

Good evening. My name is Toby Ticktin Back, the Director of the Holocaust Resource Center in Buffalo. And this evening, our visitor is Mrs. Frieda Sysman, who was born in Cologne, Germany. Frieda has a very interesting and unusual story to tell us.

Frieda, you grew up in Cologne. Will you tell us a little bit about your childhood?

Well it was a very happy childhood. My father was a businessman.

What kind of business did he have?

Textile.

Textile.

Yes, and I had a brother, my mother, my grandparents, my aunts, uncles. We were a happy family. Did you go to school in Cologne?

Yes, yes. I went to kindergarten, went to school in Cologne.

Music and art and the normal things.

Well, my mother was. Now, I was too small then. And then in 1938, my grandparents were sent away.

Where were they sent?

To Poland.

Why were they sent?

Within 24 hours all the Polish Jewish people had to get what they could together, and they were just sent out. So it's a life saving, in 24 hours, we put together and to be sent out of the country.

Did your grandparents survive?

No. Nobody survived. Not my grandparents, and I lost an aunt, and from my father, everyone died, everyone.

So you, and your mother and father, and younger brother were left in Cologne. And what happened to you all?

Yes, yes. Then in 1939, my mother had the guts and the courage to put my name and myself and my brother and to send us out, the first train that was leaving Germany.

Who supported this train?

Who paid for--

We-- she gave-- my mother gave me money. And the Germans were so flabbergasted to see those little children, that they let us through. But parents who did it after, were-- the kids never went through. They were ready--

Well, what your mother the idea that the time was so dangerous that she had to separate the children from the parents?

Because this was already after Kristallnacht. We couldn't go already on the street. We had to be in hiding. And she had a good neighbor with which she lived for years and years in the same house. So that neighbor was German. She was not Jewish. And she told my mother they would start to kill us all. And that's what gave my mother the courage to send us

out.

I remember you telling me this neighbor had family that was involved with the Gestapo, and they had warnings.

Yes, a warning, and they told us. And so I was nine years old, and my brother was seven.

Two little children, all by yourselves.

Two little children, yes.

Were you alone or were there other children on the train?

There were four more children. Two couples with their children, yeah.

So you were six children, and where were you sent?

Six children, we were sent. And that train went to Belgium. So we arrived scary, hungry, without our parents for the first time, To Brussels, to Brussels.

To Brussels.

And over there, the Red Cross took us over.

What did they do? Where did they take you?

They asked Jewish families to come and see who would like to take those children in. And I had family there that I never knew of. They came to pick us up.

In Brussels?

No, in Charleroi.

Which was near Brussels?

Yeah, it is two hours from Brussels. And I went with one family, and my brother went--

Oh, so you were separated already.

We were separated again. And my mother had told me once I arrived alive, I should please send a letter to her neighbor who was German. Why didn't you send a letter directly to her? We couldn't have. They were already in hiding. My mother and father were in a room. They couldn't go out on the street, nothing, and that lady took them every night something to eat.

And I wrote her that we were alive. That we were well. And a few months after, my parents were smuggled. A smuggler came, and they came to Belgium also.

So they had to pay a lot of money.

They had to pay everything they had.

Was this--

They came just the way they stood, nothing, they couldn't take nothing, because they had to be in the water, till here to swim the Seine who separate Aachen from Liege.

Oh, yes. Yes.

They had to swim this over, and a German took them till there, the border there. And from there, on the other side, the smuggler was waiting for them to take them into Belgium.

The smuggler was Jewish?

Yeah, a Jewish smuggler.

So you had a German and a Jew working together?

Yes, together to save us.

Were your parents the only family to--

To smuggle?

--to be smuggled?

Well, that night they were the only ones, yes.

They took at night?

Yeah, they could only do that at night. They couldn't be seen. They had to be in the water. It was awful. It was dreadful. And this was 1939. And the same German told my mother that they wouldn't touch pregnant women, so my mother got pregnant in Germany. And--

So she went, when she was leaving, she was already pregnant?

She was already pregnant, yeah. And then the 12th September 1939, my brother was born. And then 1940, the 10--

Excuse me. Your brother was born in Belgium?

