

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:44,790

2

00:00:44,790 --> 00:00:48,690

We continue with Mr.  
Werdiger's testimony.

3

00:00:48,690 --> 00:00:52,380

Mr. Werdiger, how is it that  
you came to the United States

4

00:00:52,380 --> 00:00:56,080

instead of Canada or Israel?

5

00:00:56,080 --> 00:00:59,340

Well, simply, as I  
mentioned to you before,

6

00:00:59,340 --> 00:01:01,410

we came to the point  
where we wanted

7

00:01:01,410 --> 00:01:03,690

to leave Europe for good.

8

00:01:03,690 --> 00:01:11,220

And there was no one in the  
family to ask for some papers

9

00:01:11,220 --> 00:01:12,960

or whatever.

10

00:01:12,960 --> 00:01:17,100

And we heard-- and we  
worked in the offices close

11

00:01:17,100 --> 00:01:23,460

to HIAS, where one can register  
to Canada, Australia, Israel

12

00:01:23,460 --> 00:01:24,720

and the United States.

13

00:01:24,720 --> 00:01:28,290

And we did register to  
all the four countries.

14

00:01:28,290 --> 00:01:31,380

And luckily for  
us we got the visa

15

00:01:31,380 --> 00:01:35,880

to the United  
States pretty quick.

16

00:01:35,880 --> 00:01:39,110

And we came to  
the United States.

17

00:01:39,110 --> 00:01:42,190

And we are not sorry about it.

18

00:01:42,190 --> 00:01:43,170

Yeah.

19

00:01:43,170 --> 00:01:44,550

Where did you live?

20

00:01:44,550 --> 00:01:46,100

Where did you settle?

21

00:01:46,100 --> 00:01:50,160

Now, we came boat.

22

00:01:50,160 --> 00:01:54,690

We arrived here on  
February 2nd, '49.

23

00:01:54,690 --> 00:02:00,540

And they took us to HIAS  
on Lafayette Street,

24

00:02:00,540 --> 00:02:03,630

where we lived for six weeks.

25

00:02:03,630 --> 00:02:07,680

And it was like  
not a camp exactly,

26

00:02:07,680 --> 00:02:11,520

but I was separated  
from my wife.

27

00:02:11,520 --> 00:02:15,750

Men were separately  
and women separately.

28

00:02:15,750 --> 00:02:19,770

And, of course, we were  
thank God for this.

29

00:02:19,770 --> 00:02:26,130

And in the morning we had  
breakfast in the dining hall.

30

00:02:26,130 --> 00:02:28,290

Then we had lunch and dinner.

31

00:02:28,290 --> 00:02:33,270

Till after a week or two,  
we met some people we know.

32

00:02:33,270 --> 00:02:37,470

And they got us jobs  
and we started working.

33

00:02:37,470 --> 00:02:45,000

And then we met a fellow  
whose name was Archie Cohen.

34

00:02:45,000 --> 00:02:48,030

He was one of the  
executives in HIAS.

35

00:02:48,030 --> 00:02:50,130

And he took some interest in us.

36

00:02:50,130 --> 00:02:52,560  
And he took us home a few times.

37

00:02:52,560 --> 00:02:57,570  
And then found a  
furnished room for us

38

00:02:57,570 --> 00:03:01,540  
in [? UNRAA's ?] section  
of Brooklyn, where we moved

39

00:03:01,540 --> 00:03:07,710  
and we lived with a nice  
couple for two years.

40

00:03:07,710 --> 00:03:12,270  
In between, we lived a few  
months in Borough Park, 9th

41

00:03:12,270 --> 00:03:14,820  
Avenue, I think 46th Street.

42

00:03:14,820 --> 00:03:22,920  
And finally, we moved  
to [INAUDIBLE] Hills.

43

00:03:22,920 --> 00:03:29,430  
I guess it was 1951, where  
we lived for the next 20

44

00:03:29,430 --> 00:03:37,710  
years or 24 years, moving around  
from place to place, always

45

00:03:37,710 --> 00:03:39,600  
to better ourselves.

46

00:03:39,600 --> 00:03:42,810  
And we bought a little  
house in [INAUDIBLE] Hills.

