

Good evening. My name is Toby Ticktin Back, and I am the director emerita of the Holocaust Resource Center in Buffalo. We are at Channel 4, and it is Monday, December 14, 1992. Our guest this evening is Peter Hadley. Peter you are on now to tell your story-- your very interesting story.

Well, my story has a very unusual beginning. And I guess maybe the best way to tell it is with a joke that actually happened with me back a few years ago. My mom and dad suggested I start investing in my life by having life insurance. And so we invited an agent over. And of course, all the formal questions that he asked.

And he finally got down to asking me. He said, what is your name, and I said Peter Hadley. And he says where were you born? And I says, I don't know. And he said, when were you born? And I said, I don't know.

And I had caught my mother's eye, and she had a twinkle in it. She knew I was going to take this guy down the road a ways with this, in fact, to the point that he was ready to close up all of his books and walk out.

And then finally, we had to explain why I didn't know, really, who I was, where I was born, when I was born, and the fact of how I ended up where I was in Kenmore, New York, at that time, of the questioning. And that was back in 1963.

And I guess the best way to do-- and I'd like to share something that I had written-- tried to put down some things looking back into my life because I don't have much of a past that I'm aware of. And as we go on, we will find out exactly why.

I'm going to read a thing that I had started writing, like a book, and the opening introduction to it. And then a little story about something a little later on.

"Time, place, and age have no meaning without life. Life is the most important substance with which everything associates. Without it, time, place, and age are worthless and cannot be measured. Reasoning like this brings to the forefront one important fact-- that life governs everything it comes in contact with.

Does this mean that life has purpose and value? If this be true, then the next question is very something important-- what is life?

From all corners of the world throughout the ages, people have asked that question. The answers vary, but the results have fallen one of two ways. Life is valued or it is disregarded.

What determines the answers to life? Does time, place, and age guide us to our end, or would you believe it, you and I?

Believe this if you may. But if not, then what affects, motivates, or controls the hard core of your being? With whom do you leave your trust? What do you allow to govern you? Who are you anyways?

Maybe you really aren't sure about anything. Well, don't despair. You are an important person. Maybe you should observe yourself from another viewpoint, a crow's nest experience, to see things with a different perspective. This will help you to realize that your life is full of meaning, that it is being directed for a purposeful existence. There is hope for you and in your mire so look up, for there is life's light among the shadows."

And looking back without any background, and being told when I was real small-- and we'll get into that-- by my mother that good things come in small purposes-- packages--

Packages.

--and that God had a reason for me to be here. And trying to understand that as a young lad and not having the deep philosophical reasoning behind it.

Where did I come from? I really don't know. Where was I born? That I don't know either.

But the story that we have started, I can only go back to maybe a box like this, which was a suitcase that came with me from wherever I came from.

And the reason behind that is very simple. During World War II, as you have discussed with many people, that there were a Holocaust of the Jews. And yet I think the Americans don't realize that there was a Holocaust of not only nationalities, but generations. History shows that during the end time at Berlin, young kids were found fighting and protecting the city for Adolf Hitler.

And research has given-- looks into different areas of what has happened during World War II. We have discussed before Lebensborn, and I'm not that familiar with it. But I do know that for the Germans, that was a way to perpetuate the potential Aryan race that Himmler would want.

Also, from articles over the years, and one that was saved by my mother talked about an incident where the Germans would go into a city, look over all of the young lads, and those that were, shall we say, acceptable to that Aryan qualification were taken right then and there, and the rest were assassinated, killed, right on the spot.

They were taken where?

Back towards, I guess, to-- I'll call it grooming farm, to get the young people to start being indoctrinated in the German Nazism concepts and philosophies, and groom them up to be the young, stouthearted German people--

The pure Aryan.

The pure Aryan race. And with that kind of background, also from studying, we've talked about euthanasia. But back in the '30s, Germany was looking into the fact of not only eliminating the older generation, but developing and creating a generation through test tubes, testings that they had done, and so forth. With that kind of background, still don't know where I came from.