Yeah. And we suffered because we were illegal. We were not supposed to be there. We are not allowed to be declared.

You had no passport?

No nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing. We were illegal, and in 1940, 10 of May 1940, the Germans start occupied Belgium. So we run away again. We run to France. And after we arrived to France under terrible, terrible circumstance, because the Germans did bombard the trains.

Oh, you were on a train that was bombarded?

Bombarded. So but this-- everyone. Belgian people, Jewish people, and no Jewish people, everyone--

Trying to get a step ahead of the Germans.

Tried to get away to France. And then we came after three days and night walking--

Walking? From Belgium to France?

Walking, yes. I saw people dropping there. To France, the Germans were in France, with their motorcycle, with the guns. There they were. This was 1940. And they told us to turn around, back to Belgium walking.

Oh, my. What did you-- where did you stay? What did you eat?

Oh we stopped like in the--

In the meadow? In the fields?

In the fields, yeah, in the fields. And stopped in farms. Then the Red Cross after two days started to come and give-- and my little brother was just a few months old, and he was like death. Everyone told my mother to throw him away. He was full of impetigo.

She couldn't nurse him?

She couldn't nurse him. She didn't have--

She didn't any milk.

She didn't have anything to eat anywhere. But at least we were together. And then we lost our father between all the hundreds of people. People stopped-- he was stopped. They thought he was a spy because he spoke only German. He didn't know how to speak French. So it was a dreadful, dreadful experience already. But still we were alive, and we came back to Belgium. And then started the real trouble.

We had to wear a yellow star.

That said Jew.

As a Jew, we had to be registered. And in August 1942, they took my father away. The Germans came.

To your house?

On the street, we were walking back, from the street. And they stopped my father, and he was sent away. And I never saw him anymore.

And they didn't take your mother or you?

My mother run after him. But the only thing, my mother did run after my father. She lost like-- she lost her head.

Sure, she was emotional. So emotional.

And next thing I knew, I woke up in the church. I had fainted on the street. And I was with my two brothers.

So you were about 11, and your other brother--

I was 12.

12.

My brother Irving was 10. And my little brother was 2 and 1/2 years. I had him on my arms. And I woke up in the church. That's the first time I saw a church. And the priest was very, very nice and good. And he heard my story. That was 1942. So he told me, he could take my little brothers to an orphanage, but he couldn't take me.

Why couldn't he take you? Because there was a girl.

Oh, and this was just for boys?

Just for boys. And I know he gave me a piece of bread.

Oh, you must have been starving.

We were all three starved. And in the middle of the night, he took us to that convent. And Mother Superior was very, very nice. But she said, I'm sorry I cannot take your brothers in, because I have 250 orphans here. They are my responsibility, and if the Germans find out, we're all going to be killed.

Were they all Jewish orphans?

No, they're not. No. Those were just--

Belgian children.

Belgian children. And I begged and I cried, and I said, if you don't take them all I have left, I have to go with them to the Germans.

And she was very nice.

Oh, here's a picture of you and your little brother.

When was this picture taken, Frieda?

No, this is 1934 in Germany.

Oh this is before the Anschluss.

This is before. This was when it was--

How sweet.

--normal times in Germany.

It was happy times.

Happy times. Yeah, because they were simple times.

50 years ago.

Yeah.

So you begged the Mother Superior to take the brothers in. And what happened? And then I went back home.

Did she take them in then?

She took them. On the end, she took them. She had pity on them. She saw me cry. And--

You're the big sister carrying the responsibility.

That's it. And then how my brothers cried. They didn't want to go without me. It was just terrible.

Were you all speaking French already?

Yeah, I spoke a little French, yeah. And I went back to that house where we used to live all alone. I didn't know if my mother was still there.

Oh, my.

And the good neighbor had taken in my mother.

Oh, she returned.

My mother, yeah, came back. She didn't know where I was with my two brothers.

She must have been petrified.

She was petrified. So a neighbor at night took her in, and told her that she saw a priest picking us up from the street. But she didn't know which priest. She didn't know where--

Where to go.

My mother went crazy.

