

Hello, my name is Toby Ticktin Back, and I'm the director of the Holocaust Resource Center here in Buffalo. Today our guest is Max Lendner, who was born in 1929 in Vienna, Austria. When he was 10 years old, he had to leave his home. And he's going to tell us about these years and what followed afterward.

Max, could you tell us a bit about your childhood?

Yes. I was born in 1929 in Vienna. That was in between the two world wars. Austria at that time was an independent country. It was just at the time when-- just before the Depression hit the United States. I don't remember too much of that period.

The earliest recollections that I have was when I was five years old, in 1934, there was a chancellor in Austria. His name was Dollfuss. And there was some turmoil in Austria at that time when he was chancellor. And the Nazis really, at that time, tried to take over the country. And in the summer of 1934 he was assassinated.

But I still remember some of the people yelling and saying Dollfuss has been shot, Dollfuss has been shot. And there was a great deal of turmoil when that happened. As a five-year-old, you don't pay attention to these things. But I do remember the excitement and people being upset when that happened.

Up to 1938, March the 12th, to be exact, I led a pretty normal life. I went to school, public school. Went to kindergarten before that.

In the summertime I remember I used to go to the country, to the mountains.

Oh, I think we have a picture here that we could show on the screen of your mother and your father.

Right.

Here it is on.

On a summer holiday. And my father was a salesman. And my mother was a housewife. And I used to spend a lot of time-- I was an only child, so I used to spend a lot of time with cousins, my father's parents, my mother's parents, aunts, uncles.

Used to go to the movies. Used to go-- in Vienna there was an amusement section called the Prater, I guess which is still there, where you used to have rides for kids. They used to have they called the big Ferris wheel.

Like a Luna Park.

Like a Lula Park. And I remember little vignettes of things. Nothing extraordinary. Nothing--

When did this all change?

This all changed, began to change on the 12 of March 1938, on a Saturday, when the Nazis took over, when the German Army came into Austria, when Schuschnigg resigned from office. And Austria then became part of the German Reich. As soon as that happened, everything changed.

I still remember that Saturday morning, in the 12th of March. And I was only eight and a half years old. But I remember the day before Hitler came in, there was a lot of turmoil. My mother was very upset. My father had a long face. We knew there was-- I knew there was a crisis.

And then, on Friday evening, Schuschnigg made a statement saying that he had to yield, that he couldn't resist Hitler, to that effect, and that he didn't want bloodshed. So the German Army marched in.

And I remember waking up on Saturday morning and looking out the window and seeing the swastikas plastered from every window, from every balcony, the flags. And there was excitement in the air among the population because Hitler was coming in to make his famous speech.

So even then they were experts in pomp and circumstance.

Yes. Yes. And I remember the fear among the Jewish people, and especially among my family, of what all this means, what's going to happen to us, with Hitler being in there with the Nazis taking over. And there was a lot of anxiety right away about what was happening.

The first immediate change that occurred in my own situation was I went to a public school a couple of blocks from where I lived. And about two months after the Anschluss, I was forced to leave that school. And I was told that because of the new regulations, the Jewish children and the Aryan children can't be in the same classes together. So I was forced to go to a different school.

What school did you go to?

I went to school-- at first I went to school which was just Aryan teachers and Jewish students. And then, as the Jewish population began to diminish through emigration-- in that time the Nazis encouraged the Jews to leave.

Could they take any material things out with them?

Well, they could take their furniture, their personal possessions.

Could they take money?

No money. No money. But they could take certain things with them at the time. The Nazis encouraged. At first, you have to understand, the Nazis' drive was that the Jewish people should leave voluntarily.

Wanted the country judenrein.

Wanted judenrein. And one of the, in fact, one of Eichmann's first assignments before he became the head of the program to round up all the Jews and exterminate them was to get the-- he was stationed in Vienna, and his job was to get the Jews out and to facilitate the emigration.

So as the population diminished, as people got out, the Jewish community was smaller. The number of Jewish students was less. So then the Jewish community made arrangements for whatever kids were left to go to a Jewish school that was run by Jewish teachers. And that's the school I went to until I left.

But during all this period of time, I saw the things around me, like people leaving. Even in those days, people were arrested and sent to the concentration camps.

