

Moritz Felberman, 4-25-89

MF: ...Ungwar, Czechoslovakia...40,000 people, 10,000 Jews, among them, 7,000 Chassidim.

WH: Was your family Chassidic?

MF: Satmar. I'm the first goy out of the family.

We were 7 and 3/4 children. My mother was pregnant in the 7th month. And I have one brother left from the whole family...older...and he lives in Montreal.

WH: Did the others all die during the war?

MF: Yah. Right there. Right then and there when I came to Auschwitz.

WH: What year were you born?

MF: 1926...

WH: Where were you during the war?

MF: ...until deportation in 1944...I was in a house...

WH: Did you hear at any time that there was danger, that you should leave or did anyone say, let's leave...

MF: ...you have to remember that my father, alav ha-sholom, was a Satmar so we heard things, not confirmed, we heard stories, got killed, they got the massacre...my father's ex-partner in business came to America in 1928, and he send him papers in 1937 or '38 and he tore them apart, because the Rabbi (inaudible)...

WH: Did the Satmar stay in Hungry throughout the war?

MF: No, no. They took him out...They took him to Budapest, and it cost \$100,000...but I'm sure that you know about the book that came out...of the Chassidic Rabeim...writing about the Rabonim, that they didn't allow the people to go away from the Holocaust situation.

WH: What's your opinion of all that?

MF: I'm very bitter...one of the reasons...among many...like I said, I'm the first goy out of the long chain of Hasidishe rabeim...

...sometimes people say to me, they don't understand that the Zionist who were not religious, were telling all the Jews, "You gotta leave! You gotta leave!" and the Chassidim, and the Rabeim, and the Rosh yeshivas, were saying, (needs translation) - "you should stay here."...

...when I came home...and found that nobody's alive...I couldn't believe it, I couldn't understand it. (inaudible)...when you kill the grownups, (translate) they're sinful, (inaudible) but when you kill so many innocent children (inaudible)...I was thinking about this 3 years after the war. Sitting and thinking, analyzing. I didn't break any halacha, oh, no! Oh, no! (needs translation)...but I was thinking, I (?)Hashem, "How could there be a G-d? What kind of a G-d is that to allow - ."

WH: Why did you keep the halacha if you felt that way?

MF: I'm a very strong halacha mensch...

WH: ...you had sisters also?

MF: I had sisters...three sisters and four brothers...we were seven...

WH: Was your whole family taken to Auschwitz?

MF: Everybody...my older brother...I didn't even know he was alive. I just found it out after the war...

WH: ...and when you came to Auschwitz

MF: ...I was 17...I looked like 12. Very young looking...we came to Auschwitz and my full family went to the left, and Mengele tells me...the signals they gave with the stick...so I start to cry, so the Gestapo took me from the group from my family and pulled me, "Go there!" ...I didn't know that they got killed, I didn't know nothing. That's it. That's how I was saved...

WH: ...how come you went to the right?

MF: ...in the largers they couldn't understand it. I looked like a 12 year old boy, and 12 year old boys they killed right away. They say, people there, I was very blond. I was completely blond until I was 22. Completely blond and blue eyes, so they say...that instant, blond,, blue eyed boy, he send them to the right...nobody knows the answer...I was there 10 days...

WH: ...you were lucky that they didn't make you stay in Auschwitz to work on some detail there.

MF: Just a luck. Just a luck. I mean, it's only through mazel...'cause every Monday and Thursday, they had the selection for the gas chambers, OR for workers. So you lined up. You didn't know...(inaudible)...nothing at all. They lined up, and then they need, let's say 500 workers. So they start to count. - Count, count, count. 500 - finished! You didn't know where you were going. You didn't know if you're going to the crematorium, or you're going to work.

WH: ...what do you think helped most for you to survive during that time?

MF: Learning. Hashem. (inaudible). No question in my mind.

WH: What do you mean?

MF: ...(inaudible and needs translation)...I always learned in my house, that I could remember, that was what I was thinking...I used to learn...I was learning all this to myself, whatever I could remember...(needs translation) that kept me going. That's it. There's no question in my mind. That Hashem will eventually will save us. That time I didn't know yet, about the Holocaust. I didn't know nothing yet...

