

This is a continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with Michel Margosis. This is tape number two, side A. And I was asking your thoughts about the Civil Rights movement, and whether, because of your experience as a child, that made you more attuned to it. Anything else you wanted to add to that?

There are so many things that impinge upon the values about diversity of people in this country that would be a little difficult to try to recollect all the experiences that we have here. Together with the experience in the Holocaust, during the time and afterwards, the attempted assassination of Truman by Puerto Rican separatists. And of course, the assassination of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy. It's hard to imagine that these things can happen in this kind of country. So all these things affect me, of course. And I guess in a negative way.

Affect you more because of your European background? When you read in the newspaper about what happened in the former Yugoslavia or what's happening, let's say, in Rwanda, does that bring up any thoughts in your mind, again, about your background?

The museum makes more of a case about it than I think I would, yet I can see a lot of similarities. It does affect me. Well, I guess that's-- but I don't relate it to the Holocaust. And it's a difference-- different values, different people. It's not-- the Holocaust is so unique in its whole enterprise. The way the government-- the whole government, the German administration from the highest to the lowest level were trying to achieve a certain value, a certain thing to complete. They wanted to eliminate the Jews.

I don't know whether the Kikuyus want to get rid of the white man in the East Africa. The Mau Maus, whether it was a single thing. Or the Tutsis and the Watusis in Rwanda. Or do the Catholic want to get rid of the Protestants in Ireland? Or vice versa? The values are not the same. The whole operation is not the same. But racism will always exist as long as more than two different people coexist together. They will always pick on each other.

But it doesn't have to be a complete system where the whole country is geared only to that end. And that was the Holocaust. We were selected for complete extinction because we're Jews. And I don't know whether the Spanish Inquisition was any worse. I don't think it was. And yet, I think they had the same purpose. But the purpose there was conversion. It was not the same as total extinction. And then I think in most cases, that's what they want to do. They want to convert other people to their way of life. So that's why I don't correlate one with the other.

But when you see refugees having to flee, you were a refugee and you had to leave. Do you resonate to that?

Even then, I don't relate. But then again, my own experience so far back that, like I said before, it seems like a different life.

Let's now talk about your experience at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. What was your first encounter with the museum before you began work as a volunteer?

I got involved a little bit when I worked-- I was still working. I think it was 1986 they had the reunion of the Jewish survivors of Benjamin Mead's group.

Oh, the American Gathering in '83.

The American Gathering in '83 in Washington. And it was just outside my building. And I saw these people. And as I looked at them and I talked to them, I said, that's me. Then I found out that the museum had been approved. And I immediately tried to get in touch. And I went to the offices on L Street. And I started working there. And I took the training.

And I wanted to do whatever I could, especially when I retired. That was my primary purpose was to work with them. And I don't know what I would experience being so close to that. But again, because I was not a death camp survivor, I think I could tolerate a lot more than these other people. These other people-- I mean, the other survivors.

What was it like for you to go out-- and you just used the expression, you started talking to the people. And you said, that's me. What was that like for you?

In the afternoon I would go out and on the mall, and I would start looking for the Belgian desk. Say, who do I know here? Maybe I know somebody. I had friends. We knew a lot of people. My father being one of two Jewish newspapers in Belgium, my father was well-known. I wasn't, but my father was. And then when I talked to people from Belgium, they said the [NON-ENGLISH]. Oh, I remember my father reading that. And yet, I never heard of them. But so I thought maybe I could salvage the name that we knew from Belgium. But we haven't.

So now I'm interested in helping out people and the re-establishing contact. The people in Belgium did not suffer as much as the people from Poland, for instance. I don't think anybody ever did. But we had the same fate. Many people went over the Pyrenees the way I did. And they were hiding in Marseille the way we did.

And the first thing I did when I volunteered-- I wanted to be in contact with people. My life was working as a research chemist. I was isolated. You know, the scientist in the White Tower. I never-- the only time I was able to go out was to do some research and publish and present at meetings. That was my social life at the time.

But then when I joined the museum, I wanted to work with the visitors. And I put my red jacket like everybody else and I worked with the people. And if they want to know where the bathrooms are, the toilets, that's usually the first question that comes up to people's lips, that's not beneath me to tell them where it is. That's my job. And then I want to work with the survivors with registry and encourage them to sign up, tell their past. Encourage them to talk to the oral history. And I want to join myself, Joan Ringelheim, trying to help out survivors who work in the museum. He said, we don't have the money. I've never had the money.

