

It's OK, it's OK. It's OK. OK, we are rolling.

OK.

Now we are on?

Now we are on. So where we left off before was that you had made it back to Prague after a most unusual kind of way of being liberated.

Oh yeah, when I left, yes, yes. That's how it was.

And you were at your sister's house, or your cousin's house who had married someone. Tell me again, whose house did you go to when you came back to Prague?

That was my wife's sister.

Your sister-in-law.

Georgine. Sister-- that would be my sister-in-law. That's correct.

What was her name?

In English, Patricia.

And in Czech?

In Czech, Vlasta.

Vlasta.

Vlasta is Patricia in English.

I never knew.

[LAUGHING]

I never knew. OK.

Vlasta is Patricia in English.

And was her home in the center of Prague?

No, she was living in Liben. I don't remember the street anymore, but so many years since we are--

Of course

Out of there, you know?

So was it a residential neighborhood, or was it a city neighborhood?

No, that was a residential neighborhood, yes.

A city neighborhood, or--

It was very nice, and again, you know, when these deportations started, you always said, well, we have to be somewhere when we come back. Nobody ever thought that you will not come back.

Come back.

So you assumed you would come back, and you should have some place where you will, quote, "meet."

And Vlasta, was she able to stay there because she was married to a non-Jew?

She was married to a non-Jew, but that actually was a surprise that she somehow managed not to be involved. Because that was not an excuse, she was Jewish. So under normal circumstances of that time, she would have had the same difficulties. But for some strange reason, nobody knew, the name was of course Czech, she married somebody by the name of Krejcã.

Krejcã.

Now, Krejcã is like a small tailor in English. So the name was of course, Czech, and she was married to him for quite a while. Well, they had been all older than me, but I remember him. And she came here a couple of times. We have a picture, we have a-- which I mentioned to you, a swimming pool.

Yeah.

It is covered, you don't see it. You can only see the--

The rim.

The rim. But there were quite a few, somehow, survivors. Well, not even survivors, people who were born here. I told you about this uncle who was living in Ecuador.

That's right.

So naturally, from this side, there were-- the picture shows quite a few people, you know.

OK, so when you're back, and she sees you, could she recognize you when she saw you?

Oh yes, yes, yes. Even without the hair. I mean, now I have normally no hair. But at the time, it was short cut, you know. And the language, you hear the same voice. And, yes, so I had no problem with that part, no.

And especially, the bathroom. Now, you know, you are human. So when you go to the bathroom, you know what happen. You have to clean yourself and wash up yourself. That's something which didn't exist in Australia-- in Auschwitz. There were no bathrooms. There was a piece of wood, and you had to sit down, and do what you did, and there was no water. So you really, your personal esteem, or hygiene, or whatever you want to call it was absolutely non-existent, you know.

Just think of it, what she was talking about, that underwear. Well, you know, when you are in that kind of a cold weather, and you're not properly dressed, your nose is running constantly. So at one time, they were probably, make you feel miserable or whatever, out of that prayer shawl, they made shawls, which I started to tell you earlier. Somehow, when is throwing out those shawls, I must have caught two, maybe they were somehow intertwined.

So one I put on, and the other one I tore to pieces. And this Uncle Fred and Uncle Brett, of course I gave them a piece of that material, so they could wipe their nose, just like I could wipe my. But Uncle Fred, who was living in Munnsville, Upstate New York after--

The war.

--the German. He always said in his Czech language, I will never forget it. If I remember when you gave us that piece, of course, to wipe. And that was here, not there. He never forgot that. And he was treating John. John went at that time to Colgate University, undergraduate school. And we used to get up there to visit Uncle Fred, with his wife, and John was there. It was not so far from here, anyhow. It was far, but not that far, that you could not make it, you know. So we saw them occasionally.

But all these people were older than we both were, so naturally, we are just by ourselves. You know my age, Georgine's not that's far behind, you know? So Uncle, they were born 1904, 1910.

Can we have a break?

Yes, hang on a second. What happened?

Sorry?

Yeah, I'm sorry, I have to have a break. I put the new card, but it's not reading, so.

From when.

From now.

OK.

We are fine, but-- yes.

OK, so we were talking about when you were in Auschwitz, and how you gave your uncles-- that is, Georgine's husbands--

A piece of underwear.

A piece of what had been a prayer shawl, so that they could wipe, you know--

Nose.

They could wipe his noses. I wanted to go back a little bit further, even before you're deported. Because from what I understand now, you lived, really, several years under Nazi rule in Prague.

Oh, sure, sure.

From '38--

'39 to '42.

To '42.

Three years.

Yeah.

Yes.

So during that time, what did you hear about Reinhard Heydrich, who was the leader, I mean, who was Hitler's man in

Prague. What did you know of him?