WH: What happened after the war when you found out what really happened to everyone, to your family and everything?

MF: Well - I went home, after the war before the end of the war I got typhus...I wound up in a sanitarium, I was there for 3 months...

WH: ...but then you came home, you knew...where did you stay when you came back?

MF: I stayed in my hometown...I rented a place...then I went deeper into Czechslovakia...then back to Germany...

WH: Where did you go in Germany? To the American zone?

MF: Yah...I was in the camp...near Munich...I was there for a year...then I went to another camp...and I was there until '49...

WH: What was it like in the camp?

MF: The D.P. camps? Well, it wasn't too bad. Why wasn't it too bad? Sure it was bad. I mean, I didn't have nobody there. But food, again, wasn't the issue so much, I mean, food was never the issue. I don't concentrate on food. Not even now.

The issue was only that we had no life, we had no nothing, but since I went to school there, to learn my profession, I went there to have a degree from Germany from design modeling in jewelry. So it kept me occupied...

WH: And you knew it was important to keep occupied and keep busy.

MF: Oh, yeh, that I knew. I knew that sitting around and doing gornishe, is niched...I met my wife in Ungwar after the war...in the D.P. camp...we got married...and two weeks later we got a visa to come to America...in '48...November the 2nd.

WH: ...you got an affidavit from your uncle...

MF: ...her uncle...

WH: ...you were on a quota...for a long time, right, you wanted to go to America from '46 on. Some people got in in '46...once you had the individual affidavit from your uncle, why couldn't you leave earlier, if he was willing to vouch for you - .

MF: Individual affidavits wasn't able to come in either. But I would have been able to be here in 1946. If I would have not tell the truth...if I would have said - the law was - that anybody that was in Germany, 1945, December 22, was able to come on a special quota. So her uncle sent to us a very important Rabbi...Rosenberg to bring us out to America...so I went with Rabbi Rosenberg to the American Consulate Ambassador who was a very good friend of his. And he gave me instructions...how to talk to the Ambassador (inaudible) (MF says:) only the truth, only the truth, only the truth...(inaudible)...if I'm not telling the truth, I cannot go. I'm wasting my time going...(inaudible) so they bring me in and talk to the Ambassador...(who asks) "oh by the way where were you on December 22 1945?"

"I was in czechoslovakia." he jumps up the ambassador, "Alex, Alex, don't you know that I cannot do nothing? - " So he start to bang, and I said, "No, I can't do that..." (inaudible) I left and went back home to my camp, and I forgot about it. And this the reason I wasn't able to come here until 149.

WH: ...so you came in '49...which boat...?

MF: S.S. Haan...

WH: ...it was March...you arrived in New York Harbor, right?

WF: We arrived in New York Harbor and my aunt picked us up. When I say, "mine," it's always "her's."

WH: I understand, you didn't have family here.

MF: I don't...they pick us up, and we came March the 17th, as a matter of fact, we thought the parade was for us. March 17th Parade. March 17th, St. Patrick's Day. So we thought, 'cause in the beginning -

WH: You saw the parade going down - .

MF: When my aunt picked us up in the car, and we drove in the parade, there, so we thought that the parade was for us...(inaudible).

WH: ...did you see the Statue of Liberty?

MF: I saw it the night before...we stayed overnight, until the morning, on the boat, in the middle of the water...

WH: ...what did you think...

MF: We didn't go to sleep. Could not go to sleep. We were talking, very excited...

WH: What were you talking about...?

MF: No. No idea. It was a long time, number one, number two, we were not realistic right away.

WH: What do you mean?

MF: We were not - we were not alive. We were not - what are you talking. What shall we talk about? You're talking about-we didn't even talk about the idea, are we going to have tomorrow what to eat. What we had in our mind is, I hope we have what to eat tomorrow. Something like that. We didn't talk realistically. We didn't talk about what are we going to do here in America. You know, I was 22 years old already, but-I didn't show my 22 year old intelligence...

WH: You were so, - .

MF: Bamboozled. Gornished. Gornished. Not important. We talked about how beautiful, look at this, (inaudible), look at how gorgeous (inaudible) look at all these lights! In the whole country of ours, we didn't see so many lights that we saw in one spot. Look at those cars! The cars! So many cars! In Ungwar we have maybe, ten cars...look at all these cars! The whole night cars were going, with these lights and lights and lights! Right? You know, and so, we are talking about this kind of stuff. Only nonsense, only.