Where does my life start? It starts like everyone else that was born in a family, and the time of exposure. But as far as for history, and recorded that I know of, it started in a boxcar.

During the end of the war, the Germans were losing. They felt that they needed to have one more resurgent into the French area. And if they could prolong the war, they were developing the artificial gasolines to fly their jets. They were developing the rockets and stuff like that. And so the background of the Battle of the Bulge area time, when they went back into France.

And that's where my story starts. It starts with the fact that I was in a boxcar of many cars on the train. And--

Do you know what country you were found in?

Don't even know where. It could have been along the French--

Belgian France.

--Belgium area. And that was never divulged to me. The only things that were divulged were that this train, which had many cars in it, was stopped by Allied troops. They found many kids in each of the cars. And the majority of them in each of the cars were dead.

And here I was in a box with no identification with me or anything else like that. The only thing recognizable is that I had a scar on my hip area from-- they don't know where it came from. A burn mark or something like that.

And looking around, they found, apparently, some names on other boxes with a-- but none on mine.

In the boxcars.

In the boxcar. And they found one on the floor. So they put that one with me, and said, we will call him Peter [? Schreiner. ?]

And interesting enough, the lady that was in that car, they felt she knew who I was, because the way she reacted at the time, but also trying to communicate with her, they felt that the war had really done a lot to her mind. And she was just hysterical, apparently.

Who was the "they" you're referring to?

The Allied people that were in the--

This is told to your family.

This is told to the family. And so then after that incident occurred, we do not know where, when, and so forth.

How old are you about then?

[LAUGHS]

I know it's a big question mark.

That's a big question mark. Don't know. Again. Later on in the story, we'll establish maybe some dates that had to be gone into as far as my official records, as far as being a citizen in this country. But at that time, to answer your question, probably within the one- to three-year range.

We're talking about 1944.

Right.

The end of '44.

Late '44 or early '45. And that wasn't many months before the war was ended in the European front.

Then, from what I was told, I was taken to, like, a Red Cross center, or something like that, for safety. And then, after the war, there was a massive effort, not just for me, but for many kids that were taken from different countries, and homes, and so forth, to try to get them back to where they came from. And--

May I interrupt for a moment.

Go ahead.

You talked about the possibility of your being the product of Lebensborn, producing the perfect Aryan child from perfect mother and father. Is there a possibility, do you think, that perhaps you might have been kidnapped from Poland or other countries captured by the Nazis?

I think that probably is the more practical way to look at it. I've always accepted that as my history, that I was taken.

A few years later-- and we'll get down to that-- I will tell an incident that I would say back that up even more so. I know people have said, well, were-- you look, from certain areas over there, just like our accents distinguish us, where we're located in this country. And then you could have been an American that was over visiting during the time, and gets caught, and so forth.

So there's so many different potentials and possibilities. And it leaves a lot for the imagination. It's something that I haven't dwelled on, though.

Well, then let's get back to your leaving with other children, being taken abroad. Do you want to describe that, or elaborate on it?

I will try to elaborate as much as I can on that one.

Sure.

From what I was told, after the war was over, there were definite searches gone around Europe to try to find out where I came from. They used the name Peter [? Schreiner ?] as their basis to go by, and trying to find, I'm sure, a family along that line. And after a while there, they just came to the conclusion that I didn't belong to anybody.

So you think the Red Cross was doing this--

Whoever was in that--

--or whatever agency.

--associating with them. Yes. And from then on, like in current history that we have done in Vietnam, that people would sponsor, churches would sponsor, bringing some of the orphans over. And the way it was told to me, that they felt that there was potential with this young lad, and that he was brought over here. I firmly believe that it was God's purpose and will, as we get into the story for it.

So a church here in Buffalo, with a family, were sponsoring a couple of the kids. And I was one of them. And as I got here-- I came over in a troop carrier ship. And we have a picture of-- one of the early paper pictures.

