

All right, here we go. OK, this is Olivia Rosen recording an interview with Samuel Schleider for the US Holocaust Memorial Museum on March 21, 2018, in Delray Beach, Florida.

OK, Mr. Schleider, first can you tell me-- just a simple question. What was your name at birth? And when and where were you born?

What year I was born?

Mhm.

1937.

And where?

I was born in Stanislaw<sup>3</sup>w, Poland in 1937. That's a city in Poland.

And at birth, what was your name?

Zigo-- Z-I-G-O. My family's name was Bernstein. And I learned all my family's name in a few years ago when everything was opening up-- the archives.

So you didn't--

Birth certificates and all that.

So you had forgotten what your name was?

Not forgotten. I never knew.

I see. Can you please describe your family growing up, from what you can remember, including the professions of your mother and father?

OK. My father was killed during the war because he was able to smuggle me and my mother and a few other people out of the Stanislaw<sup>3</sup>w ghetto. And we were hidden by a Christian woman in the sub-basement for 18 months.

Do you mind backing up just a little bit? Before the war broke out and before you were in the ghetto, what did your father do?

He had-- my father had a scrap iron business. And when they tried-- when the ghetto was made, his business was right adjacent to the ghetto on the other side.

So do you remember any of your early life before the war started?

No. I was at that time, I would say, three, four years old. And it was nothing special.

So what was your earliest memory?

My earliest memory was when we would-- all the people, all the Jews were gathered from the towns around Stanislaw<sup>3</sup>w, and we were marched in middle of the night into the ghetto. And all I remember is it was a cold night. I looked up. The moon was there. And we were making too much noise, so the soldiers who were guarding us shot their rifles into the air to quiet us down.

About how old were you when this happened?

Four years old.

Four. And who were you with when you were being marched?

Just with my mother. And that was it.

Where was your father?

He was at Prague at that time in his business, which as I said before, he had a scrap metal business which the Germans allowed him to continue it because it was helping for the war effort.

I see. So where were you-- do you know where you were living in relation to where the ghetto was set up in Stanislaw<sup>3</sup>w?

No, I have no idea. It was just they took a certain amount of square miles and they said, this is going to be the ghetto.

I see.

Most likely the oldest part of the city.

Did you know what the nature of religion was in your family before the war started out?

No. No, I did not.

I see. So you said your earliest memory was walking to the ghetto.

Right.

Do you remember what your life was like in the ghetto?

Well, I was carefree. I was able to walk out of the building, down the steps, into the street. I was roaming just within where I supposed to be. And I was playing ball with another kid my age or maybe younger.

Oh, so you were able to maintain a relatively normal life in the ghetto, as far as you knew?

Yeah, up to a point, right. Because every now and then, the Germans used to come into the ghetto and they took out X amount of people from the ghetto claiming they need them for work.

And what happened that you know of?

Well, they never came back. So after a while, the people in the ghetto realized something is not right. So when the Germans came into the ghetto trying to collect people, everybody was hiding into their special hiding places. I remember they built a special hiding place for me in the wall.

Of your apartment?

Of the apartment where I was staying. And when the cry came out, [NON-ENGLISH]-- Aktion, Aktion-- that's a word that sounded like that-- everybody ran to his or her hiding place.

Where-- who did you live with in the apartment?

Just with my mother and a bunch of other people.

So did you get placed with them? Who were these other people?

What's that?

Who were the other people? Did you have a choice--

I have no idea who they was. They were strangers to me.

I see.

Or maybe they were relatives or maybe they were friends of my mother. I have no idea.

And your father, was he living with you?

No. He was outside the ghetto at his business.

So he was allowed to remain outside of the ghetto?

Yes, because of his business. Right.

I see. So you mentioned the Aktions with the Nazis. Do you remember any specific incidents?

Yes. I remember once I was playing with this boy who was younger than me when I heard the word "Aktion." We all ran to our hiding place. He was too slow. So when I came out, I found him dead outside.

And do you remember what you thought of this experience?

When my father came--

What you thought of seeing your friend?

