United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Harry Markowicz
May 16, 2012
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PREFACE

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HARRY MARKOWICZ
May 16, 2012

Gail Schwartz: This is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with Harry Markowicz, conducted by Gail Schwartz on May 16, 2012 in Silver Spring, Maryland. This interview is part of the museum's project to interview Holocaust survivors and witnesses who are also volunteers with the museum. You have been interviewed before by the Steven Spielberg Shoah Foundation, but just to put this interview in a framework, I'm going to summarize where you were during the war and then we will focus on your post-Holocaust experience. You were born August 9, 1937 in Berlin. Your parents were originally from Poland and you have an older brother, Mani and a sister, Rosa were eight and nine years older than you. Your family went to Antwerp, Belgium in 1938 and then in May 1940 you went to the French border, but you were stateless because your parents had been from Poland. You went back to Antwerp and your father was called to work so your family left Antwerp and suddenly went to Brussels in 1941. In the summer of 1942, you went into hiding. The three children were placed with a family, a non-Jewish family whose name was Coons. And then later you and your sister went to the outskirts of the city to a children's home. And then after that your mother came and got you and placed you with another family, the Von der Lindens. And then you joined your parents again and you went to Brussels and your mother came and got you from the Von der Lindens right before liberation. So we are now up to the time of liberation. Before we go on though, I just wanted to ask you if you had any early, early memories cause you were so young born in the summer of 37. For instance about what happened at Dunkirk. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

Harry Markowicz: Yes, that's my very, very first memory. It happened at the border. Or near the border. We had been refused entry into France because we were stateless. And my memory is being in a ditch with my mother and other people.

Q: You were three years old now?

A: Almost.

Q: Almost three, right.

A: And there was a, on the road next to me there was a, well there was a British soldier, part of the British Expeditionary Forces that were stationed in France and Belgium before the war started and the officer was looking up in the sky with binoculars. Then I fell asleep. When I woke up he was gone and I asked my mother where was is this soldier. And she told me that the soldiers were gone. And she seemed to be afraid at this point. Later I learned that the British soldiers were evacuated from Dunkirk, which was just over the border of Belgium and France.

Q: All right, let's move ahead then to right before liberation. You said your mother came and got you from the family. Do you remember that?

A: Yes, I remember because by this time I was very attached to the Von der Lindens, specially Mrs. Von der Linden and she was very attached to me, like a son. And my mother showed up. She came and visited me occasionally. But this time she came and she wanted to bring me to my parents' hiding place which was an apartment that looked like it was in a vacant building. And I didn't know why she wanted to come and pick me up. I know, I was a little upset and Mrs. Von der Linden, also. But my mother said that she, I could come back after the liberation. So I went with my mother. We took the street car. And at some point, at a stop, there was a German truck came by. It was being pulled by a horse. Apparently it had run out of gas. And there was also a soldier lying on top of the truck with a heavy machine gun. They looked very insecure. They kept looking around and like expecting some, maybe to be shot at which is, was the case. But I didn't know that.
My mother said, going to that scene, she said, always remember this. Don't forget.

Q: And you still have remembered it? Very vividly.

A: Right. I have not forgotten it. So then we went, I thought we were going to the apartment where my parents were hidden, but in fact we went around the corner where there was a beauty parlor. And I didn't know this before but one day my mother had been walking on the street around the corner and some German soldiers came in the opposite direction on the same

sidewalk so she got a little panicky and she went into the beauty parlor. And once she was inside, she was just standing there and the woman who ran this beauty parlor told her come in the back. There were, in many stores there was a living area, behind the store. And above the store. And my mother hesitated to go in the back. She was afraid. So the woman said that her husband was Jewish which was the case. And so they became friends and their backyards were connected cause they were at right angles to each other and there was a wall separating them but they made arrangements to go over the wall in case some danger would happen to one or the other.

In several cases, my parents went over the wall. I don't remember these peoples' names, went over the wall. One time I know it's because the Germans came to pick up the Jewish family living in the house next door.

So they didn't know that it was, it wasn't for them, so they went over the wall. And as it was getting close to liberation, my parents moved in with this couple and that's where my mother took me also. By this time, or maybe a day or two later you could hear the cannon fire in the distance. And so we knew that liberation was very, very soon to come. I remember once I was standing in the entrance of the beauty parlor and I saw, on the corner, I saw a group of men wearing khaki, but they weren't soldiers. I didn't know who they were and they were carrying cases, looked like wooden cases and they opened them up and they were distributing rifles to other men that came along.

So I went back in the beauty parlor and I asked what's going on? Who are these people? And they were actually Belgians who were getting ready to join the fight against the Germans. Then again shortly after that, I don't know how many days went by, I think it was maybe one day or so. One morning my mother took me. She said we're going to go to, it was a park. I didn't know exactly why we were going there. And she said the English are there. I'm not sure what she said actually but she said the English. She probably did but I'm not sure. I didn't know what that meant. And so we started going and I asked my mother, why isn't my father coming. And she tried to explain that he hadn't been outside, except to go to the beauty parlor for two years and he was not ready to face people. So we were walking along. My mother was kind of in a hurry and we were on one street. And we passed a tent that was burned. And I was fascinated. I don't know if it was, I assume it was a German tent, now looking back at it and probably a Molotov cocktail had been thrown at it. It was burning on top. And I didn't seen any soldiers, just fire. So I stopped to look. My mother said let's go and grabbed me, my hand and continued with a lot of

other people. Everybody was rushing to this park. And when we arrived there, there were tanks lined up in all the lanes. It was all very strange. There were a lot of, a lot of civilians around the tanks and everybody was happy and cheering and my mother took me towards a tank. There was a soldier standing on it. And we looked at each other. We looked at the soldier, he looked at us. And then he put out his arms, downwards and my mother lifted me up and he grabbed me and – (crying) – he pulled me up. And he held me in his arms. I looked at my mother and she said, give him a kiss cause we didn't have any way of communicating with him. So I did and then I looked back down and she was crying. So I couldn't understand. That was all, this job that my mother was crying and she said it's all right and I remember the soldier kept smiling as if it was ok.

After that, I don't remember all the details but my mother took me back to the Von der Lindens like she had promised to do. But there was another reason. My brother and sister were by then they were living in the Ardennes. And my parents wanted to pick them up which wasn't easy because we had to go there by train or municipal trams maybe. But they weren't running. So and there was no communication so anyway I went back to the Von der Lindens and I didn't really know how long I stayed there. I only figured out a few years ago when I went back to the Von der Lindens. Every house on the street had a huge flag of the allies, American, British, French, Belgian. There wasn't a red flag. And these flags, I know how people made them. They were the size of double sheets hanging down in front of the houses.

And then one day I went outside to play, as I usually did, but I quickly noticed that there were no flags on the houses. So I went in and asked Mrs. Von der Linden. She ran a store, sort of a hardware store. And she said that the Germans might be coming back and she seemed very anxious cause I didn't know this at the time. It was many years later that I figure out this was the Battle of the Bulge.

So this is the way I know that I spent much more time with the Von der Lindens after the liberation than I originally thought because the Battle of the Bulge was in December. The liberation was in September. And so I was still with the Von der Lindens at the time of the Battle of the Bulge, several months after the liberation.

Then after probably a short time after that, I'm not sure. My parents had found, rented a house and the apartment where they lived was much too small for our family. And so they rented a house, a nice little house and my brother and sister and I were there, but also my cousin Lottie.

