

Good morning. I'm Bernard Weinstein from the Kean College Holocaust Resource Center. I am interviewing Helen Raff, who lives in Elizabeth, New Jersey, and is a survivor of the Holocaust. Mrs. Raff, I'd like to welcome you. And I'd like you to tell us a little bit about the place you come from in Poland.

OK. I start off by saying, I'm from Poland. And the city is Jedrzejów. I was born there. And I assume that my parents were born there, too.

Can you give me a little sense of where it is geographically in Poland?

Geographically, it's central Poland, exactly between Warsaw and Krakow, right in the middle.

I see.

Yeah, a nice, little city. The population was 32,000, and a clean, very clean city. We had some schools. And--

What percentage of the population was Jewish?

I really cannot tell you exactly, but it was a smaller population than half was Jewish in Jedrzejów. Yeah. We had one big synagogue, and the rest of them were just like really just like a shtetlekh, whatever, just houses of worship.

And what did your parents do for a living?

My father was in transportation. Yes, my mother was a housewife with six children.

And where were you in the family constellation? Were you the youngest or middle, oldest?

No, I'm the second from the oldest. Yes, I had an older sister, then was myself. Then I have a brother, and I have three younger sisters, I had three younger sisters. It was five girls and one boy.

Were you the only one of your sisters who survived?

I am the only one from the sisters, yes.

And your brother, also?

Yes my brother also survived.

Yes. Growing up in your city, did you experience any anti-Semitism?

Yes. Yes, there was quite a bit of Jews-- we were allowed to come to sports places, but plenty time being beaten up and being afraid to go.

Right.

Yes, and there also was picketing from Polish youngsters and elderly, picketing Jewish establishment stores with the slogan "Don't buy Jews."

This is even before the war.

Oh, yes, this is before the war.

Yeah. So you had experience even before the Germans came in of what--

Yeah, incidents like that, being like coming before Easter, like right now, at night, when everybody congregated in the churches. You better don't be in the streets before you're going to be beaten up.

Yeah. And what was it like being Jewish at the time? Were just observant people?

Yeah, not strictly, but observant for Kashruth and everything else. And my father didn't have a beard or just a hat.

So you were not necessarily conspicuous as Jews. In other words, you didn't stand out--

As Jews? Oh, yes, we stand out as Jews. Oh, yeah. Yes.

Yeah. Did you go to school?

Yes, I did go to school. I finished public school, which is seven years, like equivalent to high school here. Yes, day in and day out.

What were the schools like for you? What were the schools like?

This was a nice place of learning. I mean, they taught you reading, writing, arithmetic, and of course, even sewing and all, gymnastics, and all that. Yes, mostly we had ladies teachers.

Yeah. Did you experience any kind of prejudice or any kind of anti-Semitism in the schools?

If there was any, I personally didn't feel any. I was very good in gymnastics, and I was very good in school. So I had my friends, probably mostly Jewish friends, but some Polish young ladies, too.

Yeah. And you did have friends in both groups, among Jews and among Poles?

Yeah, I had friends, but not close friends, not close friends from-- were Jewish friends, yes, very close. And it was a very nice youth in Jedrzejow, which they came together. and Like the Mizrachi and all the others, you came. You belonged there. And you came for meetings and all different things.

Yeah. Did you have a large extended family also in the city, uncles, aunts, cousins?

Yes, from both sides, from my father's side and from my mother's side, uncles, aunts, cousins from both sides.

Are there any early memories that you particularly treasure or particularly remember?

Yes, I never knew my grandparents, from my mother's side, only a grandfather. But there was-- my grandfather's brother was alive. And it came holidays. It was a strictly holiday, because they always wanted to be together with everybody.

Yeah, and reminiscing about how it was when they were growing up, and all different. Yes.

Yeah. When did you first feel that you were in danger?

Well, when the war broke out.

In '39.

In '39. Before, we did not expect right away this, but we knew the war broke out September 1, 1939. And I think, if I'm not mistaken, the same day the German army was in our town.

Yes.

Before the army came in, there were bombings, aeroplanes, a lot of destruction in the city. And then the army marched

in.

Did you expect that this would happen?

With their right mind, nobody probably could expect, not only me being young, but not even my parents, my father, expected something like this could happen to civilian people, to women, children. We thought that if it's a war, it's only between the armies. But something like that was simply unbelievable, what happened.

Can you remember any specific incidents of the very beginning?