Well, of course I remember the name Heydrich, of course. Well, one experience comes right to your mind. When he was killed, and they were looking around for those partisans, they used to call them, who they suspected killed him, well, we were living in an apartment, we were married, of course. And we were living in an apartment which was assigned to us, because the parents had to move out of the house where they lived. And they were assigned to another Jewish family, which was, as long as you remember Prague a little bit, near the Charles Bridge.

Right.

So we were living in that neighborhood, and I don't know what I was doing. But most likely working for the Jewish organization. I shouldn't call it that way, but that's the way it was.

Well, it sounds like an authority, like an authority.

Jewish authority would be a better word. And I remember the events we were, of course, sleeping, and all of a sudden, somebody burst into that room. I don't know if they were soldiers, or SS soldiers, that I don't remember. But they were moving the furniture, which was not ours, was which, we had a furnished room. They were looking for some hidden escape routes which these partisans might have taken.

That was the middle of the night. Whether it was 10:00, 12:00, that I don't remember. But I remember very well when they came. Naturally, we were scared to death in bed, sleeping, and all of a sudden, someone is there with weapons, moving the furniture to see whether it's a hidden staircase to go somewhere where that person might have been hiding. But ultimately, of course, they didn't find anything. They left.

But it was very difficult. The conditions became worse. I don't mean living conditions like eating, no. It was more the freedom of moving around, yes. Because you were supposed to have that yellow star. And if they caught you without wearing it, without having the documents which a non-Jew had to produce, it was punishable. And the office which I was working at was just across from the headquarter of the Gestapo. So we have, I have seen many things which normally people would not have seen, you know.

Such as?

Well, the trucks with the prisoners, and the mistreating of prisoners getting into the building, and all that stuff. It was awful. That building was originally a bank, and it was owned by a Jewish person. The name was called like you have here, Citibank, so that was called the Pechek Bank. And he was known, you know, like you know here, Rockefeller, so he was known, Pechek, the banker, you know.

But what you have seen, yes, every 12:00 a new guard came to replace the guard from the day before. So you have seen the power, the might, what they had at that time. The streets were that particular location was at, that had all American Presidents, it was a Hoover street, it was a Wilson street, and there were more of them. So why they had it there, I don't know. But that was that bank which they used for the Gestapo, you know.

The Gestapo headquarters, now, was that parallel to [CZECH]?

Yes.

Then I know the building.

[CZECH]. You are absolutely right. [CZECH] was this way, and that street was parallel, yes.

Then I know the-- I have passed by the building.

It was parallel. And that section of Prague had all these American president's name, probably just to show gratitude that

they made established the Czech Republic or Czechoslovakia at that time, you know. But again, the life was-- before the Nazis came-- that was, we had the same freedom like here. There was no religious discrimination of any kind. If you were Jewish, you went to a Jewish temple, if you were Catholic, you went to a Catholic--

Church.

Church, or wherever you went. That has changed. People became more, well, maybe afraid, maybe some of the true feelings also might have come out. You never know.

Well, going back to Heydrich, when they burst in into the room in the middle of the night, did you have any idea why? Had you heard that Heydrich had been--

Oh yeah, oh yeah. We knew, oh, sure, how can you not know. Heydrich was-- you know, we had something called L-A-N-Y, Lany. Lany was like we have here in the United States, Camp David.

I see.

You see, when the president wants to relax-- whichever president, did not go into politics-- you went to Camp David, because that was the summer or the relaxation for the existing president. So we had that castle Lany. And Heydrich was known that he travels between Lany and Prague, because he wanted to enjoy the same thing, or the president, enjoy that Lany, the castle which was there.

But somehow those Partisans which were dropped by the British, they found out his route, and eventually, naturally, killed him by-- I don't exactly remember anymore. The car was passing and somehow exploded or whatever. But it was big repercussions here, because he was really the right hand of Hitler. So when they killed the right hand of Hitler, you know, they wanted to show. And you know, they traced it back-- I don't know if you heard that story-- they tried-- they traced it back that those Partisans were staying or were dropped off in a town called Lidice.

And out of sympathy, naturally, here in the United States, in Chicago, there is a suburb called Lidice. Now I don't know if they have changed it since then or whatever. But there is a strong Czech community in Chicago. And they wanted to show that, somehow, the West stands with that particular event. But of course, I remember it. And there were pictures of Heydrich left and right. He was the right hand of Hitler, no doubt about it.

Now, when they burst in the middle of the night, that means it wasn't the same night that Heydrich, or the same day that Heydrich had been attempted--

No, well, they looking for them, you know.

Right, for days.

And even if they knew that the people are God knows where, or maybe they were even killed. They wanted to show the power they had and to intimidate everybody else.

Were there other reprisals after they captured those, because--

I don't remember exactly what would have happened afterwards, except that they took all these men people, and not only men, boys, from that town of Lidice and they burned it down. Females had, I don't know whether they took the females. But it was awful, awful. And that kind of event molds the rest of the people, you know. They say the non-Jews were afraid to talk with Jews, and the fear was spread all over.