Why don't we show that picture right now? Here it is on the screen. Do you want to tell us about it, Peter?

Well, these early pictures that we'll see, I assume that's an identification picture of myself too, like we do now, trying to search for people in lost and found. And this was probably, I think, the earliest picture of myself.

And then the other picture that we have-- and there's a-- I think there's a--

Here it is. Here it's coming.

--with a life preserver and so forth. This is when I was-- they say I was about three and a half again-- we're putting time on something that they have no records-- coming across on a troop carrier ship to the United States, and then ending up in Buffalo. And I like the phrase that the Bible says what good comes out of Nazareth-- and I've jokingly said about Buffalo the same way. Why would I go to Buffalo? What good is there in Buffalo? But there was a purpose in it.

And tell us about this picture here.

This lady apparently was a lady who was taking care of me, and in responsibility of getting me to my next destination. And they have a picture with the bib on here, and they felt that I might throw up in a car. And of course, they did not know me at the time--

That you were real strong.

--that I enjoyed traveling a lot. In fact--

Was she the woman from UNRRA.

Yes, she is. Her first was Betty.

So are we in Buffalo here, do you think?

I don't know if it-- again, the time slots. And nothing was definitely given to me in what order these were. We're assuming that these-- pretty close to what is going on.

And then, as I got into Buffalo, the family that I was intended to go to, the wife was very sick. And the husband felt that he couldn't take care of another young kid in the house. And so I ended up in the orphanage here in Buffalo, down on Delaware Avenue.

Does it have a name?

It's changed name since I was there. I can't tell you. They lengthened it, and everything else like that.

But I also-- the first recollections that I have is being in a high chair. My mom insists later on, in years, that I said I did not like, lima beans at all. And I said I thought it was-- and in this high chair in this foster home that they were feeding me lima beans or something they like that. And that's where I developed my distinct dislike for it.

So let's backtrack. You went from the orphanage to a foster home? Do you want to give us that sequence?

To a foster home. I might have been in a couple. I'm not sure. But the one that I do remember the most is on Back Creek Road in the Boston hills here in New York.

You remember it.

I do remember it. I remember the big tree by the farmhouse. I remember the dog that they had, and the foster brother that I had. His name was Skippy. I don't remember the rest of the name.

Do you have good feelings about all this?

Yes, very much, except for when I was bitten by a rooster.

[LAUGHS]

I must have been doing something wrong to aggravate him. But I felt good afterwards, because Skippy went out there and shooed him away for me, or something like that. I do remember sleeping on the second floor, going up to the stairs and going to the left with my suitcase.

We have no history of when this suitcase came into my life, but it's been with me ever since--

Do you want to open it up so we could see it? Do you think this suitcase might have come from Europe with you?

I would think so. It is designed a little differently than what most suitcases are, as you notice. We open from the--

It's all paper and cardboard.

--lengthwise.

And it's not too big, so it would be--

Not too big.

--adequate for a little boy.

And I remember kind of packing it the day that-- and I'm jumping ahead, but packing it under the bed and getting ready to move out.

During this time, I apparently went to one of the churches downtown. And the neighbors of a couple that lived in Kenmore saw me in church several different times, and happened to mention to this couple that there was this cute little boy that is an orphan. And that started a chain of events that-- that's why I said God had a purpose.

Here was a couple that were a little older in years. They didn't have any kids. When they heard about me, they prayed about it, and they were very much obsessed with hearing that here was a little boy that didn't have a home and came from Europe.

And they went down to the orphanage. And they kind of went in and said, we would like to adopt Peter [? Schreiner. ?] And you don't do that. You have to go through the formal procedures-- who you are, where you are, do you have the capability of supporting a child, and do you qualify with age, and so forth.

And I've always joked that when God wants something done, it doesn't matter of all of the little things that happened. It will be done.

