

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Morris Richter
October 19, 2015
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PREFACE

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MORRIS RICHTER

October 19, 2015

Gail Schwartz: This is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Morris Richter. It is being conducted by Gail Schwartz on October 19, 2015 and is taking place over the telephone at the Holocaust Museum and in Hollywood, Florida. This is track number one. What is your full name?

Morris Richter: Morris Richter.

Q: Is that the name you were born with?

A: I was born with the name **Moishe** Richter.

Q: When were you born and where were you born?

A: I was born in September 7, 1940 in Siberia, Russia.

Q: Let's talk a little bit about your family background. Your parents?

A: My mother Esther **Dekovnik**, born in 1918 was from **Biala Podlaska** [ph], Poland and she married my father, Joseph Richter who was born in 1919. Just as the war broke out in 1939 and they got married and escaped to Russia.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about their story? Anything about their family background that you know, that you've heard about?

A: Ok well my father, Joseph Richter was part of a family, I think somewhere in the genealogy there was a name Rosenberg and he had a sister, Sarah Richter and Sarah Richter and she escaped and ended up living in Israel that I only found out much later. And his sister Sarah Richter ended up having children in Israel, Moishe Richter who had the same name as me. **Ari**

Interview with Morris Richter **October 19, 2015**

4

Richter who ended up moving to Paris. And then Sarah Richter and her daughter **Hadassah** Richter that they had, that she had in Israel. My mother, I only was able to meet after the war. One brother **Zelig** Dekovnik and I met him in Israel in probably 1995. And you know I had him come live in Florida for about a year with me and then he decided that he wanted to go back. So from a standpoint of genealogy that's pretty well what I have.

Q: I know your parents, it sounds like they were very young when they got married, where were they living when they got married?

A: Well they escaped from Poland and they went to Siberia and they survived there and that's where I was born.

Q: I understand. They got married in Siberia, is that what you're saying?

A: I hope they got married in Poland. I think they did. They got married I think in Poland.

Q: In Poland. Again they were young but do you know anything about their educational level, how much education they had?

A: I don't. I would imagine they probably had some high school and that's strictly a guess on my part.

Q: Where in Siberia were they?

A: I don't know. I heard Tashkent or something but you know I only picked up little pieces and I'm not too sure.

Q: You were born?

A: I was born September 7 of 1940.

Interview with Morris Richter **October 19, 2015**

Q: In what city or town or village in Siberia?

A: Wherever they were. Back then it was during the war. You were in Russia. It was dark you know 18 hours out of the day and I didn't get much of that information. My mother, you know was not very forthcoming in recounting you know those years so she did not sort of –

Q: Fill you in.

A: You know I picked up bits and pieces here or whatever have you. My brother was born in 1945.

Q: Your parents, can you tell me anything you know about your parents' story in Siberia?

A: In Siberia, I really cannot you know say very much. I know that my father got sick when he was in Russia and I remember as a child you know going to wait outside of the hospital where my mother went to visit him. But from that time in Russia I really remember nothing.

Q: You said you didn't get any information later about living conditions and things like that.

A: I did not get any. My, you know when my parents and I moved to Canada in 1948 my -- we moved in October of 48. My father passed away in May of 49 from leukemia so my mother was not really anxious to sort of go through and relive everything that she did. So I didn't really pick up much information from her. She was struggling with her own difficulties.

Q: Of course. You remember waiting when your father was ill. Any other memories that you would have up til let's say 1945. Do you have any –

A: Well you know from Russia, I have very little. I remember very little if anything. I remember when I was sitting waiting outside the hospital on a bench and I saw somebody coming with a wheelbarrow and there was a woman in the wheelbarrow. And apparently she was in the process

Interview with Morris Richter **October 19, 2015**

6

of giving birth and the man was wheeling her to the hospital in you know labor. So that sort of stuck in my mind. But other than that you know I have no recollection whatsoever.

Q: So then the war is over and then what happened?