So it's not like the people went against you, no. I told you, my best friend, he was playing soccer with me. Who cares whether he was Jewish or Catholic or whatever. But the fear was there. So out of fear, there was a certain called segregation.

Yeah.

And it was imposed by the system, you know?

OK, now let's jump to after the war. When you came back, how did life develop for you out of your sister in law's apartment? After that, you get better, it's--

Well, I told you, somehow-- I don't know how I got the apartment, because there were also Germans who were thrown, not thrown away, but they made them go back to Germany or wherever. So I don't know how I got the apartment. Certainly didn't pay for it. I had no money, I was a kid. Was it allotted to me by someone, I don't remember that part. I know I stayed with Georgine until, and then her aunt, the one they were talking about the clothes, she came to visit us when she was expecting George, the one who is a doctor near Washington DC. She was expecting him, and that was the first time she came to Prague, and the first time we met her, so to speak.

Also, excuse me, we haven't talked about how did Georgine come back?

Well, Georgine, I don't know how she came back physically, but I think, which I mentioned to you, the French were trying desperately to put people together. Now, if you think who paid for it, definitely nobody. That was the government somehow obligation or whatever. Georgine was sick. And I remember very distinctly when she came, there were two of her, quote, "best friends" who really made her survive. Did I remember the name? I don't know, something Ruth, but they called her Czech, Ruthka. And I forgot the second one.

But they were not from Prague, so they stayed in Prague for a couple of days before they got a connection to wherever they going. One was from Moravia, which was the other state of Czechoslovakia. And I think they lost, you know, like always, you lost track of each other, because people have different interests. And Georgine, she needed surgeries. She developed a thyroid condition. The thyroid is not only that it takes away your breathing, but also she developed a chunk on this side, that would be her left side, I think it was.

So she had to have that taken out. It was not taken out in Czechoslovakia, but she was treated for it. As always the truth, it was thinking and then we came here in New York City. Not in a hospital, there used to be small practices. There was one on Park Avenue-- don't hold me to it, but I remember it was on 83rd Street, I think, between Park and Madison, closer to Park. And it had to be taken out, because the doctor said here that she would have difficulties.

Now come to think of it, why was it not done in Australia? She had it in Australia. But you know, Australia of 19-- when we got there, 1949-- was a different Australia than 2013.

That's right.

They were very backwards. Not because they were dumb or something, it was the location. They were so far away from anything.

That's right.

It was a different Australia. That's why we also changed the name, because when I said my name is Pekarek, it was like talking to God knows what. So it was very difficult. Then since she was here, she read, heard that the treatment here is much more progressive with nuclear energy.

I want to go back to when she comes back to Prague.

Yeah, please.

Yeah. She's sick. Did you meet her-- did she return back to your her sister's apartment as well, and that's where you met her?

Yeah, we had the apartment, which I told you I got in central Prague.

I know, but your first meeting when she comes back, do you remember it?

Well, I don't think I remember exactly the first couple of days, not really.

No, so you, all right. But when she does come back, she's very sick, and so she needs treatment.

Yes.

And had you had your apartment that you were assigned already by that time?

Oh yes, yes.

I see, OK.

I had the apartment. You know, I was, I told you I was in Prague April 20, when the Germans was still there celebrating Hitler. So when the revolution finished at May 9th, I somehow, couple days later, I got the apartment. I don't know how.

Oh, so it's within a few days.

But she wasn't there yet. No, she came much later, because she was on the Russian side, and they were not so organized bringing the people back, like when you were somewhere on the Western side.

Got it.

So eventually, she did come back. Now how did she find me? Well, most likely through her sister. That's my guessing now 70 years later.

OK.

Do I remember exactly how she found me, no.

And did you start working again?

Yes.

What were you doing?

The same firm where I used to work before.

OK.

They claim-- there's a story to it also. They got it back, because naturally, it was theirs. And even if we had a left-leaning government, it was theirs, they got it back. And since they were quite well-off, and they had connections to the United States, how. The original owner who was a very old man, he had quite a few children. In those days, you know, there not so many precautions not to get children, or pregnant, or whatever. So he had, I think, five or six of them.

And two were living here in the United States married before the war started. One was in Philadelphia, and I don't know where the other one was living. So they got the thing back, but because it was so left-leaning, the whole Czechoslovakia after World War II, because the Soviet Union, we were your protectors, and the country was really very much to the left, which we didn't care for. So this firm had difficulties with the labor force, because they were delivering coal, C-O-A-L, you know, coal.

Yeah.

You know, don't forget, nowadays you have gas, you have all kinds of things. But in Prague, coal was the thing to make your morning coffee. So it was very-- and horses were the ones which really held the coal.

Ah, so now I understand. You worked as an accountant for a coal company.

That's correct.

I see. I thought it was an accounting company.

No, no, no.

No, it was a coal company.

I was the accountant for--

For the coal--

A company which was selling coal.

OK.

And the owner was an old man, he had several sons. But two of them worked in the firm. And it was a very successful firm.

