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OK, good afternoon. This is now June 29, 2020. And we are picking up our interview that we had last week. I believe it was on the 26th or the 25th of June. I don't remember exactly the date. And it is with Peter Gorog.

We were at the point where your mother had found out from certain people that there were some safe houses that Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat, had organized for Jews in Budapest. And you had just gotten to this place. And I believe you were going to describe it for me. And one of the final comments that you had before we ended for our first session last week was that this was the first time that you had playmates being a young child. So I want to learn and hear about all of these things.

Here is what I remember of. And some of the things are coming from my mother's reminiscences when she told me the whole story. We lived in this apartment. I know that the only time we were able to-- well, actually, we were not able to go out to the street at all.

My mother and the grown ups had I think, once a day, a couple of hours when the curfew was lifted. And people could leave these protected houses to made the necessary shoppings and whatever official things they had to do. Meantime, we children, we played mostly inside, because it was fall. The weather wasn't really very conducive. But we played outside many times.

The place we played or games we played were mostly either thieves and police, or Indians and cowboys. We were little boys. And that was our interest that time. And we didn't have a lot of toys.

We couldn't take anything from home, other than the absolutely necessary things. So we invented toys. We used broomsticks as rifles and [? pool ?] sticks as revolvers or pistols. And we, again, played with those makeshift toys.

If you weren't allowed to go out, and you said you played outside, what was the physical place where you played outside? Was it a courtyard or something?

Correct. In the houses, apartment has-- most of the houses-- the apartment that I was born in and raised had an inner court, which was usually used for-- people took their dogs down to the court. And the vacuum cleaner wasn't invented. So they used this instrument as a kind of beating the rugs, and the dust came out. That was one thing I remembered. And for this one, there was a special rack people could put their rugs on.

Also, there were room enough for us to run around and play soccer, or whatever. And we could play with balls. And this is where, really, we teased each other and pretending that we practically kill each other by aiming the broomstick at each other.

Now, did Raoul Wallenberg rent only the apartment, or the entire building? What was actually physically considered the safe place, the safe house?

He bought up the whole building, 32 or 33 of them in Budapest. So the whole building belonged to the Swedish embassy. And by international laws, it was protected from the local authorities who entered into those houses, and arrest people, and take away. So this is why they were called protected houses.

And did your mother tell you later what month you actually came to that apartment, came to that safe house?

Sorry. I do not have a date exactly.

That's OK. That's OK.

But I do know that we stayed there only a few weeks. It could be four weeks. It could be five weeks. I don't know exactly.

But I do know, when we had to leave, we had to leave when, October 15, the Hungarian far-right party, the Arrow

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Cross, took over the government. And that's when the Arrow Cross police-- soldiers, or whatever they're called, the people in uniform. But they weren't an official organization of the government. But they came into these houses and took the Jews away.

So in other words, they didn't pay attention to whether they're protected or not. It doesn't mean anything. It doesn't mean anything to them that it belongs to the Swedish government, and there are international standards and rules, regulations that govern such properties. They cross those thresholds and started rounding people up. Is this the correct thing? Is this the right thing?

That's the correct explanation, yes.

OK. So what happened? Do you remember leaving the safe house?

I do remember leaving the safe house. And I don't remember exactly why we were allowed to leave, because most of the people were escorted out from their houses by the Arrow Cross. And some of them were taken to the ghetto. And unfortunately, others were taken to the Danube, where they were shot.

My mom told me the story when the Arrow Cross people, two or three young thugs, came to her apartment. One of them recognized me, because while we're playing in the inner court, these Nazi thugs who, quote, unquote, "guarded" the buildings-- they were there also. And they were laughing at us, seeing these little Jewish boys shooting at each other while they had the yellow Star of David on their clothes.

So it went as far-- and I remembered that because, again, I was a little boy and fascinated by weapons-- that they fortunately unloaded their rifles and revolvers. And they gave us the real thing. And so we were so excited to have a real rifle or revolver in our hands. And obviously, that was an entertainment for those Nazis who were watching us and "guarding" us, quote, unquote.

So you're--

So--

These are all Hungarians though, right? Or were they Germans?

Yeah, they were Hungarians. And they were young people, because all the people over 18 were already recruited in the Hungarian army. And so when they came to an apartment-- and again, that's my mom saying or telling me that one of these young guys recognized me. And he told the rest of the team that, leave this apartment alone, because I know little Peter, and let's go to the next apartment.

Oh, wow.

So that was really-- you can call it divine intervention, or just sheer luck. But we were not taken away, out from our apartment. And then the Nazis left. We left also, because we knew that the next time another group of Nazis would come, and they would not recognize me and wouldn't let us stay. So that's when we left the protected house.

Which was now no longer protected.

Correct.

Have you ever gone back there?

I went back. But unfortunately, I don't remember exactly which house was ours, because most of these apartments were- - how to say-- a nice part of the city where that was the Jewish quarter where the cooler Jewish families lived around the Great Synagogue of Budapest where, actually, the ghetto was set up. And there was another part of the city close to the Danube River and just across the Margaret Island, which is a beautiful island in the middle of the Danube River.

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And across the way from the Pest side of Budapest, that's where most called the middle, upper-middle class Jews lived. And so when these apartment houses were bought up, many of the Jewish families already lived in those houses. And so that was the 13th district of Budapest. It's called--

So you know the district it was in.

Yes. That was the-- well, I think. Now I'm a little bit hesitant to say, because when I grew up, it belonged to the 13th district. But then, before the war, it might have been part of the fifth district.

Anyway, it had a name. It was called LipÃ³tvÃ¡ros. And so, whatever the number is, it was called LipÃ³tvÃ¡ros.

And did you ever see Raoul Wallenberg?

No. No. I, personally, didn't see. Neither did my mom. He didn't-- as far as I know, at least. I have no information of him visiting these houses.

But again, the Swedish embassy had a group of people who took care of the houses. As far as I know, Raoul Wallenberg was very busy to save Jews in another way. Namely, he personally went to the railway station of Budapest where those people who were taken out from the ghettos, taken out from the so-called Yellow-Star houses, they were taken either to railway station-- which was in the eighth district, JÃ³zsefvÃ¡ros-- or to brickyard, which was in the third district of Budapest.

And the brickyard-- because of the things they did, the raw material for the bricks and the bricks itself were transported by rail. So there was a railway connection to the Hungarian railway system. And unfortunately, many of the Jews who were taken from this brickyard weren't taken there by the Hungarian police.

