

Tell us when to record. Recording.

All right. This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mrs. Clara Rechnitz on December 12, 2018, in Framingham, Massachusetts. Thank you so much for agreeing to speak with us today to share a bit about your life story and your family's story, and to give us a glimpse into how the policies of Nazi Germany affected people on an individual level.

I'm going to start with a very basic question. But let's cut the camera first, please. Let me get--

--of my mind, you know? Now I have time to think and remember my grandmother. We used to live in Poland at the time near my grandmother and grandfather, my father's side. And she was still alive when Hitler was there.

OK. , So, Clara we're going to start at the very beginning. Tell me, what's the date of your birth?

1929, February 4th.

February 4, 1929.

Yeah.

Where were you born?

In Germany.

What town?

A small town. Wetter on the Ruhr, it's called.

Wetter on the Ruhr?

The Ruhr was the river, yes.

Ah, Ruhr, on the Ruhr.

Ruhr, yeah.

OK. And where is that? In Southern Germany, in Northern Germany?

Kind of Western, a little bit Western.

What part would it have been? [NON-ENGLISH]?

Yes, it's West Wand. Yeah.

It was in West Wand.

Yeah.

OK. And what was your name at birth?

Teichmann.

Teichmann.

Clara Zelma Teichmann.

OK.

Now, I always thought my name was spelled T-E-I-C-H-M-A-N-N, but that's not really my real name.

Oh.

When my father moved to Germany from Poland he tried to make it the German way. When I got married, I found out my name is spelled T-A-J-C-H-M-A-N-N.

Well, that's the Polish way.

That's the Jewish way.

Yeah.

Yeah.

With a J and-- yeah, exactly. Exactly.

Yeah.

One of my questions, and I will get to that, will be where your father was from. Can we cut the camera?

And we're recording.

OK. Did you have brothers and sisters?

Yeah.

Tell me.

I had one sister who was older, and a brother who was younger.

What was your sister's name?

Else, E-L-S-E, Else.

Else. And when was she born?

Three years before me. That means--

1926?

19-- yeah. Yeah.

OK, and your brother?

He was a year younger than I am.

And what was his name?

Pardon me?

What was your brother's name?

Gerhardt.

Gerhardt.

Yeah.

OK. And your mother, what was her name?

[? Helte. ?]

[? Helte. ?] And her maiden name?

Steinfort.

Steinfort.

Yeah.

S-T-E-I-N-F-O-R-T?

Correct, yes.

OK. And now let's talk a little bit about your father because you already mentioned that he came to Germany from Poland. That is, he was not-- he was not a German Jew.

No.

He was a Polish Jew.

Yeah.

What town from Poland did he come from?

Sianow. It was a small, small village where his parents used to live. And then they lost everything during the First World War, I think. And then they moved to Ostrowiec.

Ostrowiec.

The town Ostrowiec. And when we were sent to Poland, that's where we kind of ended up living with-- in that house, that apartment that my father had bought for them.

OK. Why did your father even move from Poland to Germany?

I can tell you that most Jews moved away from Poland into Germany because Polish people were very great anti-Semites, much worse than Germans-- then the German population. And in Poland it was the Polish population very anti-Semitic.

And so that's what propelled your father to move to Germany.

Move to Germany, yes.

What year was he born?

1900.

1900.

Yes.

So when the First World War broke out, he was just a boy, still. He was 14 years old.

Yeah, I would think so. But I don't know much about that.

OK. And when would it have been that he moved to Germany? What year?

He was 17.

Oh, so it was even during-- the war hadn't ended yet.

Maybe. Maybe it just ended. I'm not quite sure. I know he was 17 when he got away from Poland.

OK. And do you know where he first moved to?

I think it was called Essen.

In Essen.

Yeah.

OK. And did he have schooling? Did he have--

Jewish schools, yes. All Jewish people go to school.

I meant higher education.

No.

Did he go to university?

No, no, no.

No. He have a trade or a profession?

You call it in German [NON-ENGLISH]. A merchant.

He was a salesman.

Yes, a merchant.

A merchant?

Yeah. Yeah. He always had his own-- started his own business.

Ah. So did he have his own store?

Well, when I was alive he had the wholesale paper business.

Ah.

At that time, everything you needed paper for. Nothing was pre-packed. So anything you bought, you needed paper.

To wrap it up.

To wrap it up or weigh it or, you know. Yeah.

So that was his business.

Yeah.

And do you know what kind of trade his parents had or how they made their living in Poland?

Well, they used to have-- before they lost everything, it had something to do with some kind of liquor.

OK.

I don't know if it was just wine or whiskey or whatever. Yeah.

OK. And did he have brothers and sisters?

Yeah. Yeah. But I only knew two of his brothers. One lived in France, that was the youngest. And the older one lived in Poland, so I got to know him.

OK.

I didn't know any of the others.

So there were others, but you just didn't know of them.

There was also a sister who was shot when the Cossacks came to Poland. I really don't know the main story, how and what.

Yeah.

But she was killed by the Cossacks.

And were there any other siblings who came to America?

No.

OK. Do you remember the name of the brother in France?

Abraham, but the called him Adolf. [LAUGHS]

Oh, wow. Yeah. Abraham, but you know, named Adolf or called Adolf.

Yeah, because he lived in part of Germany and afterwards in France. So Adolf was the name.

And the other brother who I think you said stayed in Poland, what was his name?

I can't quite remember right now--

OK. That's OK.

--his name. I can't quite remember. He was an older-- a little bit older than my father.

OK. And do you know why, in particular, your father came to Essen and then to the small town that you were born in?

Well, he came to Essen-- and I think there was-- it must've been someone that he knew that went to Germany and was in Essen. And to Wetter, that was already a few years later when somebody-- how or why he exactly moved to Wetter, I don't know.

OK.

And he started a business. First it was-- you know, were no cars at that time yet. He had a horse and a carriage, and he used to pick up old iron, things that people threw out, you know, that had to do with metal works. And afterwards he started a different business, paper.

Yeah.

He had some people, friends that he met the next town over, in Witten, and they had the paper-- wholesale paper. And he worked with them a little while, and then he started his own in Wetter on the Ruhr.

In Wetter on the Ruhr.

Yep.

And do you know how your parents met?

They just met each other and fell in love with each other. Yeah.

So it was it through friends or was it at a party? Was it--

Well, how they saw each other the first time-- my mother said my grandfather had a bakery and a store, and the windows were washed by the children, by the girls, you know. And she was outside washing the windows, and he walked by. And it's funny. And she was on the ladder, you know, washing the window. And he walked by.

