

At this point in your experience, did you think of this in terms of liberation?

Well, I was just thinking about that, that although I recognize it-- I recognized it at the time, that this was liberation and that was the end of the persecutions, I couldn't muster the feeling of joy, of any celebration or joy, or who to celebrate with. That maybe a day or two before I was liberated, a thought occurred to me, and that is that if I should die-- when I was thinking that I might die-- that if I should die, that nobody in the world would know and nobody would miss me. And so the sense of liberation did not evoke the joy, because I was in that kind of a frame of mind, that I didn't know what I could look forward to, if anybody might be-- I had some hopes that my father and my brother might have survived. But I don't recall any celebration, just a struggle for continuing survival.

You didn't see it in the others, either?

No.

No cheering.

No. I have heard that in some places, the Russians would come into a city. They would say to the prisoners, you got a day, or you got a few hours to do whatever you want. But then they would do some revengeful things, or looting, or something like that.

But I don't-- I have not, other than a picture of a camp being liberated, which probably was produced by somebody, I don't recall seeing people cheering, like, hooray. Like, we saw the SS man ran away, so we ran away too. Crazy. And in fact, I have seen people who develop a crazy reaction to being liberated.

Did you have any hope that you would find your mother alive?

No.

You knew that-- you told me once that there was a song you had heard about Treblinka.

Yes.

But you heard it before the end of the war.

Yes, I heard it in Starachowice.

What was the song?

(SINGING) Treblinka [NON-ENGLISH]

That's the--

Good place.

--the cemetery.

Yeah. Can you translate it?

Treblinka, there for every Jew the end, the cemetery. Whoever arrives there remains there, remains forever there. There they have sent our grandparents, and our mother, and mothers and fathers. There they were poisoned. And there they were left forever. And this is their-- this is their last resting place.

What do you remember being uppermost in your mind after that? Is there something that you wanted to do that you felt

you had to do? Go back home?

Upon liberation?

Yeah.

Well, I was really not in a position emotionally or mentally to make plans. I didn't think of it at the time just that way, but I had to recover. And so first the British came and took us to another place in L \ddot{A} beck because the city of Schwerin was taken over by the Russians. And we were there in a camp, in a DP camp, the first DP camp. We started eating there, and regularly, and then looking for other people, finding other people in the DP camp.

And I was not one of the most active people looking for other people. One woman found me and-- no, that was later. But it-- we were there for some time. And we started getting in touch with United Nations lists, things like that.

And then we heard that there was a camp not far called Neustadt which was a kind of an army barracks. And so the whole group of us, which we assembled a group of Holocaust survivors that were in Bobrek-- I have some pictures of them. There were the three of us. There was Piltz and I, and then there was one other adult.

The one that is the first one at this table. And then there were some of the youthful fellows-- I think they were apprentices-- on this last table. And so--

This is a picture of the factory in Bobrek.

Yes. So we went there, and it turned out that it was a kind of a small camp, and that you could meet some people there and start talking a little bit. We started walking and thinking. Also, I was able to get a self-study book from somewhere, and we started to study English again. I started to study English.

And there were-- the British were in a barrack next to us. And I went to them. And there was a loudspeaker in our barrack. And I got connected to their radio. So we had radio.

And then I wrote a letter, one letter to my aunt in Detroit whose address I remembered because my father used to write to her, and one letter to my uncle in Israel because his address was simple. I also remembered it. And I told them that I was the son of Herschel and Dora, and that I had survived the war. But I don't know about my family. And maybe they have heard about some-- things like that.

And eventually, I got an answer from my aunt. And also, I started studying there. Accidentally, I found out that back in the city of L \ddot{A} beck, there was an accelerated high school program for Polish ex-prisoners of war. And I went there, and they accepted me. So I just took my bundle of stuff and went there. And that may have been in August or September of 1945.

And then I got lost. I lost my contact with these other friends with whom I became liberated. And eventually, somehow, they made contact, or the people from Israel made contact with them, and they all ended up in Israel.

And I went to the school, which they did not expect that I would-- that I would be a Jew and come to a Polish school which was taught by Polish army officers that had been prisoners of war, and the students were also Polish prisoners of war, and there were some men and women there-- there were two colleges. And I finished high school. I graduated. I took the matriculation exam by June 1946.