But that was like an overnight when she didn't know where you were?

Where we were. But then the following morning, I was there. So then I told her-- the boys are in a convent. But I didn't know where. The priest didn't want me to know where. He took me in the middle of the night, so that I should not start running in case the Germans followed me.

And it was just two weeks of hell, because we couldn't go out. The woman couldn't keep us. She was afraid for her own life. And I took chances. I remembered where the church was. I went back at night with my mother, and I begged-- I begged him to take me back to the convent. He said, I cannot take you, because-- I said, please. And he was nice. He took my mother and me back to the orphanage. So Mother Superior say that she took my mother, but she couldn't take me.

Oh my goodness. Because it was too many people. She was afraid.

And your mother would be able to work in the convent?

In the kitchen downstairs. That was in the basement, the kitchen.

Oh what trauma for a 12-year-old girl.

But the kitchen, but Mother Superior sent my mother to the girls, because my brothers were with the boys there, and my mother went where the girls were. They were separated.

Oh girl orphanage--

In a different, not a long distance, at a short distance.

Could she see the boys?

No, she couldn't. Only once a year, Christmas.

Once a year she could see them?

Yes, because it was too dangerous.

Oh my, goodness.

Christmas, because Christmas parents came to visit--

The orphans.

The orphans, so my mother could smuggle herself in.

Oh, my goodness, so hard for your mother.

But what happened to you? If they wouldn't take you in?

Well, this is a trauma by itself. It was just terrible. The lady told me she knew of a lady that would take me, in that I should start there to clean. I didn't know how to clean. I never had done nothing. And the woman where she took me was so mean and so bad.

Did she have a business? What did she do?

Well, she had a very, very illegal business. Up front, she had a woman that makes hats, how you say "modest?"

A modiste.

And on the other side she was running a-- a house of--

Oh, a brothel.

Like a rendezvous. And my duty was that I had to make all those beds. And asked how come you have so many beds? And I was 12 years old.

Such a young girl.

And she told me it's none of my business, just to clean. But one day a big fat German came in, and then that's when I was--

You were very frightened.

Oh, I was so scared. She didn't feed me. I was like a skeleton.

She made you work, but she didn't feed you?

She made me work. I was full of lice. I didn't have where to wash.

She didn't let you bathe?

And you wouldn't believe on what I lived. She had a big, big dog. I'll never forget it.

A dog?

And I was-- so I'm still afraid of dogs. Till now, I cannot have a dog. But that dog, she gave him to eat, and when she didn't look, I went and the dog [BOTH TALKING] The name was Bella. I took the scraps from the dog. Otherwise, I couldn't live. I was so angry.

Oh, my.

So I went and I took from--

From the dog.

And one day, I just couldn't take it anymore. So a man came in there. He was waiting I suppose for his lady date or what. And she made me go up. Because the lady didn't come. This little tray, I don't know what was on it. I knocked on the door. I went in. And he said come on in. And I was so scared.

He said, how old are you? I told him, 12 years old. And he asked me my name. I gave him. I had a false name by then, I had. My name was Alfreda [? Michaud. ?] Yes, I had false papers, a false name. He said, what do you do in the house like this? And then at that point I--

Was he a German?

No, he was a Belgian man.

She had German and Belgian men coming in. At that point, I didn't care anymore. And I told him. I am Jewish. I don't know where to go. I have nobody. He said, well I tell you what. He gave me 50 francs. That was money at that time. On the tray she had put bread. He gave me a piece of bread. He say, you're going to go down the stairs, and you go out where I come in. I didn't know there was a door in the back of a garden. In front, she had, you know, the [INAUDIBLE], and in back was a garden where the men used to come in.

And the woman came in like make believe they buy hats.

It was a fake front.

He said, you wait at night. You go out. And he gave me his address. And you're going to go to my house, and I'll take you where your brothers are in the convent. We'll find out where your brothers are. And he took me. And I Mother Superior was mad at me that a stranger that I said, I promised I wouldn't say. And I told her, I'm not going to go if you don't take me. I sleep on the street.

I'm not going to go. I have nowhere to go. And so she took me in also.