Well, he was dead, so I took it for granted. That's not the first person that I saw dead.

Who was the first?

Well, there was many people. If you walk in the street, you see somebody dead, what are you going to do? Step over him and continue walking.

Did you know at this time-- you were a young boy, but did you know that these were only Jews that you were housed with in the ghetto?

No.

And did your mother ever talk to you about this? Or how did she try to maintain a normal life for you?

There was no such thing as normal life. I know that my mother tried to reinforce what I seen so I would remember. In fact, I'll give you one recollection that she did. As the ghetto got smaller, the ghetto was surrounded by Jewish people called Kapos. And as the ghetto got smaller, they needed less and less of those Kapos to work in the ghetto. So what they did was they took a whole bunch of them and they hung them up on the poles. And my mother the next day took me to see them and I was watching them swinging in the wind.

So the event that you mentioned, do you remember when this was or how long you were in the ghetto at that time?

No, I don't remember a time scale. All I remember that a few months later, a few weeks later, we left the ghetto, my

mother and I in the home and a few other people that my father knew through my father's business.

I see. So that particular Aktion was in 1942 when the 20 members--

43 maybe.

43. And then you said you were taken out of the ghetto. Can you describe your escape?

Well, we went in the middle of the night. We got up, we got dressed warmly, and we walked towards one of the walls in the ghetto. And we moved some wooden planks. We went right through into my father's business, then we continued walking to our hiding place.

Did your parents tell you what you were doing when you escaped? Did you know that you were escaping?

No. We known when they told me, do this, so I did this. Do that, so I did that.

Was this during the day or at night?

Was at night.

At night. And let's just go back a little bit. When you were living in the ghetto, was your mother working?

There's no-- no, she was in a ghetto. She was-- had-- with a bunch of other people living in that apartment. So food was provided, X amount of food that people cooked, and each one had a little bit of the food.

Were you hungry or did you have enough to eat?

I was-- my mother made sure I have enough to eat.

I see. So roughly how long were you living in the ghetto before you escaped, if you can remember?

Maybe a year.

A year. I see. So do you know anything about the decision to hide, how your parents decided to escape?

Well, as the ghetto got smaller and the people never came back, there was no-- something was not right, so that's why we left.

I see. So where did you go?

My father made arrangement with this Christian woman to have some people in her sub-basement hiding. And my father picked the men or the women who had some-- maybe-- pieces of gold or earrings or something like that so they would have enough money to buy food. And once we were hidden, every few days or weeks, I have no idea, then a lady came into the sub-basement and somebody gave a golden ring or something. So she would take the ring, go on the black market, and was able to buy food for us.

I see. So who else was in your hiding space? About how many other people?

Well, I know my mother's sister was there, and my-- and her son, which was my cousin, was there. And there were a few other people. I don't know who they were.

And this sub-basement, what was it like? What were your living conditions?

Well, the basement was-- we had straw, and on top of the straw we had a blanket to lie on. And there was a hall in the

back with some sheets around on top. So we could go and do our normal [? X ?] duty. There was no water to take showers. I remember it used to have water, just sponged ourself down, and that was it. There was no sanitary condition there--

No sanitary condition?

--that we know now.

And what did you do to pass the time?

Just lie and sleep and dream.

And dream? What did you dream of?

The day and when this madness is finished.

And your father, what was he up to during that time?

My father did not join us in that hiding. He told my mother-- this is what my mother told me-- that he decided to stay out and see if he could take out some more people from the ghetto through his business. And he found this man who said, sure, I'll take some people in.

And my father found some people willing to go. And when they all came into that man's home in the sub-basement, he called in the Gestapo and had them all killed. Gestapo is the German police. And since my father was the instigator, they killed my father also.

I see. So do you remember when this happened? How did you find out?

My mother told me.

And she presumably found out from the woman who was hiding you?

That's right, most likely.

Do you know if your father rescued other people other than that group before?

I have no idea. But it's possible that he rescued us. Maybe he rescued another group, but I have no ideas on that.