As far as I know, there was an announcement in the Hungarian radio. And there were posters on the streets announcing or telling that every Jewish citizen should show up in that brickyard at a certain time. And many of the Jews, being law-abiding citizens, went voluntarily there. And of course, there were many of them who were escorted by either the Nazis, the SS who were in Budapest, and Adolf Eichmann who coordinated the deportation of the Hungarian Jews. But when we left the protected house, we went to the Budapest ghetto.

Why?

Because it still seemed to be a safe place, in a way. The Hungarian government, at one point-- I don't remember the exact date-- stopped the deportation of Hungarian Jews. So after more than 400,000 Hungarian Jews from the countryside were already deported, sometimes in the summer of '44 or early fall, the Hungarian government said, that's enough, no more Jews will be deported.

Even though--

And later on-- oh, go ahead.

Even though it was a far-right government? Even though--

Now, here is the thing. That was happening until October 15, when the Arrow Cross took over government with the help of the Germans. And that time, I don't think that the deportation continued.

However, there was a so-called death march of the Hungarian Jews who, by the order of the Hungarian government and maybe under the pressure of the Nazis, all the Jews who were already arrested to walk, practically walking towards the--that was the infamous death march from Budapest to Austria where the Germans took over the Hungarians and put them, I believe, in Mauthausen and Dachau. Many of the people, especially the elderly, died on their way to Austria, because that was November and December, 1944. And it was a harsh winter. And many people were just too weak to

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march.

So can one surmise. Is it wrong to-- tell me whether the thought that comes into my mind is a misinterpretation or not. But even though the deportations to Auschwitz are halted when the Arrow Cross party gains control of the government, there still is an effort to get rid of the Jews. And so the alternative is this death march to Austria, where then the Germans take over, as far as the concentration camps that people will be taken to. Is this a correct understanding?

Yeah, that's the correct understanding. That's what happened.

OK. But you and your mother are in the ghetto. So did you leave the safe house within days of this party taking over government? Did you leave a few weeks later? Do you know whether it was November that you got to the ghetto?

I think we leaved either the same day or within a couple of days because, again, my mom couldn't risk that another group of Nazis would come back and would be not as forgiving as-- or we weren't as lucky as the first time around. And also, we already had my grandparents, and both my aunts, and my cousin living in the ghetto just by default, because their address where they lived even before the war was within the boundaries of the Budapest ghetto.

Oh, I see. So you actually-- you went to live with them. And they just happened to have their home in the ghetto.

Correct.

OK. And what kind of a home did they have? Was it a single-family house? Or was it an apartment again?

It was an apartment building. I can't recall-- maybe two, three, or four stories high. I do remember that there was no elevator. And we lived on the second floor. And--

Which would be the third floor in the United States.

No, sorry. It's the second floor in the United States. It's the first floor in Budapest.

OK. OK. And were there other strange people living in the house, too? Or were--

No strange people.

Strangers to your family. I didn't mean strange people, as they were weird.

Yeah, I understand. No, as far as I know. Again, my grandparents were there, and my Aunt [? Ibi, ?] and Aunt Gabriela, and my cousin Judit.

So it wasn't like their apartment was split up, so one family per room, like the safe house had been.

Well, what happened was, really, it was what you would call a one-bedroom apartment. There was a living room. And there was a bedroom. And there were beds in the living room and the bedroom. And there was a small room, which either was a pantry room. I think that's what you would call.

It was a very small apartment. I knew the apartment, because when I grew up in Budapest, one of my aunts stayed in that apartment for the rest of her life, actually. And so we were visiting her many time. And when she got married after the war, she had a child. And so I have a good memory of the apartment-- a memory of the apartment, definitely.

But it was irrelevant. Not irrelevant-- it was relevant that that was an apartment. But by that time, we spent most of the time during the day specifically in the basement of the house, because Budapest was bombed by the Allied Forces, and I assume the Russians also. The Russians were actually much closer than America. And so it was bombed by the Soviet Red Army.

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And we had no safe place, designated air-raid shelters. The basement of the buildings, which were originally used for storing the wood and the coal, which were used by people during the winter to heat their home-- there were no central heating. So every apartment had their own stove and furnaces.

And the coal and the wood they used for fuel were stored in this basement, which was really just a dirt floor. It wasn't even a cement floor, just dirt floor. And there were stalls, wooden walls, assigned for every apartment. And it had a door. You could close it, or lock it, so nobody would steal your coal or wood.

Did people ever keep food down there, like potatoes and things?

Good question. I assume they did, because it was colder than upstairs. And refrigeration wasn't very good at that time. And so probably, they used perishable things there until they used it.

But mind you, by this time, there weren't much food or potato available. So yes, probably, before the war or at the beginning of the war, they used it. By this time, there were no woods or coal for heating the apartments, either.

So there was privation. Is this something that I can understand from that? Were people hungry?

Starvation, in a sense.

Privation. Privation, not starvation. Privation--

Oh, sorry.

--in that, did you feel hunger? Did you feel the shortage of food?

Here is the thing. I said earlier that my mom was determined to survive. And she protected me as much as she could. So no, I don't remember that I was cold, that I didn't have enough warm clothes, because from whatever and however, she cut up old clothes of hers or my father's and made clothes for me. But I was protected.

As far as food is concerned, whatever we had, that's what we had. I don't know if I lost weight during the last few months of the war. Obviously, again, food wasn't available for anybody, even those who weren't in the ghetto.

But people were very resourceful, I think, if I can use this word, because-- and again, this is a story my mom told me-- that between two bombing raids, people went out and went to the houses which were bombed out. And there were no tenants in those houses. And if they were lucky enough, some escaped earlier.

Anyway, these houses were abandoned. And so people were rummaging through the rubbles. And whatever they could find, they would bring back to their own place of residence and eat it.

So the story goes in our family that, one day, my grandmother-- who he was an orthodox-observant Jew-- came home with a big slab of bacon. And obviously, bacon is not kosher. And it's, again, Jewish dietary laws.

But again, this time, people-- whatever they could find. If they found bread which was moldy, they just took out the mold part and ate the rest of it. When you are hungry, you cannot be a chooser.

Anyway, we ate that slab of bacon. And it gave us energy to survive another few days. And every day really meant that we got closer to being liberated.

And you have memories of this? You have direct memories? I mean, you're still less than four years old.

Well, I do have memories sleeping on the dirt floor. My mom put down a blanket, so we weren't sitting on the dirt floor. We were sitting on the blanket. We had, downstairs-- what you call? You keep your children-- it's not a cage. It's a portable--

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A playpen?

A playpen-- that's what it is. And I and my cousin, who was just a few weeks younger than I, we were then in the playpen. And I don't remember, but my cousin remembers. And she told me many times since then that she was chasing me up and down, because she was just more physically developed than I was. And so I just ran away from her.

