

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:00,580

2

00:00:00,580 --> 00:00:04,960

And five, four, three,  
two, we're rolling.

3

00:00:04,960 --> 00:00:10,270

I am Leslie Swift speaking on  
behalf of the United States

4

00:00:10,270 --> 00:00:16,690

Holocaust Memorial Museum,  
on September 20, in New York.

5

00:00:16,690 --> 00:00:20,050

And I am speaking  
to Benni Korzen.

6

00:00:20,050 --> 00:00:23,740

And I would just like  
to start by asking, what

7

00:00:23,740 --> 00:00:24,790

can you remember?

8

00:00:24,790 --> 00:00:27,480

I know you were very young  
at the time that all of this

9

00:00:27,480 --> 00:00:27,980

happened.

10

00:00:27,980 --> 00:00:30,460

Can you tell me a  
little bit, if anything,

11

00:00:30,460 --> 00:00:32,590

that you remember  
from before the war?

12

00:00:32,590 --> 00:00:33,550  
Sure.

13  
00:00:33,550 --> 00:00:40,360  
I was 5, 5 and 1/2  
when, as a result

14  
00:00:40,360 --> 00:00:46,840  
of a very chaotic, and  
unplanned for rescue

15  
00:00:46,840 --> 00:00:50,620  
operation where people  
got together who had never

16  
00:00:50,620 --> 00:00:57,280  
been involved in saving anybody,  
decided to get together,

17  
00:00:57,280 --> 00:00:58,810  
save their Jewish neighbors.

18  
00:00:58,810 --> 00:01:02,380  
And so at 5 and  
1/2 years, you're

19  
00:01:02,380 --> 00:01:04,690  
old enough to know  
what's going on.

20  
00:01:04,690 --> 00:01:08,020  
And I remember everything,  
the highlights.

21  
00:01:08,020 --> 00:01:10,660  
But let me just go  
back and also just

22  
00:01:10,660 --> 00:01:15,370  
explain that I was  
born in Denmark,

23  
00:01:15,370 --> 00:01:22,720

and Denmark was occupied by  
Germany in April of 1940.

24  
00:01:22,720 --> 00:01:26,890  
And for three years, a  
little more than three years,

25  
00:01:26,890 --> 00:01:28,870  
for reasons that--

26  
00:01:28,870 --> 00:01:33,820  
anybody who knows about  
history, the Germans pretty much

27  
00:01:33,820 --> 00:01:37,450  
left the population, including  
the Jewish population

28  
00:01:37,450 --> 00:01:40,180  
of Denmark alone.

29  
00:01:40,180 --> 00:01:45,400  
One reason was that the German  
war machine took advantage

30  
00:01:45,400 --> 00:01:47,860  
of the fact that  
in Denmark there

31  
00:01:47,860 --> 00:01:50,620  
was a huge production of  
butter, and bacon, and all

32  
00:01:50,620 --> 00:01:53,350  
the stuff like that,  
so it made sense

33  
00:01:53,350 --> 00:01:57,310  
not to cause any trouble there.

34  
00:01:57,310 --> 00:02:03,310  
Then something happened in  
August and September of '43

35  
00:02:03,310 --> 00:02:07,660  
as a result of which  
things changed.

36  
00:02:07,660 --> 00:02:12,310  
And essentially,  
orders came from Berlin

37  
00:02:12,310 --> 00:02:17,020  
to round up, and arrest, and  
remove all the Danish Jews

38  
00:02:17,020 --> 00:02:20,110  
and bring them down to  
concentration camps.

39  
00:02:20,110 --> 00:02:28,610  
Anyway, what happened  
to me was my parents,

40  
00:02:28,610 --> 00:02:37,400  
in those chaotic days, which  
were in October of 1943,

41  
00:02:37,400 --> 00:02:40,430  
not knowing exactly  
what would happen,

42  
00:02:40,430 --> 00:02:45,740  
they decided to place me  
with a non-Jewish family,

43  
00:02:45,740 --> 00:02:47,300  
a colleague of my father.

44  
00:02:47,300 --> 00:02:48,620  
They were both lawyers.

45  
00:02:48,620 --> 00:02:54,390  
And they thought that would  
be the safer thing to do.

46

00:02:54,390 --> 00:02:59,030

And as it turned  
out, it worked out.

47

00:02:59,030 --> 00:03:01,970

I stayed there for  
six to seven weeks.

48

00:03:01,970 --> 00:03:06,170

And then one night, somebody  
came and picked me up

49

00:03:06,170 --> 00:03:09,290

and took me during the  
middle of the night.

50

00:03:09,290 --> 00:03:13,190

And I ended up on a boat and  
was sailed across to Sweden

51

00:03:13,190 --> 00:03:16,610

where my father had  
been nervously waiting

52

00:03:16,610 --> 00:03:17,930

for a few days.

53

00:03:17,930 --> 00:03:21,140

And we then ended  
up in Stockholm

54

00:03:21,140 --> 00:03:26,600

and stayed there until  
May 1945, when we then

55

00:03:26,600 --> 00:03:28,430

went back to Denmark.

56

00:03:28,430 --> 00:03:32,210

There are some details,  
along the way, that I

57

00:03:32,210 --> 00:03:35,150  
think are important to know.

58  
00:03:35,150 --> 00:03:42,290  
What happened between April  
'40 and August, or so,

59  
00:03:42,290 --> 00:03:48,260  
1943, was this relative calm.

60  
00:03:48,260 --> 00:03:55,250  
Then basically,  
Eichmann decided--

61  
00:03:55,250 --> 00:03:57,920  
and the order came  
from his office,

62  
00:03:57,920 --> 00:04:03,890  
to no longer leave  
the Jews alone.

63  
00:04:03,890 --> 00:04:10,940  
What happened, then factually,  
was that a low ranking--

64  
00:04:10,940 --> 00:04:14,450  
I think he was a trade  
attache at the German embassy

65  
00:04:14,450 --> 00:04:18,680  
in Copenhagen,  
saw a telefax come

66  
00:04:18,680 --> 00:04:30,860  
in that gave him the information  
that there was a Gestapo order

67  
00:04:30,860 --> 00:04:33,020  
now to round up the Jews.

68  
00:04:33,020 --> 00:04:35,930  
He decided, without

telling anybody,

69

00:04:35,930 --> 00:04:44,300

to tell a Danish friend whom  
he knew was a person who

70

00:04:44,300 --> 00:04:45,770

would take that information.

71

00:04:45,770 --> 00:04:50,780

And that person took it to a  
high-ranking politician who

72

00:04:50,780 --> 00:04:53,360

went to the rabbi  
and said, listen,

73

00:04:53,360 --> 00:04:54,950

this is about to happen.

74

00:04:54,950 --> 00:05:00,180

And the rabbi said,  
I don't believe that.

75

00:05:00,180 --> 00:05:04,130

And the reason why  
he didn't believe

76

00:05:04,130 --> 00:05:10,760

that was that the king,  
King Christian the 10th,

77

00:05:10,760 --> 00:05:15,740

had from the time  
Denmark was occupied,

78

00:05:15,740 --> 00:05:19,580

given out many signals  
that all added up

79

00:05:19,580 --> 00:05:26,060

to nobody touches anybody  
as long as I'm the King.

80  
00:05:26,060 --> 00:05:30,470  
And he would  
demonstrate his attitude

81  
00:05:30,470 --> 00:05:33,410  
by when he took his  
morning ride, horse

82  
00:05:33,410 --> 00:05:35,990  
ride, through the streets  
of Copenhagen. Whenever

83  
00:05:35,990 --> 00:05:39,170  
he was then saluted  
by German soldiers,

84  
00:05:39,170 --> 00:05:43,230  
he would simply turn his  
head away, ignoring them.