OK, so now when they come back, they reclaim their firm. Do they eventually leave it? Because you're talking about this left-leaning government.

Yes, that's what I wanted to tell you.

So tell me.

So then this more left-wing it's more left-wingish. So eventually, I don't remember if it was nationalized or not, those things escape me. But Henik, he was one of the sons, he wanted to get out, but there was nowhere to go. To get a visa permit here was very difficult, and the two relatives of his, well, you know, it's very difficult to make a living here. Thinking about millions which they had over there, they didn't have the millions here.

So he had difficulties coming. But I promised him when I went to Australia that I would try to see if I could get him some documents to get to Australia. Believe it or not, I did manage to help him. And he came to Australia eventually with his wife, two children, and he was driving a cab, of all things. Quite successful, but naturally, money-wise, no comparison to what he had been. But I'm pretty sure they must have had some money here or something.

OK, so let's go back to left-leaning government in Prague. The owners are not happy, they don't want to stay. What makes you not happy? What specifically?

The Left-wingish thing. Look, for example, there were elections. You had to go with everybody in that firm, and to sing the name of the leader.

Who was--

His name was Gottwald, and he was the only one who was running. So having that experience from World War II, we have seen that the country is deteriorating.



So it was between '40 and '48, I was always under the impression that it was still not a Communist country.

No, but it was very left-wingish, yes.

I see. I see.

And I would say not between '40. Between 1945 when we came back.

45, yes, that's right.

To 1948, definitely. Only one candidate.

OK.

If you liked it or not, he was the only one. And naturally, he was a Communist leader. So it was, it was not 100% Communistic, but it was getting there.

OK, so here's the other question. You say that when the Nazis came in, because of their policies, it affected the relationships people had with each other. So that if you were--

Yes.

--had a-- who was non-Jew, a friend who was non-Jewish, it became, you became estranged even through no desire of your own.

Religion had nothing to do with it. If you were not one of-- for example, look, your kid could go to school, to a college, if he was from a bourgeois, they call it bourgeois family.

That's what I wanted to find out. How did that develop--

That's how it was.

Now, after the war. Tell us.

So when your child was born from a bourgeois family, that child couldn't go to college.

Well, what was your family considered?

Well, I had no children to begin with, but there was no family left, you know. So I didn't have that kind of a problem. But you didn't like it.

OK.

It smelled too much from controlled leftists. So Nazi, Hitler was to control from the right side. This was the same garbage on the left side.

There's one question I forgot to ask you before.

Please.

When did you find out what happened to your parents?

Well, that's a good question. I think my sister survived, and I think she said she gave me the date when they were in so to speak, transported from one camp to Auschwitz.

So from Theresienstadt.

Yes.

And once they got to Auschwitz, there was no way that they could have survived. Because my father would have been old, also a little bit on the sick side, had difficulties with not arthritis, they were calling it something else. Had difficulties walking, I don't remember the name what they used it for. But they were old people, you know. Now, my father was born '78. So when he got to Auschwitz, say 1944, 1945, so he was close to 70. Well, I'm now 90, but that was a different time.

Yeah, he was 64, 65.

And you see, here you are a free person, whether you live until 90 or 105. You know. But that was a controlled society. Jewish on top of it. So when they got there, they had no chance. They had no chance. So my sister knew the day, and she told me. I forgot the date, of course. But she told me when the day came, she couldn't hold them as a dependent anymore. And she was there-- and they were deported.

I see, I see.

And once they were deported to Auschwitz, well, that was, of course, the end, you know.

So, OK, let's go back to after the war. So you didn't you didn't like the way you saw things developing.

Exactly.

Back in Prague.

That was the truth.

Yeah. What did you-- what actions did you start taking? How did things develop from thought to action.

You see that, I couldn't take-- I didn't take any action, except that I wanted to get out with Georgine. And being of that age, military age. Now, for example, when I came back, I had to join the army. Not that I wanted, there was a compulsory--

Right.

So for I don't remember how many months, I was within the army, office, but still I was in the armed forces. And then they passed a law that people who were in a concentration camp were exempt from that service. So I came back to the apartment, which I had originally with Georgine. So Georgine came to visit me. How she got there, I don't know. Most likely by bus, because we didn't have a car. Having a car was a luxury in those days. So she must have come by bus to visit me.

And naturally there was a question of money, because when you are in the military, you don't make-- what do you make? Nothing. So there were some difficulties. Do I remember what difficulties? Not really. Somehow we made it. You know, maybe some money was leftover from the father, her father. But you know, that during that kind of a situation, that's happening here to somebody-- I'm not going to touch that base.

But when people-- my father-in-law-- then when they heard that this one was transported to some camp and this one. So as a precaution, they gave, they had a housekeeper of the house, which was living in the basement, so to speak. So they gave her some money. How much? No idea. He had a factory. Remember, the time goes back now, 60, 70 years. So plastic was a novelty.

