

-TITLE-MAX LIEBSTER

-I_DATE-

-SOURCE-JEHOVAH WITNESS

-RESTRICTIONS-

-SOUND_QUALITY-

-IMAGE_QUALITY-

-DURATION-

-LANGUAGES-

-KEY_SEGMENT-

-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-

-PERSONAL_NAME-

-CORPORATE_NAME-

-KEY_WORDS-

-NOTES-

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00:00:00 My first name is Max. I was born in German, in Reichenbach (ph), in Buchenwald near Frankfurt-am-Main. Feb. 15, 1915, so I am now 75 years, in two weeks I will be 76.

00:00:30 The name of my mother is Bertha, born Oppenheimer and my father is Bernard . He was born near the border, in Germany.

00:01:00 I have two sisters, one in Florida, Ida Nussbaum, and one in Argentina, she has died and her name was Hanna Strasse (ph). Ida was the oldest.

00:01:30 My father repaired shoes, for men and women. My mother was a housewife.

00:02:00 I was in the common school for eight years and then I went into business. I was in business for ten years, until the war broke out in 1939.

00:02:30 In Sept. '39, he was put into a camp in the Black Forest. Before then, he had been raised in a Jewish family life.

00:03:00 My father was a shofer, he killed animals in a kosher way.

00:03:30 Q: What was the thinking among the Jewish community in 1933, when Hitler came to power?

00:04:00 A: There was fear. We knew that people were put into concentration camps and came back as ashes. I was 24 when I was taken.

00:04:30 People were excluded from the cinema, from dance places, from all forms of relaxation.

00:05:00 In my community, there were 20 Jewish families.

Q: Q: What was going through your mind, the minds of the Jewish families.

A: Mostly to immigrate.

00:05:30 The Oppenheimers migrated, and so did my sister. But I did not have the money. I was put in prison for 4 months and put into a camp.

00:06:00 Q: Can you recall the first time you were picked up?

A: Yes. I was living above the synagogue and they came along and put us into prison.

00:06:30 To me the question was why God permitted these things to happen to his children.

00:07:00 We had the Krystallnacht that destroyed all our synagogues and all our merchandise.

00:07:30 On November 11, 1938 was the first real trouble for us.

00:08:00 Until then, there was no trouble. The Nazis were a minority and the rest of the town treated us alright.

At first being put into prison, they did not treat us bad.

00:08:30 The SS who took me up to Saksenhausen kicked me and told me that I would never come back.

00:09:00 There were two prisoners to a unit in the train, and I was put into the cell with the only Jehovah's Witness.

00:09:30 I came upon a man who had an image of peace and contentment, who felt he could prove the devil a liar. I was astonished.

00:10:00 Bibleforcher - people who were searching in the Bible, they were called.

00:10:30 His wife was already in the concentration camp because she would not say, "Heil Hitler," His two children were in re-education centers, And now he was on his way to the concentration camp.

00:11:00 He explained that the Jews were persecuted because they did not accept the Messiah.

00:11:30 That opened my eyes. It gave me hope.

00:12:00 Later on, I found this picture, which depicts it. (Holds up picture and describes it.)

00:12:30 More discussion of contents of picture.

00:13:00 More explanation of the picture, which was developed by the J.W. during the war, and which he found later on in the States.

00:13:30 That was the image he gained. He was in the cell with the J.W. for 14 days.

00:14:00 In the camp, we were in "lion cages" next to one another and we were able to converse through the iron bars.

00:14:30 When we got to Saksenhausen, each prisoner was asked why he was there. He said he was J.W. and he got a beating.

00:15:00 He was beaten worse than anyone else, with boots and hand. And they where isolated immediately.

00:15:30 They were isolated in barracks. I never saw him again. He died there.

00:16:00 They put them outside wet, in the winter time, so that they froze.

00:16:30 An attempt to contact the J.W. was punished with 25 strokes.

00:17:00 I remained a Jew there, with the Star of David. Later, when I was moved, there were a hundred J.W. there.

00:17:00 There the camp commandant let me live with them. I was six years in 5 camps. This was Neuenhausen (ph).

00:17:30 At Saksenhausen, we worked outside, but mostly they prisoners were kept in because it was a death camp and the prisoners were treated very badly.

00:18:00 When a prisoner was missing, we were kept outside for three and four days. Peoples' ears were frozen. My hands and legs were frozen. And in another barrack, I found my father dying.

00:18:30 His legs were swollen from the cold. He died and I carried him, like a piece of wood, to the crematorium.

00:19:00 Q: What were your thought at this time?

We didn't have any hope of getting out alive. Every morning, there were the bodies of the dead, and those who could not work and they were exterminated.

00:19:30 We were transferred to Neuengamet. That was a work camp. Thirty Jews were transferred there. They were building a haven for boats to come in.

00:20:00 Its on the North Sea. We had to remove the sand by hand. Here I was in the barracks with the J.W. They had a few pages from the Bible.