A: The war is over and we were, went to a Bergen Belsen camp.

Q: We being the three of you?

A: Well it was, my brother was already born at that stage so it was the four of us. So when we went to Bergen Belsen camp, there I remember you know a few things.

Q: Do you remember how you got to Bergen Belsen or not?

A: I do not.

Q: The journey? Ok.

A: I do not remember the journey. I do know that when we got to Bergen Belsen, you know my mother was you know very weak you know and very depressed and she was having difficulty coping. I remember my father was able to arrange for a young German girl to help her care for us, my brother and I. And we lived in the camp. I don't recall any hardship there. My father was a star soccer player at the camp for the soccer team. Apparently you know there were other camps that had soccer teams and they used to put us on a truck and transport us from one camp to another to play soccer. And I still have pictures of me you know leading the parades, whenever there was a parade, with the flag. The -- you know the Israeli flag and all the soccer players and I was front and center holding the flag marching with them so that I recall.

Q: I know you were so young then. Were you, do you think you were quite an independent young child at that time? Or more dependent on your parents? It sounds like you were pretty independent.

Interview with Morris Richter
October 19, 2015

A: I got to tell you honestly, at that stage I don't recall any independence on my part as far as going out stealing or working to make extra money and so on. I was you know pretty well cared for. And I know that you know we lived in some kind of a barrack and we had to walk up three or four floors and share a bathroom you know in the barrack building.

Q: How many rooms did your family have?

A: There was one big room so there was a little kitchenette and I remember – I don't remember much of it but I don't remember a second room.

Q: And you had your meals there?

A: Yes.

Q: In your own room? Were there a lot of other –

A: Unless you know when I was in school, I guess I had the meals at school.

Q: Let's talk about school. What kind of schooling was it for young children like you?

A: Well in looking at the pictures I -- you know and I have some small memory of you know of kindergarten and class with a bunch of other kids, and just playing. I don't really have many recollections of the actual school itself and so on. Certainly I had no ill, you know ill or bad experiences while I was in school. I don't even remember any good experiences. I think I had a crush on one little girl. You know I started –

Q: Were there a lot of children with you?

A: Yeah. Based on the pictures that I saw. I don't recall at the time but in looking at some of the old pictures, I think there must have been 30 or 40 children around my age. In my kindergarten.

Interview with Morris Richter October 19, 2015

Q: What was your brother's name?

A: My brother's name was **Shmuel** Richter, otherwise known today as Sam Richter.

Q: So you went to school and you had your meals in your big room. And you played soccer. You said?

A: I didn't play soccer. My father was the star soccer player on the team.

Q: But you said you carried a flag?

A: I carried a flag in the parade because I was his son. So I got the honor.

Q: Not because you played?

A: No, I did not play soccer.

Q: And how was, do you know how your health was then? Was it ok?

A: I was pretty skinny but I don't recall any illnesses but my brother was the exact opposite. He was very, he was a chubby child and I was a very skinny child, but I don't recall any illnesses.

Q: Do you remember as a dangerous time or not?

A: I do not.

Q: Playing with other children, did you just play children's game, typical children's games?

Interview with Morris Richter
October 19, 2015

A: We played children's games. I don't know for some reason my father asked me to help him bury some cartons of cigarettes under a wood pile. I guess he must have been dealing in cigarettes at that time.

Q: To exchange, you mean for him to sell or to exchange for other goods?

A: I would imagine to sell.

Q: Did you go outside?

A: He wasn't a smoker being a soccer player so if he was (both talking) cigarettes. They were American cigarettes and I would imagine he was dealing with it.

Q: Did you get to school on your own? You walked to school or --

A: I do not recall that.

Q: Did you have freedom of movement that you know you could walk where you wanted to walk?

A: Yeah total freedom of movement. I could go anywhere in the camp. There was no issues there.

Q: Did you see any American soldiers or --

A: I saw soldiers from time to time but I don't have --

Q: What does that mean to a young five year old? Did it have any meaning to you when you saw them?