Oh, dear. So this is one of those curious situations where the world is falling down around you. There is war. But children still play.

Correct.

In that sense-- not everywhere, but here.

Yeah, children are children. And again, because-- we were oblivious what was happening. I mean, we knew that they were bombing. And we heard the explosions. And when we looked out the windows when we went up to the apartment, we saw houses bombed out. We didn't have the concept of what a war was and what it meant that people were dying.

As a child, do you ever remember seeing a dead person on the street or somewhere?

Yes, I do remember. When the Budapest ghetto was liberated, and we walked back from the ghetto to our home-- we lived in AkÃ¡cfa utca, AkÃ¡cfa utca [NON-ENGLISH], I mean number 27. And we went back to our apartment, which was in the [INAUDIBLE] of street number 10. It's about a 15, maybe 20-minutes walk for grown ups. And we walked through the streets of Budapest.

And I saw the bombed out houses. I saw corpses on the street. I saw carcasses of horses on the street. And I felt the stench of the dying bodies. So definitely, that was something which was imprinted in my memory. I do remember that trip back to home.

So you stay with your grandparents until January when the Soviets liberate Budapest. Is that correct?

Correct. The date, I believe, is January 17 when they came to the Budapest ghetto. Budapest was liberated a few weeks later, because they came from the east, where the Pest side is. So once they kicked out the Nazis from Buda, it took another few weeks.

And yes, we stayed there until definitely January 17. I don't know if we went home the next day or a week later. But pretty soon after we were able to go back, we went back.

And do you remember any impressions of those soldiers-- what they looked like, how they behaved?

I do have, actually. And of course, the others-- especially grown ups and women, who had different experiences with Russian soldiers. I remember that they gave us candy. And that was something a little child remembers, because I don't know when I had candy before. Maybe I never had candy before, because I was just too young, and my mom didn't want to give me candy.

And obviously, during the last year or war, there was no candy available. But some of these Russian soldiers had. And they gave cigarettes to grown ups. And those Russian cigarettes were not the best quality one. But if people were addicted to cigarettes, they accepted it.

Well, it's also like currency. It's not just the taste of the cigarettes. It's its value for exchange for other items.

Yeah, you are right. Although the Russians, the Soviets, didn't use it as a currency as far as I know, because whatever they needed, they just took it. And again, that's from stories later heard or written in memoirs-- that they took wrist watches from people, and jewelry, whatever was left. But they didn't barter.

So in other words, there was no need for the cigarette currency.

As far as I know. Maybe the Hungarians who were lucky enough and got-- they might have exchange it for food, if they weren't smokers, and they used it as a currency. I have no evidence of that.

Did your mother ever tell you any stories about the liberation later?

Not the liberation. One thing I still remembered living in the ghetto-- and during the night, we went back to the apartment. But again, that was the winter of 1944, '45.

The apartment wasn't heated at all. And it was a cold winter. But fortunately, my grandparents had lots of duvets. Or what do you call this? Feather-filled blankets.

Oh, down. It's called down duvets, these goose-down duvets.

That's right, goose-down duvets. That's what we had. And they are very warm. And so as many people as we could get in one bed were in one bed.

I just remember that my cousin, and my mom, and I was in one bed. And we had one or maybe two duvets over us. And this is how we spent the night. And we were comfortable, as far as I can tell.

Well, this is all after the threat of being deported had gone away. So was there a threat of then being forced out onto these death marches if you were in the ghetto?

Well, yes. People were taken out of the ghetto and forced into the death marches. But how the selection happened, and who were taken, who weren't, I don't know. I know that, again, many of the Jews voluntarily went to ghettos. They were in those houses. And there were about 2,000 houses, apartment buildings, in Budapest marked with the Yellow Star or David.

So the Hungarian Nazis could have gotten to there and herded the people out of those buildings or from the Budapest ghetto. I don't know their stories. I know that one of the most famous Hungarian poet was part of this death march. And he actually wrote some of his last poems on his way to his death.

Oh, wow. What was his name?

His name was RadnÃ³ti MiklÃ³s.

"Dock-no-tee" "Nick-losh"?

RadnÃ³ti, R-A-D-N-O-T-I, I believe. RadnÃ³ti.

RadnÃ³ti. Uh-huh. So do you think that-- did your mother ever say, or any of the other adults later ever say, that they felt that they were endangered to be taken away, or that just didn't come up in the conversations?

It did not come up in the conversation. But she felt. After we got into the Budapest ghetto, unfortunately, I wasn't very vigorous asking her about the details.

And in general, was your mother someone who shared much of her thoughts and experiences of living in Hungary during those years before March 1944, and of course after March 1944? Was she a storyteller? Did she tell you things?

No, she did not. She did not tell me anything about what she told me later, much later, and especially after I started to inquire. Even then, she didn't volunteer. But in the early '90s, that's when she started to talk about it.

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And why do you think that was?

Well, it's a complex issue, I can tell you, because it was a painful memory for her. She was separated from the love of her life at a very young age. And then she lost him.

And it was a hard time to tell stories, because it just-- for her, it probably weren't stories. It was history. And it was her life. She lived through. And when you tell those memories, it's the pain you feel again and again as you tell the story.

But she told me bits and pieces, which I wouldn't have known hadn't she told me voluntarily, about her escape from the Mosonyi utca jail, her escape from the Arrow Cross. And there were two other stories she told me, which is very relevant of the time. One is that-- this conversation is not about what the church or Christians did or didn't do during the Holocaust to save Jews.

But there was one thing. Namely, there were rumors in Budapest that people who converted into Christianity would be saved from the deportation. And the Catholic church started conversion classes. And my mom's-- one of her friends took my mom. And she said, so why don't we try this? There is nothing to lose.

And my mom went to the first class. And that was her last class also, because she just couldn't bring herself to the point to leave the religion of her parents and grandparents, and deny everything she believed in until then, and take another religion. So she went to one conversion class, and that was it.

Yeah. Yeah. So it's interesting that there was a willingness to help save physical bodies of people. But there still wasn't-- it wasn't seen as a temporary gesture. That is, here you get a baptismal certificate. But this isn't a conversion event. This is just so that you can stay alive.

From the church, from your mother's experience it was, in order to really get the piece of paper, you need to be sincere. You need to accept this new religion, this different religion. It's not new, but it's different. And there are stories of priests who actually behaved differently, who would urge-- if they gave false baptismal records for a child, they didn't then force, let's say, the catechism on that child. But those were individual acts rather than, let's say, a systemic one.