Her father was my mother's brother. And her parents had been deported on the last transport from Belgium. Number, it was transport number 26. They also had a son who had the same name as my brother Manfred, or Mani. They were together. At some point they were hidden together by a priest who was well known for having saved a lot of, hundreds of Jewish children. Father Joseph Andre who has been recognized by **Yad Vashem** and many other organizations. He placed the kids in convents or orphanages or in private families. But until he found the places they stayed with him. And both my cousin and my brother were with him when the Germans started watching him, suspecting that he was also involved in the underground. So he had to go into hiding himself, the priest. And my brother went to live with a family that was not really -- were friends of the family my sister was staying with in the Ardennes. But my cousin didn't have any place to go and so he went back to his parents' apartment and they were denounced. They were seen during an air raid, probably going to the shelter and they were deported. My aunt is the only one that came back. But they had a daughter, Lottie, who was hidden someplace else. So my parents took in Lottie and she was living with us. We still didn't know the fate of my mother's brother and his wife.

One day his wife came to the house. I happened to be there alone one afternoon. The doorbell rang and I opened the door and there was this strange woman. Somebody I didn't know and she also looked strange a little bit. And she didn't say anything for a long time and I didn't know what to do. I knew I wasn't supposed to let in strangers in the house and she didn't say anything and finally she, she said I'm your aunt, **Tante Dutche** and I didn't recognize her. First two years had gone by since we had gone into hiding. But also she had been in Auschwitz during that time and on a death march. And so when she told me her name I let her in and my parents came home. That evening, after dinner, my aunt kind of spilled her guts, told the whole story from the beginning to the end and they were all very, very quiet listening to her. And also at some point she pulled up her sleeve and we all kind of looked or leaned over to see what was on her arm. It was her number tattooed on her arm. (pause)

I had started going back to school. I, actually I was going to school already when I was living with the Von der Lindens. At first when they were living out in the country, it was a Flemish area. And the school was a Catholic school. There was Flemish which I didn't know. So that didn't help me very much. Then later when they moved into the city, I went to a French speaking school. But there were some gaps there. So when I moved in with my parents again I started

school but I was a year behind. And later I caught up. It was a very small neighborhood school and the fourth, fifth and sixth grade were in the same room. So I could hear and see what this, the class ahead of me was doing so by the end of the fifth year of school the teacher said I could go on to the seventh grade which was a, in like what do you call it here, junior high school. So I caught up there.

In 49, my brother got his visa to come to the States. Since my brother and sister and I were born in Germany, but our parents were born in Poland, we the kids got visas earlier because the quota was shorter for Germans than it was for Poles. So my brother got his visa first. My parents were not that interested in moving to the States. They got established again in Belgium. They were happy there. But my brother wanted to go to the States. And shortly after that, that was in 1949. Shortly after that my sister got her visa and she joined him. They went to Seattle, Washington. And then in 1951 my parents got their visas. They had, I guess I could have gone to the States before but I was only 11 when my brother left so they didn't want me to go without them. We came to the States and arrived in New York, on the Queen Mary. And then –

Q: And before, we'll come to that in a minute. I just wanted to ask you some questions though. Was your family a very religious family?

A: Not at all. I mean –

Q: Assimilated or secular.

A: They were secular. We, we observed the High Holidays. I didn't have, I had my bar mitzvah and I had –

Q: That was later. I was talking about while you were still in Europe.

A: Yeah well I had my bar mitzvah in Europe, also in 54. No, I mean. I would say they were, they were a little religious but not very. My mother did keep kosher. What was before, I don't know. My brother thinks that when they were in Germany, they were a little more mainly a little more religious.

Q: What kind of work did your father do?

A: He was in the tanning business.

Q: Leather.

A: Leather and hide, yes. Exactly.

Q: You talked about your aunt and uncle. Did you know or did your parents know or did they talk about what was happening during the 1940s to the Jews in Europe. Did they have any idea and did they share that with you, at the time?

A: At the time itself. They didn't talk to me about it. I don't know what they knew. I –

Q: What did you know as a young child about, you knew you were Jewish?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you know why you were in hiding?

A: I sort of knew that, that we were the -- that the Germans were looking for us and that something. I don't know if they ever said what would happen, maybe they didn't know at first. But it was not a good thing. So –

Q: Was it something that you talked, as a young child, over with either the Von der Lindens or your parents?

A: No. The one thing that my parents told me. I remember that, the scene even. They said that I should be very careful and not urinate in front of anybody in school or outside, not to show my

penis. And I said why. Advice to me. And they told me well it was because your penis is different because we're Jewish.

Q: Did you know what that meant?

A: No. I didn't know what Jewish meant but I knew it was different from others.

Q: As far as other extended family, do you know what happened to them and if so what it was? You talked about your aunt and your uncle.

A: They were in Belgium.

Q: Any other extended family?

A: Yes there was my, on my father's side his two brothers had left Poland too. One was in Paris with his wife. And he joined the French Foreign Legion and was sent to North Africa. And his other brother went to Tangier with his family, his wife. And there was another sister who was also living in Paris with her husband and children. Her daughter is the same age as I am. And after the war started, they were able to get out of France, go to Spain. And I guess maybe Portugal and then they caught the ship. They didn't have visas for any country but when they got to Venezuela they were allowed to get off the ship so they are the ones who survived. My father had three, two or three other sisters and his parents, they perished. They didn't survive. They were in Poland.
On my mother's side there were 11 children, so ten siblings. Father had died before the war of natural causes. This, her grandmother and all her siblings they were still in Poland and of those, no I shouldn't say they were all in Poland. One aunt and husband they were in Hungary and then from Hungary they got to England. He was a cantor and so he got a job in, not in England, in Ireland. First. And so they were saved. Her, my mother's youngest brother, he and his wife went east when Germany invaded the Russian part of Poland. They went that way. And they were, ended up in Siberia. And then later after Germany attacked Russia, the conditions got better and there were many other Polish Jews were allowed to join in a Polish division in the Russian army.

And they were sent to Iran, Persia for the oil fields, but on the way they deserted and went to Palestine, along with many others. Including the former president of Israel, Begin.

Q: When you were staying at the Von der Lindens as a young child, were you able to lead any kind of a normal life and do you remember it as being a particularly fearful time?

A: No, living with the Von der Lindens was a normal life. It was, I went out with them. I know we went to movies. We'd occasionally have ice cream in the park or something. Like I said, I went to school.

Q: When you saw a German soldier would that elicit any response?

A: Well I think I think we were kind of told, I have sort of in the back of my mind, something like don't look, don't look at --

Q: Just keep walking.

A: I'd see German soldiers in the street but you know I –

Q: But you had freedom of movement and you were able to play with other children? You were speaking French?

A: Yes, I spoke French. I was not supposed to speak German which I knew because I spoke it with my parents, but –

Q: You spoke German with your parents?

A: Yes, since they, they had, they didn't even know French. They lived in Germany for 20 years. So the language was important. I think I was – there were some secrets that I was able to keep.

Q: Did you take the Von der Lindens last name?

A: Yes, actually I had a new name.

Q: What was your name?

A: Harry is not only British or American. It's also German name but it's definitely not Belgian or French so I was Henry Von der Linden and I had a whole new identity. I was this little Belgian boy, son of Adele and Adolf Von der Linden and I had an older sister named Florence. They were, they were not religious at all and so that was not an issue at all.

Q: Why do you think they took you in?

