

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:02,970

This is the United States  
Holocaust Memorial Museum

2

00:00:02,970 --> 00:00:05,280

interview with Rene  
Tressler, conducted

3

00:00:05,280 --> 00:00:09,960

by Gail Schwartz on  
February 20th, 1997

4

00:00:09,960 --> 00:00:11,700

in Silver Spring, Maryland.

5

00:00:11,700 --> 00:00:15,880

This is tape number  
four, side A.

6

00:00:15,880 --> 00:00:18,280

And you had been  
talking about surviving

7

00:00:18,280 --> 00:00:21,160

the bombing in Dresden  
and then continuing on.

8

00:00:21,160 --> 00:00:24,790

Yeah, they put us under  
the old, broken bus

9

00:00:24,790 --> 00:00:33,970

and took us through complicated,  
partially interesting

10

00:00:33,970 --> 00:00:34,780

circumstances.

11

00:00:34,780 --> 00:00:36,860

But I don't think  
we'll go through that.

12

00:00:36,860 --> 00:00:41,310

They took us to Buchenwald.

13

00:00:41,310 --> 00:00:45,840

And in Buchenwald,  
they put us into--

14

00:00:45,840 --> 00:00:47,640

How many people are  
we talking about now?

15

00:00:47,640 --> 00:00:51,210

We're talking not  
even 100, I believe.

16

00:00:51,210 --> 00:00:54,120

I'm really not-- I didn't  
make any statistic,

17

00:00:54,120 --> 00:00:57,270

didn't count them.

18

00:00:57,270 --> 00:00:59,520

It was a big bus,  
but it was loaded.

19

00:00:59,520 --> 00:01:02,670

But I don't think it was  
more than 100 people there.

20

00:01:02,670 --> 00:01:06,578

And your physical  
condition at this point?

21

00:01:06,578 --> 00:01:08,370

My personal physical  
condition in that time

22

00:01:08,370 --> 00:01:11,760

was naturally much worse  
than it was to begin with.

23

00:01:11,760 --> 00:01:16,480  
But I was still pretty good  
condition, pretty good shape.

24  
00:01:16,480 --> 00:01:20,550  
I haven't lost as much  
weight as other people did.

25  
00:01:20,550 --> 00:01:23,430  
I was not yet really  
bone and skin.

26  
00:01:23,430 --> 00:01:26,430  
That I was only  
two months later,

27  
00:01:26,430 --> 00:01:29,040  
that suddenly I broke down then.

28  
00:01:29,040 --> 00:01:31,530  
But until then I  
was still capable

29  
00:01:31,530 --> 00:01:34,990  
of marching, capable  
of moving well.

30  
00:01:34,990 --> 00:01:36,390  
And that was it.

31  
00:01:36,390 --> 00:01:43,560  
So in Buchenwald, they put us  
into a Jewish old wooden camp.

32  
00:01:43,560 --> 00:01:51,210  
Buchenwald was brick  
and cement barracks.

33  
00:01:51,210 --> 00:01:54,390  
And in the middle of  
the Buchenwald camp

34  
00:01:54,390 --> 00:01:58,950

was another camp, just fenced  
off with barbed wire, not

35  
00:01:58,950 --> 00:02:00,780  
electric barbed wire.

36  
00:02:00,780 --> 00:02:04,830  
And in that camp, that was  
the so-called old camp.

37  
00:02:04,830 --> 00:02:09,750  
There were wooden barracks  
and there was only Jews there.

38  
00:02:09,750 --> 00:02:11,400  
And that's where I went.

39  
00:02:11,400 --> 00:02:15,480  
That's where I was for  
the next two months or so.

40  
00:02:15,480 --> 00:02:18,105

41  
00:02:18,105 --> 00:02:20,355  
You're still wearing your  
striped uniform from before?

42  
00:02:20,355 --> 00:02:23,490  
Still wearing my striped  
uniform, right, yeah.

43  
00:02:23,490 --> 00:02:27,960  
And didn't work there at all.

44  
00:02:27,960 --> 00:02:30,600  
They didn't use us for any work.

45  
00:02:30,600 --> 00:02:33,780  
Although outside people  
in a regular camp,

46

00:02:33,780 --> 00:02:37,170

I think they did  
have work Kommandos.

47

00:02:37,170 --> 00:02:38,730

And not us.

48

00:02:38,730 --> 00:02:41,760

And then there was a  
situation before the end.

49

00:02:41,760 --> 00:02:46,110

They were trying to  
liquidate the camp.

50

00:02:46,110 --> 00:02:49,230

And they were trying to put  
all the Jews on the truck

51

00:02:49,230 --> 00:02:53,880

and somehow carry  
them somewhere away.

52

00:02:53,880 --> 00:02:56,160

They did manage a  
few to take away

53

00:02:56,160 --> 00:03:00,810

and shuttered them, as I  
learned later somewhere outside.

54

00:03:00,810 --> 00:03:05,880

But most of that time, it  
was such a disorganized time

55

00:03:05,880 --> 00:03:06,810

already.

56

00:03:06,810 --> 00:03:10,860

And some of the people  
helped us a little bit

57

00:03:10,860 --> 00:03:16,770

not to enter those trucks, not  
to go into those transports

58  
00:03:16,770 --> 00:03:18,450  
that we were supposed to go.

59  
00:03:18,450 --> 00:03:21,090  
So I went on a truck  
about five times

60  
00:03:21,090 --> 00:03:24,150  
and five times just  
jumped out of it again.

61  
00:03:24,150 --> 00:03:25,160  
And they were very--

62  
00:03:25,160 --> 00:03:27,690  
What did they say to you  
to get you to jump off?

63  
00:03:27,690 --> 00:03:31,230  
The Germans were so few  
in the time, the guards.

64  
00:03:31,230 --> 00:03:34,470  
And they were so  
disorganized, so panicky,

65  
00:03:34,470 --> 00:03:36,930  
because they knew  
that's the end, right?

66  
00:03:36,930 --> 00:03:39,570  
And they just yelled  
at me and I ran away.

67  
00:03:39,570 --> 00:03:40,620  
That was it.

68  
00:03:40,620 --> 00:03:42,870  
And they got at me again.

69

00:03:42,870 --> 00:03:45,450

And about five times I  
jumped out of that truck.

70

00:03:45,450 --> 00:03:47,490

On the end, I  
didn't go anywhere.

71

00:03:47,490 --> 00:03:48,120

I stayed.

72

00:03:48,120 --> 00:03:49,890

Who yelled at you to  
get off the truck?

73

00:03:49,890 --> 00:03:52,560

German guards, SS men, you know.

74

00:03:52,560 --> 00:03:54,300

But they didn't  
want to run after me

75

00:03:54,300 --> 00:03:56,880

because they needed to watch  
those who they are still

76

00:03:56,880 --> 00:03:57,810

on the trunk--

77

00:03:57,810 --> 00:03:58,590

on the truck.

78

00:03:58,590 --> 00:04:00,490

Otherwise everybody  
would jump away.

79

00:04:00,490 --> 00:04:02,520

So that was it.

80

00:04:02,520 --> 00:04:04,020

I did not go.

81

00:04:04,020 --> 00:04:08,820

And I learned later that most  
of those people got killed.

82

00:04:08,820 --> 00:04:10,590

Because they just  
wanted to liquidate

83

00:04:10,590 --> 00:04:12,720

the camp, which  
they didn't manage.

84

00:04:12,720 --> 00:04:16,680

And later, the day  
before we were liberated,

85

00:04:16,680 --> 00:04:19,140

I remember an interesting story.

86

00:04:19,140 --> 00:04:25,560

There was a little airplane  
flying over the camp, like--

87

00:04:25,560 --> 00:04:28,020

what you call  
those-- researching

88

00:04:28,020 --> 00:04:31,350

the area for the military.

89

00:04:31,350 --> 00:04:36,120

And we put a little  
SOS sign on the ground

90

00:04:36,120 --> 00:04:40,860

of that marshaling yard  
from rocks and white clouds

91

00:04:40,860 --> 00:04:42,360

or whatever we could find.