Oh, so you finally went with your brothers.

They were really, very good. They saved my life.

I think we have a picture of the sisters from the convent.

Yes, and I still write to them.

What's the name of the convent?

The convent is a Filles de la Croix, Filles de la Croix Was where my mother was. Those are Daughters of the Cross.

Oh, Filles de la Croix

Filles de la Croix

Daughters of the cross.

Of the Cross. And I was at Maison Saint Joseph, the House of Saint Joseph, and they saved my two brothers and my life. And my mother. And I want to say that after the liberation, Mother Superior, Mother Saint Joseph was her name,

thought that it was a shame that I was only 15, and that I didn't have education. But she thought that I was smart enough, because once a week on Sundays she let me go into the library. And in the library they had only books from saints.

And that's why I know by heart all the Saints like Saint Joseph, Saint Pierre, Saint Christopher. I know all, yes, because I read them, and read them, and read them.

And nobody ever taught you French? You picked up conversations?

Oh, no. Oh, don't forget I went from 1939 till '42 to school in Belgium.

Oh, when you lived with your relatives.

Yes, when I lived with my relative. But that was all six classes, four in Germany, and two in Belgium. And she was so good. After the liberation, she took me, and we went downtown. But I looked like-- I looked like a nun, yeah, with a big coat from the nun, a black dress, black shoes, black stockings.

And she took me to-- excuse me. Yes. And she went with me to a priest. It was like a college. And she said, here is the girl that I would do anything if you could teach her something, something besides the saints, the life of the saints. And he said, well, I have very good rapport with [NON-ENGLISH]. [NON-ENGLISH] was--

[NON-ENGLISH], the educator.

Yeah, it was a stenography. It was a school. A business school.

Oh, a school of stenography.

Stenography and typing. But in order to make stenography, you have your vocabulary has to be very good, because you have to translate the stenography too. So he said, well, I'll try. I'll put her-- I have a test. And if she makes it, and sure enough, I was lucky. I passed the test, like everyone else. And for a year, she paid, Mother Superior paid for me. And I became a stenographer.

At the age of 16?

At the age of 16. But I had to lie. I had to say I was 18, because by then the Americans came into the city, and were looking for secretaries. My mother and my brothers were still in the convent, because they didn't have-- if they went out from what to live.

They didn't know what to do.

What to do so I told my mother. I said, don't worry. I'm going to earn money. And I'll support you. And I can proudly say I did. I made myself high heels, and they gave me a dress. And I went, and I got the job at the American-- I will never forget it.

Amazing.

Yes.

Let's backtrack a little bit before we go to liberation. What did you do in the convent?

What did I do? And how many years were you there, and did you make any female friends?

Yes, that girl [? Suzanne. ?] It was very sad. She was there because she was the oldest of 10 children, and her father had run away to England to be with the army, with de Gaulle, and left her mother all alone with 10 children. And by then, there was no welfare like here, nothing. So the mother started to--

To run around.

To run around, and she got sick, and they had to take her away. So the kid was put-- her brothers were put in that same house.

Oh, in the same convent.

Convent. And she couldn't tell me why she was there. And I couldn't tell her why I. But one day she said, is your mother running around too?

Oh, so that's how you--

I said, no, my mother is not-- I didn't know what it was. What did they know from such a life, running around.

She wasn't Jewish.

She wasn't Jewish. No, but she stayed-- she was so good to me.

You were friends, the same age?

Yeah. She was one year older. And we came became-- until at the end I told her when we were liberated I said you know, Suzanne,] I am Jewish. That's why I was here. But I was--

I think we have a picture of you with Suzanne.

Yeah. Here--

This is liberation? This is when? This is what, June 1945.

We were liberated, yeah, we went out the two of us, we got a dress from the nuns. I mean--

What did you normally wear in the convent?

Well, it was like-- they had no clothes for girls. So--

You wore boys' clothes.

No, I wore a nun's dress shortened.

They shortened a nun's dress.

Yes, from the nun-- but I didn't I had to wear like a [INAUDIBLE]. I had to go to mass every day.

Every day?

Yeah, but I didn't take communion. No.

