

We were talking about your work with students.

Yeah, so that was a real, very successful achievement since I came to America, and after having done a lot in Africa, as I say.

You were in Ghana and--

Nigeria, Ghana, Burundi, Uganda.

For 20 years.

For 20 years. I taught in the high school. And then, in Nigeria, I taught in the University.

And you were teaching French?

French and education classes in the University teaching methods and this type of thing.

Uh-huh, and it was French literature, French language? Both?

Both, and German. I taught German, too.

And German as well. And you learned English in South Wales when you went to school?

I learnt English in the novitiate.

Yes?

Just because we used to bring the candidates from England and Ireland to the mother house that was in Belgium. So through this interchange of 6 months or 12 months, whichever words I picked up, that was the extension of my English. Then I went to Burundi. And I was asked to teach English. So I was, like, one class ahead of the kids.

I suppose that's a good way to learn the language.

Yeah.

Yeah.

And then I went to Uganda. And I took some low-level classes in English. Because I knew nothing. I mean, after grade six, this was my education. And as I did so well-- I took seven subjects-- they decided it would be worth if I would be willing to do some studies and get a degree so I could keep teaching. So I came back to England and I went to Wales, to Cardiff.

I was, again, very lucky. I say, I've had, really, people on my way that have helped. The French government gave me the equivalent of the baccalaureate because of the circumstances of the war, which prevented me from-- so after the interview with one of the ministers of education, I got a bachelor's degree. And then Cardiff accepted me on as a mature student. So I had no A levels, which is the requirement to enter in college.

But because of the circumstances, I went for an interview. And given the circumstances, they accepted me as a mature student. But the one who paid the consequences of that was me.

You.

The gaps were the gaps. But then, again, I had a very nice French tutor. You know, you get assigned to one of the-- and

the teachers helped a lot and got to know why this was, that the French wasn't my mother language either. So I got a lot of help. And I did very well.

So I've got my bachelor's degree. And I got my master's in education in Cardiff. And that's when I went back there to teach in Nigeria. In that time, I couldn't go back to Nigeria, to Uganda. See, this happened. I left Uganda in '68. Amin Dada came along, story with the Israelis and the Entebbe plane. So they didn't want to see me.

As I told you, your being a Jew is trouble everywhere. So they did express very strongly not to come back. Because this would not have been at ease if ever it was found out. So I got a teaching job in the University in Nigeria. And so I stayed 10 years alone in the country, no other sister of my sister.

No other sisters.

No.

Was that difficult? Or was that--

There were days it was very difficult. See, in the African concept, if you're not married, so what are you?

So what were you?

Well, even a nun, they don't understand too well. You could still--

It doesn't make any sense, right? So, again, you're a foreigner, yes?

Always.

Always.

Yeah. And I did not reveal my nationality-- I mean, my Jewishness. Because I was never sure on what happen. They're very strange. So as I said, up till then, I've always been a foreigner in foreign lands, which isn't easy.

Two more things, just, this is a very small question. What do you consider your native language?

I suppose Yiddish is what I was brought up in. French, I acquired in school, right?

Right.

You could say that would be my native language. But then it was so limited. Because how far do you get into the language or the culture of the French literature at grade six? And that's when I entered college. So I had really many gaps and difficult. Because students would be wondering, why didn't I get an A? My speaking was fluent. But there were other things.

Not so fluent, right.

Which I had never studied, have never read, or never done. Because I was working. I wasn't-- you know, I've always worked, thank God. I've always been able to be very helpful, and teach without a degree, and all that. So I had to overcome many, many obstacles and many difficulties in that way, you know? The teachers knew. But the students, I wouldn't reveal, no.

But lastly, tell us what you're doing with students now in America.

Oh, then, so I say that I have done quite a bit in Africa, and successfully, really. And then, when I came here, I was kind of wondering-- there were not no poor in America. That was my philosophy. And--

There were no poor.

And I still don't think, compared, coming from those countries, that anyone here is poor. They might be homeless. But I don't think they're poor. Some of the homeless still have a car. At least they have something to put their belongings in. Do you know what I'm saying?

Mm-hmm.