But I also encourage them to go to the registry and register their whole family. Not just the survivors, but the mishpacha, the spouse, the children, the grandchildren, whatever. Because this is the only way we can deny Hitler his victory, by showing him that the Jews have survived and multiplied. And I guess I just want to be a part of it. So now I work. Well, because of my recent operation, haven't done [INAUDIBLE] with the visitors.

And I'll be the interpreter there at the information booth. If they need somebody in Spanish or French, I'm there. With my lousy kitchen Russian, I'll be there. And I also work with the registry. I translated the deportation books from France and from Belgium. Not from France, from Belgium. That's quite a revelation to me. And also deportation from Marseille, which is a separate book by that French lawyer also. And I also participate in the Speakers' Bureau with John Minnick.

Talking to social security people. In fact, the woman who put me on the Social Security when I retired, I spoke to her about the experience. And she said, oh, I know you. That was quite a surprise. And I talked to the Madeira School. And more and more active. That's something that people should know. It isn't that I want to brag about my past. I don't think it's anything to boast about. I don't think it's any achievement to be an escapee from a miserable life.

But people should know what kind of things can be done to other people because they're different. And in that respect, I think the museum has achieved an immense success, by showing people. And they've done it in very good taste. And I may not always agree with they way they do it, how they do it. But they do a very good job. And I know that with survivor group at the museum that we have, we do not agree on everything. We're different people. We think differently. We have different values.

But I want to encourage anybody. We're at the museum to be able to do what they can to enhance that experience. And going through the-- and in fact, I tell all my doctors, you haven't been there yet? Said, I have the tickets. Just let me know when, and I'll give you a special tour. So I'm still working on that, but it's a special task. And facing my own past is not as bad because mine was not really as bad as it could have been. I'm here. I'm in fairly good shape, quite content with my life. And just try to keep on as much as possible.

You had said when you had come out of your building and you saw this gathering of survivors, before that, had you

been friends with other survivors?

At one time I did try to get in touch with-- I had heard about somebody from Belgium. And I got in touch. And that happened to be Jack and Flora Singer. That was way before. And we met a little group of just Belgian Jews. But nothing ever ensued after that. And of course, everybody was working at the time. I was more professionally involved at that time than at practically any time before that.

Because as I got older, I got more involved in more policy changes with the Food and Drug Administration with different values. And I was more of a senior scientist and I became more of an expert in the field. So I was more in demand. So I did not work too much with the Holocaust, and that was part of my past.

And I still considered myself a refugee until they redefined the Holocaust survivor as anyone being affected by Nazi policies between 1933 and 1945. Even though we just moved from one to the other. But it's only when I retired that I was able to devote the time that I do now.

Do you help out at the permanent exhibit?

Not in the implementation of it or the design of it in any way. I try to say, well, most of it-- and no one there in Fry was initially there when it opened. There was an exhibit downstairs with Varian Fry. And as I walked in there I said to myself, this is my home. I lived here. I was hiding in Marseille. I recognized Notre Dame. And I said, well if I had known Fry I would have been here earlier. Instead of waiting until 1943, I could have come in 1940 or '41.

So I would like the museum to have a little more about the people who escaped. Particularly-- and there were several thousand that went into Spain. And hardly any of this is mentioned, except through Varian Fry. But he only helped the intellectuals that he knew were intellectuals. There were a lot of intellectuals that were not known.

So the volunteers have, as far as I know, very little input into the programs in the museum, at least the programs in the permanent exhibits or temporary exhibits. I don't know if anybody had any input into the Olympics, for instance. I know that survivors have quite a bit to do with the other programs. They're the deportation. Not deportation. The camps post-war from 1945 to 1957 where the refugees were being shifted from camp to camp and not knowing where they would be going, especially those that did not return to their home country. When I say home, I use the term very loosely.

Do you work in the visitors service in the permanent exhibit?

I worked at the visitor center. And I asked the people there not to send me at the exhibits themselves. I tried to stay downstairs on the first floor.

Why is that?