00:20:30 Q How were they able to get the Bible into the camp and where did they hide it.

A: They hid them in their clothes or in the straw they were sleeping on.

00:21:00 We were on three levels, packed in like sardines.

00:21:30 I worked with the Jews. The J.W. had other assignments. We worked eight hours.

00:22:00 We worked for eight hours, then we had to come back and be and be counted in.

00:22:30 If the count was wrong we had to stand outside until he was found, or we were punished.

00:23:00 I was able to talk with the J.W. every evening. We were put in the same barracks as about 100 J.W. I was surprised, the barrack was so clean.

00:23:30 There was a different spirit. There was good collaboration between the members. In the sleeping quarter, we had three levels.

00:24:00 I was on the third, upper level, near he told me about the hope that God gave to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

00:24:30 More about the religion. What convinced me was that they were the only people who refused to kill one another.

00:25:00 They loved God more than themselves and others more than themselves. God would intervene and take off the bad people and only the good people would remain.

00:25:30 When we were out in the center, I looked up for help and that gave me peace. It helped me the six years I was in the camps.

00:26:00 We worked on the docks there, carrying dirt on boards.

00:26:30 Everything was done by prisoners, like for thousands of years. I wasn't treated badly, physically, there.

00:27:00 We had to work, but life wasn't bad. Mostly we had soup to eat.

00:27:30 (Searches for German or French to describe the soup.) Turnips, like big carrots.

00:28:00 I don't remember whether J.W. died at that camp.

00:28:30 I was only there for a few months. Then all the Jews were taken to the extermination camp in Auschwitz. There is where I got tattooed.

00:29:00 20 million were killed. 5.7 million Jews. In Auschwitz they killed 4,000 an hour.

00:29:30 They were taken into showers, and gassed instead of showered. They had no clothes, no papers, they were identified only by the number.

00:30:00 Most people had heard of what happened. But you are so tense, so excited, you can't realize what's going on.

00:30:30 In Auschwitz, the younger prisoners worked. I was sent to Buna.

00:31:00 It was a factory that worked with artificial rubber. We were sent to work on steel construction of the buildings.

00:31:30 All the work of raising the steel and so on was done by prisoners.

00:32:00 Q: How were you transferred to Auschwitz?

A: The train was full of Jews. They were not open cars. It was like merchandise. No seats. When I went from Auschwitz to Buchenwald, it was in open cars, in the winter.

00:32:30 Only straw to sit on. No chairs or benches.

Q: In Auschwitz, when did the day begin for you; what kind of food?

00:33:00 For breakfast, a slice of bread with margarine, and artificial coffee. Then we had to go out to be counted. We were counted twice a day.

00:33:30 In the morning and at night. And if someone was missing, we had to stay out until he was found. Sometimes people who were caught trying to escape, were hung right in front of us.

00:34:00 Sometimes I was sick with diarrhea and I couldn't work and two Jewish boys would carry me - I couldn't move my legs.

00:34:30 There was a man who recognized from my accent that we were from the same town. He took me to the cafeteria where the SS distributed the food. People who couldn't work were sent back to Auschwitz.

00:35:00 An SS gave me extra food, helped me get to Buchenwald. Otherwise, I wouldn't be alive.

00:35:30 This SS man told me once that he felt he was on a train going downhill at great speed. If he

00:36:00 didn't do the killing, the others would kill him. He cried in front of me. And he helped me over this situation.

00:36:30 There were J.W. doing electrical work, and I talked with them and told them that I had been with and studied the Bible.

00:37:00 In Buna, I was able to give them more food, put it into their tool case, because I was distributing food.

00:37:00 I don't remember their names or whether they survived. We could not talk much because we were working.

00:37:30 In January, 1945, they wanted to get the prisoners to the center of Germany, so, in a snowstorm, we walked 40 kilometers from Buna to Klievit (ph).

00:38:00 That was the nearest train station. We walked with the SS behind, and anyone who stopped walking was shot. We slept in barns, on straw.

00:38;30 We rode for a week, by way of Czechoslovakia, to Buchenwald, and more arrived dead than alive.

00:39:00 Every day, the dead were out into a separate car. Each day, we received a little water-soup.

00:39:30 The SS he gave me a sausage and bread, which I distributed. I kept the sausage under my clothes, and each night I had a little to eat.

00:40:00 Buchenwald was overloaded. Where there used to be 8 in a bunk, there were 16. And there was typhus.

00:48:00 I thought it was the end for me, I was so weak. I heard that there were some J.W. working in the kitchen, and I volunteered to help get the food.

00:48:30 A man, Otto Baker, was able to get me transferred from the little camp, with so much typhus, to the larger camp.

00:49:00 In Buchenwald, the J.W. were distributed through 400 barracks.