So in Czechoslovakia, when you bought a drink, let's say like a Coke. Was not a Coke, like a Coke. So it has a top which you closed, you know. But it was the old fashioned thing, which was very difficult, and maybe not nice-looking. So he developed, with a partner, plastic--

Screw top.

The tops, which we today take for granted, you know. So it was a novelty, and he was doing extremely well. So he gave his housekeeper x, no idea how much, dollar, but you keep it, and when we come back, you give it back to us. Well, there are lots of people who didn't come back. In that connection, I would like to refer to a story which appeared in the Wall Street Journal not more than maybe two weeks ago, and I gave it to Elise to read.

Why? Because it turned out that New York State, there are unclaimed insurance policies, monies which were left around in banks, in the B-- in the billions. And this story was that New York State can't get this if it stays unclaimed. Because there is a law, if you don't claim x, after so many years, it becomes the property of the state. So naturally New York State, I can't imagine if they could get a couple of million, or perhaps billion, oh my gosh, you know.

Yeah.

So that was the story. And I have no doubt insurance companies, banks-- and I'm telling you out of experience, Georgine knew that her father had the life insurance policy with x, I forgot the name. So when we came here, we tried to get in touch with those people. We found some documents showing that he had this, and he had that, and whatever. So the answer which we got, if I would look for it, I would find it. I'm not going to take the time now, and I would not take the time then either.

But they responded that we have to produce a death certificate. Now, to get a death certificate for somebody who passed away in Auschwitz, is like, I don't have to tell you. So nothing happened. But that means that that policy was never consummated. So if he was entitled to those benefits, 10,000, 100,000, whatever, that was never paid. So really, the unclaimed amounts which are there, must be in the-- I'm telling you, they story was-- they mentioned, I think, \$2 billion. Because I'm sure my father-in-law wasn't the only person who did this.

But you're talking, when you're talking about where they were unclaimed, it was in Czechoslovakia where it was unclaimed.

Yeah, in Czechoslovakia, yeah, yeah.

OK.

But the money had been somehow, say, inherited by Georgine, or somehow it would have come. Or maybe to her sister while she was still living there. It was never paid, because we could not prove--

His death.

His death. And I'm sure there were cases, God knows how many, because lots of people didn't come back. Especially older people. You know, the young people might have survived longer, but the older people had no chance. So I'm just telling you what happened in Wall Street Journal, which I enjoy reading, but that's not the issue.

So the situation was-- it was very, it was not the same Czechoslovakia like it was when it was founded. No.

Wait, were you still there when Jan Masaryk was killed?

Yes, yes, yes.

What can you tell us about that?

Well--

What happened to you-- how did you experience it?

Well, we experienced only that somehow he jumped to his death. That was the official version. Now, the unofficial version was that they threw him out of the window. Now, what was true? That depends on what side you are on.

Were people frightened to speak to one another?

Oh yes, oh, definitely. Because you didn't know what the other person would do to enhance his position, whatever he was, he or she. Yes. It was not the same Czechoslovakia, no. And that, is in every part of what you're asking me, why did it. It was not just the threat from the Soviet Union, we didn't have anything, so what would they have taken, and we just came back. But it was everything. You know, the distrust of each other, the quality of life wasn't the same, by far not the same.

Religion, well, religion, we didn't practice any religion anyhow, so that did make any different. But the life was not the same, no. You talk to a neighbor, you were afraid in case you say something that it might be turned over against you. If you were more on the liberal side, rather than Communistic side. If you said you don't like-- I'm just saying as an example-- if you don't like this guy, and he was a prominent, say, politician in Prague or whatever. So it was not the same country by any means.

But it was not the same country for two reasons. Unfortunately, the German occupation did it, and the Russians threat continued during it. So there was not that Masaryk, Benes, who were the original leaders. Spirit, that was what was missing, that wasn't there. And especially, this aunt of mine who survived the war in Israel-- it was not Israel, it was Palestine. But it is the same thing anyway.

So she didn't like it, and she was alerting us to these things more than we did. Because we were thrilled that we are free. We were free. So for us, we didn't see. But she was, like I said, a different age, from a different country. She saw it differently.

Now, when she was living, I remember certain things. When she was living in Vienna, she married in Vienna, and she came to Prague with the husband. And I can't remember the year, well, it must have been before '39, before Hitler came. She was saying that this is a unstoppable wave. That anything what is somehow German will become Nazi Germany. And I think she was right. Why?

I told you earlier, because Hitler provided jobs. And even the people who had nothing to do with it became pro-Nazi. I like to say Nazi Germany, because I don't blame today's generation for what happened 50, 70 years ago. I mean, these people who are today Germans, I mean, of course, they are German because they were born, I mean, they question their old grandparents. I mean, how could you have not known, or why could you have condoned this? Different from today's world than it was at that time.