Because I have a hard time facing all these exhibits on the-- the third floor is horrendous. I'll take some special visitors sometimes through. And I'll say I'll meet you at the end of this exhibit. On the fourth floor, for instance, if you are interested in computers, take a look at this little device that was built by the IBM company in the '30s for Germany. They used that to segregate people. And then you knew who was a Jew and who was not. Also on the fourth floor I think, take a look at all the insignias. Using two triangles to characterize each different group. The Jews, the homosexuals, each one had different types of-- and that's how they had characterized each ethnic group. Take a look at that.

Take a look also at how they measured the physiognomy of the [? nose. ?] Long nose, he must be a Jew. Pseudoscientific. And look at the source of these theories. That came from the United States. Take a look at this. We also have a section about the policies of the United States in the '40s, before the war, in the '30s, immigration policies. Get acquainted with this. See what your own country-- how your country felt about that, whether that's talked about.

I think 60% of the visitors of the museum are non-Jews. I also guide. I also, the people that come in, the groups. I also talk to the groups. And if it's a French-- I remember a group from Canada coming in and I gave it to them in French.

And I talk to the kids and tell them what to expect. If they have special interests, I can look at it. If it's an archaeologist, for instance, who is interested, I say, take a look at that milk jar, that milk container. That's a fascinating bit of genealogy. Normally when you look for that kind of things, you will not find anything in it.

So there's an awful lot of history, of values, and things that you can impart. And of course you impress some of your own feeling into that. But as a survivor, I can tell them what is of value to me. And of course, we also had the ID cards. And I always say that we had different plans when we first opened it. We had hoped that on every floor, you'd be able to identify each floor with that and then go accordingly. But each page is a different floor.

And the ID cards reflect all the victims, different types of victims. And not all victims were killed. Some of them escaped. And some people who escaped even came to this country. And some of these people are even working here in this museum. So if you are interested in talking to survivors, let me know and I'll see what I can arrange. And sometimes somebody will say, are you a survivor? I said, yes. Do you want to talk about yourself? It depends how much time we have. We're not supposed to take too much time when we-- the kids come in and groups, and they have so much time.

So that is of interest. As a visitor, it's important to be able to reflect on this. And if it's a survivor who comes in, you have to be particularly mindful of that. Depending on where he came from, if I had something in common with him, if it's language. I know they're mostly Jews, but not necessarily. So I find it particularly-- what's the feeling? It's good to be able to partake some of that experience and an education in a way. I used to be able to teach a little chemistry to some kids. If it's science, if it's pseudoscience, then I can tell if it's pseudoscience or not science. That's interesting.

And the work I do with registry too is also fascinating. Because there you know what the story is. You look at the background and say, oh, that person-- some of my brother's best friend was born in Warsaw, but he lived in Belgium. They became best friends. I never knew he was born in Warsaw. He doesn't have a Polish accent.

And then working behind the scenes, doing the translations and finding things that I never knew about the Wannsee determination in '42. A lot of my knowledge is from the museum that I acquired. People didn't know. And I think we have done a good job. And I'm pretty proud to be part of that.

How has working at the museum affected your wife?

That's-- my wife has had a history of depression. I don't know if it would've affected me if she had told me before I got married. But to date she's been to the museum only once. And that was this past year appreciation night. And she was willing to go as long as she didn't have to go on the floors. And I never even suggested that she does that.

It affects me going through the floors, through the exhibit, permanent exhibit, attending the movies on the fourth floor, and then going through and seeing all that has an effect. The first time I went through it, it took at least four hours. A couple of weeks later, I went back for a second time-- another four hours. I wrote my autobiography because my son asked me a question once about what did that do to you in the war? And I said, you really want to know? Said yes, so I started writing.

He was very much effected too. I think he stayed in the museum for about six hours that time. He does want to go back. He does not want to join any group related to the children. There was one group that I was interested, possibly, in acquainting him with. And that was when the children of survivors met children of the executioners. That was an awesome experience.

There was one woman whose father was a camp commandant. And I don't know to this day what she is. She seemed that she was-- whenever I saw her, she seemed like her eyes were red from crying, crying, crying. And there was no way that she could make up for anything. But she was very strong on wanting to be part of that group. My son was not interested in any of it. He's got his own life, of course. And he is working hard. My daughter went back there too once. And then, they're not that interested in--

I'm more active. I was thinking about the hidden children. I never realized I was hidden, but I was. But they don't meet too closely here, so I haven't joined them.