92

00:04:42,360 --> 00:04:45,090



And we remember  
that the plane was

93  
00:04:45,090 --> 00:04:47,700  
kind of waving his wings  
that he understands,

94  
00:04:47,700 --> 00:04:49,470  
that he knows the situation.

95  
00:04:49,470 --> 00:04:54,780  
And then soon afterwards, I  
think the same day or maybe

96  
00:04:54,780 --> 00:05:01,290  
the next day, 3:00  
afternoon, the American army

97  
00:05:01,290 --> 00:05:03,390  
came into the camp.

98  
00:05:03,390 --> 00:05:05,880  
Yeah, 3:16.

99  
00:05:05,880 --> 00:05:09,150  
I know it because  
the time is still

100  
00:05:09,150 --> 00:05:11,820  
standing on the clock of  
the tower of Buchenwald

101  
00:05:11,820 --> 00:05:13,470  
until these days.

102  
00:05:13,470 --> 00:05:14,880  
You know, that was--

103  
00:05:14,880 --> 00:05:17,320  
I assume that's  
what the story is.

104

00:05:17,320 --> 00:05:21,750

It was electric clock,  
powered in the same way

105

00:05:21,750 --> 00:05:24,540

as the electric  
fence was powered.

106

00:05:24,540 --> 00:05:27,690

And when the Americans came,  
the first thing they did

107

00:05:27,690 --> 00:05:29,580

was disconnect the power.

108

00:05:29,580 --> 00:05:32,940

Therefore, the clock  
stopped at 3:16.

109

00:05:32,940 --> 00:05:35,340

And that's how it is today.

110

00:05:35,340 --> 00:05:38,040

When you go to see Buchenwald,  
it's still stopped at 3:16.

111

00:05:38,040 --> 00:05:42,910

112

00:05:42,910 --> 00:05:47,530

Did you feel liberated  
when you saw the Americans?

113

00:05:47,530 --> 00:05:51,400

In fact, it  
continues, again, here

114

00:05:51,400 --> 00:05:53,620

in this writing afterwards.

115

00:05:53,620 --> 00:05:59,380

Because I spent another month,  
more than a month in Buchenwald

116  
00:05:59,380 --> 00:06:01,810  
liberated already.

117  
00:06:01,810 --> 00:06:06,250  
Because Buchenwald was liberated  
April 11, where Prague was

118  
00:06:06,250 --> 00:06:08,290  
liberated May 9.

119  
00:06:08,290 --> 00:06:09,040  
You know.

120  
00:06:09,040 --> 00:06:12,460  
And we went-- before they  
organized the trips for us

121  
00:06:12,460 --> 00:06:16,480  
to go home was I  
came home May 19.

122  
00:06:16,480 --> 00:06:18,970  
But my question was--  
when you saw the Americans

123  
00:06:18,970 --> 00:06:19,960  
for the first time.

124  
00:06:19,960 --> 00:06:22,030  
I will get to it.

125  
00:06:22,030 --> 00:06:26,020  
There was a tank that  
came into the gate

126  
00:06:26,020 --> 00:06:31,480  
and a Black soldier jumped  
down from that tank.

127  
00:06:31,480 --> 00:06:37,050  
And you know, we

embrace somehow.

128  
00:06:37,050 --> 00:06:40,800  
And then this guy  
became friends with me.

129  
00:06:40,800 --> 00:06:47,460  
And unfortunately, when  
he embraced me, I fainted.

130  
00:06:47,460 --> 00:06:51,180  
And I fainted because  
I really didn't

131  
00:06:51,180 --> 00:06:52,680  
have any strength anymore.

132  
00:06:52,680 --> 00:07:00,300  
And in that moment, I really was  
bone and skin only and wasted.

133  
00:07:00,300 --> 00:07:01,530  
Used up, really.

134  
00:07:01,530 --> 00:07:06,390  
So they put me in a makeshift  
hospital the Americans made

135  
00:07:06,390 --> 00:07:08,190  
right away there.

136  
00:07:08,190 --> 00:07:10,290  
And the doctors took care of me.

137  
00:07:10,290 --> 00:07:13,910  
That was April 11.

138  
00:07:13,910 --> 00:07:19,580  
And I fainted and I woke up in  
a nice, white bed with doctors

139  
00:07:19,580 --> 00:07:22,310

and nurses around me.

140  
00:07:22,310 --> 00:07:23,780  
You're 18 years old now?

141  
00:07:23,780 --> 00:07:27,080  
And let me get to it.

142  
00:07:27,080 --> 00:07:28,950  
It's hard.

143  
00:07:28,950 --> 00:07:38,470  
And I said-- and they said, you  
are fine now, you're fine now.

144  
00:07:38,470 --> 00:07:40,220  
And I said, what do  
you mean I'm fine now?

145  
00:07:40,220 --> 00:07:41,960  
So I fainted a little bit, so?

146  
00:07:41,960 --> 00:07:43,610  
I'm fine, sure I'm fine.

147  
00:07:43,610 --> 00:07:47,680  
They said, yeah, you  
fainted for five days.

148  
00:07:47,680 --> 00:07:51,240  
I said, what are you talking  
about, it's 11th of April, no?

149  
00:07:51,240 --> 00:07:53,617  
I said, no, it's the 16th.

150  
00:07:53,617 --> 00:07:55,200  
I said, thank you,  
that's my birthday.

151  
00:07:55,200 --> 00:08:00,830

152  
00:08:00,830 --> 00:08:04,280  
I was 18 exactly on that day.

153  
00:08:04,280 --> 00:08:08,740

154  
00:08:08,740 --> 00:08:10,840  
That's the end of it.

155  
00:08:10,840 --> 00:08:13,330  
And then they took care  
of me a little more.

156  
00:08:13,330 --> 00:08:17,320  
And I had befriended  
this man, the Black man.

157  
00:08:17,320 --> 00:08:21,610  
And his name was Sammy.

158  
00:08:21,610 --> 00:08:25,540  
And I never write about that.

159  
00:08:25,540 --> 00:08:31,840  
But just for you, he looked  
exactly like Sammy Davis.

160  
00:08:31,840 --> 00:08:35,559  
You remember Sammy  
Davis the singer?

161  
00:08:35,559 --> 00:08:37,570  
Not that I liked him too  
much, but he really--

162  
00:08:37,570 --> 00:08:41,590  
when I came to  
America, I noticed--

163  
00:08:41,590 --> 00:08:44,480  
I never thought of this

man anymore, you know.

164  
00:08:44,480 --> 00:08:47,330  
But then when I saw him on  
TV, the first time here,

165  
00:08:47,330 --> 00:08:49,300  
I said, my god, that's him.

166  
00:08:49,300 --> 00:08:52,760  
Only it couldn't be him  
because it was 20 years later,

167  
00:08:52,760 --> 00:08:55,090  
you know, he would  
have been an old man.

168  
00:08:55,090 --> 00:09:00,700  
And so then I spent a few  
more days in Buchenwald

169  
00:09:00,700 --> 00:09:03,340  
because they were not  
ready to transport me.

170  
00:09:03,340 --> 00:09:08,710  
And then they made a bus  
and sent me to Prague.

171  
00:09:08,710 --> 00:09:12,850  
You had mentioned something  
before about a tree

172  
00:09:12,850 --> 00:09:14,020  
in Buchenwald.

173  
00:09:14,020 --> 00:09:17,100  
Oh, yeah, you want to hear that.

174  
00:09:17,100 --> 00:09:20,120  
OK, just very  
briefly I make that.

175

00:09:20,120 --> 00:09:20,620

OK.

176

00:09:20,620 --> 00:09:23,920

177

00:09:23,920 --> 00:09:27,460

There is a song  
that I was singing

178

00:09:27,460 --> 00:09:34,000

as a soloist in that choir  
before the transports

179

00:09:34,000 --> 00:09:36,400

to the concentration  
camps in Prague.

180

00:09:36,400 --> 00:09:41,650

By the name-- the name of  
the choir was [? Jubal. ?]

181

00:09:41,650 --> 00:09:46,360

And the director of it was  
Professor [? Wachtel ?]..

182

00:09:46,360 --> 00:09:52,000

And I was singing that  
solo of the song [GERMAN]..