And all of a sudden she saw him and she said, oh, my goodness. I-- I hope she couldn't look up my skirt, you know.

[LAUGHTER]

And he was a stranger in town, you know. Because it was a small town, almost everybody knew each other.

[PHONE RINGING]

Let's cut.

OK. So you said that your mother had this fear this stranger walking by could look up her skirt as she's washing the windows.

Well, it wasn't fear. It was just something, you know, that-- they didn't use beautiful underwear at that time, you know.

[LAUGHS]

And she's up on the ladder, and somebody walks by and they're a stranger. Because they're a small town, they almost-- everybody knew each other, you know.

Knew each other. OK.

And he was a stranger, and dressed different than all the other young boys that age. So she kind of told me that story, that she felt, oh, my goodness. And then afterwards they were introduced by people there. And, eventually, they fell in love and they got married, even though everybody said you can't marry him, he's a Jew.

Yeah. So your mother was not.

No. There weren't any Jewish people-- many Jewish people. In a small town, not at all.

OK. So what kind of-- was your mother Lutheran or was she Catholic?

They weren't very-- no. They weren't very religious. Protestant.

OK. They were Protestant.

Yeah.

OK. Do you know whether or not her parents objected or whether they supported it or did--

Yeah. At first they supported it because he was so different than all the other boys his age. He already looked like business man. He was dressed differently, you know, like a business man.

He was a serious contender.

Yeah. Yeah.

OK.

Yeah.

OK. Did your mother have brothers and sisters?

Yeah.

How many did she have?

I have to count. [LAUGHS]

OK.

I think there was a brother, older brother, and an older sister, and then my mother, and then another brother, and another brother, and another sister, and another brother.

Ooh, a large family. Yeah. At that time, everybody had large families everywhere, not only in Germany. [LAUGHS]

Of course. Of course. What were their names, if you can remember?

The oldest brother was called Karl.

Karl Steinfort?

Yeah, the same as my grandfather. His name was Karl, too. Karl, Fritz, F-R-I-T-Z, Walter, he was the youngest, Willie. I think those were all the brothers.

And the girls?

Else, the oldest sister, and Klara, same as my name.

Ah, OK. And your mother was Helte.

Helte, right.

So you were named for one sister and your sister was named for the other?

I was surprised that didn't my father went along with that, yes. Right.

OK. Now, did your father speak German with an accent?

No.

No.

Not when I knew him, no.

OK. Do you think he had learned that even in Poland?

No.

No. I don't think so.

So he learned it as a teenager when he came--

A teenager when he went to Germany.

OK.

Yeah. Because he didn't hear any more Yiddish because he didn't even-- I don't think he spoke Polish, because his parents didn't spoke Polish.

OK.

They all spoke Yiddish with each other.

OK. And what are your first memories in Wetter? As a little girl, do you have any first memories that are in your mind that you could describe for us?

My first memory was, I think, I was about two years old and my mother was in the hospital. She was on the second floor in the hospital, and took me to the hospital. Oh, yeah.

Yeah?

Yeah.



They took you to the hospital?

Yeah. I couldn't go near her. She was upstairs and I was downstairs in the yard. And I was crying.

Yeah. Yeah.

And thought she had typhoid, but she didn't have typhoid, at all. But, at that time, the doctor that was in charge there, he was he was never a good doctor. And so I couldn't go and see-- couldn't go near her, you know. That was a terrible experience. That was--

Of course.

--my first--

Memory.

--remembrance as a young child. Yeah.

Describe a little bit for me your home that you grew up in, in Wetter.

We moved in-- maybe I was three years old already when we moved. I don't remember where we lived before. We moved to-- what was the name of the street? I think Bismarckstrasse, and it was in a house-- three apartments. The owners had a bakery.

This is a reminder.

Excuse us. Let's cut.

Drink water.

That was either Siri or Alexa.

Alexa.

Its Alexa.

Do you need some water?

She has some.

This is a reminder. Drink water.

She'll stop. Stop, Alexa.

That's the first time I've met Alexa.

[LAUGHTER]

OK.

Because I forget to drink water, so my son-in-law put that in to remind me.

OK. Where were we, now? We were talking about where you moved, on Bismarckstrasse.

Yeah. Yeah.

OK. Do you remember the address?

No.

No?

No. There weren't too many houses there. So the address is-- they had a big house. The bakery was downstairs, including a pastry shop. And the back was a large bakery where they did all the-- baked the breads and make the pastry and so on. And we lived on the second floor there for a long time.

And this was-- this is your grandfather's bakery?

No, no, no.

No, it was somebody else's.

Somebody else's, yeah. yeah.

OK. OK.

They had also some pastry for sale, which my grandfather didn't have. They only sold bread-- dark bread, the German bread, and some white bread. That's it.

Well, where did your mother buy bread from then, her own father or the pastry-- the bakery downstairs?

I don't know.

You don't know?

No.

OK.

I think we got it downstairs because they also baked fresh rolls every day, you know. So we just, I think, got them there.

You mentioned there weren't many Jewish people in--

Wetter, no.

--in Wetter. Were there any?

No.

No. So your father was the only one in town.

Yeah. Yeah.

And about how many people did the town have or the village have?

It's a very small town. I don't remember.

Would you think, I mean, approximately maybe 100 people?

Oh, more. It was big.

500 people?

I think it was bigger than that.

It was bigger than that.

Yeah.

OK. Did it have a town square?

No, not a real town square, as far as I remember. No.

OK. Did many people have automobiles?

No. At that time, nobody had automobiles when I was very young, when I was born.

OK.

As a matter of fact, my father bought one of the first automobiles that were on sale that you could buy. And I have a photograph of it, too.

Well, that must have been unusual, you know, an event.

Yeah, because he did very well. Once he had his business, he did very well. People liked him and he liked the Germans, too.

Describe a little bit the house on the-- your apartment living quarters on the inside. About how many rooms did you have?

Where we lived there-- a large kitchen, first of all, a very large kitchen, a living room, a dining room, an [NON-ENGLISH]. I don't know what you'd call that in English. It wasn't an office. It was more room a room-- elegant furniture. But it had a desk and bookcase and--

Like, a library? Like, a home library a little bit?

No. It was more like a room, but it was called [NON-ENGLISH].

A gentleman's room.

That's what you called it. Yeah that's what you called it in Germany, yeah.

But was it used only by a gentleman or was it something the whole family would use?

We could use-- anybody could use it. Yeah.

OK. OK.

But it was the most beautiful-- in there were the most beautiful furniture of the whole house.

OK.