A: Well you know I never asked but in, when I went to live in France to work actually in 1976, I went to see them and my then girlfriend, American girlfriend who is now my wife, came to visit me and we went to Brussels to see the Von der Lindens. By this time, I think her husband had died already. And Arlene, my wife, asked why she took us in. Or my sister and I and that was the first time, I don't know why it never occurred to me to ask. What she said was that somebody knocked at the door and asked if she would be aware, if she would be willing to take in a child. She didn't say Jewish. She wasn't told it was a Jewish child and it wasn't us, it wasn't my sister and I. It was a young teenage girl and she stayed with them for a while and then their, they became concerned because she had a boyfriend and they were not very careful. They wrote to each other and then really all the, a lot of things which probably would have endangered them all if somebody had looked into it. There was censorship of mail. So they asked the organization to take the girl back. And so my sister and I were traded.

Q: Let's move to after the war, the 45 to 1951 era. You said you went to school. Was this a joyous time for you? You were eight years old at the end of the war. And then as you said going to junior high.

A: I was not unhappy I know that.

Q: Did you talk to your parents about the previous years?

A: Never talked.

Q: They never talked. And your father was able to start his business again?

A: Yes, yes he was. But no, we never talked.

Q: Did you talk with other friends about it?

A: We never, no. It's amazing. I, where we lived was not a Jewish neighborhood and the neighborhood I know Jewish friends. But then when I went to junior high there was a Jewish boy and it happened that his parents and my parents were friends. But it was like when the war, no when we were liberated and we all got together again as a family, I remember very distinctly my sister saying nothing happened to us. We were not caught and we didn't starve. So whatever we went through was the same as everybody else, except we were Jewish. There were some more complications. But we never, even though the word survivor didn't exist, wasn't used like it is now. But you would consider people who were in concentration camps to be, to have survived something. We didn't survive anything. We just, nothing. So we never talked about it. They never inquired about us. I guess after a while my mother learned that all her siblings and grandmother, sorry and her mother were dead and same with my father.
I don't remember them every talking about it or -- With me. Or showing anything. I was a little surprised maybe. How come I don't know when I started feeling it. It was strange that they never talked about or showed emotions about it. But they didn't cry.

Q: What did America mean to you at that point? Now you were going to be going to the United States. Did America have any meaning for you? As a child?

A: Well yes, as a child. As I said we were liberated by British but then soon American troops came.

Q: Did you know any English?

A: I didn't. My brother knew some English and he liked to practice it and so he would hang around the soldiers and when he met Jewish soldiers, he invite them home for dinner. I didn't, I only learned this maybe a year ago so. I thought it was my father who would invite them but it was my brother and so we had a lot of soldiers. And also my mother had a cousin who was in the Jewish brigade. He would come to our house with a British truck and give me rides. I remember the there was a round sunroof and I'd stand up on the seat. I didn't know then of course that he was using, the truck was used for bringing the refugees to I think Italy from where the departed for Palestine.

And then you know before the war ended, an American came into our lives. It was my cousin in Ireland had married an American officer, a dentist. Her brother was a dentist too. They met in the same way. Her father had invited this young American officer who sort of was a rabbi, for dinner. And they got married. So and then he was sent to Belgium. He worked in the field hospital in Lieges which is quite close to Brussels. Belgium is very small. And he started coming to our house every weekend. Whenever he was off. And he was able to do everything. Fix things, things that my father would never be able to do. And so I was always happy to be around him.

One thing. He used to be a great story teller but he also had a very loud voice. So with my, we spoke German because we didn't know English and he knew, he had learned German in school. And, at least he learned in school. I don't know where else. He spoke it quite well and sometimes we'd go out in public like to a restaurant or café and he would talk but it was always in this booming voice in German. I didn't know where to hide. I'd keep my distance because everybody would start staring.

Q: Did you feel very Belgian at that time?

A: No, I didn't feel. I always felt like an outsider. But I still do anywhere. I am almost.

Q: So when your folks said you were going to the United States what –

A: I was happy.

Q: You were happy. Why?

A: Well.

Q: You're a teenager now.

A: Yeah, pre teenager, I'd say 12, 13 when I became. So I don't know. My brother was already here and also I guess, I know that with my friends we had arguments who were like for example who was the best soldier. First of all there were, Germans were the best soldiers. Then the British were the . I mean that was my friend's argument. And then came the American soldiers, but like one of my friends said, his friend was communist. General Motors won the war. I had no idea what General Motors was. Who was General Motors? And since then I have, in a way that's been confirmed. I mean the fact that the United States had such an output of material that they were able to build, to continue on. The Germans couldn't produce. So anyway I was, liked the Americans better than the others and so I was prepared to come here. I was happy to come here. I liked American things.

Q: You did?

A: Well my friends probably did too. But there was a –

Q: By the time you came here, did you know any English?

A: I knew a little. I start in the eighth grade. We started learning English in school. The teacher had a British accent. And for me the last six months or after my parents got the visa, there was a period of time before we came. During that period they hired a tutor and but in reality I knew very little. I remember we arrived in London. We went to visit my uncle and aunt who lived in London. And we crossed on the ship and then we took the train and we were at the train station

and we didn't know where we were, where to go. So this man came up to us and asked if he could help. And like I think I was saying, I was saying was no thank you. In fact we could have used help.

Q: You said you took the Queen Mary?

A: Yes.

Q: How did that happen, come about?

A: Well, my parents had money and we traveled second class unfortunately for me. I mean they always used to when we traveled. Every summer we went to the coast of Belgium and stayed in nice hotels and all, so my parents were well off but then rather, not wealthy, but well off. And so it didn't, I'd say they felt it didn't suit them to go third class, tourist class. So we went second class on the Queen Mary. It's the front of the ship is first class and the third, the back of the ship is the tourist class. And second class is the whole length of this huge ship. But there were very, very few passengers in second class. If you can afford it you go first class. And there were no children. I was all by myself. I did meet a reporter for the Saturday Evening Post cause he didn't speak French and I didn't speak English. And he, I don't know if it was his girlfriend or what. There was a Chinese woman and by coincidence his sister lived, had lived for some time on the same street where I lived in Brussels. And so they took me around and sort of entertained me.

Q: When you docked in New York, was that anything special?

A: You know I –

Q: Do you have memories of that?

A: Yes, because this maybe embarrassing. I didn't know much I guess, I didn't know about the Statue of Liberty or I didn't know it was such a big deal. So one morning, the reporter, came, knocked on our cabin and said we're going to go by the Statue of Liberty. We're arriving. And

first I didn't know what it was I was going to see. But I went with him. And there was a lot of people on the side of the ship looking toward the Statue of Liberty. And he said to me, aren't you excited. And I got embarrassed because the French word excited is a sexual –

Q: Oh, ok, sexually excited.

A: So I didn't know -- So I was looking forward to arriving in New York but and we were met by friends of mine, of my parents. They took us to a hotel. But I was really disappointed by New York. It was so noisy, so dirty. I remember the first morning, or very early in the morning, the garbage trucks picking up garbage cans and the smell in the subway was all very unpleasant. And of course, not knowing any English didn't help.

Q: Right. And then how long did it take to get, did you go directly to Seattle?

A: We spent a few days. There were other friends who met my parents. They were planning to live in New York. We were just going to see my brother and sister. And but we went to LA, cause we knew some, my parents had some friends there too. And they had round, we bought round trip tickets flying. And when we arrived in Seattle, we found out that my brother was being drafted. The process had started of the Korean War and –

Q: You're now 14.

A: No I'm still 13. It was March, 51 so I was still 13, yeah.

Q: You had mentioned about a bar mitzvah. Did you –

A: I had my bar mitzvah in Brussels.

