

Her children, although they were pretty young when the kids came here. There-- if they had any problems maybe later in school or anything as foreign children and as children of foreign parents or?

Never.

They never did?

Never. No, I think it's probably also an attitude. I don't think we ever took the attitude that there should be a problem with stuff. The only one time my oldest son, they told me he had a speech defect. And they asked me to come to school.

I had to come to school, and I was very upset because I didn't know he had a speech defect. And when I came and I met the teacher that called me, she talked to me and she said, what language do you speak? And I said German and Spanish.

She said, I don't think your child has a speech defect. I think he's just picking up words from you and instead of saying like "the," the child has something like he says "der," because that's what I do. And they figured, well, that poor child--

Spanish.

And I also use certain words, and he used those words. I used them ever since they were little. And if they had hurt themselves, I'd say, let's put a little Spucke on it, which is spit. You know, let's clean it up with a little Spucke. So--

I don't know that word.

So Spucke just stayed in my vocabulary, and my son picked it up. And if a kid fell, he'd say, don't worry. Just put some Spucke on it. But the other kids just didn't know what Spucke was. And there are lots of words like blanket. I used the German word for blanket too when I spoke to them.

And he didn't know there was a word blanket when he was four years old, five years old. He thought the word was Decke. You know? And kids just didn't understand him. I guess grownups didn't understand him either. So--

Well, did he feel that that made him different or something?

No.

The kids didn't make fun of him?

He just took it for granted. The teacher just felt that which I couldn't pronounce these words.

But the other kids didn't make fun of him or anything like that?

Oh, no, no. In fact, then he graduated with a major in English, so it wasn't that bad. You know?

Well, you know sometimes kids do have problems, not in the sense that terrible problems like I mean they get in trouble. That's not the kind. But I mean like emotional within themselves in dealing with two worlds in the sense that they're living in one kind of a world, and yet their parents are from another world and bringing something else.

I know your husband told me that you're friends with Stuart Susskind. And Stuart told us this when we were talking about-- he came and spoke to us once when we were preparing to do this. And he is a child of a survivor, as we say, his parents. And he told us something like that when he was younger and he remembers being embarrassed sometimes if kids would come to the house from school and his parents acted differently or spoke with the accent, and that that would embarrass him when he was young, because he knew that these kids who came there, that their parents were not like that and that perhaps his parents manners, which were a lot more European and more reserved perhaps than American manners, or more casual and so on, and he felt that the kids would think his parents were weird or something like that.

And he's thinking back and he's saying, well, you know how great his parents all were. But at the time when he was younger, he felt it bothered him, and he wouldn't bring-- he'd think, well, I'm not going to bring the kids home because--

No, we didn't have that. We really never-- I don't ever think that our kids were embarrassed. In fact, they took pride, first of all, in having the grandpa-- everybody calls him Opa. I mean, nobody knows him by any other name.

And in fact, children have asked me how come they have two daddies?

Oh, wow. When we lived in Avondale, there's one boy asked me once, how come your children have two daddies? But I think my kids always took pride in really that maybe we were a little bit different. I know that they have warned their friends, if you don't want to eat, you better don't come to my house, things like that. But we've had kids coming through here, all kind of kids from all over.

Well, that's very interesting. Because this is different than what you hear from some others.

Yeah, no.

That's interesting.

I don't think the immigration, what it did to my parents must have been really bad.

Oh, your parents came too?

But no. I mean when they came visiting--

Oh, when they came to Bolivia. Bolivia. Yes, I would think so. Yes.

My parents came here too.

They did?

Yes, we brought them over after nine months. We had promised them. I said, we bring you-- as soon as we can, we bring you to America. They didn't believe that we would ever leave Bolivia. They really thought we were just playing a game, which at the beginning it sounded like we were doing that.

Well, were they worried or frightened that you were leaving?

Our parents? Our parents were too attached to us, which today I have learned from that. I have learned that I have to have my own life. I cannot make my life around my children. That's what my parents did. That's the European parent or German parent or maybe Polish parent.

Yes, but OK. But it's not only that. It was the whole experience they went through. Don't you think? And you know what they went through was not a normal thing for people to go to, and the fear of perhaps losing your children.

Back home, the normal thing was also for everybody to stay home. My father-in-law-- my father-in-law-- my grandfather would not speak to his youngest son when he decided he was leaving Germany. My grandfather was very uptight, very upset about that, that that my uncle was going to leave his Germany. You know? I'm sure he changed late on his attitude about that, but then it was too late for my grandfather.

But my parents did not make-- they were friendly with people, but they did not make friends just for themselves. It was-- when I married, my parents were right there with me. They were with us every Sunday, every holiday all the time. Which is fine, but it's too much at times. And as a child, you feel bad because you know you're leaving your parents all alone. And so I promised my mother when I get to America, we'll do the best we can.