183

00:09:52,000 --> 00:09:55,030

184

00:09:55,030 --> 00:09:57,190

You understand?

185

00:09:57,190 --> 00:10:02,680

And I sang it with a very  
high, almost girlish voice,

186

00:10:02,680 --> 00:10:08,410

being a kid, 13,



12 years old or so.

187

00:10:08,410 --> 00:10:19,520

188

00:10:19,520 --> 00:10:21,660

And I came to Buchenwald.

189

00:10:21,660 --> 00:10:24,320

Buchenwald, as you  
know, is laying

190

00:10:24,320 --> 00:10:31,130

on a mount of Ettersberg,  
which is a suburb of Weimar,

191

00:10:31,130 --> 00:10:37,140

where Mr.

192

00:10:37,140 --> 00:10:37,640

Goethe?

193

00:10:37,640 --> 00:10:39,620

Goethe had his home.

194

00:10:39,620 --> 00:10:41,660

And Schiller, too.

195

00:10:41,660 --> 00:10:49,730

And Mr. Goethe rode a horse  
up to that park of Ettersberg

196

00:10:49,730 --> 00:10:52,580

and sat underneath a oak tree.

197

00:10:52,580 --> 00:10:58,580

And while he was writing Faust,  
which he did for 60 years--

198

00:10:58,580 --> 00:11:01,460

and I always say, if he  
can write 60 years Faust,

199

00:11:01,460 --> 00:11:04,130

why I cannot write  
this one in 70, right?

200

00:11:04,130 --> 00:11:09,950

And so he relaxed  
there for relaxation.

201

00:11:09,950 --> 00:11:15,710

He wrote this song, [INAUDIBLE],,  
because there was a briar,

202

00:11:15,710 --> 00:11:18,920

you know, and roses, briar  
rose, white roses, and grass,

203

00:11:18,920 --> 00:11:20,690

and green, and trees.

204

00:11:20,690 --> 00:11:23,510

And he was sitting there  
under that oak tree,

205

00:11:23,510 --> 00:11:28,760

and wrote these words for  
this song that I sang before.

206

00:11:28,760 --> 00:11:33,830

And when I came to  
Buchenwald, I found

207

00:11:33,830 --> 00:11:37,520

that tree there in the middle  
of the camp of Buchenwald

208

00:11:37,520 --> 00:11:39,290

was the only tree standing.

209

00:11:39,290 --> 00:11:41,150

They didn't dare to cut it down.

210

00:11:41,150 --> 00:11:45,170  
Although it fell because  
of a storm later.

211  
00:11:45,170 --> 00:11:49,020  
And so that was the tree.

212  
00:11:49,020 --> 00:11:51,770  
And when you go  
today to Buchenwald,

213  
00:11:51,770 --> 00:11:57,740  
you will find the clock on  
the tower standing on 3:16.

214  
00:11:57,740 --> 00:12:05,420  
And you will find the stamp of  
that tree still standing there

215  
00:12:05,420 --> 00:12:09,110  
in the middle of the Buchenwald  
area, where now a museum is,

216  
00:12:09,110 --> 00:12:14,570  
with a sign which says this  
used to be the Goethe's tree.

217  
00:12:14,570 --> 00:12:18,810

218  
00:12:18,810 --> 00:12:23,130  
So you are recuperating  
in the American hospital

219  
00:12:23,130 --> 00:12:24,930  
after liberation.

220  
00:12:24,930 --> 00:12:28,480  
Now, as I said, after my  
birthday, then I was fine.

221  
00:12:28,480 --> 00:12:31,050  
They threw me out.

222  
00:12:31,050 --> 00:12:32,130  
I mean, fine.

223  
00:12:32,130 --> 00:12:35,670  
I could stand on my own  
feet at least for a while.

224  
00:12:35,670 --> 00:12:37,110  
Not for long, though.

225  
00:12:37,110 --> 00:12:39,450  
Because really,  
when I came home,

226  
00:12:39,450 --> 00:12:45,442  
even while it was more than  
a month, when I walked on--

227  
00:12:45,442 --> 00:12:47,400  
How did you get back from  
Buchenwald to Prague?

228  
00:12:47,400 --> 00:12:49,000  
They took us by bus.

229  
00:12:49,000 --> 00:12:52,350  
They took a bus of Czech  
guys, Czech people,

230  
00:12:52,350 --> 00:12:56,280  
and took us to Prague on May 19.

231  
00:12:56,280 --> 00:13:01,920  
Was there any other young  
man like you that went

232  
00:13:01,920 --> 00:13:04,860  
through all of this with you?

233  
00:13:04,860 --> 00:13:07,320  
Not specifically

with me, but I'm sure

234

00:13:07,320 --> 00:13:10,230

there's other young men or man.

235

00:13:10,230 --> 00:13:13,740

There was nobody from home  
that followed along with you

236

00:13:13,740 --> 00:13:15,270

during all these years?

237

00:13:15,270 --> 00:13:16,930

Oh, yes, there were.

238

00:13:16,930 --> 00:13:21,180

There were a few  
even boys who were

239

00:13:21,180 --> 00:13:24,300

in that group that arrived in--

240

00:13:24,300 --> 00:13:26,370

all the way down to Buchenwald.

241

00:13:26,370 --> 00:13:30,720

Unfortunately, I don't really  
remember those names anymore.

242

00:13:30,720 --> 00:13:33,720

I know there was the  
Mr. Verber was there.

243

00:13:33,720 --> 00:13:37,560

In fact, when I was in  
Buchenwald three years ago,

244

00:13:37,560 --> 00:13:43,140

they gave me a list of people  
who came with that group.

245

00:13:43,140 --> 00:13:47,257

I meant, you know,  
friends from Prague that--

246  
00:13:47,257 --> 00:13:48,090  
that's what I meant.

247  
00:13:48,090 --> 00:13:49,680  
Not really, no.

248  
00:13:49,680 --> 00:13:51,810  
Though all those  
people who were really

249  
00:13:51,810 --> 00:13:53,900  
from Prague through  
Theresienstadt,

250  
00:13:53,900 --> 00:13:57,990  
and so I don't think anybody  
survived this trip, no.

251  
00:13:57,990 --> 00:14:03,480  
I know about one man who  
was in Blechhammer, or two.

252  
00:14:03,480 --> 00:14:06,240

253  
00:14:06,240 --> 00:14:09,360  
They're living in Israel.

254  
00:14:09,360 --> 00:14:11,490  
I can't remember their name now.

255  
00:14:11,490 --> 00:14:14,140  
Yeah, Walter  
Bressler, for example.

256  
00:14:14,140 --> 00:14:15,570  
His name is Walter Bressler.

257  
00:14:15,570 --> 00:14:17,370

He went through this with me.

258

00:14:17,370 --> 00:14:19,800

But I think he didn't  
go to Buchenwald.

259

00:14:19,800 --> 00:14:21,390

He just went to  
Blechhammer with me.

260

00:14:21,390 --> 00:14:24,660

But all the way to Buchenwald,  
nobody that I would really

261

00:14:24,660 --> 00:14:26,130

know from Prague, no.

262

00:14:26,130 --> 00:14:28,080

I know there were some  
Czech people there.

263

00:14:28,080 --> 00:14:30,810

But nobody of those that  
I knew in Prague, no.

264

00:14:30,810 --> 00:14:35,640

And most of them were older  
than I was, definitely.

265

00:14:35,640 --> 00:14:38,050

So you're now back,  
coming to Prague.

266

00:14:38,050 --> 00:14:41,970

Yeah, I came to Prague.

267

00:14:41,970 --> 00:14:50,430

And they told me to find  
somebody of my relatives.

268

00:14:50,430 --> 00:14:53,410

269

00:14:53,410 --> 00:14:59,320

And so they said I can  
stay in a Y for the night

270

00:14:59,320 --> 00:15:00,820

if I don't know where to go.

271

00:15:00,820 --> 00:15:03,910

And so as long as I want to,  
there was a YMCA every day.

272

00:15:03,910 --> 00:15:07,420

And I really went through  
YMCA, slept there.