Yeah. Again, historians there tried to find out what happened and what didn't happen during the Holocaust. The Holocaust archives was just about to open in March when the virus came. It's very--

You're talking about the--

It's very [INAUDIBLE].

Excuse me. You're talking about the Vatican archives in Rome.

Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah.

Yes, correct. But again, my stepfather had a son who was six months younger than I was. And when he was taken to the forced labor battalion [INAUDIBLE], he was taken to Auschwitz. He was already divorced. And the mother of his child, his first wife, was killed during the bombing of Budapest.

So my step brother was taken in by nuns. So he survived the war until my stepfather came back by being taken care of the Catholic Church. In that church, he was taken care of until 1949 when the communist government closed all the religious orders. And they closed the orphanage where he was taken care of, because my stepfather couldn't take care of him.

So when you go--

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So--

When you go--

Oh, go ahead.

When you go back to your apartment with your mother after the liberation of the ghetto-- and then, consequently, of half of the city, and in a few weeks the full city-- how does life proceed for your mother and yourself?

Well, we settled back in an apartment. Obviously, my mother couldn't continue her profession, making hats, because there were no customers. People had other things on their mind than ordering a new hat.

That's right.

So we had to make a living. And what people did at that time-- number one, because food wasn't available in Budapest for quite awhile, people went down to the countryside and bartered whatever valuables they had for food. And I had a--

And did you--

Oh, go ahead.

No. Do you have a memory of that?

I do have a very vivid memory, because the trains were extremely crowded. There were only a few trains remained after bombing Budapest, and taking the train to Auschwitz, and other places. So people not only jammed the cars, but they were sitting on the top of the cars.

Oh, my.

And I remember that we went to the railway station. We were able to get into one of the cars. But I saw other people sitting on top of the train, because that was the only place they could find for themselves.

And so we went to outside Budapest, not too far. I think maybe 30 or 40 kilometers away. And then went to the houses of the farmers and got whatever food we could. And I believe my mom did it not just for ourselves, but for my grandparents, and my aunts also. And we went back to Budapest after the day was over.

So is there a point when life starts to go back to what would have been, let's say, a normalcy? When the liberation of Budapest happens in January, 1945, there's only four and a half months-- or, let's say, three and a half months-- left of the war, which ends in early May. And you turned four years old in March, that--

Correct.

--same March. What are some of your memories of those times, when there is no longer a threat of, let's say, imminent danger from Nazi policies, from the Holocaust, from the execution of the Holocaust?

I spent part of that one. But for me, I think normalcy started in 1947 when I turned six and I started school. And so whether the schools were open in 1945, '46, I don't know. But I started my elementary school education at the time when I was supposed to start.

And I remember school. It was a Jewish elementary school until 1949, when the government took over all the properties of the different religious organizations, and they turned into a public school. And so that was the beginning and the end of my Jewish education.

But I remember that the school, interestingly enough, was just one block away from the house that we survived the last

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few months of the war in the Budapest ghetto. And that's where the Budapest -- Jewish elementary school was in the [PLACE NAME], which was given back to the Jewish community, I believe, after the communist system collapsed in 1990. And I was walking to the school from my house.

As I said, it was a 15, 20-minutes walk. There were no school buses in Budapest. Actually, never been school buses in Budapest. So everybody had to walk to the school. And usually, you were assigned to a nearby public school, which later on, I was.

But this Jewish school was a little bit farther away. And sometimes, my mom took me with public transportation. And yes, that's what I remember.

And actually, I remember another story that was-- I was in kindergarten. And the kindergarten was, again, one block from that house in AkÃ¡cfa utca. Actually, it was in AkÃ¡cfa utca, where we lived in the Budapest ghetto. And one day, I somehow got out of the kindergarten and walked home.

And my mother was horrified, because at that time, she came for me every day to pick me up. She took me there, then took me home. And one day, I showed up at the door. And she was horrified that a five-year-old just walked home. I don't know how many city blocks, but at least 10 city blocks.

Tell me, what kind of work did she do after the war?

After the war, I think for awhile she still made hats, because people didn't have money to make new hats. And there were no raw material available. But they had their old hats remodeled or-- I don't know what's the right word-- remade, according to the latest fashions. So she practiced her skills or profession until 1949, I believe, maybe '48.

And I remember specifically the smell of the fur as she tried to steam it and pull it over on different forms to get them into shapes. So she returned to making hats. And then the business really dried out. So she decided that she was going to be a seamstress.

And by that time, my aunt, who was a seamstress by trade originally-- she and a few people established a co-op, which was an employee-owned something, where they made female dresses in an industrial manner. There were I don't know how many sewing machines. And one person did one part of the dress, another person another part. And so it was a kind of--

Factory type of thing.

Yeah, factory-like. But it was just a whole co-op. I don't know. Later, it grew quite big. But at that time, there were maybe 10, 20 seamstress just up together, and used their skills to make some money. And so my mom joined this co-op. And she was making female dresses until she retired, actually. That was the only job she ever had.

Really?

Really.

So this is how she put food on the table.

Correct. And she was a hard worker, because when the business started to pick up, they worked in two shifts to use all the equipment as economically as possible. So one week, she worked from 6:00 in the morning until 2:00 in the afternoon, and the other week from 2:00 the afternoon till 10:00 in the evening.

So the machines were being used from 6:00 AM till 10:00 PM.

Correct.

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Did you ever visit her there?

Yes. Many times after school, I went there. Yeah, I was there quite a few times.

And what was the name of the enterprise?

It was called Minta, M-I-N-T-A. The Hungarian name is [HUNGARIAN], because it means small industrial co-op.

So it was allowed to exist because it was a co-op, rather than a privately owned business.

Well, yes and no. Actually, the co-op was co-opted by the [INAUDIBLE], if I can use this pun.

Of course you can. Of course you can.

And so, in name, it was a co-op. But it was court directed, or controlled by the government.

Does that mean your mother got a salary regardless of how many dresses they sold?

Now, that's an interesting thing. I think they had quotas. As a matter of fact, I am sure they had quotas. And so the more she did-- she did just one part of the dresses. Actually, that was a rather special machine, which made the holes for buttons.

Ah, yes.

I don't know if there is an English name. But it wasn't a regular sewing machine. It was a button-hole-making machine. And that's what she did eight hours a day, six days a week for I don't know how many years, until the age 55 when she retired.

And remind me again. When was she born?

She was born 1907.

So 55 means in 1962. Did she retire in 1962?

Correct. She retired. At that time, the retirement age was, for females, 55. And I think, males, it was 60.

And in school, did you ever have lessons about World War II? This precipitates my question of, how did you find out about what all went on in the Holocaust? Was it while going to school in Hungary?

