

And some people were telling jokes to overcome, to still live a sure life.

Yeah, we've got to reload.

Camera roll seven, take 10.

[BEEP]

I want you to talk a little bit about how Germans saw Jews and how things changed in Vienna, how you remember the changes.

Your question is about how I remember what happened in Austria, let me say, at the time of the Anschluss, the annexation. I was 17, had just turned 17. It was an overnight traumatic change.

People who were your friends on the 10th of March and the 11th of March were no longer your friends on the 13th, or at least showed that they went no longer, or at least maybe you thought they were your friends before and they were really never friends. To a young person like myself, maybe I did not feel the impact as much as perhaps parents felt when it happened because they had to worry about their children. But it was an overnight turmoil more-so emotionally than anything else. It was a disruptive interruption of a normal life.

This was March. We had neighbors with whom we were very friendly and they were Christians, and at Christmas time that particular year and previous years when we were smaller we would go to their apartment and help them decorate their trees, share the cookies, go to school together. Overnight, within hours, Vienna was transformed into a sea of swastikas. Where did they come from overnight?

They were not manufactured overnight. It was a total metamorphosis of attitudes, of feelings, of emotions, of relations, everything more emotionally and psychologically than the physical aspect of it, although physically, within hours or a couple of days, Jews were taken out to the streets to scrub the streets. They were given little brushes, toothbrushes to go and try to rub away oil paint that the Austrians had painted on the sidewalks and on the walls.

[SPEAKING GERMAN] Red, white, and red until we are dead, which was Schuschnigg's, the Austrian government's, slogan not to vote for a referendum to vote for Austria to remain Austrian. That was the Austrian colors-- red, white, red-- and still are. So how could these Jews, these women, children, and elderly, get these oil-painted slogans off the sidewalks? It was impossible, but this was part of the harassment.

And sometimes this was done to the strings of Wagner's music, you know, Tannhauser and Gotterdammerung. People dancing around and poking fun, and elderly Jews having their beards set afire with matches. And when the flame finally seared towards the chin, they would take buckets of water and pour it into their faces. These were utter denigration, harassment for the pure joy of doing it. This is what we saw in Austria, hundreds of thousands of people standing on the Heldenplatz, the square of the heroes in the Innere Stadt, the first district in the city, and applauding, and cheering, and receiving the Germans, the Nazis.

The Austrians later claimed that they were the first victims. I did not see at that time any, and I can say that without any hesitation. I did not see any victimization of the Austrian German non-Jewish population, although those who were part of the socialist movement and those who were in the labor unions were also hiding out, and some of them ran away. And I know that the center forward of the Austrian football team called Austria, a fellow by the name of Matthias Sindelar, committed suicide because he was emotionally so inflamed by what had happened. Yes, that happened.

But if an Austrian wanted to put on a brown uniform and walk with that brown uniform, nobody would have known what he was thinking. He could have done it, but the Jew couldn't do it. But basically the heil and sieg heil was a shot that was heard. I only wish it would have been heard far enough so that some of the Western powers would have done something about it at the time. Maybe in hindsight they might have a feeling that that could have prevented a lot of things if they would have right then and there started with to resist Hitler with Austria.

Instead, they went to Munich and gave him another piece, and that land for peace thing that we hear a lot of now pertaining to the Middle East. As far as I'm concerned, the land for peace has really in history-- nowhere in history you can go from beginning to end of history books. Land for peace has never worked because those who want land are never satisfied with that land. It's like a spider. Hitler caught Austria, and that was his first victim into that spider web, and he wasn't satisfied.

There would have had to be more. In fact, the resistance would have come before Austria when they walked into the Saarland. The Germans and the French would have resisted then, but that's history. That has not much to do with my particular story, but being the question is ask how did Austrians and how did the Germans-- of course, I had more contact with the Austrians than with the Germans per se, but the Austrians were not really the first victims. They received the Germans with open hands, as far as I could see then, and history has borne that out. I'm sure there's always exceptions.

Now, assume that I don't know what a deportation is. Explain to me what a deportation is.

To deport someone is to send someone against his will into a place where he will be exposed to hardships, to harassment, to forced settlements, to being in a surrounding that isn't his, in a country where nobody speaks his language. And it is the forcible shipping of people into areas away from their home in order to fulfill a certain agenda, a political agenda or a plan that was conceived to do harm to a certain group of people. People get exiled because they have politically done something to-- Napoleon was exiled.