For what reason were they--

Just nothing. Because they were Jews. People were picked up on the streets.

Anybody you know or from your family?

Not from my family, but I knew of people that were picked up. Like my aunt had a boyfriend. He was picked up one day from the street, sent to a concentration camp. He was later released. In those days, you could get out, to escape.

How did you get out?

I mean, those people could get out, you see. And then they went back, and then they left the country. In '38 and '39 it

wasn't-- but people were picked up for no reasons and sent to the camps. And in those days, people say they never knew what went on and all of that, but even in those days, in '38 and '39, when people went to Buchenwald and Dachau and came back, they went through quite a bit of torment, and torture, and all kinds of horrendous things went on even at that time in those places.

Did you get news about Kristallnacht?

Well, Kristallnacht, I was there. Actually there. It didn't so much happen, as I recall, at night. It happened during the day, it was on the 10th of November, on a Thursday, I think it was.

And I remember-- see the neighborhood I lived in was not the center of the Jewish community. I lived in an area where there were some Jewish families, but it was mostly Aryan. But my grandfather, my mother's parents, and my aunts and uncles, they all lived in what was known as the heart of the Jewish section, which had in the second district.

And I remember a telephone call came. And evidently it was my grandfather calling telling him there was just-- the Nazis just came up to the apartment, that they had beaten them up, smashed some of the furniture. And across the hall was his business. And whatever was left of his merchandise, the Nazis just-- the SA just came in and just carried everything out.

And that's where most of the damage was done. Whatever Jewish businesses were left were looted. The synagogue was burned.

What about your father and his job?

Well, at that time my father was working with my grandfather. And that was the first time he was arrested was on that day. And there was such panic at that particular time that my mother didn't know what was going to happen next. So she took me to a neighbor a few blocks down. And I was hiding out in a room all day not knowing what was happening.

Then, at night, when things quieted down, I went back home. And my father was home too. They had released him on that day.

But I remember when they came-- when that particular group came and picked him up. In that time, it wasn't the SS. It was just some of the local Nazi thugs that lived in the neighborhood that figured they're going to show they're--

They weren't really Nazis, but they were thugs.

No, no, they were Nazis, but they weren't in uniform. They came up. And I remember he had to go. He had to go with them.

Was there any talk then of the euthanasia program?

No, at that time I don't remember. There was talking about mass exterminations or anything like that in '38. But there was the fear that anything can happen, that your life wasn't safe. I mean, they could beat you up, and they could kill you on the streets, and you had no recourse. There was no justice, or no laws, or no courts, or anything like that.

So did your family start to make arrangements to leave?

Well, we started even before that. We registered at the American consulate. We had relatives in the United States. And they were going to help with sending the affidavits.

But the trouble was the quota system, that my father was on the Polish quota because he was born in Poland. And from the American laws, he was considered a Polish national.

And that list was very long.

That was long. And my mother and I were considered Austrians because we were born in Vienna. And it wasn't until six days before the war started, which exactly is August 24, '39, that we got the visa from the American consulate.

But during all that 18 months period that I lived under the Nazis, there was always-- that you had to turn in your jewelry. You couldn't walk in the streets at a certain time. You couldn't sit in a park bench.

Did you wear--

No, that--

--badges yet?

No, that came later. That was before my time. But the difference was that the Aryans wore swastika buttons, and the Jews were not allowed to. And so they knew who the Jews were.

There was the constant incessant propaganda, the constant antisemitic radio, what was going on on the radio. And there was always the anxiety when Hitler would make a speech what would come out, what he would say next, what would come out of his words.

Radios weren't confiscated yet?

No, radios weren't-- well, they used to have loudspeakers all over the city. When Hitler made a speech, everything stopped, and Hitler's speech-- they listened to Hitler's speech. And it was like the FÃ¼hrer sprechen what-- and the Jews, we were terrified what he's going to come up with-- what is he going to come out with next.

And there were these-- there was these anxieties. You could tell. We didn't know how can you get out. Will you be able to get out.

You went through the neighborhoods, and you saw the Jewish neighborhood, and you saw all the stores that used to be there closed. You saw the, as I said, the synagogues had been burned. You couldn't make a living. You were not allowed to get special rationing cards.