Q: What was that like?

A: Well I didn't like the whole process. I had a tutor also who came to the house. And first it was a young woman, a pretty young woman. But so I mean after a while it was a man. And maybe, the case, I didn't like having to learn to read Hebrew and prepare for the bar mitzvah. It was all quite strange to me. Because didn't live in a milieu that --. So it was a relatively small bar mitzvah. I, my parents invited – we had friends. We did have relatives there. We had cousins. Then we lived in, they're still in Los Angeles, but he has Alzheimer's now. There was only one friend that, I had one friend that, the boy who was in my class when I started junior high. And my cousin, a cousin from, who came from Paris.

Q: This was post war so there was no danger.

A: Yeah.

Q: So you could be relaxed.

A: Yes, I was with my parents. Later I found out, there's a woman who made a film called As If It Was Yesterday, I think is the title. And it's about Belgian, children being hidden in Belgium. And her parents were at my bar mitzvah. I never met them and I've never met her. She lives in New York. My sister has met her I think.

Q: Well now you're visiting your family in Seattle.

A: And we were going to stay just I don't know ten days or so and then go back to New York. And then so this was quite a shock to my parents. He, he had tried to stay out of the army by saying that he was my parents' support. But my parents came with enough money that they decided the draft board decided that they didn't need to be supported by my brother. So he was drafted and went to basic training and then he was, he got ready to go to Korea. And this really has changed with my father's hair I think turned white overnight. I've heard that it happens that -- so then we decided, my parents decided to stay in Seattle because my brother had a business there. It was food vending machines. But it's now started was the cousin, the American cousin

Matthew. His brother had a business, a vending machine business in Tacoma, Washington. And they want to expand to Seattle. So my brother, you know partnered, with my father's money.

Q: And you went on to school?

A: I started school which is strange because as I said we arrived in March. So maybe we arrived in Seattle at the beginning of April and we were staying. My brother and sister had an apartment. And it doesn't matter. Pardon me. After being there for a while the neighbors told my sister and my brother I should go to school. So my brother inquired where the nearest school was. And it was a high school. And I was still in the eighth grade. And this high school it started in ninth grade. I went to talk, my brother took me to talk to the principal and he asked, the principal asked me what I had studied. And my brother translated. And since I had studied many things that they weren't doing in eighth grade in America, like studying math and algebra, geometry. The principal very wisely said well you can stay here. Normally we would have had to send you to a junior high school but he said you can stay here. The year is almost finished and it really is a time to learn English. So they put me in a French class and a German class and a couple of English classes. Then by fall I could speak English.

Q: You could speak English.

A: With an accent

Q: Right and so you've completed high school in Seattle?

A: Yes, there was a high school where there were --

Q: Then what did you do?

A: I went to University of Washington and studied there for four years.

Q: So you got a degree

A: I got a degree in French.

Q: Did you talk about your childhood at all? Did people ask you?

A: No. Never talked about it but one thing happened. I was having trouble writing, like for English classes. And my advisor, then we had advisors, I remember his name. Otis, Mr. Otis. He said in Belgium they teach writing very well. I didn't know how he knew. So he said, no that shouldn't be a problem and he said well why don't you go see a counselor. At the counseling center. So I did and for some reason there were two people, two, I think they were psychologists and they were sitting across from me and one of them said well tell us about yourself, your background. And that was the first time I started talking about myself and I started crying.

Q: Were they sympathetic?

A: Yes. Yes, they were sympathetic. They said that I needed counseling that it would be long term and they only offered short term there. So that they recommended I see a psychiatrist. So I told my parents and said, why should you see a psychiatrist. You're not crazy. So I didn't go to a psychiatrist. Until many years later. I was in my late 20s and I was – a friend of mine said he was seeing somebody and said he was very good. He was Jewish and he was very good. I didn't know exactly what that meant but I kind of felt, maybe I could see him. So I called his office and he told me he's all booked up. He couldn't see me. He wasn't taking any new patients. But there was somebody in this same suite of offices who might. And so I made an appointment with this other psychiatrist who was traditional. He was Freudian.

Q: Freudian.

A: He never said anything. He just, felt like he had me talk and he wrote notes. Except one time he reacted. I don't remember what I told him but something like I'm lucky and I don't know what I was referring to. Maybe I met a girl or something. And all of a sudden he blew up. He said you're lucky, you think you're lucky. You think you're special don't you? And I couldn't

respond. I mean and – he didn't know anything about me. Because he had never asked and I never talked about my past and you can look at my early childhood. You know I was lucky. I had let's see in Belgium I had a 50, 50 chance of surviving. Maybe less because I was a child. Let's see if I had been caught, it would have been less. So definitely I would say yes, I was lucky. But for some reason he reacted in this way. Shortly after that, I quit. When he raised his rate, I took the opportunity of quitting. And this happened again. When I, did I say I lived in Vancouver.

Q: No you did your four years in Seattle and then –

A: Ok, then I went to work for a year. I went to save my money so I could go to Paris. I had read the Razor's Edge, Somerset Maugham and my parents said later when I was with my sister when she was dying and we had this more intimate kind of conversation, said my mother who by that time was dead, said that that book changed my life. And I didn't even know that my mother was aware. But anyway I wanted to go to Paris. So I worked for year. And then I went to Paris for a year.

Q: What did you do in Paris?

A: I went to a school. Well it was the Sorbonne but it was a special institute for teachers of French abroad. And so I got a certificate there. And then I wanted to go to Israel to a kibbutz. And I had gone to a party. A Jewish professor had invited me to a party.

Q: In Paris?

A: In Paris which is sort of unusual because professors and students at least at that time didn't mix. But she invited another student from the class. A Jamaican girl and I. At the party I met an employee of the embassy. I don't know what he did but I told him that I wanted to go to a kibbutz and but I didn't know how to arrange it. So he suggested that I go to a kibbutz which has an **ulpan** where they teach you Hebrew. So you work half a day and you study for half a day. And he told me about one. I just followed what he told me and I don't remember what steps I took that I arranged to go to a kibbutz **Ein Hashofet**. And so that's what I did after the summer.

Q: So you went from Paris to Israel?

A: Yeah, I traveled in Europe and in Turkey.

Q: did you go back to Brussels?

A: Well I was living in –

Q: In Paris.

A: Yes, I went to visit the Von der Lindens. I was always very –

Q: You kept up a connection with them.

A: I kept, yes, but what I was going to say. In Brussels I always felt kind of sad, a little bit depressed. Everything was gray, did I Paris. I meant Brussels. Brussels is gray. And other parts though Belgium I liked. I liked the coast, and the Ardennes. But in Brussels I always felt as I -- said not well. But I would go to see the Von der Lindens.

Q: And how long did you stay on the kibbutz? A year?

A: A half a year and then I moved to Tel Aviv. And taught English in the language school. Meanwhile in the kibbutz I had met an Israeli born girl who, whose parents, her family had moved from Israel to Turkey when she was nine years old.

Q: To Turkey?