I see. And did you ever have any close calls on being caught when you were in hiding? Were there any incidences where the Nazis or the Gestapo were close to--

No. I just tried to avoid them.

When-- did the woman who was hiding you have any relationships with the Germans?

Yes. For her to be able to have so many people in that sub-basement, she had to provide some kind of food. So she entertained the German people, German soldiers. And they used to come to her house and used to bring either salami or bread-- some kind of food. This is how they paid her. And she subsequently gave us some of the food.

So what were they paying her for?

I'll let you imagine.

I see. So she was a single woman?

She was a single woman, right.

OK. About how old was she? Do you remember anything else about her?

She must have been in the 30s or 40s. I have no idea.

I see. So when the Germans were coming to visit her--

We were supposed to be quiet.

I see.

No talking, not even whispers.

Was that difficult for you, being a child?

Well, of course. A child doesn't know why he's doing things. He likes to run. He likes to talk loud so people could hear him. Well, that's normal for a child. And I didn't have no normality.

I see. And you said your cousin was housed with you. Was he also a child?

Yeah, because he was much older. Whereas I would say I was about 7, he was about 15, 16.

I see. Did you have in the sub-basement any windows? Did you ever get to go outside?

There was a high window. We never went outside. The window was-- I would say, you have to step up on a chair to be able to see outside.

And during your time in hiding, were you and the rest of you aware of what was happening outside the walls to the Jews?

No.

No?

Not to me. I mean, if you were older, you probably knew what's happening. But at my age, I had no interest.

Right. How long were you in hiding?

Well, I would say a good 15 to 18 months. We were liberated in the summer of 1944 by the Russians.

Do you remember your liberation?

Well, as soon as we were liberated, they told me, you could go outside and play. So I knew I was liberated.

And what did you do when you were liberated? Where did you go?

I just went outside. And I looked at the sun was there. It was still warm, nice, beautiful. There was no specific places for me to go.

And your mom? What did you do next?

Well, when the lady who hid us, the Christian lady, she was denounced as a collaborator, that she collaborated with the

Germans. So my mother went down to the Russian commandant and she said, yes, she did collaborate, but there was a reason for her to do it. She was bringing food for us.

Therefore, the commandant was very annoyed at my mother and he said to her, what happened, the Germans run out of bullets for you? So that's when my mother left. And that night, my mother and I, we hitchhiked out of Stanislaw<sup>3</sup>w, and we went towards Krakow, which is a big city, one of the big cities in Poland.

Did you try to find out what happened to the other Jews in Stanislaw<sup>3</sup>w? Did you go back to the ghetto after you were liberated?

No. We went to Krakow. We were in an apartment with some other Jewish people who were saved and a few other people that came back with the Russians from Russia. And my mother was-- met this man who lost his family, his wife and his children.

What was his name?

His name was Markus-- M-A-R-K-U-S-- Schleider. That's the name I use now.

I see.

And they married, and that was it.

I just want to go back a little bit. Do you know what happened to the woman who hid you?

No.

Or what about any of the other people who hid with you?

I don't know. Some of them-- we all went different ways.

I see.

I know my cousin went to Australia after the war, because he came once to the United States and we got together.

What was your physical state, like, right after you came out of hiding?

My physical?

Yes, and, you know, those who hid with you-- your mothers.

My mother was skinny because she didn't have much to eat. I was normal. Well, the food was-- if you don't have steak and you never ate steak, you don't know what you're missing. All I had is bread and water or soup, and that's what I had.

So after liberation, you went to Krakow and you managed to find housing there.

Yes.

Were there other refugees and liberated people emerging?

Yes. Yes. A lot of people who were liberated immigrated towards the big city of Krakow. Some of them went to the capital city, but we went to Krakow.

And how were the Russians received as liberators?

Well, the Russians were not that much different from Germans, but they did not kill you. They took away everything that you had, all your possessions, and that was that.

In Krakow, did your mother try to find other family members and try to find out what happened at all?

No. I'm not sure.

But there was no one else that you reunited with in Krakow?

No.

How did she meet Markus Schleider?