85  
00:05:43,230 --> 00:05:48,500  
And so for 3 years,  
3 and 1/2 years,

86  
00:05:48,500 --> 00:05:52,820  
everybody felt that  
with the king in charge,

87  
00:05:52,820 --> 00:05:55,610  
nothing bad would happen.

88  
00:05:55,610 --> 00:06:00,600  
And that led to the  
rabbi's reaction.

89  
00:06:00,600 --> 00:06:06,560  
However, when faced with  
the very harsh information,

90  
00:06:06,560 --> 00:06:12,440  
the rabbi then changed his  
mind, and at a certain sermon--



91

00:06:12,440 --> 00:06:16,970  
evening in the  
synagogue, in Copenhagen,

92

00:06:16,970 --> 00:06:23,720  
word came out and  
spread like instantly.

93

00:06:23,720 --> 00:06:25,430  
The Jewish population,  
at that time,

94

00:06:25,430 --> 00:06:30,980  
was a little under 8,000 and  
90% or so lived in Copenhagen,

95

00:06:30,980 --> 00:06:37,610  
so it was a very  
easy way to through--

96

00:06:37,610 --> 00:06:41,750  
not through anything other than  
word of mouth for everybody

97

00:06:41,750 --> 00:06:42,620  
to be reached.

98

00:06:42,620 --> 00:06:49,020  
And that's when this  
chaotic and spontaneous--

99

00:06:49,020 --> 00:06:51,560  
well, it was  
spontaneous, but also

100

00:06:51,560 --> 00:06:54,650  
surrounded by chaos  
because nobody had done

101

00:06:54,650 --> 00:06:58,070  
anything of this nature before.

102

00:06:58,070 --> 00:07:00,410

A rescue operation  
that then took--

103

00:07:00,410 --> 00:07:03,350

104

00:07:03,350 --> 00:07:08,990

the major numbers of  
people, who were taken over,

105

00:07:08,990 --> 00:07:13,540

happened in October of 1943.

106

00:07:13,540 --> 00:07:15,290

But you didn't go until  
November, I think?

107

00:07:15,290 --> 00:07:23,010

I didn't go until November  
and stayed with this family

108

00:07:23,010 --> 00:07:27,345

because the family had  
two daughters my age.

109

00:07:27,345 --> 00:07:30,570

110

00:07:30,570 --> 00:07:35,700

As I remember that time,  
it was an exciting time

111

00:07:35,700 --> 00:07:39,030

because they treated me as--

112

00:07:39,030 --> 00:07:41,470

I suddenly became a  
member of a new family.

113

00:07:41,470 --> 00:07:47,160

And there was a very nice

house, and so it was--

114  
00:07:47,160 --> 00:07:49,590  
you know, I was  
kept away, totally,

115  
00:07:49,590 --> 00:07:52,890  
from the reality of  
what was happening.

116  
00:07:52,890 --> 00:07:53,460  
Right.

117  
00:07:53,460 --> 00:07:55,920  
So continuing to  
speak about what

118  
00:07:55,920 --> 00:07:57,420  
you remember from that time.

119  
00:07:57,420 --> 00:08:01,410  
Do you remember being  
taken to the house, or?

120  
00:08:01,410 --> 00:08:01,960  
No.

121  
00:08:01,960 --> 00:08:05,620  
I remember being then  
taken from the house.

122  
00:08:05,620 --> 00:08:07,500  
It was November 17th.

123  
00:08:07,500 --> 00:08:09,930  
And the reason I  
know that date is

124  
00:08:09,930 --> 00:08:15,740  
that a very nice  
friend, a journalist,

125

00:08:15,740 --> 00:08:17,970  
generally dug up  
information that

126  
00:08:17,970 --> 00:08:22,710  
has to do with when we then--  
when all of these Danish Jews

127  
00:08:22,710 --> 00:08:25,650  
arrived in Sweden.

128  
00:08:25,650 --> 00:08:28,740  
There was another  
sort of chaotic--

129  
00:08:28,740 --> 00:08:30,360  
under the chaos of--

130  
00:08:30,360 --> 00:08:36,130  
because nobody arrived  
at given points.

131  
00:08:36,130 --> 00:08:40,260  
The boats that took us over  
ranged from rowing boats

132  
00:08:40,260 --> 00:08:44,310  
to large fishing trawlers,  
and they ended up

133  
00:08:44,310 --> 00:08:45,700  
wherever they could.

134  
00:08:45,700 --> 00:08:49,980  
And wherever that happened,  
the Swedish police

135  
00:08:49,980 --> 00:08:55,330  
took notes and took the  
information who had arrived.

136  
00:08:55,330 --> 00:09:00,030  
And so I have a copy of that

dated November the 18th,

137

00:09:00,030 --> 00:09:03,660

where I, say, a 5

and 1/2 year old boy,

138

00:09:03,660 --> 00:09:09,780

described as not able

to speak Swedish,

139

00:09:09,780 --> 00:09:14,400

which I then later learned

because I went to first grade

140

00:09:14,400 --> 00:09:15,180

there.

141

00:09:15,180 --> 00:09:20,220

And what I remember is that

the night when I was picked up

142

00:09:20,220 --> 00:09:27,930

by two very nice people that

I had never seen before, one

143

00:09:27,930 --> 00:09:33,420

of whom gave me a comic strip.

144

00:09:33,420 --> 00:09:34,470

A comic book?

145

00:09:34,470 --> 00:09:37,740

A comic book, [CHUCKLES]

which I thought

146

00:09:37,740 --> 00:09:40,050

was fascinating, to distract me.

147

00:09:40,050 --> 00:09:40,990

He or she brought it?

148

00:09:40,990 --> 00:09:41,490

Yeah.

149  
00:09:41,490 --> 00:09:42,180  
Oh, wow.

150  
00:09:42,180 --> 00:09:45,540  
And then we drove.

151  
00:09:45,540 --> 00:09:49,230  
And I think this was  
not a fast thing.

152  
00:09:49,230 --> 00:09:53,280  
I think it took about 24  
hours because I remember I was

153  
00:09:53,280 --> 00:09:54,780  
sleeping and then waking up.

154  
00:09:54,780 --> 00:09:56,940  
And then it was the next night.

155  
00:09:56,940 --> 00:09:59,910  
All the crossings  
took place at night

156  
00:09:59,910 --> 00:10:04,770  
because the German  
patrol boats covered

157  
00:10:04,770 --> 00:10:07,500  
the water between  
Denmark and Sweden

158  
00:10:07,500 --> 00:10:11,400  
across which all of  
these boats sailed.

159  
00:10:11,400 --> 00:10:15,120  
So it was probably  
something like 36 hours.

160

00:10:15,120 --> 00:10:24,750  
And I do remember that when  
I was then placed on a boat,

161  
00:10:24,750 --> 00:10:31,770  
a brusque voice from I guess  
the guy in charge said,

162  
00:10:31,770 --> 00:10:36,870  
kid, you puke on this boat,  
and I throw you overboard,

163  
00:10:36,870 --> 00:10:39,330  
so you better behave.

164  
00:10:39,330 --> 00:10:44,170  
And it was said with some  
kind of a tinge of humor,

165  
00:10:44,170 --> 00:10:46,350  
so it didn't scare me.

166  
00:10:46,350 --> 00:10:49,320  
It was just, hey, OK.

167  
00:10:49,320 --> 00:10:52,920  
I better behave here.

168  
00:10:52,920 --> 00:10:57,510  
And the crossing was  
fast because this

169  
00:10:57,510 --> 00:11:00,990  
was a very fast-moving boat.