WH: ...interesting...

MF: ...I knew a certain amount of politics what happened already during the war about America and...if McCarthy would have won, if a Jackson should win anything, - Hashem (inaudible). I don't mean - that there'll be a Holocaust. I don't think that kind of thing will not come, I don't think so, -.

WH: But you don't know.

MF: Don't know. We don't know. But things will come, if you see...today papers, that a man like this...Klu Klux Klan...just came in the State Capitol - Duke, Louisiana. Well, when you see these things, things like that what I saw the last 40 years I'm here, I always believe in that, so when I saw the America, fantastic, beautiful, I remember what they did during the war I remember these things, not everything - we didn't know at that time, but things we heard after the war already. And I said to myself, "Well, it's a very nice country, it's beautiful, you got saved from the D.P. camps, out of Germany at least. But, - .

WH: ...did you think that you were actually going to wind up living here for 40 years...or did you think it was just another stop for a Jew?

MF: No, I thought I will stay here.

WH: Why?

MF: Because I had nobody - I had nobody. Her family, they took us in like their children.

WH: They were good to you?

MF: Beyond good. Beyond good. They had no children right away...they were very, very, very good to us.

WH: What did he do, the uncle, what kind of work did he - .

MF: He was in textile business...he came here in 1922.

WH: He was religious?

MF: Yah, sure. All her family - all her uncles and aunts were religious.

WH: Where did he live at the time?

MF: Yonkers. Everything is Yonkers...straight to Yonkers...and I stayed down there all the time...

WH: He picked you up at the boat?

MF: His wife picked me up.

WH: Were there a lot of people at the dock?

- MF: ...there were a quite a few people I saw crying there. I remember, 'cause they didn't know where they going, they didn't pick them up, those that were suppose to pick up - ...we were all involved in ourselves. There was nobody there on the boat people who are involved with somebody else, to help the other one...
- WH: Do you think that this was because of the suffering that they had gone through all those years?
- MF: The truth of the matter is, that the camps, in the camps, there were very few individuals who tried to help the other person. There were some individuals. Those who had enough, like for example, some people who worked in the kitchen had enough food, some of them did try to help the other ones outside. But those people that were in the camp itself, or in the barracks itself who did not have any additional food more than everybody else had, none of them were able, or wanted, or could, help anybody - they would have killed you for anything, if you had touched that piece, a little piece of bread of his, or that he would have wanted to grab it, doesn't grab it before him. It was an animal kingdom. No question there.
- WH: So, after something like that happens, how do you learn, or even decide to trust people again?
- MF: ...unfortunately, or fortunately, I don't know what to say, I'm a very trusting person. In my business also. And...I don't know what it is. My nature, maybe. I'm trusting people, until I'm proving that I was wrong. For sure, I wouldn't trust this person.
- Never trust again, further, so, as a matter of fact, many people, even my manager, tells me, "Mr. Felberman, why don't you work with your head instead of your heart."
- WH: Why do you think you do that?
- MF: I don't know. It's a nature, I believe.
- WH: Because you don't want to believe bad in people.
- MF: I don't.
- WH: But you saw it. You saw the worst in people.
- MF: I saw, I saw in the camp. I saw in a camp, I saw in a camp. You can't help it.
- WH: ...you know, I was interviewing a survivor, and the survivor said... - and I just want to read you that statement and I want to hear what you think of it...she said, "Please," she said, "you shouldn't be shocked but the survivors of the Holocaust,

in my opinion, are not the best people, are not the most noble people, they're not the most good-hearted people, and they're not necessarily the most ethical people." Do you think that that's true?

MF: (Some inaudible. Some needs translation)...that's correct. That I accept...there were individuals who were trying to help other people. The majority - that is correct.

WH: Did you ever feel like you were torn, like you knew that - you felt that you should do something for someone but you couldn't, because if you did, you would die?

MF: I didn't come to that...but I know one thing, I stole potatoes. It was an interesting subject, because I was suppose to be hung. But I wasn't hung because of my youth. Interesting...that's the reason that I remained with Hashem.