I loved the furniture in there.

And did you have a radio?

Yeah. Yeah.

Did you have a telephone?

Yeah.

OK. How was the house heated?

That, I don't remember.

Would it have been cold?

It was not very cold there. I think it's very seldom that you needed heat on.

Did you have these sort of, like, tiled ovens in each room?

Yes. Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful, ovens. They were about this high, and they were made for marble tile, different colors.

So that could have been either wood or coal. You know, that's would use frequently.

I don't think they ever put them on.

Really?

[LAUGHS] I don't remember that they ever put them on.

So it never got that cold. That's nice.

No.

That's nice.

No. It was never that cold. Only the kitchen had a regular stove, and then was on, you know, because the cooking was done.

The stove, was it a gas stove?

No. There was no gas in the house. No.

OK.

You need briquettes, I think it was called in German, briquettes that were like this. So coal was uneven pieces.

That's right.

But briquettes were made like that.

And that's what you use to heat the stove.

Yeah. That's what they used. Yeah.

And I take it you had indoor plumbing.

Yes, sure. Yeah.

OK. OK. I ask these questions because it gives us a sense of what was the level of modernity at a certain time-- in a certain place in time.

In Germany it was-- it was quite different than in Poland. Yes.

Yes. Yes, it was quite different.

Yeah.

And so these modern conveniences was something that you had.

Yes. Yeah, yeah.

OK. Did you have public transportation in your village?

I don't know.

OK.

Because we didn't use it.

Yeah, so was everything within walking distance-- the shops, the schools?

Well, most of it was within walking distance.

OK.

I mean, there was a part of the town where we just never went, you know, but where we went or we had to go it was in walking distance.

And did you live in the center of town or on the outskirts?

No. It's not the outskirts, but it's part of the town where it wasn't that-- like a downtown, it wasn't the downtown.

It was more residential.

Yeah, yeah.

OK. Aside from the bakery, where the other shops on the street?

No.

OK. And your neighbors-- did you know your neighbors pretty well?

No.

Or not so much?

Not at all.

Not at all.

No.

For a small town--

Not at all. I don't know, maybe they knew we were Jewish. I don't know.

OK.

Or maybe that's the way people were. They just didn't know each other. There were no other children right around where we lived.

That was one of my questions.

Maybe that's why.

OK. Did your father have his own office that is either in the apartment or elsewhere?

It was someplace else, yes.

It was someplace else. And did he employ any people there?

Yeah. The business was near the railway station. There were the tracks of the railway, and there he built a large warehouse where the paper was that he sold, you know, and could be loaded up. And he had a truck where they could deliver it. He had built that, and the office was right in there, too. You walked into the office, and in back was all the paper, you know.

Did you visit him there?

Oh, yeah. It wasn't too far. We all could walk there.

OK.

It was near the railroad station-- near the railroad station. Un bahnhof, you call it in German.

That's right. Did your parents have a social circle of people coming to visit them and with whom--

Well, because my mother's relatives lived in Germany, lived quite close by, so they came to see us. And another family from the next town, they were Jewish, and they also came to see us.

So that was your social circle, was your mother's-- your mother's--

Family.

--brothers and sisters, her family.

Parents, yeah.

Parents. Did you know your grandparents?

Oh, yeah.

OK.

I didn't like my grandmother. [LAUGHS]

Why not?

She wasn't likeable.

[LAUGHTER]

There are such people.

I loved my grandfather. He was the best person in the world. Yeah.

And what kind of personality did he have?

How would I say? He was just likeable.

OK.

Just a plain likable human being.

Was he a friendly person?

Well, yeah, sure.

OK. Was he successful in his bakery?

Yeah.

OK.

It was a small town and he had his customers who came there. And it was enough, you know, to make a living. In the back there was, like, a garden where my grandmother and her daughters, whoever was yet still home, worked and had some vegetables, you know. And further in the back there was-- in Hebrew you call it a [NON-ENGLISH]. What do you call it in German? [NON-ENGLISH]

A stable for something.

Yes, for-- [LAUGHS] I can't think of-- I can't think of a simple word.

That's OK.

Well, you eat meat all the time. Chicken. Chickens.

Oh, so it's a--

A chicken coop. A large chicken coop.

A chicken coop.

Right. Yeah.

OK. And so you had fresh eggs and fresh chicken.

Yes. Well, we didn't kill the chickens too often.

Yeah.

That was my grandfather's. We didn't have that in our apartment.

Were there enough eggs to go around for everybody?

I have no idea.

[LAUGHTER]

They didn't eat eggs every day, no.

And what was your unlikable grandmother's first name?

She was seldom called by her name. I think Klara that was also her first name. But I never heard anybody call her that. Well, they called her Mutter or Mama or, you know.

Did she ever smile?

Yeah. She did smile. She was very skinny, very, very skinny. I think she had an operation on her ear once and she had, I remember, a big hole behind her ear.

Ooh.

But she could hear well. So I have no idea what that was exactly.

Did you have any favorite aunts or uncles of your mother's--

Yes. My oldest-- my mother's older sister, Else, was her name. I remember we all loved her. She was a wonderful person.

And did they have children?

No.

No.

No. They got married. She married someone, and they never had children. I think it was not the right husband for her, but at that time I didn't know, you know?

Yeah. Did any of your other aunts or uncles have children?

Yes. Her oldest brother, Uncle Karl, he had-- at that time we were the first grandchildren, my sister and I and my brother. There were no other grandchildren. And then her brother married and he had a son. And later on, the youngest sister married and she had children.

But not everybody.

No.



Not everyone did.

No.

OK. Did you travel much out of town?

Not at that time, no.

No.

No. Did you ever go on car rides with your father, since he had that car?

We went with my father and my mother to see his customers. Because you had to travel. You didn't get your orders on the phone. You had to go see your customers.

And so he would take you all along.

Sometimes he would take just one of us. Maybe I had the chance to go with him. We all wanted to go. Because when they took us to the stores we always got something. If it was a bakery or it was a-- whatever shop, you know, they always liked the children--

Of course.

--and gave us something. So we liked to go. But once we went to school we couldn't go anymore, you know.

So it was only when you were little.

When we were smaller.

Yeah.

I think I only went to first grade in Wetter.

Only to first grade.

Yeah. Then we had to move because he had to tear down the warehouse. Hitler was already there, so he had to tear down the warehouse, which he had built near the railroad tracks.

How old were you when that happened?

How old was I? Maybe eight, maybe seven, eight.

So that would have been in 1937, because you're born in 1929 and you're four years old when Hitler comes to power. Do you remember your parents talking about something like that?