The kaiser went into voluntary exile. We hear about the South American dictators. They go into voluntary exile. If they had not voluntarily taken exile upon them, they may have been arrested, tried, and maybe executed, or if they live in a country that doesn't execute, they would have been deported. They would have been asked-- other countries would have been asked to accept them, like Archbishop Trifa was in Detroit. After he was denaturalized here, he was deported. Nobody wanted him. Finally Portugal took him in.

He was the fellow who was the head of the Iron Guard in Romania. Killed thousands of Jews. Lived in Detroit.

And what did deportations mean?

What? In France?

Throughout Europe.

Throughout Europe, deportation means taking whole populations and moving them against their will into an area of confinement, where they were exposed to the whim and all the vicissitudes that came with being in that particular confinement, and these confinement were camps.

OK, we got to reload.

Take one.

So just to quickly sum up, what did it mean to be deported?

Under normal circumstances, a deportation of a person takes place when that person or that group have made an attempt to topple a government or to do something that is not lawful, do something that is against the law. And they could be deported. They could be undesirable aliens or as whatever the designation is. These Jews-- men, women, and children-- were deported for nothing else but to send them from their country of residence into an area to be confined in camps that can be called concentration camps, and the real word for some of them is extermination camps.

To be deported, not, as they said, to be resettled or to work, but for one thing-- namely, to be exterminated, but that wasn't the case of the Jews. Deportation normally means the sending away of a person or group of persons who are at

the moment under some cloud of suspicion, or endangering a situation or government, or rebellious or instigating away from their home. Deportation is also a form of punishment. It's banishment and punishment. In a way, you're being exiled away from your home of origin into an area where you are not at home, as long as you are away from the place where you are not desired, and Jews were undesirable under the German occupation in these various countries that they were deported from.

Now, I want to go back to Oradour, and I want you to just tell me what that massacre was, and tell me about the confusion of the two names.

There were two Oradours in the area of Limoges. One was Oradour-sur-Glane, and one was Oradour-sur-Vayres. Glane, G-L-A-N-E, and Vayres, V-A-Y-R-E-S. The German division was Reich, who had advanced from Toulouse towards the front lines in Normandy-- that was after the 6th of June landing in 1944-- had encountered some resistance Maquis activity on the way up from the south to the west, to the coast. And they had been informed that the village of Oradour has-- being that they had already been harassed and attacked, and they were already in the village of Tulle, and had-- was it Tulle or Brive? But, anyway, in the Corr ze had already hung a lot of males on butcher hooks in front of butcher stores, and their families had to parade in front of them to see that.

Being that there was resistance to their advance, they had taken that out on these men who were taken hostage. They advanced and had heard that the village of Oradour in [PLACE NAME], the department-- well, Limoges was the capital of that department-- had a Maquis resistance movement, except they confused Oradour-sur-Vayres with Oradour-sur-Glane. It was the "Vayres" on the river Vayres. "sur-Vayres" means on the river Vayres. That really had a small resistance detachment there, and there were arms there in that area.

They confused it. They went into Oradour, arrested the mayor, and asked him to show him the cage of arms, and he says we have no. We have peaceful citizens here. You can search the village. They arrested him, and in the main square-- there's a report. I have that report also with me. There's a report on the main square.

They were getting ready to saw his legs off in front of the populace, and his two sons begged them not to do it and they would stand in for him. They still did it and then killed the sons, too, and in the village between 800 and 900 people were killed that day. That was the confusion.

They went in there toward the female and children's population. Come to the church. We'll photograph you, and that was the end of them. They were marched into the church, and, as I said before, the church was surrounded by hay and straw and was set aflame, and of course today the village of Oradour about a 1/4 mile away, 1/8 of a mile away has been built up again. And this ruined locale, where the ruins of the church were and with other mementos, is still there in the original site of Oradour, with all kinds of mementos like baby carriages, and dolls, and shoes, and buckles, and belts, and toys, and that sort of thing.

That was the tragedy of Oradour, for which there was a trial held in Bordeaux, and some of them were sentenced to what amounts to minor sentences.

Tell me how you witnessed the November pogrom that's known as Kristallnacht.

I did not witness it. Talking about the Kristallnacht? I did not witness it because I was lucky enough. Again, a stroke of luck that I left Vienna on the 25th of October, 1938. The Kristallnacht happened during the night from the 9th to the 10th of November.

It so happens during that night I had already escaped Vienna. I had been swimming through Sauer River into Luxembourg during the night from the 31st of October to the 1st of November. It was All Saints' Night.

After it had been raining for about five or six days, I had to swim a river that a smuggler had told me I will be able to wade through. And he said to me keep a pair dry socks in your coat, and I put them in my coat, and the next step was up to here in water, so here would go my dry socks. And I did not witness it in Austria because I have a strong feeling had I been there I would have been arrested with so many young men that were.

