

Shoot speed.

This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mr. Richard Teig. On October 2, 2015 in Delray Beach, Florida. Thank you very much, Mr. Teig for meeting with us, for agreeing to share your story with us today.

You're quite welcome.

I'm going to start at the very beginning with some of the simplest questions because we want to explore and find out more about what your life was like before the war, before all of the events happened. So I'll start with the simplest of questions. Could you tell me the date of your birth?

November 5, 1924.

And what was your name at birth?

Same as it is now which, Richard Otto Teig.

Otto was your middle name.

I skipped it. Otto, it was too German for me. So here I am just Richard Teig.

OK. And T-E-I-G, yes?

Yes.

All right. Where were you born?

In Essen.

Essen, Germany. And, can you tell me, was your family from Essen, Germany?

No, my parents originally were born in Poland, came to Germany in 1920. And I was born in '24.

So they were very recent to Germany itself. They had only recently arrived before your birth?

Yes, yes.

What was the reason why they were there? Why had they left Poland?

Well, in general the Jewish Polish population wasn't too well off in Poland. And anybody that wanted to make a better life for themselves, they emigrated from Poland. And a lot of our family already had left Poland and went to Essen. And that's where my parents went to.

So because family members had already been there, that's why they came to Essen.

Yes.

What part of Poland was the family from?

Well it's all small, little Jewish towns practically. My father came from Nadworna.

Nadworna?

And my mother from Sopotwina.

And where in Poland would they be located?

I haven't the slightest idea.

OK, so you've never been there? No, no, no. I've never been there.

OK, and at home, what language did your parents speak?

Mostly German, but also occasionally Yiddish.

They didn't speak Polish with one another?

Not that I recall. Not that I recall.

Were you the eldest of children?

Yes, I was the eldest.

How many siblings did you have?

I had one sister.

And her name is--

Her name is Claire. She passed away about 20 years ago.

So she also survived the Holocaust?

Yes, special circumstances, she was hidden just like Anne Frank in the attic room in Tilburg, Holland with another Jewish family.

Together they were all hiding?

Yes. And she survived, whereas Anne Frank did not.

That is correct.

OK. What year was Claire born?

1926. So there was very little gap between you?

Yes, that's correct.

All right.

What was your father's name?

Julius,

Julius Teig.

Teig.

And your mother's?

Rose Teig.

And what was her maiden name?

Scheine.

Scheine.

Yeah. All right, do you know approximately the dates of their birth?

I might have in my papers, their birth certificate.

Aha.

Their original birth certificate.

From Poland.

Yes.

But you don't know offhand. That's OK.

Father probably, 1899. And mother '91 or so.

So they were also very young when they had you and your sister, and also still young when the war happened, when the war came on.

Yes.

What business did your-- or what kind of work did your father do in Essen?

My father had a furniture store.

His own?

Yes, his own. And the other relatives that had been there previously, were they in the same industry, the same business?

Yes. As a matter of fact I think it's coincidental, the people that sent us the affidavit to be able to come to America, they also were in the furniture business.

Oh, really?

In Titusville. Wow. That's good. I would think it's coincidental because--

How would one know?

Yeah. And so, he was able to establish-- that he had higher education? Had he gone to secondary school? What kind of *ausbildung* did he have?

I also happen to have a report card of a county school in Trautenau, which I think is somewhere in Austria where he graduated from.

Oh really?

Yes. So the family, I don't recall the name of the little villages that you mentioned where he was born. Can you tell me again?

Nadvolna.

Nadvolna.

So his family and his parents, they could afford to send him to a school in Austria?

No, no, no, no. This was not-- this was in the transition time up when they left Poland. He went to Austria. At that time, that area was partially partially Poland, partially independent and so forth. Because of course, was a very mixed up political--

It was.

--situation.

Yes, Poland was divided between the Austrian Hungarian Empire, the Russian Empire, and Prussia.

Yes.

And so was his village in the Austrian Hungarian section?

No. his village was in the Polish region.

Under the Russian section then? Because there was-- Oh, independent Poland?

I would think-- and I think, if I remember correctly, because near Limburg.

Over the road, so that would have been the Russian section.

Yeah.

Yeah. OK. But that's before World War I, after World War I, of course, it changes. I guess my real question is, did he come from a family that was poor or a family that was more well to do?

No. I think t was average. They were not well to do.

They were not well to do. As a matter of fact, my father served in the Austrian Army. I still have pictures of him.

Really?

So that's interesting. Limburg being in-- if that is the same as Lvov, which is what I think it is, how would someone from the Russian area get to serve in the Army?

I don't have any idea.

Did he ever talk about his childhood and his past and the life that he had there?

No. I was fairly young and that's probably not so of interesting and he got busy. Didn't talk very much about it even though I had quite often the desire to see my grandfather. That was my father's father in Poland. And we went

occasionally there. But it never came about.

So you never met your grandfather. And why did you have this desire?

I have no idea. I wanted-- I feel strongly Jewish and it is sort of my feeling for a small Jewish town was pushing me. I wanted to see what a Jewish shtetl looked like, but it never came about.

Does that mean that in Essen you didn't quite feel like you belonged?

I didn't have the feeling. I mean no I was different than all the other people. And the Essen Jewish community was quite large. So I felt pretty much at home till--

All of these events happened.

Yes.

We'll come to that.

As a matter of fact, I have a book of the name and picture of Jewish people from Essen.

So I mean the community in Essen. OK. Your mother's village was close to your father's village.

I would assume so, yes.

OK. Before I go on to ask about your mother, did your father talk anything about his military experiences during World War I?

No, except that he was wounded. I do have a card. His mother was notified that he was wounded.

Oh my goodness. And, so he talked about that or you knew about that?

He mentioned it. It was a deep wound to him.

Was he a quiet man?

Yes, he was not an extrovert, definitely not. He liked music and he didn't talk too much. Things were too hectic at the time to have conversation over the past. They were more worried about the present. So we didn't talk too much about the past.

When you say you're worried about the present, are you talking before Hitler comes to power or after?

After he came to power, yes.

Do you have any earliest memories of your childhood? Usually those things are a little fuzzy but there are like episodes that a person remembers. Well, I remember I went to a kindergarten. And I remember that I had my cousins. They lived fairly close to us. I remember they were pretty well off when some of us went to a resort. The whole family went there.

What resort would this have been?

Bad Driburg.

Dridenburg?

Driburg.

Driburg?

Yeah.

Where was that?

I don't know exactly geographically where it was, but not very far.

Not far from Essen.

No. Tell me a little bit about your home in Essen. What did it look like? Was it an apartment? Was it a single family home?

It was an apartment in a big apartment house. As a matter of fact, when I introduced my wife to my parents, she had to go to the bathroom at one time. When this happened, she opened the bathroom door and asked me where's the flush arm to-- and this was something that you had to pull the chain.

You had to pull the chain.

Yes. I don't know whether you are aware of those things.

But, this begs the question in my mind, you met your wife even before the war?

No. No. No. I met my wife here.

OK. And you said you introduced your wife to your parents and she had to--

Sorry.

I don't understand who it was--

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I think I mixed it out of the location. This was here.

OK, so it wasn't in Essen.

Yes, because you asked me about the apartment.

So I mix it up.

OK. So tell me about that. How did that-- was it a large apartment?

No it wasn't a very large apartment, very spacious. But--

Did you have your own room?

My sister and I did have our own room.

And was it in the center of town?

Yes, right in the center of town.

Could your father walk to his work?

Oh, yes, yes, yes, there was no other way of doing it at that time.

And, did they own it or did they rent it?

They rented.

You rented. What about your mother? Did she help him there or was she concerned--

She was taking care of the home. She was a housewife. Did she have any help in doing that? No. No.

She did it all herself. What kind of-- tell me a little bit about her personality.

She was a very quiet woman. As a matter of fact, she survived-- and she died when she 93 years old.

93.

93. She was a typical Jewish German housewife without any special abilities. I know she went-- she made me read a lot and she got me books. She was a good cook.

Did you have any especial favorite dish that she made.

No. Just typical Jewish food that she knew how to prepare that you eat at home.

Which of your parents was a greater influence on you?

I do not think at the time there was any difference. After my father passed away, which was in 1945, my mother obviously became more prominent to me. As a matter of fact I've told my wife and my children that I regretted not having known my father much better, because I was young and circumstances were not so favorable. So I really don't know my father too well. I mean we never sat down and talked.

What was your day-- I mean, did your parents have a large social circle of friends or a limited one, would you say?

I would say normal, not excessively large, because they had a lot of family. My mother had four brothers and a lot of children. So very much amongst each other.

And did people visit each other?

Yes. What I'm getting at here is sometimes children learn about what's on their parents' minds when they see the adults come together and talk and either share dinners or share celebrations and things like that. And was that something that was common in your childhood?

Well there were too many children. We were busy-- children were busy playing with each other. So I don't think we delved into too much of the conversation of the adults, except we could feel that a lot of it was talked about the danger of what was going to happen politically. That we knew from as German.

So, Hitler comes to power when you are nine years old. Is that correct?

'33.

Nine years old. I have to say, I do want to come to that part. but I want to get a sense more of what was this life like before all that, during the Weimar years. Did your father, having a furniture store and the economy being so tough in Germany, did he experience difficulties as far as you knew, as far as--

You mean financial difficulties?

Yeah, not political or things like that but financial, given Germany's economy at the time.

