

Late that evening in his house. What they done-- they didn't survive, either.

So what happened? Tell me-- tell me what happened to your family?

What's [INAUDIBLE]-- first thing you imagine, they took my father. And my father, with that time, came back from Majdanek back home.

How did he do that?

How? My father didn't look Jewish. He had a nose-- very [INAUDIBLE] nose, and two bubbles on the nose. And he came home.

Did he escape? Or did they let him go?

No, he escaped. And he was walking from-- no, forgot what-- he walked from there the whole way. And he came home. And next time, my father was in a basement with a [YIDDISH], a rabbi, a known, very nice rabbi.

They took them.

They what? I'm sorry?

They took them. Took them all. Didn't come back one. If my father would be with that rabbi, I don't-- I believe that he would come one time more.

You imagine? That moment when we saw my father back-- I was every time-- I had [INAUDIBLE] which was the master man from a garage, every time with him. I went in the country. And whatever I bought-- one egg for me, one egg for him, one chick-- whatever he got, cheese, egg, butter.

So I had-- I said to my father, I brought a live chicken, he went to the shochet. He-- Yeah-- now, I-- one-word question-- why am I still alive?

And I want only tell you, I have a life thanks to my wife. I had a date with the best woman that was ever born. A woman with a heart and feelings, beautiful woman, educated, everything. But she died from cancer.

How did you meet her?

What?

How did you meet her?

The underground needed some parts for their lives-- the phones and that. So they gave me a small piece of paper, and I went there. Come in, in the first room sits my wife. She went in, told them who was there. He told to let me in.

I went, and I told him that-- I pulled out the piece-- that. And he was working with on the underground.

On the way out, I see there sits a very nice-looking woman. I ask her if she would dine with me. She said, yes. And from that day--

And her father-- a friend has a big farm in the next village, and they every time planned that that daughter will get married to his son. And she will go on his farm, and the other daughter will take my father-in-law's farm. And one time, I appeared at her-- what the heck?

A guy came from the skies, you getting married? No, no-- and they know, the traditional, they keep their wealth. So I

took all the stuff, what she had for her parents, packed this stuff, and took her sister and sent it back to the family. I don't need nothing. And I went out and I bought my wife the best things-- panties, everything, from top to bottom, nothing from there.

No, she went there, and they see that it's no joke. He came on [INAUDIBLE]. He invite me the first time, so I came there, one a marine, in the uniform. And the other guy was a chauffeur and [GERMAN]-- in German. I bought a nice box of drink and I went there.

I went there, and one time comes in the girl and serves, and say something to my wife. And she said, she goes out, she comes back. But after 10, 15 minutes, she didn't come back, I go out, you know, dark there. What I hear-- a hound, the bark there. So I go there, I open up the gate, and there stays my wife with a huge girl.

Believe me, it was a terrible picture. Her father had a fruit farm. And a Jewish man was living in a small cottage built there, and he was living all of his life there. And my wife was going with that girl to school.

She brought out food, and brought out some stuff, and that. And she said, that she is not there. So my wife say, go there and there, I will open up the door. You can sleep on that. But it was a terrible picture.

And on Sunday, the parents went that the church, and I had a cold. I lay in bed, and I called my wife. My wife doesn't answer. I put on some clothes, and go and stands a little boy. And in Europe, them round [NON-ENGLISH], they had the wash-- and she washes him.

And later, she took kerosene and was a-- had already lice and that. She packed up-- she gave him my underwear. [LAUGHS]

She packed him a package of food. She cannot keep him. No, this is--

I had the best would ever be. I had a wonderful, beautiful life.

Was that--

And one day-- I had a chicken farm, and eat breakfast, my wife said, Jay, you know, that the roof on that house is too small to contain to the religion. I want to convert. I never, never, never had a word Jew, not Jew, that didn't exist.

And she went to a rabbi and she convert. She was a wonderful-- that is the life.

Do you want another one?

No, no, no-- yeah.

Yes, but this-- but still, I cannot complain, comparing to other people. I lived in Berlin. I bought a boat for 10 people from the council, from Czechoslovakia. And I bought the horse over-- a beautiful horse, I have.