No.

No.

No.

OK. Do you remember-- I mean, you then must have started school after he came to power.

Yeah. My mother kept me home for the first year. I should have gone to school. Because all of the sudden I got very

skinny. I lost all my baby fat, that you call. I was very chubby, you know. And I had nightmares all of a sudden, all kinds of nightmares. And so she held me back a year.

So I went the next year to school, and my brother then went to the same. And we both had the same teacher. And, also, my mother thought we would have another teacher that my oldest sister had, who was a woman. And she was fantastic.

But, unfortunately, we did not have her. We got that-- he was director of the school, you know, in charge. And he was the biggest anti-Semite, and the miserable person all together. But that was unlucky for us.

I didn't care. I wanted to learn. I always wanted to learn. My brother-- he didn't want to learn. And many times he had to go to the front. At that time they had these little sticks that they, you know, could use or send kids to the corner. They had to stand in the corner.

We had these desks, you know, like in every school. And I was a lefty. I wrote with my left hand. And every time the teacher went by he gave me a slap on my back. I never was hit at home, you know. And it was a shock, you know?

Did he mistreat all the children or was he somebody who was-- who was particularly--

That was the one class where I was in. They were all the same-- kind of the same age.

But did he treat all the children this way or particularly you and your brother?

I think my brother more than any other children, yeah.

Really?

I don't know if there was anybody else who wrote left. But I know when he walked by I every time got one on my back.

Yeah.

And I didn't care. I just wanted to learn, you know.

Yeah.

I still was one of the best pupils in his class. There was another boy and I, and he hated it that I was so good, you know.

[LAUGHS]

I remember at one time-- now, we were just in first grade. And he called me up and gave me a math-- nothing big, just numbers. Add up, add up, add up seven and to eight and to whatever-- and more and more. And you wanted me to say something wrong. But it didn't happen, so he gave up.

That's the teacher.

The teacher, yes. He was also not only the teacher of the school. He was the head of the school, the director, you call him.

The headmaster.

The headmaster, right.

Do you remember his name? [? Doimer, ?] I think.

[? Doimer? ?]

[? Doimer ?] was his last name, yeah. And I still hate myself because he still was alive after we came back after the war, that we couldn't-- we didn't do anything to really make him suffer for-- because he made us suffer. I don't know why, what happened that we didn't try to do something to make him suffer.

Yeah. Would you wipe a little bit on your eyes? That's right.

Yeah. Other one, too?

Yeah. And then let's try to keep the hands free. OK?

[LAUGHS]

What else did I want to ask?

We were talking about the school and the teacher.

And what about the children? How did they behave?

They were all fine.

They were normal.

They were all normal, yeah.

OK.

We were never ever called you dirty Jew-- never, ever, ever.

Do you think that even after Hitler came to power most of the people in the town continued to work with your father and like him and so on?

Yeah.

Yeah?

The Germans were not really anti-Semites. It's the Polish people who were anti-Semites, all of them with exceptions. But Germans were not normally anti-Semites. Hitler had just his own gang-- his whole gang, you know. Whoever was bad and liked to be above other people, they worked for him.

Ah. Where they're such people in Wetter?

I don't remember, no.

OK.

No, not when we lived there.

When your parents lived above that bakery, did they own the place or did they pay rent?

They paid rent. Nobody owned their apartment. Everybody who had an apartment had to rent from the owner.

OK, so they weren't owners.

No.

And your grandfather who had his bakery, did he own?

Yes, he owned his house and the bakery. Yeah.

Tell me a little bit about your parents' personalities-- your mother's personality and your father's personality.

They were both fantastic people and fantastic parents.

Well, was your mother, for example, outgoing or was she shy and reserved?

No, she was outgoing.

She was outgoing.

She grew up in that town, you know, so everybody knew her. I mean, not everybody but a lot of people knew each other.

And your father, was he a reserved person or was he also outgoing?

Outgoing. Everybody loved him. All his customers were Germans. There weren't any other Jews around, you know. All his customers-- many towns around Wetter, they had to go visit the stores in order to get orders.

They all bought from him except maybe the last year when they said, I think, Mr. Teichmann, it's better if you don't come in. Because they know-- our neighbors know you're Jewish. So that happened at the end, before we were sent out from Germany.

Well, tell me about the part where you were-- you were starting to explain that your father had to take down his own warehouse and you had to move. Let's go back to that. You were eight years old, you said, at that time?

I don't really know exactly what age I was.

That's OK. OK, but at any rate it wasn't at the very beginning. It was later on.

No, no, it wasn't the very beginning. I remember how many times we went to visit the warehouse. Because there was an office in front, and in the back was the warehouse. And the people who worked for him, they were very friendly. There were a few people who worked in the office.

You said you had to leave your apartment at one point. When did you have to move out from on top of the bakery, when you lived on top of the bakery?

When he had to tear his warehouse down. And he had to find another place where he could to keep all his--

Supplies, yeah.

--all the paper, all his stuff that was in the warehouse.

And was that for political reasons that he had to tear it down?

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. From then on, it was whatever happened was political reasons.

Your older sister, Else, did she have experiences in school that were also-- she was older, you see.

She's the only one who had experiences because she was Jewish. Yeah.

What were some of those?

In Germany you always had to-- what do you say, [NON-ENGLISH]-- gymnastics and things like that. And they didn't let her do it anymore. And she loved to do that, and she couldn't do that anymore. That was the year before we were sent out.

At home, when you listened to the radio--

I never listened to the radio, so I couldn't tell you much about it. I heard singing sometimes or music sometimes and that's it.

OK. OK. But, you know, the interesting thing is that you're young enough that you're only four years old when Hitler comes to power. So all of those formative years is during the time when he's already in control.

Yeah, but I didn't know. We didn't hear about it.

OK. Did you see Nazis in the street in Wetter, people in uniforms?

No. No.

Did you see the swastika many places?

No.

Really?

No.

Really? It wasn't in Wetter?

Not at that time, no.

OK. When did life start to change? I think it was after we left Germany already, we were sent out.

Well, tell me about that event then. What happened? What happened when you had to leave?

Let's see. First of all, we had to move to a different town because he had to tear the warehouse down. So he had to find a place where we could live and where there also was a warehouse close by. So that was a town about maybe 20 minutes away. And the warehouse was in the back yard, the large, large warehouse. And that's the place from where we were sent away.

How long did you live there?

Maybe 1 and 1/2 year.

Do you remember the street name?

No. I don't remember the street name.

And what was the name of the town?