47

00:03:42,810 --> 00:03:46,500

And then because  
of my type of job,

48

00:03:46,500 --> 00:03:51,540

where I was mainly  
employed here in Jersey,

49

00:03:51,540 --> 00:03:54,240

we moved 15 years ago to Union.

50

00:03:54,240 --> 00:03:59,090

As a matter of fact, I built  
myself my own house in Union.

51

00:03:59,090 --> 00:04:00,884

And here we are.

52

00:04:00,884 --> 00:04:01,800

Yeah.

53

00:04:01,800 --> 00:04:05,610

And both of your children were  
born here in this country?

54

00:04:05,610 --> 00:04:06,510

Yes.

55

00:04:06,510 --> 00:04:11,250

One is born in 1952 and  
one is born in 1955.

56

00:04:11,250 --> 00:04:14,310

They went to school in Queens.

57

00:04:14,310 --> 00:04:19,680

One, the older one, graduated  
Albany State School.

58

00:04:19,680 --> 00:04:22,830

Went later to a medical  
school, Cornell Medical School.

59

00:04:22,830 --> 00:04:26,370

And now he's a  
physician in his office

60

00:04:26,370 --> 00:04:28,825

in New Haven, Connecticut.

61

00:04:28,825 --> 00:04:35,040

The other one went to  
Rutgers and to Syracuse.

62

00:04:35,040 --> 00:04:39,000

And he graduated architecture  
school in London, England.

63

00:04:39,000 --> 00:04:40,710

Then he came back.

64

00:04:40,710 --> 00:04:43,650

And he took the master's  
of business administration

65

00:04:43,650 --> 00:04:44,880

in Columbia.

66

00:04:44,880 --> 00:04:48,390

And now he's a vice president  
of a big development

67

00:04:48,390 --> 00:04:50,460

company in Manhattan.

68

00:04:50,460 --> 00:04:52,650

Both doing very well.

69

00:04:52,650 --> 00:04:56,700

The older one is married,  
has two children.

70

00:04:56,700 --> 00:05:00,280

And we see each  
other pretty often.

71  
00:05:00,280 --> 00:05:05,650  
Have you been able to talk with  
them about your experiences

72  
00:05:05,650 --> 00:05:09,800  
and your wife too?

73  
00:05:09,800 --> 00:05:12,990  
I'll tell you, mainly  
what they know,

74  
00:05:12,990 --> 00:05:18,930  
and I think they know  
almost all the stories, is

75  
00:05:18,930 --> 00:05:25,080  
from what they heard, but  
not in a continuous talk

76  
00:05:25,080 --> 00:05:30,450  
or whatever, which not only  
that they avoided, but it's

77  
00:05:30,450 --> 00:05:32,640  
our fault. We avoided ourselves.

78  
00:05:32,640 --> 00:05:37,710  
We didn't want to share with  
them those experiences, which

79  
00:05:37,710 --> 00:05:41,640  
we don't know if  
it's good or bad.

80  
00:05:41,640 --> 00:05:45,900  
But I'm pretty sure  
that they both know.

81  
00:05:45,900 --> 00:05:49,110  
Because whenever friends  
come into our house,

82

00:05:49,110 --> 00:05:52,620

and most of our friends are  
from the same background,

83

00:05:52,620 --> 00:05:59,130

also survivors, so as usual,  
always comes to the same thing.

84

00:05:59,130 --> 00:06:01,830

And we would remind  
ourselves of those things--

85

00:06:01,830 --> 00:06:04,710

that time what happened,  
that time what happened.

86

00:06:04,710 --> 00:06:08,300

And automatically, they  
had to listen and hear

87

00:06:08,300 --> 00:06:10,540

it, what's going on.

88

00:06:10,540 --> 00:06:15,060

And they read quite a  
few books about it also.

89

00:06:15,060 --> 00:06:20,100

And then it's not that  
hard for them to realize

90

00:06:20,100 --> 00:06:21,880

they never had grandparents.

91

00:06:21,880 --> 00:06:26,380

92

00:06:26,380 --> 00:06:27,490

Yeah.

93

00:06:27,490 --> 00:06:30,820

Not even uncles or cousins.