273

00:15:07,420 --> 00:15:11,810

Next day, I went, and they  
told me to go to a building.

274

00:15:11,810 --> 00:15:15,580

They called it already  
Repatriation Office.

275

00:15:15,580 --> 00:15:18,490

You know, the Czechs have  
quickly names for offices,

276

00:15:18,490 --> 00:15:19,660

they're like that.

277

00:15:19,660 --> 00:15:24,160

And I went to that building,  
Repatriation Office,

278

00:15:24,160 --> 00:15:31,060

and it was a building which  
had a courtyard with a wall.

279

00:15:31,060 --> 00:15:33,970

And the building was  
kind of an old building,

280



00:15:33,970 --> 00:15:35,290  
was halfway destroyed.

281  
00:15:35,290 --> 00:15:38,950  
But not because of the war,  
I think because of the age.

282  
00:15:38,950 --> 00:15:43,420  
And that wall was big,  
like a football field.

283  
00:15:43,420 --> 00:15:46,750  
And under the wall  
were little tickets

284  
00:15:46,750 --> 00:15:50,290  
written of people  
looking for other people.

285  
00:15:50,290 --> 00:15:53,440  
So they were looking  
for Mr. So-and-so, who

286  
00:15:53,440 --> 00:15:55,450  
was supposed to be  
in Theresienstadt

287  
00:15:55,450 --> 00:15:58,270  
or supposed to be in  
Buchenwald, and so.

288  
00:15:58,270 --> 00:16:01,390  
And his father, his  
mother, or his daughter

289  
00:16:01,390 --> 00:16:04,330  
is looking for him,  
please come, too.

290  
00:16:04,330 --> 00:16:06,250  
Because there was  
no telephone then.

291

00:16:06,250 --> 00:16:11,450  
And when I saw that wall,  
I said, I mean, it's crazy.

292  
00:16:11,450 --> 00:16:13,810  
How can anybody  
find anyone in here?

293  
00:16:13,810 --> 00:16:16,270  
It's impossible.

294  
00:16:16,270 --> 00:16:21,250  
My father had a  
peculiar handwriting.

295  
00:16:21,250 --> 00:16:25,210  
He never used anything  
else but green ink.

296  
00:16:25,210 --> 00:16:28,600  
I have a hand script  
here-- he was a musician

297  
00:16:28,600 --> 00:16:31,120  
and he wrote music, you know.

298  
00:16:31,120 --> 00:16:33,080  
I have it here, this  
one [INAUDIBLE]..

299  
00:16:33,080 --> 00:16:36,520  
It's also written in  
green ink, naturally.

300  
00:16:36,520 --> 00:16:38,570  
He would never  
use anything else.

301  
00:16:38,570 --> 00:16:40,900  
And I was looking there,  
and literally not knowing

302  
00:16:40,900 --> 00:16:41,480

what to do.

303

00:16:41,480 --> 00:16:44,530

And suddenly I  
look in the corner.

304

00:16:44,530 --> 00:16:47,680

There was something green there.

305

00:16:47,680 --> 00:16:50,010

I said, my god.

306

00:16:50,010 --> 00:16:55,000

So I came to it and it  
says Harry Tressler,

307

00:16:55,000 --> 00:16:58,640

please come to address.

308

00:16:58,640 --> 00:17:00,800

Harry, because Harry  
was the elder one.

309

00:17:00,800 --> 00:17:04,310

My father didn't even  
hope in one [? iota ?]

310

00:17:04,310 --> 00:17:06,319

that I would survive.

311

00:17:06,319 --> 00:17:11,640

He heard that some kind of a  
Tressler arrived in Prague.

312

00:17:11,640 --> 00:17:15,890

And he thought, definitely,  
it's my brother.

313

00:17:15,890 --> 00:17:18,230

Because then they knew  
already what's happening.

314

00:17:18,230 --> 00:17:21,869

And he knew children would  
not be able to survive that.

315

00:17:21,869 --> 00:17:23,750

So I saw that.

316

00:17:23,750 --> 00:17:25,160

And I went to the address.

317

00:17:25,160 --> 00:17:27,319

That's where my father was.

318

00:17:27,319 --> 00:17:30,260

And that's why I  
lived my next 20

319

00:17:30,260 --> 00:17:32,480

years, in that same apartment.

320

00:17:32,480 --> 00:17:35,590

It was a nice apartment  
in the middle of Prague.

321

00:17:35,590 --> 00:17:40,450

And my father, with  
his wife still, they

322

00:17:40,450 --> 00:17:42,520

moved back to  
Komotau, to the place

323

00:17:42,520 --> 00:17:44,270

where their parents used to be.

324

00:17:44,270 --> 00:17:47,980

And they had some  
possessions there,

325

00:17:47,980 --> 00:17:50,620

some farms and some buildings.

326

00:17:50,620 --> 00:17:51,890  
Do you have to close?

327  
00:17:51,890 --> 00:17:58,030  
And so they moved there and  
left the apartment to me.

328  
00:17:58,030 --> 00:18:01,030  
So then my mother came.

329  
00:18:01,030 --> 00:18:05,080  
My mother came  
from Bergen-Belsen.

330  
00:18:05,080 --> 00:18:08,260  
And she came about  
three months after me,

331  
00:18:08,260 --> 00:18:14,650  
because she worked in  
the American army kitchen

332  
00:18:14,650 --> 00:18:16,210  
as a manager.

333  
00:18:16,210 --> 00:18:20,050  
And they liked her so much,  
they didn't want to let her go.

334  
00:18:20,050 --> 00:18:23,620  
I even have here thank  
you notes from the army,

335  
00:18:23,620 --> 00:18:26,980  
from the American Army, to  
my mother for her work there.

336  
00:18:26,980 --> 00:18:29,350  
So then she finally came home.

337  
00:18:29,350 --> 00:18:31,120  
But my brother, never.

338

00:18:31,120 --> 00:18:37,240

And we didn't know about him  
until in fall, late fall, they

339

00:18:37,240 --> 00:18:41,680

sent us to some recreation  
to out of Prague,

340

00:18:41,680 --> 00:18:46,540

to some mountain resort place,  
you know, to get better,

341

00:18:46,540 --> 00:18:47,180

get well.

342

00:18:47,180 --> 00:18:50,860

343

00:18:50,860 --> 00:18:55,390

Yeah, before we went, my  
mother ordered a little plaque.

344

00:18:55,390 --> 00:19:01,210

We have a family grave in the  
cemetery in Prague, you know,

345

00:19:01,210 --> 00:19:03,490

where my mother is  
also buried now.

346

00:19:03,490 --> 00:19:07,420

And there, she made  
a plaque to put

347

00:19:07,420 --> 00:19:09,730

on the grave for  
my brother's name

348

00:19:09,730 --> 00:19:13,640

that he died in the Holocaust  
in a concentration camp.

349

00:19:13,640 --> 00:19:15,670  
So we went to this resort place.

350  
00:19:15,670 --> 00:19:21,030  
And a friend of mine  
who played with me

351  
00:19:21,030 --> 00:19:22,540  
on this soccer team over there.

352  
00:19:22,540 --> 00:19:25,890  
He's right there, the  
last one, the little guy,

353  
00:19:25,890 --> 00:19:28,170  
who also survived.

354  
00:19:28,170 --> 00:19:32,610  
Who now lives in Norfolk.

355  
00:19:32,610 --> 00:19:37,610  
Who is the main reason  
why I am in America.

356  
00:19:37,610 --> 00:19:40,970  
He came to Prague during  
the communist times

357  
00:19:40,970 --> 00:19:46,070  
to visit as an American citizen  
and arranged for me to escape.

358  
00:19:46,070 --> 00:19:48,440  
Helped me, at least,  
to escape from Prague.

359  
00:19:48,440 --> 00:19:50,230  
And that's why I'm here.

360  
00:19:50,230 --> 00:19:55,000  
So he, also, but he is  
not a very wise person.

361

00:19:55,000 --> 00:19:56,710

He's not something  
that you would

362

00:19:56,710 --> 00:20:00,280

say his wisdom is  
overflowing the barrel.