Well, we went and we lived in an apartment, and there was a lot of other people surviving, living in that apartment. That's how she-- they met.

Was the apartment-- did you pay for it? How did you come to be in the apartment?

Well, I have no idea.

So what did you do after staying in Krakow? About how long were you there?

We were not that long in Poland because there was no future for us. So we left Poland and we were going south. And we reached Czechoslovakia-- Prague. And my father was telling me after the war that he met British soldiers who came from Palestine-- Jews who were fighting with the British army. And any surviving Jew, they kept saying, go south. Go to Bari, Italy and take the boat to Palestine.

And so we hitchhiked all the way to Italy. We finally hit Bologna, Italy, and was supposed to take a train from Italy all the way to Bari. And Bari was a city just below Naples. And there were towns, and so people tried to get on the train. I remember seeing people on top of the roof of the train, people in between the train, and some people put wooden planks underneath the train so they could lie on it.

Underneath the train.

Yeah. And my mother took one look at that train situation and she said, I can't get on it, because she was pregnant. And so we stayed in Italy. We went to the city of Florence, Italy, and there were other Jews going also to that city. And that's-- my sister was born in Florence, Italy, and she is Italian by birth.

I see. So there was this hope that your family would go to Palestine. Did you still-- did your family still hope to go there when you were settled in Florence?

There was no way of going because it was ready. The war started and my sister was born, you know, so we--

So this was about 1948?

We were there from 1945 to '46, when she was born, until we emigrated to the US. And my parents, my father-- my stepfather, which I shall call my father-- and my mother had to recuperate from their experience more than I had to.

How did they manage to recuperate?

Very difficult, but they managed. They had no choice.

Did you notice the effects on them of the Holocaust when you were a child?



Yes. They wanted make sure nothing would happen to me. They kept an eye on me until my sister was born. Then they-- all the resources were on my sister, so I was free to roam.

And what was life like in Florence?

Very easy. I was going from one end of the city to the other. And if I wanted to eat something, I jumped into somebody's garden. They always had all kinds of fruit in the garden. And I made lots of friends. And I was on the soccer league, which was sponsored by the churches. And I never had a better time. I was free like a bird.

So you mentioned the churches. Were your friends Italians? Or were they refugees--

They were all Italian. There was a school-- there was a synagogue in Florence and there was a school attached to it. But they did not teach anything about Judaism that I remember.

In the synagogue even?

In the school.

In the school. So were you-- what was your knowledge of your Jewish identity?

Very little.

Very little.

I did not know nothing about Judaism until I came to the United States. We arrived in 1949 November.

So was there anti-Semitism at all in Italy post-World War II?

Not that I know of. I mean, all my friends were Italian. They did not say anything bad to me. We played soccer. We did all those things. We had adventures.

And you learned to speak Italian?

I still speak Italian fluently. And when in adult life, I was in business, would be communicating with Italians.

So in Florence, what did your father do for his profession?

He couldn't work because he was not an Italian citizen. To be able to get a job in Italy, you had to be a citizen. You were either born there or you-- there is no such thing-- it's naturalization like we have in the states. So he found a unique way of getting-- making a living.

He used to go down to south Italy. He used to be able to buy gold at a cheaper price than the gold was in northern Italy and used to bring the gold to the stores in Ponte Vecchio. And he was able to make a living like that, trading, buying the dollars-- the soldiers had different kind of dollars. And he used to buy those dollars and be able to do that kind of work.

Was he in business with other Italians?

No, he was in business with other Jews. There were about 20 families, and there were-- we all doing that kind of work.

I see.

That's the only work that they could do which did not interfere with actual work.

I see. So when did your parents decide that it was best to leave Italy?

My father had some relatives in New York City, and he wrote to them. They wrote back to him, and they made out the papers, and we emigrated to the United States November 1949.

So did you go straight from Florence?

We went from Florence to a DP camp which is right outside Naples-- [? Anzio ?].

A displaced persons camp?

No, there was just a temporary camp for us to stay. And that's where they checked us out physically and mentally, and they gave us all kinds inoculation shots. And then came a day when the ship was ready to take us, we got on it, and we left.