I don't think so. His business was able to sustain us and we had a pretty average life. I don't think they suffered. I mean, I don't know how it would have been if Germany would have been in better shape. But as it was, my father made a decent living.

OK. So you didn't feel any deprivation?

No, no, no.

OK. Did you ever visit him in the furniture store?

I don't think so.

So you don't have an image of what it looked like?

No, I just know where it was and what the outside looked like.

And was all the furniture in your home from there?

I do not know that.

And then in the name of it would have been.

Julius Teig Furniture.

Mover,

Mover, yeah.

Were you close to your sister when you were children?

I don't know what you mean close, but we got along fine.

OK.

As a matter of fact that my father came home nights, he always or mostly brought us some noshes. And I am a big nosher. And I always try to chisel my sister out of hers and she consented most of the time. We had a good family life.

Would you say it was a close family?

I would think so, yes.

Explain to people who don't know what the word noshing, what it means.

Liking sweet stuff at any time.

Snacking.

Yeah.

OK.

What was your school life like? What kind of school did you go to? There was a Jewish public school in Essen. And I still have my report cards, my last report cards and so forth. So it was funded by the state, and yet it had a Jewish--

It was only for Jewish people.

Only for Jewish people.

OK. Do you have memories of the school?

Yes.

I remember exactly all the teachers and I remember the subjects that we had. I remember that I never did homework. But I had good reports. I also remember that after going to school, My father sent me to a rabbi practically every day where had some Jewish education. This was a general curriculum school but my father wanted me there, wanted a Jewish education.

So what does that entail?

To study the Torah and the commentaries and being able to understand the Hebrew.

So it was religious. It was religious instruction.

Yes. And in school, there was no religious instruction. It was secular. It was a secular school, even though there was subject that had a set religion. But it was very superficial.

Was your father a very religious person?

Traditionally religious.

Was he orthodox or was he--

I think we were. I would call it orthodox.

And did you observe the Sabbath every week?

Yes. Sabbath and the holidays. My father prayed every morning, which my son does now too.

And do you?

Occasionally. I veered off and I went to Holland.

But you said earlier that one of the reasons you wanted to meet your grandfather was to get a sense of what was a Jewish shtetl like. Tell me a little bit about how it was that in Essen, Germany, you had this strong Jewish identity. What did it mean to you?

I really do not know. I really do not know. Maybe I wanted to see how my parents lived or had lived and that I wanted to see my grandfather. I wanted to see where I come from and what my background is.

Did you have any people in your life in Essen who were Gentile, who were not Jewish?

Well, we knew many people that lived in the same building. But we didn't have any closer contact with them.

So they might just be neighbors.

Yes, yes, yes.

As a matter of fact, they had the children in the children were friendly as children.

And again, before 1933, did you ever number any kind of anti-Semitic experiences? Did things like that happen? Did children sometimes blurt something out or say anything. This is before Hitler comes to power?

Not really. Not really. But the shortly after Hitler came to power, there was a Jewish community event to which my parents let me go. And I had to go through the street where a specific young German kid always waited for me and kicked me. So I had to circumvent his street and go the long way. But this was after 1933.

So before '33, something like that wouldn't have happened.

No, I don't think so.

In school, did your teachers talk about what was going on in the country in the '20s.

No. So you were just taught regular subjects?

Yes.

Did you have a radio at home?

Yes.

And did you have-- did your father own an automobile?

No.

And a telephone?

We didn't have a telephone.

But their home had plumbing and running water and things like this?

Yes.

I'm trying to get a sense of what kind of conveniences were there in downtown Essen in the '30s, as well as getting a sense of how much the outside world made itself felt in your home, in your world more or less. Before Hitler came to power, was there any news of any kind of attention being paid by your parents, by their friends, by their relatives, as to the political things going on in Germany?

I am not able to detect this. I probably was too young to-- it was of of no interest to me at the time.

When was the first time that you felt there was something has changed, something's happened here.

When some of my friends from school left. That was actually the first time that I was aware that there is a danger in the environment and try to avoid it. And so did my parents.

Was this soon after Hitler came to power?

No, this was not so soon, so maybe in '36, '37, that's when it started to be more aggressive.

Was he able to keep his furniture store after 1933?

Yes, yes, he was.

Were there any difficulties that he experienced? Physical difficulties?

I don't think so.

Financial difficulties? Was there boycotting of his store?

No, not till the Kristallnacht, November, '39. | for three years after Hitler comes to power 1933, 1936, your life precedes fairly normally, is that so?

Yes. Yes. Except I remember one time my father bought me a bike, used bike, and painted it himself, and I remember that a kid from the same block, stopped and took my bike away. It was one of those things that occurred I think I was seven or so.

And you weren't able to get it back?

No.

Did your sister go to the same school that you did?

Yes.

Did your parents' manner change. Did their demeanor change? Did they look more worried than they had before?

Well, physically I cannot-- I don't think so. I'm sure they must have worried about it because-- worried about things because that's what caused them, that in 1939, they did send my sister and myself, put us a train and send us to Holland without any permit without any-- So it must have weighed heavily on them, the fear of what's going to happen.

OK so let's come let's come to that. You know, from the point where you say you first noticed that there is danger because there are kids in your school who leave and they leave because of this. Between let's say that time to the time that you leave Holland, how does life progress for your family?

Not leave Holland, leave Germany.

Leave Germany, excuse me, yeah right.

I'm sorry. So how does life progress for your family between that time when you notice that other kids are leaving or have left and your parents put you on a train?

It was a strange time because most of my mother's brothers left Essen in 1935. They went to Israel. And at that time, it was a long year. I didn't have my cousins with me anymore. And, sort of, you get used to hanging if you could stand it long enough. In other words, this is what took place and we have to live with it. You understand my example?

Well, in a way I'm thinking whether an analogy is, there's a question of how do you boil a frog, very slowly, so that the frog doesn't notice it's been boiled. Is that what you're trying to say?

Exactly, exactly.

I would assume, but I don't want to make this assumption, did your uncles leave for what became Israel because of the political situation?

Yes. So did they have businesses that they sold?

Yeah. They had businesses. They had homes. And they liquidated everything and they when to Israel. And they're still there. My cousins are still there. And did they urge your parents to do the same?

I do not know whether they urged them, it just didn't come about. One brother and two-- she had four brothers. Two went to Israel with their children and two stayed in Germany as well as my mother and father, the five of them.

What happened with the two that stayed in Germany?

They were deported. They were interred. There was a time when all Jews that were of Polish origin, there were certain centers, Sbungun in Poland.

What's the place?

Sbungun.

Sbungun?

S-B-- Sbungun.

S-B-U-N-G-E-N.? Something like that?

This was a border town between Germany and Poland. That's where all the Jewish people that were of Polish or origin, came from Poland, they were sent there. They were picked up at night and sent there. We were practically the only family that was not sent there.

Why?

I have no idea.

So your uncles were deported in this way. And that would have been in the '30s before the war starts or anything.

That's right.

And what was their fate after they got deported there?

They all were--

Did they make their way home to their village, their original village.

I do not know that. I do-- I only know that they later were are sent to either Auschwitz or Birkenau, whenever.

So they perished.

Yeah none of them survived.

And your father's side of the family, did he have brothers and sisters in Essen?

No, nothing else, but he had a brother in Berlin, the two boys. And they also got deported and perished also.

They were also from Poland. And that has--

But they lived in Berlin.

Did you know them well?

No, I didn't know them at all.

You had never met them?

No.

So those who stayed, this is what happened. The family members who stayed in Germany were all of Polish citizenship before and so they had never gotten German citizenship, or it was revoked?

I don't think they ever applied for it. I don't think there is any desire or need for it.

They get deported to Poland before the war, and then when the war happens, they they are murdered.

Yeah.

It's hard for me to imagine that there wasn't conversations amongst your mother and her siblings about whether to go and whether to stay.

I'm sure there might have been conversation, but I am not aware of them. I am sure because they were all in good relationship, and as a matter of fact, they were Zionists. I guess they would have wanted to go to Israel and this, when Hitler came that was a push for them. So that's why they went in 1935 when things were not so bad yet for the Jewish people.

When you say-- was the whole family Zionist, that is all the siblings are the ones that particular the left were particularly Zionist?

The ones that left were.

The rest of the family was it more or less apolitical.

Yes. I would think so. I would think so. I mean they had established themselves in Germany. They were making a fairly a decent living. And there was a reason they did not feel that to go to Israel. It was not their priority.

So your uncles leave in '35. People from your school leave. For you-- at what point, you said your father could no longer run his business. It was destroyed during the Kristallnacht.

I see. So up until that point--

Yeah, he had his business.

Were you there at Kristallnacht?

I was there.

Can you tell me what that was like, what happened?

The Kristallnacht was special for me. I had a-- excuse me.

It's OK.

First of all, we were the only family surrounding that was not affected, the only family of Polish origin that was not picked up on Kristallnacht. Secondly, I had an appendix attack.

On that night?

On that night, my father, I saw them burning books and Torahs in the plain, in the plaza that was around our house. And my father was able to get an ambulance and take me to a hospital, but no hospital wanted to take me. Till we came to the Catholic hospital, where the head sister says to my father, Mr. Teig [GERMAN PHRASE]. And they took me in there, operated on me and a week or ten days, I came out and went home.

Can translate for me the [GERMAN PHRASE]. What does that mean? The old God is still alive. This was a Catholic hospital. We went to three or four hospital with the ambulance but and they wouldn't take me because I was Jewish. But the Catholic hospital took me.