WH: ...you say you remain with Hashem because you see that you were saved, you see that you kept on believing...what about all those supposed kiddoshim...who also believed in Hshem, they also davened, what do you say about them?

MF: WHY DO YOU THINK I WAS SITTING FOR THREE YEARS AND THINKING...(inaudible)...I was always thinking. Always thinking - I tear apart, I tear apart things...(inaudible)...and then I said, I ask Hashem, "Is there Hashem?" Then again, (inaudible) there is (inaudible) because I was suppose to be hung, there was already a line up there in (inaudible) to be hung. All the camp was already lined up...

WH: Did you ever follow it through, to think to yourself, "Why did Hashem" pick you? Why did He decide?

MF: I couldn't get an answer.

WH: But you tried.

MF: Oh, yeah, sure. I told you for 3 years I kept on thinking.

WH: What did you conclude from the three years?

MF: Well, I came to the conclusion that I don't know what I'm talking about.

WH: That you have to have Emunah...

MF: ...that's what it is, really. You have to have Emunah. First you see that there is Hashem. You could see that there is Hashem, otherwise why would you have remained alive, when the German law was that if somebody steals from the Third Reich, (inaudible) you he to hang him...but...I looked very young...and they



let me go...everybody was just looking...and that night I was back at the potatoe stealing, I stole potatoes again.

WH: ...why, what about in your own family...what did they do that they shouldn't also be able to live?

MF: That's exactly the point! I'm asking. That's exactly what I said to you. That the three years, that's all I kept on thinking. I couldn't understand it. There's no answer...

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

The reason why I have to believe, really, in Hashem, is because I could see my own self, that I - was saved by Hashem. To think why my parents were not saved, and my brothers and sisters ere not saved, this was all the problems I have in the beginning. The conclusion was only, I was saved, because I don't know why. I don't know why. I don't know what to answer you why they wasn't killed.

WH: But you're sure that someone had to intercede to save you!

MF: Farshtitezuch!...(needs some translation)...like I told you, I like to think, and I thought and thought. An answer I didn't get. So what should I do? What should I do? Commit suicide? It's against Halacha. Sit and cry? What good do it do...so, lie has to go on and you live it. Should you think for one minute, it did not affect our life for the future, it did.

WH: In what way.

MF: Okay. It happened that we were - my wife, alev ha-shalom, - very much, very much in love...but it was that subdued life was always there. (inaudible)

WH: You mean, not too much simcha?

MF: No. Well, simcha with the (needs translation ?babylech?), simcha with the - this and with this, Baruch Hashem, I have fine (needs translation) kids...but there was a subdued life...(needs translation)...we had a subdued life in the terms of this show-off bit, we never did...luxury, we didn't do that. Even let's assume we could afford...

WH: You wouldn't buy fancy clothes or a fancy cars or - .

- MF: ,,clothes we would buy. We were always like - this. It was known in Yonkers...let's say, if I could afford to buy a Cadillac or a Mercedes, I wouldn't buy it. (inaudible) Why don't they give it to some really poor man, this extra gelt between a car and a Mercedes...that luxury bit - wouldn't enter in our minds. I think it has to do with what we went through.
- WH: ...you said your wife had a freezer full of food...and she wouldn't eat it. Just in case.
- MF: ...She was scared. I wasn't so scared of the food 'cause food by me was no issue...by her it was, it was always the fear of food. And most of the time we just threw it out. And I never said a word, because if this is the issue...(inaudible) you don't do nothing. If you don't love each other, you make an issue of it. But if you love each other, you realize...I realized right away I didn't need a doctor or a psychiatrist to see what the main issue is involved here...Baruch Hashem, we could afford it, so - .
- WH: You never talked to a psychiatrist or a social worker - .
- MF: What for?
- WH: A lot of people had nightmares...
- MF: I had a lot of nightmares...so what! I read books. (inaudible) He gonna tell me more the psychiatrist than I could read?... (needs translation) the truth, so tell me something. If I'm not ready to accept it, will I learn from him? If I'm not ready to accept what he's going to tell me the stories - .
- WH: And you don't think you would accept it from him?
- MF: What will he tell me?
- WH: ...the obvious, because of everything you went through in the war, so you had nightmares.
- MF: So I know that! I know that...
- WH: Among your circle of friends...
- MF: No survivors...very, very few. I lived in Yonkers...
- WH: You were friendly with Americans.
- MF: Very friendly.