In the meantime, my aunt wrote me that my cousin, who was her son-in-law who lived in Toronto, that he was coming to Hanover, that he was going to be in charge of the HIAS in the British zone. So I went to Hanover and I found him.

And as soon as I got my graduation from high school, and before they even had the celebration-- I left before the celebration, I felt in such a hurry. And I, with his help, I was able to get to Frankfurt in the American zone, where at first I was in the DP camp Zeilsheim.

And I was working. I got a job at the HIAS in Frankfurt through my cousin's connection. And after hanging around for a while, they put me in charge of a family tracing bureau. And I was helping people to find relatives, and find relatives in this country, and so on.

In the meantime, I went to the university and applied to medical school. And I was accepted for the fall.

This is by 19--

1946.

'46. So I was working at the HIAS--

That's the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society.

Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society. And then I found a room in Frankfurt so it would be easier for me to work there. And then, when the university started, I went right to medical school. In Germany, they have a five-year medical school. You start with anatomy, and chemistry, and biology, and things like that.

The HIAS was very kind to me. They let me work there part time. And there was a number of Jewish students there. And I was elected the president of the group. I was able to get, to organize some things for the group-- extra food-- as a group of students.

So I was doing this until March of 1947, when my visa came in. And I did another very, very risky thing. That is, that I just took advantage of my visa, taking a chance that I could get accepted to medical school here.

Well, when I came here, my aunt had a little beer and wine and workers' supply store on Michigan and 29th Street, which was across the street from the Cadillac plant there. And so she was in the store all the time. My uncle-- it's complicated-- came and picked me up at Michigan Central Depot took me to 29th Street. I came into the store. It was a little store.

And there were papers spread on the floor. It was Purim, and I think it was Friday. She had the floor scrubbed, and then she would put newspapers on the floor.

And then the two of us took my suitcases to the house and put them down, and I changed to work clothes. And I came back to the store and started working. So there was not too much of a sense of celebration either.

Then, they didn't have actually a phone in there. They had two payphones. And one of the two payphones, my cousin called-- my cousin called, and she wanted to talk to me and welcome me. And she said, how shall we speak? And I said, let us speak English. So we talked a little bit about my coming there.

And a couple of days later, her sister took me down to Wayne. And I applied to Wayne, and they went through my papers, and they said I'd have to go to pre-med for some time, and then I could apply to medical school. So I did.

But at the same time, I continued to work at my aunt's store. And she paid me \$10 a week. And eventually she paid-- she added \$2 for car fare, I think through the intervention of my cousin.

My aunt had a very, very rough life, and my uncle also. They were rather tight-fisted. But I have to say that they accepted me with a love, that they loved me just like they did their own.

Now this was an uncle by marriage, my aunt's second husband. And he had left a family in Russia. He didn't know what was going on. But anyway, we got along pretty well.

What was it like seeing her for the first time?

Well, it was-- again, I was-- I realized that at that time, I was still in a kind of a numb state, and for a long time, in stressful occasions or on happy occasions-- even on my wedding day-- I would go into that numb state.

Did anyone ask you about what had happened?

Well, not actually. No. No.

Did you tell anyone?

No.

Why, do you think?

Well, I was not angry about it. I just, I didn't feel like talking about it anymore than they wanted to hear about it. And I was just busy trying to get myself so that I would be more secure, and that I would reach the goal of my professional goals.

And when I finally-- when I applied to medical school, at that time, the veterans were coming home. And it was virtually no chance of being accepted. But somehow, I got accepted. And so I just went, like, from one job to another. And this was another thing to do. And I was ready to go.

When did you decide on psychiatry?

Not till the end of medical school did I even start thinking about it consciously. And I really liked internal medicine. I was going to go into internal medicine.

But in retrospect, I feel that the contact with John Dorsey had a very big influence on me, and it started my own process of working on myself. So during my internship, I called him, and I said, I decided to go into psychiatry. Where would you recommend? And he said, without hesitation, Receiving Hospital.

And that was during my internship, and I had already started my analysis while I was doing my internship. I was going to-- I was interning at Eloise and started an analysis in Grosse Pointe.

With them.

And so I was kind of driven, you might say. It took me some time before I made the first attempt to learn to play-- to play in any way.

No fun. Do you think this haunted you? Is that part of the reason?

