

During the break, Mr. Yungst, you told me that there was an incident you wanted to relate to me about your stay in Flossenburg. Would you like to talk about that now?

Yeah. When we arrived in Flossenburg, we wasn't too long there, maybe a month. And then they want to take us to Dachau. One evening, the SS, the Germans, come in in the barracks. There was other people too, not only Jewish people. They come in the Jewish barracks and they want to take us out just to go to Dachau.

The Russians-- the Germans say are-- the Americans are very closing into that camp and we have to evacuate us. So they did that. They start to take everybody out. And then I was afraid. Because it was already rumors that they're going to kill us outside, not to leave nobody alive for the Americans.

Right.

So I didn't know what to do. And I started to think and think. When I was laying there, so it start to-- you, all the Jews out, Juden raus, Juden raus, Juden raus, they come in. So in the meantime, I looked under the bleachers. An open board to go down. That means the barracks that were standing on such pieces.

Yes.

I don't know what they call it.

Planks.

Yeah. So I opened up that little board. It was broken a little. Then after that, I opened the other one. And let myself down there. I didn't know what is in there. It was limey, cold. That was a time where it was cold, in March-- April, March.

And I let myself down. And here, you see, I hear people going back and forth, running, out, out, out, out, out. And when I was there, I said maybe now, if I'm not going to go with the whole crowd, maybe I survive. Because I figured the Americans must be here in a day too. And that's what happened.

So when I was down, they threw everything out. It was quiet. No Jew. The whole barrack was cleared then.

Yes.

Now, I want to-- when I was down, it was so cold. So I look a spot where is a rock. I can lay down on the rock. I just have the stripes on. And it was dark. And when everything was quiet, I said let me come up there. Maybe I can mingle in with the Gentiles. This way I'd be safe.

Yeah.

So I looked for the spot where I was up. I couldn't find the spot to get up again. Then I figured, now I'm going to lay here and die the whole night, and nobody would know. Because I don't know where that opening is, what I opened before.

Yeah.

And I don't know, with God's help I find that place. I was groping around and I find that place. Come up, there was nobody in the barracks. So I took a piece of blanket, ripped that piece up, covered up my head, that they no see I'm Jewish.

Mm-hmm, yes.

So one of them. And outside, when I was outside, in another room, in another barrack [INAUDIBLE]. So my name wasn't like my mother called me, David. My name was Heinrich.

Yeah.

Heinrich, that's a Polish name. And this way, I was with them. Polish I speak.

Yeah.

Most was Polish people there, Polish and Russians. And speak-- and from there, they took us to-- on the way to Dachau, that was Kamh, a small town. And there the American panzers come in, one after another. The Germans, SS, that watched us, they disappeared. All of a sudden, we didn't see nobody.

How many days were you on the march?

I marched about two, three days, day and night. We marched--

No sleep.

No sleep. How could you sleep? We would sleep in the woods.

Yeah.

And it was raining. That the whole week was raining. And while we was walking, and the last time when we stopped, and we laid down, the American panzers start to go one after another, one after-- they see us laying there, skeletons, people. They tried to throw out their ration cards, chocolate, cigarettes, whatever they could.

I couldn't move. I couldn't move closer to the highway that I can grab something too or ask them for something. I was so sick, a skeleton.

And when everything was over, I was laying there, a day, two, I got typhus, the doctor told me. And they took all the people that are still alive laying there in the woods. And they took me in a hospital that the American army made from a German movie house in Kamh. The city was Kamh.

And they took me there too. And a bed. And was officers. There were nurses, doctors. And they start to take care of me and of other people. And by me there was laying people, now I see them laying alive. The next time, I see their dead. They just died.

And I was there in that camp maybe two or three weeks or more, till I start to feel better.

This was in what city?

Kamh.

K-A-M-H.

K-A-M-H. Kamh.

K-A-M-H.

Kamh, right. In lower Bavaria, this town.

Yeah. These people who died, they just expired from weakness.

Yeah, because they had the typhus too. Just dead. The nurse or the doctor was here let's say a half an hour ago, he keeps his eyes open. And he comes an hour later, he was laying in bed dead.

Yeah. So how long did you spend in the hospital?