Did you get food?

Yeah, we got food.

Special rations?

Yeah, but there were special ration cards. And the people were very nasty. The Austrian people were very nasty to the Jewish people. I mean, they were very-- every time you walked in the street they called you a dirty Jew. And then you had the-- you had constantly the SS and the SA walking the streets. And you never know what was going to happen to you next.

It was very, very stressful.

It was very stressful. It was very tense. It was very, very anxiety ridden.

But it is something that probably I would have forgotten about, or at least wouldn't have been the key to the whole story. Because the key to the whole story was that on September the 11th, 1939, 11 days after the war broke out, the SS came to our house and told my father to get dressed, that he's under arrest. And he got dressed. And I remember the Gestapo officer telling my mother, if you want to know what's happening to your husband, you can go to the Gestapo. And he got dressed, walked out of the house, and I never saw him again.

Was that during the day or at night?

That was at 6 o'clock in the morning.

Oh, in a very unusual time.

Yeah, 6 o'clock in the morning. And that was the end. That was the finish. Then my mother was able--

On what pretense, though--

No, there was no particular pretense. If there was any pretense at all is that he was staatenlos, that he was stateless, that he had a Polish passport at one time. And since Germany had attacked Poland, or the war was on with Poland, they used that as a pretext to round up what would be considered to be enemy aliens. But the only people were involved were Jews.

So your mother went to the Gestapo, I presume.

She never went to the Gestapo to find out what was happening. All I know is that right after that happened, they arrested several thousand people at that particular time. And we wanted to know what was going on. And at first they took all these people, and they put them into a sports stadium. And they had them lined up in tiers near the sports stadium.

And then the people, the families of the people that were there, went down to the sport stadium to see whether, from the distance, they can recognize their members of their family who were there. And all I could see from the distance was all these people in standing up there in tiers, in rows, and cuddled together. They weren't shaved. They looked like they were dirty. I don't know what sanitary facilities they had for them. And that was the-- I suppose after that, they then decided to take all these people and ship them off to Buchenwald.

And then we were lucky-- my mother and I were lucky-- that the papers came through, and we had the opportunity to leave.

Who took care of the affidavits from America?

Some cousins of ours, cousins, American cousins.

And how long did that whole procedure take?

Well, that must have been started earlier, just right after the Nazis came in, when you wrote the relatives and things like that. I'm not too familiar with all of that aspect of the thing.

You were a little boy.

Right.

But I'm thinking of what a conflict that was for your mother to leave a husband, and yet to be wary of a life, or lives.

Right. Well, the idea was-- that it was if you stay-- you see, the war was already-- the war was on with Poland. And the Nazis said they were going to-- if the Jews, they don't leave, they're going to start deporting them or resettling them. So it was a question of if you don't take this opportunity to get out now, your life is in danger.

So my mother, we were able-- we were lucky, because Italy still hadn't declared war against England and France at that time. And Italy was neutral. So we were able to get out.

You went via Italy?

Italy. And we came with an Italian boat to the United States in October '39.

Were there other refugees on that boat?

Yes, yes, there were. There was an Italian liner. I don't remember all the passengers on the. Boat it was a mixed-- as I said, I was 10 years old. I was glad to be on the boat and be out.

But when we came to the United States, then we knew he was in the camp, that he was in Buchenwald.

How did you know?

Because he wrote to my grandparents and then they wrote to us.

Oh, I think we have a copy of that.

Yeah, he sent many of these postcards. He was able to write once a month a card.

And this card is, I think, is one of the last ones he wrote.

You pointed--

Right. And at that particular time, my grandparents already had been deported from Vienna.

To Poland.

To Poland. And my father, even, I think, one of the things he says here, [GERMAN]. "Hopefully you have already news from the parents." In other words, he, while he was in the concentration camp, he knew that his parents themselves had been shipped off, and he was asking here, his brother, "I hope you have news about the parents."

Now he knew that we were in America, that my mother and I were safe.

How do you think he knew that? Probably these postcards?

Well, that he-- I guess my grandparents wrote to him, and said to him, Anna and Max left. So he knew we were in America. So he knew that we were safe.

