

This is an interview with Solomon Teichman on April 13, 1983, in Washington, DC.

Mr. Teichman, tell us a little bit about your childhood in Czechoslovakia and leading up to your graduation and your trip to the United States.

Unfortunately, my father passed away just about two days before I was born. It was in 1920. I was raised by my grandparents, by my mother's parents. My mother later remarried and had children from the second marriage. But I still remained to live with my grandparents. And they lived in the town of Sereдне, which is in Czechoslovakia.

And I went to school. I went to cheder there. I went to the yeshiva there. And I spent my life till a family-- a friend of the family from the United States visited Czechoslovakia, his mother in Czechoslovakia. This family that we knew in the States asked this man, would he please, if he had the time, to stop over to see part of his family, which was my family.

And he came to our house. And we sat and talked and everything. And he asked me, would I like to go to the States? And I says, well, it's something I haven't been thinking about. And my mother chuckled and she says, ah, tell him, yes. You're not going to go anyhow, and so far how the mothers are.

But this friend took me serious. And when he came back to the States, he told these relatives of mine in the States in the north of Pennsylvania that there's a young boy there who would like to come to the States. Before I even got a letter from these relatives of mine in the north of Pennsylvania, I get a letter from the Cunard-White Star Company. It was a shipping company, the owner of the Queen Mary, that I have a ticket waiting for me to go to the States at the shipping company. Whenever I'm ready, the ticket is there waiting for me.

So then I proceeded to get my passport and so forth. And family really saw that things were moving along and so forth. And I got my passport. I said goodbyes to the relatives. Some lived in town. Some lived miles away. I went to see them and bid them all goodbye.

I still had my grandmother living from my father's side. My grandfather from my father's side wasn't living. But my grandmother, who lived quite a distance, but I made it a point to go to see her and say goodbye, that I was going to the States for a visit.

How long did you plan to stay?

I tried to stay no more than six months. My visa was a six-month visa. And I had a wonderful time here. And they took me places. And they introduced me to friends and relatives and so forth as far as from Pennsylvania to New York and so forth.

And time was getting near to go back home. I was getting homesick. I was 17, and I wanted to go back home.

By that time my mother had written to these relatives in my-- it took a year.

Did she tell them what the problem was?

Yes.

The Germans were coming--

Yes.

Had the--

She said things was very bad over there and if at all possible to keep me here and not to let me come back.

Did she explain-- had the Germans already entered Czechoslovakia?

They were not in Czechoslovakia at the time. They got to Czechoslovakia in 1939. But there were already what they were doing to the Jews in Germany and in other parts of the country. And my mother happened to know-- I don't know how she knew, but she happened to feel that it was best for me to stay here. And that was-- when I left home that was the last time I saw everybody.

Did any of them survive?

I have a brother who survived. And we brought him over to the States. It was from the second marriage, because I was the only one from the first marriage. But he had a couple of heart attacks and then he passed away. He lived in New York.

Somebody also said that they saw another brother mine in Frankfurt, Germany, after the war. But we have tried-- to the Aliyahs and to a different organization. We have printed papers in the newspapers in Frankfurt and so forth trying to locate somebody that may know him. But we didn't have any luck.

And again here today-- that's why we're here this week-- trying to the computers and maybe we can match somebody so far. I have met quite a few people that came from the same town where I was born. And they all remember me, and I remember them, after talking to them for a while and so forth, which was a wonderful thing anyhow, you know. But as far as anybody from the family--

What was the brother's name who you've heard of that may have been seen in Frankfurt?

Isidor Glick.

Glick.

Yes. He's my stepbrother, from the second marriage, right. And my brother that passed away here in New York after he had a heart attack was Menachem Glick.

Tell a little bit about your life in Czechoslovakia before you left, your childhood. What kinds of things did your parents do?

Well, I lived with my--

Your grandparents--

My grandparents, yes. And they were up in age. And finances were very spare, very poor, you know, and so forth. My grandfather worked hard, very hard. And it was like a transfer company. We didn't have no trucks like they have here now, then either. They had a horse and wagon. They used to go into the city and bring food and then deliver it to the stores in the smaller towns. And that was his livelihood.