A: Yeah. They had, her father was Austrian but this whole family lived in Turkey and the mother was Greek background, Sephardic. And they had lived in Istanbul. And so they went back because the father had problems with his eyes and with the light in Israel. So she when her

mother was 16, she, her mother died and -- when she was 16 her mother died. So then her aunts were pushing her to get married. And so she, to escape, she and her younger brother came to Israel. She was 18. He was 17. And I met them. They were at the kibbutz. And so we started a relationship and after I had been in Israel a year, I had applied to go to graduate school at the University of Washington and so I was accepted and since -- the girl's name was Tilda. She couldn't come without being married or – and because we wanted to, we got married. She was 18. I was 24. And we went back to England. To see obviously she had never been there. She didn't speak English. She spoke five languages. We spoke French to each other. Cause that's a minority language in Turkey. She had gone to French schools also.
So we were married three years and then she was not happy, not, it was a difficult adjustment for her. Meanwhile her father and her other brother. Oh, actually she had two brothers. Two brothers came to the States and they went to live in Los Angeles and she, then she went to Los Angeles after we were married three years.

Gail Schwartz: This is a continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Volunteer collection interview with Harry Markowicz. This is track number two and we were talking, that you were back in Seattle, going to graduate school. And how long were you, for how long were you in graduate school?

Harry Markowicz: For over two years. I was working on my masters which I didn't get. I got into a program that they -- the university had set up between linguistics, psychology and French, literature, not French literature. And so it involved almost three departments and there were a lot of infighting between the faculty. So many of us didn't get our degrees because each one tried to get very high level of requirements for their field. And I was teaching French. Then for some reason two people in the same week told me about this new university in I forgot the – After that, sorry, after that I got a job in a community college in Tacoma, Washington. It was called Tacoma Community College. I taught French there for two years. Then these two friends told me about this new university called Simon Frazer University in British Columbia near

Vancouver and for some reason, both said this separately you'll fit in there. So I didn't know exactly what they meant but I called the chairman of the foreign language department, or maybe I'm sorry linguistics. It was a combination. And I told him I was interested and he said ok come on up. This was 67. And we can talk. So after a few minutes he offered me a position as an instructor. I didn't have a transcript or anything. And then he introduced me to some of the people in the department and the French woman and she told me she was a graduate associate. I knew what a graduate assistant was because I had been one but it's a little higher level and more paid. So I went back to the chairman of the department and said what is this graduate associate thing. Can I do it? Cause I don't have a PhD and I'd like to work on it. He said oh sure, you can do that too. And so I, and they paid very well too. So I became a graduate associate and taught French and I got my MA degree there.

Meanwhile, while I was there, I got interested in sign language, completely by chance. I'll make it very brief. I had in mind a research project involving linguistic universals which had become popularized or not only got popular but they were introduced by Chomsky, Noam Chomsky. And but it involved doing a little experiment with artificial languages to discover whether one could learn a language more easily if it had universals. But everybody already knows a language so that the experiment was not feasible until one day I read in a book called the Biological Foundations of Language that deaf children, before they go to school don't know any language. So I decided ah ha, that's my, those are going to be my subject. Just about this time there was a letter published in the Vancouver newspaper in response to an article which I had not seen. But the writer wrote that so and so, a deaf man has a little deaf girl, he and his wife are deaf. And have a deaf girl who was two years old and she has a vocabulary of, maybe she was two and a half, of several hundred signs which she combines in two word sentences. Two sign sentences. This was exciting because that's what hearing children in whatever language they learn. So I contacted the writer of the letter. He was a director of social welfare agency.

And we talked and I also met a deaf man there. He introduced me to this deaf man he was writing about who I don't remember how we talked, having a long conversation. And it became clear to me that if you're deaf and you grow up in a deaf environment, namely deaf residential schools, that it's very similar to being Jewish.

Q: Why do you say that?

A: Because you are in a minority and you're part of a larger society but you're always a minority. And the kind of relationships that develop among deaf people are the same kind of relationships you have among Jewish people. For example, a deaf American and a deaf Japanese may have more in common than a deaf American and a hearing American in some ways. There's a language aspect. There's a whole lot of, though later in my life I started writing about the community, the deaf community as an ethnic group. Anyway this became very fascinating for me. I got hooked. So I started reading books related to deafness and either the books didn't mention sign language or else they denigrated it by saying it's not a real language because it doesn't have articles. And it doesn't have a passive voice which is pure nonsense. There are plenty of languages that don't have articles or a passive voice, not a requirement for that to be a language.

So that immediately got a rise out of me and the director of this institute for the deaf told me about a professor at Gallaudet University, William Stokoe who had worked on sign language. And suggested I contact him. So I did. And immediately Stokoe sent me back books, several books that he had written on sign language. So I, with my masters papers on sign language. This was in 1969, 70 at a time when sign language was not really accepted in America.

So I -- it was a cause. It was not my cause. I couldn't, I couldn't fight for my cause, whatever that would be but I found that I wanted to take part in this fight for recognition of sign language and I could see eventually that it has to do with deaf civil rights. So that's what I did, get involved in. Eventually in what year was that. In 72 I came to Washington to go to Georgetown to work on my PhD at the suggestion of Bill Stokoe. And so I studied at Georgetown and then I started working at Gallaudet in William Stokoe's linguistic research lab where he did research on sign language. And it was funded by various grants, National Science Foundation and so on. When the money started running out, I was no longer working there. I worked there three years. And I had gone to Paris during the summer of 75 with several colleagues from Gallaudet. One in particular had a grant from maybe it was National Science, no it was National Endowment for the Humanities, a grant to study the historical foundation of American Sign Language, but its origins are from French sign language.

So I was the French expert. My task was to go into the library at the school for the Humane school for the deaf in Paris and do research there on what was available on French sign language.

There I met a sociologist who had some interest in deafness. And then he knew the history of, this history of deafness, the controversy. But he felt that all, he had been led to believe that with the new kind of hearing aids that were developed that that was not the problem anymore. And so we got involved and he invited me to stay with him and I told him what I knew that. So he, next, the next summer there was the world congress of the deaf took place in Washington. It takes place every four years. He came here and then stayed afterwards with me and saw what we were doing in the linguistic research lab. And then he asked me if I would like to go back to France, work with him, to get French sign language recognized in France. So I took a year. He got a grant there. And went to Paris. That was 76. Fall of 76. And the year stretched to five years. And in the meantime, after the first year I got married to my current wife Arlene who I knew already from Washington.

Q: And then you came back after the five years and did you go back to Gallaudet?

A: Yes.

Q: And then how long did you stay at Gallaudet?

A: Eventually, I got a position in the English department and I taught English 25 years. I know the total number of years is 29 and, 29 years and nine months.

Q: So now you are retired?

A: I retired in 2008.

Q: Let's talk about two other topics. One is your experience as a volunteer at the Holocaust Museum. That's number one so let's, how did you happen to decide to become a volunteer?

A: That was very easy. I know a lot of people who are volunteers. In 1985, I was one of the small group who were founders of an organization that Congress called, if I remember correctly, child survivors of the Holocaust in the Washington Baltimore area. It was Flora Singer who got us

together. First time was seven and we've been meeting ever since, once a month. And we also have, it's become international and we have yearly international meetings. And so in this group a lot of people were volunteering.

Q: How did you get to meet Flora and how did –

A: That's an interesting question. One day I wasn't teaching. I guess I was home at lunchtime. I turned on the TV while I was eating and there was the Povich program, I forgot his first name.

Q: Maury

A: Maury Povich. It was called. Anyway she was on the show with her cousin and I –

Q: And you contacted her?

A: Yeah well I asked my, that was the other thing. My wife to contact her because I couldn't talk. I was just – so she called the station and eventually Flora called me and she invited me to come to the meeting of the, now I don't remember what the adult organization is called. I went and it was obviously not for me.

Q: Is this the hidden child?