So you drove by-- driving by you saw all of these disturbances, the fires, the burning of the books.

Yes, right out of the window.

Oh, you wouldn't even have to be outside you saw it from your apartment window.

Yeah.

But you didn't know what was happening to your father's store at that point.

No.

And nobody came to your apartment? Nobody came to your--

No. Do you have any reason, any understanding why?

I have none, no. Neither do I understand why I have survived the camp over 100,000 of Jews perished in Holland.

Do you ask that question of yourself a lot?

I ask that a lot. I do not understand it. I guess God was good to me.

When you came home from the hospital after about 10 days, what did you find, at home with your father with your mother, but what did you find? What was there?

My parents still lived there. And this was November 9. And in January-- I stayed there for another four to six weeks. There was no more Jewish school.

So you had gone to school up until that point?

Yeah.

Even though there were people who were leaving, you know, the school was still existing?

Yes, yes.

And then what happened to the school?

I guess it was dissolved.

OK, the building, was it also destroyed?

I do not know.

And did your father telling you about what happened to the business?

Well, I mean, he might not have specifically told me. But I certainly heard about it. He talked to my mother about it and so forth. He specifically probably didn't want us to be scared and perturbed. So four weeks later, they send us on a trip to Holland.

Did they prepare you, I mean psychologically prepare you for this?

No.

No. There was no need for it, because the idea of trying to get away from Germany was already in us. So, there was no need to prepare and how you would prepare somebody for that?

So there was no-- I mean, I guess a conversation to say, we'd like to send you here and there and do you agree to go? Do you want to go? And so on, that's sort that's what I meant.

Well our plan was that my sister and myself should go to Holland because we were told borders are pretty open. There was no need for a visa for anything, for any permit. People could just across the board.

You didn't have passports?

No. We didn't have passports or anything. And my parents claimed, this is for children. My parents planned to go to Belgium. And we were supposed to in May. They had they arranged that my sister and myself should come from Holland to Belgium, and from Belgium, we were going to go either to Israel or to the United States, wherever we would get permission, a visa to emigrate. Then the war broke out in January. No--

September 1, '39, was when the war broke out

Let me try to get this straight. Kristallnacht, was that, 1938?

No. It was '39. I think it was '39.

Because that would have been when the war is already going on and I thought it was before. Then it was in '38.

It must have been, yeah. OK.

So does that mean it is less than a year before the war starts, but you leave Germany on this train in January to go to Holland.

'39 Yeah. January '39.

Oh, '39. Yeah. So that's OK, January '39. You then are supposed to meet up with your parents in Belgium in May and then continue onwards.

Exactly. But in September, there are nine months between the time you are in Holland and the war starts. It starts September 1. And then with the invasion of Poland, and then subsequently into the Netherlands.

I have the dates.

OK. We can break for a little bit. OK.

OK. So we've established that Kristallnacht was in '38. Because it had slipped my memory too. And January 20 is when

you left Germany.

Yeah.

And do you remember anything from that train ride?

No, my sister and I, we had no luggage. I just remember my parents waving at us I don't think we were fully aware of the separation that was coming up. Because I didn't see them again until 1946.

Wow.

We were told that the first stop of the train or one of the stops of the train in Holland was, the first stop was Nijmegen. And in Nijmegen we were told that there is a Jewish congregation had people waiting there to receive children on that came over from Germany.

So you had an address to go to?

No.

At the train station.

At the train station?

People were waiting at the train station.

And your parents didn't know-- didn't have an address to give you?

No, no address, nothing.

So all they did was, kind of put you on the train and get you out of here.

Yeah, we had heard that people before us had done this. And that's why my parents did it.

Do you remember were there any guards on the train before you got to Nijmegen?

No, no, no. I don't think so. I don't think so.

And no passport control or anything like that?

No, no. I don't know whether there was any passport control.

But we were not asked to [INAUDIBLE].

So you got off the train at Nijmegen?

Yeah.

And would you have gone further if there had been-- if you hadn't known to get off? Or you knew that Nijmegen was where you get off.

Nijmegen was the place we had to get off.

OK. From there my sister was-- there was a family that sort of like my sister. They were Dutch people and they took them into their house.

Not Jewish?

Yes.

Jewish.

Yes.

OK. I-- and boys, they didn't take boys. Boys could not go to Jewish private families. For boys they had the children's camps. And that goes all the way to the north of Holland. So they put me on the train and I went to Wijk aan Zee.

Wijk aan Zee?

Yeah.

How long did it take for you to learn Dutch.

I don't know.

It came.

Yeah. I am-- even if I say so myself, I speak, I can converse in seven. Languages.

Oh my goodness.

Tell me, this is a little bit of an aside, but tell me which languages are these?

Well, the German, obviously and Dutch French, which I forgot, but I am taking some classes now to freshen up, Spanish, Hebrew, Yiddish.

English.

And I guess in English.

And English.

That's quite-- that's quite a roster.

What were your first impressions of this camp?

Oh, it was-- first the impression was good. It wasn't a camp. It was a children's home.

Oh, I see. And there were-- there were 100 or 150 children there already. It was right by the ocean. And it was actually fun. Except that I personally, I was worried about my sister.

But, did you have any contact? Did you write letters to one another?

Yes. And what kind of news--

I still have some of the letters.

Oh, my.

Was she happy where she was?

Very happy. These people hid with her afterwards from 1942 to the end of the war.

Oh, so these were the people in the attic.

Exactly. They wanted-- they asked my parents, they wanted to adopt my sister. But parents didn't--

Of course.

Did they have children of their own?

No, they didn't.

So it was one couple and your sister. It was just a couple, husband and wife. Did you meet them before you took off on the trip.

Yes, yes. At the train station. They said we take Claire.

Do you remember what they looked like?

The people?

Uh, huh.

Oh, yes, we have pictures of them. They have a house here in America. Lovely people, very generous people.

What was their name?

Drillsma.

Drillsma.

Drillsva? Drillsma.

Oh, Drillsma. Yeah,

I have a picture of this, too.

Of meeting here?

No. I visited their house in Spain.

I see.

So you and your sister were able to maintain contact and letters back and forth. So, she was in a good situation.

Yes.

And you were in a good situation.

Yes.

Did they give you any reason why boys would not be taken into the families?

I don't know. It was the general policy and I guess we were more difficult to handle boys.

Some. All right so tell me a little bit about life at the home that was by the sea, which sounds actually quite nice.

Yes. There was-- they gave us lessons. And they had an improvised school for the children. I also-- you needed to be very clean. We had to wash our hair with commercial soap. I lost my-- my whole head was bare. I lost all my hair, but it came back again.

So it was so strong.

Yeah.

That it took away-- I was completely I was bald.

Oh my goodness, as a young teenager.

Yeah.

Did you have any correspondence with your parents during this time?

Yes. And what were they-- what were they writing to you? What were they saying?

Just I also have some cards post cards. They just wanted to know how we feel, nothing specific. And they let us know that they are OK, and that the hope to get reunited in Belgium in May. Because that's-- for that time, they had made an arrangement to go to Belgium.

So we're talking about four or five months, something like that. If it's late January that you leave Germany and then you end up in the school May, 1939, in Belgium. But what happened--

No, I did not end up in Belgium.

No, no, I'm saying, they wanted to go to Belgium. What happens? I assume they didn't make it to Belgium or did they?

Oh, yes.

What happened? Tell me about what your parents further destiny was after they put you on the train.

Well I guess--

As much as you know.

I guess they lived there as long as they could. And then they probably packed up whatever there was and they moved to Belgium, Antwerp.

OK.

Yes.

And did you and did they move there in May, 1939?

Yes. That was then in May of '39.

And did you go see them right after that?

No.

And why not?

Because we were restricted in the children's home. We could just go and leave or anything. We had to be approved by Dutch authorities in Belgium for this.

And your parents couldn't travel to the Netherlands--

No.

--to pick you up.

As a matter of fact, I was very worried about my parents at that time. And they used to get from the management of the children's home came four stamps to write our parents or to whoever you wanted. I pat myself on the shoulder for that. Because I didn't write four letters. I wrote only two. And the other two stamps I sold the kids that needed more, and I sent the money to my parents in Belgium. Don't do that anymore.

They probably wanted you to be able to have that money.

Yeah, yeah. But I was the very well taken care of there.

When you left Germany did they give you any money, anything to do with you?

No. We had no money.

Most of the boys who were in this children's home, were they also from Germany or was it a mixture?

It wasn't a mixture of Viennese and from other cities in Germany. So no Dutch boys.

It was specifically, it used to be a resort town. And it was a specifically changed to camp for refugee kids.

Oh, it was run under the aegis of Jewish organizations.

No, Dutch. The Dutch government ran that.

I see. I see. What was the name of the town?

Wijk aan Zee.

Wijk aan Zee. Yes, you had mentioned that before

Do you have-- can you describe to me what that place looked like?

It was nothing outstanding. There were rules.

Was it a building that looked like a school? Did it look like--

Yeah, it was more like a school.

Several stories high or was it a dormitory style place?

No, a lot of smaller rooms as far as I remember.

About how many boys were there?

I would say about 75 to 100.

So what happened after that? Your parents are in Belgium. You send them two letters plus money. They wrote back and said, don't do that again. How does life develop? What happens next?