My mother had beseeched me to leave, and she was the one that prevailed upon me to leave early, and I see this woman's eyes in tears and gray hair. It was prematurely gray, and it was due to her that I am frankly alive today. Had she not sent me away then, I would have been there on Kristallnacht. Who knows? This is all conjecture, but during that night from the 31st of October to the 1st of November across the river, and from the 9th of the 10th of November I was smuggled into Belgium. And there was about 6, 7, or 8 people in this car, and the smuggler that smuggled me to Luxembourg was also the one that smuggled us to Belgium.

As we are approaching the Belgian border going north from Luxembourg in the Ardennes region, we look to the right, and there was a strange appearance in the skies, a strange coloration into reddish, and purplish, and weird colors, almost like some sort of a natural phenomenon. And it was interesting to view at the time, but little did we know that this was Kristallnacht and all of Germany was a flame. It wasn't till the next day, the 10th of November, arriving in Brussels that we saw the headlines describing, headlines speaking about what had gone on and then reading further of what the tragedy of it was. And that is the way I witnessed Kristallnacht-- from a distance, just with its reflections.

Tell me about your who in your immediate family survived and what happened to some of your siblings.

When you speak about the immediate family, nobody in my immediate family survived. My mother and two sisters were gassed. My father died a natural death in Vienna in 1930. He was only 39 years old.

He would not have survived. He was an activist. He would not have survived the Nazis, I know. Then there were figuring that on my mother's side were 10 brothers and sisters. On my father's side is nine. Quite a few of them were married and had children.

I have still a few surviving relatives in Israel now, and an aunt in Paris, and a couple of cousins. In fact, three cousins, but between 40 and 50 members of my family perished, immediate family, speaking about family family. My mother and two sisters. I said goodbye to them in Vienna in 1938 on the 25th of October and never saw them again. A very stark scene that brings this back to my memory-- and I will never forget it-- is when I went to the hospital to visit my youngest sister. She was then confined with scarlet fever.

She was not only in confinement but in quarantine. This was incurable at the time. They had to go to the hospital. See, there was no injections for that. Scarlet fever was quite a current thing, and I went to visit her to tell her goodbye.

She was on the second floor, like a little elevated at the window, and I in sign language wrote toward her that I will be leaving tonight. And she wrote on the blackboard, good luck. Hope I see you soon.

[BEEP]

I want to go back to the story of Annie again and have you just encapsule this story, and then talk about how you talked with her about it later, when you were hiding in the attic.

That story with the hiding in the attic in [? Cotter's ?] was a very scary situation because I had just come back from the mountains, and I didn't want to be caught again. But as I said before, these gendarmes went up the stairway with her, and in order to entice her to open up, I don't know what they-- she didn't want to open up, and she had no key to open up. They could have broken down the door, but when they approached her and made advances to her, and she sort of implied, yes, if you would just get off the stairs and just go down she'll talk to them.

Now, later when we talked about it, she told it to me with tears and never went into any kind of details, but I don't think that they actually violated her because it was in the house where her parents lived also. But later when we spoke about it, there was just another aspect of a moment of tension that worked out to the good rather than what it could have worked out. Namely, I could have been arrested right then and there and sent into deportation rather than two months later, when I was sent back from Switzerland, and it could have been a whole together different situation.

But later on in life, we talked about it when I visited Belgium again, and it was a tense moment. It was mainly we talked

about it in a very light way. No details to any effect.

How was it different for people in your mother's generation to experience the war from how it was for you?

You mean in 1938?

Through the whole thing in general. In general terms.

I wish I could really other than speculate and conjecture have some sort of a-- I wish it would have been a bug in that transport where my mother and sisters were. How she took to that situation, and how she coped with it, and what her trepidations were, and what her thoughts were, and what the feelings, and all this. When I heard that they were in trucks and were gassed in trucks, I almost was relieved actually because I know when you travel in a truck you can doze off, you can fall asleep, you're tired, and then you just doze off and that's it because this is odorless and colorless and can kill you, these gases, carbon dioxide that kills you.

But how was her generation taking it? By sending me away, I know it was a trauma to her. It must have been because we do that when we send kids to camp only for two weeks, or for two days, or for day camp. We admonish them. We say take care of yourselves, and when you go away for a longer time it is write to us. Let's keep in touch. Don't catch a cold.