170  
00:11:00,990 --> 00:11:04,860  
And at the other end,  
across in Sweden,

171  
00:11:04,860 --> 00:11:07,410  
my father then,  
who had come down

172

00:11:07,410 --> 00:11:13,200  
from Stockholm, where my  
parents had been settled,

173

00:11:13,200 --> 00:11:16,590  
he had been waiting  
there for three days.

174

00:11:16,590 --> 00:11:20,350  
It's not exactly like the  
schedule is this, you know?

175

00:11:20,350 --> 00:11:20,850  
Right.

176

00:11:20,850 --> 00:11:25,560  
So he was very happy, and  
then we ended up in Stockholm

177

00:11:25,560 --> 00:11:30,250  
and stayed there  
until May of 1945.

178

00:11:30,250 --> 00:11:34,800  
And so what was your  
life like in Stockholm?

179

00:11:34,800 --> 00:11:40,680  
Under the circumstances,  
by the time

180

00:11:40,680 --> 00:11:47,310  
I turned six in  
the Spring of '44,

181

00:11:47,310 --> 00:11:51,390  
I was enrolled in a local  
school, first grade.

182

00:11:51,390 --> 00:12:02,490  
And that became a new  
lifestyle that totally took me



183

00:12:02,490 --> 00:12:04,230  
into a new world.

184

00:12:04,230 --> 00:12:10,200  
And therefore, the war had  
sort of vanished completely

185

00:12:10,200 --> 00:12:12,450  
from our lives, from my life.

186

00:12:12,450 --> 00:12:14,580  
Of course, in the  
case of my parents,

187

00:12:14,580 --> 00:12:16,380  
it was different  
because my father

188

00:12:16,380 --> 00:12:20,010  
was given the task,  
as an attorney,

189

00:12:20,010 --> 00:12:24,165  
to deal with settlements  
by the Jewish community,

190

00:12:24,165 --> 00:12:26,550  
the legal aspects of it.

191

00:12:26,550 --> 00:12:32,250  
But that was not very  
much a part of my life.

192

00:12:32,250 --> 00:12:33,930  
Do you remember that  
your parents were

193

00:12:33,930 --> 00:12:36,750  
anxious about anything, or  
it was just, sort of, like,

194

00:12:36,750 --> 00:12:37,905

oh, this is our new life?

195

00:12:37,905 --> 00:12:38,405

No.

196

00:12:38,405 --> 00:12:40,530

They were anxious and  
nervous because they

197

00:12:40,530 --> 00:12:42,360

knew what was going on.

198

00:12:42,360 --> 00:12:49,980

But it was not until  
sometime late April of 1945

199

00:12:49,980 --> 00:12:57,000

that a new event totally  
took me by surprise.

200

00:12:57,000 --> 00:12:59,010

It was at night.

201

00:12:59,010 --> 00:13:01,800

In the middle of the  
night, I hear voices

202

00:13:01,800 --> 00:13:03,790

that I had never heard before.

203

00:13:03,790 --> 00:13:08,820

And I went into the kitchen of  
the apartment where we lived.

204

00:13:08,820 --> 00:13:10,560

It was like 4:00 AM.

205

00:13:10,560 --> 00:13:15,910

My parents were seated,  
and my uncle and aunt

206

00:13:15,910 --> 00:13:18,460

were sitting right next to them.

207

00:13:18,460 --> 00:13:24,430

And what had happened was that  
during the October days, when

208

00:13:24,430 --> 00:13:28,180

everybody tried to  
get across to Sweden,

209

00:13:28,180 --> 00:13:31,830

they were captured along  
with a group of people.

210

00:13:31,830 --> 00:13:34,900

211

00:13:34,900 --> 00:13:38,890

They had been hiding  
in a small village

212

00:13:38,890 --> 00:13:42,610

near the coast, where they were  
hoping to get off to Sweden.

213

00:13:42,610 --> 00:13:49,960

And they were then taken  
down to the Theresienstadt

214

00:13:49,960 --> 00:13:51,160

concentration camp.

215

00:13:51,160 --> 00:13:55,870

And they stayed there  
until April of '45,

216

00:13:55,870 --> 00:14:01,570

when they were rescued and taken  
to Sweden in those white buses

217

00:14:01,570 --> 00:14:04,520

that Folke Bernadotte  
had arranged.

218  
00:14:04,520 --> 00:14:13,630  
And so at 4:00 AM I hear these  
voices, and I walk in there.

219  
00:14:13,630 --> 00:14:19,600  
I knew them, but at five,  
before everything happened,

220  
00:14:19,600 --> 00:14:23,470  
we had visited them, and I  
certainly recognized them.

221  
00:14:23,470 --> 00:14:27,430  
And they had survived  
without being

222  
00:14:27,430 --> 00:14:32,760  
able to function at 4:00 AM,  
and having a meal, and so on.

223  
00:14:32,760 --> 00:14:38,140  
And I do remember that at some  
point, I'm just standing there.

224  
00:14:38,140 --> 00:14:40,300  
Nobody's even paying  
attention to me.

225  
00:14:40,300 --> 00:14:47,070  
And I see my mother say to  
my Uncle Ben, don't eat this.

226  
00:14:47,070 --> 00:14:49,190  
This is not fresh butter.

227  
00:14:49,190 --> 00:14:50,590  
I'll get you some fresh butter.

228  
00:14:50,590 --> 00:14:53,710  
To which he said, it's  
fresh enough for me.

229

00:14:53,710 --> 00:14:59,030

230

00:14:59,030 --> 00:15:00,580

So--

231

00:15:00,580 --> 00:15:01,410

Just to finish.

232

00:15:01,410 --> 00:15:10,030

So what happened was that the  
war ended and May 5, Denmark

233

00:15:10,030 --> 00:15:14,530

was freed and open again.

234

00:15:14,530 --> 00:15:18,400

And very shortly thereafter,  
we returned from Sweden

235

00:15:18,400 --> 00:15:19,810

to Denmark.

236

00:15:19,810 --> 00:15:24,610

And we found our apartment  
pretty much exactly the way

237

00:15:24,610 --> 00:15:27,220

we had left it during  
those chaotic days

238

00:15:27,220 --> 00:15:30,700

because a neighbor  
had taken care of it.

239

00:15:30,700 --> 00:15:32,320

Can you tell us more about that?

240

00:15:32,320 --> 00:15:34,280

I mean, do you know  
who that neighbor was?

241

00:15:34,280 --> 00:15:37,360

Do you remember that  
person from before the war?

242

00:15:37,360 --> 00:15:37,930

Yes.

243

00:15:37,930 --> 00:15:40,780

It was a next door neighbor.

244

00:15:40,780 --> 00:15:43,420

But there were other  
people because I think

245

00:15:43,420 --> 00:15:45,460

the next door neighbor had--

246

00:15:45,460 --> 00:15:46,900

there was a death in the family.

247

00:15:46,900 --> 00:15:54,440

Anyway, it was neighbors  
who took care of it.

248

00:15:54,440 --> 00:16:01,900

And I think that my parents  
were totally astounded at this

249

00:16:01,900 --> 00:16:03,850

and of course, very happy.

250

00:16:03,850 --> 00:16:09,340

And so, in celebration,  
what they had brought back

251

00:16:09,340 --> 00:16:12,580

from Sweden was a  
certain kind of chocolate

252

00:16:12,580 --> 00:16:16,810

that during the war in Denmark  
you couldn't get chocolate.

253

00:16:16,810 --> 00:16:19,090

So what happened was  
there was a big party

254

00:16:19,090 --> 00:16:24,460

where all the kids, in the  
complex where we lived,

255

00:16:24,460 --> 00:16:32,260

were invited up, and it was a  
party that took several days.

256

00:16:32,260 --> 00:16:37,420

That ended our Sweden odyssey.