And over there, we had a house, which we sold. We got \$2,000 for it. That was our whole house.

And here you don't get much for \$2,000.

The whole family lived in that, you know? And here it wasn't a down payment.

Exactly, right.

So there were some things that were difficult because we gave up a lot.

A way of life.

In Tangibles I had everything that you could possibly get, even if the electric icebox didn't work most of the time because you had no electricity. In summertime, they cut your electricity during the day. And they give it back to you at 7:00 at night. So during the day, your icebox doesn't work.

All right. So it's not good for anything. But I had it. It was available. Money was losing its value every day from hour to hour. So if you had some money, you bought something for it. You bought rolls of linoleum. You bought dishes from England. You just bought things to hold on to whatever little money you had.

Did they allow you to take things with you when you left Bolivia?

We didn't bring any of that, no. The only stupid thing we did, we brought nine German feather beds to Cincinnati, and we arrived in May.

But it gets cold.

Yeah, but I got rid of my feather bed. I don't like feathers anymore at all. That's probably something that stuck with me. I can't stand feathers.

Did your parents adjust all right here?

For my mother, it probably was the nicest four years of her life. She worked. She worked at the Jewish Hospital.

Oh.

And earned money.

Oh.

And she ate there, and she went on a diet. And she--

Met a lot of people.

--worked good and she felt good. She'd take a Sunday pass for-- I don't know how much it cost at the time. And she'd ride the bus all Sunday. She knew every corner of Cincinnati. She could read the paper. Her English wasn't good, but she could read perfect.

And she knew the city. Anybody who would have been lost she would have found a way for them. And she died of cancer. And my dad was a shoemaker. He had his shoe shop then later on in St. Bernard.

Oh, he did?

Yeah. He died 12-- I think it's 12 years or so ago. But for my mother, now she had her grandchildren. And for-- I can't remember what she earned, but there used to be the drugstore in Avondale, King's Drugstore on the corner you of Rockdale and Reading Road. And you could buy-- for \$0.39 they had little things, clothing, something for the children, little tops. For \$1 you could buy two or three items. And she'd always enjoy that, just go shopping, buy something for the kids.

And she was fascinated by the pressurized things that finally one day I was shopping, and she saw the top of my shopping cart. And she said, oh, that's the whipped cream. And she put it on her hand. It was shaving cream. But she was just fascinated by that stuff.

So it turned out all right.

Yeah. I mean, sure, she was very sick, but she got all the care she could get. Everybody was nice to her. And would have been nice if she's still around.

Yeah. Yeah.

Kids-- the kids really-- my kids adored my parents. My parents never had any money, but my kids loved them the same, just the same. And so--

How-- she only lived here four years then?

My mom was 54 when she died, yes. Just been married 30 years.

Mhm.

At the time. She liked it here very much. She really enjoyed it.

Well, that's good. That's good.

I think Bolivia was very difficult. But we were so young. We didn't feel it so bad. We could go outside and play, you know? For her, she'd go to the market. She couldn't speak the language. She'd go with a piece of paper and a pencil, and she was going to write down everything.

She never learned Spanish?

She did. But the Indian woman doesn't read or write or even speak Spanish. So right there you have a problem. Here was my mother with her dictionary, her book, and her pencil, very proper. And the Indian woman just thought she was crazy. What does she want with paper and pencil for her?

So you had to go, and you had to use your hands and use the money and then bargain and make your way this way. The Indians speak a dialect you know? But it's-- my first love-- this is my home here. But if I have a choice, it's always been let's visit Bolivia, you know? My friends are there. It's a different friendship that I have there than I have with my friends here.

We were in September over Rosh Hashanah. We were in Rio de Janeiro. And I met a friend that we had lost the year we got married. He disappeared. And we met him one night as we walked out of a hotel. There was about 18 of us, all old friends or the children of friends.

You mean from Bolivia? People from-- you met together with people from Bolivia?

Yeah, but they came from Colombia now. And so we went to a wedding. And as we walked out, we were all speaking either Spanish or German. I was speaking German with my friend's oldest brother who was visiting. And this man approached us. And he says, ah, you're all German. And my friend says, no, we are not German. We are Jews.

And the other man said, I'm Jewish too. You know, so that softened it. And he said, but how come you speak German? And so my friend Julio said, because you speak German doesn't mean you are a German. We are from all over. Like his nephews and nieces were from Colombia, he said. My friend's here from America.