I think it's intriguing what you showed me on the postcard that it actually says Weimar and Buchenwald.

Well, that's it. This is an official-- this was the card. And on the bottom, it says Konzentrationslager Wiemar, Buchenwald, which is one of the official cards that the Nazis let people use in order to write to their relatives.

What year was that? 1942?

This was 1942.

And how did you get that card?

When I was in Vienna after the war, my uncle had saved it.

That's the uncle to whom he wrote it.

Wrote. And he survived the war. And he was the one who gave this to me. And in it, it's very clear what-- that these things-- this thing happened. He even had a number. He was prisoner number 7365, and he was in block number 23. In the camp. So everything was very official with these people.

But did you know in 1942 that these cards were being sent to your--

No, I knew nothing. No.

So from the time he left--

Well, I personally knew he was alive. Whether I knew about the cards or not at that time I don't remember. I was in New York. I was 13 years old. Whether I knew about there were specific cards, or whether-- I suppose I must have thought. I knew he was-- well, by '42, I didn't know anything. We knew until-- between '39 and '41 that he was alive.

And then, from '42, until the time you found out that he was no longer alive, there was no news at all.

No, no, because the United States was in the war. America entered the war in '41. So between the fall of 1941, when all mails-- I think there was all mails stopped anyway between Germany and the United States. And in '45, after the liberation, which-- and I didn't know. We didn't get word until July of 1965 exactly what transpired.

Until 1960--

I mean '45. July of 1945.

How did you get word then?

Well, I went to a Congressman in Washington and told him the story in the spring, in July of '65. And I asked him to check, because he was with the American Army. He's the one who liberated the camp. And he checked the records. And he came back with a report showing the Nazis have kept a record saying that in March of '42 he died.

But my uncle, who survived the war, he was there in Vienna when it happened, when the Nazis sent a telegram saying that he died. And then the ashes-- they sent ashes to Vienna.

But why wasn't your uncle taken away?

Because his wife isn't Jewish, and so he was like--

He was protect?

He was sort of protected by her and her family.

Because we hear stories about Mischlings and second and third generation being taken away.

He was being hidden out by his wife, and so he survived. So he was able to survive the war.

So in 1945 you found out. In the meantime, you were raised as-- raised by your mother. And how did your mother manage?

Well, my mother had to go to work. She had different jobs. She worked in a-- and she did-- she worked in a restaurant. She helped clean houses.

And then, during the war, when things got a little better, she got a job in a factory where they made umbrellas. And she worked there in the shop.

So you were raised without a father and as an only child. It must have been very difficult for everyone.

Well, it was difficult. It was difficult for my mother because she had to work late hours. She was very upset.

And leaving you too, right?

The husband was around. And where he was, she didn't know whether he was living or not.

I sort of managed, in my own fashion at that time, to grow up. I was interested in certain things. I was interested in politics. And so when I went to school, I was always interested in anything that had to do with the world situation, and the war. And then the United Nations.

And I wanted to be a writer. And I was, even though maybe at that time, I didn't even feel it as much as later on--

Were you different than your classmates?

Mm?

Were you different than your classmates? Were they mostly American?

Yes, yeah, they were. They were mostly Jewish. It was a Jewish neighborhood in the Bronx. But there still was a difference, because they didn't have that anxiety hanging over them that I had hanging over me.

And the family that brought you over, did they help your mother and you?

Well, I used to have a-- it's a long story. They didn't help too much in that sense. I mean, when they first came here, they helped a little bit. But then my mother went to work after she was here a short period of time. And the Jewish organization helped, the HIAS and all, helped the refugees. And so that wasn't too bad.

And then, during the war, I lived in the Bronx. I didn't have-- I had some friends, and I still had some family. My mother's parents were here. So I spent time with them.

But it was a sort of a lonely life. I mean, there was--

It wasn't a normal life.

It wasn't normal, because there wasn't a sense of direction. My mother worked late hours, and when she came home she was usually upset. She was tired, and she felt miserable, and she cried a lot. It wasn't exactly a very happy--

Doesn't sound--

Wasn't very happy at all.

You mentioned a while ago that you went back to Europe.