257

00:16:37,420 --> 00:16:42,550

And when did you come to the  
U.S., and how did that happen?

258

00:16:42,550 --> 00:16:46,960

That did not take  
place until '63.

259

00:16:46,960 --> 00:16:55,840

What happened was  
before that, in 1960,

260

00:16:55,840 --> 00:17:01,750

as a young 22-year-old  
kid, I started

261

00:17:01,750 --> 00:17:08,859

working at a movie company as  
a P.A., production assistant.

262

00:17:08,859 --> 00:17:17,619

One day, arrived a crew of five  
people from CBS in New York.

263

00:17:17,619 --> 00:17:20,829

They came to Denmark in  
order to do a documentary

264  
00:17:20,829 --> 00:17:23,109  
about the rescue  
of the Danish Jews.

265  
00:17:23,109 --> 00:17:25,720

266  
00:17:25,720 --> 00:17:28,119  
I spoke English, and  
I was attached to them

267  
00:17:28,119 --> 00:17:31,690  
as their guide.

268  
00:17:31,690 --> 00:17:35,320  
And what happened  
was we went around

269  
00:17:35,320 --> 00:17:38,800  
and interviewed a  
number of the people who

270  
00:17:38,800 --> 00:17:42,820  
had been actively involved  
in the rescue operation.

271  
00:17:42,820 --> 00:17:48,280  
And at some point, we sat  
in the town of Elsinore,

272  
00:17:48,280 --> 00:17:52,960  
which is on the coast,  
five miles across the water

273  
00:17:52,960 --> 00:17:59,540  
from Sweden, at the  
office of a bookbinder,

274  
00:17:59,540 --> 00:18:01,150  
whose last name is Kerr.

275



00:18:01,150 --> 00:18:04,060

276

00:18:04,060 --> 00:18:07,060

And he spoke not  
a word of English,

277

00:18:07,060 --> 00:18:11,770

so I not only had to  
translate, but also try

278

00:18:11,770 --> 00:18:15,400

to interpret what he was saying.

279

00:18:15,400 --> 00:18:16,660

And it was fine.

280

00:18:16,660 --> 00:18:18,230

It went on for 20 minutes.

281

00:18:18,230 --> 00:18:22,810

And the CBS writer got  
all the information

282

00:18:22,810 --> 00:18:26,410

he wanted until suddenly,  
Mr. Kerr turned to me

283

00:18:26,410 --> 00:18:29,290

and said in Danish,  
listen, I'm busy.

284

00:18:29,290 --> 00:18:30,220

I'm a busy guy.

285

00:18:30,220 --> 00:18:32,440

Get these damn Americans out.

286

00:18:32,440 --> 00:18:40,000

I've had enough of them, which  
made it slightly tricky for me

287

00:18:40,000 --> 00:18:43,700  
to translate, and I didn't  
quite know how to handle that.

288  
00:18:43,700 --> 00:18:45,820  
But I was, sort of,  
saved by the bell

289  
00:18:45,820 --> 00:18:53,890  
because into his office walked  
another man who was clearly

290  
00:18:53,890 --> 00:18:58,600  
his assistant, or friend or,  
whatever because he was then

291  
00:18:58,600 --> 00:18:59,870  
introduced to all of us.

292  
00:18:59,870 --> 00:19:04,362  
And when he came to me  
and he heard my last name,

293  
00:19:04,362 --> 00:19:05,320  
he said, wait a minute.

294  
00:19:05,320 --> 00:19:07,240  
I remember that.

295  
00:19:07,240 --> 00:19:19,570  
Then it turned out that what  
unfolded was as follows.

296  
00:19:19,570 --> 00:19:22,840  
It turned out that  
this man who came in,

297  
00:19:22,840 --> 00:19:26,920  
whose last name was Larsen,  
had been the assistant of Kerr

298  
00:19:26,920 --> 00:19:28,840  
during the transportations.

299

00:19:28,840 --> 00:19:38,110

And then it developed was  
that it was on Kerr's boat

300

00:19:38,110 --> 00:19:41,860

that I had been taken across.

301

00:19:41,860 --> 00:19:45,520

And he was the one who said,  
if you puke, you go overboard.

302

00:19:45,520 --> 00:19:49,530

And so, all of this  
happened within two minutes.

303

00:19:49,530 --> 00:19:52,570

And, of course, Kerr  
changed his attitude,

304

00:19:52,570 --> 00:19:56,050

and we stayed and had beer,  
and aquavit, and lunch,

305

00:19:56,050 --> 00:19:58,630

and stayed for hours.

306

00:19:58,630 --> 00:20:02,740

And then the next day,  
that story was then

307

00:20:02,740 --> 00:20:06,460

made part of the documentary.

308

00:20:06,460 --> 00:20:11,320

And again, because Kerr still  
didn't speak a word of English,

309

00:20:11,320 --> 00:20:14,080

I had to translate  
everything he said.

310

00:20:14,080 --> 00:20:17,020

311

00:20:17,020 --> 00:20:23,910

His story as part of  
the people rescuing

312

00:20:23,910 --> 00:20:27,010

their Danish neighbors,  
Danish-Jewish neighbors,

313

00:20:27,010 --> 00:20:35,470

was that he continued sailing  
across even into 1943, '44

314

00:20:35,470 --> 00:20:41,380

the Spring, in spite of the  
fact that it got increasingly

315

00:20:41,380 --> 00:20:45,280

difficult because there were  
more and more patrol boats.

316

00:20:45,280 --> 00:20:49,240

And so it was only on  
nights without any moon

317

00:20:49,240 --> 00:20:52,790

that he could cross  
without being seen.

318

00:20:52,790 --> 00:20:56,230

And what did help  
his enterprise was

319

00:20:56,230 --> 00:21:02,540

that he was, sort of,  
a Scarlet Pimpernel.

320

00:21:02,540 --> 00:21:05,830

He didn't pay much  
attention to his own safety

321

00:21:05,830 --> 00:21:09,760  
He went from a very small  
boat to a bigger boat.

322  
00:21:09,760 --> 00:21:10,990  
And by the time--

323  
00:21:10,990 --> 00:21:16,090  
in November of '43, he had,  
under the circumstances,

324  
00:21:16,090 --> 00:21:17,630  
a very fast boat.

325  
00:21:17,630 --> 00:21:22,690  
And so he managed to do this  
until he was caught and almost

326  
00:21:22,690 --> 00:21:25,690  
killed in 1944.

327  
00:21:25,690 --> 00:21:29,560  
And he spent a year in  
a concentration camp.

328  
00:21:29,560 --> 00:21:32,830  
He also, obviously,  
survived because we

329  
00:21:32,830 --> 00:21:36,790  
had this wonderful lunch thing.

330  
00:21:36,790 --> 00:21:39,790  
And so did you talk at  
all about why he was

331  
00:21:39,790 --> 00:21:41,090  
motivated to do what he did?

332  
00:21:41,090 --> 00:21:42,280  
Yes, we did.

333

00:21:42,280 --> 00:21:51,010  
And he said, and I  
translate it verbatim,

334  
00:21:51,010 --> 00:21:53,050  
and it ended up in the film.

335  
00:21:53,050 --> 00:21:55,810  
He said, I didn't rescue  
the Jews or anybody

336  
00:21:55,810 --> 00:21:57,580  
because I like them.

337  
00:21:57,580 --> 00:22:00,834  
I did it because I  
hated the Germans.

338  
00:22:00,834 --> 00:22:06,130  
[CHUCKLES] That  
was what he said.

339  
00:22:06,130 --> 00:22:10,600  
Obviously, there was  
more to it, but that

340  
00:22:10,600 --> 00:22:12,990  
was what came out of his mouth.