Very much. The minute the army came into the square of the town, they right away picked out three for sure, probably more, prominent Jews. And they simply, in view of everybody, they just, with no specific reason, they shot each and every one of them.

And this gave us a feeling like probably you obey me, because you can be next. And this was something that it's an unbelievable sight. From the same moment when this happened, it looks like my father was in the square.

And then he ran home, maybe about a block and a-- we were probably a block and a half from the square. And coming then, he kept looking back if the army comes into our street. And they did. He got so scared that he fell and had a heart attack.

He survived it. He survived it, but this was the-- but it looks like the soldiers or the SS, whoever it was, they probably noticed him, too, because they came into our square of where we were living, and took out a religious Jew. And he was with a talus praying in tefillin. He took him out to the middle of the square where we were living, and cut his beard. And when he objected, he was beaten.

Did you see this incident repeated over and over?

It was repeated a lot of places when they see, yes, assembling Jews with beards, and cutting their beards, the pious. And-- go ahead.

Please, no do you want to continue?

And it was a trying thing for young people to see something like that, that one human being can do this to another with no reason.

You were still in school at the time this happened.

Yes. Oh, no, I was out of school already, because at 14-- we start school at 7 and at 14 you were finished. Yes, I was out of school.

What were you doing at the time the war broke out?

At the time, at the war, I was learning a trade, to sew. But I don't remember-- either it was no work or whatever, but that day, because of the war, that day I was no place other than home.

Right. Yeah. What was the mood in your household at the time?

Oh, very scary mood, very scary mood. There was like the old-fashioned kerosene lamps, no electricity. We were afraid even to put this on-- very scary, very scary.

Did your father lose his job as well?

Oh, yeah, of course. That's right. Yeah, right away.

Yeah.

We even tried somebody from the neighbors, which they're Christian. Maybe they take over and we split the income, whatever. But they take everything or that's it.

Had you thought of trying to escape or running away or any kind of--

Yes, amongst a bunch of friends, we started to talk about it. This was when came out word that a certain day in December-- this is September when it started, but in December, all the Jews have to wear the Star of David, the yellow star. And by that time, that whole bunch of friends were talking amongst themselves and getting ready to escape.

And December, I think the 14th, we finally took to that plan. And this time, I don't know if it was four couples. No, it was a mixed group, a mixed group, girls and boys, friends.

It's the fact that my father, that time, not through the center of the city, took us to the train station. Because we had the means to get there. And one word what really comes back and plagues me-- by saying goodbye, the father said, almost like addressing all of us, look, children, we wouldn't run away and leave us behind, but you are you going. But [SPEAKING YIDDISH].

And this is just embedded in me. And we started to travel. We started to travel.

Were your sisters and brother with you, also?

This was a very big, big thing. My sister was engaged to our cousin, and they both wanted to come with us, too, and were prepared already, would have your shoes and everything else. And the last minute my aunt, my cousin's mother, said, we depend on you for our survival. So where are you going? And the last minute, they changed their mind because of that, and they stayed behind. So.

This was your oldest sister?

My oldest sister, yeah.

And what about the others?

Oh, the others were too young. The others were too young.

I see. So you and your brother were part of the--

No, my brother was not part of me, only myself. My brother was not part of me. My brother had his own story.

It was a law that every Jewish man has to go to work for the Germans to clear the debris from-- whatever they needed. And when it came to my father's turn, he was sick. As I said that he was sick.

Somebody had to go, so my brother volunteered. And this is the reason that my brother is alive today. They sent wherever he was sent to work, but then he has his story, too.

Because a while later, there was the [NON-ENGLISH], where they close the ghetto. And they were sent to the place where my brother was working. And the trains, the-- [COUGHS] excuse me. And the cattle trains were waiting for them.

And my brother, as young as he was, this is-- those are almost his words. I wasn't there. And he saw the family. And he saw my father taking the youngest child by his hand, and trying to walk away from the train. And the Polacks-- it was not a German, but they had a name by themselves, Volksdeutschen.

Yes.

He came and grabbed my father. And he pushed him back into the train. My brother seen this, and to this day, he said the older he gets, the more it bothers him. And I don't have to say from Treblinka, we had very, very little survivors.

Yeah, that was the last time they saw each other.