363

00:20:00,280 --> 00:20:07,510

And so he called to this  
resort and asked for my mother

364

00:20:07,510 --> 00:20:11,170

and said, I am here  
in a sanatorium.

365

00:20:11,170 --> 00:20:13,270

And your son is here.

366

00:20:13,270 --> 00:20:14,590

Harry is here.

367

00:20:14,590 --> 00:20:15,940

He's sick, but he's fine.

368

00:20:15,940 --> 00:20:17,290

He's here, too.

369

00:20:17,290 --> 00:20:18,470

Mom said, let's go.

370

00:20:18,470 --> 00:20:19,210

Go home.

371

00:20:19,210 --> 00:20:21,040

So I, don't be  
crazy, it's nonsense.

372

00:20:21,040 --> 00:20:21,880

You know John.

373



00:20:21,880 --> 00:20:24,080

He doesn't know what  
he's talking about.

374

00:20:24,080 --> 00:20:27,460

Who knows whom he met there,  
some Harry or something.

375

00:20:27,460 --> 00:20:29,070

And you would think  
it's my brother.

376

00:20:29,070 --> 00:20:29,570

No.

377

00:20:29,570 --> 00:20:30,310

Don't go.

378

00:20:30,310 --> 00:20:31,900

Just stay here.

379

00:20:31,900 --> 00:20:33,070

He's in a hospital.

380

00:20:33,070 --> 00:20:35,470

Anyway, if it's him, don't go.

381

00:20:35,470 --> 00:20:38,740

No, my mother took the  
train and went to Prague.

382

00:20:38,740 --> 00:20:41,620

In the evening, she called  
the resort, called me

383

00:20:41,620 --> 00:20:44,980

through the phone, said  
yeah, your brother's here.

384

00:20:44,980 --> 00:20:48,130

He had tuberculosis,  
he was very sick.

385

00:20:48,130 --> 00:20:51,360

But he was fine.

386

00:20:51,360 --> 00:20:53,940

Then the journalistic  
organization in Prague

387

00:20:53,940 --> 00:20:57,570

sent him to Switzerland  
for healing, you know.

388

00:20:57,570 --> 00:20:59,650

And he still was  
working after the war

389

00:20:59,650 --> 00:21:03,840

in the Palestinian office in  
his journalistic organization.

390

00:21:03,840 --> 00:21:08,490

And then in '48, he went  
to Israel, married already

391

00:21:08,490 --> 00:21:09,660

with a kid.

392

00:21:09,660 --> 00:21:12,840

And straight into  
Kibbutz HaHotrim, where

393

00:21:12,840 --> 00:21:15,080

he lives until these days.

394

00:21:15,080 --> 00:21:17,040

He is sick, though,  
but he's still alive.

395

00:21:17,040 --> 00:21:21,900

396

00:21:21,900 --> 00:21:22,950

And your health?

397  
00:21:22,950 --> 00:21:24,090  
You recuperated?

398  
00:21:24,090 --> 00:21:28,265  
I recuperated pretty  
well, pretty easily.

399  
00:21:28,265 --> 00:21:30,140  
How much did you weigh  
by the end of the war?

400  
00:21:30,140 --> 00:21:31,590  
That was what I  
wanted to come to.

401  
00:21:31,590 --> 00:21:35,850  
When we came and the bus landed  
in Prague in Wenceslas Square,

402  
00:21:35,850 --> 00:21:37,830  
I wanted to go on the sidewalk.

403  
00:21:37,830 --> 00:21:42,330  
I had to go where a lamppost  
was to pull myself up

404  
00:21:42,330 --> 00:21:43,110  
to the sidewalk.

405  
00:21:43,110 --> 00:21:46,200  
I couldn't make the  
step up, I was so weak.

406  
00:21:46,200 --> 00:21:47,910  
And then when I  
walked, I walked,

407  
00:21:47,910 --> 00:21:53,490  
you know, just step by step,  
just shoveling my feet forward.

408

00:21:53,490 --> 00:21:56,100  
But I felt not too bad.

409  
00:21:56,100 --> 00:21:58,710  
And I recuperated very quickly.

410  
00:21:58,710 --> 00:21:59,520  
Very quickly.

411  
00:21:59,520 --> 00:22:03,150  
And I became, as I  
said, a sportsman again,

412  
00:22:03,150 --> 00:22:08,070  
and a professional soccer  
player, everything.

413  
00:22:08,070 --> 00:22:09,780  
Writer.

414  
00:22:09,780 --> 00:22:17,120  
Took some university courses  
of journalistic and writings.

415  
00:22:17,120 --> 00:22:20,393  
You were able to go into  
university right away,

416  
00:22:20,393 --> 00:22:22,685  
even though you would missed  
all those years of school?

417  
00:22:22,685 --> 00:22:25,970  
Oh yes, right, I had to  
make a test of knowledge,

418  
00:22:25,970 --> 00:22:28,520  
of high school knowledge.

419  
00:22:28,520 --> 00:22:32,180  
And I went through  
a course, actually,

420

00:22:32,180 --> 00:22:34,310

where I learned about  
a couple of months

421

00:22:34,310 --> 00:22:36,650

all the stuff that  
I had to know.

422

00:22:36,650 --> 00:22:38,450

And that was it, yeah.

423

00:22:38,450 --> 00:22:41,720

And then the communists came.

424

00:22:41,720 --> 00:22:44,075

And they just--

425

00:22:44,075 --> 00:22:46,670

I don't know if you  
want to hear that.

426

00:22:46,670 --> 00:22:49,940

And I lived 20 years  
under communism.

427

00:22:49,940 --> 00:22:53,180

I escaped from  
Czechoslovakia, from communism

428

00:22:53,180 --> 00:22:55,190

in Czechoslovakia.

429

00:22:55,190 --> 00:23:02,450

And in 1965, escaped,  
really escaped.

430

00:23:02,450 --> 00:23:05,670

And since then I  
live in America.

431

00:23:05,670 --> 00:23:09,300

So I lived under

fascistic Hitler regime.

432

00:23:09,300 --> 00:23:12,510

I lived under democratic  
Czechoslovakia

433

00:23:12,510 --> 00:23:14,490

before the Hitler regime.

434

00:23:14,490 --> 00:23:18,210

I lived through 20 years  
in a communist regime.

435

00:23:18,210 --> 00:23:24,420

And now I live 32 years in a  
capitalistic regime in America.

436

00:23:24,420 --> 00:23:26,800

Had you considered  
right after the war--

437

00:23:26,800 --> 00:23:28,220

but you were quite young--

438

00:23:28,220 --> 00:23:29,700

to leave Czechoslovakia?

439

00:23:29,700 --> 00:23:32,100

I was considering it, yes.

440

00:23:32,100 --> 00:23:33,570

But I couldn't manage.

441

00:23:33,570 --> 00:23:37,890

It was very difficult. In  
fact, I had such problems,

442

00:23:37,890 --> 00:23:40,410

like I was a writer always.

443

00:23:40,410 --> 00:23:44,040

And I was writing and

publishing here and then.

444

00:23:44,040 --> 00:23:48,030

But they always came to me,  
the communist officials,

445

00:23:48,030 --> 00:23:50,880

and said, Mr. Tressler--

446

00:23:50,880 --> 00:23:52,380

Comrade Tressler, actually.

447

00:23:52,380 --> 00:23:55,285

They said, what is your job?

448

00:23:55,285 --> 00:23:56,160

What are you working?

449

00:23:56,160 --> 00:23:57,330

I said, I'm not working.

450

00:23:57,330 --> 00:23:58,770

I'm a writer, I write.

451

00:23:58,770 --> 00:24:00,600

I published here,  
published there.

452

00:24:00,600 --> 00:24:03,930

Short stories and  
things, not about camp.

453

00:24:03,930 --> 00:24:06,720

Love stories I wrote,  
then poetry I wrote.

454

00:24:06,720 --> 00:24:13,740

And one time, a few years,  
I made crossword puzzles.

455

00:24:13,740 --> 00:24:17,220

I mean, not solve them, I

created them for papers,

456  
00:24:17,220 --> 00:24:18,780  
for magazines.