00:49:30 Otto Baker and I were in the same barrack. Also. the man in charge, the Kapo, was from my home town, and everyday, he gave me a little extra food.

00:50:00 And one Jewish fellow he was in touch with a
J.W.

00:50:30 We both were baptized in the bathtub of Leon Blum, the former Premier of France. Blum had a villa, and his servant was a J.W.

00:51:00 When we were liberated, we were too weak to go, so the J.W. used Blum's villa to gather together the J.W. We had heard that they wanted to exterminate all the Jews before the Americans came.

00:51:30 People were required to dig their own graves before they were shot. We were reading Revelations in the Watchtower.

00:52:00 We were hiding behind some wood until the train left. Then it was announced that J.W. could gather in Barrack 1(?). There were more than 180 J.W. in Buchenwald.

00:52:30 I was liberated with Fritz Heikan, we were both baptized and he is still preaching.

00:53:00 There was actually a Bible-hour going on, by heart. By the J.W.

Q: How as your health when the Americans came in?

A: I was quite sick. I had rheumatism.

00:53:30 I was treated by the Americans. They gave me rice and milk to get the digestive system going again. They treated me for two weeks.

00:54:00 I went home in April, 1945.

Q: How long did it take for you to get back home and what did you do?

00:54:30 Nobody was there. I lived with an old woman. I started preaching and help to reorganize the J.W in Wiesbaden.

00:55:00 One mayor gave me a motorcycle, and by showing my number, I got gasoline from the Americans. I went to Switzerland and got instruction on the work of reorganizing the J.W.

00:55:30 Q: Have you ever gotten together with the people you were in the concentration camps with?

A: Yes. I have (shows picture) a whole group of J.W. I saw in Munich in '78.

00:56:00 We had a convention in '78. Also in the picture is Alex Eckstein, the Jewish person who also became a J.W.

00:56:30 Met some of them at the first convention in Nurenberg, in '46.

00:57:00 Talks about the significance of meeting in Nurenberg.

00:57:30 More about people in the picture.

00:58:00 Q: Explain the picture about your wife and her parents?

A: Shows family picture - father-in-law spent four years in Dachau.

00:58:30 His wife was taken for two years to a re-education camp. Family started as Catholic, became J.W.

00:59:00 Q. After working out of Wiesbaden, what did you do for the J.W.

A: In 1947, sister sent papers for him to come to the U.S.

00:59:30 Went to Charleston, W.VA, preached there for two years, then went to Brooklyn.

01:00:00 Bethel - the place where all productions were produced for the church.

01:00:30 Q: You said you went to Gilead - what is that?

A: It is a training school.

01:01:00 Describes the training.

01:01:30 Shows picture of class with which he graduated.

01:02:00 Graduates go all over the world to preach.

01:02:30 After the bad people are removed, the world will become a paradise.

01:03:00 Q: What did you do after your class at Gilead?

01:03:30 A: Was assigned to France and was married.

01:04:00 I had to learn French. I was born in Germany, and I lived in the States for 10 years, now I learned French.

01:04:30 Shows pages of Bible from concentration camp. The copy was divided up among the prisoners.

01:05:00 The whole Bible was divided up and people hid the parts under their clothing.

01:05:30 Hid it where SS could not see it, and only brought it out at night when they were alone.

01:06:00 Never saw a whole Bible in the camp. Most other prisoners did not have hope, did not talk about God.

01:06:30 They talked about the food they used to have and tormented us.

01:07:00 Shows I.D. from Buchenwald, in four languages.

00:07:30 Shows pictures from before and after stay in concentration camps.

01:08:00 When he came to Aix-le- Duc, there were no J.W., now there are two congregations and a Kingdom Hall. since 1962

01:08:30 The Hall was built by volunteers. About 40 or 50 volunteers spent their vacation building it.

01:09:00 Shows picture of convention in Munich, with two boys who went into camps as Jews and came out as J.W.

00:00:00 Repeat from 01:08:00

00:00:30 Repeat

00:01:00 Repeat

00:01:30 Names of two Jews in picture.

00:02:00 Q: What do yo say to people who say the Holocaust didn't happen, or was exaggerated?

00:02:30 I know I was in five camps and I know that millions of Jews died.

00:03:00 The camps were made for extermination. The numbers were for identification.

00:03:30 Explains the contrast in human behavior by the word of the Bible.

00:04:00 More on the interpretation of the Bible.

00:04:30 For 45 years I have been preaching the good news of God.

00:05:00 His last comment - religious statement.

00:05:30 Further religious statement.

00:06:00 Continued

00:06:30 Further statement.

00:07:00 Shows map of concentration camps contained in a journal.

00:07:00 Uses map to show various camps in which he was located.

00:07:30 More about the map.

00:08:00 Shows locations on enlarged map of Europe.

00:08:30 More description of travels, using map.

00:09:00 More of same.

00:09:30 More travelogue.

00:10:00 Mutual thanks.

.END.