94  
00:06:30,820 --> 00:06:33,095  
Did they ever remark on  
that and that aspect?

95  
00:06:33,095 --> 00:06:35,000  
Yes, they did.

96  
00:06:35,000 --> 00:06:35,500  
Yeah.

97  
00:06:35,500 --> 00:06:40,270  
No, they mainly  
told us, that, we

98  
00:06:40,270 --> 00:06:43,550  
keep telling them about  
staying close with the family,

99  
00:06:43,550 --> 00:06:44,350  
and so forth.

100  
00:06:44,350 --> 00:06:46,120  
They say, what family?

101  
00:06:46,120 --> 00:06:49,600  
They don't know  
what one experiences

102  
00:06:49,600 --> 00:06:53,548  
having a grandmothers,  
or an uncle, or a cousin.

103  
00:06:53,548 --> 00:06:54,340  
They don't know it.

104  
00:06:54,340 --> 00:06:58,672  
And they have no feeling for it.

105  
00:06:58,672 --> 00:07:01,590  
Yeah.

106

00:07:01,590 --> 00:07:05,790

And your grandchildren,  
how old are they?

107

00:07:05,790 --> 00:07:06,770

One is three.

108

00:07:06,770 --> 00:07:07,623

One is five.

109

00:07:07,623 --> 00:07:11,490

110

00:07:11,490 --> 00:07:18,290

Do you have any message that you  
take away from your experiences

111

00:07:18,290 --> 00:07:21,466

that you would like  
to share with us?

112

00:07:21,466 --> 00:07:27,720

No, I'll tell you, I think  
that we were, unfortunately,

113

00:07:27,720 --> 00:07:31,800

living in this period of time  
when those kinds of things

114

00:07:31,800 --> 00:07:32,850

happened.

115

00:07:32,850 --> 00:07:38,950

And we hope that those  
won't happen again anywhere

116

00:07:38,950 --> 00:07:40,560

at anytime.

117

00:07:40,560 --> 00:07:44,880

But at the same, we would like  
the young generation to know,

118  
00:07:44,880 --> 00:07:49,050  
to beware of any  
little things which

119  
00:07:49,050 --> 00:07:53,790  
they may detect that may  
lead to this type of behavior

120  
00:07:53,790 --> 00:08:00,420  
and the consequences which  
they heard and they saw

121  
00:08:00,420 --> 00:08:01,910  
came out of it.

122  
00:08:01,910 --> 00:08:05,130  
Have you gone back to  
Krakow or to Poland?

123  
00:08:05,130 --> 00:08:06,390  
Yes.

124  
00:08:06,390 --> 00:08:09,990  
After thinking for  
years and years,

125  
00:08:09,990 --> 00:08:15,060  
which, of course, we all  
mainly have bad memories of,

126  
00:08:15,060 --> 00:08:21,690  
but still we felt that once at  
least before we are gone let's

127  
00:08:21,690 --> 00:08:26,280  
go and see how these  
things look there.

128  
00:08:26,280 --> 00:08:34,470  
And especially, at least to  
visit the graves, which we did.

129

00:08:34,470 --> 00:08:37,440

Yeah.

130

00:08:37,440 --> 00:08:39,539

Is there anything  
about that experience

131

00:08:39,539 --> 00:08:41,760

that you would like to mention?

132

00:08:41,760 --> 00:08:48,300

It's uh-- I don't know how  
much accomplishment we made,

133

00:08:48,300 --> 00:08:53,790

but we felt a relief  
that we were there.

134

00:08:53,790 --> 00:08:56,940

We actually didn't  
see any monuments,

135

00:08:56,940 --> 00:09:00,750

which we knew all--  
like we went to Belarus,

136

00:09:00,750 --> 00:09:03,210

which is on the Russian border.

137

00:09:03,210 --> 00:09:05,790

There's one little  
monument there

138

00:09:05,790 --> 00:09:08,850

commemorating the 600,000 Jews.

139

00:09:08,850 --> 00:09:10,290

We know that there are--

140

00:09:10,290 --> 00:09:12,210

our parents were between them.

141

00:09:12,210 --> 00:09:15,350

142

00:09:15,350 --> 00:09:18,530

Now in Plaszow, there's  
a little monument.

