drunken

756

00:33:12,480 --> 00:33:15,390

soldier came in and demanded  
watches and was really

757

00:33:15,390 --> 00:33:17,000

being rather ugly.

758

00:33:17,000 --> 00:33:21,060

I was still in the cellar  
till someone who was--

759

00:33:21,060 --> 00:33:23,630

I don't know, a higher up  
officer came and got him out.

760

00:33:23,630 --> 00:33:26,630

761

00:33:26,630 --> 00:33:29,000

I just want to ask you one  
more question about when

762

00:33:29,000 --> 00:33:31,130

you mentioned thing  
about deportations.

763

00:33:31,130 --> 00:33:33,530

Did you know who  
was being deported?

764

00:33:33,530 --> 00:33:36,680

Yes, again because  
there were people

765

00:33:36,680 --> 00:33:39,230

with whom we had contact.

766

00:33:39,230 --> 00:33:44,960

One of, if you will, one  
of my governess, nurse,

767

00:33:44,960 --> 00:33:50,510

whatever-- young women who  
had replaced this German nurse

768

00:33:50,510 --> 00:33:55,690

was being deported, and  
I remember her crying.

769

00:33:55,690 --> 00:33:59,390

This is about '43,  
and so I do know--

770

00:33:59,390 --> 00:34:02,760

I did know that.

771

00:34:02,760 --> 00:34:04,530

And you knew that  
she was deported

772

00:34:04,530 --> 00:34:05,560

because she was Jewish?

773

00:34:05,560 --> 00:34:08,040

Oh yes.

774

00:34:08,040 --> 00:34:12,780

Now we were not at risk  
during the time before--

775

00:34:12,780 --> 00:34:15,739

or not at great risk

in terms of life

776

00:34:15,739 --> 00:34:19,580  
because my father had an  
exemption in Slovakia.

777

00:34:19,580 --> 00:34:23,570  
There was exemption granted  
for what the state considered

778

00:34:23,570 --> 00:34:27,739  
necessary work for heads  
of families, and then

779

00:34:27,739 --> 00:34:29,000  
their whole families.

780

00:34:29,000 --> 00:34:31,580  
My father had an exemption  
because even though my father,

781

00:34:31,580 --> 00:34:33,860  
of course, no longer  
owned his printing plant--

782

00:34:33,860 --> 00:34:35,330  
it was Aryanized--

783

00:34:35,330 --> 00:34:38,290  
in order for the printing  
plant to run, they needed him.

784

00:34:38,290 --> 00:34:42,730

785

00:34:42,730 --> 00:34:48,239  
And so there was a  
great deal of concern

786

00:34:48,239 --> 00:34:51,780  
about getting the exemptions,  
and keeping tabs--

787

00:34:51,780 --> 00:34:55,620

I know my father was  
active, or in good contact,

788

00:34:55,620 --> 00:34:58,500

with the Jewish  
community because there

789

00:34:58,500 --> 00:35:02,190

was a great deal of concern  
for keeping information going.

790

00:35:02,190 --> 00:35:04,470

What are the changes  
in the edicts and laws?

791

00:35:04,470 --> 00:35:06,090

Who would be deported next?

792

00:35:06,090 --> 00:35:09,360

And trying to get word  
to those to try to escape

793

00:35:09,360 --> 00:35:11,190

and leave when people--

794

00:35:11,190 --> 00:35:15,870

to find safe houses,  
and you know, then

795

00:35:15,870 --> 00:35:19,170

the volume of all that just  
became so great in 1944

796

00:35:19,170 --> 00:35:21,900

that nobody could deal with it.

797

00:35:21,900 --> 00:35:23,170

Right.

798

00:35:23,170 --> 00:35:27,810

What happened when you came and

saw your parents, when you were

799

00:35:27,810 --> 00:35:30,270

reunited with your parents?

800

00:35:30,270 --> 00:35:31,720

I don't remember that.

801

00:35:31,720 --> 00:35:35,573

I mean, we lived  
together in the--

802

00:35:35,573 --> 00:35:36,990

there was still a  
bit of upheaval.

803

00:35:36,990 --> 00:35:41,040

I remember then we started  
getting stories of who survived

804

00:35:41,040 --> 00:35:43,230

and who didn't, and that  
was a very sad time,

805

00:35:43,230 --> 00:35:48,390

because my mother's mother  
and father and sister

806

00:35:48,390 --> 00:35:49,740

died in concentration camp.

807

00:35:49,740 --> 00:35:57,360

My father's father, his sister,  
their child, his brother,

808

00:35:57,360 --> 00:36:02,060

and his family lost their  
lives, and [? my ?] [? aunt ?]

809

00:36:02,060 --> 00:36:05,610

[INAUDIBLE] in the  
partisan uprising.

810

00:36:05,610 --> 00:36:08,450

I remember-- there  
was lack of food,

811

00:36:08,450 --> 00:36:10,950

and I remember my  
mother trading one

812

00:36:10,950 --> 00:36:17,070

of my coats, outgrown  
coats, for a goose,

813

00:36:17,070 --> 00:36:19,230

and trying to put  
together whatever food

814

00:36:19,230 --> 00:36:21,900

we had, because  
refugees from the camps

815

00:36:21,900 --> 00:36:23,670

were beginning to come  
through on trains.

816

00:36:23,670 --> 00:36:27,480

And I remember going with my  
mother and my mother's aunt

817

00:36:27,480 --> 00:36:29,910

literally carrying whatever  
food in big pots that we could

818

00:36:29,910 --> 00:36:33,270

to the trains so that we  
could help feed those that

819

00:36:33,270 --> 00:36:35,610

were coming from the camps.

820

00:36:35,610 --> 00:36:38,850

And shortly after  
though, I had uncles

821

00:36:38,850 --> 00:36:41,100

who were in the  
Czechoslovak army in exile,

822

00:36:41,100 --> 00:36:44,670

and they were coming  
through, and tried

823

00:36:44,670 --> 00:36:46,800

to get us food parcels.