So what did you think about leaving Italy?

Well, I loved it. It was such a carefree place for me. Nobody said anything to me. I had everything I wanted. I had friends. I was in the soccer league. There was-- nobody asked me, do you want to leave? I just had to go with my parents.

I see. And you mentioned growing up that your parents struggled, dealing with the effects of the Holocaust. How so?

Well, we came to the United States, and the first thing my father did was he took me-- we had an apartment on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. And that was a real railroad apartment, if you know what it is. And we lived there for about 10 years. He also made sure I learned about Judaism. So he took me to a yeshiva which is not too far from home, and he told the head rabbi that if he doesn't take me in, I'll grow as a gentile because I don't know nothing about Judaism.

I presume the reason they did not push forward my Jewish education in Europe was to protect me.

I see.

So-- and I went into that yeshiva. And then I was 13 years old, they put me in the first grade in Judaism and they put me in junior high school in English. And after five years, I was able to graduate the English department and I was able to learn about Judaism. And I passed all the regents, and I went to college, and then I started a business.

So was it difficult for you to assimilate into American society?

Yes. Yes and no. It was more difficult for an older person because at that time, my mind was thinking in Italian. My mind now thinks in English. But that's a normal thing, that's all. Until when I was in a yeshiva, I spoke Italian and I spoke Yiddish. I didn't speak a word of English. But I was lucky that most of the teachers were Jewish in the yeshiva, and all of them spoke Yiddish.

Did you have a lot of support from the Jewish community-- your family when you got settled?

We had support at the beginning-- not that much-- like a few weeks. When we arrived, they put us up in a hotel until we were able to find an apartment. But most of the time, we were self-sufficient. My father went out to the farmers market to peddle. And he was able to get merchandise on consignment from some businesspeople in the Lower East Side who trusted my father. And he was doing that. And we as a family also supported his physical effort of making a living.

I remember we had some businesspeople who were in the United States longer than us were exporting nylon stockings to Europe. Those nylon stockings were irregulars or third qualities. My father's job and my job and my mother's job was to erase the word "irregulars" and put a fresh quality stamp on it. And we used to get \$0.10 for doing that on a dozen stockings. And we made a living on that way until something else came out.

So how long did your-- you said you went into business with your father.

I went into business in 1960, 1959. I received from the Germans \$5,000, maybe to make their conscience easy for stealing my youth. So that's what they gave me.

When did they give you this money?

1959, 1960.

So you were about 22?

No, I was about 18.

18.

No-- '55 I was 18. I was about 21, 22. You were right. Your math is good.

And how did you feel when they gave you this money? Were you--

I said it was blood money.

So did you not want it at first?

I myself, I did not want it. And my father and my mother said, take it. We need it to continue our lives.

So at this time, you're a young man. Are you beginning to realize more about the Holocaust? Is it beginning to take effect?

No. You have to realize, the Holocaust, we lived through it, and there was many, many years I did not speak about it. And also I have a feeling-- this is my personal feeling-- the United States government suppressed a lot of the knowledge about the Holocaust. Why? Because we were at war-- not yet at war, but we were enemies with Russia. And the United States wanted to enlist Germans' side to be with us.

So they did not encourage publications of the Holocaust or movies or anything until there was a peace. In 1980s, after 1980s, everything was opened up. You check around, you see how many books were printed after 1980s-- or the movies, or anything else that was about a Holocaust.

So you said you didn't speak of the Holocaust growing up. Did your mother explain to you about your father's role in it?

A little bit, but not that much. Even my mother wouldn't speak too much about it. I guess it was painful.

I see. When you were a young man-- so you went to college. Can you tell me about your education?

My education? I was in college a few years. Then I went into business. I was training to be an officer, ROTC. Then I got married. And then they called me down to Whitehall to have my physical examination to see if I'm qualified to be an officer. And they gave me a physical and I was ready to be taken into the Army when the captain that came out to us and said, you're going to be sworn into the Army. And if there is any reason why you think you shouldn't be sworn in, let us know.