Interview with Morris Richter
October 19, 2015

10

A: I think there was just a positive feeling that I got in seeing them because you know, it there was a feeling of safety seeing the, you know the military there.

Q: You knew what it meant, even at a young age. That you were safe.

A: It was, I would think yeah.

Q: What language did you speak?

A: We spoke, at that time Yiddish.

Q: You're there, you're going to school. What was the next change then?

A: Well the next change is that you know I know that a lot of the families were leaving at different times and going to different places and we had some very distant, you know distant cousins in Canada and I think my parents were struggling with the decision whether they should go to Canada. Everybody wanted to go to America. But it wasn't that easy to get to America. So they were wrestling with the idea of either going to Israel. They had some distant cousins in Canada and they ended up deciding to go to Canada.

Q: This is on your mother's side or your father's side? The cousins, the Canadian cousins.

A: I'm going to say, I'm going to say my mother's side and I'm not sure about that.

Q: You have that picture of you and your brother coming down the stairs and where you're in the front. Can you talk a little bit about that? Do you know anything about the picture?

A: Absolutely nothing. I didn't even know that picture existed until they had an exhibition in Boca Raton, Florida and somebody saw the picture and they called me and they said hey Morris, I think you better go take a look at this. And I tell you, I was shocked. But they had it blown up

Interview with Morris Richter October 19, 2015

11

cause there was an exhibition there. They had a bunch of pictures of Bergen Belsen. And when I saw that picture, I'll tell you my goosebumps just popped. Yeah.

Q: Life goes on until –

A: Life goes on. It's 1948. It's October. We get onto a ship called the **Scythia**, S-C-Y-T-H-I-A and we take this ship and I remember that ship because my mother was totally ill and I don't remember about my brother but me, all I knew was I had a great time and I was eating. Me and my father got along fine. So the trip was ok for me. It wasn't so ok for my mother and brother. And we came into Halifax, Nova Scotia, October of 1948.

Q: Do you know what line the ship was under?

A: I don't know what line but I know the name of the ship, I gave you. And when we landed in Halifax, they took us off the ship.

Q: What did Canada mean to a young boy like you, anything?

A: Absolutely nothing. I didn't know I was going to Canada. I was going with my parents and that was it. I do recall we stayed a few days at a hotel. And the hotel had tile and marble floors and I just couldn't get over the floors shiny and beautiful. And I was playing in the hall of that hotel in Halifax. And after a few days in Halifax, I don't remember the train ride, but I assume we took the train to Montreal and –

Q: You're now eight years old at this point?

A: At this point, I'm eight years old. It's October of 48 and I guess my parents must have gotten some help either from the cousins who were in Montreal. There was the Hebrew free Help association. I assume they got some help there. I'm not you know I'm not sure but I would imagine. There was a good organization in Montreal to help people coming over and we rented a -- I think it was a one bedroom apartment in a house and from this point on my memory gets

Interview with Morris Richter **October 19, 2015**

12

really good cause I remember the street. I remember the house and so on. They would bring the, the ice man would come with his horse and bring the ice to the icebox. And the milkman would come with his horse and bring the milk to the house. And we were living on a, it was a three story but we were right in the city, in the downtown part of the city. In Montreal. And we lived there and then unfortunately we were there for a few months and my dad got very sick. And apparently I you know he had leukemia and cancer and at that time they couldn't do very much for him. So in May of 1948, he passed away. So give me a break for one second. I don't usually do this.

In any case so –

Q: You said May of 48, but you said you didn't leave til October of 48 to Canada.

A: I meant 49. He passed away in May of 49. Yeah so he passed away and my mother was left a widow with two young children to take care of. She went to work in a clothing factory and she raised us until I was about 16 when she married a nice gentleman who had come from Israel, originally from Romania, wonderful man, gentle nice man. And at that stage you know myself and my brother were pretty independent. So that was the period of time. Of course we went to school. My mother went to work. I would take care of my brother and we would go to school and do what kids do.