A: No, no not, this is not the, this is the adults. This is the people who went through camps mostly and who were older than me, 20 years older. And maybe not that much but there is a huge difference. And to them, nothing happened to us because we were just kids. We don't even remember and, and so, once we invited one of their members to come to one of our meetings. We tried to get closer to them. This is a long time ago. Probably 20 years ago. And at some point this man said exactly those words. But what do you know? You don't remember anything. You were kids. So I got back to Florence and I you know, I don't fit in there. She said yeah I know. There are several people who feel the same. Flora was sort of in between in ages. And she spoke Yiddish fluently. So she said well you know I'll get you together, just hold on. So she did.

She got us together. And we met and decided to meet again. The beginning year or so were very difficult because different individuals had different ideas what the group should be. But eventually got, sort of worked out.

Q: And then how did you hear about the Museum?

A: No, I knew I, people in the child survivors group, there were several that volunteered. There was also –

Q: When did you start volunteering?

A: In 2009. What happened also, during the year 2000 I taught a seminar on the Holocaust, a seminar, an honors seminar at Gallaudet on it. Since I knew so many, the way I structured the class was every --- we met once a week for three hours and I invited my friends to come and make a presentation. Not all of my friends. The first time I invited two historians from the Museum, Patricia **Heberer** and I'm blocking on the other one.

Q: And you signed those talks?

A: No, we had interpreters for that. I mean there was a reason. Yeah but also instead of just having it as a class, I, we had this in an auditorium. It was open to everybody. And somebody from the Museum suggested to have a general who was one of the liberators. I've forgotten now his name also. But he was well known and he was Jewish. So I had him come. So and I selected people from my group who represented the whole scale of things from people who were in camps. The majority in our group were not in camps. But sharing their experiences, unique and everybody, there was somebody who came in a group of almost a thousand who were brought to the state, 44 and they were sent to Oswego and put in a camp. So there was a, and kindertransport and so on.
So I knew I was going to do it but after I retired. I don't know why it took me a year. I would ask who do I contact and oh, I'll let you know next time. And then it wasn't just their fault. It

was mine. I could have just, I knew quite a few people already so, at the Museum itself. I could have, but I don't know why. So –

Q: What do you do at the Museum?

A: I work with visitor services. Initially I thought I should do that so that I can see what it's like. And I did a little work for Judy Cohen. On the –

Q: The photo archivist?

A: Yes, but I wasn't working. I didn't see -- what did I do. The Salvadorian project. And it was kind of tedious and not very exciting. Maybe she gave me something else to do also. But meanwhile, Theresa **Pollin** had asked me to translate letters that a family wrote. They were traveling through Europe. I think they started in France. Letters were in several languages but a good part were in French. Letters that were sent to their relatives in the states. They didn't, the family didn't survive but the letters obviously ended up in the Museum. And I agreed to do it. And she gave me copies, but my sister wrote many letters during the war to my parents but they didn't go directly to my parents. And she wrote in French, of course she wrote them in French. Because of censorship. And my sister is dead. She died about 15 years ago but her daughter who lives in Israel, she has the letters but she doesn't know French. She wants, she's asked already several years ago, she asked my brother and I to translate them. And for some reason, we've done a few. My brother more than I. But some of it you have to decode because of the censorship. You couldn't just so – I don't know why. I haven't really sat down with my sister's letters and I felt if I'm going to translate letters, I'd rather translate my sister's letters first and so I didn't do the other ones.

Q: What is your feeling when you walk into the Museum building? Do you have any special feeling when you walk in?

A: Well one thing, I don't feel –

Q: Any connection? Do you feel any connection?

A: I feel a lot of connection with the people.

Q: Or the exhibits?

A: I've always been interested in Holocaust thing. In 1957 when I was at the University of Washington, majoring in French literature, I had a professor. He was French. He might have been Jewish but he, at this time he was Catholic. He and his wife were in the States when the war broke out. He was – he had a year or something, so they stayed in the States. So one day in class he started talking about – he told me later and I realized who it was he was talking about Eichmann and the deal that he was trying to work out with Cant. The guy's name is Cantor I think, the Jewish --.

Q: **Kastner**.

A: Kastner, thank you. And but at that time I didn't know any of this. And he was telling this story of the, how they were bargaining and then Kastner or somebody else said well how can we trust you when you delivered 10,000 trucks which they didn't have of course and were never had gotten. How do we know you're going to release, whatever one million Jews or whatever it was going to be. And Eichmann said you have the word of a German officer. So I started going to the library at the University of Washington and you know at that time, that was 57, it was very early. The French professor had used the word let's see, in English, no in French it's **litterateur concentrasonaire**, the literature of concentration camps. In France it apparently existed already existed already. But not here. So anyway, I went to the library and got books. I remember one specifically Bergen Bel was the title and it was all about Bergen Belsen. It was each chapter was written by a different person. Like an Englishman, soldier, an inmate from the camp. And it was fascinating. So I've always been interested in releasing.

Q: Are there any particular exhibits at the Museum that resonate with you? The permanent exhibits or anything?

A: Well yeah. Come to think of it. There's a wall of rescuers and you know most people have their names and then there's the priest who saved my brother. He's got a whole. And then the woman who was – found places for my sister and I. She also has a plaque with – because she saved hundreds.

Q: And her name?

A: You know. I can't remember it. She married an Italian who was teaching at Chapel Hill. My sister found this out. Both the priest and this woman. First name is Jeanne, and my sister remembered they called her Mademoiselle Jeanne.

Q: Do you find you are more comfortable among other people who survived the war than those who weren't or did not experience it?

A: Yes, yes. Yes, definitely.

Q: Is it easier to talk to them than someone who did not have to live through it the way you did?

A: Even if we all talk about the war but you know there is something that we have in common.

Q: An unspoken connection.

A: When I was at Georgetown, I, when I first came I was staying with a young woman I met at a conference cause I didn't know anybody in Washington. And then in the seminar a -- she pointed to a woman and she said I think she's French also. So during the break I went up to this woman and I asked her where she was from and she said France, Switzerland and after a while she said Israel. And then she said, and you. That's always a difficult question because I have to think what am I going to say. Seattle. Belgium, Germany. So while I was thinking what am I saying. I

already knew obviously what the situation was. But I was still thinking. She said you don't have to say anything.

Q: It's unspoken. What is your opinion about the non-survivor volunteers at the Museum?

A: I think they're wonderful.

Q: Jewish and non-Jewish.

A: yeah well the ones I've worked with, I work on Tuesday afternoon. Right now they're all Jewish and I don't know how it is but I think it's the same with other people. I mean other teams or whatever on other days. We really form like a very supportive group, even if it was the case that another day would be better, more convenient for me. I wouldn't think of changing. I really look forward to going. You asked me how I feel. I look forward to going. Already on Sunday –

Q: Why?

A: One is this bond with these people. The other is I like the feeling while interacting with the visitors. They encourage us to enter the, enter into conversation with them.

Q: What do you say about your background when you speak to visitors?

A: No I don't. It's funny cause no I don't. I don't. I said to Debby. They made buttons for us that say I'm a survivor. Do you have any questions? I don't know but people don't even wear them. But I asked for one and no, it's my own little private joke that I feel like putting it behind a lapel of my jacket because I'm a hidden child. No I don't. Well I have on occasion but like people come up to the desk, the information desk where I work and say I heard there are Holocaust survivors that we can talk to and I say yeah they're over there. These two ladies, you can go over there and talk to them. Once one of my Tuesday afternoon group came up and whispered to me, this woman and her daughter would like to speak to a Holocaust survivor but they went for lunch and they're not there. Do you mind talking to them? I said ok. And so I talked them. They

asked me, I mean not the mother but the daughter. She had maybe a school project. I don't know. Yeah, but I don't know.