I gave her the best. That woman had a beautiful life with me. What can I do?

You loved her?

Yeah. It was not an artificial, ma'am.

How old was she when you met her?

When I met her, she was 26 years old.

And what was her name then?

Irene.

Irene, and her last name?

Irene Turek

Turek

Was a beautiful woman. Elegant, smart, you can imagine. If you have business with me, something doesn't go straight, and you go sit down both and talk over, she can every time, you go away, she come in, Jay, give him \$1,000 more, whatever. Don't argue. She never was on my side.

She was a lovely woman.

Did it protect you that you were married to her during the time of the war?

Ma'am, I had that accident with the police, that place, Warsaw-- was not a place that to live more. I must try to go on. And they--

How did it happen that your father and mother and siblings were taken away, and you escaped being taken? How did that happen?

What do you mean, how it--

Because you survived, and most of your family did not. So how did that all happen? Can you talk a little bit about that?

Ma'am, I am not a religious Jew. I go only once in Yom Kippur. I go to the synagogue. But I felt alone-- I believe that something is above us. Lots of people, they don't believe in God. I believe in God.

I give you-- listen, I was laying in [GERMAN] house in Berlin. I was dying. And I came out.

How did that happen? Or what happened? How did you--

What happened? My right kidney was closed up in a carbuncle. And one of the biggest-- the professor [GERMAN]. And to operate, I say, doc, if you take out the kidney, I jump from the window. And I was alive, like lay on the table. And at that moment, when he woke up a rip from me, and take out the kidney on a dish.

I lost that-- but there was a sister, the Matilda, she said, professor, maybe you take the kidney out. Have ever-- [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]-- I was able to get. He, thanks God, I never have trouble. I never was operated, or something else.

When was that? Was that after the end of the war? When did that happened to you?

At the end of the war-- that happened in '46. Can you imagine? After a week's time I came home, I got terrible pain. So my wife calls him up, he came with his own car, picked me up, and brought me to the hospital.

And you know what it means, [GERMAN], to take out-- that the nun from the chapel? He took a gallon of glass what-- that would throw it on the floor. [GERMAN], Jesus and this, [GERMAN].

But they came out, they didn't move-- that's OK if they saw, you see. By me, he heals everything, so like by a dog. And dries up. The outside part couldn't-- that closed up. But inside was left the materials.

So he opened up one day more, cleaned out. And that.

And Self, a SS man, what he told me-- he was the [INAUDIBLE] of his counting house. It's in the east sector. His family lives [INAUDIBLE], so he was coming every time Monday. He had his room across the hallway. He spent with me hours and hours, talked to him and that.

He thought if I wouldn't work with them, I could never be a professor. What did he know.

Life is not a romance. Life, then, every time it happened something.

How did you learn about your family? What happened to your family?

Well, I was feeding my family. And when they took my mother and her sister, I came in the morning, and I was crying. That my mother say, what happened? And I told her. I have my brother and a sister, and together, they took her. He went with me, but it was closed up by the gate.

And was a German-- the soldier, he told me that he would talk to his superior. And they came, and they told them, they are Hungarian from the Wehrmacht. Then we enter the ghetto. Here, I was sitting in a car, what are you-- [SPEAKING GERMAN].

So were you considered to be a part of the Wehrmacht? Did they consider you being part of the Wehrmacht?

No.

No?

No, what I had done what he told them. [SPEAKING GERMAN]. And he saw what's going on.

Let me try to understand a little better-- your mother and your sister were brought to the ghetto.

Yeah.

Where-- were you at that time--

They built right away, they separate already the Jewish people from the others.

What protected you from going to the ghetto?

I was working for the [GERMAN], and I had-- well, what I want to tell you, when it starts on the Stalingrad very, very bad, they need a man, they brought [NON-ENGLISH], and with heat for the motor. And I went to Stalingrad [INAUDIBLE]. And it was terrible.

They brought down guys without both legs, or with one leg. It was terrible. But you see, in that moment, I didn't keep bad feelings. While there were soldiers, there was the sacrifice. So like lambs.