But they insisted that I get an education. And I went like a servant. I graduated high school. I got a diploma from Czechoslovakian high school.

And I went to cheder. And they made sure that I had every opportunity that they could possibly give me. And love was there. There was plenty of love in the family. There wasn't-- and my mother, I used to see her quite frequently even though I was raised with them, with my grandparents.

Did she live nearby?

They lived in a city called Munkács, which was about 20 kilometers away from Seredne, from where I live. But I used

to visit her and so forth. And matter of fact, when I said goodbye to my mother about three or four days in Munkács. And then I went back to Sereдне to my grandparents and so forth.

And when I boarded the train, which is another city on the other side of Sereдне, when I got to the train, my mother was waiting at the train for me already. That's all-- forgive myself for one thing.

I'm sorry.

I have never forgiven myself for one thing. I feel that I was the oldest child. And I think had I been home, I would maybe have been able to save somebody. And that goes through my mind awful lot.

But there were a lot of young men, strong young men your age who disappeared without a trace.

They did. They did. But maybe some of them did survive, and they were able to help the families, maybe a brother or sister. And that has gone through my mind an awful lot.

What kinds of things-- go ahead, I'm sorry.

That's all right. I mean as far as I have my good life, upbringing. I couldn't have had better than any child in all circumstances. My grandparents were devoted grandparents. And they did everything possible.

I do have one survivor, who was my mother's brother. And he now lives in Israel. And we went to see him in Israel. And we talked a lot and so forth.

We went one year with a group to Israel. And it just so happens about a month later after we were with the group visit to Israel, he was able to come over from Russia to Israel. So my son was in college, in Technion, in Israel. And when my son came home, he says dad, he says, you have to go back.

It was only months apart that I'd been there. I just came from there. He says, your uncle is there. He's the only living survivor that you have. And he wants to see you so bad. That is your mother's brother.

So I said to my wife, let's turn around. Let's go back again. Let's go see him.

So we turned right around. And we went back to Israel. And especially just-- didn't make any other plans except just to spend some time with him.

And I still correspond with him now. Still living. He's up in the 80s. We help him out financially a little bit now, you know, and so forth. Write him a letter. My wife always puts in a generous check for him and so that would help out a little bit.

And he told me a lot about the family, where they were in the ghettos and how he saw them there and all bundled up in the cold, and the whole family with the kids and the grandparents and everything. They must have picked them all up at one time. They went to one ghetto, near Ungvár.

And that's where they were all-- that was the first stop to what they did. From then on where they took them, he didn't know. But he had general idea.

He was in a work camp. And he was healthy. And he was married. And he lost his wife and children there too, you know.

But when he came back from the concentration camp, he went back to Sereдне. And there were no Jews left there. And some of the Gentiles that were there, the Christians that were there, said to him, what are you doing around here?

But he went to a city nearby. And he stayed there a good while. And then he had his own business for a while under the

Russians.

He has a daughter. The daughter was getting a little older. And playmate she had was mostly Christians and so forth, and that bothered my uncle very much. After all, he's been raised different, you know and so forth.

So he decided that he had to start making a move for his daughter's sake so she would meet Jewish families and Jewish children and so forth. So that's what he was, after long tries and bribery and payoffs and so forth, he was able to get over to Israel. And his daughter, you know, married now in Israel and have children in Israel, which my son has seen.

And my daughter and her husband, they also went to Israel. And they stopped over to see him and so forth. And just, like I say, we still correspond. And he's asked me to please to come again. But I don't know whether I'll be able to go again. I would like to.

He lived in the same town--

Yes.

--with your mother and--

Yes. Yes.

--your stepbrothers.

Yes.

Was he with them when everyone was taken away?

Yes.

And so he traveled with them to the ghetto?

Yes. Yes. Yes. Only there, they put him in a work camp. He was strong enough. And then the rest of them stayed there.

The oldest one-- let's see, I was 17. My stepbrother, he was next to me and was probably 14. And he was able to run away and hide out and so forth. And he managed to survive.

That was Menachem?

Yes.

And then he met a girl from Hungary. And they got married in Europe. And they had a child in Europe. And then we were able to bring him out, his family and so forth.