Each and every one of them went there. And when I came to my sister, my older sister with my cousin, which she was-- looks like they got married, because when she went to-- I don't know where she disappeared, because she did not go together with my family. She was pregnant, and they sent her to-- so this is how my immediate family. But everybody from Jędrzejów was in Treblinka.

Yeah. And what happened to you?

OK, well, we were traveling and going somewhere. So first, we met up with people, strange people. And one of them said that I had an idea to go and try to cross the Russian border, go to the Russian side. We started off going there.

And we traveled very, very scared, because on the trains was no way to be Jewish.

Right.

Well, we finally came to [? Lzhansk ?] and down there, the Germans were already. And this is where they got us to work for them. They came to us.

We came-- [? Lzhansk ?] was completely clear of Jews. But it was a Jewish committee for people like us that travel, to give them a night where to sleep or whatever. And this place is where the SS came and picked us up.

And we had to go to their headquarters. In the back of their headquarters, there were a well. And we had just fetch the water a whole day, our whole day, with very deep well. And you only-- and this is what we did.

What was the name of the place we went to?

[? Lzhansk. ?]

Can you spell it, please?

Oh, let me write it if I can.

If you would.

Where should I?

Right here is fine.

On top?

Yes.

All right, and this was in Russian and Soviet territory, or this was in--

No, this was not in Soviet. This was still German. Yeah, and to this place was-- looked like Jews from Lodz were coming in droves, running away. Must have been very close to them, too.

So we met up with them. And from there, after they didn't need us already to fetch the water for them, they send us to the border line with the Russians to dig ditches or trenches, shooting somebody. And down there, at night, we ran away.

We ran away. And this must have been probably the outskirts from [? Lzhansk, ?] from the other side of the water. OK, and down there, we also find right, not too far away from the-- I don't know, was not a deep water, but we had to go through a water. And down there, they took us in, also for the night, because they were afraid that if the Russians find us in the streets, they would arrest us and take us into the police station. So we were there a night.

So who took you in?

They allow us to stay there. They had like a big warehouse with something, whatever. They probably were business before and we stayed there, not only myself--

These are Poles.

No, no, those are Jewish.

Jewish.

Those were Jews, yeah, those were Jews. And we stayed there, a big group, almost a big group, until they said that they have a time which-- they arrested people. What the Russian arrested, they let them go, take them to the train. And they are singly or two in a line.

So they'll tell us when and how to join that line and go to the train with them. And they did so, one by one. And not even-- it was a big group, so not even the whole group managed to go this time.

Well, the train took us to the Lviv. OK, and then in Lviv, we came in to Lviv, and we came into a bombed-out church-- no windows, maybe not even doors. But no windows I remember, like it just would be right now. And we stayed there.

And we had to-- we went right away to sleep, because it took quite a while. When we came already, it was dark. And the next morning, we start going out in Lviv and seek to buy some bread or whatever to eat.

So we already couldn't because the Russians-- how should I say it, that the money was completely worthless. They recalled the Polish money and you couldn't do-- on trucks with a loudspeaker, they announced that you cannot spend Polish money anymore. Behind this truck came another truck and said if you want to have passes to buy some food, come with us and register to go to Russia. And you'll get all the privileges, what they allow you to.

So of course, if you're hungry, this is what you do. So we waited there in line, took probably more than a day to wait because all the people were doing that. And by the time they documented each and every one of them, of us, so the next day, we got cards from them for food.

And when they finished registering everybody, they just got us together and put us on a train, a cattle train. And we were traveling probably three, four, five days. So we wind up in Ural.

In the Urals, Ural Mountains.

Yeah, Nizhny Tagil. Yeah, that's right. And down there, there were also single people, got between single people to live, single. And if you were married, you got a room for yourself. They right away said that.

Now, what year was this?

This was the beginning of 1940. 1940, yeah. 1939, we left home. This was the beginning of 1940.

So it was wintertime.

Oh, sure, very much wintertime, yes, very much winter time. When we came to the Urals, Poland has a very, very cold climate, too, with a lot of snow. But what we really witnessed there was impossible.

And this is how we started in Russia. We had to go to work, and very hard work. And if you worked, you got your-- I think 4 grams of bread and a soup. And if you didn't work, you didn't get anything.

But the work that we got was very hard. Ural has a lot of hills, which they have there ore, which is there, too. And not only just ore, but this place was ore. And they were just blasting those hills to uncover that.

And we had to work with that, which is very heavy. And I worked. As a young lady, I worked put down tracks for the little wagons to pass by full with ore. And they will go and shipped, probably, somewhere to make something out of it.