In the hospital, I think about three, four weeks. Then they give me a suit and a hat that was oversized. And me as a skeleton, in such a big outfit, how I looked, I don't know. But they sent me in another camp where we recuperate after the typhus.

Yes.

This way we could eat more. In the hospital, we couldn't eat at all, just certain things, what they give us.

Yeah.

And after that, I start to feel better, feel better. But to tell you the truth, after maybe a year, I didn't know I was a man even. I didn't know I was a man. I didn't know whether I could have children. Was so everything bad in me.

The feeling and the--

The feeling and the sexual feeling, I didn't have at all. And after that, I was free to really-- free man, go anyplace I want. So there was American soldiers come there in that recuperation camp. And asked, who would want to work for us, for the American army? We give you jobs, tailors, kitchen, and that.

So I figured, I'm lonely. I have nobody here. So I went there. And that was in that little town, [PLACE NAME]. So Straubing was the big camp. And I was located at the little [PLACE NAME], [PLACE NAME], a little village. And I went to the Americans. They have my room and everything. And I had it very good. And 1, 2, 3, I start to get stronger, and stronger, and stronger.

Yeah.

And after that I went in the city, Straubing. Got apartment through the military, government. A family that didn't have children.

Yes.

And he was a big Nazi in the Nazi time. He was a banker. And the wife, she was a sweet woman, like a mother she was to me. So I got there this apartment, one room. And it was everything all right. And all of a sudden, I fell in such a depression that-- I see I have nobody. Wherever I go, I just see a shadow of me. I look in the mirror, who am I?

So I have a tendency, maybe I shouldn't live. And then Mrs. [? Lipp, ?] the wife of that German Nazi-- she was a sweet woman-- she said to me, Mr. Yungst, what is wrong? You're not the same. What you thinking? Tell me, what is bothering you?

So I told her. And she said, you know, Mr. Yungst, good that you tell me. Now let me tell you something. How about if your parents would be alive now, your brothers, your sisters, your mother and father? You think they would want you to die now? Or they would want you to live and start a new life and have a family and children?

So that really convinced me that there's still another world around.

Yes.

And I say, maybe you're right, Mrs. [? Lipp. ?] I'm going to try to do that. And after a while, I become the same man, like I used to be. And go out with friends, with girls. And then I met my wife.

So the optimism that you needed to carry you through in the worst part of the war came back to you through her.

That's right. She really--

She saved your life.

--saved my life.

Yeah. Yeah.

And we got married in that same Straubing. And she was invited to our wedding.

How did you meet your wife?

My wife, I meet her by coincident. She has cousins in Munich, in Bavaria, MÃ¼nchen.

Yes. And my wife, she lived with her brother in Bergen-Belsen, this Hanover, a city. So she met a girlfriend. But they happened to be from the same city. They went to visit her boyfriend in Straubing. So when she visited her boyfriend in Straubing, I was by her boyfriend's sister. They was married too.

And this way, when I come there to the sister, all together, my wife saw me, and I saw her. And there was love at first sight. And that what happened. Then we got married. And then we have three lovely children. I have a daughter, Etta. She lives in Edison.

She's named for your mother?

She's named after my mother.

You mother, yes.

And then we have-- the younger daughter is Hela. She's named after my wife's mother. And then my youngest son, Paul, he was the youngest. He is named after my father.

How did you learn about the rest of your family?

Yeah, I have something to tell you.

Please.

My brother, the youngest one, I know he's a small boy, maybe they killed him or maybe they sent him straight to concentration camp.

This was Abraham.

Yeah. But my sister, I couldn't believe. She was a beautiful girl, tall, gorgeous, like a movie star for the world she looked.

Yes.

I couldn't believe that they would do such a thing to that girl. They wouldn't send her to a camp. She must be alive. I traveled. I was all over. I looked for her. I see a face like her. I went to Israel. In Israel, that was on a Main Street-- I can't remember the name-- Rothschild Boulevard, Rothschild Boulevard. I saw a girl walking. She looked from the back like my sister, tall, because my father was tall, and nice legs. And I thought that's my sister. Such long hair.