Do you think that you bring special insights as a staff member because of what you experienced?

Is it for me to qualify that? I think the staff should know better than I whether I contribute. I don't think any volunteer is ever rejected because volunteer time is always appreciated, anybody who wants to volunteer. It's rare that it's rejected. And I've heard that it can be. I don't know how much I contribute. I think I'm contributing quite a bit when I'm there. I've been looking to translate-- to have the museum sponsor the translation of the deportation. I asked the attorney there about two years ago to help on that. And since Sara has been moved to the Wexner Institute, she can't be too much involved with it. But nothing has been done with that.

I think I contribute, and I think I can, and I think I will. First year I was eager to be part of the advisory meeting, the VAB. They finally came with that name, that was adopted, VAB. That's the only thing that was adopted from that group. And I thought I could contribute to that. But then we have so many people who have so many different ideas that it's difficult. Especially since a volunteer has no real say in what goes on, since a volunteer doesn't bring any money, and you cannot be fired for causes. Even though I claim I've been promoted 25 times. I think we contribute, each in a different way perhaps.

But I'm not talking about volunteers in general. I'm talking about volunteers who themselves are from Europe.

I think we have more of something to offer. That kind of experience cannot be obtained in any way. And I don't know-- when I talk to different volunteers, when I talk to Flora, for instance, she talks mainly about the father, Bruno, who saves her and several hundred other Belgian kids. And she always direct any visitor to go particularly on the second floor and take a look at his picture. She then went back to Belgium to commemorate the sister's 50th year in the order. It's a very rich experience.

The priest that I met that took care of us and in Spain is nothing like it. But I felt he was in the same type of cloth material. And if he had been in France, he would have done the same thing. So there is a value in that that we can bring. The liberated cannot bring that kind of feeling. And we have, I think, a couple of people who have been-- I know a general, he used to be in our temple. He was promoted in the reserve. And he's the one that accompanied Clinton at the Omaha Beach. [INAUDIBLE] is a volunteer over there too. Even the liberated cannot bring the same type of feeling that the survivor can.

What type of feeling does a survivor bring?

That's the kind of feeling I cannot express. We were part of it. We were part of the history. They're talking about me. And yet, I'm glad it isn't, it wasn't me. I was one of the few lucky ones. But we can bring a lot of things that I think the visitor can appreciate.

If you have friends who are survivors, do you try to encourage them to volunteer at the museum?

Well, I have a friend who's not Jewish. He retired as an attorney. I've known him for many years. Our boys have the same age, maybe five days apart, who went camping, had scouts together. He'd bring the martini. I'd bring the whatever. And he didn't know what he was going to do with himself. And I provide him with tickets. I said, if you want to volunteer, we have plenty of things we can do here. He took the course. He's volunteering. He's now working at the museum. But he's not a survivor. He's not Jewish. And so you don't have to be Jewish to volunteer. Although, most of other volunteers are Jewish. But the staff is not. But that's something else. I have another friend from temple--

When you meet survivors, do you try to encourage them to work at the museum?

Well, I know so few survivors at the temple. And one of them will have nothing to do-- well, I shouldn't say nothing to do. She'll contribute. She'll give money. She doesn't want to go there. Most of them don't want to show that affiliation with them. The past is buried. Let's leave it there. I don't want to bring it back. And I know many survivors that feel that way.

What is your relationship with the other volunteers who are the survivors at the museum.

I feel pretty good about working with everybody there. I have a good rapport with the staff, with the administration, with Sara Bloomfield, with everybody there. And I feel pretty good about it. But then, I'm not paid.

What is your impression of the museum's volunteers who are not survivors? And staff who are not survivors? Jewish or non-Jewish.

Most of them do a very good job. Some of them are a little too dictatorial. You know, you can't do that, you cannot do that. But I'll do that. I'll say that too sometimes. You can't smoke here. You can't drink here. You know, we have to abide by certain rules. I think I've heard of only one being fired, and that's for nonappearance. And when we volunteer, we have to commit ourselves to a certain time. And I was told it was at least four hours a week. If I want to give 40 hours a week, that's my business. Most of them give a lot more than four hours.

