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--staring. OK. Uh-huh. Go ahead.

OK. Tana, I wanted to just get back. You were talking about your father being placed by-- was that the Joint Distribution Committee?

Mm-hmm. They placed him into a totally inappropriate job by putting him into a shoe factory to make shoes. And so he said, well, he just felt that he couldn't live like that. And so he was ready to go back to Germany, even though there was nothing there for him.

And luckily, he, I guess, answered some ads, and he found a position in Cambridge, Massachusetts as a cantor. And then he was happy. From then on, life was good for him.

And that was at a synagogue.

At a synagogue in Cambridge.

Was he Orthodox or Reform or Conservative?

No, Conservative. Conservative. Yeah.

And you were raised Conservative?

I was raised Conservative. I went-- I lived with my sister. My sister raised me. And I went to Hebrew school.

I remember every day, after school, public school, go to Hebrew school. I think I-- I did that all through high school. And I was bas mitzvahed when I was 12. And it was just-- that was just part of my life. It was just regular school and Hebrew school.

And was your stepmother there with you then too?

Oh, no. My dad had gotten divorced again right away after we came here. And I never saw them again, thank God, because she was really terrible. I remember her-- see, I guess after the war I still wet my bed and I sucked my thumb, and it would just really infuriate her. And I remember all the beatings she would give me because I was sucking my thumb and wetting the bed. And she'd stand me up in the middle of the room, even though it was cold, and open up all the windows, and just take off all my clothes, and just beat me until-- because I wet the bed.

But this was, I guess, part of, oh, the things that happened in camp. I don't know. But it took me a long time. I didn't stop sucking my thumb till I was 14. But no matter what they tried, that it was just-- I guess that was my security blanket.

Yes.

But he-- it was kind of a really bad time to be with them.

And she even made me, Friday nights, if I would go there, part of the ritual, of course, was the Sabbath, and to observe the Sabbath. And we'd have fish and we'd have chicken soup. And she would make me eat fish even though I didn't like it.

And then I remember one time it was-- the fish was very bitter. It was terribly bitter. And I tried to tell her, and she forced me to eat it. And I got very, very sick. And to this day I absolutely hate fish. I can't-- it's horrible stuff.

And another time-- I don't know. She was just very, very mean person.

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So when you were in the United States, how long-- did she go to Boston with you?

I think she lived in Boston, mm-hmm. But I just totally, I just don't remember her, and after that anymore.

And then did your father live with your sister as well?

No, no. He moved out. He was in his own apartment. And he just did his own thing. And he--

So--

And he remarried again and again. [LAUGHS]

And you stay with your sister and her husband.

I stayed with my sister until I finished high school, and then went off to nursing school, and so on.

I see.

Yeah.

And your father stayed in the Boston area?

Right, until he retired. And then he moved to Florida.

OK. Is there anything else you can think of that your sister had shared with you, or your father had shared with you?

My sisters, my younger sister-- I mean, not younger, but the one that's just above me, my sister Erika, I've asked her several times how it was to be in Auschwitz and things. And she said that they worked. She and my sister Ruth worked in a munitions factory.

And she said that one time, one of the machines chewed up her finger. She still has quite a scar. And she said they couldn't even-- she couldn't even make a sound because if she did anything to show that she was no longer able to work, it would have meant death. It was a death sentence. So they kept it quiet and just didn't do anything. So--

And I guess she was lucky she didn't lose her finger, or that it didn't fester and become infected or whatever. But my older sister refuses to talk about it, her experience.

Even to you.

Oh, yeah, even to me. Even to her husband. Her husband has-- my brother-in-law talked to me about his experience.

Which camp was he in? Do you--

He was in Auschwitz, after-- see, he was in hiding for quite a while. And then someone turned him in. And he ended up in Auschwitz. And he was telling me how he used to have to stack bodies. He'd be down in a pit, and they'd throw the bodies down, and he'd have to stack them.

And then he said one time he saw the commander of the camp come to the edge, and he looked over, and he asked him his name. And his name was Henry, Heinz. And he said, my name is Heinz.

And he said, Heinz, I see a arm sticking out of the stack of bodies. The stack is not straight. And he took out his gun, and he said, you will straighten this stack, or I will kill you. So my brother-in-law broke off the arm in order to make it straight. He told me that.

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And then he was put-- prior to that, he was in a prison. They put him into a prison. And everybody there got dysentery-- typhoid or something. And he said, he just thought he'd die because he was so dehydrated. He was delirious. And with all the diarrhea, and no food, and all that.