824

00:36:46,800 --> 00:36:48,980

The Czechoslovak army in  
exile got as far as Plzen,

825

00:36:48,980 --> 00:36:50,670

and then some of  
them managed to--

826

00:36:50,670 --> 00:36:53,330

they were looking for  
their families too.

827

00:36:53,330 --> 00:36:56,390

And one of the things that they  
managed to bring was chocolate,

828

00:36:56,390 --> 00:36:58,800

and I never remembered  
eating chocolate--

829

00:36:58,800 --> 00:37:00,230

I was rather skinny--

830

00:37:00,230 --> 00:37:02,430

and the only way I  
would eat the chocolate

831

00:37:02,430 --> 00:37:05,732

was to swallow it down with  
a glass of water in one

832



00:37:05,732 --> 00:37:06,940  
hand, chocolate in the other.

833  
00:37:06,940 --> 00:37:10,360  
I wish I still had those same  
taste buds because [LAUGHS] it

834  
00:37:10,360 --> 00:37:11,150  
kept me skinnier.

835  
00:37:11,150 --> 00:37:14,460

836  
00:37:14,460 --> 00:37:17,330  
Was your family in a displaced  
persons' camp at all?

837  
00:37:17,330 --> 00:37:18,270  
No, no.

838  
00:37:18,270 --> 00:37:22,840  
Slovakia returned  
slowly back to normal.

839  
00:37:22,840 --> 00:37:25,230  
Obviously, we never  
went back to our house--

840  
00:37:25,230 --> 00:37:28,660  
we got an apartment.

841  
00:37:28,660 --> 00:37:31,450  
The furniture in that apartment  
must have been left by Germans.

842  
00:37:31,450 --> 00:37:34,170  
Oh, the other thing that I  
remember is that there was

843  
00:37:34,170 --> 00:37:36,660  
Germans who had lived  
there and left in a hurry,

844

00:37:36,660 --> 00:37:41,220  
and my mother's aunt took me to  
loot some of those apartments,

845

00:37:41,220 --> 00:37:45,270  
much to my father's horror--  
he thought that was terrible--

846

00:37:45,270 --> 00:37:46,560  
for things like dolls.

847

00:37:46,560 --> 00:37:49,980  
There were then no  
toys, and a doll

848

00:37:49,980 --> 00:37:54,700  
that I acquired that  
way after the war.

849

00:37:54,700 --> 00:38:01,710  
But most of what we had owned  
had been destroyed or taken

850

00:38:01,710 --> 00:38:02,730  
away.

851

00:38:02,730 --> 00:38:06,710  
A few pieces of  
furniture were left

852

00:38:06,710 --> 00:38:09,220  
in my grandfather's  
house in Trnava, which

853

00:38:09,220 --> 00:38:12,540  
was a good substantial house.

854

00:38:12,540 --> 00:38:15,510  
It turned out ultimately that  
the person who lived there

855

00:38:15,510 --> 00:38:20,790

was the person who turned my  
grandfather in to the Nazis.

856  
00:38:20,790 --> 00:38:22,400  
He had-- or he was  
a Nazi himself,

857  
00:38:22,400 --> 00:38:26,070  
but he also managed  
to be a communist.

858  
00:38:26,070 --> 00:38:27,760  
In Slovakia-- things  
in Czechoslovakia

859  
00:38:27,760 --> 00:38:32,960  
things were fairly normal  
till 1948, till February 1948,

860  
00:38:32,960 --> 00:38:35,955  
and my father regained  
his printing plant.

861  
00:38:35,955 --> 00:38:37,330  
I started-- I went  
back to school

862  
00:38:37,330 --> 00:38:40,936  
for the last month of 1944,  
finished second grade that way.

863  
00:38:40,936 --> 00:38:41,436  
OK.

864  
00:38:41,436 --> 00:38:42,090  
[LAUGHS]

865  
00:38:42,090 --> 00:38:42,610  
Right.

866  
00:38:42,610 --> 00:38:43,710  
May.

867

00:38:43,710 --> 00:38:46,270

Right.

868

00:38:46,270 --> 00:38:51,660

And so that people  
started coming back,

869

00:38:51,660 --> 00:38:54,260

a few people that were left of  
my father's friends; very, very

870

00:38:54,260 --> 00:38:58,310

little family; and  
tried to rebuild

871

00:38:58,310 --> 00:39:03,320

lives, and some  
people stayed there

872

00:39:03,320 --> 00:39:09,700

after the Communist  
coup in 1948.

873

00:39:09,700 --> 00:39:12,210

My parents started  
talking about leaving

874

00:39:12,210 --> 00:39:15,010

because my father's perception  
was that he had had enough.

875

00:39:15,010 --> 00:39:17,440

He didn't want to go  
through this again,

876

00:39:17,440 --> 00:39:19,840

and besides, he had been  
after the war somewhat active

877

00:39:19,840 --> 00:39:24,040

in publishing a  
democratic journal.

878

00:39:24,040 --> 00:39:28,990

And his brother had been with  
the Czechoslovak government

879

00:39:28,990 --> 00:39:31,390

in exile, and then at the  
founding of the United Nations

880

00:39:31,390 --> 00:39:34,015

at the Bretton Woods Conference,  
and was with the International

881

00:39:34,015 --> 00:39:36,202

Monetary Fund, and my  
uncle here in Washington

882

00:39:36,202 --> 00:39:37,660

had the perception  
that it wouldn't

883

00:39:37,660 --> 00:39:41,830

do him any good to have family  
behind the Iron Curtain,

884

00:39:41,830 --> 00:39:45,190

and nor would do us  
very good to have

885

00:39:45,190 --> 00:39:47,330

family who was associated here.

886

00:39:47,330 --> 00:39:52,010

So we were able to get an exit  
visa on the strength of a visa

887

00:39:52,010 --> 00:39:54,800

to Canada.

888

00:39:54,800 --> 00:39:56,780

We never did go  
to Canada, though.

889

00:39:56,780 --> 00:39:59,650

We got to the United  
States, and both sides--

890

00:39:59,650 --> 00:40:02,730

both my mother and father  
had family in New York.

891

00:40:02,730 --> 00:40:04,480

It's very interesting  
that you say Canada.