And one time I was sharing with a friend. And I says, they didn't know my parents. They were going to win out. And I'm referring to Larry and Betty Hadley, who lived in Kenmore. And through a process of time of events-- I don't remember too much of it, except going to their house one time. They bribed me with ice cream. I do remember that.

And to make a long story short, in that situation, it was finally-- they were given permission to take me home, and then wait for the final procedures as far as adoption was concerned.

How old were you then, about?

This would probably be around 1948. So again--

You might have been.

--might have been five years old or something like that.

Does anybody recollect, when you came to the orphanage, whether you were speaking a language other than English? Perhaps you weren't speaking yet.

I remember, when I was little, that I used to say something about the soundings of Y's and double L's, but nothing more than that. I can't even tell you if I was speaking German or-- I don't think I was speaking French, because I think the development of the French, and the way they talk, and the more nasal sounding, I never had that. I apparently geared right into the Midwest, Western New York style of speaking quickly. But no, I don't.

So let's get back to your story. So you went to Larry and Betty Hadley's home.

Right.

And they started the process of adoption.

Right.

And how long did that all take?

It wasn't until 1949 that I finally got my adoption taken care of.

Do you remember that?

Not really. I remember that I think I had to sign something.

Could you write already? I don't know. I think my dad kind of helped my guiding hand and so forth.

I do remember the talking about Lawrence-- and my dad's first name, Lawrence-- that they wanted that in the name. Because I was going to be--

Oh, they retained the Peter, the original Peter, and gave you Lawrence.

And I remember very little of that time. I remember more of the day that I was supposedly coming to stay with them, not the worry of whether their applications would be rejected, or anything like that. And my parents never shared that with me. So I never was aware of it.

But my mom was telling me this the other day, and she remembers now. She's up in her 80s. She said that I got into the car and sat behind the steering wheel, and dad got in the car picked me up, and put me on his lap. And obviously this is before seatbelt time. And all the way from the children's home to their house I sat there pretending I was driving all the way home.

And I do remember when we got out, they opened the trunk and got some of my toys out of the suitcase. And they got my tricycle out. And we had a real long driveway.

Was this a tricycle that they had bought for you?

I don't know where it came from. It may have been something like that. But as soon as I got on the tricycle, I rode right down to the sidewalk, to the street, and made a quick left-hand turn and went over to our neighbor's house, and leaving my dad to unpack the car.

[LAUGHTER]

Very cavalier.

Well, there were kids over there. And so I was definitely making sure that, hey, I'm here to stay and let them know about that.

You don't have any recollections of apprehensions or being frightened.

I felt very much content. God put the pieces perfectly together. There wasn't any friction. I needed someone to invest in me, and my parents needed-- [BOTH TALKING]

They obviously wanted you very badly.

Very much so.

They were older parents in their 30's?

They were older in that time, yes. And from what I understand, usually, when you were of that age or a little older, it was something that you wouldn't consider for adoption. Usually the young couples.

As far as apprehensions, I can remember as, growing up, not in the house, but I absorbed the routines of doing the normal chores that I had to do. And one was taking out the garbage.

And I can remember at night, when I took the garbage out, and we, again, we had a long driveway. The garage is behind

the house. And I had to take the garbage from the garage all the way out to the street curb, and at times felt-- I had anxieties not in fear, but that there was noise, and maybe simulating that there was a wild animal out there or something like that. And I'd hurry myself to get in.

And after a few years that went away. And I would almost-- at the time I was attributing it to maybe my feelings of the war and whatever experience I had in it.

Being encase in a dark cattle car?

Could be. And I don't have it now. I enjoy going out and looking at the stars. And God certainly has made some beautiful things out there to observe.

Peter, we have a copy of your-- of your adoption. Oh, this picture precedes the adoption papers.

Yes. My dad was an amateur photographer, very much interested. He had worked at Allegheny Ludlum Steel for many years. And what he did was to show an interest in photography.