Yeah, I was going to ask you what they were using the ore for.

well, this is very, very expensive metal. I don't know what they were using for.

For weapons?

I have absolutely no idea. They wouldn't let us know where this is going or whatever. But this is very precious metal.

And it's not only ore. They had those hills all over the place in Nizhny Tagil with-- and from that heavy work, and I got sick. Because the rocks were so big and heavy that you couldn't get it with the shovel, but you have to pick it up with your hands.

And just bending, and picking up, and throwing into that basket till you fill it up in a whole day, it's very heavy work. And I did something to my back. And that time, the manager from this place-- I remember his name till today-- was [? Grazhdanin ?] [? Rogozin. ?] And I don't know, he took some kind of a liking.

And he said, if I get better, I don't go back to this work, but he will give me something light, which he did, too. And that time he took me in to a factory with just machinery, which those machineries were helping those hills to get power to blast the hills open. And there was there probably more than 10 machines.

It was easier work, but you have to be very quick. You have to oil a whole day. You start with one side. Can I use my hands?

Sure. Of course.

I can start with one side. By the time you came around this way, it was time to start again. And you have to be very quick. If not, the machine would break down if it's not oiled.

So it's almost like running in a factory probably as big as a football stadium to run. But it was much better than being outside. This was already hot water in there and warm from the machinery. It was already like--

In this place I worked till the war, Germany and Russia starting the war. So the Russians had ammunitions and who knows what else, and the Ukraines. And they were moving everything from down there deeper into Russia that the Germans shouldn't take a hold of it. OK, so we had to--

So now we're in 1941.

This one-- maybe not right away '41. You know what I'm saying?

Yeah.

No, it couldn't be in '41, because I tell you exactly. When we first came, I should have mentioned that I got married with a friend that came from home. And 1941 June, my daughter was born.

And she was a year old when they really made us move. Because she was very little when she-- she didn't even walk then. And we had to move away from there.

So we start traveling all through Russia, through Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan. If you maybe know by now which this place is very, very familiar, it's Frunze. It's a big city. And also from people where we go.

And we had enough cold weather, so we started off for warm weather. So we went to Tashkent. And down there, we went. Nobody knew. There was thousands of people sleeping really outside in a park, just like that.

And from there, we were there a while, which I cannot recall exactly how long. And then we wind up in Bukhara. And this is where we stayed already till the end of the war, when we try to-- but not right away. The Russian-- everything was if they let you do it. If they let you do it.

Then there came word that whoever wants to go home, register. You have to register. So we registered. But registered, they came probably-- it took as long as the letter time from '45, because we came to Germany still back, was '45. Then finally, our papers came through and we could travel home.

And also with cattle cars. And on the train heading home, the train started already, and looks like the SS-- and no, this is the [INAUDIBLE] or just simply people who were there. And they asked for all paperwork we had completely to surrender.

And if you didn't surrender, or sometimes you didn't, it looked like to them like it's not enough, they were looking through your belongings. And they took all our documents. If we ever had a picture or whatever, they took everything away.

And then finally, we came with Poland. The train stopped in Poland, which was not in our city, but in Silesia. But I didn't want to go, because we started to hear what's-- when we're starting to travel back home, we found out what happened, what happened with everybody, what happened in Poland.

Part in Russia, we didn't know that the atrocities are so bad. As a fact, when the war stopped, I wrote a letter to one of our friends, a Christian. And I figure if somebody is alive, this is the place, probably. But they are going to come and look for somebody else.

Sure enough, my brother when he was released, his last place, I don't know. I know he was in Buchenwald. So he went and he found mail from me. But he suspected, because they knew that I am in Russia. Because when I arrived in Russia, I wrote letters home. But I never received any from them, any letters from them. So that's--

And then we started to look for one another. Any place we traveled, in Germany, and in Poland, any place there was a little committee in a little room, no paper to write, so everybody wrote on the walls. "I am so-and-so with my name and looking for family so-and-so." And when I moved from one city to another, find another little committee, something Jewish. And I wrote.

This is how I found my brother, through the joint, too. We registered. And when I came to Germany, I was in a concentration camp-- not that we couldn't go, but there was a concentration camp there, which is Ziegenhain in Germany.

And this is where we occupied the-- we were there until I found my brother. When I found my brother, he came for me. At that time, I already had another child, my other daughter.