457  
00:24:18,780 --> 00:24:20,790  
And that's how I made my living.

458  
00:24:20,790 --> 00:24:23,550  
But they always came  
and they said, are you

459  
00:24:23,550 --> 00:24:25,680  
a member of the Writers Guild?

460  
00:24:25,680 --> 00:24:27,780  
I said, how can I be a  
member of the Writers Guild

461  
00:24:27,780 --> 00:24:30,447  
when I'm not in the  
Communist Party?

462  
00:24:30,447 --> 00:24:32,280  
Because you can't be a  
member of the Writers

463  
00:24:32,280 --> 00:24:35,120  
Guild if you're not a member  
of the Communist Party.

464  
00:24:35,120 --> 00:24:39,840  
And so no, no, no, you're not a  
writer, you have to go to work.

465  
00:24:39,840 --> 00:24:41,400  
And they put me  
to work somewhere.

466  
00:24:41,400 --> 00:24:43,920  
And I always worked for a  
couple months or half a year



467  
00:24:43,920 --> 00:24:47,280  
somewhere.

468  
00:24:47,280 --> 00:24:55,020  
Building some brick walls or  
working on a railroad, building

469  
00:24:55,020 --> 00:24:57,330  
tunnels and building bridges.

470  
00:24:57,330 --> 00:24:58,770  
For a while only always.

471  
00:24:58,770 --> 00:25:01,770  
And then I disappeared  
and they forgot about me.

472  
00:25:01,770 --> 00:25:04,570  
And then they again  
remembered me after a while.

473  
00:25:04,570 --> 00:25:07,740  
And so I was working in mines.

474  
00:25:07,740 --> 00:25:09,810  
For nine months,  
I was in a mine.

475  
00:25:09,810 --> 00:25:11,340  
There was a big explosion.

476  
00:25:11,340 --> 00:25:15,960  
I have a blue coal line  
here on my forehead.

477  
00:25:15,960 --> 00:25:18,840  
And I was supposed to  
be there for 12 months.

478  
00:25:18,840 --> 00:25:20,460  
And nine months,  
I went home again.

479  
00:25:20,460 --> 00:25:22,260  
And that was it.

480  
00:25:22,260 --> 00:25:26,820  
And after the war, they told--  
when the communists came,

481  
00:25:26,820 --> 00:25:30,270  
they said, you,  
such a young guy,

482  
00:25:30,270 --> 00:25:33,900  
you went through all those  
things, concentration camp.

483  
00:25:33,900 --> 00:25:37,170  
You should join the  
Communist Party.

484  
00:25:37,170 --> 00:25:41,160  
And I said, because I  
was in the Holocaust,

485  
00:25:41,160 --> 00:25:44,370  
because I was in a  
concentration camp,

486  
00:25:44,370 --> 00:25:47,310  
because of those  
sufferings, I will not

487  
00:25:47,310 --> 00:25:50,030  
join the Communist Party.

488  
00:25:50,030 --> 00:25:51,440  
And that was my answer.

489  
00:25:51,440 --> 00:25:56,390  
Not very wise, but  
that's what I did.

490

00:25:56,390 --> 00:26:00,090

Any experiences of  
antisemitism after the war?

491

00:26:00,090 --> 00:26:01,310

Slight.

492

00:26:01,310 --> 00:26:04,190

I must admit, not too  
heavy ones, really.

493

00:26:04,190 --> 00:26:06,860

But the communists  
were not really

494

00:26:06,860 --> 00:26:10,830

very sympathetic towards Jews.

495

00:26:10,830 --> 00:26:14,030

They tried to  
minimize the suffering

496

00:26:14,030 --> 00:26:16,650

as much as they could.

497

00:26:16,650 --> 00:26:18,810

As well as they tried  
to minimize everything

498

00:26:18,810 --> 00:26:21,760

they didn't like, right?

499

00:26:21,760 --> 00:26:25,170

They were trying to tell the  
world that Czechoslovakia

500

00:26:25,170 --> 00:26:29,350

was liberated by the Soviet  
Army, which is not true.

501

00:26:29,350 --> 00:26:32,580

It was liberated all the  
way, the whole West part--

502  
00:26:32,580 --> 00:26:36,690  
the main city of the  
West, Pilsen, for example,

503  
00:26:36,690 --> 00:26:39,150  
was liberated by  
the American army.

504  
00:26:39,150 --> 00:26:41,770  
You go there today to  
personally see all the signs,

505  
00:26:41,770 --> 00:26:44,440  
thank you, American Army.

506  
00:26:44,440 --> 00:26:48,270  
Yeah, so, they were not  
sympathetic to the Jews, no.

507  
00:26:48,270 --> 00:26:51,810  
They were not daring  
to officially do

508  
00:26:51,810 --> 00:26:54,950  
anything against them, but  
they were not sympathetic, no.

509  
00:26:54,950 --> 00:26:57,870

510  
00:26:57,870 --> 00:26:59,600  
What was it like  
just to come back

511  
00:26:59,600 --> 00:27:02,510  
to Prague right after the war?

512  
00:27:02,510 --> 00:27:03,950  
You were so different.

513  
00:27:03,950 --> 00:27:07,190

You left as a child and you  
came back as a young man.

514  
00:27:07,190 --> 00:27:09,500  
I was still a child, really.

515  
00:27:09,500 --> 00:27:10,472  
I was still a child.

516  
00:27:10,472 --> 00:27:11,180  
You know, I was--

517  
00:27:11,180 --> 00:27:12,660  
Even at 18.

518  
00:27:12,660 --> 00:27:14,930  
--not even three years, really.

519  
00:27:14,930 --> 00:27:17,857  
But those three years were  
more than three years.

520  
00:27:17,857 --> 00:27:18,440  
I left Prague.

521  
00:27:18,440 --> 00:27:21,110  
I was 15 and some half or so.

522  
00:27:21,110 --> 00:27:25,900  
And I came back exactly  
18 and one month, right?

523  
00:27:25,900 --> 00:27:27,560  
So much happened in  
those three years.

524  
00:27:27,560 --> 00:27:29,600  
Which is actually a  
time of childhood,

525  
00:27:29,600 --> 00:27:31,430  
right, for normal people.

526  
00:27:31,430 --> 00:27:32,680  
That's my childhood.

527  
00:27:32,680 --> 00:27:34,670  
Now you ask me,  
who brought you up?

528  
00:27:34,670 --> 00:27:35,480  
Who brought me up?

529  
00:27:35,480 --> 00:27:37,730  
Concentration camp  
brought me up.

530  
00:27:37,730 --> 00:27:44,990  
And so the feeling was  
just be a free person.

531  
00:27:44,990 --> 00:27:51,670  
To have gone through that  
and now start my own life.

532  
00:27:51,670 --> 00:28:00,880  
And trying not to  
cry about the past.

533  
00:28:00,880 --> 00:28:04,780  
And that's my philosophy  
until these days.

534  
00:28:04,780 --> 00:28:08,260  
There is lots of people who  
went through similar things

535  
00:28:08,260 --> 00:28:10,070  
that I went through.

536  
00:28:10,070 --> 00:28:14,560  
They spent their whole life,  
I dare to say sometimes,

537

00:28:14,560 --> 00:28:16,870  
they even waste the time  
of their whole life,

538  
00:28:16,870 --> 00:28:22,600  
by crying about the spilled  
beans, what happened.

539  
00:28:22,600 --> 00:28:26,560  
I don't make it any lighter  
by not crying over it.

540  
00:28:26,560 --> 00:28:33,820  
But I lost so much life and so  
much time during the Holocaust

541  
00:28:33,820 --> 00:28:37,420  
time that I don't want to  
waste and lose any more.

542  
00:28:37,420 --> 00:28:39,370  
That doesn't mean that  
I want to forget it.

543  
00:28:39,370 --> 00:28:40,110  
Opposite.

544  
00:28:40,110 --> 00:28:44,080  
I spent my life writing about  
it, practically, you know.

545  
00:28:44,080 --> 00:28:47,330  
But not to feel  
sorry for myself.

546  
00:28:47,330 --> 00:28:51,790  
That was my motto and still is.