And he's done well financially in the States, came to north of Pennsylvania where I first live and then in Baltimore, which I lived a long time. And then he moved to New York and got in the housing business and done very well financially. But after, he had a couple heart attacks and one day just didn't make it.

Tell a little more about your childhood and the way of life in your town before you left. Your wife said something to you before you sat down about be sure and tell stories about your childhood. What are some of those stories?

Yeah, my daughter's very much interested in my childhood.

Tell us about that.

As far as I can remember, I had a very hard schedule. I used to go to cheder in the morning.

When did you start cheder? How old were you?

Six. Not even six. Five. But I didn't start public school till I was six. But then you have afternoon classes.

But then when I started public school, my grandfather wanted me to really go to cheder. So I used to go to 6:00 in the morning to the cheder. And the cheder and the synagogue and the public school was almost like a u-shape, and the playground was right in the middle.

On one side was shul and then it was the cheder. And the other side was the public school. So when you went there, you had all three of them together.

And from public school, I didn't even-- from cheder, I didn't even go home. I went to public school. And when I got off from public school, I went back to cheder.

And by the time I got home-- there was no cars and no buses. And we lived a good ways from the shul and the cheder. So it used to take me about a good 45-minute walk to go home.

So you started at 6 o'clock in the morning.

In the morning.

And what time did you get home?

You got home about 6:00 or 7:00 in the evening. Of course, the school, the public school was over at 4:00 or 4:30. And from there, I went for a couple more hours back to cheder.

Were-- go ahead.

And then when I-- I was still in public school. But I have progressed far enough in cheder where I went to the Yeshiva. And this was right across the street-- the rabbi lived across the street from the shul and all that. And there, they had a room where they had a rabbi who taught more advanced than the cheder and so forth, which was probably from the time I was about 15 till I was about 17. And--

What subjects did you study in the public school?

Math and Czech. Of course, everything was in Czech. We had history. The schools were adequate to give you a basic education for advancement to college if you wanted to. I have never reached the stage where I went to college, you know.

But the school was good and good teacher. They didn't have no teachers for different subjects. The same teacher taught you all the subjects, the history and the geography and your math and your reading, the same. We had a woman teacher. And it was all in one room.

Were all the other students your age or was it a mixture of ages?

No, it was a mixture of ages. But they had us divided.

Grouped by age.

Yes.

How many-- what ages were in your class at any given time? Two, three, four years?

About three years ago were in our class, yes.

Were most of the other students in the public school classes also in your cheder classes?

Yes.

Were there a lot of non-Jews?

Yes.

Were there any non-Jews.

Yes. Yes. Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

Did the non-Jews get along well with the Jews?

Yes. At that particular time when I was still home, there was antisemitism even then. And I remember it very well because a couple of times I was stopped going home from cheder and tormented by some of the Christian boys. And I remember I fought myself out. I saw them coming. And I ran the other way to avoid the confrontation with them.

But we sensed it. And I heard rumors then that it was very bad for the Jews in Germany and that they were killing them left and right and so forth. That I heard when I was still home. How much it advanced after I got home-- after I came here, you know, I'm sure my mother saw and so forth.

And then again, I was only 16, 17 years old. You've never had that type of experience before, you know, and I hope you never do. You know, I was still growing up. Those things-- just like we all say today and maybe it wouldn't happen to us, you know, it's over there. It won't come over here, you know. And I think a lot of the grownups felt the same, felt that way, you know.

Of course, some of it's unbelievable. But it really happened, you know. It's something that I think every person who's here who's a survivor is a book itself. Every person can sit down and write a book about what they went through. And they all have different stories to tell. But I guess I was one of the fortunate that I was able to come over here in 1938 and miss all this. But sometimes, I wonder was I really that fortunate?

Did you correspond with your parents, with your mother?

As long as I could. I went in the service, in the United States service after-- I became a citizen, and in the army. I was already overseas and I was an Australian. And a telegram followed me from Czechoslovakia. How long it traveled, I don't know.

But I remember even recently watching the movies about the Holocaust and television and so forth that they gave them telegrams to send to families to write that everything was OK, that they're doing fine. And that was one of those telegrams that my mother wrote to me, which she was probably on a train already being shipped to Germany. But they stopped the train, and they gave them all telegrams to send to families that everything was fine, not to worry, and so forth. That was one of those telegrams--

When was that?