And this picture is really special. I wish they had the-- out just a little farther, because my right arm, in my hand is a little plunger. And my dad told me-- he says, whenever you're ready, push the plunger and you'll take your own picture. So this is my own self portrait.

So you're thrilled. Now let's see what we have after this.

This would be the adoption papers.

And what year is this again?

And this would have been 1949. And I believe it was September 16.

And that is a very, very special day because everything was made legal.

September 16--

--16, 1949.

--when I first met you.

Yes, we-- where first contact was. And then this would be about 1951. And this is when I was naturalized. And at that time, in Western New York, I was the youngest person to ever have been naturalized. And they had an article in the Buffalo paper about it.

And they already gave you a year-- an age.

Right, at the time.

And they made you how old then?

Eight years old.

Eight years old. Eight-year-old boy.

The interesting thing, the documents that you're looking-- that you've looked at are my only legal documents, since I don't have a birth certificate. I wasn't born in Buffalo General or something like that. And my dad had the foresight of having, in my papers, a date for my birthday established for court records that I would have. And that was July 30, 1943.

So now we got a date.

Now how did he pick July 30?

I really don't know how they came about it. I don't know if there was something, information that they had gotten, or what, or the guesstimation of how old I was at that time. But that's the age that they picked.

Now we're going to go back just for a second to the adoption paper, because I shared this with you before, and I think it was very interesting. Apparently, I was very much aware of what was going on in this country because they had Mother's Day. And Mom told me the story that one day I came up to her and says, well, how come they have Mother's Day and Father's Day, but they don't have a day for me. And this is before Children's Day became in this country.

And so they made the day that I was officially adopted as Little Boys Day. And every year they have given me a present because that has been the day that I came to live with them.

September 16.

Yes.

Very beautiful story. Now we have a picture of you with your grandparents, or in your-- tell us about this.

This picture was taken right around the time of being adopted. And this is in front of the house in Kenmore. So this was just before I was adopted, I believe.

One of the pictures that we will have will show a cottage. And that will be with my--

This is a cottage. And where is this?

Right. And This is just west of Madison, Wisconsin, on the Wisconsin River. And this is-- and I told you I would tell you something about going back to-- did I come from Lebensborn as a test tube? Was I kidnapped or something like that?

This cottage, as you notice on the right-hand side, is a garage. And apparently I had gone to a park and had gotten a balloon, and came home. And I was behind the cottage. And there's a back door going into the garage. And I walked with that balloon very proudly.

And the next thing I knew, I was zapped by a flying object. And it turned out to be a humongous owl. And apparently my grandfather had said that this owl had caused a lot of other problems.

Well, I went in there crying. My balloon was destroyed. And most embarrassed of getting zapped by this thing. And they figured that he saw the balloon and went after that. But of course, I guess-- I wasn't like Charlie Brown, completely bald, but I got part of the hit.

And so my dad and grandfather decided. They went out in the yard and looked, and finally found the owl. My dad asked me to go to his car and get his revolver, which I did. And very proudly-- I remember carrying it very nicely to him-- my grandfather got his double-barreled shotgun, and they went out.

And a strange thing happened. I was not allowed to stay outside. And I went inside. And I do not remember anything after that.

But my grandmother, who was inside taking care of me at that time, told me a story that relates back to earlier years, that I must have had a flashback. Because she said as soon as the shot was fired, I immediately told her that my mom had-- my real biological parents-- my mom had dark hair and my dad wore a uniform of some sort. And for some strange reason, and only God knows this, I said to her, tell me when I get older.

Oh, you said that.

I said that to her. And she said she would. And she told me the whole story a few years later when I could really remember about it, and keep it in my memory.

And what do you think about that? What can you envision?

At that point, I would envision that I was taken from them. In talking with some people, two stories. I was kidnapped by them or, if the uniform was a soldier, that either I was taken forcibly or donated to the cause. Again--

You--

--just don't know.