Annen. Witten-Annen. Annen. It was a small town.

OK, Witten-Annen.

Yeah.

And was he able to continue his business?

Yeah. He still had the business. Yeah.

OK.

As I said, some people he couldn't go and my mother went to see them. Because he had to see the customers to get orders. It wasn't done by phone that somebody ordered something. You had to go see the customers.

Was that a solution for them-- for your parents for a while, that your father would not go but your mother would go?

Yeah. And we had to hire a chauffeur who drove the car, because my mother did not drive.

OK.

And, also, my father was sick. I forgot to tell that. He had appendix.

Appendicitis?

Appendicitis. And it was operated. And, as I mentioned, I think, the doctor-- he was not-- he was called a doctor, but he was not a doctor. So he was in the hospital a lot of times and it never really healed. Even during the war he always had the small hole in this belly. Yeah.

Had it burst? Had the appendix burst before he had the operation?

Yeah. He had the problems and then he had the operation. And the doctor was not-- he was a shyster. I don't know if you know what that means, a shyster.

A shyster.

Yeah.

[LAUGHTER]

Right.

OK. And did you have any warning at all that there would be a change that you would have to leave?

No. I wouldn't have known, no.

OK. So describe to me what happened when you were in this new home. You're there for a year and a half, and then what happens?

How did it happen that we had-- that we left? Sometimes I try to think what exactly happened. They came-- the police came. And they said to my father-- it was kind of in the evening after he came back from his customers, and we were at the dinner table. And policeman came in and apologized for it and he said, "Mr. Teichmann, you have to be over the German border by 12 o'clock."

And we were all in shock. And then they came back again, after maybe 15 or 20 minutes, and they said, "I'm sorry, Mr.

Teichmann, but we have to take you with us." So they took him. And all the Jewish people that came from-- were not German Jews, like Polish Jews, were taken at that night and put into a large prison, a bigger town away from us. And they took him, too.

And he didn't have German citizenship. He had Polish citizenship.

No, he had German. It didn't matter. He was still a Polish Jew. And he was a Jew, on top of it, you know?

OK.

It didn't matter. Yes, he was a-- had a German citizenship because he had lived in Germany since he was 17 years.

Yeah. Yeah.

Anyhow, so they took him. And they told my mother that she can-- we can come and see him the next day at this and this prison. So that's how it all started. And we went to see him the next day. And somehow things kind of-- I don't really remember how did it really happen that we got on the train and were sent to Poland, you know.

Do you remember packing?

No, no. I don't remember. I remember my mother was packing and hiding money in all kinds of places, you know.

Was there ever any question or was there the possibility that she didn't have to go because she was German?

Yes. They said we did not have to go. She didn't have to go and we didn't have to go.

Uh-huh.

But we wanted to stay together as a family. We were a very close family.

What about your mother's brothers and sisters? When things started to get difficult for the Jews, were they still the same in the way they--

They were still the same. There was one brother, the youngest one, who was a little bit influenced, you know. And maybe my grandmother, too, but not that she really let it out on us, but she definitely believed in Hitler, you know. Not my grandfather, but she did.

I see. I see. And were there any friends from your older village, the first one, who let's say became adherents, who joined the party or believed in the party?

Yeah, they were. Where we first-- the house that had the bakery, they were very-- the women that owned it, that run it, were very friendly. We called them [NON-ENGLISH]. But their brother was different. He became a Nazi, but he did not live there. He had moved away and had gotten married. But when he came to visit he wore a [NON-ENGLISH]. You know, they had the--

He wore the swastika.

The swastika, right.

But we didn't really have much to do with him because he was not there. He didn't live there.

And I take it that you and your brother and your sister and your mother had German citizenship.

We were all German.

German. Yeah.

Right. My father had German citizenship, too.

OK. So there was really no legal basis for any of it.

For my father, he was still born in Poland. Yes. But if we wanted to stay as a family we could have stayed. We had to go with him.

Did your mother-- did anyone suggest to your mother that she divorce your father?

Not at that time, no.

OK.

No.

OK. Do you remember the journey?

No. I don't remember anything of that.

Nothing. How old were you when you left?

Good question. Don't know. [LAUGHS] I have to figure.

Was it before Kristallnacht?

Yeah. We were not there during Kristallnacht. Maybe it was the year of the Kristallnacht, but we were sent away before. We were not there during the Kristallnacht.

I believe that was in '38, in November '38, I believe it was. But it I might be wrong. It might have been '39.

I think it was '38.

Yeah. I think Kristallnacht was '38 because the war starts in September '39.

Yeah. Yeah. So we left before the Kristallnacht.

OK. Do you remember the time of year when you left?

Well, it must've been still late summer or something.

OK. OK. So it wasn't during school.

I don't know.

OK. OK.

The vacation were a different time in Germany than they are here, you know. So your father-- how long was he in this prison for?

I don't remember. Not too long because we were sent away from there.



And you all were together when you left.

Yeah.

So it was-- that first rule that he had to be across the border by midnight was--

That was different. That changed. Then he took him. They took him. And forget about our car, you know.

Your car was gone. You didn't go--

The car was there where we used to live at that time, you know. We couldn't use the car anymore.

So you went by train.

Oh, yeah. We were all supposed to meet him where they had him in prison. And from there we took a train. Yeah.

And you ended up where?

Well, first we-- the train, I think, went to Posen, the border of Germany and Poland. I think we stayed there overnight and then we were-- continued to Ostrowiec, where my father's parents lived.

And had you ever visited Ostrowiec before?

No. No.

When you went into Poland, how did the place look to you? Did it look very different than Germany?

It looked like day and night. Yes, it looked very different. It was disgusting. [LAUGHS]

Really?

Yeah. Where my grandparents lived, as I said, my father bought it for them. Because they had lost everything. So he bought them that piece of property, which was attached room by room. It wasn't, like, a house like that.

OK.

And the part that belonged to them was three rooms, you know. And when we get to Poland, that's where we moved in.

All five of you.

Yeah. Well, one room was gigantic. It was as long as the house, from here to the end.

OK.

And we had that room, and we changed it into smaller places. Yeah. And then we had to-- my father, by the way, had electricity put in. You know, there was no electricity in the house. But we couldn't do anything about the water. Water had to be delivered, you know.

Did you have a well in the yard or--

No, no, no. As I said, it had to be delivered.

Wow.

OK? There were water carriers who made the money that way. They wore a thing and pails on each side and they brought the water.

Was this Ostrowiec, was it a small shtetl or was it a larger town? What was it?

It was a-- I think it was a city but still far behind in everything, you know?