It was back about 1943.

Was that the last heard from them?

Yes. Yes. And I know the telegram, what it was. I didn't know the meaning of the telegram right there and then, what it

really meant. But later on after seeing what happened and saw it on television and so forth-- and I wasn't the only one who received them. So that was one of those telegrams that the Germans asked them to write and so forth.

And when I was a youngster, I played with my friends. I had friends home. And now that I'm here, I am meeting people that I knew from back home. And I remember the names and so forth. I met a woman yesterday. I told you about the suit, didn't I tell you.

I met a woman yesterday. She says her name is Schwartz. Did I remember people name of Schwartz? I said, well, the only Schwartz that I remember from Sereдне is a tailor. She said, that was my father.

Oh, yeah, you did. You did. Did she remember your parents, your mother, after you left?

No, she didn't remember my mother because my mother moved a couple of times between Sereдне and Munkács. But my grandparents where they raised me, I was always in Sereдне. They always lived in Sereдне.

At one time, my grandparents lived together with my mother in one house in Sereдне. But my mother moved back to Munkács. And my grandparents remained in Sereдне. And that's why I said when I went to say goodbye to my mother, at that particular time, she was living in Munkács and I was living in Sereдне.

But I had a good life. I mean, from what-- I had it much harder after I came over here till I got married. And I got a wonderful wife. And I have wonderful children. And I have a lot of nachas for my kids. They couldn't be any better children.

I have a son who is an engineer. And he lives 4 and 1/2 miles from where I live. And my daughter is 5 miles from where I live. So now my children say, you finished watching us. Now we're going to still watch watching you.

And I have a son-in-law and a daughter-in-law who couldn't be any more to us than if they were born to us, such a wonderful children. As I say, I'm very, very fortunate too--

It sounds like it.

--the way things turned out. But only thing, sometimes, like I say, it bothers me is that I left and I was the oldest. And maybe had I been home, maybe, a chance, maybe one a million, I may have been able to save somebody because I was 17. In the time they got there, I probably would have been 18 or close to 19, by the time the Germans got there.

Did you ever hear from any of your former classmates?

No. No. No. No, I never corresponded with anybody back home except with my family, my grandparents and my mother and father and so forth. I sent them pictures after I was here, taking some pictures and so forth, and mailed it to them.

And I said, things were tough over there. So I worked for these people that brought me over here. And I was drawing a salary. And I split my salary, sending some to my grandfather and some to my mother to help out as much as I could then and so forth.

And when I went into the service, I sort of lost-- didn't get any answers for my letters.

You were sent to the Pacific, though? Not to Europe?

Yes. I asked to go to European theater of operation. And there was something that came up. It's a long story. I actually went to enlist in the Marines because I knew I was going to be drafted anyhow. But they didn't have enough security on me. At that time, I was still an alien, you know and so forth. It takes time to check out, make sure that wasn't some kind of spy or something.

And so I was turned down by the Marine Corps for that reason. They didn't have enough security on me yet. And plus, that my parents were still living there in this country they're going to fight with. And they'll be better off that your parents did not have a son who volunteered to fight against them. At least, that's what I was told back right here in Washington, DC, by the United States Marine Corps commander.

But I have no desire to go back home except for one thing. When I went to Israel, I did make plans with friends of mine that were going to Israel with us that day they would go as far as France, Paris, together. Paris, they would go to Israel. And I would go to Czechoslovakia, stay there a day or two and then meet them in Israel.

But everybody talked me out of it. The Russians just-- don't know whether you're going to die. Not that something was going to happen to you. But they can detain you for a week or two weeks for security reasons and so forth. That's one of the reasons I didn't go. And the only reason I wanted to go was I know where my father is buried, and I wanted to see the grave one more time.

Which of the stories about your childhood do your children like to hear the most? What do they find the most interesting about your childhood?

Well, my grandfather was a terrific person, you know. And he taught me a lot of things. And I helped him a lot when I was small. I worked hard with him because every opportunity that I had-- he used to drag the big heavy sacks to the stores and so forth. And even though I was maybe at that time a 15 or 16 or even younger, I didn't want him to do all the dragging, that I wanted to help, and let me take the burden off of you a little bit, you know and so forth.