Yeah, in 1953 my mother had remarried after the war. And after I graduated school, my mother's second husband was in business. And so I had an opportunity to go back to Europe. And I went to see-- I had a relative in France. I went to see my uncle in France, my father's brother. And I went back to Vienna for about a week.

And it was a very-- don't forget, at that particular time, the conditions were just like-- they were after the war. Austria was-- really wasn't-- they didn't really begin to really rebuild the country till after I guess in the '50s, when the Allied occupation ended. So in '53, even though it was eight years after the war, all the rubble was still there from the fighting and the bombing and everything.

So you went to-- it looked like, really, you came into the city there, and you saw all the opera house was a shell. And it's really-- so the Americans were there, the British, the French, and the Russians. They all occupied the city together. And it was sort of dreary.

Did you find anything from your parents' home? Did you go back to that original home?

Well, interesting story. The neighborhood where we lived was not touched by the war. There was no bombing in that section of the city. So when I went back to look at the neighborhood, it was very eerie, because it was just like it was before I left-- the same houses, the streets, and everything like that. And I felt a trepidation going back to that section and going back to the apartment house.

The closest I got to anything was I rang the doorbell of the apartment that I used to live in, and some woman answered the door. And I told her who I was. And she didn't know, because they took over the apartment, I guess, way after we left. And she wanted-- she said, well, if you're interested, I'll show you the apartment.

I didn't want to go inside the apartment. I felt the memories of being inside the apartment itself, and remembering what I remembered most, namely, how my father was removed from that place, and marched out, and I never saw him again. It would be too unpleasant.

So I didn't want to go. I didn't want to go inside the apartment. Because that's where I lived the first 10 years of my life.

And that's what you remember, that was [BOTH TALKING]

That's what I remember. And I think it would have been too upsetting to see the apartment. I didn't want to do that.

But I wonder what happened to all the material possessions of your parents-- their furniture, their pictures, their dishes.

Well, no. My mother was able to bring-- when we came to America, my mother was able to bring whatever-- most of the things with her. They were Allowed When you emigrated at that time, they allowed you to bring those things. My mother has the-- in fact, in the apartment today, she still has some of the paintings and things that we had in Vienna. It's still in my mother's apartment. Those things we were able-- she was able. They weren't that valuable or anything.

Well, certainly sentimental.

Sentimental. So that's still there. In fact, we have things like my grandmother, my mother's mother, when she was very young-- when she was-- not young. She was in her 60s or so. She used to do needlepoint. And we have all of the needlepoints, things that she made. And it's still in my mother's-- my mother has it, and my mother's sister has some of those that she made.

That's beautiful that you still have continuity.

Yes, and we have-- my mother has in New York all the pictures going back, which she doesn't want to look at, because it would make her very depressed.

What happened to all the family that you left behind in Austria?

Well, my father's parents were deported and killed.

Do you have proof of that?

Well, we know they were deported, and if they weren't killed they died, because they were elderly people. So either they died of starvation or they were killed when they were shipped off to Poland. And my grandfather was about 70 at the time, and my grandmother was in her early 60s. That those were my father's parents.

Then, on my-- and my father had a sister who lived in Romania. And she was killed during the war. And some of the family had left Europe, had left Europe even before the war.

My father had a brother and a sister who went to, then, to Palestine in the 1930s. So they left before the Second World War. And my father's younger sister, she's living in New Jersey. And one of his brothers went to France. He survived the war, but he died since.

So either the people died, or they were scattered, and with time the families go. But there was never, even though some of the members of the family survived, they were all scattered. Although I do remember as a kid, there was no problem visiting one relative or another relative, go to one grandparent's home or going to another grandparent's home.

You had a normal extended family.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Did you go back to Europe again after '53?

Well, yes, the last time, though, I was there was 20 years ago. But at that time I didn't go to Austria. I was on a trip to Israel, and then I just stopped off, and that was a tour. We stopped off in France, Holland, and Belgium.

Did you see any of your relatives, your relative and friends?

There were relatives in France. I saw it.

And how did you get this postcard?

Well, this is my uncle in Vienna gave that to me 30 years ago.

Oh, when you went to--

When I went to Vienna.

--the first time in 1953.