892

00:40:04,480 --> 00:40:07,500

The Canadian government  
came over to Europe,

893

00:40:07,500 --> 00:40:09,040

and they were  
looking for farmers.

894

00:40:09,040 --> 00:40:11,140

That's exactly what we  
got as an exit visa.

895

00:40:11,140 --> 00:40:16,250

My uncle, the one with the  
IMF, married a Canadian.

896

00:40:16,250 --> 00:40:19,980

Her family had [a  
farm in Winnipeg,

897

00:40:19,980 --> 00:40:21,520

and on the basis of farming--

898

00:40:21,520 --> 00:40:23,870

of course, my parents  
both had farm backgrounds,

899

00:40:23,870 --> 00:40:25,780

so it was legitimate.

900

00:40:25,780 --> 00:40:27,460

My father and mother--

901  
00:40:27,460 --> 00:40:30,160  
That's unbelievable,  
because a number

902  
00:40:30,160 --> 00:40:33,760  
of individuals, survivors that  
I've spoken to have told me

903  
00:40:33,760 --> 00:40:36,250  
precisely that, except that--

904  
00:40:36,250 --> 00:40:37,540  
[INTERPOSING VOICES]

905  
00:40:37,540 --> 00:40:38,533  
They were not farmers.

906  
00:40:38,533 --> 00:40:39,450  
They were not farmers?

907  
00:40:39,450 --> 00:40:41,605  
Well, my parents at this  
point weren't farmers either--

908  
00:40:41,605 --> 00:40:42,040  
No, I understand--

909  
00:40:42,040 --> 00:40:44,000  
--but at least they had a  
legitimate farm background

910  
00:40:44,000 --> 00:40:45,667  
in the sense that  
they understood crops.

911  
00:40:45,667 --> 00:40:47,770  
They, believe me,  
hadn't had much

912  
00:40:47,770 --> 00:40:50,020

to do with the cultivation  
of those crops,

913  
00:40:50,020 --> 00:40:52,390  
but they did know  
how to manage farms.

914  
00:40:52,390 --> 00:40:54,722  
Can I come back just  
for two minutes?

915  
00:40:54,722 --> 00:40:58,570  
'44 to '48, you know,  
those four years.

916  
00:40:58,570 --> 00:41:01,290  
'45-- '44 was war.

917  
00:41:01,290 --> 00:41:03,910  
'45-- I'm sorry,  
I think I misspoke

918  
00:41:03,910 --> 00:41:05,964  
when I said I went to  
school in '44. '45.

919  
00:41:05,964 --> 00:41:07,330  
'45, OK.

920  
00:41:07,330 --> 00:41:07,940  
Right.

921  
00:41:07,940 --> 00:41:11,410  
'45 into '48.

922  
00:41:11,410 --> 00:41:14,060  
Was there a revitalization  
of the Jewish community?

923  
00:41:14,060 --> 00:41:14,560  
Do you--

924



00:41:14,560 --> 00:41:14,830  
Not really.

925  
00:41:14,830 --> 00:41:15,997  
--have any memories of that?

926  
00:41:15,997 --> 00:41:17,640  
No.

927  
00:41:17,640 --> 00:41:21,190  
There was-- I'm sure there  
was this small synagogue.

928  
00:41:21,190 --> 00:41:24,870  
I remember attending  
very few services.

929  
00:41:24,870 --> 00:41:28,090  
I had no Jewish  
education to speak of.

930  
00:41:28,090 --> 00:41:28,897  
There wasn't any.

931  
00:41:28,897 --> 00:41:31,480  
What about-- you had mentioned  
your father prior to that time,

932  
00:41:31,480 --> 00:41:33,340  
prior to the war, had--

933  
00:41:33,340 --> 00:41:37,090  
My parents, as I said,  
kept a kosher home.

934  
00:41:37,090 --> 00:41:40,573  
That ceased with the war.

935  
00:41:40,573 --> 00:41:42,490  
And as I said, my father  
was an observant Jew.

936

00:41:42,490 --> 00:41:45,310  
He still remained an observant  
Jew in spirit, but not

937  
00:41:45,310 --> 00:41:47,940  
in a literate sense.

938  
00:41:47,940 --> 00:41:49,780  
The first time he  
traveled on Sabbath

939  
00:41:49,780 --> 00:41:55,730  
was to get his sister out of  
Vienna after the Anschluss,

940  
00:41:55,730 --> 00:42:00,090  
and I think he sort of--  
a compact had been broken,

941  
00:42:00,090 --> 00:42:03,450  
and he had never shaved  
on Sabbath till Hitler.

942  
00:42:03,450 --> 00:42:05,000  
Did he ever talk  
about that with you?

943  
00:42:05,000 --> 00:42:05,500  
Oh yeah.

944  
00:42:05,500 --> 00:42:07,550  
We discussed it.

945  
00:42:07,550 --> 00:42:14,440  
So he still was observant in  
terms of being a believing Jew.

946  
00:42:14,440 --> 00:42:16,600  
I don't think my  
mother believed again.

947  
00:42:16,600 --> 00:42:20,438

948  
00:42:20,438 --> 00:42:22,730  
So you went to public school  
then, between '45 and '48?

949  
00:42:22,730 --> 00:42:23,990  
Yes I went to public school.

950  
00:42:23,990 --> 00:42:28,650  
I went to what was  
considered elementary school,

951  
00:42:28,650 --> 00:42:34,560  
and at the end of fourth  
grade, one could take an exam.

952  
00:42:34,560 --> 00:42:37,420  
Public school, elementary  
school, was for five years.

953  
00:42:37,420 --> 00:42:39,420  
At the end of four years,  
you could take an exam

954  
00:42:39,420 --> 00:42:41,460  
to get into the  
Gymnasium, which is

955  
00:42:41,460 --> 00:42:44,570  
like first form, sixth grade.

956  
00:42:44,570 --> 00:42:47,490  
And I passed that exam,  
and so I started--

957  
00:42:47,490 --> 00:42:52,170  
I sort of skipped a year,  
and started Gymnasium.