But school, I was a good student in school. And I had a lot of friends. Of course, we had no television. I don't even remember-- I think don't remember we had a radio. So any news that you got-- you've heard this. I know you've heard it. Maybe hard for you to believe that we still had a town crier when I was-- it was a small town.

In different cities, I remember we got electricity to our town. I was going to cheder. And I remember one of the kids took a poker from the stove and stuck it up into the socket and the juice was and so forth. I remember a lot of things like that with my friends, you know.

Describe the town crier.

He used to go to certain stations of the city, certain blocks. And he'd have a drum. And he would beat the drum. And people would hear the drum. They would be used to it, knew what it was. And they would run to that particular corner. And he would recite the news, the event that was going on and so forth, whatever news they had.

There was sometimes there were town news. They were country, Czechoslovakia new from the country, and so forth. I remember one time the president of Czechoslovakia motorcaded toward town, Benes. He was the president after Masaryk when I left. Masaryk was first president of Czechoslovakia. Then it was Benes. And we were all stood out on the street, lined up with the flags waving, waiting for him to go through the town and so forth.

Did your grandmother have any special dishes that you remembered?

Not really. I guess it's the old, old story, whatever they had for dinner during the week. And they made sure they had a chicken and a challah for Friday night. That was the cholem with the-- like I said, they were very poor and just so much you could have. But that was one of the things that always made sure that we had they had a nice Shabbos.

In the center of the town, there was a little--

[AUDIO OUT]

You were talking about the market.

Yeah. Even though ours was a small town, we still had about, I would say, approximately 50 Jewish families living in



our town. On the outskirts, maybe three, four miles, five miles, 10 miles, there were other little villages where they may have only had three or four Jewish families living. So our synagogue and our rabbi and everything, he was pretty much made the rounds. And people used to come down to our synagogue, maybe not so much during the week for minyon.

But they used to come down for Shabbos, for minyon, and for yontif, for the holidays and so forth, they used to come down. So our town was pretty much-- even though it was comparably a smaller town to the neighboring cities like Munkács and Ungvár. Our town was named Seredne because Munkács is a city and Ungvár is a city. And Seredne in Czechoslovakia, it means the middle. And that's why our town was named Seredne because it was in the middle between the two cities.

Did the town get crowded at holiday time when the--

Yes.

--families from the outlying areas came?

Yes. Yes.

Where did they stay?

They found places to stay. And a lot of them walked. It wasn't too far away. They found places to stay. They made arrangement before. Next to the shul, we had a mikvah. And I think that was every Friday a ritual, everybody-- maybe that's when they took their bath. I don't know. But everybody went to the mikvah Friday afternoon before Shabbos.

And it was a relative of ours who ran the mikvah. And I remember they had to pay so much to get into the mikvah. But being that I was relative, I always got him free. And it just so happened that my uncle, who now lives in Israel, married the daughter of the man who owned the mikvah, who ran it, anyhow, you know, so forth.

He lost-- of course, my children know the history of my uncle, that he lost his first wife with children. And he remarried his first wife's sister, she survived. And they married. And they've been living in Israel. That one, he has one child, the daughter, the one that they brought over when they came home from Russia.

What about your bar mitzvah?

I remember that there was no parties. There was no party. I remember like it was yesterday being called up on Shabbos to the bema. And I said my [NON-ENGLISH] and so forth. But we had no party or nothing like that.

I remember when my uncle got married in Europe, you know. It was outside on the lot in front of the synagogue. And they set up the chuppah outside. And I remember that.

And I was, all of maybe 13 years old. And my uncle lived, of course-- before my uncle got married, before he went on his own, he stayed with my grandparents after all there were his parents. And he was just as good to me as any brother, anybody could be, and so forth.

My son got a lot of history from my uncle. And so did my children. My uncle said to me when I saw him, he says, he says, I met all the children. They're wonderful children. But one thing, he says, I'm disappointed he. I says, what? What's wrong? He says, you didn't teach them how to talk Yiddish.