Well, then the war broke out. And the Germany prohibited the Jews from living at the borders of countries. We had to go inland. So they packed us up and we went to five different-- I can tell you exactly when. We went to Driebergen three months later, and then Soesterberg.

Soesterberg?

And then to Quarantine Heijplaat. Quarantine Heijplaat. It was a quarantine in Holland, which was also made that available for refugees. Then, from there to Rotterdam.

And I was there in May, 1940 when it was bombed. It was the second city that was-- inner city was completely bombed and destroyed by Stukas, which was the dive bombers. And I think our building where we were, that is, children's camp was about a quarter of a mile from where the last bombs fell.

Oh my goodness.

And I remember we went out with pails of water to give to people whose building was destroyed and so forth.

So you heard this and you saw this.

Yeah. Then we went to another two places. After Rotterdam, we went to--

So as you are being moved around it was the same group of refugee children always being moved together, away from a border area.

Yes, some kids were added and some, for one reason or other, came out of there, either the parents were able to, or family was able to get him out of the children's camps. But mostly the same children.

Now what about the adults who were in charge of you, who had the responsibility for your care. Was it the same people?

Yes.

And what was your relation to them? What kind of manner did they have?

Well, one was a very prominent doctor in Berlin, Dr. Wolf, the pediatrician. And he was the director of that camp. And he had some assistants.

So was he himself a refugee?

Yes. There were people. There were teachers. There were musicians, and that helped to add a lot of education on music. We heard a lot of music. It was one of the things that we got--

What was your last question?

It was more or less who was in charge. Who were people who were responsible for your care? Did they stay constant? Were they the same people as you moved from camp to camp to camp?

Administrative, yes. Otherwise, like for example, in Wijk aan Zee, there were the people that working there before, they did the housekeeping there. But in most of the other places, it was only the people that took permanently care of us.

And tell me why there this, to have a move from the border area, because this is on the ocean I would assume that that's considered a border area. Why so many frequent moves once you're inland? What was the reason?

I do not know. I do not know.

Could any learning happen during this time?

Oh, yes. So because you had the same teachers and the same people all the time, you still--

Oh, yes, we had French lessons. We had music lessons. We had Spanish lessons. And this was given by the people that were administrating the whole group.

So I have to assume then that they were still being paid and to be able to do this. There was this still--

No.

They weren't. They were also refugees.

So how did they-- how did you eat? How did the Dutch government-- who was it? Were the facilities funded by the Dutch government?

I do not know I think mostly by Jewish organizations, by the HIASS.

So at some point it stopped being sponsored by the Dutch government, whether when the Nazis came in, would this be--

No I don't think so. I don't think so. There was still a sponsored by the Dutch government even though the Nazis were there.

And how long did this last?

You can take a look.

Till December 1942.

Truly?

Still for such a while?

December 1942.

As a matter of fact, the last place that we were was Arnhem.

Anhem.

Yes, Arnhem.

Arnhem. And over there, I went to a school to learn how to deal work machines, machine work. And that's what got me later on the locomotive, which--

On the train.

--saved my life.

I see.

Where is Arnhem located in the Netherlands?

Arnhem home is located very close to the Belgian border.

OK.

In the south. So it's near Limburg. Near the province of Limburg.

And so the school or this group operates the camp, this community, more or less until December 1942. So at least two years into the German Nazi occupation.

We had to wear a star then.

Is that the star that you showed me earlier?

OK, then we'll forthwith take a photo or film that later at the end of our interview. So, yes, tell me, once there was the German occupation of the Netherlands, how did that affect the life of the children in your camp school community there. What changed?

Well number one, like I mentioned before, we had to wear the star. We couldn't go certain places anymore. And there was this constant fear of being picked up by the Germans. Because from the outside the Jewish community, already people were taken to camps, before they took us. So we lived in fear, in constant fear. So

You knew of what was-- so you walk in the town? Could you go outside of a certain area?

Yes, yes, we could move around still. It was under effect. Some boys got jobs. One of the boys worked for a butcher. He was very funny and whenever I came home, he gave me-- bought a little pieces of meat. And then when we asked him, Freddy, you got something today? He said, yeah, meow, meow, cat's meat.

[LAUGHS]

Katzenfleisch?

Yeah.

Truly?

Absolutely.

So cats were being butchered?

Oh yeah. And I worked in a bakery. And this was a Jewish bakery, the scrapings from the plates, they put them together and then they'd make a cake out of it. And I also brought this always into the game. We had a really good time. I mean,

I played the mouth organ. And we had a little orchestra. And we didn't realize. We didn't live in fear, but we knew what was coming. So we prepared-- next to our beds, we always had a little satchel with the most necessary things that we would have to take along, or our entire belongings if we wanted to take along as soon as we were picked up. And which took place in December of 1942.

Now until that time, once the Nazis march in, does your correspondence with your parents continue or break off? No, we were able to write to each other.

OK. So they knew where you were in the various locations.

Yes. And your sister as well? You were able to correspond?

My sister I could correspond also. Because she was in Holland. She was Nijeme.

In Nijeme still?

And when did she go into hiding with her Dutch Jewish family.

I would assume-- I would assume in '42.

So before you were taken away?

Yes, yes, yes.

And were your parents still staying in Belgium or they moved anywhere else?

Well, when the war broke out, my parents went from Belgium, they went to France, to the unoccupied part of France. First, through the occupied part and then the unoccupied. And then they were in a camp and set in here. And they escaped from there. And they-- What was that?

That was a noise outside.

Strange are your noises here. We were moved a bunch.

And they went across the Pyrenees through Perpignana And came to-- but first to Barcelona and then to Madrid. They lived there until the end of the war.

When they were in Spain, were they in any-- did they have fear for themselves or-- I would assume you learned this later.

Yeah, well, they were in a camp in Spain first after before they let you go, when the tide turned, and Germany was sort of on its last legs, trying to let all the Jews out and then spread over Barcelona and in Madrid.

Were there many? I do not know. Don't think it's extremely many.

So until the time-- like maybe even the Battle of Stalingrad, when Germany starts losing the, war so until that time they are in camps.

Yes.

In Spain, yes.

Yes.

And you say your father passed away in 1945?

Yes.

From what?

He had Parkinson's disease. I don't know whether Parkinson's Disease caused his death. But his resistance was always very low, and he had pneumonia and passed away.

Did you see him before he passed away?

Oh, yes.

OK, so by that point, you're joined back together.

Well, when I was liberated in 1945, I went to Spain. I hitchhiked the Dutch Resistance gave me names and places, names and places where I could stay. And after they were dismissed from the camp, let go from the camp, from Westerbork, I went on my way. First I visited my daughter. Your sister, you mean.

My sister, I'm sorry. I also had a bike. I got a bike. Took me two days or so behind. It was two days bike ride. And then I took off from there to Belgium, through Belgium, and France, to Perpignan. And then across the Pyrenees and came to Barcelona. And from Barcelona, I went to my parents. I hitchhiked most of the way.

And this was mostly done through liberated Europe at that point.

Yes. It's a matter of fact, it is I always tell this story when I crossed the border I'm from Holland to Belgium, a marshal say, a border guard, stopped and he said, where are you going? So I told him I want to go to Belgium. He says what do you want to do in Belgium?

So I said, I want to go to France. He said, what do you want to do in France? I want to go to Spain. He said, is Spain your final destination? I said, no. From there, I want to go either to America or to Israel. So he says, go, go, go.

[LAUGHS]

He didn't expect such a long answer. So you must have seen interesting things on the way. I know I'm jumping ahead in the story, but I would like to kind of come to that loop. And then we'll go back to what like what happened in the Netherlands. But so as you're hitchhiking through what it was just newly liberated, what did you see?

Well, I saw the demonstrations in Paris where people had signs, let's kill the last Jews.

No really?

Yeah. That is one thing that was outstanding in my mind. Second, the second thing is, at that time, my French was pretty broken. I asked-- I had an address and the the Rue des Rosiers, which was the former Jewish quarter in Paris. And they asked, somebody said, you look like a typical Frenchman. You have a basque, a French basque hat on, and a bike with a curly handle.

So I said, [FRENCH PHRASE] They looked at me and said, that Yiddish

[YIDDISH PHRASE] In other words, he packed me right away.

So he said, speak Yiddish with me. And then, what did he do?

He didn't look like a Jewish guy.

And so then he told you where this was, and so on.

So with this was this a liberated Paris that you saw such organizations? Yes,

This was right after the war.

Amazing.

Yes.

And very surprising.

Yes.

Very perturbing.

Yes, of course.

Yes.

And were they large?

I don't think so. I don't think so. It was a group of people and there were big signs.

Did you see US Army personnel?

France? No. I saw them-- I saw some-- I slept one night at the railway station and as the trains down through the, US personnel. But in the streets and so forth, I didn't see any.

So it was like a demilitarized place.

Yeah, it was. The war was over.

In these places.

France was an ally, so--

So you get to Madrid, and what do you-- how do you see your parents? When do you first--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

To Barcelona. I had an address in Barcelona of people that moved from Germany to come there. And they took me to a house. They bought me a pair of shoes because I had a German soldier shoes, which were much too big for me. And I went to the shoe store. They asked me what size do you wear? I said, I don't know I haven't got any shoes for five years, so I don't know what size. But in any case, you needed permits in Spain at the time. And this was a Joint Distribution Committee met her in Barcelona. And they got me the permit to travel to Madrid to see my parents.

And that mean permit to travel and stay there in Madrid?