And I feel good about it. And those people that I know on my shift-- and I come in sometimes other days. Tuesday is my day at the visitor center with the visitors. Thursday is my research day. And sometimes I'll come in on weekends or during the week sometimes. And all the volunteers are always gracious and helpful and dedicated. And I think they're great.

Can you describe any memorable experience that you had while working at the museum?

One time, I was in registry. And this young woman comes up to the registry. And she was directed that by somebody in the visitor's center. I have ID card. This is my cousin. And even though we cannot divulge where that person lives, it's confidential. So we get in touch with that person and ask permission to reveal. And then when I tried to get back in touch with her, she didn't give an address to follow up. And we couldn't do any more. So I don't know whether-- you know, we feel good about being able to reconcile people who hadn't seen each other for so many years. But then when it doesn't work out, it's frustrating.

I've met many people from Canada, from France who were French-speaking, and some from my own neighborhood. And when somebody's from Belgium, I'll say, where in Belgium? Brussels. What part of Brussels? Saint Jean. Where in Saint Jean? What street? And it's almost like coming home, you know? It's, and yet, a strange feeling. The past is always with you, and yet we have to look ahead. And I don't want to live in the past, but I have to talk about it.

Why do you have to talk about it?

Because the past is part of our future. If we do not know our past, we cannot appreciate what the future will be. If the future is anything like the past, it may not pay to have one. Depending upon-- I wouldn't want to see another Inquisition, either. But the best way to avoid any kind of incidents is to know what causes these incidents to occur, or accidents. I think all accidents can be prevented if you just find out what the cause is how you can prevent it.

Are there any particular parts of the museum exhibits that you identify with that you haven't mentioned yet?

When the museum first opened I was sitting in back of a young lady and she kept her umbrella wide open. And it was a drizzly, terrible day. And I kept asking to please close it, I couldn't see anything. That young lady happened to be a young woman by the name of Anna Rosmus, who her movie was made about The Nasty Girl. And we've been friends ever since. It brings that kind of people together. Now she's [? trembling. ?] She was trying to dig up the facts. And I think, again, I forgot the question, the original question. I keep digressing.

This is a continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with Michel Margosis. This is tape number two, side B. And I have asked you if there were any particular parts of the museum or the exhibits with which you identify. And you talked about meeting this young German woman who wrote The Nasty Girl.

So when I went through the museum and I see the name Passau, the town. It brings me back to some people, decent people, who tried to dig into the past and tried to correct it. And that is good. Being a scientist also, when I walk by that

IBM thing, that's a strange feeling, that science, of course, was instrumental-- is that a pun? --instrumental in the destruction of the Jews. They always use advances in science to achieve nasty ends. The gunpowder, the botulism, whatever-- toxins, nerve gases. Sometimes I feel sorry I am a chemist. Maybe that's why I felt so good about working for Food and Drug. We always worked for drugs rather than for the other end of it.

We had some experiences where when we were able to make people feel better about where there were, what they did. I also met some other survivors from other towns. One who came from Belgium that I've been in touch with. And there's a picture of her on the second floor as she was a hidden child. And when I talked to her I say, Simone, I see your picture all the time. And it's a good feeling when I see listen to Nesse all the time. She's a fabulous speaker. And Regina, we work together. We get along. We are fond of each other. We've become friends. More than friends, it's a special relationship. I feel very good about this kind of work. But then, I feel good about the other volunteer work I do, too, also in a positive way.

What other kind of volunteer work do you do?

Well, with my wife was being a parkinsonian, I'm very active in the National Parkinson Foundation, raising funds, participating, being optimistic, and being-- I collect a lot of humor and try to send it to many of my parkinsonian friends. I'm active in that and trying to keep up with the advances in the field. And I also work with WETA, public radio and television. Without Beethoven, Mozart, Bach, my life would not be as rich as it is. And I'd like WETA to continue with that kind of thing. And if I can help-- since I cannot afford to give them what I thought they deserve, I'll give my time. I'll got to the studio, answer the phone, little things.

When you walk into the Holocaust museum, when you come to volunteer, do you have any kind of emotional reaction when you step inside the building?

Well, sometimes the rent-a-cop gives me a hard time. Especially after the operation, I couldn't open the door to well. It was a little too heavy. So use the handicap button. And he said, that's not for people like you. I said, you don't know me. Yes, we know you. At any rate, Jeff said I'll open it for me if I ask him to.