My son speaks Hebrew fluently because he went Technion, the school, and so forth. But he said that was the only disappointment that I have in you, Sam, he says, Sholem, he called me, he says that you didn't teach the children how to talk Yiddish.

I enjoyed my stay in Israel. And as far as back home, when I was growing up-- but I don't know what else to tell you. I was a normal boy. I get into mischief as anybody else did in my time.

What kind?

Well, as you know, we used to-- they don't do it here. But, you know, Purim, we used to put on a face. We used to go to the doors. We used to-- they had to get us a present, just like you do-- almost like you go today here on Halloween trick or treat. We used to do it on Purim.

And neighbors used to exchange goodies, you know. What we used to call [NON-ENGLISH]. You know, on Purim, you sent [NON-ENGLISH]. And we always gave the rabbi a little present. And things like Hanukkah, you gave the rabbi a present with Hanukkah gelt, you know.

We used to play the dreidel, you know. And we used to play a game with walnuts. We used to line them up. We used to line them up maybe a dozen or so on the ground and go a certain distance. And then try to get the head of the pile. Of course, if you got the head, you got all of them. If you didn't hit the head, then you only got from where you hit on down, you know. And that's the kind of games we used to play, you know.

I got to tell you a funny little story about one time we had a big storm. And not too far from where I live, we had a mill. And one day I was walking along that mill, along the water, it was one of those powered by water, the big wheel with the waterfall, because we didn't have electricity then. And I remember when electricity first came to our town.

And I saw the water was very, very muddy because we lived at the bottom of mountains. And the dirt washed out into the water. So the water was-- the fish can't see in the muddy water. And then certain amounts still come-- they always come up for air, you know. So I see these heads pop up occasionally, you know. I like to get them.

So I got in the water. And I found the basket. And I sat there really still in the water to my waist, maybe a little higher. It depends how the water was in a certain area. And I held a basket underneath the water and wait for the fish to pop their head up. And I'd scoop them up with the basket, you know. And that's how it-- and then all at one time with a load of fish, catch them just with the basket.

I'm trying to think of all the things that I used to do, you know. Because as I said, we had no ball games. We had no--

What did you do on Shabbos? What was that day like?

Shabbos was mostly to shul. We went to shul in the morning. And then Shabbos, the service was finished by 11:00, 12 o'clock in the morning. Then we went home. We had the big dinner.

And then we used to go back to the-- after dinner, I used to go back to the school ground. We used to meet our friends there. And that's where we used to play and so forth, spend the afternoon with the rest of the gang, you know, so to speak.

And then again we had the mincha services and maariv services. And about that time, they laid the Torah, you know and so forth. And then, we went back home. And then the routine started all over again, you know.

But we spent Shabbos usually in a schoolyard. Like I say, it was like a u-shape with the buildings around it. And that's where we used to spend-- play ball, throw the ball against the wall, you know, and those kind of things.

We used to go sleigh riding a lot. Of course, where I come from, winters are very cold. We get the first snow in September, October. And I remember with the same snow would still be there the end of April. It just kept on piling up on top of the other.

Did you go skating as well?

Yes, skating, we did a lot of, sleigh riding, yes. Yes. That was a good sport in the wintertime. In the summertime, we had a river, small river. We used to go fishing. And we used to go swimming and so forth.

But it was none with the family really because most of the time my mother lived in the city. So I didn't have my other brothers and sisters to play with. But I had a lot of friends and so forth.

My second-- my stepfather was a shoemaker. And he struggled also. So I think it was just as well that I stayed with my grandparents because it was less of a burden I guess to feed another mouth, you know and so forth.

My mother was a very devoted person. She was smart and much, much above-- even my stepfather and my grandparents used to take a lot of advice from her because she-- she was a good mother, but just so much that she could do.

I remember one time there was an army camp, there was some kind of maneuvers. And they happened to be near our town. And my mother went out and she bought all kinds of fruit and sold them to the soldiers and try to make a profit, try to help out, you know and so forth. And I remember her telling me that.

And they built the house, mortgaged up to the hilt. And then sold it and made a lot of profit. And bought another house. And things just didn't go right financially. My stepfather just didn't make enough to get along. I do believe they lost the house afterwards. I think the bank foreclosed on it. But my mother always had a smile on her face and would never let on. And like I say, I was 13, 14, 15, 16 growing up.