Yes. Well, it was this insecurity, the need to work and to learn. I was very, very curious, and I was really regretting that I couldn't go on with the whole field of medicine. I was curious about the whole field of medicine. And eventually, I tried to integrate psychiatry with the rest of the medicine as much as possible.

Do you think there are certain times, or objects, or events, sounds, smells, that maybe trigger a memory from the wartime experiences?

Well, I think so. And I think that particularly it is very difficult for me, in working with Holocaust survivors, and especially depressed ones, it brings back the whole thing. And also the defenses.

You've worked with a lot of them.

Yeah.

Do you think that there's a-- there was, during the war, and continued to be certain kinds of coping mechanisms, distractions even, that some of the survivors used to get through this?

Well, yeah, I think that there are, depending on the circumstances, there were certain talents that were especially helpful. And the capacity to retain a kind of infantile faith that things will work out all right, the capacity sometimes to regress. I would sometimes be talking to my mother, especially in Auschwitz, I remember.

You mean in your mind you would talk to--

In my mind. But also, the ability to receive help and to give help, to relate to others, not to become insulated.

How do you-- is that what you draw from the experience. I mean, if you look back on the Holocaust and say what, if any, meaning can I give to this, is that part of what comes to mind?

Well, I think that in trying to understand what made a person survive, I still think that it was mostly accidental, a number of accidents, and that many people did things that were potentially self-destructive, but they survived. But I think that the ability to maintain a little nucleus of hope was probably the strongest asset. I would call it "infantile narcissism," but really, this is the way it manifests itself, to, against all odds, to be able to continue to struggle and to make a comeback.

Do you think this is at all related to talking about it, to telling the story? You said that at one point you were-- you thought, if you died, no one would know, and no one would have missed you. Some survivors have said that they thought that they would survive because they felt the need, that they were going to be the witnesses. At least that's the-- more folklore.

Well, I know that for many people, this is a very important mission. However, I felt keenly already then that we were not just persecuted by the Germans, but I felt that we were abandoned by the whole world. And therefore it seemed to me that to tell about this to the world was really not going to achieve anything. And it turned out that I was right, that the British and the Americans knew what was going on, and wouldn't even bomb the trains to Auschwitz, wouldn't even bomb Auschwitz.

So I think that among the most terrible things that happened to us was this feeling of abandonment. And that was why I was more pessimistic about the power of witnessing. But I think that things have changed, times have changed. And we may need the witnessing for ourselves and our people.

Have you told your family any of this story?

Not in the running narrative, but in pieces whenever I could, whenever. And I made-- these numbers on the side have to do with copies of these pictures that I made, and I gave it to them.

To your children.

Yeah.

And you've told your wife.

Also in pieces and snatches.

What do you make of the sort of new interest. It's almost chic now to do something with the Holocaust. Schindler's List. The museum in Washington. How have you thought about those sort of unusual phenomena since 1980 or so?

Yes. I think that especially some of the other programs are kind of geared to a happy ending, and the survivors are pleased by it in that they can say, well, not only did I survive, but I did well. I have a family. I have grandchildren. I

have won.

And I think that this is a kind of a balm to the heart of both the survivors and to their children because they can see it in their survivor relatives that this is uplifting for them, to be able to go through this process and say, here I am, I have won. Whereas many things-- many things that survivors needed to experience, they would not allow themselves to do so because they felt that this would be granting Hitler a posthumous victory. If they had a nervous breakdown, or if they had-- needed help.

So I think that there is this new trend, that the ones that have survived till now are in two groups. Either they are depressed, and they are not inclined to do that, or they feel good about themselves and want to talk about it.

Let me ask you two things about this. Do you think it also soothes the general public to think that there's a sort of happy ending to all this?

Yes.

You just said that the world didn't seem to care, and abandoned--

That's right.

--abandoned the Jews. And so now they can feel better about it?

The Jews, the Jewish public feels better about it.

But there's a non-Jewish public who also feel better about seeing Schindler's List, for example. Here is a rescuer, and there's sort of a happy ending.

But it is a fiction movie.

Well, that was my other question.

Yeah.

This sense of victory, is that the truth?

Well, not entirely, but in relative human terms, yes. Holocaust survivors have not only survived and had their families, but became good people, and became-- give of themselves to good causes, and do everything possible of good things.

OK, is there anything else you want to add to this?

No.

That's a good place to stop, I think. OK, thank you.

Thank you.