--just don't know. Do you want to tell us the other story about your grandmother, who was a dentist?

Yes, my grandmother was a dentist in Wisconsin for several years before she was married. And she was the first woman dentist of that state. And she looked at me just like you look at a cow. You open up the mouth and everything else like that. And she said, by looking at your teeth, and how they're coming in, she said the date that they gave you July 30, 1943, for your birth date, is very, very close, give or take six months on either side. So she says the date that they gave you is very much accurate. So she, professionally speaking, how do you argue with that?

No, no, no. That's a good analysis.

So here you are. You're growing up with your parents. Anything unusual about that?

Strangely enough, no. I felt that being in a home where I was loved-- my daughter was looking at some pictures that we have, that my parents had-- the one that you saw the self-portrait. My parents took a lot of pictures over the years, when I was in school and everything.

And she kept saying, you were spoiled, you were spoiled, you were spoiled. And yet here I was an answer to the dream of my folks. And yes, they did. But I didn't feel that I was spoiled. I didn't feel that I was for want.

Did they tell you anything about your background?

Nothing more than what we talked about. My mom did-- relayed a story that I remembered during World War-- the Korean War. She had read an article, apparently, about the orphans that were found in Korea. And she told of the story of some of the kids that would get the food. And the kids would only eat very little of it and clutch the food in their hands.

And I think she felt very much content and happy that I didn't do stuff like that in the beginning, that apparently the barrier, and whatever background that is in my mind, didn't come to the forefront, except for, as I told you, like taking the garbage out, and just were pretending.

But that's a normal thing of any little boy, being afraid.

I didn't think it was unusual at the point. I wasn't afraid of the dark in my room or anything like that.

And people knew you were adopted, your friends, your family?

Yes. As I've gotten older, I was very much surprised how much a stigma of adoption has been to people who have been adopted. I knew I was adopted. My parents never hid it from me. They always shared.

And they said God wanted you here. The good thing comes in a small package. And you have been a blessing in our lives, and very much that way.

And I guess I'm very much surprised that, when other people talk about adoption, and the stigma, well, why didn't you tell me. Why are you insulting me--

It was also natural. It came with age.

And so it was just that way.

And also I've been asked to talk to a group that has done search and seeking of their biological parents. And I've never had that desire. Yes, I've naturally thought a couple of times, well, where did I come from? Who are my parents? Would I ever see them again, or anything like that?

But it wouldn't linger. It never went deeper than just the surface thoughts. And again, I attribute to the fact that I had needs, and they were met by my parents, and why go looking anywhere else? The oasis is there. Why go looking for water somewhere else?

Well, you had a very fine family. And you have a very fine family now. Actually, maybe we should project the picture of your family on the screen now. And tell us who's who.

Well, with me is the love of my life, of 25 and a half years of marriage is Alice. And then, going from right to left on the bottom would be Beth, our middle daughter. She was born in '73. In the center, our pride and joy, number one son, first born, David. And then to the left is Caroline.

The two from the center, to the right, have graduated from high school out at Holland Central, have gone to Bryant & Stratton. Beth is still going to Bryant & Stratton. And Caroline will be graduating from Holland Central this year. Each one, we feel, is a gift from God, just as, I guess, as much as--

As you were for your parents.

A few years ago-- I'd like to share this story with you. East Aurora has a program during the Easter time where you submit your names into the different vendors, and stores, and so forth, to win a big chocolate Easter bunny. And one year we hit the jackpot-- literally. My wife gets a call on Thursday night, and she had won. And so she was high and excited about it, and went in. And it was about a 26-inch rabbit.

Big one.

Very much so. And it was hollow. And they had a contest that one of the hollow ones had a \$50 bill in it.

And then Friday night I got a call saying that we-- I had won one, and Alice says, oh, you just didn't want me to be the only winner. And yet there was a winner out of this.