Q: Was it hard to pick up English?

A: I had a tough time from the standpoint that when I got there, you know I didn't speak any English. And they put me into a -- what I found out after was a left leaning socialist communist Jewish school but instead of giving me a break, they put me into grade one and at that time I guess I was eight going on nine. So they started me off in grade one so I started off behind, a couple years behind from day one. I don't recall any major difficulties in picking up English. You know it took me a certain amount of time and whatever. But I don't recall any struggle in learning how to speak English and the children at that school were quite accommodating and there was never an issue.

Interview with Morris Richter
October 19, 2015

Q: Were they all refugees like you or –

A: No, most of them were not. In fact, very few of them were.

Q: Did you have to learn French also in Montreal?

A: Not at that time. At that time they were happy you were learning how to speak English. That came many years after.

Q: I didn't ask you before. Do you know if your parents came from religious families? At all or was your mother observant or your father observant?

A: I don't recall that they came from – I think maybe on my mother's side possibly but there were no big rabbis in my family that I know about.

Q: I just meant generally observant. I didn't necessarily mean –

A: I mean my mother used to get the chicken and swing it over her head so I guess she must have had some upbringing with some religious background.

Q: Did you observe the holidays or Shabbat?

A: I'm sorry.

Q: Did you observe any holidays or Shabbat?

A: You know my mother was a widow. There was just you know she came home from work. When it came to Shabbat and so on, yeah we would light candles. You know we observed Passover holidays and so on. But you know being alone, looking after two boys after a week of work it wasn't in the forefront of our upbringing.

Interview with Morris Richter
October 19, 2015

Q: What kind of work did she do?

A: She worked in a clothing factory.

Q: Your health was good and your brother's health?

A: Well when we came probably a year or a year and a half after my brother came down with scarlet fever and they you know quarantined him in a hospital for I guess it must have been a month or two months. But other than that thank god you know we were ok.

Q: Did you talk about your experiences with your friends like being in, you said you didn't remember being in Russia but your experience in Bergen Belsen? Did you talk about that?

A: Never.

Q: With the other kids?

A: No. it was not something that you know I was proud of. I was going on to America, to Canada and it was not something that I wanted to you know even til today, it's not something that I am very forthcoming with. As far as I'm concerned it was such a dark chapter in the history of mankind that I didn't even go see Schindler's List. I know it was bad. I don't need to see it in front of me. I lived through it from you know indirectly so I don't need it. That's me.

Q: That's ok, yes. You did live through it. You continued to go to school.

A: So I continued to go to school and –

Q: Were you athletic?

A: Well I played soccer in school and I played hockey. It was skating and so on. In grade four, there was a valentine day and a lot of the children you know made valentines. You know so I'm

Interview with Morris Richter October 19, 2015

15

in grade four at this point. Whatever have you. And one of the girls you know is crying so I went over to her and I said why are you crying? She says well this one didn't give me a valentine. And I stopped and I looked and I said she is crying, she is crying because she didn't get a valentine from one particular person. Right there and then I said I'm never going to marry a Canadian or American girl. I'm going to marry a European girl. Because you know if they're going to cry, they're crying for a reason. Not cause they didn't get a valentine. Anyway, PS, I got lucky. I did marry a European girl. Similar background.

Q: You're continuing to go to school?

A: So I'm continuing to go to school. I went to public school. Then I went to high school. During high school you know I was working on the weekends and –

Q: Was there any anti-Semitism in Canada then or not, in Montreal? Did you experience any?

A: You know I'm trying to recall. I personally don't recall. You know there was a bunch of French kids or something, you know you would avoid it but I didn't really have any major anti-Semitic experiences as a child growing up. You know you would avoid you know if the kids weren't Jewish and then there was a group of them, you know you wouldn't start an argument but I think there might have been one little or two little altercations you know kids calling out names but nothing of any significance. So I went to high school. I was working on the weekends. You know when I was going to high school, throughout high school. I used to work delivering at the drug store on my bike, winter, summer. So I was always trying to earn some money to you know have some money to spend cause we certainly didn't have it. And I managed to graduate from high school which wasn't an easy task.