Yeah. Yeah.

Sure, there were people. We had friends. And they had electricity and they had water. They lived in different places.

In Ostrowiec.

Yeah.

OK. But where your grandparents lived, then, it was undeveloped in that way.

Yeah. It was a completely Jewish section, and a lot of poor Jewish people. Most Jewish people lived in Poland, and most of them were poor.

Yeah.

Very poor. They lived in one room with their whole family.

And there was then no electricity until your father had an installed.

Yeah.

There was no plumbing because--

No. Never any plumbing.

OK. How was that place heated?

There were tile-- tile-- big--

Ovens.

--tile ovens. Right. Right.

Were the roads paved?

Not paved, no. They had stones, you know, that made the road.

Was there anybody else who was living with your grandparents when you came there?

My cousin, yeah, lived with them. He had lost his parents and lived with his grandparents.

And what was his name?

Max Teichmann.

Max.

The same last name.

Max Teichmann?

Yeah.

And about how old was he in relation to you?

I think it was about 10 years older than I.

Ah, OK. So he was, like, a young man or a older teenager.

Oh, yeah. He was a young man, and I hated him.

[LAUGHTER]

Really?

Yeah.

Why? Did he tease you or something?

No. When we first got there and arrived at the station, you know, you didn't have cars. You had and horse and behind a buggy, you know. A [NON-ENGLISH], it was called. And we all-- the five of us, the family with the suitcases, were all in that one [NON-ENGLISH], and he was standing on the side.

There was, like, the step to get in. And the [NON-ENGLISH] was a little leaning to the side. And I was screaming for him to get off because it was going to tip over. Anyhow, I was very emotional always, you know. But he didn't get off and he assured me all the time it's not going to tip over. It's not going to tip over. But I hated them from then on, you know. Anyhow, maybe I would have hated-- disliked him anyhow, I don't know.

How did you communicate with your grandparents and with him?

Well, they only spoke Yiddish. Yiddish is very much like German. It's just a little different. So we could communicate with them.

OK. Did you end up learning some Yiddish?

Oh, yes. Yes. Maybe I still remember now a little. But I never speak it. Yeah.

How did they react to the fact that your mother wasn't Jewish?

There was no reaction at all. My grandmother loved my mother, and my mother became Jewish. We all became Jewish when my mother married my father.

Oh, so she converted?

Oh, yeah. Yeah. We all were brought up to be Jewish. Yeah.

Did you have-- go to religious services?

Yeah. But it wasn't in Wetter. We had to drive to the next town where there were some more Jewish people and there was a temple. Yeah.

And did you go often, on a regular basis?

No. No.

No, OK. OK. I had misunderstood or made an assumption that was incorrect. I thought that your mother stayed Protestant.

No.

OK.

No. She became Jewish and we became Jewish. Yeah.

And what was your father's mother's name?

Rachel.

Rachel.

Yeah.

And do you know what her maiden name would have been?

Don't remember now, no.

OK.

Fuchs. Yes.

Fuchs.

Her maiden name was Fuchs. Yeah.

Fuchs.

Yeah.

And your grandfather's name-- what was his name?

Tajchmann. Oh, his first name, you mean?

Mm-hmm.

Haskell.

Haskell.

Yeah.

OK. And any of your father's siblings live around their parents?

No.

Where did they all live?

Well, I only remember an older brother who lived in the next town.

OK.

We saw him maybe twice. We didn't seem too often. We know he didn't have children. He married once and he didn't have children, so he divorced the wife because he thought it was her fault. And he married again and he didn't have children. So it wasn't-- wasn't the women's fault. And his youngest brother lived in-- I think I said--

France.

France, right.

Yes. Yes. And the sister had been shot during the Cossack time.

Yeah. And I don't remember that I ever met any other brothers.

Were there other Germans-- German Jews who were in Ostrowiec, too, who had been thrown out like your family was?

Much, much later. Much later.

Much later.

Yeah.

So you were amongst the first.

Oh, yes. Yeah.

Your family was amongst the first.

Yeah.

And was there any reaction on the Polish side?

Jewish people didn't have much to do with the Polish people.

OK. During your time there, did you have any interaction?

Yeah.

Yeah? As a child?

Yeah.

Did you go to school?

No. My mother didn't let us go to school. Everybody had lice. And she was afraid we might get sick, so we did not go to school. My father had to hire tutors for us, you know, from high school that finished high school. Yeah.

And was he able-- it sounds like he still had some money that he was able to take with him that he would-- he could afford to do that, to also have electricity installed.

Well, it didn't-- all those things didn't cost much money at that time.

And did he continue working?

I don't know exactly how in the beginning he-- we made-- got some money in. I remember the time that his friends came to our house and they played cards. And they paid him money for being able to sit there and play, use the place as a-- you know.

And then there's-- Jewish people started some kind of a club where people went, and my mother used to cook the meals there. So they're paid as for the meals. So we got a little money. That was before Hitler came in. Yeah.

You say that there was this plot of land and these separate rooms that were built on that land. And your grandparents had three of them. And you moved into one of those three.

Yeah.

In that yard, was there anything--

We don't call it a yard. No.

OK.

No. It wasn't just the bank-- whatever you call it. The dirty water was spilled. There was a big thing, and then there was a big-- what do you call it? A hole built where you throw all the--

Trash?

--trash in, yeah. And then, all the way back, there were some outhouses.

It sounds ugly.

Oh, very, very ugly. I don't know. My mother, she never, ever complained. Still today I cannot-- I cannot understand. She never, ever complained from such a change, you know.

Yeah. Because if they were quite well-to-do when you lived in Germany--

We were very well-to-do, yeah, in comparison to other people. Yeah.

And then you're thrown into this situation.

Yeah. And she never complained. All she tried to do is keep us alive, you know.

OK.

Every night we were checked if we had lice, you know, that somehow we got someplace. And then she bought a big metal--

Kettle? Not kettle, like, a bathtub. You know, like--

A metal bathtub.

Yeah, so that we could take a bath. The water had to be heated someplace, and then we took a bath one after another. So that's whatever she could do to keep us alive, you know. And she didn't want us to go to the outhouses. So she had a carpenter called who built a box. And inside the box she put a big pail. And that's where we had to go. And then she took it-- took it out, you know. She was a-- yeah. She was an amazing woman.

Did their personalities change much after this, your parents?

Well, my father, he was in concentration camps, you know. I don't know if you know. And when he came back alive they were back together, my mother and my father and the children. We came back as a family. And he never, as I remember, had a temper before that he screamed or yelled. But at that time, when he came back, yes he did. Especially with my brother.