So you know the catechism?

Yes, I saw how to become a nun. I was allowed to see how they become postulant. And from a postulant, they become novice. And from novice, they take their vow of chastity. Very, very interesting.

Good people. Wonderful people.

Very good, yes.

What did you--

They saved my life.

They saved your life.

What I did, I tell you. By then they had already 12, 13 little boys like my brother. And they thought it would be a good idea--

Were these orphans? What kind of children were they?

Some were orphans. Some were placed when parents didn't behave. The judge took away the children.

Oh, like a juvenile delinquent?

Like the judge, there were kids that didn't behave, they went stealing or robbing. So those children.

So they were difficult children?

Yes, those children were placed by the judge. Other children, when parents didn't behave, were placed from the King, the Kingdom Belgium.

Right. Yes.

So with those children.

Did you take care of them? What did you do?

Yeah, then-- by then I was 13 years old. They gave me one home, and they gave me those children. And there was-- and what the nuns said, it wasn't much we had to share. There was no food. I mean, we were always hungry, always, but so were the nuns. All the children were always hungry too. So they gave me the little children. And I was with them.

What did--

The whole day, don't ask. There was no choice, nothing. I was a baby-sitter.

So what did you do? For instance, a day's activity.

I was fantasizing, if not, I'd lose my sanity.

Sure, sure.

What I made up, I told them little stories, how it was, the world was outside. I remembered my childhood in Germany. So I didn't tell them. I told them this was a story like Alice in Wonderland. What I was thinking, I made stories. And they loved me. I was like a mother to those, like a young mother to all those little children that never saw parents.

Who didn't have a normal life.

Who didn't have a normal life, no. Nobody had a normal life.

You grew up very fast, didn't you, Frieda? Very fast. You lost your childhood.

I didn't have a childhood.

You didn't have a childhood.

No. No. I didn't have a childhood.

Now, here you were in the convent. And you were sheltered. Did you have a feeling of war around you?

I tell you what. I had the feeling that I was not normal. I didn't-- I touched chairs. I touched a table. I didn't think of a house was still a house, if people were-- you don't know what goes through. And the main question, why. Why?

Why did you have to upset your normal life?

Right. Why was my father taken? Why was my whole family taken away? Right. Such suffering, why? That was in my head.

You just didn't understand. And could the nuns answer your question?

Well, I was not allowed to talk, this sort of thing.

You weren't allowed to talk?

Not-- to the other kids, I mean to the orphans, only to the little children, I was allowed to talk. Because they were afraid that I should tell. The nuns didn't know I was Jewish, only Mother Superior knew.

Oh, so it was Mother Superior who said, you can't talk to the other children, because she wanted to protect you.

Yes. Yes, because she was afraid. So I wasn't allowed even to talk.

Could you see your mother and your brothers?

My brothers I saw. In fact, my little brother was my pupil there. So and my other brother I sometimes, I say hi in the dining room, which they had.

And your mother?

I saw him suffering so. My mother, I didn't see. I saw Christmas.

Once? Just once at Christmas?

Yeah, once a year Christmas.

When the parents came.

When the parents came. Then I had one visit.

Oh, my. What a difficult many years you had.

Yes, it was. And then I remember, I told my mother that I wanted to become Catholic that one Christmas. And she said, why? You know you are born Jewish. And I said, well the sermon this week was the priest said if we take a match and we burn on our finger it hurts. And so you can imagine when you burn in hell, your whole body, how it hurts.

Oh, and you didn't want to burn in hell.

I didn't want to go to hell. And I didn't want to burn. When I went after the sermon, I went up with Suzanne, and we took a match. And I says, see how it hurts? It's just a piece of finger. I say, because she wasn't Catholic. After this, she turned Catholic. We're going to burn like this the whole.

You know, this just goes through mind. It was just--

Well, you were under an influence. And you didn't have other education.

Yeah, but they didn't ask me to become a nun, no, no. Mother Superior say, you were born Jewish, and you have a mother, thank God. And you'll come out. And everyone will be just fine. She was a beautiful, beautiful woman.

Are you still in touch with her?