958  
00:42:52,170 --> 00:42:54,350  
And then the second--

959

00:42:54,350 --> 00:42:55,350  
then we started making--

960  
00:42:55,350 --> 00:42:58,050  
at the end of that,  
that would taken me '47.

961  
00:42:58,050 --> 00:43:00,540  
'48, I was first year Gymnasium.

962  
00:43:00,540 --> 00:43:06,870  
And in the fall of '48,  
they redid the schools,

963  
00:43:06,870 --> 00:43:08,820  
and Gymnasiums were  
considered too elitist,

964  
00:43:08,820 --> 00:43:11,450  
so they reshuffled  
the whole thing,

965  
00:43:11,450 --> 00:43:13,950  
and I remember starting some  
other school for a month or so,

966  
00:43:13,950 --> 00:43:15,760  
and then we left Czechoslovakia.

967  
00:43:15,760 --> 00:43:16,260  
OK.

968  
00:43:16,260 --> 00:43:18,940  
So-- in 1948, you were how old?

969  
00:43:18,940 --> 00:43:19,440  
11.

970  
00:43:19,440 --> 00:43:20,700  
11 years old.

971  
00:43:20,700 --> 00:43:24,450

Was there any consideration  
of going to Israel in '48?

972  
00:43:24,450 --> 00:43:27,032  
I'm sure there was, but I  
think our family was very much

973  
00:43:27,032 --> 00:43:29,490  
concerned about trying to get  
together with whatever family

974  
00:43:29,490 --> 00:43:32,940  
that was left, which was  
mostly in the United States.

975  
00:43:32,940 --> 00:43:36,980  
And although I do have a  
cousin who did go to Israel,

976  
00:43:36,980 --> 00:43:39,690  
they're now living here  
in the United States,

977  
00:43:39,690 --> 00:43:43,680  
but really the quest  
was to just go.

978  
00:43:43,680 --> 00:43:46,310  
And as long as this Canadian  
opportunity existed,

979  
00:43:46,310 --> 00:43:50,640  
then we could come  
to North America.

980  
00:43:50,640 --> 00:43:54,050  
We got as far as New York,  
and petitioned to stay.

981  
00:43:54,050 --> 00:43:57,150  
And actually, one  
of the efforts was

982

00:43:57,150 --> 00:44:00,210  
to pass a bill through Congress,  
a special private bill,

983  
00:44:00,210 --> 00:44:02,520  
to let us stay in the  
United States on the basis

984  
00:44:02,520 --> 00:44:06,600  
that we had family here, and all  
the destruction of the family

985  
00:44:06,600 --> 00:44:10,680  
to the extent that it had been,  
and then that wasn't necessary.

986  
00:44:10,680 --> 00:44:13,470  
I do have a copy of that bill,  
but that wasn't necessary

987  
00:44:13,470 --> 00:44:16,105  
because the Displaced  
Persons Act was passed,

988  
00:44:16,105 --> 00:44:18,480  
and we qualified under that  
to stay in the United States.

989  
00:44:18,480 --> 00:44:22,920

990  
00:44:22,920 --> 00:44:28,090  
This may-- I'm not sure how to  
ask the question, but you know,

991  
00:44:28,090 --> 00:44:29,650  
you're 11 years  
old, you're finding

992  
00:44:29,650 --> 00:44:31,870  
yourself all of a sudden  
in the United States.

993

00:44:31,870 --> 00:44:33,410  
I mean, did you have any--

994  
00:44:33,410 --> 00:44:34,540  
I hated it at first.

995  
00:44:34,540 --> 00:44:35,040  
Really?

996  
00:44:35,040 --> 00:44:35,860  
Yeah.

997  
00:44:35,860 --> 00:44:38,860  
Oh, for one, you know it's  
a very hard time to change.

998  
00:44:38,860 --> 00:44:41,850  
My English-- I had had some  
private English lessons.

999  
00:44:41,850 --> 00:44:44,690  
I joke in saying English  
is my fifth language.

1000  
00:44:44,690 --> 00:44:49,120  
It's probably the fourth or  
fifth because German, Slovak,

1001  
00:44:49,120 --> 00:44:51,970  
Hungarian, and then Russian--

1002  
00:44:51,970 --> 00:44:56,165  
we all had to study Russian,  
and so I had Russian in schools,

1003  
00:44:56,165 --> 00:44:57,790  
but I had some private  
English lessons,

1004  
00:44:57,790 --> 00:45:00,020  
and my mother particularly  
spoke good English,

1005

00:45:00,020 --> 00:45:01,840

and my father spoke

English as well,

1006

00:45:01,840 --> 00:45:02,830

and that's what

they spoke when they

1007

00:45:02,830 --> 00:45:05,163

didn't want me to understand,

so it was a good incentive

1008

00:45:05,163 --> 00:45:06,710

to learn.

1009

00:45:06,710 --> 00:45:09,273

I spoke some English, but

clearly with an accent.

1010

00:45:09,273 --> 00:45:10,690

I wore the wrong

kinds of clothes,

1011

00:45:10,690 --> 00:45:13,257

we wore short little dresses

when we were 11 in Europe,

1012

00:45:13,257 --> 00:45:15,340

and come here, and there

are sophisticated people,

1013

00:45:15,340 --> 00:45:18,160

and I was sort of out of it.

1014

00:45:18,160 --> 00:45:20,230

And when I came to

the United States,

1015

00:45:20,230 --> 00:45:22,720

we first came to

Bayonne, because that's

1016



00:45:22,720 --> 00:45:24,850  
what my family  
was, and first day,

1017  
00:45:24,850 --> 00:45:27,820  
besieged by all these people  
I'd never even heard of--

1018  
00:45:27,820 --> 00:45:30,110  
distant relatives, near  
relatives, whatever.

1019  
00:45:30,110 --> 00:45:31,580  
They all wanted to know,  
how do you like America?

1020  
00:45:31,580 --> 00:45:33,580  
And I thought-- the most  
absurd thing, you know.

1021  
00:45:33,580 --> 00:45:35,920  
Here I was in Bayonne  
one day-- right, come on.