We talked about which one might have the \$50 in-- normally that you would feel. We, all of a sudden in the discussion, thought, wouldn't it be nice? We were blessed with two. Wouldn't it be nice to share? And in the conversation that came around, let's call down to the orphanage in Buffalo and see if they would like to--

The orphanage--

[BOTH TALKING]

--orphanage from whence you came.

From whence I came. And so we took one of the bunnies down after calling, and talked to the people. And they were--

the kids said, when we walked in, of course, with the orphan kids there, that they were looking. My kids felt that, oh, maybe they're thinking we're going to be dropped off or something like that.

And we went in and talked with a couple of the people. And there, questioned properly at this stage, do we accept a gift like this, or something like that.

We shared this story with them. And of course, the question is, if we find the \$50 in this one, what do you want done? They says, it's yours. We decided that we wanted to share something back with-- from where I came.

And they didn't, to finish the story, win, but we got a nice letter from them thanking us for sharing the time.

That's a very nice story. Talking about children, we forgot we have a picture, a drawing, of David's. Maybe you'll tell us about this drawing.

This drawing was made in 1979. And the reading that I started off with, at that time I was starting to write a little book. And I was reading the first two chapters that I had finished to Alice. And unknown to me, David was down the hall in our home, and he heard the story being read, about-- and I talked about the train going through the night, and how it was stopped by the Allied troops, and so forth. And not knowing that what I was reading was a novel aspect of my life-- well, maybe this is how I was found.

And about 15 minutes later, since I'm not a fast reader, David comes walking up with this picture. And here he had drawn a picture of the train, and right to what I had been reading. And so I have not gotten beyond chapter two, but that is a precious picture, and it's--

That certain is precious. How old is he at this?

He would have been eight years old at the time.

Oh, the same eight, when you were naturalized. And you told the story about your background to your children?

They've heard it many different times. We did get a chance to-- we tried to find some books and articles in regards to boxcars, and kids being found in them. And there isn't any one that talked about a train has been captured or anything like that. I'm getting specific. But we've seen stories on-- and there was a story about I think it was Lena in Poland who had a trainload of kids.

Yes.

And we read a book, Of Pure Blood. And we tried to find a copy of that. It took quite a while. It's something that I'm interested in. I would like to put it with these things and pass them on, because that part is--

That's your biography.

--my background. And so we haven't found it, as I said, but we keep looking.

But the kids, they know the background. And I keep things open just like my parents had done. And I-- sure that somewhere along the line, and I've seen it over the last several years, that the kids have gotten very much sentimental about the home, and its heritage, and wanting to do things together, like be together for the holidays, Thanksgiving and so forth.

That's a tribute to you and your wife. Incidentally, what do you do professionally?

I'm a media coordinator for the city of Tonawanda Public Schools, just north of Buffalo. I've been there for quite a few years. People ask what I do up there, and I usually give them the runaround as far as an answer. In fact, for several years, some people thought I worked for the BOCES services here in Western New York instead of for the school

district, because they'd always know I was out of BOCES or something like that.

I coordinate for the district the closed-circuit television programming that they have in the high school and junior high, do videotapes of different plays and projects. We have many different projects that we have gotten involved in that I have to sit down, do a lot of editing, and give it that professional look. And I have grown up in it for the last 20-plus years doing that.

And I get a chance to work with kids a lot, train them in how to work the equipment. And some of them have gone on to use their talents in that area to further [BOTH TALKING]

Obviously, you enjoy your work and do it well.

Well, the first half, yes, I enjoy it a lot. I do the best that the talents that God's given to us-- the other day I heard we're given the talents to do things, and we should let it shine, shimmer, and glow.

Shimmer and glow. That's very nice. I think we're-- is there anything else that you want to tell us about your own personal story? Any other--

Well--

--vignettes?

--all, I guess, I can say is from what I've learned in looking at those, that people who have been searching, that I hope that they do find what they're looking for. Hopefully they don't limit the look to just finding the biological parents, but to realize who they are. I know who I am, and I'm very content with who I am. And I think that is an important thing in life.