143

00:09:18,530 --> 00:09:21,950

And about-- which I  
remember about the place

144

00:09:21,950 --> 00:09:26,900

where my brother and  
his wife was killed.

145

00:09:26,900 --> 00:09:34,880

Otherwise, we visited the  
graves in Krakow and Auschwitz.

146

00:09:34,880 --> 00:09:40,100

And that's the whole thing  
which we could go and look at.

147

00:09:40,100 --> 00:09:42,770

Otherwise, we have no  
interest whatsoever.

148

00:09:42,770 --> 00:09:46,790

It's true, we went to  
our birthplace in Krakow.

149

00:09:46,790 --> 00:09:49,140

My wife is from Czarnow.

150

00:09:49,140 --> 00:09:50,380

We went from Czarnow.

151

00:09:50,380 --> 00:09:52,200

She saw her house.

152

00:09:52,200 --> 00:09:57,130

But she didn't go inside

and I didn't go inside.

153

00:09:57,130 --> 00:09:59,440

We just looked from far away.

154

00:09:59,440 --> 00:10:05,720

And then I was walking in Krakow  
on the streets which I know

155

00:10:05,720 --> 00:10:08,090

and I remember very well.

156

00:10:08,090 --> 00:10:09,930

The streets are there.

157

00:10:09,930 --> 00:10:13,397

The buildings are falling apart.

158

00:10:13,397 --> 00:10:14,480

There are no people there.

159

00:10:14,480 --> 00:10:17,490

160

00:10:17,490 --> 00:10:19,420

No people at all or no Jews?

161

00:10:19,420 --> 00:10:23,220

No, there are people,  
but you walk around

162

00:10:23,220 --> 00:10:25,860

like complete strangers.

163

00:10:25,860 --> 00:10:29,360

Everything is strange to you.

164

00:10:29,360 --> 00:10:31,350

Everything is neglected.

165

00:10:31,350 --> 00:10:35,045

The synagogue, there's  
no one active synagogue.

166  
00:10:35,045 --> 00:10:36,460  
They're falling apart.

167  
00:10:36,460 --> 00:10:40,480  
The ones they have, they  
make storages out of it.

168  
00:10:40,480 --> 00:10:45,895  
And it's-- there's one little  
synagogue with a cemetery,

169  
00:10:45,895 --> 00:10:49,445  
where it's supported  
by the American Jews,

170  
00:10:49,445 --> 00:10:54,190  
so still the few old  
Jews, the sick ones,

171  
00:10:54,190 --> 00:10:56,980  
come there every Saturday.

172  
00:10:56,980 --> 00:10:59,080  
So do the tourists.

173  
00:10:59,080 --> 00:11:05,210  
And they're begging for  
money and things like this.

174  
00:11:05,210 --> 00:11:08,660  
You mentioned something before  
we started the interview

175  
00:11:08,660 --> 00:11:12,610  
about visiting  
Mauthausen or seeing--

176  
00:11:12,610 --> 00:11:16,820  
Yes, since I was liberated,  
although I wasn't in--

177

00:11:16,820 --> 00:11:22,830  
I didn't go to Mauthausen which  
is, I think, four or five hours

178

00:11:22,830 --> 00:11:25,940  
ride by car from Vienna.

179

00:11:25,940 --> 00:11:32,220  
And I hope to be there this  
year if everything goes right.

180

00:11:32,220 --> 00:11:36,380  
And maybe we will go  
also to Theresienstadt,

181

00:11:36,380 --> 00:11:41,536  
where my wife was liberated,  
which is not too far away.

182

00:11:41,536 --> 00:11:42,760  
It's near Prague.

183

00:11:42,760 --> 00:11:45,840

184

00:11:45,840 --> 00:11:49,830  
I'd like to thank you  
for sharing your thoughts

185

00:11:49,830 --> 00:11:50,970  
and your memories with us.

186

00:11:50,970 --> 00:11:51,470  
Thank you.

187

00:11:51,470 --> 00:11:56,670

188

00:11:56,670 --> 00:11:58,220  
OK.



189

00:11:58,220 --> 00:12:23,076