Well, that's a legitimate question. And yes, I did learn about the Second World War, especially mostly about how grave the Soviet criminality was and how they won the war. We didn't learn about the landings in Normandy and the Allied forces. But we did learn about Nazi Germany and how the Soviet Union defeated them. We did learn a little bit about the Hungarian roles in Second World War.

But again, everything we learned in the communist system, everything which happened before 1945-- it was bad. It was wrong. It was the fault of the capitalist, federalist system. And so the Holocaust-- the word itself didn't even exist when I was in school. But the history of the Jews during Second World War was not mentioned at all.

And we didn't really know about Auschwitz and the other concentration camps. We just learned that, yes, the Nazi system were against the Jews. And they killed a lot of Jews. I don't remember if I heard three out of four Jews were killed.

And so that would have been what you heard at school. That would have been the public history lesson, the one that is the official one.

Yeah. My generation grew up learning in school about the Holocaust and the role of the Hungarians of the Holocaust. And because my mom and my relatives didn't want to talk about it, I really didn't know the story of the Wallenberg house or the Budapest ghetto. I saw a Memorial plaque on the wall of the Great Synagogue of Budapest that this was where the Budapest ghetto was.

And many people actually-- Jewish cemeteries are not attached to the synagogues. But at that time, they had to bury Jewish people somewhere. And the synagogue ground has many Jewish tombs.

So was there different-- I know you just mentioned that there was not much talk from your mother about this. But at home informally, in social circles, amongst friends, did the war ever come up? Did the fate of the Jews ever come up? Was there an alternate version?

Yeah, the alternative version was that it was a war. And a lot of people died. And Hungary lost the war. And the Soviet Union liberated eastern Europe.

And that was practically-- yeah, we knew about the great battle of Stalingrad. The war returned. And the Germans started to lose. We heard about the heroes of Leningrad who for-- I don't know-- 1,000 days--

Something like that, yeah, which--

--resisted the Germans. And the Germans never went into Leningrad. We saw a lot of movies. The Soviets made lots of movies, how great the Soviet partisans were. And so we knew a lot of things, but from one viewpoint, and one viewpoint only.

And was there any questioning of this privately?

Not really. I mean, we knew there was a war. We knew that the Soviets won. And we knew that they liberated us. And so we didn't question-- we definitely didn't question publicly anything, because that was a no-no. And we knew that there was more to it than what we were told in the school.

But I'm ashamed to say, but we weren't really interested. We didn't do our own research. We didn't force our parents and relatives to tell the story. We just knew that family members died, and died because they were taken by the Nazis. But that was it. We didn't really do our own digging and research.

Well, when I ask these questions, it's not with the sense of, well, why didn't you? What you're describing--

Oh, I understand. You don't blame me. I--

No.

It was a confession on my part, absolutely voluntary.

Yeah. But what you're describing is perfectly normal. That's how many people remember those post-war years. And that's how many people describe the immediate aftermath. And by immediate aftermath, I'm not saying just, let's say, 1945, '46, or '47. But let's say, 20, 30 years-- is that there was not that much focus or attention for some.

For an older generation, they wanted to forget, because it had been unbelievably painful and traumatic. And for a younger generation, they wanted to live. They hadn't understood many of the horrors that they might have been alive during.

But they were young. They wanted to grow up. They wanted to do normal, teenage, young people things. And to me, that sounds perfectly-- like a very normal way of being, and thinking, and feeling.

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And all of these questions that we're talking about really come later. And the irony, or let's say the unusual aspect of this, is simply that all of those normal feelings that people are having are in the wake of something that was incredibly abnormal and incredibly out of the ordinary when it comes for human cruelty, and let's say the system of human cruelty, and let's say having a racial aspect to it, a genocidal aspect to it.

Yeah. I think it's a very fair and correct assessment.

But it's interesting, nevertheless, and important to hear from you your memories of what it is that was told publicly, a little bit of why it was told publicly, and what was not told publicly. It's telling that you learn about the Soviet experiences, the Soviet battles, the Soviet heroism.

But you don't know about Normandy. You don't know about the Western allied contributions, and sacrifices, and so on. That's a sign of the post-war years. That's a sign of the Cold War. That's a sign of another era.

Correct. Yeah, that's what happened. And again, we cannot go back in time. And we more or less know what happened. And we know how it happened, and why it happened. And now we know what we have to make sure that it will not happen.

So my question to you is, when did this start to become important for you? When did it become something that was more than just an historical topic?

Well, it [? ties ?] to something I would call identity crisis when I came to the United States in 1980.

And what precipitated that?

It was-- aye, yai, yai. It's a long story. In short, I was fed up with the system, the communist system. I, personally, had a privileged position or place, because I was working in the most prestigious Hungarian research institute. And I was working in the most advanced technology developing and designing computers and computer software.

Well that is quite advanced for that time.

I had a good job. I liked my job. I was well paid, according to Hungarian standards. And I had a very comfortable life, even with Western standards, if I may.

I had a car. I had a house. I could work. But we had a home. We could afford vacations four, five weeks abroad. We traveled relatively well, mostly in socialist countries.

But there was three years when the government allowed us-- we went to western Europe. And I had an opportunity to visit western Europe four times, or sometimes five times a year, because I was a member of a professional society, people who designed computer software and are making [? fortune, ?] mostly in Brussels, Belgium. So I was more privileged than the average Hungarian citizen, who were allowed to go to Western Europe every three years. I was able to leave four times a year.

Four times a year.

So as far as my physical well-being, I had a good life. But the system was so rotten. And there was no sign that it could ever change. That was 10 years before it collapsed under its own weight.

And there is a point when you know that the government is lying to you. You have the proof, because you can compare four times a year how people in my position with my background and skills live in France, or Holland, or Belgium. And I knew what we had in Hungary.

Then, sometimes, I had to bring home basic necessities, like soap and other items, because in Hungary, you had soap. So there was one soap, or two. The government decided that were going to make two kinds of soap. And that was it.

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But people [? have other ?] needs, especially when they can afford it. But those weren't available in Hungary. And meantime, you go and saw on the television and heard on the radio that's how socialism is overtaking capitalism. And just there, we had no proof.

But the final thing was that my Jewish identity started to come around and come about. And all the things they said and wrote about Israel hurt me personally. And that's where my identity crisis came up the first time. And that's when we started to talk to my friends, who are just [? changed ?]. But most of them were Jewish, practically all of them.

In Hungary.

In Hungary. And it was just a coincidence, or it appeared a coincidence. But again, I just wanted to leave Hungary and start a new life.

Were you married?

I was divorced by that time. And again, that was also part of my identity crisis, or crisis of my life-- that, yeah, I was divorced.