341  
00:22:12,990 --> 00:22:17,680  
Well, hated fascism, or he hated  
the government, or whatever.

342  
00:22:17,680 --> 00:22:19,960  
Yeah, that's very interesting.

343  
00:22:19,960 --> 00:22:25,030  
And so one question I had,  
just when reading your story,

344  
00:22:25,030 --> 00:22:29,860  
was when this  
documentary was made,

345  
00:22:29,860 --> 00:22:32,740  
was it because the Eichmann  
trial was going on?

346  
00:22:32,740 --> 00:22:34,180  
Or was there any relationship--

347  
00:22:34,180 --> 00:22:34,680  
No.

348  
00:22:34,680 --> 00:22:36,544  
--to that?

349  
00:22:36,544 --> 00:22:39,310  
That may have been  
part of the thing,

350  
00:22:39,310 --> 00:22:42,130  
but I think more  
to the point was

351  
00:22:42,130 --> 00:22:46,150  
that the producer of  
the CBS documentary

352  
00:22:46,150 --> 00:22:47,230  
had a personal interest.

353  
00:22:47,230 --> 00:22:50,260  
He thought this was a  
very important story

354  
00:22:50,260 --> 00:22:52,300  
to show his viewers.

355  
00:22:52,300 --> 00:22:59,350  
And it was part of what was  
then the Sunday morning--

356  
00:22:59,350 --> 00:23:02,140  
CBS had Sunday morning.

357  
00:23:02,140 --> 00:23:04,030  
This is before  
cable and anything.

358  
00:23:04,030 --> 00:23:07,690  
And so the public  
affairs, the type service

359  
00:23:07,690 --> 00:23:13,050  
that was given mostly  
by CBS, NBC, and AB--

360  
00:23:13,050 --> 00:23:16,330  
ABC and NBC did not  
do the same thing.

361  
00:23:16,330 --> 00:23:19,410  
So they had a whole  
department of people

362  
00:23:19,410 --> 00:23:26,460  
on 11th and 57th Street  
in the production office.

363  
00:23:26,460 --> 00:23:29,370  
And they did whatever they  
thought was important.

364  
00:23:29,370 --> 00:23:33,300  
So they told this story  
because they wanted

365  
00:23:33,300 --> 00:23:35,640  
the American viewers to see it.

366  
00:23:35,640 --> 00:23:38,580  
And it was broadcast twice  
because it did make--

367  
00:23:38,580 --> 00:23:43,890  
it was the first time a  
TV program had done this.



368

00:23:43,890 --> 00:23:49,590

Books had been written before,  
and many came afterwards,

369

00:23:49,590 --> 00:23:52,590

dealing with the  
same subject, so.

370

00:23:52,590 --> 00:23:57,720

And do you know any other  
people who were rescued?

371

00:23:57,720 --> 00:23:59,490

I mean, is there any  
kind of community

372

00:23:59,490 --> 00:24:02,040

that you maintain  
because of, sort of, that

373

00:24:02,040 --> 00:24:07,260

shared experience, or you're  
just an American now, or?

374

00:24:07,260 --> 00:24:08,220

A few.

375

00:24:08,220 --> 00:24:10,590

But because I have  
a very large family,

376

00:24:10,590 --> 00:24:14,460

my father is one of seven  
and my mother, one of four--

377

00:24:14,460 --> 00:24:15,750

[PHONE RINGING]

378

00:24:15,750 --> 00:24:17,510

--it was more-- I'm  
sorry about this.

379

00:24:17,510 --> 00:24:19,380

Oh, that's OK.

380

00:24:19,380 --> 00:24:23,280

Talk a little bit more about  
coming to the U.S. and why,

381

00:24:23,280 --> 00:24:27,750

and when and how  
that whole thing--

382

00:24:27,750 --> 00:24:28,860

how it all happened.

383

00:24:28,860 --> 00:24:31,140

Well, then because  
of the contact

384

00:24:31,140 --> 00:24:37,860

that I made with the people at  
CBS, which lasted after they

385

00:24:37,860 --> 00:24:40,980

went back to New  
York from Copenhagen,

386

00:24:40,980 --> 00:24:44,850

they worked on the program,  
and then I got a call,

387

00:24:44,850 --> 00:24:48,900

would I like to come to New  
York because I could help put it

388

00:24:48,900 --> 00:24:53,310

together, and then I stayed.

389

00:24:53,310 --> 00:24:56,760

I went back a couple of times,  
but I ended up liking New York.

390

00:24:56,760 --> 00:24:58,380

I thought it was very exciting.

391

00:24:58,380 --> 00:25:05,730

And they gave me a job  
being a production manager

392

00:25:05,730 --> 00:25:08,970

for a number of  
programs that came out

393

00:25:08,970 --> 00:25:13,590

of the same office,  
the public affairs

394

00:25:13,590 --> 00:25:15,630

Sunday morning programs.

395

00:25:15,630 --> 00:25:22,080

There were two shows, "Lamp Unto  
My Feet" and "Look Up and Live.

396

00:25:22,080 --> 00:25:25,380

Those were the two  
programs, and this precedes

397

00:25:25,380 --> 00:25:28,450

cable and everything else.

398

00:25:28,450 --> 00:25:38,910

So I got stuck here, and I  
met a young lady in 1964.

399

00:25:38,910 --> 00:25:42,060

And got married 3--

400

00:25:42,060 --> 00:25:47,470

2 and 1/2 months after we met,  
and that is now 51 years ago.

401

00:25:47,470 --> 00:25:47,970

[CHUCKLES]

402

00:25:47,970 --> 00:25:49,690  
And now you're in California?

403  
00:25:49,690 --> 00:25:55,050  
And then we moved from  
New York to L.A., in 1990,

404  
00:25:55,050 --> 00:26:02,070  
because we made a movie there,  
and it was easier to then stay.

405  
00:26:02,070 --> 00:26:03,540  
Yes.

406  
00:26:03,540 --> 00:26:07,110  
I mean, just to go back to what  
you remember from the time.

407  
00:26:07,110 --> 00:26:08,220  
What sticks with you?

408  
00:26:08,220 --> 00:26:12,390

409  
00:26:12,390 --> 00:26:17,940  
I guess what do you really,  
sort of, have clear memories of?

410  
00:26:17,940 --> 00:26:20,640

411  
00:26:20,640 --> 00:26:24,180  
I have a very clear memory  
of spending something

412  
00:26:24,180 --> 00:26:28,740  
like an hour on a fast-moving  
boat because what also happened

413  
00:26:28,740 --> 00:26:33,780  
was in November of  
1943, pretty much all

414

00:26:33,780 --> 00:26:39,480  
the Jews had crossed to Sweden.

415

00:26:39,480 --> 00:26:47,460  
And so the transports  
then took care of--

416

00:26:47,460 --> 00:26:50,580  
had people such as--

417

00:26:50,580 --> 00:26:58,650  
on the boat was an RAF pilot  
who had parachuted over Denmark

418

00:26:58,650 --> 00:27:01,650  
and had to be gotten out.

419

00:27:01,650 --> 00:27:04,620  
The Royal Air Force, you  
know, British Air Force,

420

00:27:04,620 --> 00:27:07,150  
and there were  
some other people.

421

00:27:07,150 --> 00:27:14,670  
So later on, while I  
was still six or seven,

422

00:27:14,670 --> 00:27:24,810  
and we talked  
about the crossing,

423

00:27:24,810 --> 00:27:28,030  
my father said  
something, and I said,

424

00:27:28,030 --> 00:27:31,320  
well, it was me and  
the other saboteurs

425

00:27:31,320 --> 00:27:34,770

that crossed the water.

426

00:27:34,770 --> 00:27:37,980

And because it was a very--

427

00:27:37,980 --> 00:27:43,680

it was the first time I had  
been on a boat of that type.