Q: You don't normally bring it up?

A: No, no.

Q: Have you ever encouraged other friends' of yours who were survivors to work at the Museum, to volunteer?

A: Yes, indirectly. This woman that I mentioned that I met at Georgetown. When I -- lost contact with her. It was, after, I don't remember. Oh when I went to France after that I lost contact with her. But I, once I started working at the Museum I joined the Echoes writing workshop, echoes in memory. And one of the, maybe it was the first story I wrote. And so I thought hm, I'll try calling her. I knew she traveled back and forth between here and Geneva a lot. I think her mother was living there still. And I called and I left a message on the phone. And she called me back and we got together and we don't see each other that often because she lives in Potomac or McLean. But we correspond by email a lot. And she goes, still she goes to Geneva. She's there right now. Constantly going back and forth.
But I don't want to suggest it. In fact I had brought it to one of our meetings, child survivor meetings and I said that's not for me. And she didn't come back again. So I, but I know she's very interested. I tell her about the things that are going on. And the peril to the work, the various events that we get to participate in like the president coming to, to speak to. I got to shake his hand and I got a wonderful picture of it.
But I don't want to suggest it, no. And I don't, I don't know anybody else who is not already affiliated with one of the groups in lives here. Maybe have been all good. I was just reading a review.

Q: Do you have children?

A: We have one son.

Q: One son. When he was growing up did you talk about your experiences to him?

A: No.

Q: You did not.

A: No, but –

Q: When did he learn about what you went through?

A: He was very little, when I still used to read books to him. I had a copy of **Maus**. And for some reason he picked it. He wanted me to read it. So I read him. I skipped a few parts here and there. And we adopted a, adopted him. He's from Brazil and he doesn't, didn't have a bar mitzvah because we were going to have it in Israel but then my wife got vertigo problems. She couldn't fly. Anyway after that he didn't want to have a bar mitzvah so he didn't. He doesn't feel, he doesn't identify as being Jewish. That's neither here nor there. But he knows, like sometimes he calls me and says dad there's a film that you might want to see on TV. But we haven't talked. I've given him a couple of the texts that I've written for Echoes and he hasn't said much but he said he briefly liked that. Unlock the door or something but he doesn't ask me.

Q: How old is he now?

A: He's 26.

Q: When he was your age that you were during the war, you know a young child. Did that bring back memories for you about what you went through?

A: I don't know if it brought back memories but I was aware. I was thinking oh that's when I was there and this was when we were liberated and trying to imagine what could have been, how I could have gone through those things and –

Q: Right, such a young child. So it did elicit –

A: Yes.

Q: Are there any sights today or sounds or smells that trigger memories of the war and you being hidden and anything that ever triggers it?

A: (pause) Some other things that trigger. Sometimes it's something that's said. There's a film. I think it's called 80th blow. It's a documentary and it's about probably the Warsaw ghetto. I don't remember any more. And this, the scenes that were shot then and I can watch that without – it doesn't bother me. I can watch bodies being bulldozed and – but little things. In this 80th Blow there is a scene which two little boys are sitting on the sidewalk, little, little boys and one of them they, as people walk by he says in Yiddish **a shtick of a broit** [ph], a piece of bread. If you said in English, doesn't do it. Doesn't do anything but in Yiddish. So there are lots of things but it's not obvious. I haven't categorized them but – I get teary easily.

Q: You said you were in Israel during the Eichmann trial and you had to hear about it.

A: Well I didn't really know I was going on that . When I went to my uncle and aunt they would give me a little – well the, you know there was no television in Israel at the time so you know I didn't see very much as far as I remember. Maybe they did, they didn't know either. It was such a big thing and I was there but I was out of it . It was the same with the Cuban missile crisis. We were in England. We met, my new wife and we traveled to London where my parents were and my uncle said something about, I guess we were watching the news and he said you know there might be war or something. And I had no idea because we hadn't kept up with the news.

Q: Did that shake you up, the fact that you would live through another war?

A: No I don't, I thought it, maybe I thought he was exaggerating. I don't know.

Q: Would you be a different person today if you hadn't had the childhood that you had? Has it affected you?

A: I think it has but of course there is no way of knowing but I think it has. One thing I wasn't even aware but I read an article. There were two articles I think it's in the Shoah foundation newsletter or newer magazine. There was an article about a woman who was a hidden child and then the next thing was an article that she wrote herself. And she works in the medical school. I don't know if she was a medical doctor or what. But she made several statements that I can identify with. One is indecision. And –

Q: In what sense?

A: Well this writing business has been nagging me forever. Having trouble writing. So I was seeing a psychiatrist and –

Q: When you say trouble, are you in the physical act of writing or what do you mean by trouble writing?

A: You know I can't write and I correct myself so many times

Q: You mean picking the right words? Physically?

A: Oh yeah, physically yes. So one day the door is open. It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. It can go this way or that way. It has no consequences. That never occurred to me before. So she talks about this. Another thing is feeling that people perceive you differently. This woman obviously is very accomplished. She's teaching in medical school in New York and she said that she feels like a fake. And I have the same feeling. I feel like a fake. A fake --

Q: I know but in what sense do you –

A: Whatever I get recognition for I don't deserve. Or people take me for more intelligent than I am. That what I do knowing people, sometimes I get praised for my writing and I think well –

Q: And why do you think that is that you feel you don't deserve it?

A: I don't know. I don't associate it with my experience, but this woman in her article that's what she wrote about.

Q: Do you think maybe it's because you had to lead two different lives? You were that other little boy Henry which you know what I mean. So who are you really, in a sense. As a young child when your personality is being formed.

A: I think you're right.

Q: That's an interesting comment what you said.

A: Well I think your comment is also very interesting because sometimes I think about it. I mean it's comes to me as leading two lives, specially when you're so little.

Q: Right and your personality hasn't been formed yet. You were such a young child. What are your thoughts about Germany and Germans today?

A: Today I think what happened in Germany could happen anywhere. I mean Germany was one of the most advanced countries, educational. The culture and in every field they were tops you know, among the tops. And it happened. The conditions made it possible to happen. I could see it happen here.

Q: You could see it happening again.

A: I mean not there but I can even can see it here or anywhere.

Q: In today's world.

A: In today's world yes.

Q: You could see it happening.

A: The conditions get, I don't know.

Q: Do you think your political views have been affected by what your experiences were?

A: I don't know how to link that up. I mean there are many people who have not had my kind of experience but feel the same way politically.

Q: You had mentioned about, you were active in the rights for the deaf, civil rights for the deaf. Were you active in the civil rights movement in generally. I mean you came from a situation where your civil rights were deprived and your parents and so forth. Has that made you more attuned?

A: Maybe more attuned but I didn't, I'm reticent to actually take part in – I was in British Columbia for five years, when – during 68 and so on. So there was also the movement but I was afraid I was going to be evicted, reported at Simon Frazer University. Students took over the university. And lots of the people I knew were like in the building.

Q: Were demonstrating?

A: Well they were in the building and the mounted police arrived. And I was outside but I didn't go in the building. I was afraid what the consequences would be – but also I'm very dished, but I never told people I was Jewish either. I think the first time was I mean some people saw me. In the high school I went to in Seattle it was in a formerly Jewish neighborhood. There were still a lot of Jewish kids, 50 percent or more you know. So there it was not an issue. But later on, as student at University of Washington, I remember being in a restaurant having a place with my

friends, several friends. I don't know why I said I was Jewish and they said you're Jewish. They were like it was a surprise to them but that was the first time that I remember saying it to anybody who was not already -- I don't know how they, I didn't know how they would react to that idea.