WH: You think that made a difference in the way your life - .

MF: I wouldn't be surprised...oh, a very important point. Which I didn't bring out yet. That really had a lot to do with my thinking of the future. When I came to America, my aunt, the one who picked us up at the boat, told us, "Listen, if you want to have friends here in America, do not keep on talking about your experiences. Nobody's interested to know it. Because you speak to them, they going to hear it once, next time they going to be afraid to come to see you. Don't EVER speak about that. Nobody's interested here." And we never spoke about it.

WH: ...did you feel that they had any resentment towards what they call the "greener?"

MF: ...I thought about it, that they do, provided that there are certain circumstances where they have reason to think this way. What was those circumstances? It means this. I thought about it, and I thought that there is resentments, 'cause there's jealousy. You do know that a lot of "greener" worked very hard to get where they are, and - some might have succeeded and some might have not, some of the "greeners" are show-off people. Look - and why? I could understand it, why. Even though I am not, I'm not at all. I never was. I'm not...the reason is very simple, "You see, here is somebody like me, I was nobody, I was in a concentration camp, I was a (translation-gornishe), I was not even a human, look what I did. Look! I made it! (inaudible) I did it." But the Americans who did not have it, who did not succeed so well, they hated the "greenhorns." I could understand it. So those Europeans, those "greenhorns" who came and they showed off that they succeeded in all these things, which they proved to themselves that they are something, that's all it was. They want to prove to themselves that they are something. And once you do it once, and do it twice, and three times, it gets elevated, you do it more and more and more, show off...(inaudible)...there was a hate...I never showed off.

WH: ...how many children do you have?

MF: I have three children and ten grandchildren...

WH: ...did your wife work?

MF: The first few years we had no children so she worked. She was a designer on the clothing. And I was in jewelry.

WH: ...what kind of jewelry?

MF: I manufacture fine jewelry...on 29th Street, New York. I was for 28 years on 47th Street...62 West 47th..."Four Aces"...

- WH: ...you had relatives who were survivors, right, so you would get together with them, right, did you in any way feel more comfortable with them than the people in Yonkers? I mean, relatives who came after the war. Did you have any? On your wife's side, your side?
- MF: From my side I had a lot. But they all Satmars so I had no association with them. Except at the chassenehs, or the simchas.
- WH: What was that like?
- MF: I was an outside man.
- WH: They would see you as someone who just went away. You left their community.
- MF: Yah - a shaygets...(inaudible)...that's enough, I live in Yonkers.
- WH: You're out of their world.
- MF: ...my brother's also Satmar...so we went to one of the Simcha's here in Williamsburg, and there was Yosel ?Ashkanize(gabbi) so my brother and he are very close friends...So my brother says, Shlomo was his name, to Yosel, (needs translation - "I would like you should get to know my brother.") So he says, he doesn't look at me because I look like a goy, after all - I wasn't looking like a goy because I was dressed up in black. I had a black suit on. I purposely put on a black suit...so he doesn't look at me, he looks at him and says, "(inaudible)...where does he live?" - "Yonkers." he didn't say nothing else. All he said was, "Shloma, (needs translation) - do something with this goy."
- WH: ...where did your kids go to school?
- MF: Oh my kids! I have one boy, two girls, all of my kids and my incoming kids, all are graduate Yeshiva University...Stern, and Central high School...my son is the youngest, he is a rabbi, he has quite a few degrees...he lives in israel...he's the administrator of the English speaking students in the Yeshiva.
- WH: ...your daughters...
- MF: ...one married a professor...a history teacher...in Day school in Toronto...my second son-in-law is a Doctor Elliot Jacob, he's a researcher in immunology. he works for the Walter Reed Hospital.
- WH: ...sounds like you did a good job (needs translation) what about the other part of mazel, that it says, (needs translation: ?machem mons lasos?).

MF: What shall I tell you about that. I believe one thing. You have to do. You have to do. You have to do. IF you do, Hashem will help you. Just to sit around and wait for the meshiach, without you doing anything, you cannot get no place.