My mother coped with it I hope in a courageous way. She had two daughters with her. She had become a widow eight years earlier, and she was used to a life of hardship, perhaps. Unfortunately, between the end of her hardship after the First World War and then the depression in the late '20s and early '30s to 1938, there was very little breathing room for them to recover. So I think the life of my mother, my relatives, and my grandparents during that period was one of hardship, all the time overcoming. My grandparents living in Poland had to overcome pogroms at the turn of the century, and even in the early 20th century, and harassment

My mother didn't have much time to probably cope with anything, just to know that there's enough food on the table next day for the kids after my father died and she was a seamstress. And she did the best, and we went to school, and we had our food, and we had clothing, and we had schooling, and we went to movies, and we had good times and bad times. But I could never really go into a detail then and ask my mother, how do you feel about this now? Because it was all spur of the moment decisions. I mean, we couldn't sit down and discuss it really.

We could discuss the fact, yes, you have to leave rather than us. Why? I knew I was going to have to go through a river and perhaps swim. I was the scout. I went there hoping that if that succeeds eventually my mother and sisters will be able to follow. But from '38 to 1940, when the lowlands were invaded and I was a refugee and I had no financial means-- and to have a smuggler smuggle you, you need to pay somebody.

So I hope that eventually I will accumulate a little bit and maybe get somebody to help, but there was no time between '38 and '40 in those 18 between-- I said '40. 1940, the lowlands were attacked, but in '39 the war started on the Eastern Front. After that, there was no leaving anywhere anymore, so it was just a year had gone by or maybe a year and a half. And that was the end of our being together, in a way, because if it had lasted longer-- if the Germans had not attacked in 1940 but maybe in 1941, maybe there would have been a chance for my sisters and my mother to follow me to Belgium.

But we did correspond, yes. They wrote to us in veiled terms, in code terms, that things were bad and what's happening, and they were going to a ghetto, and all that sort of thing. But I think in the life of a Jewish mother-- any Jewish person-- I think one other little period of suffering was just another segment of a totality of sad events. You know? This was part of the psyche.

Did not have time to go into any kind of details as to what she thought of the future maybe. Yeah, I know what she thought of the future. I hope we'll see you soon. That was the hope. Naturally, that was always the hope, and if you don't have any hope anymore, then you don't have anything, and I was hoping against hope of course, which at the time we didn't know. And anything I would say as to her feelings or attitudes, I would only be guessing and using a lot of conjecture.

Who was Marguerite Berjeaux? Just give me a little portrait of her.

Marguerite Berjeaux was the lady whom I referred to before who was the owner of that little house that I stayed in in Limoges. I lived in an attic-- mansard, it's called in French-- apartment, and actually shared it with my friend Eugene Bass. And when we had people come into Limoges from our groups from surrounding areas with cards, or with material, with printing materials, or inks, or just communication-- and they would come into Limoges. They would also stay with us, something in that little mansard up there with one bed and two armchairs.

We may have had six or eight people sometime up there, and then we just stretched out on the bed and made two for one night on the floor, the bed, and the chairs, and there was no running water in that mansard. We had to go out to the corridor one flight below and bring water up from that faucet to a washbasin. And Madame Berjeaux was the owner of that place, and she knew exactly who we were. She knew me by name Maxon [INAUDIBLE] Lefevre.

Later, she learned my real name. She knew all of our names, and when somebody would come to the door and inquire or ask any kind of questions that she would feel were sort of digging into trying to find things, she would just play so dumb as can be. I don't know what you're talking about. She was a witty lady. She was a very good Lady. A constant smile and very human and understanding, and Madame Berjeaux sent me a silver napkin ring engraved with MB, and she says that's for your son, because my son has the same initials, Myron Bretholz, so she just gave me that as a token.

We went to visit her in 1970. Yes, in 1970, and-- no, actually not. That was 1970. We didn't go to Limoges. In 1954, we went to Limoges, my wife and I, and we went to visit Madame Berjeaux. We walked through the Limoges main square, and they have a market there three days a week. Chinaware all over the place. People are just stepping over it. Some people would think that's a crime to step on china, you know?

But there she was, Madame Berjeaux, in the main square, and we fell into each other's arms. What are you doing here? I said, well, we came to France. We're just on the way to visit you, and my wife met Madame Berjeaux. Very, very nice and pleasant get-together, and that's when she gave us-- she sent us later that ring for my son, later when she found out we had a son. You know? And she did a lot, yeah.

She's also one of those little heroes, unsung heroes. She's no longer alive, Madame Berjeaux. Marguerite Berjeaux. Oh, yes. Beautiful lady.

Thank you. Thank you very much.