Mm-hmm. But this is after Germany--

After the war.

Yeah. After Germany invades Poland and--

It was after the war, again.

After the war.

Yeah. After we got together, after the war was over. No more Hitler. Yeah.

We'll come to all of these things. Right now I'm still in that year-- those years between the time you're in Poland, in the late 1930s, '38, and up until when war is declared in '39, September 1, '39.

Yeah, yeah.

So I asked you before if you had any interaction with Poles and you said yes. But it wasn't through school because your mother didn't allow you or your father didn't allow you to go to school.

No.

So what kind of interaction was this?

Well, in the beginning we didn't have interaction with the Polish people. There were only Jewish people. But then, the Jewish-- when Hitler came, which wasn't very much later, all the Jewish people we're sent away. And we were lucky we did not-- were not sent away. Because my father had left. He did not live with us anymore because the Germans deported one city after another, not all of Poland at once, but one city after another.

And so you could hear what was going on. And when he realized that if we stayed together we might all be sent away, he left and worked some someplace in a German factory, as Jewish people worked as slave laborers at the time. So when the advocation came, all the Jews had to go to the marketplace. And, as I said, my grandmother she still lived. And she came to the door and said, I have to go to the marketplace. And we have no idea how she died.

But since my father didn't live with us-- and my grandfather, my mother's father, had visited us a year before, so the Germans knew that my mother is German and that she has a German family in Germany. So they left us alone. They didn't send us away. And, as I said, my father wasn't with us because we heard that there was a family in two towns over, the same like we. And the whole family was sent away. Because the father was there, the children were there, and the mother was there and they were all sent away.

So my father decided to leave. That would give us a chance to survive. And it did. So where was I?

Well, I was asking what kind of interaction did you have with Poles. Because it didn't-- if you lived in a Jewish community--

Well, it was a Polish town, but most people in the area were Jewish, even though of across the street was a fancier house

and it was Polish. Polish people lived there.

OK.

But eventually we also had Polish friends. Else, who was older, also had friends. And eventually all Jewish people were sent away and we stayed behind. They left us.

OK. I'm going to go backward. I'm going to step back a little bit chronologically. So let's say it was '37 or '38 that you get to Poland. You're in this house, well, sort of a--

Not '37, '38.

'38.

Or maybe even later.

Maybe even later, you think.

Well, I think a year we lived there and then Hitler came.

OK. So that would have been September 1, 1939. Do you remember-- by that point you're 10 years old. Do you remember discussions at home about whether there will be a war or there won't be a war, whether people felt something? What kind of-- no, you didn't?

We didn't really listen, no.

OK. What kind of conversation would be going on in the family?

We wouldn't be there if they had conversations about something.

OK.

So we didn't know.

OK. What about-- how did you experience the beginning of the war? Do you remember where you were?

Yeah, the same house. The same place.

OK. By this point did you have a radio there?

No.

No radio.

No. No radio.

No news.

No.

OK. I don't know how the news traveled, but somehow-- news somehow eventually came around, you know. Yeah. Some people had a radio but not many.

And do you remember hearing about, OK, the war has started, they've invaded Poland?



Yeah. Well, all of a sudden there was-- there were Germans there, you know.

OK.

And they called my father to translate, you know, from Polish to German in the beginning. And slowly it got worse and worse, and then all the Jews were sent out and were deported.

Including your grandmother.

Yeah. Well, she had to walk. All Jewish people had to walk to the marketplace.

What about your grandfather?

He had died normally, a normal death, before.

After you had arrived?

Yeah. Yeah. Shortly after we had arrived.

So then it was just your grandmother and Max and you--

Yeah.

--as a family.

Yeah. And did you know where your father had gone to be a laborer, to be a slave laborer?

Yeah. At first he worked in a factory. I think it was partly Swiss and German. And we still could see him. It wasn't far away from the town, and we could go and visit him.

And then, after a while, we didn't hear from him anymore. They had transferred the Jewish people to another place. And from then on we didn't hear anything anymore.

And you all stayed in that same place.

Yeah.

You never moved from there.

Not at that time, no. We lived in the same place. Yeah.

And so when the evacuation of all of the other Jews in the neighborhood happened and you stayed, did anything change after that? It sounds like it was very empty.

It was empty. And it was silent that day that all Jews had to leave. And you didn't hear anything except once in a while a shot. And then, all of the sudden-- there were shudders, you know, big wooden shutters that you pulled in from the outside and you put hooks on. But there's always some room you could look through. And that day we were in the house there, shuttered in, you know, it was very silent outside.

As I said, all Jewish people had to go to the marketplace, and then it was very quiet all over. And all of a sudden I hear a little boy saying, [NON-ENGLISH]. That means-- do you know what that means?

Tell me.

And then there was a German. And the boy was all by himself, nobody else. It was quiet. Just he came down the street and said [NON-ENGLISH]. So there was a German there. And all of a sudden there's a shot. He killed the little boy. [CRYING] And I-- I saw it.

Aw.

Because I looked-- I looked out through the shutters when I heard the little boy. And the German shot him. And I saw it. And I couldn't do anything. I couldn't do anything. Never could take revenge. It's the only time that I saw somebody being shot.

Tell us, what was the little boy saying?

I forgot his name.

So you knew him?

Yeah. Yeah. He was about our age, maybe a little young-- or maybe half a year younger or so.

And what was he saying as he was walking down the--

I didn't know. I didn't know. I didn't know. [NON-ENGLISH]. I didn't know. All Jews had to go to the marketplace.

And he didn't know he had to go to the--

And he said I didn't know. Yeah.

And it didn't matter.

Didn't matter, no. To Germans, the Jews were like rats. You can kill them any time, anywhere.

Did you ever see anything like that again?

No. No. In movies, yeah.

Yeah. Well, movies is different.

Yeah. No, I never saw anything like that, that a human being got shot. No.

Did your father ever come back from the factories where he was sent, where he first went and then was sent?

In the beginning he came back twice because it wasn't very far away. And then he didn't dare to come anymore. And eventually they sent them to other places, you know.

But you said earlier he was in concentration camps.

Yeah, from there on--

From there on concentration camps.

--they sent him to concentration camps. That was in the beginning that he was-- the Jews were all working someplace for someone as slave laborers or had to go to the marketplace and were all gone, you know.

And did you have any idea where he might be during this time? This is already after Germany occupies Poland.

Yeah. Naturally. Who else would do that?

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, did you have any idea where he was?

In the beginning?

No, no. Later--

No.

--when he's sent to concentration camps.