But when I talk about Germany, I like to usually say Nazi Germany, or German. Because I'm getting a pension, small pension, couple hundred dollars today, it's not even worth talking about it. Depends on the exchange rate. So Georgine got for the month of May, \$200, I got five-- \$200, \$500, something. So today in this world, \$700 a month is not going to make me rich or poor. Yes, it helps me to maintain Georgine, which I told you.

Yes. Yes.

But those are people, they had nothing to do with the Holocaust. Those are people who are John's age or even younger. I mean, why should they-- and there they through taxation pay me x dollars. Well, I'm looking at it, I'm telling you how I feel about it. Do I accept it? Well, I would be crazy not to accept it. But really.

The guilty are not-- the guilty got away with it.

Sweetheart, I told you I like to say the truth. This is the truth I accept the thing, well, yes, I accept it, because I was working then all of the in between happened. But I'm wondering why this generation is tolerating it. Do they feel a moral guilt? Well, would I fear a moral guilt what my grandfather might have done? I don't know. I'm just asking a civilized question, you know?

It's one question that is-- there are so many questions in these events that, for which there are no answers, and yet we still look for them.

And so you're saying, that I say, that's how I feel, you know. If they sent me the check, yes, I take the money, because, ultimately, it's coming to my account, so I take it, you know. But from a human point of view, from my personal point of view, I wonder how I would feel if I would be in that situation. They didn't cause it. It was their grandfather, or their grand-grandfather. And to analyze what reasons that person had 50 years ago, you only can search is the Almighty God.

Let's talk a little bit about Georgine. If we can.

Sweetheart, Georgine, she's my wife of 70 plus years.

Yes.

I told you that she was there, right here where we are.

What I mean is, just give me the outlines of what happened to her when you were split apart. She was--

Sweetheart, she went through Auschwitz. And anybody who went through Auschwitz issues and saw that misery, and had a heart-- and she was lucky that she didn't have to work, although then became she did. Remember, she had a British passport. So she was working for the British consulate on the Rockefeller Center. How long, I don't remember, a short while. Then she got another job.

But that's not the issue. So she was lucky that she could have stayed home. She stayed home when she became pregnant. Well, that was another reason why she had all that surgery, because they were saying, if you treat it with nuclear energy, she would become sterile. And as a young woman, you know, you didn't like that. So she had the surgery rather than the treatment. And eventually, just like I said, we were working about two years or so.

Then she became pregnant. She had a vacation, I had a vacation. And it was like summertime, quit her job. Well, then, you know how it takes, it takes a few months to get to a place. So she was very happy. She was 100% mother. And having seen all of these children perish in Auschwitz, she devoted her life to children. Truth is the truth.

So she went when John was six, kindergarten, or whatever that system is here, she started to be on the school board. Not as a teacher, she was never a teacher. And through her persistence, integrity, or interest, whatever, she was on the school board for 32 years.

Wow.

So here in this country, in the local school board here, there is a room dedicated to Georgine's 32 years of being on the school board, giving service to the children. Now, if we would have time, she has literally hundreds of these things. Well, now we have this. So we have all kinds of wooden plaques, testimonies. We had it here hanging. Well, you know, they changed-- I don't blame them.

We had here hanging honorary doctorate. She has a couple of honorary doctorates. What I'm telling you, like I just told you, I am not a person who will make things bigger than they are. This is the truth. Where it is now, I don't know. Elise has a tendency to change things, which is fine. She's a very hardworking person, and I told you, I like all three of them. What happened to it, I don't know. It was always hanging here. So maybe they put it inside or something, I don't know.

OK.

It was a proclamation of one University, an honorary doctorate in like they called letters, something, like writing.

Did you talk with one another about what you both went through a lot?

Very little.

Very little.

No, no. Because she'd answer the same like I. Well, luckily we both came back.

But you know, here's another thing that's unusual. You got married so that you wouldn't be called up for the army. Everybody--

That I would not be deported--

Excuse me, to be deported to Theresienstadt.

Yes.

OK. So you don't get--

One little thing, we were kids.

Yes. How old were you?

I married when I was 20 and she was 16.

[GASPING]

We had to have permission from our parents.

And they gave the permission?

Oh sure. Well, because they knew what's coming.

So one could say that you didn't get married for the most, I would say normal--

No.

Usual of reasons.

100% right.

OK.

That's the truth.

And then when you're together, you're young, but somewhere after Theresienstadt, you're separated. And you go through the kinds of experiences that can shatter a person.

Yes.

You both survive, you come back, and then you spend a lifetime together. That's unusual. I mean, so many people-- that

is, so many people can come back from such traumatic experiences, and they're changed inside.

Well, we changed to a certain extent. She got involved with the schools.

OK.

And I was much more, say, for going to the Metropolitan Opera. So I, financial were different. So I bought a subscription for two of us. Naturally, we were married, we used to go. There was a show here on Broadway, very, very close, unimportant. So we had tickets, two tickets to go to the Metropolitan Opera. But now, all of a sudden, oh, Frank, I won't be able to make it, because I have to see commissioner so-and-so from the education department.