In '53, yeah. He gave this card to me. He gave me several cards, but this is the only one that seemed to have--

Survived.

--survived.

Are you still in touch with that family, that Viennese family?

Not too much. My aunt, who lives in New Jersey, she's in touch with them, because that's-- her brother. And she's more or less in touch with the members of our family.

Do you think that the disruption of your normal family life, and coming to America without a father, the stress, being raised without the knowledge of his whereabouts and the dire difficulties that you were in, has influenced your--

Yes.

--your character and your--

Well, I don't know about--

Well, character, no. I shouldn't say your character. Your-- let's see. How do we put that? Your direction or your--

Yes, definitely.

--your attitudes.

Definitely it's affected-- well, one of the things that really affected is, well, it's affected my personality in some ways, that I'm not an aggressive kind of a person. And the fact that--

Are you depressed much of the time?

Well, not-- sometimes. Let me put it this way. I am more subject to depression when I'm surrounded by a very negative or depressing situation. I'm not normally depressed when I am not under pressure. But the minute I get into a situation where I feel I'm being threatened, either imagined or real, then I become depressed.

Of course, that could be coincidental.

Well, not necessarily, because then I trigger something in me. In other words, whenever I feel that I'm in a bad situation now, whenever I feel that I am in some kind of a situation where the pressures around me are threatening to my survival, either economically or some other way, and I feel doubts about myself and these kind of things, then it triggers back to the fact that how would have life would have been if all these horrible things hadn't happened. Would I have turned out this way, or whether if my father had survived, and we'd all come to America, I would have had a different upbringing. I would have had a strong--

You would have had direction.

--a strong sense of direction. Not that problems or crises wouldn't have come up. That's what life is all about, to deal with problems and crises and difficulties. Everybody has it. But my ability to cope with them might have been stronger. I would have been maybe more adult in my way of dealing with things. I wouldn't be so introspective about things.

How have these attitudes affected the second generation, your own American-born children?

Not too much. Not too much. I mean, not too much on the surface.

Not too much in the negative way.

Not too much in the negative-- maybe in the positive sense, especially with my son, because my son has a very strong Jewish feelings. He's very much devoted to the Jewish religion, and to the Jewish culture, and to the Jewish people.

Do you think he's more of a responsible young man than some of his peers because of your background?

To some extent, it probably-- he may not be consciously aware of it. But it probably got into his system. Whether he's consciously aware of it or not, it's part of his makeup that he's serious. And he's very ambitious and he's very bright.

We find this among many second generation, a trait that the parents have fostered to succeed, to be successful, to be go-getters.

Yeah, well, he's, in that sense, he is. He is.

I think part of my problem, I think, is that this whole talking back, going back to what impact this whole thing had on me, I think the fact that I never was able to pinpoint on a specific career goal, that I developed in that, and set that as a specific point in my life, in the early part of my life, and then I stayed with it.

So what you're saying is you lacked guidance.

I lacked guidance, and so I floated around to too many things. And maybe none of them were the right choices for me. None of the work that I ever did was something that I really wanted to do. And I feel it especially now more than at any

other time because of the kind of situation that--

What kind of work do you do now?

Well, now I'm a social worker with Erie County Department of Social Services. I've been in that for about 18 years.

Working with disadvantaged people.

Disadvantaged people. It's a very depressing kind of a job. You always deal with people who have very serious problems. And at one time, it wasn't-- even though it was a difficult job, at least you could really do-- you could work with people and try to help them.

But lately, it's become a very difficult kind of and frustrating kind of situation because you're more confronted with the directions and conflicting directions you're given by the people who work above you than by the people that you can help. And there's a lot of tensions now going on.

And this affects your--

And this affects my whole attitude. This makes me very depressed, because it makes me feel very insecure.

Max, do you get reparations money.

Yes, yes.

How did you go about getting these monies?

Well, at the time, about 20 years ago or so, there were people in New York who were telling me that the German government has agreed to take applications for that. So I went to an attorney who specialized in that and told him my story. And he said, well, you may have a chance. It all depends on what evidence you bring up.

What exactly were you asking for from the German government?