She died. But I have to tell you one story. She said when she dies what she wanted is to have some Holy Earth from Jerusalem to go with her in the--

In the grave.

And my mother didn't forget this. When we went to Israel, the first thing she did. She went to Jerusalem. She got some--

Holy Earth.

Holy Earth. She went to the white [NON-ENGLISH]. There is a monastery in Jerusalem.

Yes. Yes, I know that monastery.

She went. She had it blessed. She went to Belgium. And she died with this.

Oh, what a wonderful story.

This went in--

A beautiful story.

Oh, and then I went back two years ago to Belgium.

To the monastery, to the convent?

To the convent.

This was very touching, which I think.

And then are some of the nuns still alive?

Some of the nuns, yes, some they remembered me. I went back with my husband. I wanted him to see this.

It was a beautiful, sentimental journey.

And I saw Suzanne.

Oh you saw Suzanne. What's Suzanne doing? Is she married? Does she have a normal one?

Oh yeah, she has grandchildren just like me, we correspond. Yeah, she has a beautiful family.

So while you were in the convent, at least you had a girlfriend.

Yes. This yes.

That saved your sanity.

That saved my sanity. For her and for me both.

Both of you.

And you were just like sisters.

So how many years were you in the convent?

From 1942 till 1946, four years.

And before that--

Till I got the position, then I took out my mother and my brothers. I was 16. But everyone thought I was 18. I had to lie again. So all my life, my youth was a lie, with my false paper, with my real paper. I didn't remember anymore what was, because under 18 I couldn't have gotten a job.

So how many years did you work and live in Belgium with your mother and your two brothers?

Till got married. In 1947 I met my husband who was left all alone from eight children.

From eight children, from the country?

Eight children from Poland.

And he came to Belgium?

He came to Belgium, because he didn't want to stay in Germany. So he came with a transport from all those on the way to-- it was in Palestine, because they are not allowed to stay in Belgium either. Belgium didn't want them. Nobody wanted them. They were the refugees. But he stayed here. He met me, because my mother by then had to open a soup kitchen for all those--

All the refugees.

For all the refugees. She had pity on them, yeah.

And I met my husband who was left all alone.

Till you had each other.

And we married, and we went to Israel.

You went to Israel before was Israel. Then you went and what year did you go to Israel?

1949.

Oh, you went after the country was declared a country.

With your mother and your brothers?

Then my mother followed me with my brothers. But first, I went with my husband.

All these things at such an accelerated age you did. Frieda, when did you find out what happened to your father?

We never found out.

You never--

He never came back. So that's how millions knew that.

Well, sometimes people have evidence from someone who saw something or was in the same camp or the same bunk. But you don't have any evidence at all?

No, one evidence I have this Paulette that I was with [INAUDIBLE] for the year. Her father was on the same train than my father. And the train went to Auschwitz. But her father jumped. Would you believe he jumped?

And he survived?

And he survived in the resistance. So then he came-- so the first thing I say, where is my father. Because they had been taken on the same transport. She say your father--

Your father continued on to Auschwitz.

Continued onto Auschwitz.

So you just assumed that he died. Do you tell your children those stories?

No.

They don't--

No because--

It's too hard for you.

It's too hard for me.

Too traumatic.

I'm sensitive, and I know my children are sensitive.

They never ask you stories? Or they-- they want to know why they have no grandparents, no uncles and aunts.

Sure. Sure. But they know-- as everyone knows. I said, they are among the 6 million. Sure they are hurt, yes.

But when you got married and you went to Israel, a normal life began for you.

Well, it was very hard, because--

You had no role models and no money, I suppose. Not just no money, no water, no electricity. But it was our country. I liked it. But the reason that we came here is because my mother found two sisters.

Two sisters who had survived.

Survived, yeah.

And they were in Buffalo?

One survived in Russia, and one survived and one came in 1937.

To Buffalo?

To America.

To Buffalo?

Yeah, but they are not in this city. They're not anymore.

They're not living here?

No.

So that's when you decided to leave Israel and come to family. A lot of people did. They wanted to move towards family.

Yes, yes.

So what year did you come to Buffalo?