WH: When you make a decision about things, do you make it quickly usually or do you think about it very slowly, carefully.

MF: ...if I have to make a decision, I make it within split-seconds. If I don't have to make a decision, I do analyze things very fast. And I do analyze. I do not do anything, really without analyzing it...

WH: If you urge your children to go into a profession, do you tell them they should go into something that gives you security?

MF: No. No. Never did that. Was not interested in that. You have to remember, I come from Czechoslovakia, Ungwar, we (inaudible)...mishpocheh (inaudible)...so, so what? SO WHAT?

Came right after Pesach, 1944, in one day you are just a shlepper. You took that little suitcase with you and you went to the ghetto. And you went to the ghetto. And you were not here any more! Money by me means NOTHING! Nothing. I mean, when I came here to America without nothing, it didn't nothing. I mean - and after a year later, and ten years then I already had something. It didn't mean nothing. And it doesn't mean nothing today. Today I have what to live from. You understand what I'm saying? (?) doesn't need money. All my kids are in fields that - no money making...

WH: So what do you think about that?

MF: (translation) I believe, it is naturally my wife's upbringing. My wife brought up in the kids...(translate-inaudible) - she had the same philosophy as I. Money was no issue...if you don't have what to live, I mean, you need it. But, it wasn't an issue. Our issue was, learning torah. My son believes VERY strongly, very strongly to bring up children Yiddishe kinder (needs translation-in derek torah). He's very much involved in that.

WH: There were survivors that brought up their children like you, they want them to be religious...and their children sometimes not only weren't religious, but they married goyim.

MF: Well, I believe very strongly, and I always did, (needs translation: echod b'vey echod b'lech?) "whatever I have on my heart, I say it." I'm not going to tell you a story, I'm talking about my kids, now, and then do different what I'm saying to you...for example, come Shabbas to go to shul, would I say to my son, "Barry go to shul!"

WH: If you don't go.

MF: I took my kids when they were 2 years old, I shlept my kids - girls too, by me there's equality. I don't believe in this (?Chasidische derek? by yid?) that the girls, they have to be a (needs translation). I took them to shul. 25, 30 minutes walk. I took them-now you're talking about winter. Took them to shul. To see the shul. To see the derek of the shul. To see Yiddishkeit. The way a Shabbas...no business discussion. Never! Never! Bais in our house, no lashon hara. Not to tell the kids what to do. When you do your life. No. We didn't do that. I believe because of that, it helped towards the derek of -.

WH: If your child had come to you at age 17 and said, "I don't want to be religious anymore," what would you have said?

MF: ...it would kill me.

WH: You mean, your attitude would be, better to be a garbage man and be religious.

MF: Uh. Yah. 'Cause money is no issue...

WH: Do you think that you did well in business because you didn't worry about money in the same way? In other words, did it make you more willing to take a chance...

MF: I took chances constantly - I live on chances. My whole business is on chances. I didn't care. It's not the issue. It's not an issue. I did have a yetzer ha-ra in the business. Don't let's think for one second. I didn't. I have it today. The same yetzer ha-ra that I told you before, that why the "greeners" are working so hard and trying to prove themselves, I have the same yetzer ha-ra. Who are I? For example, I have 5 salesmen on the road.

I also go out on the road...let's assume my salesman makes a business, let's assume, a half million or a million dollars a year in sales, and I go out let's say for 3 weeks and bring in that kind of money, I feel that - ACH! - should you one minute think, because of the money that I made? Don't even think about it. Okay? It doesn't enter my mind. You understand what I'm saying? That's it. If I did it. I did it! A greenhorn came here to America without a penny and I succeeded.

WH: Is there anything you would have done differently...?

MF: I would never live in a community where there is no Yiddishkeit. That I will tell you. Nobody should ever do that...if I could help it, NO WAY should a Yiddish kid - ...not that I'm mad on Yonkers...we have a lot of friends, 'cause I'm very active in the community all my life there. Very active. Everything you want to hear why I was active, so was my wife, alev ha-shalom. So, I come to friends

and we let's say, we invite them to kiddish, next week you have to (go to) invite to them, right? So I come there and they say, "Look, Morris, look. I specially bought for you. It's 'O.U.' It has an 'O.U.!' " Do you need that? So I'd rather go to even to Boro Park, which I hated all my guts! A kehillah like that. I'd rather go there, than to go to a kehillah like Yonkers. I don't mean Yonkers specifically. Where I lived there, so I know what it is. This is not where the yiden, a finer menshen, fine people, beautiful, we have friends, but we know we cannot go to each other. They come to us. (translation)...that's not good. So therefore I say, if you have children, even not children, no, no, no. For yourself...