Well, they call it Gesundheitsschaden, which is damage to your health. And it's specifically related to this particular problem, that when I was younger I didn't have a normal development because of the fact that not only I didn't have a father, but I didn't know that he was around.

I think, to some extent, I mean, harsh it may be, if he had been arrested and killed right away--

It would have been easier?

--it would have been easier, because you would know where you stood. He's gone. That's it. You can plan.

But to grow up without knowing whether you have a father or not--

What you're saying is your traumatization was dragging on.

It was dragging on because it wasn't something that was immediately resolved. It took six years. And therefore, it festered on my mind. So instead of being able to concentrate, let us say, on your studies, or in your career, or what you want to do with your life, and all of that, you think in terms of, well, what's happened to my father now? Is he dead? Is he alive? Is he being tortured? So this is the thing, you see.

It preyed on your nerves all the time.

This played on my nerves during a time of my life when these kind of things shouldn't have been bothering me under

normal circumstances.

Did you get your reparations immediately upon application?

No, no. It took four years. First I had to see the lawyer. Then the lawyer had to gather all the papers. And I had to give him certain statements, and certain historical backgrounds, and give him reports from doctors that I had seen in order to prove this point. Then it had to go to Germany.

Then the German government decided that it was necessary for me to see a doctor in the United States that would either verify or confirm that. And this one had to write a report. Then the German government had to evaluate all the reports. And then first they turned the application down.

Why did they turn it down?

Oh, because they felt that even though I had these problems, since they claimed that other kids who went through similar kind of experiences supposedly didn't have the kind of problems that I did, therefore my problems must be a result of some other factor rather than that. And then I had to appeal it, and I had to induce-- this is very interesting, that I had to use the good facilities of Dr. Anna Freud.

How did that come about?

Well, when I got that report back from Germany from the German doctor saying that they're turning down my claim, the German doctor used a study that Dr. Anna Freud had made about children--

Oh, the children in England.

--children in England, who had gone to England from Europe, from Germany and Austria as refugees. And supposedly in that study she indicated that the majority of the children adjusted normally to the situation. And so the German doctor says, well, Dr. Anna Freud said this and this and this.

Well, I showed this report to a prominent person in Buffalo at the time.

A physician?

Not a physician. A social worker in the Jewish Family Service at the time. And he read it. And he came up with the idea. I says, I tell you what you do. You write to Anna Freud in England, and you give her excerpts from that particular passages from that report in which she says what she say, which she makes those particular comments about the children of England.

And so I wrote a letter to her, and I told her who I was, and that I have a claim pending, and all of that. And the German government has denied my claim and is using partially the evidence. This and this is what you wrote. So I took the verbatim paragraphs from this doctor's report and sent it to her.

But she wrote me back a letter saying that she was highly incensed and indignant over the fact that a doctor in Germany would use any study that she made to use that as an argument to deny a personal reparation. She says, that was the last thing in mind that she thought that a study of hers would be used for such a purpose. And she said she was so angry about it that she wrote a letter to a colleague of hers in Germany complaining about this particular person.

And so then finally, an appeal was made using that argument, plus other arguments, and it went to the German courts. Then the German court had to make a decision of what to do. And then they said, well, they couldn't make up their minds themselves at that point who was right, who was wrong, because there were conflicting reports. They said, we'll give one more opportunity to this particular person to justify his claim.

And they sent me to a doctor in New York City who would be the final--

Final arbitrator, who his decision would be final. So I went to New York. I saw him. And he wrote another report. And after his report was submitted. Then my claim was finally settled.

How long did that all take?

The whole procedure, from the very beginning until the end, took four years.

So you really had a lot of guts, a lot of chutzpah to follow this through. You were persistent.

Well, I persisted in it because I felt I was right, that my cause was right. I was justified.

So you get reparations now?

Yes.

Until what age will you get it?

I don't know. I mean, originally, when they sent me the report, when they sent the claim in, they said that-- it was in '67. They said that they have a right to reexamine me in 1970.

Did they?

They never did. I never heard from them. And I was told they don't bother with that. See, now it's something that's all on computers. Your number is in a computer, and as long as you-- the only thing you have to do, in order to continue to be eligible-- which I suppose is a fair thing, it's only normal-- that once a year you get a forms, and you have to verify that you're still alive. And that form has to be signed by the German consul, and then it's sent on to Germany. And as long as they have on file that you're still alive, you get the money.