I was wondering, because when you were saying before that you were allowed to go four or five times a year abroad to Western countries for professional reasons. Usually, in the Soviet system, you had to have hostages left behind. And hostages meant family members of one kind.

No. Yeah, you know it very well. That's very true. Actually, I wanted to defect right after I graduated from the university. And because I was young and I was single, I applied on a-- not an exit visa.

At that time-- that was 1967, '68-- you could go to western Europe on group tours only, organized group tours. And the first company I worked for had-- those were had organized by usually birthplaces. And they had a tour to Vienna, Austria, which is about three and a half, four hours train ride from Budapest.

Anyway, I applied. I wanted to go. And I went and got the permission. The first time I got the permission to travel to western Europe was on official trip. And the vetting took a long, long time before they decided that I can go.

And by that time, I was married. So yes, they had hostages, besides my parents. And we were, by default, hostages. But they were retired by that time. So they couldn't do much to them.

Yeah. They couldn't throw them out of their jobs. They didn't have jobs.

Correct.

They were retired. When did your mother remarry? What year did she remarry, or approximately?

She married in 1953.

OK. And were you ever a member of the party?

Yes. Interesting, I was. But that's another story, a whole other story. The place I worked, I had two choices. Either I become a member of the party, or I lose my job.

Wow.

Yeah, practically how that was. It was never explicitly said. But when-- I was there, working in that research institute for a couple of years.

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And then the party secretary in your workplace approaches you. They say, you are the good guy. We need good guys like you in the party. Would you join? And so it's one thing if you never apply. But that's another thing if you are asked to be a member, and you say, no, because that's a statement.

Yeah. And so you were put on the spot, in other words.

In other words, yes.

OK. And were there still true believers?

Now, that's an interesting thing, because the definition of the true believers-- it could be very tricky. Here is the thing.

That's true. It could be very tricky.

Probably, because your backgrounds, or you heard more about it from others. The communist ideology, on paper, is beautiful. And people are demonstrating on the street today for those ideals-- equality, that everybody has a job, and free education, and free health system, and everything else.

So being enchanted by communistic ideas-- best people and best thinkers had no problem with identifying themselves with those ideals. So true believers are those who believe in those ideas. But they are not true believers in the system, which based on these ideas, and worked practically against those very ideas-- that all people are equal, except some are more equal than the other, that--

George Orwell.

George Orwell. Some animals are equal, but some are more equal.

Than others, yeah. Now, was being Jewish something that made a difference in your education and career in Hungary before you left? And I'm saying that separately from how the media was writing about Israel, and how then you felt about that. But I mean, did it matter in your ability to study, to progress, to build a career?

Again, for if I was discriminated against because I was Jewish, the answer is no. In that sense, the system was color blind, or was religion blind. It never came up. And I never have felt that I was discriminated because I was Jewish.

Having said that, this is more complex. Number one, because my mom's experience before and during the Holocaust, she turned away from religion. She turned away completely. She stopped lighting Shabbat candles.

And we went to the synagogue for the high holidays, but that was more a reverence to her parents than a conviction. She just turned away from God, because she couldn't believe in a benevolent god who allowed the Holocaust to happen, and her husband being taken away. So I went to Jewish school, as I said, first grade and the first half of second grade. And that was the end of my Jewish education.

And because I didn't have a family Jewish upbringing like my cousin, my mother's sister, who kept her religion as thoroughly as she could-- and actually, she sent my cousin to a Jewish high school, because there was one Jewish high school for 100,000 Jews who lived in Budapest. And so my cousin graduated from there. And my aunt religiously would observe all the holidays. And every Saturday, she went to the synagogue until her last day.

At the same time, my mom completely turned away. And actually, interestingly enough, after I came to the United States and I returned to Judaism, and she visited us and saw how observant we were, she started to light the Shabbat candles again.

Oh, my. Oh, my.

Yeah, that's part of the Holocaust story, really, because she's not the only one turned away from God, religion, because

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of their experience. And other people just became more religious. So it was really how people individually lived through those times.

How painful. How painful and how hard it must have been for her. And what a loss of faith in the world this meant, because religion is faith. And when you lose your faith, then it's sort of like, what's left?

I'm not necessarily advocating something that is a formal religion. But you've lost your trust in people. You've lost your trust that there could be something beyond provability that exists for the benefit of us all, or this higher being. And it's nice you said that she came back to it.

Yeah, it is nice. And I'm really glad that it happened. Finally, her life came to a full circle, my life.

And interestingly enough, my aunt, who kept her religion very seriously for all those years, she went through more than my mother went through. But that's another Holocaust story. She was just so happy to see that I turned around, and I picked up when she was about to leave, that I actually-- today, I am more observant Jew than my cousin, who got a formal Jewish education.

Those things happen, too.

Yeah.

So your leaving Hungary was tied in to a wakening identity, and your identity that you are a Jew, that you are Jewish, and the atmosphere that you are seeing or experiencing in a public way in Hungary through the media, and how it talks about Israel.

Yeah.

Is that--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

That was half of it. But I don't want to make it as the major part. It was a kind of existential crisis-- a perfect storm, if I may say.

When my dissatisfaction with the communist system I more or less believed in-- for a while at least, I thought that it can work. Also, my divorce, my Jewish identity-- and you even call a midlife crisis, because I was 39, about half of my age now. So that was really a perfect storm when people decide, I'm going to start from scratch.

How did you do it? How did you leave?

I did it in a legal way, in a sense that I applied for an exit visa. At that time, it was the time when you left for a Western country, you have to ask the government permission to leave. And I applied for the visa to the United States Embassy to come in. I was invited by my uncle and aunt, who lived here. And I came as a tourist.

And before I had to return, I had a long, hard conversation with my uncle. And he really ignited the [? high ?] outrage. It was really [INAUDIBLE] that night that I just needed some-- I don't know-- encouragement or divine prophecy.

But my uncle was the catalyst who, one night, asked me way before I went home, so why are you going home? And then I asked the question myself. Although I was, more or less, ready to defect. But I didn't know that I had the chutzpah, or I had-- knowing all the consequences.

It's not just living an old life, but starting from scratch at the age 39. So there were a lot of pros and cons. But my uncle was really, with this very question, the catalyst for deciding that I'm going to ask for political asylum.

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And you did then.

And I did, which again, that's for another two hours of conversation. I didn't get it, because of all kind of formal things. You had to prove that you personally were persecuted, which I couldn't.