And I follow her, follow her. I wanted to tell that I can see the face. And she probably realized I follow too far. So she turns around. And she said, why are you following me? So I told her. I thought that you're my sister. I have a sister like you. And you look so like her from the back, I thought-- and I couldn't believe that she is not alive anymore. I thought you are my sister. So she said to me, I wish I be your sister, but I'm not. That was just heartbreaking.

Yeah. Yeah. It-- you went to Israel to-- in the hopes that she might be there?

Yeah, yeah.

What was your life like in Straubing during the years after the war.

Because I was textile line, my father, and my grandfather even, when it was hand-- weaved looms, they called it. By hand you make the materials. So I bought a textile-- a small, I start very small textile factory machines. And I start to put them together. And buy the raw materials. and have little weaving factory. Had people working by me.

And after that, we decide to go to Israel, bring a textile factory to Israel.

Yes.

So we came to understand we come at the wrong time. That was after the independence. They have everything on ration card. I couldn't get the raw materials. So my machines were standing there in the-- what they call it-- the big, huge field. And the crates, one after another, one after another. And I have to pay the government for storage.

Yeah.

So I see that nothing is going to come out of that. Because I will not be able to pay as much. They're asking now more than I would get even if I have where to put them in or I would get the material. So I left everything for them. And I left Israel, back to Germany, back to Straubing. In Straubing, I had the factory again. And finally, I sold that. And I went to the United States.

Yeah. Yeah. When did you come to the United States?

In, I think, '53, '54. '54.

Yeah. Where did you settle when you came here originally?

My wife's sister, she come before us. She come from Bergen-Belsen. The lived in Newark on Horton Avenue.

Yes.

So we got apartment on top of Horton Avenue. They had that house. I don't remember the no number anymore. And we lived there for a time. I had three little children. In the wintertime, we have coal. So before I went out-- I got a job, I went out to work-- I had to go in the cellar and put coal in that stove until the heat come up. Was already the day gone.

Yes.

And in summer, it was too hot because you lived on top of the roof. But for the beginning, it was good. And then we got a house. I bought a house, accumulated a little money. We bought the house in Hillside. And from Hillside, we bought a little business in Union, a deli business. And I moved to Union.

And about two years ago, three years ago, I retired, semi-retired. Sold the business. Now I work a little, part time. And that was it. We live in Union. My kids, all three, are married. And my youngest son is a doctor in Sarasota, Florida. Has a little grandson. He's going to be four years in June.

Yes.

And they're expecting a second baby. So the whole family is happy now.

So you're all together and you're all happy.

And my children, two daughters that live here in New Jersey, but we see each other very often.

So you're close.

Yeah.

And do you speak to them about these experiences.

Yeah, yeah, they all know about this.

You share it with them.

Oh yeah, yeah.

Yeah, so there hasn't been any hiding of anything or evading?

No, no. Sometimes they say enough is enough. But it's good to remember. And when we get together, especially with my daughters-- with my son, is nothing he see on television that he wouldn't watch it that concerns what we went through, and Holocaust, and everything.

Because he wants to know.

He's really dedicated to that.

Yeah.

I want to know everything, dad. I want to know everything.

In what way, just to summarize or to conclude, in what way do you think these terrible experiences that you suffered and witnessed have given shape or meaning to your later life, to your life now? Do you think in some way they taught you something that you would like to transmit to us through this medium here?

What we went through and what I learned through the years that I was in concentration camps, there's only one thing, that people should be aware things can happen overnight, that what happened in Germany. Because in the beginning, they went slowly, slowly.

Yes.

Finally, when they see they have all the Jewish people and the Poles, they can do whatever they want and nobody's going to stop them. So what we people here should do, not only now, but for years to come, to be watchful what is going to happen. Who is behind things that they want to repeat that, what Hitler did.

And I think, not only the Jewish people, but the whole country in general, if they would be a watchdog of such things that happened before, then everything I think would be all right.

Thank you. You are indeed a survivor. And it was a great pleasure and privilege to be able to meet you, and to talk with you, and to see how strong and how good a person you are. And I Thank you for the privilege of sharing this--

The same goes for you too.

Thank you.

It was a pleasure--

Thank you.

--talking with you.

You're very welcome, and--

[MUSIC PLAYING]