There was no need for a permit for me to stay.

OK. It was just the travel.

It had been seven years. Yes? Six, seven years.

No. '39, six years, six years.

Had they changed much from the time you had last seen them?

Yes, yes. Yes, my father had lost a lot of his hair. Father had Parkinson's disease. My mother, which I always remembered as pretty stocky was a little lady. But my father had a little job there. He taught some children in the building, he taught them French. And I got a job in Madrid also because I stayed for a couple of months before I came to the United States. I got a job as an English correspondent of all things, not speaking Spanish, and not speaking English. But I got a job. I like the dictionary. And I managed.

So at that point, the plan was to leave Spain.

Yes, I never intended to stay there permanently.

And your sister, she was still in Nijigen? My sister was still in Nijigen and for several months after and then she flew to Madrid. She came back then.

Let's cut here.

Right. Sweet, sweet.

This is a continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mr. Richard Teig, and before the break, we were talking-- we have jumped ahead a little bit and were talking about how you met up with your parents in 1945 and then your sister joined you and you were going to all travel out of Spain to either Israel or the United States.

That's correct.

So, let's go back now. Let's go back to the Netherlands, to December, 1942 where your life as part of this community of refugee children, refugee boys, kind of comes to an end. Tell me how that happened and where it happened.

Jewish adults and [INAUDIBLE] already had been picked up. And we were waiting for the same thing to happen to us. So we were prepared. I had a little knapsack and I've even had-- you're supposed to make an inventory of what do you wanted to do because you couldn't exceed a certain value. So I had this document of what I had and what it was worth.

So we had these knapsacks next to our beds because we never knew when we would be raided, when we would be picked up. So this happens, then on December 25 German soldiers or Gestapo, SS people came and lined us up and loaded us on the train and we went to Westerbork, in the north of Holland.

Tell me, what is Westerbork? Westerbork is town in the north of Holland. And this was a camp that had been built before for refugees that came to Holland before the deportations to Poland. And they were there and ready for permits to emigrate to either-- to other countries.

And you say this was built before the war, originally?

Yes. It was a small place. It had just a few hundred people and then it was expanded encircled with the wire, barbed wire. And became a camp for transit of Dutch Jews to the East.

At that time when the Gestapo came in and lined you up, all of the children, teenagers there, was this the first time you had direct contact with them in all these years?

Visually, not, physically, yes. We saw them. We saw them in the streets. And we heard them and they were marching and singing and so forth. But physically, I had no contact with them.

So this was it. This was-- did you have any kind of identity papers by this point? Did you have any documents that you know that said I am who I am. You are who you are.

I don't think so. I don't think so. I don't think I had any identification, certainly no identification that was issued by

Germans.

OK.

But they knew you were Richard Teig. They knew you had your star. And did you have to be registered anywhere when you got the star?

No. Funny, Germans could recognize a Jew, no matter what he looked like. It's an amazing thing. We didn't have horns or anything like this. Yet, they knew right away who was a Jew and who was not.

You know, we had the same thought because I figured if you didn't have documentation, sometimes people could go in hiding you know and some people passed or passed a Aryan or could be on the border or something like that. Did you know of any people in the Netherlands, for example, who did such things?

Uh, Jews were registered by a Jewish organization. I don't know what it's called, the organization, But that there was a formal of Jewish Administration in Amsterdam. And they register everybody that was Jewish. They are the ones that are accused of having submitted these lists to the Germans. And that's how the Germans knew where to go and who was Jewish. It was called [NON-ENGLISH].

What happened when you got to Westerbork?

Well, first of all, it was late in the night and we were herded into a barrack and we had to give everything we had and put it aside and [? leap. ?] And then they took us to a barrack that had triple beds and--

With mattresses?

Yes, straw, mattresses. And they said to stay here. Tomorrow you start working. And then the next morning, they called and each one got an overall, and they took our own clothes and they were taken away from us and we were assigned jobs.

What was your job?

Well, first I worked-- I was rented out to a Dutch farmer. I worked for maybe a half a year on a Dutch farm that supplied food and material which farms produce to the Germans. And then one day I heard that there was a steam locomotive being built because there was an industry industry, small industry in the camp. They separated the parts of shot down airplanes into these various components, like copper, aluminum, brass, and so forth And that had to be transported from the camp to a nearby canal down where there was a barge. And than it was shipped to Germany and reused. So for this they a small, narrow gauge railroad transporters.

So since I had some mechanical experience, which I got in Arnhem beforehand. Yes, you mentioned that. I volunteered. Nobody knew how to do it drove a locomotive. So I volunteered.

Excuse me let me go back a little bit to the farm. The half year that you were there would have been the winter and early spring of the year because you were just picked up there. So the first half here is the time when there's the least amount of work, certainly in the wintertime. What was your job and were you well treated? And did the Dutch farmer ever give you-- having an access to food is also something that's quite important.

Food was very important because I exchanged afterwards, I mean I'm going ahead a little bit. Because I had contact with farmers. I exchanged coal from the local market for food with some of their farmers that had work. Now I'll answer your question. What we did in the winter time was feed the animals there, the cows and so forth, also there was tilling of earth. just was no harvesting. But there was work.

Oh, yes.

And how were you treated?

Just like a worker. Not in a job in a particularly more demeaning way, but just as a worker.

No, not demeaning.

Did you get extra food because you worked there?

Yes.

And did you have to go home and-- go home. Did you have to go back to the Westerbork in the evenings or did you sleep on the farm?

No, no, no. We were escorted again by SS troops, SS soldiers back to the camp. I was pretty fortunate to have this kind of a job, because this was also out of the camp. God was good to me and I had a good job.

So after half a year, you heard about this possibility of a locomotive job.

Yeah. And what would make that more attractive than continuing what you were doing?

I think this is I really don't know, but I think this continued giving. I mean, that's when transports to the East started. And there were not so many people that they could rent out to do to farmers. So this part of the job disappeared actually.

I see. And transports started. There hadn't been many before or any before? There had been some before, but it got expanded and many more. And they were bigger. So ceremony took place once a week, every Tuesday.

Describe for me such a procedure when there was going to be a transport. What happened?

Every morning on Tuesdays, the barracks leader, each barrack contained about 150 people. Woke people up at about 5:00 or 6:00 in the morning and read out a list of names of people to get ready to go and be transported. They call it a transport. They're going to go on transport.

And they were lying there on the cot, and waiting if your name was called. They took us, the 80, 85 children that came with us in one barrack. So they already called a few of those young kids for those transport, mostly Dutch people, and not so many of the refugee people.

Interesting. I wonder what the logic was. I don't know. I guess maybe they wanted to keep the younger people there because of other various jobs to be done in the camp.

That's when you had to take your bundle and got to

[NON-ENGLISH PHRASE] That was the end of where the train was parked, cattle trains, cattle cars, and the people got loaded up and then they disappeared.

So every Tuesday. Every Tuesday.

Those bundles that you had, does that mean you've got the same bundles back that you had left?

No, no, no, no. You had a blanket and maybe there are boots and shoes or something like this. I had two pair of wooden klompen, wooden shoes. So, that was very funny.

So the bundle that you left when you first arrived--

That was gone.

That was gone. And were people-- did people have an idea of what this transport really meant in Westerbork?

Well, maybe not what it really meant, because I don't think a normal brain can visualize and predict things like this. But they certainly were uprooted. Their home was-- they were taken away from their home and from their country, which was traumatic by itself, without knowing of what is going ahead of you.

But, I happen to have been-- I spoke to-- being on the locomotive, I had a sort of a rapport with the engineer on the big train that came and transported people. And he says, they will all be killed.

Really?

Yeah. Because they are the ones that do the same one, locomotive, machinist did not go from Holland to Poland. But from each other.

And was this the first time you heard that that's actually what the destiny was. From the conductors of this?

Yeah.

OK. And did you find it hard to believe?

I couldn't really grasp it. I mean, it's even when you see things happen, to understand the enormity of such a action, it's hard to believe.

Had you, up until that time, and everything you've described to me, I have not gotten a picture yet of actual physical violence against individuals. You described that you saw books being burned and you described the fear and a boy waiting for you after Hitler comes to power at the corner who would beat you up or someone who stole your bicycle.

Now in the East, in Poland, and further east people saw, people being shot in the streets. They saw the violence. It was up close. What was it like in the Netherlands? Did you see such things? Did you see corpses in the streets.

No.

No.

No. , So people were mistreated in the streets, but not like you said, described corpses or people you shot.

So there'd be humiliation?

Yes, I would think so. Bad humiliations. They, for example, commandeered a group of older Jewish religious people that wear hats to clean up the grass between the gravel in the streets. So, humiliation, yes. A lot of that.

And you saw that while you were still outside of Westerbork?

That is correct. That was before we went to that, while we were in Arnhem.

And what was the treatment like when you got to Westerbork by the people in charge there? Were they German or were they Dutch?

Mostly German, former German refugees.

Who were in charge of Westerbork?

Not in charge of Westerbork, that was SS and German soldiers. But the ones that commandeered what you do, and so

forth, those were Jews, former Jewish inmates. They had been in Westerbork before. It became a camp.

Oh I see. So there was like another level. It was the SS who was always on top. And then there was a level of, let's say, the equivalent of a cappo. Could I put that? Could I say that?

I'd say so.

OK. And they were mostly a German refugee people.

Yes.

Now, was there any resentment amongst the prisoners that somebody got a better job or someone was in charge in this little bit of the power?