No. We had no idea. From then on, when they sent him from that factory away, we had no idea anymore where he was or if he is alive or not.

I'm going to have to turn off up there.

OK. Can we do that for a second? Yeah.

Yeah.

OK. OK. To make it clear-- so there-- when some people are going to be listening to your interview in the future and they hear that someone has to go to the marketplace, what does that mean? What happened at that marketplace to all those who were told they had to go there?

They were only Jewish people who were going to the marketplace. From there on, the ones that weren't shot arrived at the marketplace. Because, as I said, it was so quiet all over except we heard a shot every once in a while.

OK.

So we don't know if my grandfather was shot right at the marketplace or if she was transported down to the-- by car, by trucks to the railroad station, and from there they were put into wagons. I think you know about that, right?

But some others may not. So that's why I want to know, you know, when you say someone goes to a marketplace, what happened to all those Jews who gathered there? What happened to them afterwards? So you're saying they were either shot--

They were transported to the-- the ones that weren't killed at the marketplace were transported to the railroad station and put into wagons where usually animals are transported.

Cattle wagons.

Cattle wagons, right. And from there on where they were sent we did not know.

OK. But they go away and they never come back.

They never come back, right.

OK. OK. So most likely they were sent to concentration camps.

Yes. The ones that didn't die in the carriages, right.

Yeah.

There was no food. There was no where they could relieve themselves. It was just like animals are sent away.

Yeah.

How old were you when all this happened?

How old was I? I don't know exactly. 10, 11, maybe.

Do you think you were-- then that would have been soon after the war starts, because you were 10 years old when the war starts.

I think it was in '42.

So then you would have been about 12 or 13.

Yeah. Yeah.

OK. OK.

Yeah.

And how does your mother then make do? How does she keep you all together? How does she feed you after that?

My mother started to travel to Warsaw and buy something and then sell it when she came back and so on. She tried to do the best she could. It was a different time then, you know. She might have found something that she could buy in Warsaw, and when she came back she could sell it for a little more.

Was Warsaw far away?

I don't know exactly how far.

Did you ever go with her?

No. I never was in Warsaw, no.

You mentioned that your German grandfather came to visit--

Yeah.

--pretty early on.

Yeah.

Let me take that.

Oh, yeah. I know.

[LAUGHTER]

That he came to visit-- and was there any communication from him or from other aunts and uncles in Germany during this time?

Yeah. Yeah. We would hear from them.

Were they sending you parcels?

My aunt, Tanta Else, she usually was the one who might send a parcel.

OK. OK. But from the others not so much?

No. No.

OK. And you said-- when I asked you earlier that-- was it brought up to your mother that she could divorce your father when you left Germany, you said--

I don't know.

--not at that time.

I didn't hear about that, no.

OK. Was that question ever raised for her later?

Yeah.

By whom?

That was in Poland. Somebody came to work in a store with-- who she knew from before, from Germany. And he suggested that it's a better idea to get divorced. I mean, just not officially, but just show that they are divorced, you know. Because there's a Jewish-- you know, a Jewish wedding, too.

Sure.

So that's what she did eventually.

Oh, she did do that.

Yeah. Yeah.

She did do that. OK.

Yeah.

But this wasn't like an official person. This was just someone that she knew who ended up in Ostrowiec.

Yeah. Yeah.

OK, who said it as a suggestion.

Who became an official in Ostrowiec, yes, who had some kind of office there. Yeah.

OK. OK. Did that help things for her?

I don't really know. We weren't killed. We were all alive, right? We came out all alive.

So what did you do during these years? I mean, your father's gone away. Your mother has to try to make ends meet somehow or other. There is no school that you go to.

No. I just read all the time.

You read?

I read whatever I could get a hold of that was written in German.

Did you ever learn Polish?

Yeah. I learned to speak Polish, eventually to read, too. But I never could write Polish.

And your sister, what did she do? She was older. Did she go to work or something?

She used to work in the German office, the one that-- it was an office who tried to supply the Jewish people to where they were called to work.

So, like, an [NON-ENGLISH].

Yes. Yeah. Yeah.

A labor office.

Yeah. Yeah.

OK.

So she worked there.

OK. And did she have any experiences there that she would talk about when she came home? No?

No.

No. And your younger brother then was with you, I would take it.

Yeah. Yeah.

And you both stayed in that one room, that one large room that you had portioned off?

Yeah. We went out sometimes. He looked very much German, my brother.

So he was safe.

Yeah. Yeah.

OK.

Except if they would have pulled his pants down he would not have been safe anymore. [LAUGHS]

Ah, OK. OK.

But he looked very much German.

OK. Did you ever walk around town in the non-Jewish sections and see the center of the city and--

Oh, yeah. Sure.

Did you go-- was there a cinema in--

There was a cinema. And in the beginning, my cousin, this--

Max?

--cousin who picked us up, took me to the cinema. Right.

OK. And had Max left with your grandmother?

No. Just like my father, he had to work, you know, in German places.

Did he survive the war?

He survived the war. Yeah.

OK. Then tell me, how did life go on during these years-- 1942, '43, '44?

I was a teenager and I was just thinking of finding a boy that I can fall in love with.

Even during this time?

I didn't think of bad things then. No.

OK.

I think I always was a person who hoped for the better. What do you call people like that?

Optimist.

I wasn't a pessimist.

You were an optimist.

I was an optimist, always things have to get better.

OK. And is there anything else from those years that you'd like to share that happened? Because it's a time of both emptiness, that is no one else is there. Did anyone move into those houses that the Jews were taken from?

Yes. Yes. Wherever the Jews were taken from, the Polish people moved in.

I see.

Yeah. I told you-- I think I told before, the Polish were big anti-Semites.

You did say that.

Much worse than the German population.

But you see, one of the things I'm trying to get at is what showed that to you. What experiences that you had-- did you have that brings you to that point of view?

Well, I think if it would have been a population of Poles that would love-- that would accept the Jews as themselves, not as you're a Jew, you know.

You're different.

They would have had more protection. Because there weren't as many Jews said they were Poles, but the Poles themselves hated the Jews. So they helped the Germans more than if it would have been the other way around. I think you probably heard of Denmark.

Yes, of course.

How it was there.

Yeah.

Not in Poland.

What did I want to ask? Did you hear such expressions from the Poles when they would move into these houses?

Did I move?

No, no, no. Did you hear Poles say such things when they moved into the vacated--

No. They didn't talk about those things, no, that they took over Jewish places and Jewish things. No.

OK. OK, let's go on.

May I go to the restroom?

Of course. Let's cut.