I raised my hand and I said, I'm not sure if I qualified for it, but my wife is pregnant and she's expecting. He said, when is she expecting? I said, in December 1960. So the officer said to me, OK, go home. January, they send a special delivery letter, please send us birth certificate of your son. And my stature was changed from 1A to 4A.

So had you wanted to be an officer?

Well, I wanted to be an officer, right. At that time, at that age, yes.

Why? What was your--

Well, maybe I would have gone to Israel and fight.

I see. So you wanted to be in the Army for the American-- in the American Army and represent Israel and help.

Yes, eventually. I always wanted to go to Israel and help that way.

Did you ever consider taking aliyah to Israel?

A what?

Immigrating to Israel?

Not really. I got used to living in the United States, so-- and I figured there's more ways than one to help Israel than living there. And if everybody moved into Israel, nobody would be left to help.

So it seems like your Jewish identity really developed during your time in America. You became more religious and you identified stronger than in Italy. Is that correct?

That is correct. In Italy, I had no idea what Israel is, just like any other country.

Were you a participant in the Zionist movement in America?

What?

Did you participate in any way in supporting Israel from America?

Yeah, well, of course. I'd give donations. I'd give my vocal support, my voting support. If any candidate runs and says something bad against Israel, I vote against them.

I see.

So you needed that kind of support.

And let's go back a little bit. You mentioned that you got married. How did you meet your wife?

Friends of mine-- I had many friends there, Special. And some of the friends said, we are going to-- through the Y, on 92nd Street Y in New York City, they have a young adult camp for people between the ages of 18 to 25. They're going to get 50 guys and 50 girls to go to that camp. So come sign up with us. So I signed up.

And we were in that camp, and they put us in such a circle that you were bound to pair off with a person of the opposite sex. That same-- we were there for one week, and that's how I met my wife.

Oh, was she a survivor as well?

No. She was born here in the states.

In New York?

No-- New York-- no, no [? thanks ?] as a survivor.

But she was Jewish as well?

She was Jewish. And if I didn't marry a Jewish person, my parents would kill me.

Did you want to marry a Jewish person anyways?

Yes. But in Italy there was very low Jewish-- Jewishness.

It developed when you came to America.

Right. I mean, there were Jews in Israel and Italy going back hundreds and hundreds of years, but they were very assimilated with the Italians' culture and all that.

And now we're just going to take some time for you-- to ask you some broader, more general questions. Can you talk about the long-term impact of your experiences in the Holocaust?

No. I mean, sometimes I wonder why I survived. I'm not richer or stronger than the next person, and there must be a reason why. And I try to [? phantom ?] to reason why I survived. And maybe now, in this community where I live, I help out other people who cannot help themselves.

And of course, I go now to different schools and I talk about the Holocaust experience that I had. And I tell that to kids 12, 13, and 15 about the Holocaust. And I mention to them, this is not the first one, and won't be the last one. And I told them all about previous holocausts that happened in the past 500 years.

So you're part of a large survivor network in Florida?

I'm part of a group of surviving network. We have about 130 survivors, and every year there's less and less survivors. I'm one of the youngest. And that's basically it. If we don't talk about it, we'll be like any other holocaust that happened previously. Nobody talks about it. I could start mention them.

But going back to the Crusades, that was also a holocaust. When the Crusades went into Palestine, they killed every person that they found. Every city that they conquered, they killed everybody. How about the Spanish Inquisition? Then, of course, what happened to the American Indians?

So you--

I'm just pointing out a few of them. And the kids really-- it hits home when I tell them about the American Indians. Millions were killed. And of course I tell them, how many of you know what happened by the Turks when they killed 1 and 1/2 million Armenians? Very few know about that.

So you feel like by talking about your experience, you're helping to educate the younger generation?

Yes. And there's a lot of wonderful teachers who want to continue that kind of education.

Have you struggled with feelings of anger about what happened to you and your family?