1956. No 1958.

So you had nine years in Israel.

Yeah.

So I presume some of your children were born there?

All three. My three children were born in Israel.

So when you look back on these memories, it's hard to believe, isn't it?

That's why I wish that the gentleman could even, if I could show that boys [INAUDIBLE], the things the that those children wrote in, because this is really dear to my heart.

Your autograph book that you saved from your school days.

Yes. Yes. But I want to emphasize again how the nuns were good. That thank God. It's through them that I owe my life. I cannot say it enough. And that every year, I mean I write to them every year.

You write to them every year. You're still in touch?

Yeah.

And you send them gifts?

Yeah, I send something for the chapel every year.

That's beautiful. That's really beautiful. Do you think that if it hadn't been Belgium, it wouldn't have been as easy to survive?

Oh, you couldn't survive nowhere else.

What do you call--

Poland surely didn't--

No, Poland didn't help.

Auschwitz was in Poland. Poles, it's a-- I'm afraid to say it because Buffalo is a Polish town. Poles were as bad as the Germans. Because I tell you, the family from my husband were hidden for three days in a hole, in a hole in a house. There was maybe 40 people in that hole. The Poles went to the Germans to say it smells. There are Jews in there. And they came. They threw grenades. And they killed everyone in. You wouldn't have seen this in Belgium. You wouldn't.

What do you attribute to the mentality--

Because Belgian people are good people, like people from Holland, like people from Sweden. But Poles are still very, very anti-Semitic, very.

Historically speaking.

Very, very, very, very-- because I remember. What-- why did my father run away at 14 from Poland to Germany. You couldn't go on the street. They threw stones at you. They spit on you. They called you Zhyd, which means Jew.

In Belgium, there was a different kind of feeling.

So what the Poles started, the German finished. That's all.

So that's the reason for your parents to have run away from Germany. Yeah, when my mother was two years old. But her parents had left.

But then from Germany to Belgium, they thought they would be safer in Belgium.

Well, they would have lived all their life in Germany. They had a terrific life until Hitler came. The Jews in Germany had the best life from all over the world, until Hitler came.

It was rich cultured life.

It was rich in culture, yes, and a beautiful country, and people were beautiful, until Hitler came, and the Nazis.

And that all changed.

And then you could see what a culture of people can do.

Did you go to the gathering in Jerusalem or in Washington of the survivors, Frieda?

No I didn't.

Just, you didn't want to go.

No, because I know that I cannot find nobody. Everyone was killed or dead.

I wanted to ask you if any of your schoolmates from Germany have ever surfaced, any of the children you went to school with in Cologne.

Two, two are survivors that's all.

Nobody survived. Everyone was killed in Poland. This is in Poland, 1939.

When they were deported.

In Krakow in the ghettos, before even Germany came to Poland. They were killed in the pogroms from Polish people.

And the two schoolmates that survived where did they live, and how did you find out?

Oh, this is how I heard from them. They were three identical twins. And they live in Brazil.

How did you get together?

I didn't get together. I was told that they were alive. It came out through the archives. I didn't see them.

Oh, you haven't seen them, and you haven't written to them.

No, but what I know, all those that I have in my book, had a very, very violent death in Poland. They were killed in the ghetto.

You were very, very, very lucky. And we're very, very thankful. Thank God. We're very, very thankful that you survived, your family, your husband, your children.

Like I say, things that I cannot say, like when they took away my father, or when we had to separate. For father and mother to have to separate from 9 and 10-year-old children, you are a mother yourself. So you know what it means, what it feels like.

It's impossible.

And just because you are Jewish. Here, you have to kill someone in order it should be taken away. And then he gets a chance. And then you take 6 million, just to be Jews. And then you have people that don't even believe it. And that's the reason that I came and said it.

I know. I know. And we're very thankful. I know it's so hard for you.

It's very hard, very.

Very hard.

Because you live with it all the time, but you don't want to talk about it.

Well, I'm--

But I thank God I'm in America, which is a beautiful country, and just praying that it should never, never happen again, that our children should have freedom.

Thank you. Thank you very much, Frieda.

You're welcome.

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