Q: Has, what is your feelings now religiously in a sense of, you said your family was quite secular.

A: Yes.

Q: Do you feel yourself still quite secular or did your experience change that?

A: No it hasn't.

Q: Your thoughts about being Jewish in general?

A: I think I feel very Jewish but very, very Jewish but not because of religion. Some of our relatives, my sister married an Orthodox man and her children are very, quite Orthodox. Especially the son. And my wife has, she has several siblings. But one of them also is very Orthodox and married a very Orthodox man and seven children are very Orthodox. So it's kind of strange sometimes. I think. I don't need this. I don't or maybe I don't say I don't need this maybe. I feel I would like it but I can't do it. Like I see it's when they get together with other people, they don't have the same kind of faith. They -- there's a rapport through religion that I don't have. And the prayers and –

Q: Are you a member of a synagogue?

A: No, we tried several things. In fact two weekends ago we went to an open house from the **Kehila Chadasha**. We went to go on their retreat. But we had been members when -- before we had our son. And it was very child oriented it seemed to us. So we thought we didn't feel it was our place, but we went to this one meeting and it was quite amazing to us. The besides the bagel

nosh and all that, they had a discussion led by a reporter for the Washington Post who reports on the national news. He talked about the elections. There was another reporter from -- the who works for the Los Angeles Times that was there. And but among the audience, everybody who commented, they were so brilliant. And it was an amazing intellectual feat going on and so in fact I felt, I didn't feel up to par. But so we're going to try that.

Q: Good. And do you think more about the war years as you get older?

A: Well there's more time to think about it.

Q: Now that you're retired.

A: Yes. And especially being in the environment with the -- role with the museum. So there are all these other activities and movies and so on. And my wife doesn't mind. She likes so it's a good thing cause she didn't go through that. But it would be more difficult if she couldn't relate to it and didn't want to participate. She doesn't participate in the child survivors group. One thing when we started, we didn't allow non survivors, even spouses. Some people were very adamant about that. But that's all changed but my wife feels -- she's much younger than me. She's young and it's not her thing.

Q: Are you angry that you had to go through what you did, being hidden and away from your family and the losses your family suffered? Are you angry that other people Jewish children let's say or other children your age didn't have to go through it?

A: No I'm not angry.

Q: You're not.

A: No.

Q: It's more of an acceptance or –

A: Other children who didn't have that experience don't have such happy childhoods. In fact my wife's background, I mean the family was poor. They had five children and her childhood wasn't that happy.

Q: It was difficult. Well is there anything else you wanted to add, any thoughts you had?

A: Well one thing that I've been thinking about at the museum, maybe elsewhere too. There is a lot of emphasis on seems to me, on the bystander as being guilty for not doing something. Well to me that's, it doesn't make sense. Just because there are injustices going around, it doesn't mean that you can specially being in an occupied country or in Germany, doesn't mean that you can just go out there and do something. I mean you can do something, get hit over the head and that's the end. A lot of the, I've become aware that a lot of the people were involved was due to circumstances. If (inaudible) And somebody came, knocked at the door and asked if they would take a child, didn't say Jewish child. She suspected it she said. Others, that woman who, Jeanne. Mademoiselle Jeanne, she was a school teacher. She was 20 years old, a school teacher and someone said kids were disappearing, Jewish kids. So she had this connection. She was then determined helping other kids. And I'm now watchful. I'm on the lookout and I see that's what's happening. With the priest in Belgium. There was also an aspect that he was asked or, so I see it's not that easy to just decide well this is not fair. Then I'm going to go out and demonstrate or something. You can do that here under certain circumstances which is perfect as long as you've got your permit or whatever. You can have a demonstration.
But under the conditions that, in Germany and later in the occupied countries, I admire the white rose movement. Its but they gave their lives for nothing. Same with a lot of – another thing that gets to me is the myth about the Jews not resisting. There was of course some armed resistance. But it was futile. What does that mean. Countries like Poland, Czechoslovakia, Norway, Denmark, Luxembourg, Belgium, France, Holland. Almost Russia were invaded and almost they were defeated, not Russia -- almost. What does it mean to resist? Well there was resistance but it did take all kind of form. Every time you didn't do what they wanted you to do. Every time you didn't report to the work, when you were chosen or you didn't go to the place where you were

supposed to go so they can deport you. Or when you were supposed register. Hiding children. All these things were resistance. And so it, I've been, that's bothered me for a long time.

Q: There's all kinds of resistance.

A: There's all kinds of resistance and the armed resistance was I think well, it's wonderful that people did decide, ok we're going to resist with weapons and but in general I guess you could say that it was futile. And they didn't survive. Many times hostages were killed.

Q: Have you been to Germany?

A: For very brief periods, visits. When I was living in Paris, when I had an aunt who had been in Tangier. She's actually not Jewish. I didn't even know that. When my uncle died in Tangier, she and their two daughters move to Frankfurt, where she's from I guess. And while I was in Paris I visited you know for two weekends. And another time with Arlene, when we were coming, when we're living in France we did a lot of traveling back and forth. She'd come here for a summer and so one time there was some I don't know if it was a controller's strike or whatever. I don't remember what it was. I think it had something to do with controllers, so we couldn't get a flight, a commercial flight back here. But my brother who was in the tourist business arranged for us to get on a, I think it was a charter flight or something from Salzburg in Germany. So we went there you know to spend the night and so I felt –

Q: Are you comfortable in Germany?

A: I'm not comfortable wherever I can't speak the language and my German is limited in vocabulary. It's also limited by the fact that I only spoke it with my parents or relatives. So I don't really know how to talk to people. When I was in college there was a Swiss, it was from an Italian area. So his German was –

Q: So it was more the lack of a language rather than the feeling of what Germany represented?

A: It was both. I still thought you know when I saw older people, what did they do. But you know I, at least intellectually I think, didn't do anything more than people do in other countries in that kind of situation.

Q: Did your parents get reparations?

A: My parents got, yeah they did.

Q: And you and your brother and sister did you get any payments?

A: I think my brother got a -- and sister got a few hundred dollars for the loss of school. I didn't get anything.

Q: You didn't get anything but your parents did?

A: Yeah my father had a pension. They got, they lost the apartment in Berlin. We left illegally across the border illegal. My we left, my father believed that this wasn't going to, Hitler wasn't going to last. Like a lot of other people were not informed. Well I think a lot of professionals lost their jobs so they left. But my father had this business. And it was getting better as its competition was leaving because he held on. Some things we're doing well. So he didn't want to leave but then his friend – I'm not sure it was a friend – it was they used to have a German maid until 35. And her boyfriend was a policeman. He came to see my father in 38. He said Max you have to leave and something's going to be terrible. And I think he had knowledge about the Kristallnacht plans. So my father took my brother and sister and they were caught at the border by the Dutch there. And they were put in prison but he got out and then see my brother and sister disagreed on whether we left before or after Kristallnacht. And I think it was both. They left before but they were caught and sent back and –

Q: Well is there anything, as I said before, anything else you wanted to say before we close.

A: There was but I forgot what it was.

Q: Well thank you very much. For doing it.

A: Thank you. You certainly helped me. With your questions.

Q: This concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum with Harry Markowicz.

(end)