I personally-- and now, also, I have no bad feelings that the German people.

What about your father and your brothers?

Oh, they gone, they finished.

How-- I mean, what did you see, or what did you hear?

Ma'am, everybody was walking around being sure that he will not come home. When the Germans came in, they took my father to the jail to dig out what the Russians did. The Russians killed a lots of people. And my father, in the evening, my father came back home, and he was telling-- it was terrible, was the bodies already, rotten, stinking, and

that.

We was living with that. You cannot understand that. You understand me?

And then, what is? In fact, that I tell you, life is not a romance. Oh, no.

When your--

All of life is struggling.

When your father did this-- was forced to do this kind of work, was that after he came back from Majdanek?

No, no, either way, the first three or four days, they took the respectful people from the town, from that city. Quite a few people didn't come back, you know.

Were your parents and your siblings deported at the same time?

No.

Or did that happen in one after the other?

Yeah.

And you knew about that?

Yeah, I knew about that. And I went-- and I went to the [GERMAN] and worked.

And you were-- what were you thinking? Were you thinking that you would be the next one?

Ma'am, I don't know. I, myself, I was all the time I have a gun. Honest. And I promised myself, if they catch me, and they want to kill me, I will kill at least two guys of them.

Every time I've worked with a gun. Well--

How did you make your way from Tarnopol to Warsaw to Berlin?

Oh, that-- I had a 10-ton truck with six soldiers, they want-- they brought me to Warsaw. I had everything different, if that's what they want. And I already had my first wife there.

You were married before?

I was married when the-- after a week I came back from the war, there was-- I came home, and I had a girlfriend. The parents want us to get married. And I married her.

And the same girl which was my wife, was sitting in the basement of the Gestapo. And she sent me a letter that she is pregnant. [INAUDIBLE] So I found a Polish woman, I gave her that picture of her for now, and make a confrontation in the Gestapo. And they let my wife out.

And later, I couldn't-- my conscience couldn't let me run away from that wife, what I married, and in the church. Well, the parents, if they would find out that this older daughter married an American Jew, they would kill her. So after the war, I found my first wife, and she married a Jewish boy in the big jail in Warsaw.

That boy was with his father. And they both was plumbers. So he found a place where he built a bunker for himself and for his father. And then, when he met my first wife, he said, you will be my daughter-in-law. And after the war, I gave

away my wife, and she married that young man.

And there was, under Praga in Warsaw, was a house where all Jewish came together. And she, for a girl, died two years ago of cancer. But we went apart in a very good way. We knew, or I say with her and die with her, or I have a chance to save her life and save my life.

And the baby she was pregnant with? Was that your child?

No, that is the second wife. I was-- we was-- I was discussing with my first wife the same way I sit here with you. There was no other way. And after the war, I found her, and she married the boy. And that old Jewish man, he was in heaven, you understand?

And I went to the wedding. And--

So you stayed on in Poland for a while? Or did you?

In Warsaw.

In Warsaw.

Yeah, my first wife was in church when I got married to the second wife. But other than-- whenever I was in Canada, I went and I looked for her. We-- she didn't have hate against me. I did that what was right that time.

I couldn't leave my second wife, and you know that the Pollacks-- there's a bunch of murderers, they would kill her. So I told her who I am, I offered her money-- I had lots of money, I was making vodka. There were two farmers. And whatever they made, half of them, half for me.

And I had money. I had the jewelry from my family. I want to give her everything, and I will disappear. If I hand her the newspaper, but this big [PERSONAL NAME] died in an accident, you will be free. She said, no, I don't want. I want you.

And after that, what I saw with my own eyes, who she is, I couldn't let her. And that, I discussed with my first wife.

When was your first son born?

What?

What year was your first son born?

Andre was born in '42 or '43.

Still during the war? Or after the war?

No, after the war. The 5th of May, the Russian army went in to Berlin.

But that was '45, right?

And I am behind them, and I found a place to live, and everything. Yeah.

And how long did you stay in Berlin?

Oh, Berlin, six years. I had a beautiful business. I was only the one which has an import for chocolate, cigarette, coffee--