WH: What negative effect did it have...?

MF: (translate)...with all our hard work what we did. We went through so much. I don't want to even think about it. I don't even want to think about - I'm not going to start to cry to you. But I remember the time when we didn't have the next meal in our house. Nobody knew about it. Oh, we were always uhh - even my uncle, he was so dear to us and we are dear to him, he's like my father, even he didn't know. Because we never told anybody nothing. Always just smiling, always beautiful, everything is beautiful. But to (?lie? ?rely?) with Yiddishkeit on, on, on a goishe kehillah (inaudible)...I wouldn't go to a kehillah if there is no (?torah) even if they should give me all the diamonds in the world. I wouldn't-we shouldn't do it. Shouldn't do it.

WH: ...Boro Park...why do you hate it?

MF: Because it's - the showoff bit. I don't like showoff. I don't like showoff. I don't like these crystals things. I don't like it. "Oh, do you know what house I have! You should see in my house the crystal that I have!" I don't want to hear that kind of junk. Doesn't mean nothing to me. It just doesn't mean nothing to me. Take the crystal off, sell it, and give it to tzedukah. it's true that they are giving to tzedukah, but I think that this is - I think this makes anti-Semitism. I really believe in that. I don't believe in showoff...

WH: Isn't it in a way, against the religion...if his whole centers around a chandelier - .

MF: ...that's exactly what I'm saying...we just got married, my wife (?tziyon gesunde shtock?), and we look to kehillahs where we to go...we went to Kew Gardens....

WH: ...would you say that your nature is basically optimistic?

MF: Yep...

WH: How do you maintain optimism after everything you went through?

MF: I don't analyze it.

WH: But you like to think.

MF: Oh, I like to think...but I don't think about that...(inaudible)...I just don't even think about that. That's my nature. I accept it as nature, and I do it, and hat's it.

WH: That's partly because you have religion?

MF: Oh, there's no question in my mind that it's in my subconscious, even.

WH: Do you live in someway with your bags packed?

MF: You talking about subconsciously?

WH: Yes.

MF: ...let me tell you one thing. I go on vacations only to one place in this earth. Eretz Yisrael. That is my vacation. No other country do I go for vacation. I wouldn't enter Europe. I wouldn't enter Switzerland, now I would have to enter because she lies there - I have a bar mitzvah the next few months I have to go - I would NOT go to Hungary, Czechslovakia...or to Austria, I wouldn't go. Any of these countries. I wouldn't enter. And when I go to erez Yisrael, any plane that stops in any of these countries, I don't take that plane. That's why I go with El Al.

WH: Aren't you surprised that many survivors go back to these countries?

MF: It eats my insides out. When I hear all these Chasidim go to Hungary - to the baths and so on. Eats my insides out.

WH: How can they do it?

MF: I don't know how - but let me tell you, when I hear that, it really eats me. it EATS me...but do I feel that my bags packed? Yes! If I feel that I don't want to go nowhere's for vacation, I have no interest a all, just to erez Yisrael. I think that this will give you the answer...I should live with it? Every minute? No! I don't think so.

WH: But you still think that America is a good country to live in?

MF: Yah. It's the best country in this Earth. As far as I'm concerned.

WH: Even with the goyim?

MF: The world is the goyim world...



WH: If you feel this strongly about being Jewish, wouldn't you also think about maybe, living in Israel?