So I had to tickets. I went, and I sold one, or gave it away, or whatever I did. So that went on for about three years like that, that I had two tickets, very seldom we used them.

Yeah.

Seldom. But we still had the same interests, we had the same background. We knew our parents, her parents, was the same. She knew my parents, of course. So nothing really has changed, really. And proof is what I'm saying, is we are--

71 years.

And financially, I told you, what it costs. If you multiply by 50, and multiply it by five, six years, you're not talking about \$10.

No.

Do I have any regrets? No, I considered this is my responsibility, no.

Just for the sake of the interview, we're talking about Georgine, who is no longer able to participate in--

Very little.

Normal activities. Who is not well.

There was a story in the papers-- if you want to read it, we have made copies-- that goes back about two, three years. You know what, I tell you something, I have to go to my office and give you a copy. Our life has changed, my life in particular. Because now I go to eat dinner at 4 o'clock. I come home when Libby comes, she comes usually at 6:00, I come usually home at 5:15, 5:30, because it's only a mile.

So I come home, either bring them, or they order it, or whatever. That's not the issue. And when she, when Bibi comes, 6 o'clock, summertime, wintertime, go to sleep. And again, I told you, my I was have shifted. I get up at 2 o'clock, 3 o'clock. Do I complain? No, I just, this is the life it is, my obligation. She is sick, so either you get, quote, not me, "rid of her," or you do what you have to do. And I feel this is what I have to do. We married, we were kids. My responsibility was the same as it was 50 years ago.

When you--

Before you go, I give you this story from the newspaper. Free of charge.

OK.

[LAUGHING]

Thank you.

They made a bunch of copies.

And the story from the newspaper is about what?

Well, what I'm telling you, that we were separated because of Auschwitz.

Oh, I see, it's about you. The story from the newspaper's about you. OK.

Well, it was about both of us but, actually it's more about what I'm doing. You know, I was always working. Some of us-- I mean, one of us had to make a living.

Did you feel like you were a different person when you came back from Auschwitz though?

Oh sure, oh, from Auschwitz, of course. I was a grown up man. I was a kid when I went in. No, no question about it. You understood what life is, what brutality is. Don't forget there were instances where some prisoners wanted to escape. A Russian in particular, I have to say the truth. You know, we had to witness when they were literally beaten to death. Why did they ask us to witness this? To discourage other people from doing it.

And that's, after all these years, I'm still seeing it once in a while. When I start thinking, like now talking about it. Sure. It was awful. So you have grown up, no question about it. You were a child, we were inexper-- when we came out, we were children. I wanted to buy the house. They were talking about real estate things, I had no clue.

So this friend-- not friend, she was a client of mine, said, well, do you have any money? Remember, \$3,000 down payment. Was a different down, different time.

In the 1950s here?

Yeah. So I said, not really. She said to me-- I will never forget her-- well, you can't just get a mortgage without having some money in the bank. Well, for me, that was a revelation. What was she talking about? So she loaned me \$3,000, which was 10% from what was needed for the down payment. Of course I paid her back, this is not the question. But that's how it was.

Well, one of the things that I find is something that I can't imagine, because I've had a normal life, rather than this kind of life.

Well, we didn't have the normal life, you said the right thing.

Is one of the things that, when somebody goes through something like that , and they see this kind of brutality, can you ever really laugh again? When do you start enjoying life again?

Well, you know, truthfully you try to push it away, you know, and you concentrate on what we did together. You know, we went shopping together. She was normal, don't forget, she was a normal person. So not that I'm putting her down or something.

No, no, no, no.

I'm just telling the truth. To go to Lord & Taylor, I remember. We bought a house, we bought a car. If you just look out of the window, there's a tree. Stupidly, we planted it right next to the house. Well, we went, I had a Chevy, and we thought to make it more trees. So we bought a tree which was bigger than this thing here. Well, now it's 50 years ago, now it's tremendous.

You know, so we were sharing life together. She grew into it I, grew into it. But they grew into it together, not separately. Separately was only the circumstances which made us separate.



Got it.

And that was the story in the paper, you know. I couldn't get out of Czechoslovakia because of that military age. Well, I managed to get that British passport, so that was not a pretense of some kind of divorce or separation. It was just to survive, because that's so panicky with survival. And the only way to do it was, well, you go first, and somehow I managed to get out by myself, because I will take a suitcase and go. But now if we are two, it's a different thing. And that's exactly what happened.

So when I go to stay, I told you before, she took the plane and came back. Of course she came back. It was not some kind of a second marriage or something.

No. Is there anything that you'd like to add to what we've talked about today that you think it's important for--

If I would take it back?

No, no, no. Is there something you would like to add?

Oh, add, well, the only experience I would like to tell you about, when I was working for General Motors, which I told your photographer here. When I went to General Motors, no English. So since I had some experience from the concentration camp by the lathe.

Yeah.