547  
00:28:51,790 --> 00:28:56,350  
You said you had, obviously,  
lost part of your childhood.

548  
00:28:56,350 --> 00:28:57,310

Yeah.

549

00:28:57,310 --> 00:29:01,160

Do you feel that you ever  
got some of that back?

550

00:29:01,160 --> 00:29:02,000

I don't know.

551

00:29:02,000 --> 00:29:05,000

552

00:29:05,000 --> 00:29:09,440

I like to think that  
I'm still a child.

553

00:29:09,440 --> 00:29:14,360

I'm still young and still  
thinking youthfully.

554

00:29:14,360 --> 00:29:16,710

And I never lost my childhood.

555

00:29:16,710 --> 00:29:19,940

There are such people,  
they are kids forever.

556

00:29:19,940 --> 00:29:21,938

And I think I'm one of those.

557

00:29:21,938 --> 00:29:22,438

Yeah.

558

00:29:22,438 --> 00:29:25,366

559

00:29:25,366 --> 00:29:30,870

Are there any sights, or smells,  
or sounds today that bring back

560

00:29:30,870 --> 00:29:33,840

some experiences that



you had during the war?

561

00:29:33,840 --> 00:29:36,030

That kind of trigger what you--

562

00:29:36,030 --> 00:29:38,910

Oh, I don't think

there's passing one day

563

00:29:38,910 --> 00:29:42,330

that I would not

remember something out

564

00:29:42,330 --> 00:29:45,360

of the Holocaust time.

565

00:29:45,360 --> 00:29:47,580

As I said, I'm writing

about it, you know,

566

00:29:47,580 --> 00:29:50,320

so I constantly think about it.

567

00:29:50,320 --> 00:29:54,210

But I would say in

a not negative way,

568

00:29:54,210 --> 00:29:56,880

positive, useful way.

569

00:29:56,880 --> 00:30:05,590

And naturally, it

was not a happy time.

570

00:30:05,590 --> 00:30:10,440

And what was the question?

571

00:30:10,440 --> 00:30:12,480

I was going to say, are

there any particular--

572

00:30:12,480 --> 00:30:12,990

Oh, yeah.

573  
00:30:12,990 --> 00:30:14,015  
--sounds, sights.

574  
00:30:14,015 --> 00:30:15,600  
Is there anything that triggers?

575  
00:30:15,600 --> 00:30:18,300  
I tell you, I have  
no nightmares.

576  
00:30:18,300 --> 00:30:19,680  
I never had nightmares.

577  
00:30:19,680 --> 00:30:23,220  
Although I did dream once in a  
while about concentration camp.

578  
00:30:23,220 --> 00:30:27,930  
But not the way that you say,  
oh, that's a nightmare or so.

579  
00:30:27,930 --> 00:30:31,950  
And I think it's  
my positive mind.

580  
00:30:31,950 --> 00:30:36,690  
Even when I was dreaming about  
the camp, about Auschwitz,

581  
00:30:36,690 --> 00:30:39,580  
I was dreaming that  
that's just a dream.

582  
00:30:39,580 --> 00:30:42,450  
I will wake up and  
be at home at my bed.

583  
00:30:42,450 --> 00:30:46,410  
Even in my bad dreams,  
I try to be positive.

584

00:30:46,410 --> 00:30:49,950

And that's what my view is.

585

00:30:49,950 --> 00:30:52,230

There are certain  
times, certain pictures,

586

00:30:52,230 --> 00:30:56,340

certain situations that remind  
me of the Holocaust time.

587

00:30:56,340 --> 00:30:56,895

Yes, surely.

588

00:30:56,895 --> 00:31:04,840

589

00:31:04,840 --> 00:31:06,760

This is tape four,  
side B. And you

590

00:31:06,760 --> 00:31:09,430

were saying there are certain  
pictures or some times that

591

00:31:09,430 --> 00:31:12,760

remind you of the Holocaust.

592

00:31:12,760 --> 00:31:15,490

I really don't think there  
are particular things that

593

00:31:15,490 --> 00:31:17,320

would remind me of it.

594

00:31:17,320 --> 00:31:21,640

Maybe if you turn your head and  
you look at my library here,

595

00:31:21,640 --> 00:31:25,240

you will see the  
artist of Theresien,

596  
00:31:25,240 --> 00:31:27,190  
you will see the  
Buchenwald report,

597  
00:31:27,190 --> 00:31:31,700  
you will see the 2,194  
days of World War II.

598  
00:31:31,700 --> 00:31:35,560  
You will see several books  
of Holocaust literature.

599  
00:31:35,560 --> 00:31:42,250  
Naturally, whenever I look up,  
it reminds me of those times.

600  
00:31:42,250 --> 00:31:46,730  
Sometimes-- I am the  
cook here in this family,

601  
00:31:46,730 --> 00:31:48,580  
my wife doesn't know  
where the kitchen is.

602  
00:31:48,580 --> 00:31:51,070  
Well, sometimes when  
I don't do a dish

603  
00:31:51,070 --> 00:31:53,860  
well enough as I want  
to, I say that tastes

604  
00:31:53,860 --> 00:31:55,900  
like in concentration camp.

605  
00:31:55,900 --> 00:32:02,050  
And I'm trying to enlighten  
and joke about it.

606  
00:32:02,050 --> 00:32:04,970

607

00:32:04,970 --> 00:32:07,120

No, there are not  
particular things that

608

00:32:07,120 --> 00:32:09,430

remind me of the camp, really.

609

00:32:09,430 --> 00:32:10,990

No.

610

00:32:10,990 --> 00:32:18,130

Sometimes when I watch movies,  
Schindler's List, for example,

611

00:32:18,130 --> 00:32:21,010

naturally, it  
reminds me situations

612

00:32:21,010 --> 00:32:23,740

in which I was myself.

613

00:32:23,740 --> 00:32:30,040

Not that I would have liked  
Schindler's List too much.

614

00:32:30,040 --> 00:32:35,170

But yeah, some movies  
remind me of the situation

615

00:32:35,170 --> 00:32:37,420

that I was in myself.

616

00:32:37,420 --> 00:32:39,790

Lately, they are not  
that many movies anymore.

617

00:32:39,790 --> 00:32:42,610

After the war, there  
were so many movies

618

00:32:42,610 --> 00:32:44,530

about concentration camps.

619  
00:32:44,530 --> 00:32:48,710  
And so naturally, whenever  
I see something like this,

620  
00:32:48,710 --> 00:32:51,700  
it reminds me of the  
situation that I was in.

621  
00:32:51,700 --> 00:32:56,790  
But not in a kind  
of crying, sad way.

622  
00:32:56,790 --> 00:33:02,340  
Sometimes, when I talk  
about a certain situation--

623  
00:33:02,340 --> 00:33:08,070  
and it's usually mostly the  
lyrical, the sentimental

624  
00:33:08,070 --> 00:33:14,910  
situation, more like than  
the situation of suffering,

625  
00:33:14,910 --> 00:33:18,810  
that makes me cry inside.

626  
00:33:18,810 --> 00:33:20,890  
Or sometimes even outside.

627  
00:33:20,890 --> 00:33:23,430  
And that's that, yeah.

628  
00:33:23,430 --> 00:33:26,020  
Did you ever consider  
having your number removed?

629  
00:33:26,020 --> 00:33:26,520  
No.

630  
00:33:26,520 --> 00:33:27,900

Never, never.

631  
00:33:27,900 --> 00:33:29,100  
No.

632  
00:33:29,100 --> 00:33:30,810  
Never in my life.

633  
00:33:30,810 --> 00:33:34,550  
I wouldn't even think of it.

634  
00:33:34,550 --> 00:33:36,390  
Why not?

635  
00:33:36,390 --> 00:33:38,770  
Why yes?

636  
00:33:38,770 --> 00:33:43,600  
I mean, it's a part of  
what I went through, right?

637  
00:33:43,600 --> 00:33:46,250  
It's like I want to remove  
what I went through.

638  
00:33:46,250 --> 00:33:48,400  
I don't want to remove it.