MF: Sure we thought. We always thought that we gonna go and retire there. We planned it before my wife got sick. We did. We planned it that we gonna go...we knew that we gonna have to liquidate the business, and it's gonna take us about 5 years. i was going to go back to Yeshiva to learn. When we were 62 we were going to go to aliyah and we're going to live - (inaudible)...so 8 months later she got sick. That's it. Now, it's a different...(inaudible) I have two daughters, it was not so simple. Then I think now, "Do I want to retire at 62?" ...too young. I lost my memory when my wife got sick. I got it back now. I tell you, I'm so proud of myself, you have no idea. With this interview now, you know, I didn't do you a favor, you did me a favor. I see myself now. I remember things. I lost my memory. (translation)...she had died and all these things. The doctor did tell me I was going to get it back and I shouldn't worry...now I see that since I got married, since I got to know my wife...it's unbelievable. I remember things that I never even thought I will remember.

WH: Did you tell your children about the Holocaust?

MF: No...never.

WH: Why:

MF: It was a matter of nature. It's a matter of - natural phenomenon.

WH: Wouldn't you want to prepare them? Tell them what anti-Semitism is like?

MF: No. They know it...they highly intelligent...

WH: Did they ever ask you about the war?

MF: No...

WH: ...your (grandchildren) they go to yeshivas?

MF: All go to yeshiva. All down the line go to yeshivas.

WH: ...your children's friends?

MF: They all... -yeshivot...

WH: ...and when you went on vacation, when the kids were small, where did you go?

MF: We didn't go nowheres...we couldn't afford it. We had yeshivas to pay.

- WH: ...your best friends, are any of them survivors?
- MF: No...
- WH: ...you were sent to Yonkers so...
- MF: ...I adjusted very well...
- WH: Do you think that it's important they they show these films about the Holocaust now?
- MF: Yes, very much...I always believed in that. I just didn't want to talk about it.
- WH: You mean, if you could have brought yourself to talk about it to your children, you would have?
- MF: I would have, I would have.
- WH: ...are there different types of goyim...?
- MF: ...(translation)...let me tell you this. The Czechoslovakiam goyim were the better goyim. Human wise. Humanity wise.
- WH: ...do you think that most Americans who are goyim, are anti-Semitic?
- MF: No. I cannot say that. Because those who are (inaudible) interested in the history, or who have maybe friends, Jews, especially those American Jews who are with each other friendly and so on, and they don't see that other side of the - picture, the anti-Semitic picture, or if they read something, they ignore it b because they have friends, jews, and they are kind of like, (inaudible) I believe that some of them, maybe by nature, that they are not anti-Semitic...
- WH: ...what do you think about the minority groups here in this country?
- MF: They're the same as any other jew, any other place, they are in the minority, and they cannot - the majority will never accept them. And don't let's kid ourselves. There are individuals who will accept them, and marry with each other, just to prove that they are liberal...
- WH: Do you feel sorry for the Black?
- MF: ...sure I feel sorry for them. Because I feel sorry for the Jews...(Chassidic story)...what I want to bring out (translate)... "the goy does not like the Jew." ...
- WH: ...do you think it's more true of Blacks than of whites...that they dislike Jews.

- MF: I don't think it's the same truth...the problem that we have is that the same as the White think, that the Jew is controlling the business...
- WH: ...what do you think about Watergate?
- MF: Watergate was joke. As far as I'm concerned. Coming from Europe? In Europe they would laugh at you about stuff like this.
- WH: Do you worry more in this country about the danger from the Right than from the Left?
- MF: Oh, yes, no question there. The Right is a danger for the Jew. This Evangelist friends for the Israel is a joke. People don't see that. The biggest joke there is...
- WH: ...and Jackson...?
- MF: ...you're not talking about the Left or the Right. You're talking about here now, an anti-Semite...
- WH: You don't think that it could happen here like it did in Europe?
- MF: No, I don't think so...
- WH: Why do you think the Jewish people survived for so long?
- MF: ...simple. Very simple. Every person, human being wants to survive. there are a few individuals who don't care, don't give a damn, so they get disappeared, they died away.
- WH: But we did a better job of it.
- MF: Because we want to survive more...this is one of the reasons why we come into the Torah. it is connected. That history of ours is teaching us that...in the end Hashem, his word will help us, and is gonna save us... (translation) even though the biggest goy has the little thing in his mind...I'm talking about the Jews who went away from Yiddishkeit. Take Einstein. Real atheist, huh? When it came to his end - he said, "There's something up there ruling us." ...nu? A real atheist.

END OF SIDE TWO.

END OF INTERVIEW.

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