No. Sometimes I say-- I'm looking at sometimes on a growth basis. My sister was born in 1946. She has four children who are doctors, dentists, all in the medical field. She contributed a lot towards the community in general. My nieces and nephews, my sister's children, grandchildren, also are doctors and also contribute a lot to the communities of the United States.

If there was no such thing as the Holocaust, I would probably be still living in Poland. Maybe I would marry somebody,

a local girl there, and have a few children, but I don't think they'll be doctors or lawyers or anything from our family. Sometimes something like that, it's good to my benefit. But on the other hand, I wonder how many Einsteins did we kill, or Leonardo da Vincis?

Now, I have pictures here. And I say to myself, if I was living in Poland, would I still do pictures like that? I doubt it.

Can you explain about your pictures and your artwork?

They call it marquetry. It's a European kind of artistry. In the United States, we would call it inlay. All the furnitures that we have has a veneer on top of it. And it's one solid piece of veneer which the furniture people smooth it down and polyurethane it.

I take different veneers, I form the pictures of different colored veneers, which forms a picture. Then I sand them down to make them all the same level, and I polyurethane it. Then I form a picture with it.

How did you get into this? When did you decide?

Well, a friend of mine was doing it, so I found it to be very easy to do it.

And I see a lot of your pictures show Jewish themes.

Yes. Or do you-- American themes like the Statue of Liberty. Yes. I wouldn't do any other themes. I wouldn't do a Russian theme.

So America is important to you?

Oh, yes, it is. It's, you know, like the song goes, God bless America, which is done by a Jewish fellow-- written by a Jewish fellow. And I feel that he did the right thing.

And how do you feel about Germany and also Poland and Russia today?

Russia, I have no-- I mean, they took away a lot of people's livelihood, but they did not kill them. Poland, I say most Polish people are stupid, and that's why we have so many Polish jokes floating around. Even now, they still don't know how to do things correctly. They wanted to say the concentration camps were on Polish soil, but they were really German concentration camps.

But they came out with the stupid things-- if anybody talks about it, we're going to fine them \$5,000. Stupidity. But Polish-- Poland was such a vibrant country. It had one of the biggest Jewish population. And the Jewish population helped the whole economy of Poland. And now with most of the Jews are gone, the population is falling apart.

Have you been back to Poland?

I was on the March of the Living last year, with one week in Poland. I mean, they did nice reconstruction work of synagogues, and this and that. We had a bus guide, a Polish girl. She must have been about 28, 30. And she says that the Polish state is falling apart.

A lot of young people move out of the Poland. They go to different countries for work. They come to the United States, England, you name the country. They don't want to stay in Poland. And the country won't last much longer.

Did you go to Stanisławów?

No. My group stopped over at Krakow, and then we walked between two camps, Birkenau and Auschwitz. We had maybe 10,000 to 15,000 people from all over the world. Young people from Australia, from New Zealand, Fiji, India, you name the country, they were there. And we walked between those two countries to show what happened so the

world will take notice.

How did you feel being in that huge group of people for the March of the Living?

When I was in Poland, I was down because all you show all the cemeteries. One cemetery with towns, and so thousands of children, 2, 3, 4-year-olds, were killed. There was no reason to kill them, but they were useless to the Germans because they can't produce anything. And I was very down.

But you have to realize, 6 million Jews were killed, 5 million non-Jews were killed by the Germans. To them, anybody that is in the hospital who has mental deficiency or anything like that is useless, so they killed them. 5 million non-Jews were killed. Total amount of people died during the Second World War, I estimate is over 50 million.

Did being in Poland bring back any memories that you had perhaps forgotten or pushed down?

No. I live by the day. I can't change history. I see a lot of countries are trying to change history. You can't change history. You could change the future, but not the past.

Do you have any final thoughts that you would like to share?

I think the new generation that's coming up now will put a stop to a lot of the abuses that the older generation didn't as a practice. And I honestly believe, after seeing the younger generation and going to schools and talking about it, I honestly believe that the world will be a better place in the future.

Well, that is some very positive and hopeful words to end with-- if there is not anything else?

No, you just have to hope, right?

Well, thank you very much.

Am I finished?

You are finished.

You know--