Not having the religious freedom was a good cause for coming out from Hungary. But in 1980, they changed the law, which allowed people from eastern Europe to come to this country and automatically granted a green card, because they didn't have individually proof that they were persecuted. Knowing the communist system, the law said that those people who come from communist countries had assumed that they were persecuted. Therefore, they would be granted green cards.

And because that was the year of the Haitian and Cuban boat people who came from similar circumstances that weren't granted the same exception, instead of giving them the same privilege, they took away from the eastern Europeans. So then I turned to a lawyer who advised me to get a work permit, which I were able to get relatively easily because of my professional skills. And so I got my green card, based on the need of this country of my professional expertise.

I see. And one of the reasons I'm asking in more detail about this part of your life is because it sounds like your interest in the war years, your interest in your own experiences, your family's experiences starts to become woken. That is, it starts to wake up, with your identity also becoming something that's more conscious for you. Is that right? Or are they not connected?

It's connected. It's definitely connected, because once I got into this country, I have to figure out who I was. And the question was, I am a Hungarian-American, or I am an American-American, I am a Jewish-American? And so I had to sort out a identity issue. And that's when my Jewish identity awakened and started to pursue a better understanding of my heritage and everything which comes with it.

So this is pretty much when you're entering your early middle age, after age 39, that all of these things develop.

Yeah. Again, I don't know if everybody goes through such a catharsis or not. And in leaving a country behind, you spent the first half of your life knowing that you cannot go back. That was part of the equation-- that if I decided that I stay, I could have gone back, but I would have been put to jail. And I would have lost my job. And I was marked for the rest of my life.

No, and this step was huge. The step is-- it's no question. It's because you can't go back, because you lose. That is, you really have to cut everything that you knew before when you come here.

But you did it because of a variety of reasons that you've explained to me. And I understand that it's complex. It can't be boiled down to any one factor or any-- like you said, it's a perfect storm. The part that I want to hear about, within the context-- but I want to find out how this consciousness, this interest of yours, how that develops. And this need to reclaim a heritage, your heritage-- how that progressed once you were here.

Well, again, I was searching my heart for my Jewish identity. I found it in the synagogue. I started to study. I had to start basically from scratch learning Hebrew and learning everything Jewish, because I never had a formal education. And I, again, started to be involved in Jewish community lives. I was donating money for the Russian Jews who started to come up from the Soviet Union.

Oh, yeah.

I was protesting in Washington, DC for the release of the Russian Jews. And I supported the Israel reaction to bring out the Ethiopian Jews. So in all kind of little things, this whole identity came to place. And again, my love for Israel was kindled, not rekindled, because that was the first time I really learned history, and history of Israel in 1948-- and then, of course, my interest in the Holocaust, and everything connected to it.

I am a charter member of the museum, and not just a survivor volunteer. I joined the museum when it was just in the

planning phase of, [? little donation ?]. But never the less, I knew that that's where I belong to.

So you settled in the Washington, DC area?

Correct. My aunt and uncle lived in Baltimore. So when I came, the first few months, I stayed with my uncle.

But I knew that I wanted to work in the Washington area, because in my job or profession, there were more opportunities. And also, living in Europe in the capital of Hungary, I wanted to live as close to the capital here as possible. So because I got a job with a company who did work for NASA and my work was at NASA in Greenberg, that's where I rented my first apartment.

And you said that you-- well, if you came here in 1980, it really is around the same time that the museum, which started as an idea and became something that-- I believe it was even Jimmy Carter who formed a-- my history may be wrong here, but I thought he was the one who drew up the proclamation that there should be such a museum. So during that first decade that you're in the United States is when the idea develops, and develops further, and develops further.

Yeah, you are correct. I believe that he was the one that set up whatever planning committee or consul for the Holocaust Museum, and it's how this started.

Did you become involved with those people who started those committees, who first took it to all the next steps?

No, I was just a passive supporter. Being on the mailing list of a [? para-Jewish ?] organization, I got a solicitation to museums in planning phase. And, would I support it? And I did support the museum's planning.

When did you take the step further to become more involved with the museum?

Well, I wanted to be more involved from 1993, I think, when the museum opened. However, I still had a job. I still had girls to put through colleges and marry them off. So I really didn't have time to get involved in the museum as a volunteer. So I waited until I retired in 2014.

And then, at the first opportunity, I contacted the museum [INAUDIBLE]. And the rest is history. I became a volunteer. I went through the training, first with the visitor services. And I took the courses to become a docent. And I'm a member of the survivor group.

And what kind of activities, what kind of volunteer work, have you been doing most often at the museum?

Well, lately, until March 2020, we-- the [? want ?] is we went to various places, mostly schools, colleges, high schools, even elementary schools and synagogues, and told our story to anybody who would come. And so I followed with the museum to various parts of the country and locally, and told my family's story and history.

And so these presentations were a major part of my volunteer work. I did a lot of translation from Hungarian to English-- documents, diaries, and whatever the need was and is. I am part of the team of project History Unfolded. I--

Explain. What is the History Unfolded project?

That project is an extremely interesting and exciting project. The museum ask people, mostly students all over the country, to go to local libraries and newspapers and find out what the country knew about the Holocaust by reading those local newspapers. Small-town newspapers never heard the name of, in all 50 United States. And it's extremely well-organized. And students are extremely enthusiastic about that.

I've got 30 some topics within the Holocaust from 1933 to 1945. And so the newspaper-- or the museum is asking students to find newspaper articles relevant to that topic from Lindbergh, to the deportation of the Hungarian Jews, every major event, the Holocaust. We want to know what the United States knew about, and especially in cities or towns in the Midwest. Surprisingly, very much was known from the local newspapers for those who read it and who were

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interested in it.

So what is your-- how have you been involved in that project?

Well, I started out researching myself, just to get familiar with the whole project. But what I am doing is I am verifying the submissions, the way everything is computerized. Students go to libraries, or go to online libraries, and get the articles. And they fill out the form concerning the newspaper name, and location, and the date of the articles, and the theme the article is relevant to.

They send me their copy of the articles, or a link to the article in a library where we can verify that the article is about that theme-- like, the deportation of the Hungarian Jews is in the time period between 1949 March to 10th of 1944. So we verify all the relevant data. They fill in the author, the--

So excuse me. I believe I heard the date 1949, which would not be within the time frame. Are you saying--

Oh, it's '44.

Oh, 1944. So can I understand it this way-- that what you do is you look at their submission in the form that they fill out, these students. And then you look up the article that they are referring to. And you compare one to the other. Is that it?

Correct.

To make sure that it's accurate.

Yeah, because sometimes, they submit articles where maybe there is a name or date which is relevant, but the time period is completely different. It didn't happen at the time when, let's say, the Kristallnacht happened.

I see.