Q: Did you go just to a public high school with all different kids?

A: Yeah. I went to the high school where most of the Jewish kids, you know European kids that district in Montreal. You know Baron **Byng** was very well known as sort of the melting pot.

Interview with Morris Richter
October 19, 2015

Q: What was the name you just –

A: The high school was called Baron, B-A-R-O-N Byng, B-Y-N-G. That's a baron from England.

Q: What street did you live on in Montreal?

A: When I first moved to Montreal with my parents, we lived on St. **Dominque**, That's S-T D-O-M-I-N-Q-U-E. And from St. Dominique, I moved to St. **Urbain**. That's S-T U-R-B-A-I-N. And then I moved to **McCreahan**, which was M-C-C-R-E-A-H-A-N. And then we moved to **Dupuis**, D-U-P-U-I-S.

Q: Lots of moves then.

A: Well you know.

Q: What was the reason for your mother moving like that?

A: You know I, I'm not too sure. Maybe she was looking to get a lower rate. And then to move to a better place and so on, but it wasn't anything significant.

Q: And then you said she remarried.

A: Yeah, she remarried a very wonderful man and –

Q: 1956 or 57?

A: I'm sorry.

Q: Was it around, you were 16 I think you said.

Interview with Morris Richter
October 19, 2015

17

A: Yeah.

Q: So that was what, 1956?

A: Right.

Q: And then you continued.

A: I continued. I finished high school and you know I went to work. I went to work for a retail hardware store chain and I worked in different sales and management positions there for seven years. And after that I left there and went to work for another seven years cause I used to get the seven year itch. In a sales and management position in a foam, for Dominion foam. Actually I should give you the name of the company I worked for cause they were a great company, the first one. The hardware store was Pascal, P-A-S-C-A-L hardware. They were a large successful chain in Montreal, owned by the Pascal family. And then I went to work for a company called Dominion foam, foam is F-O-A-M and I was there in another sales and management position for seven years. And then in 1976 I left there and went into partners with my brother to build some houses in Montreal. And we built some houses and some rental apartments til 78. And in 1978 we emigrated to Florida.

Q: We being you, your brother.

A: Me being my family and my brother and his family.

Q: Your mother and your stepfather and your brother.

A: My mother and stepfather stayed in Montreal and once we got here fortunately things went reasonably well. We were able to get them a condominium in Florida so they would spend their summers in Montreal and their winters in Florida.

Q: Had you married when you left Canada?

Interview with Morris Richter
October 19, 2015

18

A: Yeah. I got married in 1962.

Q: Oh, 1962 ok.

A: I was young boy. Married my European girl.

Q: Just very generally her background, just very generally.

A: Her background I can give you some of the family background. Her maiden name was Gert, Gertie **Stawacki**, S-T-A-W-A-C-K-I and her parents were Aaron and Eva Stawacki. And their parents were Mordechai and **Sivia Naifeld**, N-A-I-F-E-L-D and they were from Łódź Poland.

Q: From Łódź. So your wife was born in Łódź?

A: She was.

Q: When did –

A: They emigrated around the same time as us, probably around 1949. My father in law, Aaron Stawacki you know served in the Russian army. They had gone –

Q: Where were they during the war?

A: I'm sorry.

Q: Where was that family during the war?

A: They were in Russia as well.

Q: They were also in Russia.

Interview with Morris Richter
October 19, 2015

19

A: Yeah, not with me. They were on their own. And he got drafted into the Russian army and my mother in law Eva Stawacki worked in a coal mine.

Q: And then you met your wife in Canada?

A: I met my wife in Canada. And we got married in 1962 so I was pretty young. My father in law god bless him, you know, at that time I was a sales clerk in the hardware store and he was a good man cause he had a very charming daughter and he always you know he –

Q: How did you meet your wife?