428

00:27:43,680 --> 00:27:49,140

It may have been the first  
time I'd been on a boat ever.

429

00:27:49,140 --> 00:27:55,170

As a 5 and 1/2-year-old boy, I  
was very excited about how it

430

00:27:55,170 --> 00:27:55,950

worked.

431

00:27:55,950 --> 00:28:01,750

And since, at that  
time, unlike before,

432

00:28:01,750 --> 00:28:07,020

during the really  
chaotic days in October,

433

00:28:07,020 --> 00:28:13,870

where sometimes young children  
were given sleeping pills

434

00:28:13,870 --> 00:28:18,370

or whatever to make sure that  
they would not make noise,

435

00:28:18,370 --> 00:28:20,560

this was different.

436

00:28:20,560 --> 00:28:25,660

And I guess Mr.  
Kerr took a chance.

437

00:28:25,660 --> 00:28:29,650

I guess he talked to me,  
and the way I responded

438

00:28:29,650 --> 00:28:35,230

made him believe that it  
was not necessary to give me

439

00:28:35,230 --> 00:28:37,990

an injection for  
me to keep quiet.

440

00:28:37,990 --> 00:28:43,360

So by the time we  
arrived near Helsingborg

441

00:28:43,360 --> 00:28:49,210

in Sweden, which is across  
from the shortest distance

442

00:28:49,210 --> 00:28:59,500

from Denmark, as we moved into  
the harbor along the side,

443

00:28:59,500 --> 00:29:02,620

I saw my father from the boat.

444

00:29:02,620 --> 00:29:07,420

And he was there, I think, with  
a policeman, nervously pacing

445

00:29:07,420 --> 00:29:09,410

back and forth.

446

00:29:09,410 --> 00:29:11,960

So that's what I do remember.

447

00:29:11,960 --> 00:29:14,380

And do you remember  
getting off the boat,

448

00:29:14,380 --> 00:29:19,060

and then seeing your father,  
and being reunited, or?

449  
00:29:19,060 --> 00:29:25,000  
Well, the image I remember  
is as we moved into towards

450  
00:29:25,000 --> 00:29:32,770  
like maybe 25 yards before  
the boat actually moored.

451  
00:29:32,770 --> 00:29:36,500  
And then what happened, I  
don't remember, but obviously,

452  
00:29:36,500 --> 00:29:39,940  
what did happen was that we  
took a train, my father and I,

453  
00:29:39,940 --> 00:29:43,180  
to Stockholm, where we  
reunited with my mother.

454  
00:29:43,180 --> 00:29:44,350  
Right.

455  
00:29:44,350 --> 00:29:47,830  
I just asked that question  
because I'm the mother

456  
00:29:47,830 --> 00:29:50,290  
of a couple of  
six-year-old boys,

457  
00:29:50,290 --> 00:29:54,940  
and I can't imagine being  
that person who was waiting

458  
00:29:54,940 --> 00:29:57,620  
for your child to arrive and--

459  
00:29:57,620 --> 00:29:58,120  
Yeah.



460  
00:29:58,120 --> 00:30:00,550  
And one reason why.

461  
00:30:00,550 --> 00:30:05,530  
During the interview, where I  
discovered-- where everybody

462  
00:30:05,530 --> 00:30:08,200  
discovered that the  
boat actually had me

463  
00:30:08,200 --> 00:30:11,470  
on board, what actually happened  
was that the man who walked

464  
00:30:11,470 --> 00:30:16,210  
in with a severe limp  
because he'd been injured

465  
00:30:16,210 --> 00:30:23,500  
during the war, where his fellow  
Mr. Kerr was almost killed,

466  
00:30:23,500 --> 00:30:28,120  
when he was introduced to me and  
remembered the last name, which

467  
00:30:28,120 --> 00:30:31,030  
is somewhat unusual,  
the reason why

468  
00:30:31,030 --> 00:30:37,360  
he remembered that was that  
my father had, as a gift,

469  
00:30:37,360 --> 00:30:40,870  
given him a silver  
cigarette-- he was a smoker--

470  
00:30:40,870 --> 00:30:45,100  
a cigarette holder and  
had engraved in it a

471

00:30:45,100 --> 00:30:49,180

thank you note from him,  
last name being Korzen.

472

00:30:49,180 --> 00:30:59,110

So the name was a name that this  
guy remembered very clearly.

473

00:30:59,110 --> 00:31:07,450

So I don't know how  
to end the interview.

474

00:31:07,450 --> 00:31:12,080

Is there anything else you would  
like to say, to tell us today?

475

00:31:12,080 --> 00:31:14,510

I mean, what does  
your experience--

476

00:31:14,510 --> 00:31:19,540

how does that inform your  
day-to-day life today?

477

00:31:19,540 --> 00:31:29,440

What happened then, where  
basically people put themselves

478

00:31:29,440 --> 00:31:36,880

at risk and many  
died, is an example

479

00:31:36,880 --> 00:31:47,110

that stands as a role model  
for human behavior now.

480

00:31:47,110 --> 00:31:53,620

What we're witnessing these  
days having to do with refugees,

481

00:31:53,620 --> 00:31:57,040

and immigration,

and people trying

482

00:31:57,040 --> 00:32:08,420

to escape alive from  
either war or related

483

00:32:08,420 --> 00:32:13,630

horrible to human  
situation, is the opposite.

484

00:32:13,630 --> 00:32:18,760

And it would be very nice  
if this example, which

485

00:32:18,760 --> 00:32:24,070

is not really that known,  
could be, let's say,

486

00:32:24,070 --> 00:32:32,110

elevated as the role model  
for everybody to imitate.

487

00:32:32,110 --> 00:32:35,620

How that is to be done  
remains to be seen.

488

00:32:35,620 --> 00:32:43,720

Obviously, it would  
take an attitude

489

00:32:43,720 --> 00:32:49,880

that is the total opposite of  
what's happening right now.

490

00:32:49,880 --> 00:32:57,100

This is 2015,  
where as we witness

491

00:32:57,100 --> 00:33:01,630

the debate about who we  
are, and what we should do,

492

00:33:01,630 --> 00:33:02,740

and what we should allow.

493

00:33:02,740 --> 00:33:06,730

494

00:33:06,730 --> 00:33:14,180

As I see it, the idiocy of  
doing the opposite of what

495

00:33:14,180 --> 00:33:16,160

this country is all based on.

496

00:33:16,160 --> 00:33:25,760

This country is based on having  
people come here and then start

497

00:33:25,760 --> 00:33:33,050

a life that ends up making  
a country as good as it

498

00:33:33,050 --> 00:33:35,870

can be because of the people.

499

00:33:35,870 --> 00:33:39,800

So therefore,  
whenever the opposite

500

00:33:39,800 --> 00:33:48,620

is being advocated, that  
to me sounds like it's

501

00:33:48,620 --> 00:33:53,060

based on idiocy, it's based  
on ignorance, and anything

502

00:33:53,060 --> 00:33:58,100

we can do to counteract  
that, we all have,

503

00:33:58,100 --> 00:34:02,220

I think, a responsibility to do.

504

00:34:02,220 --> 00:34:03,050  
Thank you.

505  
00:34:03,050 --> 00:34:03,550  
OK.

506  
00:34:03,550 --> 00:34:06,395  
Can we cut for a  
minute, and let's--

507  
00:34:06,395 --> 00:34:07,880  
We're rolling.

508  
00:34:07,880 --> 00:34:10,790  
Can you tell me a little  
bit about what you remember

509  
00:34:10,790 --> 00:34:13,790  
from life before the Holocaust?

510  
00:34:13,790 --> 00:34:16,219  
Was your family religious?