1022  
00:45:35,920 --> 00:45:38,810  
[LAUGHS]

1023  
00:45:38,810 --> 00:45:42,860  
And clearly it was  
upsetting in that sense,

1024  
00:45:42,860 --> 00:45:46,420  
and then we moved  
to Woodside, Queens,

1025  
00:45:46,420 --> 00:45:48,362  
where I attended junior high.

1026  
00:45:48,362 --> 00:45:49,820  
Because my English  
wasn't terrific,

1027  
00:45:49,820 --> 00:45:51,820

they placed-- they had  
a homogeneous grouping,

1028  
00:45:51,820 --> 00:45:53,810  
and I got in with  
all the dummies.

1029  
00:45:53,810 --> 00:45:59,260  
So that was also upsetting,  
because except for the English,

1030  
00:45:59,260 --> 00:46:03,330  
which perhaps was somewhat  
challenging, nothing else was.

1031  
00:46:03,330 --> 00:46:04,210  
That was sort of--

1032  
00:46:04,210 --> 00:46:09,250  
we got here in November, and  
I started school in Bayonne

1033  
00:46:09,250 --> 00:46:11,400  
for six weeks, and then off to--

1034  
00:46:11,400 --> 00:46:14,320  
And I didn't miss any schooling  
because they transferred me

1035  
00:46:14,320 --> 00:46:16,210  
directly to seventh  
grade, although I

1036  
00:46:16,210 --> 00:46:20,320  
was a year younger than  
seventh grade should have been.

1037  
00:46:20,320 --> 00:46:24,160  
But then, off with the dummies  
in Woodside, and next year

1038  
00:46:24,160 --> 00:46:25,940  
they promoted me

to a better class.

1039  
00:46:25,940 --> 00:46:28,750  
And I think after the  
first year and a half,

1040  
00:46:28,750 --> 00:46:30,700  
I was fairly well adjusted.

1041  
00:46:30,700 --> 00:46:32,470  
For one, I had a  
second cousin who

1042  
00:46:32,470 --> 00:46:35,410  
took great pains in making sure  
that my English pronunciation

1043  
00:46:35,410 --> 00:46:38,870  
was good, so I got  
the "th" sound right.

1044  
00:46:38,870 --> 00:46:44,380  
I think I was young enough  
not to have an accent

1045  
00:46:44,380 --> 00:46:48,070  
and to sort of fit  
in, if you will.

1046  
00:46:48,070 --> 00:46:50,110  
During this whole  
period of transition--

1047  
00:46:50,110 --> 00:46:52,720  
I sort of alluded  
to this before--

1048  
00:46:52,720 --> 00:46:57,310  
was there any attempt  
to sort of describe

1049  
00:46:57,310 --> 00:47:00,460  
the sequence of events that were

taking place between yourself

1050  
00:47:00,460 --> 00:47:02,220  
and your father,  
yourself and your mother?

1051  
00:47:02,220 --> 00:47:04,122  
Now we are going to  
America because, we

1052  
00:47:04,122 --> 00:47:05,330  
are leaving Slovakia because?

1053  
00:47:05,330 --> 00:47:06,380  
Oh, yes.

1054  
00:47:06,380 --> 00:47:08,372  
Oh, sure.

1055  
00:47:08,372 --> 00:47:09,580  
It was clear, in other words?

1056  
00:47:09,580 --> 00:47:11,860  
Oh, yes.

1057  
00:47:11,860 --> 00:47:15,250  
I think-- yeah, I'm sure I was  
a good deal more politically

1058  
00:47:15,250 --> 00:47:20,580  
aware and savvy than one would  
consider children of that age

1059  
00:47:20,580 --> 00:47:23,580  
normally to be because  
that ruled my life--

1060  
00:47:23,580 --> 00:47:29,110  
politics mattered in a  
very significant way.

1061  
00:47:29,110 --> 00:47:31,570

So I knew exactly why we  
were leaving Czechoslovakia.

1062  
00:47:31,570 --> 00:47:32,570  
Right.

1063  
00:47:32,570 --> 00:47:36,820  
I remember vividly the  
time, the radio announcement

1064  
00:47:36,820 --> 00:47:39,100  
of the Communist takeover.

1065  
00:47:39,100 --> 00:47:43,267  
[? We'd ?] visiting  
family, some distant family

1066  
00:47:43,267 --> 00:47:44,100  
in a little village.

1067  
00:47:44,100 --> 00:47:46,142  
This must have been some  
little school vacation--

1068  
00:47:46,142 --> 00:47:48,670  
February, I don't  
remember why I was there.

1069  
00:47:48,670 --> 00:47:50,890  
I remember having eaten  
too many pickles that day.

1070  
00:47:50,890 --> 00:47:53,810  
[LAUGHS] And then came  
this announcement, and--

1071  
00:47:53,810 --> 00:47:56,320  
I knew what it meant.

1072  
00:47:56,320 --> 00:47:58,340  
And among my friends--

1073

00:47:58,340 --> 00:48:01,840  
and as I told you, my  
friends were children

1074  
00:48:01,840 --> 00:48:05,035  
of my parents' friends, Jewish.

1075  
00:48:05,035 --> 00:48:07,950

1076  
00:48:07,950 --> 00:48:12,140  
We discussed the pros and cons  
of communism and whatever.

1077  
00:48:12,140 --> 00:48:14,470  
Some of them, by  
the way, stayed.

1078  
00:48:14,470 --> 00:48:18,880  
One of the families'  
man was an attorney,

1079  
00:48:18,880 --> 00:48:21,820  
and did very nicely  
under communism.

1080  
00:48:21,820 --> 00:48:25,583  
Some of those young  
people have subsequently

1081  
00:48:25,583 --> 00:48:27,250  
come to the United  
States-- they managed

1082  
00:48:27,250 --> 00:48:29,020  
to get out in the Dubcek era.

1083  
00:48:29,020 --> 00:48:30,490  
One of the most  
astonishing things

1084  
00:48:30,490 --> 00:48:35,140  
is that the people I

met last when we were 11

1085

00:48:35,140 --> 00:48:38,480  
ended up being not  
very different from me.