So he talks about his experiences, but not my sister. And yet, a couple of years ago she had a stroke, and she reverted back to German. She couldn't talk English. She only spoke German. And she-- it was my brother-in-law told me, it's just like she relived her experiences in the camp.

But again, she will not talk about it. She has three children. And my two nephews and my niece refuse-- they don't know anything. They don't know anything about their parents.

Have they asked?

I'm sure they've asked. I know my youngest nephew, Steven, I'm sure he's asked. And nothing.

Now have you talked to your children about your experiences?

Oh, definitely. Definitely.

Why do you feel the need to do that?

Because I don't want it forgotten ever.

[BACKGROUND NOISE]

No problem.

Keep going.

OK. I think it should be remembered. And there are a lot of people around that say it's an-- it was imaginary, it's propaganda put out by the Jews. It's ridiculous. It's stupid to say that, because it happened. And I just don't want it forgotten.

OK. Thank you very much. I wanted to ask just a few more questions, Tana. I noticed that there was a sheet prepared of the names of all your relatives. And could you just tell me what this sheet is, if you would hold that up, please, and--

OK, this is a list--

If you could show it to the camera.

OK. My father had prepared this, a list of relatives which he lost during the Holocaust from 1941 to '45. And it gave-- it starts out with my mother, who died in Theresienstadt, and my sister Eva, that died in a gas chamber in Auschwitz. Then he lists the rest of his sisters, brothers, brother-in-laws, nieces and nephews who died also in Auschwitz, which was a total of 14 people.

And then he goes on. My grandfather, Wilhelm Wolf Hecht, my grandmother, Dorothea Hecht. A brother, Martin, sister-in-law, Regina, their baby, another brother Eli, another sister-in-law. Brother-in-laws, childrens, uncles, aunts and so forth that he lost in the ghetto at Warsaw-- Warsaw. I don't know how to pronounce it. Warsaw?

Where was that?

Poland. Warsaw.

In Warsaw.

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Warsaw.

The Warsaw Ghetto. They were all in the Warsaw Ghetto.

They were there. And he lost a total of 20 people there. Then another uncle, Isador Hecht, and his aunt, Emily Hecht he lost in the Riga forest, which a lot of people were just shot there. OK.

So he lost a total of 37 people. His total-- his whole family was wiped out. There was no one left alive.

He was the only--

He was the only one.

On my mother's side, there was my Aunt Risha, my Aunt Cilla, and my Aunt Paula.

Who survived.

Who survived.

And the others?

No one. And my mother also came from a large family of eight children. And what happened to the other children? They were-- all died in camps, various camps.

My Aunt Risha survived the camp. My other two aunts were never in camp. One was because she married a German, and that always sort of rankled my dad because she remained in Germany, and her husband became a Nazi, and her son became a Nazi. And he would never have anything to do with them afterwards.

Did they talk to their mother and wife-- your aunt? I mean, how did she live married to two-- married to a Nazi.

Well, I guess they didn't find out that she was Jewish.

Oh.

I mean, I guess my uncle kept it a secret. But he, of course, knew that his wife was Jewish, right. But they kept it a secret. And they were able to survive the war.

And from what I remember, my dad told me that when things got bad, like some of our possessions, he gave into trust to my aunt. And they sold it and things. We never got anything back. So after the war, he refused to talk to her, just as though she never existed.

Now her husband and son got killed.

During the war.

During the war.

How was that?

I don't know. What?

Put down the paper.

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Can I put it down? Thank goodness.

OK. Thank you. Yeah, I didn't want to--

I don't under what circumstances they got killed. But I did spend some time with her after the war. Did she talk about her experiences or--

No. I just remember being with her, and her trying to fatten me up, because I guess I was really undernourished.

OK. And is there any-- have you talked to your-- anyone about your experiences here?

No, only to my children and my husband like that.

Any other non-Jewish people?

Not offhand. I just don't feel I really want to talk about that to them, because a lot of times they just don't understand. I think a lot of people don't understand.

OK. We're just about at the end. Is there anything else you would like to say before we close?

No, I don't know if there's anything else. My dad did write some poetry which were representative of how he felt about the camp, and the Jews, and the things that happened to us there. And they're kind of nice, kind of neat poems.

OK. Thank you so very much, Tana. I really appreciate your being here. Thank you.

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