So my sister go to General Motors, they pay a good salary, 10 pounds or whatever it was in those days. And I was having a lathe, which is something like this, and then that goes in like this. And I was working on brake drums. Now, the brake drums, when they come out of the foundry, are very rough. Which is the contrary of what a brake drum should be inside, because it's supposed to have the brake pedal, and stop.

So naturally, since everybody knows how not handy I am, I'm still saying that GM went down financially because of the automobiles which I fixed up.

[LAUGHING]

That they are still recalling the cars which I did.

[LAUGHING]

Well, of course, that's a joke.

Of course.

There were gauges, they call it gauges, and it was after every so often, you had to check to be sure that it's that way. But I'll leave that story apart from what I was doing. Well, then we came here. You know, here was, you started to work, you went to school, learning English, accounting, expressions. And English to begin with, I told you we thought in Prague, 5:00 PM, you speak English. Was very different after the war, before the war, you know.

Have you been back?

No.

You've never been back?

We have never been back, no. I was for business in Paris a couple of times. But that was with a friend, he was a friend,

happened to be, no different between Arabs or no Arabs. If they are terrorist, yes, but we're talking about normal people. He was in real estate, and we became business friends, very pleasant person. And I went with him to Paris, I don't remember if it was two days, four days, I don't remember.

So have you been back to Europe?

I went back to Paris twice.

Only.

But not Prague, or anything like that, no.

That's unusual. A lot of people have been back.

Well, she was not keen, Georgine. And then she always had something, well, you know, I can't make it now. This is coming up with a school. She was always, not that she was hiding behind the school, but the school, John. Oh, we should certainly go back, so I can tell Natalie, his child, my granddaughter, where we come from. Well, it never came to it, you know. So really, we have never been back.

We've traveled here, not USA, the continent. We were in Guatemala, we went into Peru, the Machu Picchu stuff, and all kinds of islands and everything, yes. But not back to-- no. She didn't have so much interest, and if she had no interest, then I went along. You know, by myself to go, that was absolutely unthinkable.

Well, I think then, thank you for sharing.

I thank you for coming. Whatever time it is, this is-- you know, sometimes you start thinking about all this, and it comes back to you so vivid. You know, I don't like to think about these things. The only thing what I would like to give you is that story about the newspaper, but that is only the newspaper when we had 70 years wedding anniversary. So that Cathy, Georgine's friend, and she's the one who is alerting me to the thing that one day she will stop eating, because she will forget how to eat, you know?

She knew that the reporter. Georgine also knew him for quite a while. And they somehow thought it was a great story.

It is a great story.

Well, people who were living all kinds of places, and celebrate 70 years of marriage. Not too many people are married 70 years.

Not too many, no.

So this year it would be seven-- we met in '41, so it would be 72. If we live that-- you never know.

Well, thank you, thank you again.

My pleasure. It was wonderful that you are here. What will happen now? It will be somehow in the Holocaust Museum?

Yes, yes, it will be. I'm going to first say this concludes our interview with Mr. Frank Hyde on May 4th, 2013. And--

Well, it's a story, you know. Oh, I see--

Attack on 9/11, when we had that airplane bombing or whatever you want to call it. Of course, I know where I was. I was with a client in his house. And I don't know why he had the television on at that day, that I don't remember. But we had it on for some reason or another, and then I saw it. Well, I thought that the pilot made the mistake, of course. Why would I think that it's a terrorist attack?

And the same things with Auschwitz. Why would anybody think that a sophisticated nation like the Germans would come up with something like this because of religion or where you come from? Unheard of. And the same is with that 9/11. Why did you think that that would be planned?

Yeah.

Now when you see it again, you know, well, you know it might happen. And if something in the future will come up with some crazy person like Hitler was, well, maybe the world will not make the same mistake. There was a wonderful story, Wall Street Journal-- I'm not trying to sell you the Wall Street Journal, but that's what I'm reading, so that's what I'm talking about.

They were talking about the pre-emptive strike. If something like this happened to be somewhere, they were talking about Iran. That you shouldn't wait until it's too late. And whoever wrote it was a historian or whatever it was. Was [INAUDIBLE]. I gave it to Elise to read. And he said if the Allied forces would have done something when Hitler marched into Saar, and the other place, I don't know--

Ruhrgebiet. It was the Ruhrgebiet. Ruhrgebiet, the manufacturing and heavy industry, and the military.

And the historian said, maybe five million people would not have been killed. Well, you know, if you would have done something what you should have done, God knows. But maybe it would not have developed the way into Auschwitz, you know? God knows. I don't know. I've lived through it, it was there.

I told you the time, from time to time, when I was leaving, and all that stuff, you know. God knows. But people make the same mistakes. They don't learn from history, you know. So if you can kindly take my stuff out of me. Do I still have it?

Yes.

Yeah, I do.

Yes, yes.

[LAUGHING]

Yes.

Sorry about that.

I'm very glad that you came.

Thank you. I'm glad--