511  
00:34:16,219 --> 00:34:19,670  
Did you go to synagogue,  
that kind of thing?

512  
00:34:19,670 --> 00:34:21,260  
The answer is no.

513  
00:34:21,260 --> 00:34:25,310  
The previous gen--  
my grandparents

514  
00:34:25,310 --> 00:34:27,830  
were somewhat religious.

515  
00:34:27,830 --> 00:34:33,800  
They did celebrate  
the high holidays.

516  
00:34:33,800 --> 00:34:42,770

I was bar mitzvahed when 13  
as the last of my siblings.

517  
00:34:42,770 --> 00:34:47,659  
And so we were, and  
still are, what you

518  
00:34:47,659 --> 00:34:49,639  
would call secular Jews.

519  
00:34:49,639 --> 00:34:55,920  
When our son turned 13, and we  
lived in New York at that time,

520  
00:34:55,920 --> 00:34:58,400  
we did not--

521  
00:34:58,400 --> 00:35:02,150  
what we did was  
we sent him to be

522  
00:35:02,150 --> 00:35:08,300  
tutored by a Yiddish  
poet who tutored kids

523  
00:35:08,300 --> 00:35:14,180  
and dealt with everything  
Jewish except for religion.

524  
00:35:14,180 --> 00:35:16,970  
History, music,  
culture, et cetera.

525  
00:35:16,970 --> 00:35:25,460  
And so, he got his upbringing  
in the same secular tradition.

526  
00:35:25,460 --> 00:35:32,150  
When my wife and I got  
married, which was in 1964,

527  
00:35:32,150 --> 00:35:36,530  
we went down to city

hall in New York.

528  
00:35:36,530 --> 00:35:41,060  
But we really didn't  
like the AstroTurf floor

529  
00:35:41,060 --> 00:35:48,050  
and couldn't see ourselves  
doing the ceremony there,

530  
00:35:48,050 --> 00:35:50,090  
so we ended up--

531  
00:35:50,090 --> 00:35:52,250  
we lived on the Upper  
West Side of Manhattan,

532  
00:35:52,250 --> 00:35:58,460  
and we ended up finding a  
rabbi in a synagogue who

533  
00:35:58,460 --> 00:36:02,630  
was willing to marry us  
with the understanding

534  
00:36:02,630 --> 00:36:05,060  
that we were secular Jews.

535  
00:36:05,060 --> 00:36:10,160  
And so he promised to stay  
away from a subject that

536  
00:36:10,160 --> 00:36:12,500  
had to do with--

537  
00:36:12,500 --> 00:36:16,910  
that would not really connect  
with being a secular Jew.

538  
00:36:16,910 --> 00:36:20,610  
And the only thing he--

539

00:36:20,610 --> 00:36:23,120  
and he said, so let's  
do it in my chambers.

540  
00:36:23,120 --> 00:36:30,170  
You know, not in the big  
space where actually, I

541  
00:36:30,170 --> 00:36:34,190  
think the synagogue  
seats about 3,000 people.

542  
00:36:34,190 --> 00:36:37,280  
So we came there  
with eight friends,

543  
00:36:37,280 --> 00:36:39,780  
and he changed his mind.

544  
00:36:39,780 --> 00:36:42,410  
He said, no, let's go  
into the big space,

545  
00:36:42,410 --> 00:36:48,050  
even though we're only 12  
people, because he wanted

546  
00:36:48,050 --> 00:36:55,340  
to demonstrate that he could  
deliver a sermon for people

547  
00:36:55,340 --> 00:36:56,180  
like us.

548  
00:36:56,180 --> 00:36:59,660  
And he did.

549  
00:36:59,660 --> 00:37:07,910  
So he managed to stay  
away from the word God.

550  
00:37:07,910 --> 00:37:12,590  
And yet, he did not



violate his own,

551

00:37:12,590 --> 00:37:16,250

let's say, background and  
principles being a rabbi.

552

00:37:16,250 --> 00:37:19,340

He knew how to  
have that balance.

553

00:37:19,340 --> 00:37:24,290

So the fact that I  
went through a bar

554

00:37:24,290 --> 00:37:34,790

mitzvah, I'm happy and proud  
of it even though the truth is

555

00:37:34,790 --> 00:37:44,480

that very shortly thereafter,  
I lost the ability

556

00:37:44,480 --> 00:37:48,720

to speak whatever  
Hebrew I had learned,

557

00:37:48,720 --> 00:37:51,480

which is what you  
need to understand.

558

00:37:51,480 --> 00:37:57,740

And it's like it just ended up--

559

00:37:57,740 --> 00:38:01,580

in retrospect, it was  
a nice experience.

560

00:38:01,580 --> 00:38:03,710

It was a nice thing  
that happened.

561

00:38:03,710 --> 00:38:04,250

Right.

562  
00:38:04,250 --> 00:38:08,690  
But it has not influenced  
our lives going forward.

563  
00:38:08,690 --> 00:38:09,270  
Right.

564  
00:38:09,270 --> 00:38:09,770  
Right.

565  
00:38:09,770 --> 00:38:16,690  
And do you feel a commonality  
with other Holocaust survivors?

566  
00:38:16,690 --> 00:38:19,960  
Or do you feel that  
your experience was--

567  
00:38:19,960 --> 00:38:20,790  
because there--

568  
00:38:20,790 --> 00:38:23,860  
one thing we learn in  
this, at the museum,

569  
00:38:23,860 --> 00:38:26,620  
is that there are so many  
different experiences.

570  
00:38:26,620 --> 00:38:32,950  
People say Holocaust survivor,  
but it is a very diverse set

571  
00:38:32,950 --> 00:38:34,000  
of circumstances.

572  
00:38:34,000 --> 00:38:35,500  
Yes.

573  
00:38:35,500 --> 00:38:39,850  
One thing that

happened very early on,

574

00:38:39,850 --> 00:38:44,740

after I settled in

New York, was my wife

575

00:38:44,740 --> 00:38:51,700

and I met a young girl

our age and for reasons

576

00:38:51,700 --> 00:38:58,160

that neither of us understood,

we became fast friends.

577

00:38:58,160 --> 00:38:59,200

And still are.

578

00:38:59,200 --> 00:39:03,650

This is now 50 years later.

579

00:39:03,650 --> 00:39:05,410

She happened to be--

580

00:39:05,410 --> 00:39:10,930

she's my age, and

she is a survivor,

581

00:39:10,930 --> 00:39:15,520

but under much more

dramatic circumstances,

582

00:39:15,520 --> 00:39:22,540

in that she was saved by her

grandmother who was with her.

583

00:39:22,540 --> 00:39:26,950

And this was-- she

was born in Berlin.

584

00:39:26,950 --> 00:39:31,380

And under circumstances that

cannot be described any other

585

00:39:31,380 --> 00:39:37,660

than miraculous, survived  
and ended up in Sweden,

586

00:39:37,660 --> 00:39:38,440

in Stockholm.

587

00:39:38,440 --> 00:39:42,280

And by the time we met  
her in 1964 in New York,

588

00:39:42,280 --> 00:39:48,430

she had, like I, sort of,  
gravitated from wherever.

589

00:39:48,430 --> 00:39:58,180

But the fact that she was a  
German-Jewish girl had totally

590

00:39:58,180 --> 00:40:02,770

changed into she was  
now a New Yorker.

591

00:40:02,770 --> 00:40:09,700

But her story, and her attitude,  
and her whole demeanor,

592

00:40:09,700 --> 00:40:19,210

clearly was something that made  
an impression and the bond.

593

00:40:19,210 --> 00:40:24,940

It's not that my story has much  
to do with hers because mine

594

00:40:24,940 --> 00:40:30,740

is a happy end and hers is a  
bittersweet with a happy end

595

00:40:30,740 --> 00:40:31,240

story.