1086

00:48:38,480 --> 00:48:41,220  
I thought what really  
shaped so much of me

1087

00:48:41,220 --> 00:48:43,750  
was my growing up in  
America, and yet here they

1088

00:48:43,750 --> 00:48:47,350  
went to school and  
university in Czechoslovakia.

1089

00:48:47,350 --> 00:48:53,380  
One of them is now an urban  
planner for the Meadowlands

1090

00:48:53,380 --> 00:48:56,950  
Authority, another one  
got a PhD in psychology.

1091

00:48:56,950 --> 00:49:01,990  
Very similar paths in  
terms of interests;

1092

00:49:01,990 --> 00:49:05,680  
and yet I'm sure that  
I'm as American as can

1093

00:49:05,680 --> 00:49:07,420  
be for heaven's  
sake in many ways

1094

00:49:07,420 --> 00:49:12,367  
in terms of what motivates  
me at this point.

1095

00:49:12,367 --> 00:49:14,200

They didn't come here  
till they were adults.

1096  
00:49:14,200 --> 00:49:15,640  
Right.

1097  
00:49:15,640 --> 00:49:19,960  
Going back again to when  
you were 11 years old--

1098  
00:49:19,960 --> 00:49:22,260  
coming to the United States.

1099  
00:49:22,260 --> 00:49:23,260  
How did you see the war?

1100  
00:49:23,260 --> 00:49:26,650  
I mean, was this a war  
against between superpowers,

1101  
00:49:26,650 --> 00:49:28,870  
between countries  
that were fighting?

1102  
00:49:28,870 --> 00:49:33,670  
How did you see the Jewish  
question, the issue of--

1103  
00:49:33,670 --> 00:49:36,130  
Well, I knew that war  
very much involved

1104  
00:49:36,130 --> 00:49:37,390  
Jews, and me particularly.

1105  
00:49:37,390 --> 00:49:41,740  
It was a very personal  
thing, and very much part

1106  
00:49:41,740 --> 00:49:47,410  
of my conscience and being.

1107



00:49:47,410 --> 00:49:49,990

And in that sense,  
political events

1108

00:49:49,990 --> 00:49:53,920

were very much more  
part of my being

1109

00:49:53,920 --> 00:49:57,520

than any of my contemporaries  
during adolescence.

1110

00:49:57,520 --> 00:49:59,710

This is the Eisenhower  
era during which

1111

00:49:59,710 --> 00:50:02,020

I became a teenager,  
went to college,

1112

00:50:02,020 --> 00:50:03,950

and I think my  
perceptions of the world

1113

00:50:03,950 --> 00:50:09,400

were very different than  
my classmates, my friends,

1114

00:50:09,400 --> 00:50:12,340

and I always did feel  
myself somewhat apart.

1115

00:50:12,340 --> 00:50:14,350

Not set apart--

1116

00:50:14,350 --> 00:50:16,050

I certainly did all  
the right things

1117

00:50:16,050 --> 00:50:19,630

in terms of dress and  
activities and whatever--

1118

00:50:19,630 --> 00:50:23,380  
but inside, in terms of my  
relationship with my peers.

1119  
00:50:23,380 --> 00:50:26,650  
There were things I knew  
they did not understand,

1120  
00:50:26,650 --> 00:50:29,260  
and I remember very much  
when Diary of Anne Frank

1121  
00:50:29,260 --> 00:50:31,910  
came out, and here was something  
with which I could really

1122  
00:50:31,910 --> 00:50:33,910  
identify, because those  
feelings, emotions, were

1123  
00:50:33,910 --> 00:50:35,910  
very much mine, although  
she was of course older

1124  
00:50:35,910 --> 00:50:37,498  
during that time.

1125  
00:50:37,498 --> 00:50:39,790  
And I remember being very  
upset with some of my friends

1126  
00:50:39,790 --> 00:50:41,457  
who didn't have the  
patience to read it.

1127  
00:50:41,457 --> 00:50:44,320

1128  
00:50:44,320 --> 00:50:46,840  
And I knew there was  
a tremendous distance

1129  
00:50:46,840 --> 00:50:49,500

in that sense.

1130  
00:50:49,500 --> 00:50:53,220  
Did you know that six  
million Jews had been killed?

1131  
00:50:53,220 --> 00:50:54,360  
Oh, yes.

1132  
00:50:54,360 --> 00:50:55,435  
I mean not just--

1133  
00:50:55,435 --> 00:50:56,310  
I'm sure I knew that.

1134  
00:50:56,310 --> 00:50:58,710  
I mean I knew the  
totality of the horror,

1135  
00:50:58,710 --> 00:51:03,465  
as well as the personal horror  
and emotions of people I knew.

1136  
00:51:03,465 --> 00:51:04,590  
When you were 11 years old?

1137  
00:51:04,590 --> 00:51:07,050  
When you--

1138  
00:51:07,050 --> 00:51:08,250  
Well, before.

1139  
00:51:08,250 --> 00:51:08,750  
OK.

1140  
00:51:08,750 --> 00:51:14,750

1141  
00:51:14,750 --> 00:51:18,030  
As soon as information  
became available

1142  
00:51:18,030 --> 00:51:21,410  
after the war in terms  
of the totality of it.

1143  
00:51:21,410 --> 00:51:22,410  
Did you want to hear it?

1144  
00:51:22,410 --> 00:51:24,785  
And there was always stories  
to who made it, who did not,

1145  
00:51:24,785 --> 00:51:26,940  
and how; and the  
stories that were told--

1146  
00:51:26,940 --> 00:51:28,080  
how did you survive?

1147  
00:51:28,080 --> 00:51:30,597  
And how did you  
survive the camps?

1148  
00:51:30,597 --> 00:51:33,180  
So there were-- I mean, between  
those years-- for example, '45

1149  
00:51:33,180 --> 00:51:33,990  
through '48.

1150  
00:51:33,990 --> 00:51:35,440  
Before coming to the States.

1151  
00:51:35,440 --> 00:51:38,323  
I mean, there was great  
discussion in your family,

1152  
00:51:38,323 --> 00:51:39,240  
between their friends.