Of the moment, at the moment when they arrived, that the resentment certainly showed but later on, you realized these people, what they did was under-- was not voluntarily done. And some of them were friends of mine, but that was their job.

I also meant resentment from non-refugees, for example, from Dutch Jews to let's say German Jews. Because the German Jews may be in a more privileged position. Was there something like that going on?

I don't think so. I don't think so. I didn't notice any of that.

I had heard of something like this before. So therefore I wanted just to run it by you just as a question.

I don't think so.

All right. So let's go back to that locomotive. And its job is to pull-- to bring these different parts of shot down planes that have various metals, copper, brass, and so on to a river canal area or river area, and have them loaded onto barges. What was your specific job?

I drove the locomotive.

Did it take long to learn?

No. This is small. It's a little narrow gauge. There's a few handles. There's a firebox. Somebody is with me that loaded coal into the box. And I knew I had to watch the gauges, had to watch the water. As a matter of fact, they had a machine shop in the camp. And one of the bearings of the locomotive had broken. So I myself repaired it. I made one and took it apart and so forth.

And was your machine training that you had gotten earlier helpful in this--

Just--

Not so much. No?

No. I didn't have any training in retriever handling. But technically, I can do a lot of things, or I tried to do. You can put it this way, I tried to do a lot of things.

And the journey, how long was the journey between the camp or wherever you uploaded these items to where you down outloaded them?

I would say about 15 to 20 miles. It was a short distance. There was always a German soldier in the cabin.

With you.

Yes. And as well as one on the first lorry, the first cart.

So as you were driving in that locomotive, there's you, there's the fellow who takes care of the coal to make sure that all the gauges are right and a German soldier.

Yes.

And was it always the same German soldier or a different one.

No. There was a group of those troops that changed. It wasn't always the same.

And what was the relation between the three of you, two prisoners and this soldier?

Just work.

Just work.

Yeah. I mentioned before that I worked on a farm and the German soldiers stepped aside for a moment. We unloaded some of the coal and came back into a side of the machine. And they left us some bread. And the farmers picked it up later and left some bread for us. So I was able to get some extra food. So I was also very fortunate in that respect. As a matter of fact, I shared whatever I could get with my other kids that were with me from the children's camp. And some of them, I think one or two are still alive. And say, Richard, [INAUDIBLE].

Made a big difference.

Yeah.

Tell me, what was the food like in Westerbork?

We got a lot of soup. Mostly soup and bread. But and potatoes. I knew from one of the previous children's camps, I knew one of the young men, and he became a young man because he was 18 or 19 already. He worked in the kitchen in the camp. And he also helped, since I knew him, he also tried to get us extra cans of food, extra shares of potatoes and so forth. And we shared all of those things.

So that's quite a bit of how, shall we say-- a very, a very and admirable kind of spirit between the boys who had been part of the children's camp, that you would share food, share with one another. It meant something, some kind of camaraderie had to have grown up.

Absolutely. Absolutely. We all were close.

Did any of the boys-- did you lose any of them, that had been in this home, this refugee home?

How did we lose?

Either they died because of starvation or they were in the transports or something happened.

One young man, his name is Arthur Nutt, he stole a gun from a German soldier. He once a week, we went in Arnhem before that took us to the camp, we went once a week to a bathhouse, which also was used by Germans. So from the locker room, he stole the gun, and they found out who had it right away. And they shot him right on the spot. So this is the only one that did it. Because you say lost.

But beyond this, I also was associated a lot with a Hakhshara group. Do you know what that is?

No, tell me.

That is a group of Zionist people, kids mostly, or young people, that worked on farms in Germany as well as in Holland in order to learn this field of running a farm. It is a very cohesive group of people. And it's a preparation to get prepared to go to Israel and work there on a kibbutz and on the farm.

This group was also in, not together with us, but also kept together. And they also all went together on a transport. And I remember like today, when I hear the Hatikvah. Do you know what the Hatikvah is.

Tell us what it is.

Well, it's national, Zionist national hymn. They cut in two. They're all loaded into one cattle car and they all sang the Hatikvah. And I saw, and I can see this today how, as the train moved, then sound became lower, and lower, lower until neither I think more than three or four survived.

And they had been in Westerbork with you.

Yeah. They also worked on farms. Westerbork But they kept together.

Were the Dutch workers, Dutch people working at Westerbork as well?

Yes.

And what kind of roles, what kind of jobs.

Leaders especially in agriculture. Arranged this and arranged all the agricultural activities.

When you say you were rented out, does that mean that the camp thought money for your-- that is, the farmers would pay the camp money for your labor?

I would assume so. OK, what do you want to ask me?

OK. Was there a lot of underground activity going on?

I only know of the one that I am participating in.

Now, tell us about that. Tell us how you got involved and what it was.

One day I was approached by somebody in the camp if I wanted to help to get some people on the information out of the camp and into the camp. And I thought, why not? And my function was to smuggle mail into the camp and mail out of the camp, which I left at an agreed upon spot. I dumped a bag and I got also when the Germans went out looking, I picked up whatever they wanted to give me and hand it to the person in the camp.

I also helped smuggle out some people out of the camp by at night, letting them go into a one of the carts, to cover them with a blanket and put coal on top of it. This was always the car that was right next to the machine.

Right next to the locomotive or the cabin that you were in?

Right. And Germans, again, we waited for more Germans to leave themselves on the launches or when we lifted the blanket off and let the people out.

So there were times that you were in the locomotive without any guards around?

Yes, yes, yes.

And was this usually at a time that sort of like a regular routine. Like you say, lunch? So they go out for lunch and you knew that was an opportunity. Or was it unknown every time?

Yeah, it was unknown every time. I mean, it wasn't planned. So it was just as they were occasionally permitted.

And did you run this locomotive to the same place back and forth?

Yes.

And once a day, twice a day, more?

Mostly twice a day.

And that was every day?

Yeah. Also, towards the end of the war, when we, the British Air Force was flying over, was shooting at everything that moved, cars, trucks, locomotives, trains. And they also passed us. So, I had to trust, we had one person at the front of the train and one person in the back of the train to be on the lookout for planes.

In the middle, if they heard anything, they waved. Then I threw the brake of the locomotive and slowed the motor locomotive and then everybody that was on the train jumped. And I broke my knee there. And have through an injury.

From that.

Yeah.

From the jumping. And then the train had to be stopped. That was it. Well, they wanted to destroy it. Of course, I guess maybe, they never shot at us. But we saw planes come over. So.

So after you injured yourself, did you still keep on working? This was one week before the Liberation.

I see.

And I kept on working. I had it bandaged. And as a matter of fact, and the Canadian troops, Canadian tanks, came into the camp. They were into it then, my bandage opened up and left a long line of trace behind me. I think somebody told me they had a picture of that.

Oh, really?

Yeah. But I've never gotten it.

So by that point, did you have a sense that it's coming to the end or not?

Oh yes. Oh, yes, the Germans are not anymore.

They weren't?

No, no, no, no.

When did they disappear? They left the day before or the same night.

Was it easy-- in Westerbork, did you have a fairly good sense of what was going on in Holland with the

[INAUDIBLE]?

No, not at all.

No. I didn't have any idea of what went on in the world. I didn't know about Japan. I found out later on, as a matter of fact, when I crossed the Pyrenees to see my parents. I started that in a Spanish farm and the Spanish side only. And the farmer told me about [NON-ENGLISH PHRASE]. time I didn't know what he was talking about. This was the day that the Italian and the Americans, America bombed to Hiroshima.

So it was news to you, all of that, that even Japan was at war with the States.

That's why I'm so interested in the History Channel here that shows what went on in the world while I was completely isolated, with Japan and Africa and so forth. At least I didn't know. So you asked me before I was released and we got to the camp. They took care of our bundles. The next day when we started working, I had to, before I got to the farmer, I had to carry barbed wire to, they had a, what is it called? A groove, a deep groove, around camp.

A trench.

Trench, yeah, they had a very deep trench with water around the camp. But they erected, after the trenches, posts with barbed wire. And we had to transfer the wire, big balls of wire and it was bitter cold. And it was a hard job to do. We had to transport the carry the barbed wire to have the trenches secured there.

So in some ways, you built the prison around yourselves or you were forced to build the prison around yourselves.

This was pretty much in the beginning before it was a completely surrounded with barbed wire and posts, you know, guard posts.

So if I kind of put it in two stages, your first three years in the Netherlands, were as part of this group outside of Westerbork, from January, '39 to December, '42.

You have an excellent memory.

The next three years, from December '42 till when the British or the Canadians liberate you is in Westerbork.

That is correct. And for two and 1/2 of those years you're doing this locomotive back and forth.

Well, not for two and 1/2 years. First I worked on a farm.

That's right. So maybe less than that, a little bit less than that. Are there any other incidents that stick out in your memory as you were having this transport of events that happened that were different than the everyday ordinary back and forth?

Not really. We passed the crematorium.

There was one, huh?

There was a crematorium, a small one. And quite often it was-- they shot and destroyed and burned people that tried to escape. And we knew when the crematorium was working.

I see. And was it a very secure camp, one that it was difficult to escape from?

Well, yes, I would think so.

But locomotive was one of the ways.

Yes.

Which would have made it very dangerous for you had they been caught.

Absolutely. Also, every barrack had a barrack leader and they're very responsible for the count of people. And it was always checked. So it was very hard to escape.