And I was born in Vienna, and I lived in Bolivia. And this fellow says, oh, I used to live there too. And I said, where did you live? And he said, in La Paz. And I knew. I looked at those eyes and I said, what's your name? And he says Jacobowitz. I said, are you Billy? And he looks at me like I was crazy. And he says yes.

And I said, I'm Anita. And he didn't know who I was. And I yelled, everybody come. I was just trembling. And I said, look who I found. This is Billy Jacobowitz. And the poor guy was-- he didn't know what to make of it.

And I said, where are you? He said, I'm in this hotel for tonight, one more night. And I live in Argentina. And he calls his wife from the other side. It was 1:30 in the morning. And he calls her and introduces her, but he really couldn't place us. It's been--

Well, how old was when he disappeared?

Like my husband, 21.

And he didn't remember?

He left. He left, and he made a different life for himself. And we got married. And slowly we had different friendship circles. And all of a sudden, we said, where's Billy? Nobody knew. So a lot of young people had gone back to Berlin, some that came from there. Some had joined the communists.

So then we figured, well, just as well leave it alone. If he was a communist, we didn't want to have anything to do with him. And we had to lead our own lives. So here we ran into him. In a matter of five minutes a little later or a little earlier, we would not have met him, or one more day. And we had a dinner planned the next night in this hotel.

So we quickly told him we had to leave because we had three cars waiting for us to take us home. And the next morning when I tried to reach him, he was gone. But my friend Julio had reached him and told him we'll be upstairs tonight for dinner. Come upstairs.

So when he came-- well, I left him a message at the concierge downstairs too, telling him we were upstairs. And he came up with his wife, and she said he was putting us all in certain places, trying to get his [NON-ENGLISH] back. And our host and hostess that night, the parents of some friends of mine who gave their daughter a birthday party, and they know me when I was 10. And of course, when Billy comes in, they said, using the German word "boy," everybody always called him boy, Junge, Mr. Finkelstein says, but boy, he said, you came on the same ship with us. So there was more for him to digest.

And he's fine. He's a grandfather. He works for a travel bureau. His wife is very Jewish and very, very--

She was not a Bolivian. Because she is from Argentina.

Yeah. He met her in Tucuman. That's where he's been living 32 years.

So you had a grand reunion.

It was just-- we couldn't believe it.

Unbelievable.

Yeah, we couldn't believe it. And my girlfriend whose parents were giving the party, she says to him, but Billy,

remember you took me home after [NON-ENGLISH] after the meetings? And he said, did I behave myself?

[LAUGHTER]

I mean, here we are, old people, and that used to be so long ago. But I wrote to him. He wrote back to me. And so it's another link from the past. I just couldn't believe it. But it's happened to me many times. We've sat in a sidewalk cafe and I ran into old friends. And that's happened all over the world.

That's important because it's a part of your life.

There are some all over the world, you know? Some where we run into them in New York. We have them at this, or we have them, because they're all immigrants. For whatever reason, they haven't stopped yet. They're still going. Some come here. Some go there.

But I think I'm very happy with my life. And there are days when you feel gloomy, when you raise three children and you're cooped up at home. There are days when you say, I don't want to do that anymore.

But today, I'm--

You're glad you came.

I've always been happy with what I did. Even you have to work at it. Nothing comes to you already wrapped up, you know? You just have to do it yourself. But then both of us, we are not worried about work. We've lived on so little. We have not been to concentration camps. Thank God for that. But the way we lived at the beginning, it wasn't a bed of roses either. Pretty rough. Very bad.

When we're on our own. We had one room, three beds. My sister and I, we shared one bed, and we never thought about it. And today, I see kids can play in one room, you know? And we had one room. That was kitchen, living room, bedroom, everything right there. And cooked on a kerosene cooker like these Coleman cookers that you have to pump.

And you had to cook your meat 24 hours because it's tough from the altitude. It doesn't get down as quickly. Or potatoes have to boil two hours before they're ready, and then you have just one little cooker. You boil your potatoes, let's say, at 9:00 in the morning. They get put on, and when they're almost done, you pour the water out. You wrap them in old newspaper, and you put them in the bed.

That's where your feather beds come handy. Put them into the feather bed. And at 12:00 or 12:30 at lunchtime, by then you might have put spinach in your bed too, in a pot, and wrapped up in paper. And then when it's lunchtime, you've got your potatoes hot. The spinach is hot and your meat is fried. That's good.

Well, all this just helps you to grow up, I suppose. I mean, nobody picks it. It just happens, you know? And if you don't know any better, you live with it.

Well, you make your adjustments on the way, and--

You jiggle along and you find just where to put the things. So I'm not-- I'm not ever worried if we don't have enough oil or gasoline or electricity. There are other ways of doing it.

Yeah. You're right.

I am.

OK. I think that's--