Was this a concentration camp or a DP camp?



I think a DP camp. Yeah, that's right. That's why I say that we were allowed to-- yeah, a DP camp.

Yes, was a kitchen [? fine. ?] You know, you went for some food. Well, living was not exactly living but it was better than being-- they fed us.

And then when my broth-- the same day that he was notified from the HIAS where I am, because I did that. And he did that. I was notified, too. And the same day I was notified, maybe a half hour later, my brother walked in right to the camp, to my door.

He came probably to the office, and they told them in which barrack I am or whatever. And he came. It was-- and I used to walk around and look at people, and say maybe this is my brother and I don't recognize him. Maybe it's him. Maybe it looks like him.

Or finally, when he came, I did recognize him. He looked like half his weight and everything else, but I recognized him. And he said, "This is it. You're not staying here."

There were no street, no sidewalks, no nothing-- mud up to the knees. "And you pack in, and you come with me," because he was in Landsberg, Landsberg am Lech. And down there, the fact that they had to move out of their room-- they didn't have room-- and give me the room. And they went into a very small quarters to live.

Because they didn't have, that time, extra room to live. Because you have to register, and you have to get food for yourself, and everything. Since then, we were in the camp till-- it was still 1949. I think we all were-- my brother was the very first one. We all registered the same time, but my brother was the very first one got papers to come to the United States.

How did you find out about the rest of your family?

From my brother.

From your brother.

From my brother, sure-- how and when, exactly how it happened, and everything else. It was not news to laugh about, to find out the way and everything else. And it was an unbelievable-- it's probably unbelievable, to believe that one human being can do this to another.

And this is a country-- literate, intelligent, and but they did it. They did it. They are part of six million, not only us. They are part of six million that perished the same way.

Probably between the family from both sides, probably not less than some close to 200 people. That's all we know, is about just myself and my brother. And we were looking. We were searching-- nobody else.

So it must have all come as a great shock to you to realize what was happening.

Very much. Very much. Never, never did I wanted to go back to Poland, just see the place where they lived and somebody else is there, and noticing how, the way and how, and what all this happened. It's trying. It's just an unbelievable story.

I assume you didn't know what happened to the Russian Jews, either, the Jews who were living in places like Kiev and--

The ones that were surrounding, the ones that I was with?

Mm-hmm.

Well, unless they died with natural death, which quite a bit, because of the cold weather and being older, some were

families that are older people. To young people, if somebody is 40 years old, is old already. And yeah, some passed away, but natural causes.

Natural causes-- you can't stop them, or if you inflict it on yourself. If you, for some reason, didn't want to go to work, you did not have any help from the government, medical or nothing whatsoever. So if you chose a way to beg, and not to go to work, and you died because of that, it's your own choosing. What nobody in your right mind wants to.

And I'm talking about the place where I was. There were places deeper in Siberia that maybe they even had it much worse than I had it, too. They were really prisoners. They were really prisoners to the point-- we were prisoners not to get out of the vicinity.

I can go to town. I can go to the main city, but I cannot travel. Traveling outside, you had to have a permission.

But this was not considering-- consider what other people did. We didn't consider this being prisoners. We had a room for ourselves.

I know we were watched because none of us had rooms separate from a Russian family. There has to be three-- this is how the buildings are-- there's an apartment for four families. So three of them were Russians and one was a newcomer to watch him, how and what.

Are they spies? Are they working? What are they doing? Who is coming to them? We realized that. We realized.

So you were always on your guard.

Always. And by us was a couple, but the man was not watching as much as the woman. She was a really party member and she was watching.

What were they watching you for, for being possible agents or--

I suspect so, but what else or whatever? Wherever we work, if we don't maybe bring something home. Well, none of us can bring anything home. Was nothing to eat that we worked with. You don't bring home a piece of rock or whatever.

How were you treated there as Jews? Were you able to practice any aspect of the religion?

No, no, no. You don't practice nothing. You are an atheist.

You observe nothing.

You don't observe nothing. You observe if you remember. We had a family, which there were a father and a mother. So we sort of-- if it was exactly or not, but we knew when a holiday is coming you didn't light no candles. First of all, you probably didn't have it.

No, you became like one of them and they atheist. They didn't believe in anything. You became one of them.

Were you able to keep track of time?

Of time?

Yes.

Oh, that's a funny think about it. We learned to tell-- no watches, but by the sun. We knew exactly when 12 o'clock is. Yes. And you really guess.