Are there any other things that you'd like to remember or that you'd like your children to remember that may not have talked about before?

Only when I finally left home, when I got on the train, and we got to Prague, that's where I picked up the ticket. And there I met quite a few children of my age that were going to the States. And we traveled till we left Czechoslovakia together, you know, sightseeing and so forth.

Then we got on a train. And we went through Germany part way. And I remember the Germans come and check on my passport and everything on the train. But they didn't bother me or nothing. They asked me to open up my suitcase. And I opened my suitcase. And they checked it, and they stamped my passport. And I went on through.

Did they know you were Jewish?

Yes. Yes. And then we got to Paris. And we had a choice of going to take a ship the next day or wait three or four days and get the Queen Mary. So we all decided we would wait and go on the Queen Mary.

So we had a wonderful time in Paris, you know. I remember going to a barbershop one day to get a haircut. And I didn't know the French money at all. I had changed some of Czechoslovakian money. And I already had American money, because these relatives sent me some money from the United States. So I had some American dollars in my possession, which I changed over to French money. So we can spend here and there, buy something.

And I went to the barber shop to get a haircut. And I didn't know how to count the money. So I just held up a fistful of change. And the barber took the money. How much he took, I still don't know. You know, he just--

What else did you do in Paris? That sounds like it must have been fun at that age.

Yes. You got to remember one thing, my son at 17 was much more grown up than I was at 17 because the situation he was exposed to growing up and that I was exposed to growing up. Schooling, information, radio, sports, and so forth, you know, and travel, see, I was in a little town. You didn't travel. Once you stayed there, you stayed there, you know.

And I remember a little story of my grandfather. He used to go to the city, to Munkács, to pick up the merchandise to bring back to Sereďne to deliver to the stores. And I always wanted to go along with him when I was a youngster. I cried. I wanted to go along with grandpa to the city.

Grandpa says, well, I'll tell you one thing. I'll make you one deal. You can come if you want to. But there's a big bridge

before the cross-- and there is a bridge before you cross. There's a river called Latorica.

But at the end of the bridge, there's a snotty grandmother. And anybody who goes the first time to the city has to kiss her. And I didn't want to go kiss a snotty grandmother. Till I was old enough to know what it was all about. But that was one of the stories he told me.

I almost killed my grandfather one time accidentally. He came home with some hay on a wagon. It was in the summertime. We had gotten some hay someplace. We bought it and he hauled it home.

And in order for the hay to stay down-- it wasn't baled like we had it baled now. We just piled it on top in a certain special way. Then we have a big thick pole, probably about a foot in diameter. And that would be tied on in front of the wagon and also tie with rope in back of the wagon. And that would sort of put pressure on the hay, and it would hold it down so it wouldn't fall off while you were traveling.

And my grandfather I loosened the back rope. And I picked the pole up. And I threw it on the side. I didn't realize my grandfather was there. And it hit him and knocked him them down and knocked him out. And I started crying, went in the house, you know. I called my grandma and so forth.

But he came out of it. And everything was fine, you know. But just one of those freak accidents that could have been very, very fatal at the time.

My grandfather was a very strong person. He was a redhead. And he was known as the Rote Yankel. The Red-- his name was Yankel. Rote is red. So he was known-- even yesterday when I met some people here, I tell him my name is Teichman, see, and that's very hard for them to understand because I'm only taken Teichman left. My other brothers are Glick. And my grandfather's name was Klein.

So how does a Teichman come in? Between all these Glicks and Kleins is Teichman. So it's very hard for them to remember the name Teichman. I was all of 17 when I left. It wasn't that I left a name behind me, you know.

So I met somebody here, Izzy Small, who was a distant, distant relative from Europe, who I knew he lives in the States. I wasn't here yesterday at the time. But he met those two girls from Seredne. And they couldn't remember me.

He says, you remember [NON-ENGLISH]? They used to stay with the Rote Yankel. Oh, sure then they will remember who I was. They didn't remember my name. But I remember that I used to stay with my grandfather who was Rote Yankel, Red. That's how they remembered me, you know.