Could you have escaped if you wanted to?

I had-- it sounds, actually, now that I think of it, it sounds strange. I had-- because I have the underground Dutch resistance they had supplied me with a little wagon, actually on the roller skates, with which I could have gone through the sewer canal outside of the camp and they had about maybe a mile or two a bicycle and a suit that, if I were [INAUDIBLE] would have gone on transport, I could have used that is as escape route and gotten the false passport, false identification card to places they had given.

So you had that possibility.

I personally had that possibility.

That's unique.

Yes.

And it was because you were agreed to work with the resistance?

Yeah. They had asked me because I had the opportunity because I was on the locomotive. I had permission, I had a special privilege to leave the camp.

So was the point of it that if you are going to be called on to transport, this is your route out. But otherwise, you didn't use it until

That. That is correct. And when you learned from the other conductors of those large transport trains that these people were going to be killed, did you pass that information on to others in the camp? Did the camps soon know what a transport really meant?

I don't think so. You asked me a similar question before.

I did.

The sad part was first to be uprooted and taken. And the other thing followed. I don't know at which point people knew, the ones that-- I don't know.

But did you tell anybody?

No, no. I could be leaving because I think a lot of people thought they are taken to work to be used as labor. But--

But not for this, not for extermination. So, the Germans disappeared from the camp the day before it's liberated. What was that day? Do you remember the date?

My diary.

OK.

13 of April 1945.

So, April 13, 1945.

Yeah. I have that, name of the camp and then I wrote in there, frei.

What did they look like, these liberators?

Oh, it was a wonderful thing to see it. After having seen the formality and the stiffness of the German soldiers and the SS and so forth. And they came into the camp, to the appellplatz. Remember what the appellplatz is?

Tell me.

That is the square in the middle of the place where where you had to show up every morning. They took off their battle jackets. Threw them down and played baseball. That was it. I mean, this is the difference of people and soldiers. These were just civilians and soldier's uniform. It was a very, very noticeable thing.

And what happened to you? You were running. You say hello to them. You have your bandage dragging behind you. What happens then?

Then we had to stay in the camp and get permission from some kind of Dutch authority, which I have copies, not copies, originals here, saying that I am politically reliable, in other words, that I am not a collaborator and that have the permission to leave the camp.

As a former prisoner, would put every person who had been a prisoner gets such a document or was it something that went individual by individual?

No, it was individual.

So there could be a prisoner who was a collaborator and they wouldn't get such a document?

I would think so. Maybe they were looking for somebody and so forth, et cetera. But all those other people, and you had to have this also, when you moved in Holland anywhere, from place to place You had to show that you are politically reliable and that you were not collaborating.

In this time from December, '42, when you were taken until April, '45, did you know what had happened to your sister?

Well, I was very fortunate. I figured, if I don't see her here, she must be safe. This is what gave me a lot of confidence, a lot of lack of anxiety. I knew if the [PERSONAL NAME] are not here and my sister is with the [PERSONAL NAME], they should be safe.

So in other words, Westerbork was the place, the only place.

There was another little place. But today the transit camp was the bulk of the transit. Transits took place through Westerbork.

OK.

At least I didn't know of the other places. But I figure if I don't see Alea--

She's OK.

She's OK.

So what did you do after you got such permission to leave the camp? What did you do?

I stole a bicycle. And I went to Tilburg which is all the way in the south of Holland. Westerbork is in the north. Then I visited, saw my sister. Stayed with them for a week.

Were they at the same address that their home had been?

Yeah.

And where had they hidden?

Had they hidden in their own home?

No, no, no. They were in an entirely different town. Nijmegen is a little further north. And they lived in Tilburg

I see. And how did you know to find them?

Well, I went to Nijmegen.

First you went to Nijmegen and you were told that that's what they were. That's where they were. They already were liberated.

I guess I'm trying to find out, how do you find hidden people when they've just been released or they've just come out of hiding?

Well, I guess--

They don't know if you're alive. You don't know if they're alive.

Yeah,

If it's not an answer, you know-- And if you don't remember the sequence, that's all right. I'm just-- in

My sequence was that, I figured they must have gone back if they-- I didn't know where they were in. So I figured they would be where they originally came from.

And where they?

Yeah.

Oh, so they weren't still in Tilburg.

No, no, no.

No, they had come back. Yeah. They had been liberated before me.

OK. OK. Now I understand a little more. And so, and why was it that your sister decided not to go with you when you said, I'm going to with our parents.

Well, she had been with these people so intimately connected for five years. And these people were so good to here. They sent us, before the war, they sent us to school. And she felt at home there. She was younger than me. She was two years younger than me, one and 1/2. For her it was also very difficult to leave these people.

I can imagine. By the time the war ends, both of you are now young adults. So you're 21 years old.

At the end of the war, yes.

A young man rather than a child.

Yes.

And your sister is also 19.

Adult.

Adult.

And what did it do-- did you ever-- did this thought of her come to you, it actually is very formative years, when you think about it that you spent under such stress and under such circumstances. It's at a time when people are growing up, a child becomes an adult. Did that have an effect on the kind of person you became?

Well, a child gets older. But my thinking is that what you gain in years, forms you anyhow. Anyhow.

It's true.

So if you have certain abilities and, like for example, I have here in my book, of Jews from Essen, there is a young man which I visited in Israel, Ephraim Bezem. He's a world renowned painter. He was not in a camp, but he showed already at the time that we were schoolmates how he was terrible in all subjects except that he was always doodling and painting.

So I did not know what I wanted. And I had no ambition of any kind to develop. I didn't want to be a doctor or lawyer or something like this. Like to answer what you said about the formative years. I did not have any ambition at all. I just wanted to things to get over it, things to pass by, to end. And that's how the affect it effect it had on me.

As a matter of fact, I do not think that many of the ones that survived had any ambition for what they wanted to do and what they wanted to become. You become sort of, let things happen and see then. I meant my question a little differently, but I'm very glad you gave me the answer that you did because that's-- OK.

I meant it as, did this experience change your personality in any way, in your character in any way? Were you more of a fearful-- Did you grow into more of a fearful person or a reserved person or more or less trusting person, in that sense. Or an angry person. I mean people had different-- during it, you survive from one day to the next. And let's see what that will happen. You don't think of-- when it's over. It

Has an effect.

It has an effect. And what kind of effect did it have on you?

I do not know. Nothing that I can determine. I don't think-- I really don't know. I know I would have done other things than what I did subsequently, because these are not my choices, but these are what I drifted into. I mean like for example, when I got my job, I applied as a shipping clerk because I read in the newspaper there was an opening in this place.

You're talking about the United States now?

United States. Now, I didn't-- shipping clerk, I thought, it's fine with me. And the owner of the firm liked me and after he talked to me, he said, you'll never be a shipping clerk. And I became a diamond person. So which satisfied me. I mean, professionally I was always very happy in what I did. It was creative I don't think I could have chosen anything else.

OK, we're jumping ahead again, but let's stay in that place. You said the owner said that you're not going to be much of a shipping clerk?

No, not much. You will never be a shipping clerk.

And why did he say that? Because he'd wanted me for something better.

Ah. OK. Yeah. And so what's the connection between shipping and diamonds? Did he own a diamond company?

Yeah. This was a big diamond firm.

I see. I see. And what did you-- when you say you worked in diamonds what was your role? What did you do?

My role was supplying diamonds and styles and you can read this in this little pamphlet, because when they honored me they mentioned some of my qualities. Some. I created jewelry.

You designed jewelry? Design, all that. I went to places where I bought models and ordered diamonds, sorted diamonds, purchased diamonds. And helped my firm to grow. We were a firm when I started, we had ten little stores all over New York. We went bankrupt, did \$1 billion worth business.

Wow. That's quick growth, quite a bit of growth.

62 years.

And that's a very interesting role. It has so many different aspects to it, particularly the creativity.

Oh, yes. There is one interesting thing if you'd like to hear. I went to India. And there was supposed to be an auction that had colored stones that are in our price range. It wasn't. I was the only Occidental person amongst Orientals. And this was an auction of a former pasha's treasure. And pieces were there for only for \$100,000, \$200,000, which was not our business.

But interesting.

Miscalculated. Yeah. But I did also, I went to auctions here in New York, to [INAUDIBLE] and Sotheby. And I bought pieces that I had the vision to convert into smaller pieces. Like, for example big bracelets that lend themselves into making into pots. And then I went to Portugal, I had a jeweler there to make these individual links into rings.

It sounds fascinating. Truly it sounds like wonderful work amongst beautiful items.

I had a very, very gratifying position, very gratifying.

And it all started because you had applied for a job as a shipping clerk.

Yeah. And the reason was because I know I had to get [INAUDIBLE] because I did this after eight days that I was in America. I saw an ad in the paper, shipping clerk. Two years college with a-- there was a block of American, ex-GIs. The war was just over. And I forget-- let me stand on line. Let me see how it is to find a job. I just was lucky.

And you got the job. Yeah.

So let's go back a little bit. When you get to Madrid, and you're there with your parents and your sister will join you and your father is ill but has job and you get one where you're translating Spanish and English, though you don't know either.

Translate a report. Yeah.

Your father passes away. Were you there during that time?

Yeah. My father passed away here. He came to America.

Oh, here in the United States?

Yes, yes.

I see. So tell me how is it that you got permission to go from Madrid to the United States? What made that happen?