A: You know at the Y. You know where at that time that was the place to hang out. We didn't get into trouble. So in 1962 we got married and we had two daughters. And I worked at the hardware store. I worked at the foam company and then in 78 we moved to Florida with the girls.

Q: You were all Canadian citizens, correct?

A: Correct.

Q: Now you come to the United States.

A: Now we come to the United States, god bless America. What can I tell you and you know things went fortunately fair well, being in the building business. And at that time the economy and everything else was starting to really go extremely well in Florida. So things went well. And in partnership with my brother we built houses and we built apartments and condominiums and we have lived here ever since.

Q: And you're an American citizen?

A: Yep.

Interview with Morris Richter
October 19, 2015

20

Q: What was it like to get your citizenship?

A: Very simple. You know at first we had our green card. Actually now wait a minute. I know Sandy has her citizenship. I don't think I even, I don't think I have my citizenship papers yet. All right. Excuse. My girls, they took it on their own. Me I just never bothered, got around to it.

Q: To become a citizen, is that what you're saying?

A: I didn't become one yet.

Q: Your wife's name is what?

A: Gertrude, known as Gertie or Git.

Q: Are you still working now?

A: Yeah, I don't want to quit. I'm still working.

Q: Can we talk about some general issues? Have you been back, have you gone back to Europe or have you –

A: Well I've been to Europe you know different places on holidays or whatever have you, but I've not gone back to Bergen Belsen or that area.

Q: You have not.

A: I have not.

Q: What are your thoughts about Germany today?

Interview with Morris Richter **October 19, 2015**

21

A: They are extremely capable, hardworking, regimented sect of people. Because they were so regimented and so, you know I can see where they were misdirected to commit the horrific things that they did. I'm not, let's put it this way. I went to Germany on a couple of occasions on business and I wasn't comfortable, let's put it that way. I don't hold it against the German people that are alive today. They weren't there. They didn't do what was done. But I'm you know there's something that crawls up my back. And like I say, I don't harbor any ill will against any of them but it's not something that's positive because it just brings everything to the forefront. But I don't dwell on it.

Q: Are you angry that you had to go through, you and your family had to go through what you went through while there were other children your age in the United States who didn't have to?

A: Let me tell you. You know, I'm sad, disappointed and discouraged in the fate of humanity you know if we, mankind is capable and commits the kind of atrocities to other human beings that were committed. It depresses me to think that we'd be capable of doing that, treating each other like animals, and killing them and so on. I mean it's not a pleasant thing to me. I managed you know to block them out of my mind as much as possible. I don't let it discourage me in personally my life. To try to make a happy life for me, my family, my friends and the people I associate with. And notwithstanding the horror that was willfully inflicted on mankind. My glass thank God is half full.

Q: Did you talk about your childhood with your daughters when they were little or when they were young?

A: I did not. And I have not discussed with them to any great degree til now.

Q: When they were your age, young children, did that kind of trigger memories for you?

A: Not at all. I just enjoyed, I went you know maybe because you know the way I was brought up and what I didn't have and so on, I guess I went a little overboard trying to make their life as comfortable and as happy as possible. So to that extent, it probably impacted me to sort of go

Interview with Morris Richter
October 19, 2015

22

beyond what would be usual to make sure that they were cared for, that they were happy and so on. So I think that, it was a result probably of the things that I lacked in the way I was brought up due to different circumstances.

Q: Is your mother still alive?

A: No, my mother passed away about 12 years ago.

Q: Are there any sounds or sights or smells that trigger memories let's say of Bergen Belsen or –

A: Nothing like that. You know Bergen Belsen at that time was a you know it was a camp for displaced people and the only thing that stands out in my memory is that everybody was extremely skinny and til today I have an aversion to skinny people. So if I see a woman, I don't care how attractive she is, if she's skinny it's like I don't want to know from her.

Q: You mean it triggers memories?