There were clocks in the offices, maybe, but nobody had a watch or a clock in the house. And no different-- this was

absolutely no different than the Russians lived. They had a little more in the house, like maybe a carpet or whatever.

We lived the way they gave us. They gave us a bed and a stove. And the wood, we got permission to go to the forest to cut, and bring home, and chop up the wood to have it.

If you didn't go, you didn't have it. But you were allotted so much, so many trees that you can have. And the rest of it you do with it what you're supposed to do. But if we want to have a little warmth, then we did it.

The only thing we didn't do it is for the kitchen. There were four rooms, people living in, and one kitchen for everybody. It's for the Russians and myself. And it works. It works. Everybody gets the time to go in to do your little cooking or whatever.

Coming back to your place in your family, I see that you were a year younger than your oldest sister, and that your brother was some five or six years--

I left it open. I left it open because this is what-- remember, I said I made myself older two years?

Yes.

Which way do you want it, because according to my brother, it wouldn't fit in. Either you want my regular, normal time, which was 1921. This is mine. But I made myself 1919.

I thought maybe I'm too young to go to work and I'm not going to get anything to eat. Who in the world is making themselves older? Everybody's making themselves younger.

Yes.

So which way should I put it? That's why I left it open.

Put it as you really were. However--

Because all the documents here are 1919.

Yes.

So would it interfere?

No.

OK, so I'll give you the proper thing. I know what I did there. 1921, because-- [INTERPOSING VOICES]

I was only going to remark that it seems just so remarkable that your life was really saved by the fact that you were in a position to be able to get away. And you didn't have the attachment, let's say, that your sister had, the older one who was getting married, or engaged and--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

She was already engaged, so whatever he was doing, too. I did what the group of my friends did. You know what I'm saying?

Yeah.

OK.

Yeah, tell me about how you got to the United States.

Oh, how I got-- well, I registered with the joint or whatever, I think so. And waited my--

In Germany.

In Germany, and waited my time. And we all did this. My sister-in-law happens to have a sister, too, down there. So my brother and his wife, they were the first one to leave. My sister-in-law's sister followed six months later.

And I was left in Germany with my husband and two children. And exactly to the six month-- December-- I got the papers to leave. And we all came with the same boat, same ship, that looks like made the trip back and forth, and then the next one was ready to go.

So both of your children were born in Germany.

No, no, my older one was born in Russia. In Russia, yeah, and the younger one was born in Germany in a DP camp.

Did they have any memories of that time?

From the older one?

Yeah.

The older one a little bit, more from Germany than from Russia. I don't think she remembers much from Russia. And the younger one was exactly three years old when we left, so a little.

What did you and your husband do when you got here?

To here?

Yes.

OK. In the beginning, well, I had two children, so I right away didn't do anything. My husband got a job in a factory, I think in a shoe factory, if I'm not right, just made \$17 a week. And from \$17 a week, my husband's niece, sister's daughter, was in Israel. And we sent packages to them, because they had hard times in the beginning in Israel, too. Yes, and it was enough for everything.

So you were actually taking care of them or helping them.

Yes. Not anymore, but in the beginning, yes, sure, to the point that we send them chocolate for the children.

And you worked in a factory.

I worked in a-- yes. When my younger daughter started school, in Newark, I went to work in a factory-- dresses, I think. Dresses, yeah.

As you look back on your experience now, what do you think? How do you think your life has changed as a result of all that you've been through? What can you tell us about--

In general, from the beginning on?

Yes. I mean, what has this-- how has this influenced you?

The beginning was very, very trying. Very "disappointed" is a very mild word, that all this happened, that by that time,

no more sisters, no parents. You do everything on your own.

And the worst part, when the children start to grow up, no grandparents. How? What? Not even picture.

Did they ask questions when they were younger?

Yeah, when they start getting a little more, you know-- yeah. I remember putting my older daughter to school. I didn't speak English. Neither did she, at all.

And they put her right away in the first class, what she belonged. And the child felt very bad, not understanding, nothing at all. But soon enough she was a top school student, went to school. And we learned the language.

But the hurt does not go away, no matter how much you try. You have a little naches from kids and everything else. And you try to put it where it belongs and everything, grandchildren and everything else. But the hurt doesn't go away.

Do you still have memories of it?