It is all a matter of what you've lived before and to what you compare it. But anyway, I got to know that there were homeless and that there were poor people. And so that's how I started working for that Christian Service Club. It was very, very successful. Actually, I got a decoration from Cardinal Mahony, the only sister in 26 Catholic schools who ever got that decoration, for my achievements in the club, mm-hmm.

But now, you have a 'volunt-teen group?

And so, yeah. After, when I got back, then, to school, after my friend passed away, I needed something more to keep myself busy. And I had made friends with many of the nurses, and the doctors, and all that with their three years of disease, three, four years of disease, yeah. So they invited me to see whether I would be willing to start a group with teens who would be offering some volunteer work.

And I started that in '98. And it has grown, as I say-- this is the 14-- I have kids who I started the first year and still there. And they come back. And they're very, very enthusiastic. It works very well, very successful. We have over 5,000 hours of volunteer work that's already gone into the program. And also, some of them find out they want to be nurses, they want to be doctors.

It takes a lot of time and dedication. And you need to be up there with them. I mean, I go and see them in the different stations where they are. They never know when I'm coming. So that's good too. Because it needs supervision, as you well imagine, you know? We take them from freshman to seniors.

So you teach all day from 7:45 until 2:30 or 2:00 o'clock?

2:30, and then go to the hospital--

--hospital from 4:00 to 8:00.

That's right.

So it's quite a day.

I'm there around 3:30. They start coming. Because they all sign in. They all have to sign out. I need to know where they are. And they can work through our shift. There are some who even do four-hour shift. They like to stay, which is fine with me. I'm pretty flexible. I mean, you know, I go with my whatever suits them.

But then it's close to 8:20, 8:15 by the time the last one is either gone or picked up. And then I go home.

And then you sleep all weekend.

Not necessarily.

No, not you. Well, I just want to thank you profusely for being willing to speak with us and in such an open and fascinating way, really.

Well, you've helped a lot with it. As I say, you know, the audience has to give the tone. And if you make it easy and

confident-- you know, I felt at ease. I felt confident. I knew you would give me full attention. So I felt easy to talk.

Well, I'm really grateful, and so is everyone. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

And now, we'll go to some photographs.

OK.

Go ahead.

Go ahead. Now, you can explain what the picture is.

OK, the picture?

Yeah.

That's the kindergarten in Antwerpen. And I suppose that was just a class picture. That is one-- whenever I look at it, the one thing that will spring up in my mind is "the dirty Jew." And I didn't think I was until I was called that.

And this?

That's the one. And in that kindergarten, there was only Izzy, and myself.

And this picture?

And this one is from grade school, I believe, maybe. I couldn't tell you for sure, five, grade five. And we must have gone for a little outing. And so we took a class picture. But again, a lot of the Jewish girls who are standing there who are taller than me are no more. They have been arrested and perished.

And we weren't very well accepted in that group, either. And just lived along with whatever we could handle.

And you are?

Right there.

Right there.

OK, OK.

OK, this is actually a copy of the real picture, which I finally got from David three, four years ago, I think. He's the one who was the real one. That was taken before the war, one of the last things we did when the whole family was still together. Because Clara is still with us. And that's taken in Antwerp. We don't see, particularly, too happy a group. Because, talk about something to get us all together.

So why don't we go from here across and say who are the--

That's Regine [? Yamee. ?] Then you have Clara standing. And the tall one is David. And that is Izzy, my mother. And little Henry in the middle of mother and father. We eventually got to go to a photograph, of a real thing.

And who's this?

This Is Henry, the youngest child, with his mother. And that is taken during the war. But as you can notice from their

expression, whenever they had the chance to get together, they were very happy. They were very close to each other, yeah.

OK.

And that's my father. And I have a feeling that was a picture taken for the identity card. And I just don't think I have any special date, though it could well be before the war, as we needed pictures for identity card. And that's, I think, what it was.

And this?

And this is, unfortunately, again a copy, and the only picture beside the one of the identity cards which I have from my sister Clara, the one who was gassed in Auschwitz. We have no pictures from her at all. And she's walking in the streets of Brussels during the war, no star wearing. But she looks pretty sad and worried.

And this?

Who's this?