596

00:40:31,240 --> 00:40:34,060  
There's a very big difference.

597  
00:40:34,060 --> 00:40:36,190  
Yes.

598  
00:40:36,190 --> 00:40:44,064  
So I would like to thank you  
for coming and doing this.

599  
00:40:44,064 --> 00:40:44,564  
Sure.

600  
00:40:44,564 --> 00:40:48,060

601  
00:40:48,060 --> 00:40:49,240  
Am I missing anything.

602  
00:40:49,240 --> 00:40:52,840  
I said it already, but--

603  
00:40:52,840 --> 00:40:57,250  
so can you tell me anything  
you remember about life before

604  
00:40:57,250 --> 00:41:01,270  
and, you know, was  
there anti-Semitism?

605  
00:41:01,270 --> 00:41:03,730  
Do you remember feeling that?

606  
00:41:03,730 --> 00:41:04,510  
No.

607  
00:41:04,510 --> 00:41:14,401  
Growing up in Denmark and  
in Copenhagen as I did,

608  
00:41:14,401 --> 00:41:22,540  
the life that began after

I came back in 1945 had--

609

00:41:22,540 --> 00:41:27,400  
there was no anti-Semitism  
or any other,

610

00:41:27,400 --> 00:41:33,820  
let's say, negative  
aspect of life.

611

00:41:33,820 --> 00:41:45,580  
Denmark was then a society  
that had very few prejudices.

612

00:41:45,580 --> 00:41:50,860  
The Jewish community  
in Copenhagen

613

00:41:50,860 --> 00:42:01,120  
had been there for a few hundred  
years because in 16 something,

614

00:42:01,120 --> 00:42:07,900  
the king of Denmark had  
invited a bunch of Jews

615

00:42:07,900 --> 00:42:11,860  
from Germany, or wherever  
in middle Europe,

616

00:42:11,860 --> 00:42:18,580  
to settle because he was an  
enterprising builder type King,

617

00:42:18,580 --> 00:42:23,350  
and he'd heard that having  
Jews around would be helpful.

618

00:42:23,350 --> 00:42:28,090  
And so from that moment on,  
the Jewish community grew.

619

00:42:28,090 --> 00:42:38,320

And by the time we  
get to World War 2,

620  
00:42:38,320 --> 00:42:43,690  
there were, in Danish  
culture, a huge impact

621  
00:42:43,690 --> 00:42:50,920  
of the Jewish artists, and  
playwrights, and so on.

622  
00:42:50,920 --> 00:42:58,270  
One play, that is always part  
of the repertory of the Royal

623  
00:42:58,270 --> 00:43:03,250  
Theater in Copenhagen, is  
written by a Jew and deals

624  
00:43:03,250 --> 00:43:08,410  
with a Jewish holiday  
and the reason for that.

625  
00:43:08,410 --> 00:43:23,740  
So until I left in 1964  
and settled in New York,

626  
00:43:23,740 --> 00:43:27,370  
being Jewish in Denmark  
was almost something

627  
00:43:27,370 --> 00:43:31,330  
that people would boast of, or  
having a Jewish grandmother,

628  
00:43:31,330 --> 00:43:32,290  
et cetera.

629  
00:43:32,290 --> 00:43:35,290  
Things have changed  
because there have been--

630  
00:43:35,290 --> 00:43:38,080

631  
00:43:38,080 --> 00:43:41,420  
both because of  
politics and so on.

632  
00:43:41,420 --> 00:43:48,370  
And because Europe, now,  
is a different continent

633  
00:43:48,370 --> 00:43:50,740  
than it was then.

634  
00:43:50,740 --> 00:43:59,110  
So the wonderful-- let's  
say, the days of peace,

635  
00:43:59,110 --> 00:44:05,020  
and prosperity, and  
cultural exuberance

636  
00:44:05,020 --> 00:44:09,670  
that I relate to when  
I was very young,

637  
00:44:09,670 --> 00:44:14,260  
that has changed, unfortunately,  
in a negative direction.

638  
00:44:14,260 --> 00:44:14,770  
Yeah.

639  
00:44:14,770 --> 00:44:17,300  
And do you go back to Denmark?

640  
00:44:17,300 --> 00:44:17,800  
Yes.

641  
00:44:17,800 --> 00:44:23,830  
We go quite often, at  
least once every two years.

642



00:44:23,830 --> 00:44:27,160  
My very large family  
loves coming here.

643  
00:44:27,160 --> 00:44:32,230  
And so they come here more  
often than we go there.

644  
00:44:32,230 --> 00:44:36,760  
But we are-- with  
everything such as Skype

645  
00:44:36,760 --> 00:44:41,020  
and so on, we stay in  
very close contact.

646  
00:44:41,020 --> 00:44:43,180  
Right.

647  
00:44:43,180 --> 00:44:45,580  
Well, thank you.

648  
00:44:45,580 --> 00:44:48,700  
I think we will end there.

649  
00:44:48,700 --> 00:44:54,010  
And I guess we need to, sort  
of, break everything down,

650  
00:44:54,010 --> 00:44:57,553  
but you don't need to  
be involved in that.

651  
00:44:57,553 --> 00:44:59,470  
Thank you very much,  
Benni, for being with us.

652  
00:44:59,470 --> 00:45:00,520  
You're welcome.

653  
00:45:00,520 --> 00:45:08,320  
But Leslie, if you discover  
that you need something more,

654  
00:45:08,320 --> 00:45:11,330  
I can phone it in,  
[CHUCKLES] as we say.

655  
00:45:11,330 --> 00:45:14,180  
Well, I'm also going to be  
in California very soon, so--

656  
00:45:14,180 --> 00:45:14,680  
OK.

657  
00:45:14,680 --> 00:45:17,890  
--I might come to L.A. and yes.

658  
00:45:17,890 --> 00:45:21,310  
We do a lot of things  
like this on iPhones.

659  
00:45:21,310 --> 00:45:22,130  
I know.

660  
00:45:22,130 --> 00:45:22,630  
I know.

661  
00:45:22,630 --> 00:45:24,940  
But this is the way the  
museum does it, which I

662  
00:45:24,940 --> 00:45:25,690  
think is really good, actually.

663  
00:45:25,690 --> 00:45:26,190  
Sure.

664  
00:45:26,190 --> 00:45:27,310  
No, no.

665  
00:45:27,310 --> 00:45:29,500  
I appreciate that.

666

00:45:29,500 --> 00:45:36,820  
Look, I think what you're doing  
is wonderful, and it's a--

667  
00:45:36,820 --> 00:45:41,950  
for many generations,  
it's a documentation

668  
00:45:41,950 --> 00:45:48,350  
that probably has more meaning  
than people reading books

669  
00:45:48,350 --> 00:45:50,410  
and all of that.

670  
00:45:50,410 --> 00:45:52,190  
Well, for people  
today, I think so.

671  
00:45:52,190 --> 00:45:53,050  
Yeah.

672  
00:45:53,050 --> 00:45:58,480  
I mean, it's my pleasure to  
be able to interview people

673  
00:45:58,480 --> 00:45:59,020  
like you.

674  
00:45:59,020 --> 00:46:03,910  
And I interviewed somebody  
yesterday, and it's really--

675  
00:46:03,910 --> 00:46:07,780  
to be able to still record this  
history while it's remembered

676  
00:46:07,780 --> 00:46:09,470  
is really important.

677  
00:46:09,470 --> 00:46:11,380  
So thank you.

678

00:46:11,380 --> 00:46:13,300

Sure.

679

00:46:13,300 --> 00:46:15,180

My pleasure.

680

00:46:15,180 --> 00:46:18,000