Regardless of our backgrounds or circumstances, we don't have control. God does give a hedge of protection around us, but to know that you're content with what you have.

My students have challenged me, why don't you continue to pursue your career in things? I've worked the Chuck [? Knotts ?] show when it was here in Buffalo. I've worked on a cable sports program for several years.

But the thing is that the family, the home, and what you already have is what your basis is. And that's what I've already had. When the two of us gelled together like Velcro, I guess, Mom and Dad, that lives were complete at that point. And a growing process, and being able to share that.

That's why, I guess, I'd like to spend time with the family. I've given up doing many things so we can spend that time, because it's so important. God's given us that gift, you with your family, and everybody else.

And those who are searching, they need to look within for the real reasons why they're doing it, and remember, everything that I had up to this moment before the search is important. And I'm not talking about the feelings of adopted parents. My mom, I think, would have been hurt if I had looked, because am I not adequate enough? She was. And that's why the desire never went deep. And because we can get possessed looking too much.

And I've talked to several people who have gotten so much involved. We think we can handle what we look at, but we can't, because we don't understand the changes in the decades as life goes by. Why do you give up a child?

Well, this might have been circumstantial, of course.

Right. And then accusing that parent of giving up that child in their search. And what's important is there were some arms that were open saying we're taking you regardless of your past--

And gave you a very beautiful life.

--and gave you something. And that, I think, is important. And I'd like to share that, because without knowing who you are, and being content, then you're not fruitful, as far as a person, and you can't share what you have to offer to other people honestly.

Peter, do you have a philosophy about the Holocaust, about World War II, about what happened? Certainly affected you, and of course it has a happy ending.

Well, back-- war is hell. I've learned that from my readings. Back in 1964, I had an opportunity of meeting a person who revolutionized my thinking over the years. And that was a personal relationship, meeting Jesus Christ.

And shortly afterwards, at that same time that I came to know him as my personal savior, I got my draft notice for Vietnam. And I was getting letters from Uncle Sam saying, we want more information. And it seemed like I was getting it every day.

And a good friend of mine, after I had accepted Christ, we talked about the situation a few months later, because he too was notified. And he's like a brother to me. And so we could share from the two different perspectives.

I says, you know, I'm very thankful, as a human being, that here were some people who went out and experienced hell, fighting to keep this country free. And I came over here. I was wanted, and I was accepted, and loved. And I says, I could do no less than to do the same.

And my friend, who has the same belief as I do, and the same savior, said he could not go out. It's the same story as Sergeant York that was played by Gary Cooper so well. And he said, I have studied the Bible, and I feel it's wrong. But he said, I also would give for my country. And he put two years in as a conscientious objector.

So I didn't go. God intervened. I had my Perthes. And that's one of the things that I have carried with me, the scars with me, and the Perthes disease, the deterioration of a hip ball socket, that I had problems right at this time I was getting these letters, and I had made this decision.

So you're saying it was all providential.

I would say, yes, definitely. And I went to the doctor. And he wrote a nice letter to the draft board people saying here is a very healthy person, but he could not physically take the rigors with the hip. And I'm a living fact of it a few years later, because I am very much hobbled. And if I had gone into the rigors of--

And I think God spared me, because several of my friends went over to 'Nam, got into the Agent Orange, and hearing that war is hell, and it does play terrible minds on a-- tricks on their mind, that I felt, yes, God did spare me from that.

But still proud of my country, proud of the fact that there are people who are still willing to give, that there are people who are willing to spend time like yourself, and sharing, and looking, and helping.

I know that we all need people, as Barbra Streisand said. People who need people.

Yes, people who need people.

And when we are giving, then we are the luckiest people in the world. And our country has been blessed that way to do that.

I can't think of a better way to conclude. Thank you very much, Peter Lawrence Hadley. Thank you.

Thank you.