This is Paul the dentist, who then lived in [? Jordan ?] the name and address he was given to me on the train when I was in despair, running back, not knowing where to go next, and considering suicide. And he's the one, then, who gave me the address to go to his mother and sister, that I would be safer in their place. And so I've really lived with him as part of the family, except he lived in [? Jordan ?] and had his own wife and children. But he was always in the picture, and loved me dearly, and would have done anything for me.

OK.

As I said, that's little me. Probably, that was the only decent dress I still had after all my goings, and comings, and running away. And I probably dressed up to make a good impression as I was knocking at the door to ask for being sheltered and kept, in my mind, for a few months. The war was going to be over. But-- yeah.

What's this house?

That's the house where I knocked-- the house of the Hanquet family, where I knocked at the door, asking whether they would take me in. Because I was hiding from the Gestapo. And I thought the war would be soon over. And so-- and that's the house where I lived many happy years during the war and after the war, even in hiding.

Who's this?

This is Marie, Marie Hanquet, the one who took me in, she and her mother. But the picture, I think, is taken after the war. But at least you have an idea on who she was, OK?

And she is on the right or the left?

She is on the right, yeah. But it's also one of my visits. So you have the whole family here. Marie and her mother, with whom I lived, and who were hiding me during the war, and the four girls, who had become-- you see, they were in their uniform? They have become boarding in the boarding school of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph. And it must be Sunday evening. We're getting ready to go back after a weekend visit. But I probably already had it in my mind that I would join.

Who's this?

This is Elise Hanquet, the one, the mother of Paul and Marie, who gave her final word that, yes, I could come, and they would help me, and they would hide me. And she's the one who became the godmother to my mother then, a very holy,

gentle, soft-speaking lady.

And when's this?

And that is Regine, myself, towards the end of the war. We're just taking a walk around the woods near Great Oiseau. It's a very beautiful, regional area, with woods, and nice walks, and all that. So Sunday afternoon, we'd go for a stroll. The hat, and the coat, and all that was made by Marie. And so I was probably very proud wearing it.

And what is this?

Those are photocopies of the original documents, the registry, that the Germans kept for all the Jewish people that they arrested during the war. And this is still in existence. So when I visited Marine in 1998, I asked for a copy of the page where the family's name were on. And so they made me a photocopy.

OK?

And Garfunel, Jack, is her husband. And that's how we got the number of their tattoo, 1,174 and 1,175. And the convoy was 21. It's the first time I saw that, in 1998. --Donner, Izzy.

Say it again.

Donner, Israel-- Izzy, who was from another convoy, [INAUDIBLE], as you can see, with the number 548. Now, he reported. He wasn't arrested. He went and handed himself over to the Gestapo. And again, even as far back as then, they kept a register. And they made a copy for me.

OK. And what's this?

This is a brown envelope in which the Gestapo have put her identity card and any papers that belonged to her when they arrested her in '43. And I received it from the Ministry of Health in Brussels in 1998. And I didn't know that her identity card was in it. So when I opened, that was a very traumatic experience to find 60 years later, her identity card, with her number and everything on it. And the envelope was still in good condition. I sent that to Henry too.

As I told you before, so this is the identity card, the real thing, for my sister, when she was arrested. See, they took her papers away, put it in that brown envelope. And that's the only real picture I have from her. And it had the stamp across her face, Jude [FRENCH]. So that showed, really, how things were in those days.

And they saved it and kept it all these years. It hasn't been destroyed.

OK.

What's this?

So this is the other part of the same identity card, which I rescued from my sister. And what I thought was interest is to show that, in big, red letters all across it, said, "foreigner," "etranger," which means "foreigner." And that's how we were easily identified, even by the Kingdom of Belgium. Yeah.

And this?

And this is my youngest brother, Henry, and myself, in Brussels-- no, I think it's Antwerp. That's after the war. We kind of got together to share our experiences, our sorrows. But he was very happy to be with me and so was I to see him. That's all before he left for Israel.

This is Marie's.

Go ahead.

Well, that is the medal given by Yad Vashem, the Righteous of the Nation, to Marie and Elise Hanquet, for having saved me. And they got the decoration in July, 1999, only because I have delayed so long to write up my story. As you see, it didn't come that easy to me to do these things. And I knew, for her, that I didn't have any importance. She did because she believed in what she was doing.