A: No it doesn't trigger a memory. It's just I'm turned off by skinny people. Whether it's an association unconscious or not. My guess is it's probably an unconscious association of people being emancipated or being very skinny and skeleton like and maybe what I saw in the camp after the war. But it's just not something that I care for. So –

Q: How would you describe yourself? Are you Canadian or American, Jewish or –

A: I'm a Canadian American. I'm a dual citizen and certainly I would say that at this point you know I am definitely American.

Q: How observant are you religiously? Or are you?

Interview with Morris Richter **October 19, 2015**

A: I go to a reform temple but I'm not really too observant. You know we observe the holidays. We light the Shabbat candles. I fast on Yom Kippur but I'm not too observant. Mind you, I've got a local Chabad rabbi that's working on me pretty good.

Q: Do you think you were at an advantage being so young that you don't remember those first years?

A: Absolutely, absolutely cause it didn't mark me. And I don't feel marked by that because I was too young and nothing you know ok. I mean subsequently seeing the people, hearing little bits and stories, but for the most part the people that my mother was with and family members, they never discussed the war and what happened and so on with us children around. They shielded us from that.

Q: Do you remember what your thoughts were during the Eichmann trial?

A: I certainly, certainly watched it in the sense and read about it and so on. And I definitely felt anger and I was happy to see that some minute, minute justice you know was taken out on somebody like that. So let's put it this way. I was happy that they caught him and I was proud that we were able to at least put a small nick into the mass of horrors that happened. Doesn't seem to impact the fear of you know going to trial on crimes against humanity. It doesn't seem to put too much of a fear into the people around the world, notwithstanding that we've been doing that particularly with some of the German guilty persons.

Q: How often do you think about your childhood experiences? More as you've gotten older or less?

A: I'm a, I'm a product of my childhood, my upbringing, the experience which I think we all are. And you know everybody, my brother and I we're totally different. We were brought up the same place, same time, same way. He's black, I'm white. Or should I say I'm white and he's black. It doesn't matter. So each individual basically deals with his life's experiences in his own way. It's part of the make-up of the human being. So I don't really think back to my childhood

Interview with Morris Richter
October 19, 2015

24

growing up. You know once in a while I'll joke around with the kids, you know that I used to go to school in the snow with torn shoes, uphill both ways. But I don't dwell upon it. You know I don't let what happened there impact me at all.

Q: Do you think you would be a different person today if you hadn't gone through what you went through?

A: Absolutely not.

Q: You'd be the same?

A: I think so. I am what I am and well I shouldn't say that. I don't think I would be the same. You know like I say I am based on you know what I experienced growing up. Whatever have you. So yeah I'm sure it's impacted me but I haven't allowed that to give me any major negative feelings towards life in general.

Q: Are you totally assimilated to the American way of life?

A: Repeat that please.

Q: Are you totally assimilated to the American way of life?

A: Oh absolutely. I'm assimilated.

Q: Are you more comfortable around people who had to go through the war years over in Europe than you are with people who never had to? Do you feel a connection to people that went through the war years?

A: You know I don't, I don't differentiate. I don't, it's I'm not impacted by it. You know I've been so Canadianized and Americanized, as have they that it really doesn't come into the picture.

Interview with Morris Richter
October 19, 2015

25

Yeah there are some sort of affinity to the people that went through, but it doesn't really impact our interaction, not for me anyway.

Q: Do you only mention your background when you're asked or –

A: Yes.

Q: You don't offer it unless –

A: I do not.

Q: Unless you're asked. Do you receive reparations?

A: I do not.

Q: Did your mother?

A: Yes, she did.

Q: She did. How do you feel about that? Receiving reparations?

A: You know I got to tell you, she needed it cause we didn't have anything you know. We had barely anything. But certainly I really would have wished that she didn't need to take it cause for me the reparations, I just wish we didn't have to take it, let's put it that way. It's just you know you can't buy your way out. I mean look. I'm glad some people, it helped them in their later life and so on. But I really didn't care for the – I wish there was another way that we could have supported a lot of these people over the years, other than taking money from Germany. That's my feeling.