But when I go there, I'll park the car, and I'll approach it, and I'll see the flag. And I said, that's my building. I walk in, that's my building. I feel at home. I know where I am. I am with friends and with family. And I know exactly-- it makes me feel good. And I see somebody who seems to be lost, the first thing-- can I help you? That's part of my ingrained-- even the streets. You know, I'll see somebody out on Constitution Avenue looking at a map. Can I help you? I think it's part of what it's all about, being a volunteer-- being helpful, and wanting to see a better world.

Do you receive reparations?

I have a claim. Let's put it this way, my mother sued the German government in the early '60s. They said that she applied too late. The lawyer we had in Germany died. And his replacement said that we shouldn't even bother. Then, when the Swiss problem came up and even before that, we were told that people who had no claim before could then resubmit claims. I resubmitted one. And then thinking, well, my father was in Geneva 1939. He was not covering the convention 26 hours a day. I'm sure he did other things.

And I thought maybe he did stop by the bank, just per chance. He knew-- he was pretty well aware since 1933, Hitler won the election. God, the election. It sounds so ridiculous. But I thought that maybe he did. We were not wealthy, but he might have had some money to put in. So I did see the list. My name was not on it. If he used his name-- if he used it, number one. If he used his name, number two.

I don't expect to see anything from that. In fact, as we're downsizing for the move over here, my wife says, why don't you throw that stuff away? I have big files on the museum that I can't throw away. She says, you have to get rid of a lot of the stuff. Well, I got rid of practically all my chemistry stuff, except my own publications. And there's just so much I can't toss out.

Why can't you toss out the museum information?

Because it's part of me, or I'm part of them. I don't know. That's more than I want to get rid of. You know, we keep moving. And we have to break with the past to some extent. And downsizing after collecting 35 or 41 years of marriage, and then to a small place, it's difficult, especially since I had an active professional life. And all of these other things, that's just so much. I have Triumphant Spirit is sitting on top of that table there.

How did the author of Triumphant Spirit get to you?

Nick was visiting the museum. And he was on the fifth floor in the registry. And I saw-- my hobby used to be photography. I asked what kind of camera he was using? The stand and everything. And then he asked me, are you a survivor? I said, yeah. He said, you seem interesting. Can I interview you? So he did.

And one of the pictures he took was the three cameras, the three monitors in the registry with my picture and me sitting in front of it. And I have that picture. And that was one of the few that he selected. He also interviewed Flora and I think possibly Regina. And I gave him a few names, including that French actor from Hogan's Heroes in California.

So I helped him with the exhibit when he came to the capitol over here. And when he needs information about how to spell camp and where they are, I'm his contact to some extent with the museum. He was affected by visiting Germany and going to one of the camps. And that changed his life. And it's quite an experience. That's quite an achievement.

Do you ever dream about the years you were a refugee?

I don't remember most of my dreams. I think I do at times. But I had some good times over there too. You know, being free in southern France living on the farm, no school, learning how to be friends with cows and horses. And I had never driven a horse before. I had never been that close to cows. And then being able to milk them and drinking warm milk without heating it. Being able to climb trees to get fruit directly from there. It was a sense of freedom that is seldom ever achieved. But I had that experience. And I felt good.

I didn't have any feeling of doing anything evil when I climb on the truck full of watermelons just because I wanted to have one. Getting food, as I probably explained on my previous thing, was very difficult back then. Everything was difficult to get. In fact, about a month ago, I wanted to put a vegetable in the soup and I didn't have the-- what do you call? The [NON-ENGLISH]. Not the horseradish, but some kind of radish put in this chicken soup.

They had nothing but rutabaga. And against my better judgment, I bought one. And that gave me nightmares. Thinking about rutabagas. That was practically the only food available in Marseille. I don't think we even had to stand in line for rutabagas. And somehow, the thought of having another one just sickens me.

Any other foods that trigger memories?

Beans in Spain. One time there was practically nothing in Spain except beans. Baked beans, I guess. And 1942 was not too long after the Civil War. And I they still had food shortages in Spain. I did not see white bread until I came to this country. Then I said to myself, why the heck do bleach bread? But there were a few things, like the rutabaga was one of the worst.

You had said that you were part of a survivor discussion group at the museum and that some people have different feelings about certain areas. What is-- the different feelings about which areas?