1153  
00:51:39,240 --> 00:51:40,470  
As a matter of fact,  
one of the things

1154  
00:51:40,470 --> 00:51:42,762  
that we found very upsetting  
when we came to the United

1155  
00:51:42,762 --> 00:51:45,005  
States is, in contrast  
to the attention

1156  
00:51:45,005 --> 00:51:46,380  
that people paid  
to the Holocaust

1157  
00:51:46,380 --> 00:51:49,530  
now, how very little of  
the family that was here

1158  
00:51:49,530 --> 00:51:51,248  
wanted to know.

1159  
00:51:51,248 --> 00:51:53,040  
That's exactly what I  
was going to ask you.

1160  
00:51:53,040 --> 00:51:55,390  
This is a family  
that you came to.

1161  
00:51:55,390 --> 00:51:55,890  
Yes.

1162  
00:51:55,890 --> 00:51:57,140  
Did they ask?

1163  
00:51:57,140 --> 00:51:59,458  
Very little.

1164  
00:51:59,458 --> 00:52:00,750  
They really wanted to not know.

1165  
00:52:00,750 --> 00:52:07,000

1166  
00:52:07,000 --> 00:52:08,423  
Did you want to tell them?

1167  
00:52:08,423 --> 00:52:10,090  
I don't know that I  
wanted to tell them,

1168  
00:52:10,090 --> 00:52:12,220  
but I know my family-- my  
parents did, and my aunt

1169  
00:52:12,220 --> 00:52:13,780  
and uncle did,  
who came with us--

1170  
00:52:13,780 --> 00:52:17,298  
my father's sister and  
her husband and son

1171  
00:52:17,298 --> 00:52:19,090  
came with us simply  
because my aunt decided

1172  
00:52:19,090 --> 00:52:21,340  
she was going to be the last  
member of the family left

1173  
00:52:21,340 --> 00:52:21,910  
there.

1174  
00:52:21,910 --> 00:52:24,610  
They were not in any  
kind of political danger.

1175  
00:52:24,610 --> 00:52:28,040  
My uncle was a civil engineer,  
and he would be valuable,

1176  
00:52:28,040 --> 00:52:30,310  
even to a communist state.

1177

00:52:30,310 --> 00:52:33,040  
And my cousin was two  
years older than I,

1178  
00:52:33,040 --> 00:52:36,510  
had been bar mitzvah'd  
in Czechoslovakia,

1179  
00:52:36,510 --> 00:52:37,840  
and was much more upset.

1180  
00:52:37,840 --> 00:52:41,020  
I mean he probably would  
have wanted to go to Israel,

1181  
00:52:41,020 --> 00:52:42,923  
but he certainly  
didn't want to--

1182  
00:52:42,923 --> 00:52:44,590  
if he was leaving,  
he certainly wouldn't

1183  
00:52:44,590 --> 00:52:47,530  
come to the United States.

1184  
00:52:47,530 --> 00:52:49,420  
Why do you think they  
didn't want to know,

1185  
00:52:49,420 --> 00:52:52,180  
they didn't want to  
ask what had happened?

1186  
00:52:52,180 --> 00:52:57,290  
It's something I never  
discussed with them afterwards.

1187  
00:52:57,290 --> 00:53:02,380  
I think-- I'm not sure whether  
they had a sense of just this

1188  
00:53:02,380 --> 00:53:06,280

was too morbid, or because there  
must have been guilt-- they

1189  
00:53:06,280 --> 00:53:07,860  
were there, here, whatever.

1190  
00:53:07,860 --> 00:53:13,680

1191  
00:53:13,680 --> 00:53:15,480  
Did you yourself wonder  
where anybody else

1192  
00:53:15,480 --> 00:53:17,230  
was during this period of time?

1193  
00:53:17,230 --> 00:53:23,380  
I mean, after all if you  
were cognizant of the fact--

1194  
00:53:23,380 --> 00:53:25,560  
You mean, why weren't  
they doing more for us?

1195  
00:53:25,560 --> 00:53:27,170  
Yeah.

1196  
00:53:27,170 --> 00:53:29,670  
No, although obviously we  
paid very close attention

1197  
00:53:29,670 --> 00:53:31,610  
in clandestine radio  
to what was done.

1198  
00:53:31,610 --> 00:53:34,440  
In particular, don't-- in '46,  
'47, '48, when you were already

1199  
00:53:34,440 --> 00:53:36,080  
nine, 10, 11?

1200



00:53:36,080 --> 00:53:36,790  
No.

1201  
00:53:36,790 --> 00:53:38,360  
No, as was to why they weren't--

1202  
00:53:38,360 --> 00:53:39,460  
no.

1203  
00:53:39,460 --> 00:53:42,510  
I did not sort of dwell,  
how come this happened?

1204  
00:53:42,510 --> 00:53:47,080  
I think the one thing  
that you sort of skirted--

1205  
00:53:47,080 --> 00:53:49,050  
you asked me, how what  
was your relationship

1206  
00:53:49,050 --> 00:53:51,630  
with your schoolmates?

1207  
00:53:51,630 --> 00:53:53,670  
I think even after the  
war, one had the sense

1208  
00:53:53,670 --> 00:53:56,070  
that there was an underlying  
tone of anti-Semitism

1209  
00:53:56,070 --> 00:53:58,200  
among this segment  
of the population.

1210  
00:53:58,200 --> 00:54:01,170  
Someone didn't ask, how did  
this horrible thing happen?

1211  
00:54:01,170 --> 00:54:04,890  
Because there was anti-Semitism,  
and it was pervasive.

1212  
00:54:04,890 --> 00:54:09,660  
We also had tremendous  
experience with people

1213  
00:54:09,660 --> 00:54:12,680  
who risked a great deal--

1214  
00:54:12,680 --> 00:54:15,470  
if you will, the righteous--

1215  
00:54:15,470 --> 00:54:19,290  
but this anti-Semitism had  
existed for a long time,

1216  
00:54:19,290 --> 00:54:24,000  
it was there, and that there was  
a mechanism to put into place

1217  
00:54:24,000 --> 00:54:27,700  
is something that I only  
understood later on.