Q: You feel totally American, totally assimilated and do you ever dream about what happened. At night do you dream about your childhood at all?

Interview with Morris Richter
October 19, 2015

A: Never. I got a lot of other things to dream about. I'm not a youngster any more. I don't delve on that and I don't dream about it. I don't have nightmares, I don't dream about it.

Q: Did you lose any extended, any members of your extended family? Do you know if your mother and father did?

A: We lost my father's family perished. My mother's family perished. Except for a couple. I'm sorry.

Q: Do you know where any of this happened?

A: Absolutely not. It was never discussed and you know my wife's family you know a lot of them perished, uncles, cousins, whatever. But you know, I never tracked it and I don't pursue it.

Q: I take it you don't think the world has learned any lessons from this?

A: Unfortunately they have not. You know because it's ongoing continuously all over the place. It's just, it's saddening that even though the Holocaust occurred and you would think people would learn, you just don't treat each other like this but there's something in the human gene that just isn't right.

Q: Were you active in the civil rights movement at all since the civil rights in Europe were taken away from people?

A: During that era, I watched it. No I watched it. I was in Canada, I watched it and early on I saw a movie of Jackie Robinson. And that made a big impression on me. And you know being Jewish and having been persecuted as a people you know that history certainly, it would – we should be the last ones to persecute minorities and so on. So my feelings were certainly with the civil rights movement. I certainly was not active. I was not marching.

Interview with Morris Richter
October 19, 2015

Q: Is there any message you would want to leave for your daughters, other members of your family before?

A: The only message that I have for them moving forward is that regardless of what kind of difficulties, regardless of what life throws your way, there are, there is still some sunshine and look forward, don't look past. Look at the good side.

Q: How do you feel about all the holocaust memorials there are in the United States, let's say?

A: I am glad that they have these holocaust memorials, not for me who was sort of indirectly involved with it, but for people who have no idea you know what happened and whatever have you. I think it's very helpful to have these memorials so that all kinds of people can basically say hey something bad happened here and this is not a good thing. So the more of these memorials in different cities and places around the world that we have, I think it's, it just alerts people and awakens people that hey some bad things happened and don't think we want to go there.

Q: Have you been to the museum in Washington?

A: I have not.

Q: I know there are some in Florida, memorials in Florida.

A: You know I went, there's a nice monument in Miami but you know I got to tell you I don't go out of my way to get involved and be overly cognizant or aware of it. I sort of want to block it out. Ok, that's my way of dealing with it. Other people they want to fight, they're angry and so on. I supported the Miami, the erection of it and so on but I have not visited the museums.

Q: Is there anything else that you wanted to say that we haven't talked about, anything you wanted to mention?

Interview with Morris Richter
October 19, 2015

A: No I just hope that people can learn to, from what transpired in the Holocaust and move on to a better interaction among peoples' all over the world. That's my message.

Q: Have you been to Israel?

A: I have. I'll tell you. I was a little disappointed because when I flew in for the first time, my elder daughter went to study at the University of Tel Aviv. And I went to visit her so for the first visit I was going to meet some cousins and family that I had never met. But I was a little disappointed because I was sure when I got off the plane and my foot touched the ground I was sure that there was going to be lightning and there was going to be something that would just come over me. And I got off the plane and nothing happened. So I was a little disappointed cause I was sure that you know Israel, all these years and so on and everything that we encountered. We have our own land. I was sure that there was going to be lightning and Morris you're back. Nothing happened. (laughs)

Q: Well I want to thank you for doing the interview.

A: It's my pleasure and like I say I didn't really prepare myself with going through any kind of litany but whatever information.

Q: But you feel you said what you know.

A: That's it. Right, I was not able to describe to you some of the atrocities, thank god. I did not witness them. Thank you very much.

Q: Let me just say that this concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Morris Richter.

(end)