639  
00:33:48,400 --> 00:33:50,350  
There are certain people who--

640  
00:33:50,350 --> 00:33:52,750  
I don't criticize  
them, but they probably

641  
00:33:52,750 --> 00:33:55,720  
have a reason why they  
don't want to acknowledge

642  
00:33:55,720 --> 00:33:56,830  
that they are Jewish.

643

00:33:56,830 --> 00:33:59,440

Or they don't want to even  
acknowledge they were in camps.

644

00:33:59,440 --> 00:34:00,940

I have a friend.

645

00:34:00,940 --> 00:34:02,620

I have a friend who lives--

646

00:34:02,620 --> 00:34:04,690

I hope he still  
lives in America.

647

00:34:04,690 --> 00:34:06,280

He's older than I am.

648

00:34:06,280 --> 00:34:09,190

And he lives somewhere  
in the Midwest.

649

00:34:09,190 --> 00:34:13,210

And I hear, I understand  
his children do not

650

00:34:13,210 --> 00:34:15,820

know that he was Jewish,  
that he's Jewish,

651

00:34:15,820 --> 00:34:17,367

that he was in a camp.

652

00:34:17,367 --> 00:34:18,159

They don't know it.

653

00:34:18,159 --> 00:34:19,534

He doesn't want  
to talk about it.

654

00:34:19,534 --> 00:34:20,860

He doesn't want them to know.



655

00:34:20,860 --> 00:34:23,620

He's ashamed of it.

656

00:34:23,620 --> 00:34:25,420

No, that's wrong.

657

00:34:25,420 --> 00:34:27,580

He's not ashamed  
of it, I'm sure.

658

00:34:27,580 --> 00:34:30,280

I'm sure he does it  
because he is afraid

659

00:34:30,280 --> 00:34:33,850

that his children would have  
to go through a situation

660

00:34:33,850 --> 00:34:35,260

that he went through.

661

00:34:35,260 --> 00:34:36,489

That's probably the reason.

662

00:34:36,489 --> 00:34:38,530

But it's a certain fear.

663

00:34:38,530 --> 00:34:43,360

And I think, I believe by  
having this kind of fear,

664

00:34:43,360 --> 00:34:46,630

that you could succumb  
to such a situation again

665

00:34:46,630 --> 00:34:48,699

all your relatives  
or your children.

666

00:34:48,699 --> 00:34:52,449

You actually acknowledge that  
you didn't win that fight.

667  
00:34:52,449 --> 00:34:53,350  
OK.

668  
00:34:53,350 --> 00:34:55,840  
And I think I won that fight.

669  
00:34:55,840 --> 00:34:58,490  
I just don't want  
to acknowledge that.

670  
00:34:58,490 --> 00:35:03,580  
And I think I will never  
come to a situation

671  
00:35:03,580 --> 00:35:05,350  
where I would not admit--

672  
00:35:05,350 --> 00:35:11,430  
or not even not admit it, not  
be proud of what I went through.

673  
00:35:11,430 --> 00:35:13,140  
But I understand some people.

674  
00:35:13,140 --> 00:35:15,270  
As I said, I don't  
want to criticize them.

675  
00:35:15,270 --> 00:35:17,130  
They just are afraid.

676  
00:35:17,130 --> 00:35:18,430  
They don't want to do that.

677  
00:35:18,430 --> 00:35:19,680  
But I feel sorry for them.

678  
00:35:19,680 --> 00:35:22,800  
Because as I said, I feel  
they didn't win that fight.

679

00:35:22,800 --> 00:35:27,840

They kind of let the  
upper hand to those

680

00:35:27,840 --> 00:35:30,090

who wanted to destroy us.

681

00:35:30,090 --> 00:35:34,050

Did your feelings about being  
Jewish change in any way

682

00:35:34,050 --> 00:35:38,080

because of what you went  
through because you were Jewish?

683

00:35:38,080 --> 00:35:39,480

No.

684

00:35:39,480 --> 00:35:42,720

I am Jewish.

685

00:35:42,720 --> 00:35:45,180

Many times, we get  
to the discussion

686

00:35:45,180 --> 00:35:48,030

why I'm not going to  
the synagogue, why

687

00:35:48,030 --> 00:35:50,160

I'm not religious.

688

00:35:50,160 --> 00:35:53,520

I'm a traditional Jew,  
not a religious Jew.

689

00:35:53,520 --> 00:35:56,280

I know the rabbis don't  
want to hear that.

690

00:35:56,280 --> 00:36:02,190

And I kind of acknowledge that

I am maybe wrong saying so.

691  
00:36:02,190 --> 00:36:03,360  
But this is my feeling.

692  
00:36:03,360 --> 00:36:06,270  
And I cannot say anything  
else if it's not true.

693  
00:36:06,270 --> 00:36:07,540  
This is the truth.

694  
00:36:07,540 --> 00:36:08,400  
I am a Jew.

695  
00:36:08,400 --> 00:36:10,200  
And I am a traditional Jew.

696  
00:36:10,200 --> 00:36:11,220  
I was born a Jew.

697  
00:36:11,220 --> 00:36:14,820  
And there's nothing I can do  
about it, even if I wanted to.

698  
00:36:14,820 --> 00:36:18,060  
And I don't want to.

699  
00:36:18,060 --> 00:36:21,480  
And I'm really proud  
of what I went through.

700  
00:36:21,480 --> 00:36:24,480  
Not that I would have  
wished not to do that,

701  
00:36:24,480 --> 00:36:26,050  
not to have gone through it.

702  
00:36:26,050 --> 00:36:29,010  
I wish the times  
would be so I would

703  
00:36:29,010 --> 00:36:32,700  
become the gynecologist  
doctor in Usti

704  
00:36:32,700 --> 00:36:38,280  
and never know what  
Hitler, Nazism, or racism,

705  
00:36:38,280 --> 00:36:40,560  
or Holocaust means.

706  
00:36:40,560 --> 00:36:43,410  
But since that didn't  
happen, since we

707  
00:36:43,410 --> 00:36:46,950  
did go through those  
times, to deny them

708  
00:36:46,950 --> 00:36:49,050  
and not to be true  
to them, as I said,

709  
00:36:49,050 --> 00:36:51,180  
you would lose your fight.

710  
00:36:51,180 --> 00:36:53,700  
I don't want to do that.

711  
00:36:53,700 --> 00:36:55,140  
You said you're married.

712  
00:36:55,140 --> 00:36:56,370  
Yeah.

713  
00:36:56,370 --> 00:36:57,990  
Is your wife a survivor?

714  
00:36:57,990 --> 00:36:58,560  
No.

715  
00:36:58,560 --> 00:37:00,780  
My wife is not Jewish.

716  
00:37:00,780 --> 00:37:03,060  
She's Evangelic.

717  
00:37:03,060 --> 00:37:04,260  
Yeah.

718  
00:37:04,260 --> 00:37:06,340  
And did you get married  
in Czechoslovakia?

719  
00:37:06,340 --> 00:37:06,870  
Yes.

720  
00:37:06,870 --> 00:37:14,010  
Yeah, we got married in 1953  
at the night of Stalin's death.

721  
00:37:14,010 --> 00:37:20,760

722  
00:37:20,760 --> 00:37:24,350  
Well, is there anything  
else that you would

723  
00:37:24,350 --> 00:37:26,680  
like to add to your remarks?

724  
00:37:26,680 --> 00:37:28,400  
I just did, I think.

725  
00:37:28,400 --> 00:37:29,920  
I just did, I think.

726  
00:37:29,920 --> 00:37:31,250  
Yeah.

727  
00:37:31,250 --> 00:37:34,040  
No, not really any more.

728

00:37:34,040 --> 00:37:37,860

If you have any more questions,  
I'd be happy to answer them.

729

00:37:37,860 --> 00:37:41,120

Well, thank you very much  
for doing this interview.

730

00:37:41,120 --> 00:37:41,990

You're very welcome.

731

00:37:41,990 --> 00:37:44,640

732

00:37:44,640 --> 00:37:47,670

This concludes the United  
States Holocaust Memorial Museum

733

00:37:47,670 --> 00:37:50,930

interview with Rene Tressler.

734

00:37:50,930 --> 00:37:55,000