I don't know if it's a discussion group. It's a meeting of survivor volunteers. And we have quite a few volunteers who feel certain things. Some of them feel other's not Jewish enough. With my background being in government, I said, this is not a Jewish Museum. It's an American Museum. And it should be open to the public. And it is not a Jewish Museum. It's a museum of the Holocaust. And it gives the history of the Holocaust.

It's an educational institution. It's also a museum. And that should be for the American public, not for the Jews. Even though the Jew was the main target of the experience, that should not be run by Jews, for Jews. Because many other



people have suffered just as much. Maybe not to the same extent, but even if one person suffered, it should not be tolerated.

So we have different people who said it is still not Jewish enough. We need more people who have to be able to read Jewish, Polish documents that come to the museum. Yes, we do need these people. Fewer and fewer people speak and read Yiddish. But to have somebody who can speak and read Yiddish at all times at the museum may be more than what they can afford. And not all survivors know Yiddish.

So we have the kind of discussion. And some other things that survivors may value more than others. I think that it's important for somebody who works with the public to be able to communicate with the public. The public is not always American. I'm not going to learn Japanese just because a Japanese comes over. But I did provide a guide. Translate the guide that we had in English and translated into French.

And a friend that I know that I used to exercise with, who used to work at the Library of Congress was Japanese. I don't have the feeling against the Japanese that I had against the Germans because I was not part of that war. And he was very willing to write a guide in Japanese. So anybody who's willing to help the museum is there for anybody who gets there. And if he can get the help in the language that he's more familiar with, and if he can make it easier for him to understand what went on, that would be better.

So I would like each volunteer to be able to be identified with the language that he can speak-- French, Spanish. So that when somebody comes, we need a Russian interpreter, he can come over and help. That's one of the things I would like to see. There are other things there. And different people have different ideas, suggestions. And Marty is in the position to be able to help out in that respect. I think he's been there long enough so he knows access.

What other areas do you have suggestions for?

Well, I would like the lawyer to be able to come to a decision whether we need permission from [? Klaus Fell ?] to be able to publish in English. We can use it in-house, but we cannot publish it as it is now. We need permission. I would like the museum to sponsor that. There were quite a few things. I would like exhibits to reflect some of the other things besides death houses. Many refugees went to England. Many refugees went to Switzerland, as we learn now.

There should be an exhibit about escapes. My brother-in-law escaped through Spain. As soon as he was able to leave Spain, and he went to Palestine. And he immediately enlisted in the Jewish Brigade. Does anybody know about the Jewish Brigade? The Wexner Center has very little on that. The Wexner Center doesn't have much about the Pyrenees. And I'll get back to Sarah Ogilvie on that, because she's now in charge of it.

A few things that should be. But you know, Rome wasn't built in a week. But then, I'm not trying to build Rome. But slowly, I hope I'll be able to help. Now, I'm going to be 70 in about 12 days, just a couple of weeks. And I don't feel 70. But I like to be able to do things while I can. And that is the problem with survivors. They're getting fewer in numbers. And many of them still want to do a lot. I'd like to be able to do what I can.

Is there anything we haven't talked about that you would like to speak to?

I'm trying to think about it. But as you probably get to reach my age, you'll realize that the second thing that happens is the memory goes. I'm sure there are a lot of things that we could touch on. I'm proud to be an American. I don't know if I'm proud to be a survivor, but I'm proud to be able to help out and to be a part of that museum.

And I was extremely content with my life as a chemist. And being able to go to a drugstore and see my methods in the official compendium. I think that was very gratifying, I was able to contribute. And if I don't get paid for it, I'll get paid in a lot more ways than I could ever get from money. And I want to continue that. What else can I say to that?

I'm not active so much in the temple anymore. But I'm in touch with the rabbis. And they keep hearing from me because I send them jokes practically every day. And they appreciate my jokes. I want to be active in that respect-- make people feel better about themselves, about where they are and what they do.

And even with the worst impairments, people can still achieve a certain degree of being happy. My motto has become carpe diem, seize the day. Do whatever you can while you can and enjoy it to the fullest. Thank you for being here. I may see you, Gail, in maybe a couple of years and update this one.

[LAUGHTER]

Right, right. I hope so. Well, thank you very much for taking the time to do the interview. This concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Michel Margosis.