You have to have somebody that guarantees that they will support you in case you have no means of your own. And these other relatives in Pennsylvania, they sent us these papers.

The furniture people.

Yeah. We got our visa, immigration visa, and after five years we became citizens.

So you left Spain relatively quickly.

Yeah.

1945.

Yeah.

Was it summer? Was it fall? Do you remember?

End of the summer.

End of the summer.

And when you arrived in the United States, where did you stay?

A Joint Distribution Committee supplied-- gave us a hotel, Marseilles, in New York. They gave us a lot of coupons to stay there for I don't know for how long, but my father and I, even though he was shaky, we went and found an apartment on 77th Street.

77th? Upper West Side or East Side?

Manhattan. East Side.

East Side.

Is it in the apartment that he passed away?

No, in the hospital.

So it was then you, your mother, and your sister. And did you ever meet your relatives in Pennsylvania?

Oh, yes.

OK.

As a matter of fact, we went there by bus, my father and I went there by bus. There was a lady sitting in front of us who heard us talk German, in German. So she asked us where we came from, and so forth. And then she showed us a banana, and said, you know what this is? This is a banana, you take and peel off. She thought we came out of the jungle.

Did you ever go back to Essen?

No. I wouldn't want to go back? As a matter of fact, one time I went to a show, a jewelry show, I can't think of it. And I had to be back in New York for a meeting. And planes could not take off in Milan because of fog. So somebody suggested for me to go to Frankfurt by train. And planes were taking off over there.

So I followed their advice and the trip through the Alps was just something marvelous. But when I came to Germany, I couldn't put my foot down in Germany. So I waiting in the cab till the plane arrived and till they were boarding. And I couldn't move in Germany. So I wouldn't want to go back to Germany.

Did your sister ever go back or your mother?

No.

My sister might have gone back to Holland one time.

And you, did you ever go back?

No. Oh, on the trip to, not specifically to Holland, but we went to-- my wife and I flew to Switzerland and then to London. She had family there. And then we went to Holland for a few days.

Tell me a little bit about how you got married, how many children you have.

We have three children. I have five grandchildren.

How did you meet your wife?

Introduction of a mutual friend.

In New York?

New York.

I told this gentleman before, they were talking about how long they were married. My first date, my wife's apartment was right next to an elevator. And when I rang the doorbell. I put my foot in the elevator door in case when she opens up, and I don't like her, right back--

Into the elevator?

It's the wrong floor. But when I saw her, I knew right away I was going to marry her.

Really? What year did you get married?

1955.

In 1955. Five years after you arrived. No, no, no. 10 years after you arrive in the United States.

You've got good eyes?

Not very, but let me take a look.

Says inside. That was January 23, 1955.

January 23, 1955. And your wife's name is?

Charlotte.

Charlotte. And is she from Europe as well?

Charlotte was born in Argentina.

In Argentina. And your children's names are?

Joel, so my son. Shirley is my middle daughter, and Denise is my youngest. If you go into the room there, there are some beautiful pictures of my family.

Did your children ask you many questions about what your life was like during the war?

Yes.

Did you talk with them openly?

Yes.

So they knew your story?

Yeah, yeah. There were certainly details I didn't go into. All details, but I spoke to them. And they are the ones that ask me to put these things together. There is an abundance of paper to put it in some kind of shape so one can look at it. And they also told me that I should try to give it to someone where it can be kept. It's OK, you can have it. Some of it. Some of it.

Well, Mr. Teig, is there anything that I haven't asked you that you think is important for people to know about, this entire-- not only the specifics of what you went through, but what we should know of it, how we should understand it, how you understand it, how you processed it. Are there things that you think are important?

Well, I guess I just-- people ought to be nicer to each other. That's what I think. I think prejudice and hate, jealousy, and so forth, I guess are normal things. But for others I would have to think. I also know, for example, I make myself some notes, somewhere, for example, what it did to my religious. But.

Please tell me, because I'm so-- yes. We didn't follow up on this.

We were pretty traditionally semi-orthodox, not extremely orthodox, a reasonably orthodox family. And I lost my belief after the war and during the war. Because I have seen things, that children without parents were loaded into cattle cars and were taken to for-- to be eliminated and God didn't do anything about it. And I didn't think-- not only didn't He do anything, but he let it happen. And that is sort of not destroy, but made me doubt of what humanity has become.

Did it make you doubt God?

Yeah.

Did you ever reconcile that? Did you take your belief back?

No. I do things out of respect to my son. I pray. I don't know why. Maybe it is because of the tradition, but I don't

believe that a god would let happen what has happened and what is happening now. Because people murdered and killed, children starving in Africa, and all over the world, and God let this happen. So my belief in religion is say pretty critical.

That's a huge loss.

I don't feel it. I don't feel it.

Thank you.

You're welcome.

Thank you very much.

You're very welcome. And this concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mr. Richard Teig on October 2, 2015 in Delray Beach, Florida. Thank you very much. You're very welcome.

You'll describe this.

I would like to-- I think you would like to hear some of this.

That's right. So when he's ready, you guys are ready to roll, then I will ask you some more questions.

OK.

OK.

All right, rolling. OK. So, Mr. Teig. Tell me, what is on this page.

Well, this is my Judenstern, which is in Dutch "Jood," which means Jew. Everybody had to wear it. Also, there is a list of the places I spent from the time that I left my parent's house to the Liberation in 1945.

So that's this list down here.

OK. And then these are various articles.

Yeah, these are articles. I don't think-- no, I don't think so. This is what the camp looks like now.

Westerbork. All right, we can cut for a second.

Rolling.

OK, so tell me, what is this photograph of?

This is myself on the locomotive, the narrow gauge locomotive and the lorries behind it with military transported materials that were separated in the camp and shipped to a barge to be send to Germany.

And it's unusual to have a photograph of somebody who's a prisoner in a camp. How did that happen, that someone took your picture?

I do not know.

You do not know. But it's during the time you're a prisoner.

Oh, yes.

It's not like right after liberation or something.

It was during that time. And you're the young man who is standing out.

That's right.

And we see your whole uniform there.

And my smile. And your smile and your smile. Thank you.

So tell me what is this right here. It says Lager Westerbork. This is everybody in the camp had to have a identification card. And since it was controlled when one worked and when one didn't work, and for what reason, this is in the back of this card.

I see. So this is the front and this is a photocopy of the inside of it.

Right.

All right. Thank you.

OK, tell me, what are these cards.

The one on the top is the ID card that everybody in Holland had to have. And if you were Jewish, you have the J stamped right next to your picture. When I helped and work with the Dutch resistance, they gave me a false identification card without the J in case I get held up or asked to show that I am Jewish or not, it didn't have the J on that.

So this is the real-- this is the real one with your real name. And this one is the false one with your real picture. Dutch name. Frame that. OK. Cut.

OK. Hold on a second.

Yeah.

Speed.

OK. So tell me, what is this right here?

This is the backside of the identification cards with my fingerprints and with my false name. OK

So the top one has Richard Otto Teig. And the other one is Werner Franz--

Vermeer.

Vermeer. Ah, yeah, Franz Vermeer. But the fingerprints are authentic ones. Thank you.

Speed.

OK. Mr. Teig, then tell me what is this page of and who is shown here? These are the children and the young people that were together with me in the children's refugee camps during the years in Holland before we came to Westerbork.

And so I was under the misapprehension that all of them were young boys, but I see that there are many young girls

here.

These are people that also who came through Kindertransport, not only directly without any papers and so forth, organizations arranged transport of children from Austria, mostly from Austria, from Vienna to come to a neutral country.

Thank you.

Go ahead.

OK. So tell me what is this piece of paper?

This is a registration document of all the Jewish people who had to register with the Amsterdam Jewish Administration. And was through this like you explained that you were able to be found and identified by the Gestapo when they came to get you, is this with you--

Well this is where most people probably who were listed on. And these were submitted to the Gestapo.

So, Mr. Teig, tell me what is this right here. This is a list that we're supposed to make before we-- of all of our possessions. And the value of it. Because there was a limit of value that you could take along to Westerbork.

So I see here, you have [NON-ENGLISH WORDS], so that means a winter coat, rain coat, [NON-ENGLISH WORDS] which means cap,

[NON-ENGLISH WORDS] a scarf, one pair of gloves and a suit. I can't read that word, hosen, pants, a pullover, a shirt, underclothes.

Can you lean it back?

Yeah.

Like that?

Yeah. Underclothes and some night clothes, four pairs of socks, and [NON-ENGLISH WORDS] and six handkerchiefs. And all of this is what you took with you. That was your bundle to Westerbork. My goodness. And that's your copy that you kept while in Westerbork, that piece of paper?

Some of the things I don't remember seeing how I got them.

It's amazing. It's amazing.

It amazes me every single time I look at it.

That's an honest answer. thank you.

So tell me what is this?

This is a telegram that a relative of mine in Israel sent to my parents which were at the time in Spain, notifying them that I was alive and in good health and was liberated in Holland.

Speed.

OK, tell me, who is this? In this photograph, who's in that photograph? We're rolling now. It's OK.

I have the same problem sometimes. I go to physical therapy. I have to do something with my left foot at first and then my right foot. And sometimes I mix them up.

So this is my father is in the Hungarian Army during World War I. I also have somewhere else, I don't know where it is, a picture of my father and his father both in uniform.

Oh really? [NON-ENGLISH]

Sure, Hungarian Empire. Oh, well, Army. OK. Thank you.