So that article is not relevant. And unfortunately, we have to reject it. So ultimately, I give verification-- either accepted and posted, which means that the moment I accept it, it's posted on the museum website. And anybody who is interested can find this article about specific topics.

That is a very interesting project. And just I want to clarify for myself. The criteria is that, for example, Kristallnacht happens in November, 1938.

Correct.

And if an article in the United States is in some town, in some city about Kristallnacht is published in November or December, 1938, it would be relevant, and it would be posted. But--

Exactly.

--if the article is written 20 years later, does that--

Then it's not relevant. Yes. Yes. We want the contemporary articles--

That are news at the time, not history later.

Yeah, which can be informative to people who lived at that time.

Excellent.

So Americans were aware of the Kristallnacht on November 12. I think that's the first time they reported, or maybe the

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11th. Because at that time, the news didn't go as fast as today.

So a couple of days later, there were articles in American newspapers, mostly in small newspapers. They didn't have correspondents in Berlin. But they relied on mostly the AP news agency. That's the most frequently quoted news agency.

That's right. That's right. Well, it is-- I mean, to the historian in me and the journalist in me, this is a fascinating project.

But I want a segue now to the broader question. What contribution do you think the museum makes for the public? What does it bring to the table? What does it give us?

Well, I can start with a specific one. We have a temporary exhibit right now, besides the permanent exhibit in the museum-- The United States and the Holocaust.

Yes.

And it has an overview what happened between 1933 to 1945 in the United States and from the foreign ministry's refusal to raise the quotas for Jewish immigrants. So everything is in this exhibit. But this exhibit used a lot of information, which was collected from the History Unfolded project.

And actually, one of the displays has the map of the United States, if I remember correctly. And you can click on any major cities or smaller cities. And the newspaper article would pop up in a relevant event. So actually, this particular project was put into practice immediately. And it's a data for people in understanding what the United States knew, whether or not the States did, and what it didn't do.

So the primary reason of the museum is to disseminate information about the Holocaust-- the history, the geography and statistics, and everything which is relevant to the history of the Holocaust. Now, this is a memorial museum. So obviously, this is a memorial of the 6 million who died, who doesn't have a grave or a dumpster. So this is a place that people can come and show their respect of the 6 million who perished.

Obviously, we have the permanent exhibit, which tells the story. We have temporary exhibit, which tells stories within the stories, and also contemporary genocide events. Unfortunately, Holocaust wasn't the last genocide in human history. And since then, we saw, in other countries and other continents, people persecuted because they were different either religiously, or ethnically, or whatever the criteria was.

So the museum has this role to monitor what's happening in the world, to raise the voice on behalf of the people who are persecuted because of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or whatever the criteria is. And so they do a good job. Of course, there is Holocaust research to have more facts about what happened. And as archives are opening, there are new sources for information. And the museum uses that to refresh what is known about the Holocaust.

And actually, there is a project going on to redesign the permanent exhibit, because it opened in 1993, 27 years ago. Or I don't know how many years ago. And since then, historians came up with new facts. And they want the permanent exhibit to reflect on it.

And also, technology changed. So we can communicate much better with using all the advancement in technology. And of course, to have the Holocaust survivors go through their personal experience can be the best witness of what happened, and have other people not only understand what happened too, but make them aware that they have a responsibility to make sure that this will never happen again. And I think that's really the essential motto of the museum-- what you do matters.

So tell me then, does it succeed? These are lofty goals. These are big goals. These are very broad, sometimes, goals, and very ambitious ones. Do they do it? Does it work?

Well, it depends on what measurement you use. If you--

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From your perspective. I'm not asking as a [INAUDIBLE], but from your experience.

I understand. But it's a complicated question. Namely, if you hear about the Holocaust denial, which is getting louder-- and because of the internet, it's more well spread. You may think that we don't succeed, because the number of people who believe today that the Holocaust didn't happen-- or it happened, but it was not systematic. And it's just people died, because there was a war.

So again, the museum succeeded in their goal to do what it meant to do, and I think doing a really good job. How the world accept it, or [INAUDIBLE] it, or receives it-- it's another issue, because one would think that antisemitism is over after the Holocaust. And we see today that antisemitism is not over. As a matter of fact, it's getting worse.

So if you say, oh, the museum failed because antisemitism is on the rise, or the Holocaust denial is on the rise-- but at the same time, we have a million visitors who come to the museum physically. And now, because we are closed and people are more aware that the museum is available through the internet, we have hundreds of thousands of visitors from the internet. So there is an interest. And there is an opportunity to educate people.

And I think education is the crucial part of any condition, because Hitler wouldn't start by demonstrating on the street and having slogans and signs. Hitler would start with people who would be educated and know what the cause of the hatred is, and how danger it is, and how we can fight against it. So I think the museum is doing a good job. Can we do better? I'm sure we could. But without the museum, I believe we would be in much worse shape.

Well, that sounds like it's the key sentence. What would it be like if it weren't there? And it's very hard to measure things like the ones that you're bringing up, because how do you measure how deep, let's say, antisemitism would go, or violence would go, or other genocidal impulses would go if this institution doesn't exist? It's hard to. How can you measure that?

But you can measure what it can do and how that is perceived, whether it is relevant. And one way is the number of visitors, whether they're physical visitors at the museum. The other is, how many people visit the website? What do they find relevant? What do they click on, and so on?

Tell me, what has it meant for you? In a very personal way, what has it meant for you?

For me, in a nutshell, this museum is a memorial to my father, whom I never knew. It's a memorial of the 6 million. So being part of the museum-- it means that I do what I can do by sharing my experience with mostly young people. And that's the most rewarding part-- when they write cards, or emails telling how much it meant to be at my presentation, or giving me a hug or a handshake.

And it means that my father and the 6 million didn't die in vain. The memories are preserved. And the lessons we can learn from their experiences are taught, and projected, and disseminated. And we can be optimistic that a generation will grow up, which would be more active in fighting against Hitler and discrimination.

Thank you. I can't think of a better note for us to end on. Before we do, though, is there anything else that you would like to add to our interview today that I haven't asked, that you think is relevant to any of the issues, and topics, and events that we've been discussing?

Well, I think we finished just four hours. So I think I said more than I ever said before concerning this topic. Probably, I might have some things when I think about what we discussed, which might be of interest. And if we can, at a later time, I would use that opportunity.

Absolutely. Absolutely. We can do that. For right now then, what I will say is that this concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mr. Peter Gorog on June 29, 2020, taking place in the Washington, DC metro area remotely via telephone because of the current coronavirus pandemic. Thank you once again, Mr. Gorog. Thank you very, very much.

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Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity.

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