Well, I have memories that I cannot explain. I only seen it in the beginning, what happened. I didn't see him being killed. I didn't see him being chased out of the house. But I know step by step, step by step, because of my brother, how and where. We even go through the whole city, I can almost by name call every street in the city, who was living and where.

So it's all very vivid to you.

Yeah, every little thing, every little thing. I even know my Christian neighbors' last names till today, too. And it changed, but hopefully, and especially now with what's going on now, almost you can't get rid of it. Of course, I wasn't beaten up or whatever, but just to see things going on. And living through something like that was unbelievable. Yeah.

Have you been able to talk to your children about what you-- and your grandchildren?

I've been able to talk to them. Has affected-- my younger daughter bought me an album to record all my things. And each day, she said, mom, did you already start it? Did you already start it? We have to have this. We have to have this.

You have three grandchildren.

Three. My older one has one daughter, and she's a widow. She lost her husband. And the younger one has two.

Do you talk to your grandchildren about this?

Oh, the older granddaughter from my younger daughter is already in college. She's in Ithaca, New York. The first thing she did is joined Hillel on the campus.

The first thing she did is went to the museum, and the first thing she did is seeing Schindler's List. And hopefully, they go straight. You know what's going on.

I don't like the idea about mixed marriages, and it happens so much. And hopefully, it stops already, because it's eaten away on the Jewish population. And who knows what it brings?

Is there anything you would like to say as a final message of your take?

I would like to talk to all humanity, and especially to the Jewish people of America, to be vigilant that another Holocaust should never come to being. I don't like the idea, what I've seen in Sarajevo and nobody responded. People were killed, and regardless of their nationality. And anything like that what goes on, in any country, bothers.

People should have enough-- one Holocaust and forever, not just sit back, and do nothing, and see people, innocent people-- innocent people-- being done away with for no reason at all. All right, the people in Yugoslavia and all those small towns didn't go through exactly what the Holocaust was in 1939 with the Germans. They did not perish alive in some ovens. But it's still something.

I want to thank you very much for coming here and for speaking.

You're welcome.

And for telling your story.

OK.

And I think you have contributed a great deal--

Did you?

--to our understanding.

You think it was clearly?

Yes, I believe it was.

Well, let's hope so.

Yeah. I hope we covered everything that we want to cover.

And it's the truth. It's the truth.

Yes. I hope we covered everything you wanted to cover.

And if not, I'll probably come back. I probably will come back with one episode, too, which happened, which I got too far away.

Yeah.

You want me to mention?

Would you like to do it? Yes.

Yes. When the Germans came in, and when we ran away, so we stayed in a small town a few days in a synagogue, in a bombed-out synagogue-- not only ourselves, filled to capacity. My brother and my father wanted to run away further, because they said that men are the biggest. And that's all they do is hunt men.

And my mother and all the girls stayed in that synagogue. So we stayed for a few days, maybe the most a week. And then my mother said-- I cannot even say, "rest in peace," because she doesn't have a place where she is.

"Kids, let's take everything together and we have to go home. We have to go home, whatever. And let's hope that father and my son is somewhere safe, too."

So we start walking home. We didn't probably have any money to pay for transportation, or to look for transportation, or whatever, because my father ran away. We came back. It took us, I think, a day and a half.

We have one minute more, so--

Hmm?

We have about one minute more so-- we have about one minute more on this side of the tape.

Oh, OK, I don't think a minute will be enough, but I'll try it again.

Summarize.

When we finally came on home, on the outskirts of Jedrzejów, our city, it was still light, daylight. And we were afraid to go, that the Germans shouldn't see us. Finally, when it start to get a little bit darker, we came home.

And we walked into the house, and we lit our kerosene lamp-- it shouldn't be too bright-- and we went to sleep, all of them in just two beds. Not even 10 minutes later came a knock on the door, an SS man by the door. And he came in.

Who sent them? Only the Polacks could. There were no Jews home. They said that somebody came.

He came in. He stays in front of me, in front of my eyes now-- not a young person, middle-aged, and heavy on the side. He's walking around two beds together. And he's walking around.

Mother slept with two, three children. I slept with my sister in the other bed. And he came and he point. That's it?

Almost. Go ahead.

And he said, you, you come with me, pointing to me. I have to finish. I have to finish.

OK.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

--a few more minutes.

Because I'll finish this some other time.

You don't want to do it now?

Oh, you have time?

We can do it another-- we can do a brief--

Oh, yes, so then I finish.

All right.