Now I don't know. Some people told me that after you get to be a certain age, and you get Social Security or something, they may cut it down or what else have you. But as far as I'm concerned, I leave it as it is.

Did you think the settlement was fair?

Well, not-- well, it all depends what you talk about. How can you equate a few thousand dollars--

That's exactly--

--to the whole thing?

To your sanity, to your parents, the loss of your parents.

It wasn't a question.

Family.

So at that particular time, what they gave me was, in those days was they gave me a settlement of \$5,000. And I get \$200, about \$250 a month, which helps with my living expenses and everything. And I suppose, from that point of view, it makes the economic situation for me a little bit better.

And if they're contributing to making life a little bit easier for me-- or not easier, but helping out a little bit, I think that's only at this point that's only fair.

But as far as, I mean, if you want to-- if I would have to choose between having to go through all of that and getting a

few thousand dollars, and the whole thing had never happened in the first place, I mean, how can you equate it to? I mean, this doesn't change-- basically it doesn't change the kind of life that I have.

Do you have negative feelings about German products?

I don't know. Well, it all depends. It's some things that I used to, but I suppose some of the people in Germany today, some of the younger people who were born after the war, I don't know whether you can hold them responsible for what was done by their parents. I don't know whether you can always do the sins of the fathers. I mean, it can go on. That doesn't make any sense, really.

So I have no, against the current generation in Germany that was born after the war, I suppose many of the people have shown some, in the past, have shown some kind of remorse. Many of them have been very friendly to Israel. And I have no particular animosity to that particular group.

But anything to do with Nazis, I do. I mean, I'm very upset about this shenanigans that went on with this Klaus Barbie, and about how certain American officials, for whatever reason, supported him.

Sheltered him, and then let him escape to South America. And we knew all about it. I'm more angry at our own--

At our own government.

At our own government for that kind of thing, and for the fact that are still Nazis in this country,

Of course, Dr. Mengele is still alive.

Yeah. Well, he's in South America.

But there are always reports. Representative Holtzman has indicated in the past that there are former Nazis. Most of them are not even Germans. I think most of them are people from the Ukraine--

Ukrainian.

--who came into this country, and they're still given a-- that's the kind of thing I suppose that still would get me angry. I still get angry if I'm dealing with-- you hear about situations, about actual people who were there, who participated in these kind of things.

Also, I get a little bit annoyed about all this hoopla about poor Rudolf Hess, who was in Spandau. And they want to have him released and all this tear jerking about him, and all these reports that come out, you know, that he really wasn't so bad and all of that, which is all ridiculous, because he was the vice-- he was the second in command from '33 to '40. So-- '41. So I mean, to me this is--

I suppose it's stupid that they spend millions of dollars just to keep one guy in that particular jail, and that money could be used for better purposes. From that point of view. But about feeling sorry for him, I couldn't care less about Rudolf Hess, as far as having any crocodile tears for a man who had that position in Germany during the war.

Are you still actively searching for members of your family?

No, no. Because whatever was-- I mean, my grandparents would have been dead a long time ago.

And your cousins--

And my cousin, they lived in Romania, and my uncle told me they were killed. They knew what happened. So there wasn't so much that people disappeared in our family, and you didn't know what happened to them. I mean, we knew what happened, more or less, I mean, to the members, you know, of the family.

Well, we thank you very much, Max Lendner. You've given us another dimension in our archival history. And I know it's very difficult for you to go back to those memories, those negative, sad times.

Yeah. Yeah.

But you're doing a service for the community.

Well, at least this way, at least when this is shown, it will say-- the most important thing is to illustrate and to keep on the record that these things happened. This was not something that somebody made up.

And not only that it happened, what the repercussions were.

And what the repercussions were.

On you, and your family, and the next generation.

Right, that it's something that was ongoing, and that it actually took place, that they have the-- denies all these reports.

These revisionists.

Revisionist thinking. These places never existed, or these things were never done, when they were done. And I'm a witness to the fact--

You're a witness to it. And we thank you. We thank you very much. Good night.