1218  
00:54:27,700 --> 00:54:29,700  
But no, I don't know that  
there was a question--

1219  
00:54:29,700 --> 00:54:33,690  
how come the United  
States did not do more?

1220  
00:54:33,690 --> 00:54:35,730  
There was concern  
about immigration,

1221  
00:54:35,730 --> 00:54:40,260  
there was concern as to what  
you can do in terms of--

1222  
00:54:40,260 --> 00:54:43,460  
In a personal way, our  
family was very helpful.

1223

00:54:43,460 --> 00:54:46,950

There were packages,  
support, and there

1224

00:54:46,950 --> 00:54:49,450

wasn't that sense that they  
abandoned us in anyway,

1225

00:54:49,450 --> 00:54:52,547

or that they personally  
could have done more.

1226

00:54:52,547 --> 00:54:53,880

I don't think we ever felt that.

1227

00:54:53,880 --> 00:54:57,580

1228

00:54:57,580 --> 00:55:00,280

When you came to  
the United States--

1229

00:55:00,280 --> 00:55:02,980

And you know, it may also be  
unfair to say [? that ?] they

1230

00:55:02,980 --> 00:55:04,480

did not want to know.

1231

00:55:04,480 --> 00:55:09,730

I think it also may have been  
if you will, a politeness

1232

00:55:09,730 --> 00:55:12,400

not to upset.

1233

00:55:12,400 --> 00:55:13,810

So who knows?

1234

00:55:13,810 --> 00:55:16,720

And I certainly didn't ask, how  
come you didn't ask questions?

1235  
00:55:16,720 --> 00:55:18,940  
And all sorts of  
other things in mind,

1236  
00:55:18,940 --> 00:55:22,990  
like getting to like  
ice cream sodas.

1237  
00:55:22,990 --> 00:55:25,000  
I don't mean to be silly  
about it, but you know,

1238  
00:55:25,000 --> 00:55:27,000  
there was a different  
kind of adjustment problem

1239  
00:55:27,000 --> 00:55:30,490  
rather than sort of a  
retrospective evaluation.

1240  
00:55:30,490 --> 00:55:33,118

1241  
00:55:33,118 --> 00:55:34,910  
When you came to the  
United States, I mean,

1242  
00:55:34,910 --> 00:55:37,520  
did you feel that--

1243  
00:55:37,520 --> 00:55:40,936  
you clearly felt when you're  
in Europe that you were--

1244  
00:55:40,936 --> 00:55:43,640  
that your life was  
definitely threatened?

1245  
00:55:43,640 --> 00:55:45,130  
You mean 1948?

1246

00:55:45,130 --> 00:55:46,590  
No, before.

1247  
00:55:46,590 --> 00:55:47,595  
When you were in hiding.

1248  
00:55:47,595 --> 00:55:48,095  
Oh sure.

1249  
00:55:48,095 --> 00:55:48,430  
When you went to the village.

1250  
00:55:48,430 --> 00:55:49,400  
Oh yes.

1251  
00:55:49,400 --> 00:55:52,680  
It was clear to you that  
you could easily be killed?

1252  
00:55:52,680 --> 00:55:53,180  
Yes.

1253  
00:55:53,180 --> 00:55:54,180  
Because you were Jewish?

1254  
00:55:54,180 --> 00:55:54,680  
Yes.

1255  
00:55:54,680 --> 00:55:56,347  
And when you came to  
the United States--

1256  
00:55:56,347 --> 00:55:57,140  
I mean, after.

1257  
00:55:57,140 --> 00:55:58,525  
I mean 1945, '46, '47, '48.

1258  
00:55:58,525 --> 00:55:59,900  
Back then I  
certainly didn't have

1259

00:55:59,900 --> 00:56:02,600

that feeling that my  
life was threatened

1260

00:56:02,600 --> 00:56:04,280

because I was Jewish, right.

1261

00:56:04,280 --> 00:56:06,370

Did you feel that  
you had been saved?

1262

00:56:06,370 --> 00:56:11,120

I mean, was there this all of  
a sudden tremendous relief?

1263

00:56:11,120 --> 00:56:14,260

I mean, obviously you were  
under tremendous duress.

1264

00:56:14,260 --> 00:56:16,449

No, I don't remember  
that sort of sensation.

1265

00:56:16,449 --> 00:56:20,847

1266

00:56:20,847 --> 00:56:22,680

I was very happy to be  
back with my parents.

1267

00:56:22,680 --> 00:56:27,960

1268

00:56:27,960 --> 00:56:28,500

OK.

1269

00:56:28,500 --> 00:56:32,580

So you came in '48 to  
Bayonne, from Bayonne to--

1270

00:56:32,580 --> 00:56:33,893

Queens, then to Forest Hills.

1271  
00:56:33,893 --> 00:56:37,004  
To Queens, then to Forest Hills.

1272  
00:56:37,004 --> 00:56:39,240  
That [? I ?] [? remember. ?]

1273  
00:56:39,240 --> 00:56:43,500  
And-- OK, then to Forest Hills.

1274  
00:56:43,500 --> 00:56:44,960  
Right.

1275  
00:56:44,960 --> 00:56:46,460  
You know what we're  
going to do now?

1276  
00:56:46,460 --> 00:56:46,770  
No.

1277  
00:56:46,770 --> 00:56:47,430  
We're going to take a break?

1278  
00:56:47,430 --> 00:56:48,432  
We're going to take a break  
for a few minutes, OK?

1279  
00:56:48,432 --> 00:56:49,148  
Great, OK.

1280  
00:56:49,148 --> 00:56:50,190  
Oh, let's get some water.

1281  
00:56:50,190 --> 00:56:53,500

1282  
00:56:53,500 --> 00:56:54,700  
How are you doing on time?

1283  
00:56:54,700 --> 00:56:55,200  
Good.

1284

00:56:55,200 --> 00:56:55,700

Not bad.

1285

00:56:55,700 --> 00:56:57,580

We just did an hour.

1286

00:56:57,580 --> 00:57:01,035