He was a very tall man. And almost had to bend down to walk in any door. A long, red beard. And my grandma, may her soul rest in peace, was just the opposite, small. And she also worked.

On Friday, they used to come to town. They had a little marketplace in the center. But in order for you to come to the marketplace to sell your merchandise, you had to have a ticket. And they had different stations and different streets entering the town.

And different people were out there selling those tickets. You had to buy a ticket. And the proceeds went to the town. But that gave them the privilege to come to sell in the market place. And every Friday, mornings, my grandma, she had one of those stations where she sold the tickets. And she got a percentage out of it.

Did you used to help out at that market?

No. No. No. I used to go there with Grandpa and Grandma shopping, you know. And they used to bring vegetables and chickens and so forth. And I remember they used to pick up the chicken by the lakes and hold it and blow on their feathers to see how yellow it was, see how feather it was and those kind of things. And they had it every Friday. And there were grocery stores, 99% of them Jewish.

What percentage of the community was Jewish? What would you guess?

I would say about 15%.

15. But most of the merchants were Jewish?

Yes. Yes. Yes. There was a Gottesman, one man who had a shoe store. And later on he opened up a bank, who was my godfather.

And I can remember the streets much better than I can remember the names. Some of these are rather-- I can close my eyes and go through every alley and to every street that's there, you know. But names, I remember names after talking to the people. They tell me where they lived, then I can finally get the name there, you know. But they have to tell me where they lived first and so forth.

Opposite the shul, there was a family named Stern. I want to tell you about this. My kids may get a kick out of this.

There used to be a big rabbi, used to come around. He used to make round to the cities and the towns and so forth. And he always used to stay at this family name of Stern. And you would go to this family when the rabbi was in town and visit with the rabbi. And you'd give him a couple of kroners, whatever money he had that time. And he would bless you. I remember my grandfather taking me to him. And he put his hand on my head and blessed me.

Would he bless you if you didn't have the kroners?

What was that?

Would he have blessed you if you didn't have the--

Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. But I say there was-- I guess you wouldn't even go if you didn't have it, you know what I mean. But my grandfather, like I say, he was something to me that he couldn't have done no more. I mean, his whole life was me, you know. It was-- I think if he had to choose between life for him and life for me, he'd chose for me, you know.

It's just how he took care of me. He worried about me. He clothed me, fed-- everything that anybody could possibly do.

What was his name?

Jacob, Jacob Klein. And Jacob, Yankel, in Yiddish is Yankel. So used to call him Rote Yankel. Red headed Yankel. Yeah, that's how people distinguished him. He was known in the town as the Rote Yankel.

And my uncle, lives in Israeli. His name is Moshe Hirsch Klein.

I remember Pesach at home. I remember the Seder at home and so forth. It was my uncle and my grandma and grandpa, just four of us, you know. There was an older brother of mine from my first father. And at the age of two, he got very sick and he died.

And whether the doctor knew what he was doing or not, I don't know. But somehow, they always blamed-- he just didn't know what he was doing. He burned up with fever. The doctor insisted that you don't give me any water. And if you had given him the water, it would have helped him and so forth. But medicine today is not what it was yesterday. It's a different story.

What else can I tell you? I'm glad to be here. I'm very, very fortunate to have a family like I have.

Very good. Grandchildren, children who have the respect for me that I couldn't wish any more myself. And not only my children, their spouses they brought home, I feel the same way. All very, very good.

As a matter of fact, my son is coming down here at 2 o'clock. He works at M Street, 25th, on the block of 2600 block. Engineering company, he's an engineer. And he wants to come down here. So we called and we talked to him last night and this morning and so forth. So we told them about 2 o'clock we'll pick us up and go pick him up. He wants to spend the rest of the day here with us.

My daughter's running the computer.

In the next room here?

Yes.

In the big room?

Yes.

Well, we're getting near the end of the tape. Are there any final thoughts that you--

Not about-- I didn't know my wife was going to bring me right up. Maybe I had a new one I would have--

A new story, right.

Brought something up. But I really didn't know.

OK, well, thank you very much. And I want to apologize for mispronouncing your name in the beginning, Mr. Teichman.

Thanks a million.