

1  
00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:02,790

2  
00:00:02,790 --> 00:00:05,940  
The date is Sunday  
March 29, 1992.

3  
00:00:05,940 --> 00:00:10,110  
We're speaking with Dr. Liane  
Reif-Lehrer about her father,

4  
00:00:10,110 --> 00:00:12,125  
Dr. Gerson Reif.

5  
00:00:12,125 --> 00:00:13,750  
What can you tell us  
about your father?

6  
00:00:13,750 --> 00:00:14,458  
What do you know?

7  
00:00:14,458 --> 00:00:18,270  
Do you know anything about his  
childhood, about his family?

8  
00:00:18,270 --> 00:00:21,900  
I don't really know  
anything about his family.

9  
00:00:21,900 --> 00:00:24,840  
The only things that I  
can say about my father

10  
00:00:24,840 --> 00:00:29,580  
is that, first of  
all, apparently he

11  
00:00:29,580 --> 00:00:32,790  
was a pretty good daddy.

12  
00:00:32,790 --> 00:00:38,610

Apparently, he really wanted  
very much to have a daughter.

13  
00:00:38,610 --> 00:00:43,530  
And so he was  
apparently very happy

14  
00:00:43,530 --> 00:00:47,670  
when I was born as a girl.

15  
00:00:47,670 --> 00:00:57,055  
And I think he was probably  
a fairly serious person.

16  
00:00:57,055 --> 00:01:02,420

17  
00:01:02,420 --> 00:01:11,160  
But I think he was  
probably less way

18  
00:01:11,160 --> 00:01:14,430  
out than either of his  
children in the sense

19  
00:01:14,430 --> 00:01:18,840  
that I think he was serious  
about his professional pursuits

20  
00:01:18,840 --> 00:01:22,500  
but he also apparently enjoyed  
going to the opera and so on.

21  
00:01:22,500 --> 00:01:26,430  
And I guess he and  
my mother bought

22  
00:01:26,430 --> 00:01:30,510  
sort of popular music  
records of the day,

23  
00:01:30,510 --> 00:01:38,010  
and so I have a

feeling that he was

24

00:01:38,010 --> 00:01:42,870

not a sort of  
ultra-intellectual type,

25

00:01:42,870 --> 00:01:44,730

but very serious about his work.

26

00:01:44,730 --> 00:01:48,510

Do you know where went  
to school or anything?

27

00:01:48,510 --> 00:01:49,860

He went to school in Vienna.

28

00:01:49,860 --> 00:01:51,340

That's all I really know.

29

00:01:51,340 --> 00:01:55,050

And then he actually  
was in the war

30

00:01:55,050 --> 00:01:57,480

during World War I  
and he was wounded.

31

00:01:57,480 --> 00:01:59,070

He was in the Austrian  
Army and He was

32

00:01:59,070 --> 00:02:01,200

wounded at the Russian front.

33

00:02:01,200 --> 00:02:04,170

And actually I'll take  
you on a 3-minute tour

34

00:02:04,170 --> 00:02:07,920

to show you a certificate  
that he got for that.

35

00:02:07,920 --> 00:02:10,889  
And that happened during his  
medical training, apparently,

36  
00:02:10,889 --> 00:02:12,435  
and then he went back and--

37  
00:02:12,435 --> 00:02:15,328

38  
00:02:15,328 --> 00:02:16,620  
You said he was born in Poland.

39  
00:02:16,620 --> 00:02:17,120  
Yes.

40  
00:02:17,120 --> 00:02:17,910  
Grew up in Poland.

41  
00:02:17,910 --> 00:02:19,950  
Yes, and apparently  
he was the only one

42  
00:02:19,950 --> 00:02:23,280  
of the children who did  
anything professional.

43  
00:02:23,280 --> 00:02:25,800  
Do you know anything about  
any of the other children?

44  
00:02:25,800 --> 00:02:28,380  
Well, I know about the  
two who were in New York.

45  
00:02:28,380 --> 00:02:33,780  
And my Aunt Lena came  
here I think in the 1920s

46  
00:02:33,780 --> 00:02:35,130  
and got married.

47

00:02:35,130 --> 00:02:38,040  
And she and her husband  
owned a hardware store.

48  
00:02:38,040 --> 00:02:41,730  
And the other, the  
Uncle Max brother

49  
00:02:41,730 --> 00:02:44,640  
owned what was called a  
luncheonette in New York, which

50  
00:02:44,640 --> 00:02:46,230  
was a place with  
a fountain and you

51  
00:02:46,230 --> 00:02:50,250  
could get sandwiches or a  
sundae or something like that.

52  
00:02:50,250 --> 00:02:53,140

53  
00:02:53,140 --> 00:02:56,250  
So I think he  
probably was different

54  
00:02:56,250 --> 00:02:59,340  
within his own family,  
different from all the others.

55  
00:02:59,340 --> 00:03:02,500

56  
00:03:02,500 --> 00:03:06,690  
My brother felt that he had--

57  
00:03:06,690 --> 00:03:09,810  
My brother liked him  
because he was serious

58  
00:03:09,810 --> 00:03:14,205  
and he would bring him books

to read and things like that.

59

00:03:14,205 --> 00:03:21,760

60

00:03:21,760 --> 00:03:24,700

But I think he also  
took my brother ice

61

00:03:24,700 --> 00:03:28,120

skating, for example, which  
my brother apparently hated.

62

00:03:28,120 --> 00:03:33,790

So I think he had a variety  
of things that he liked to do.

63

00:03:33,790 --> 00:03:37,180

And he did go dancing  
with my mother.

64

00:03:37,180 --> 00:03:42,250

As a matter of fact, I grew  
up with this funny thing.

65

00:03:42,250 --> 00:03:43,960

I thought that all  
people in Vienna

66

00:03:43,960 --> 00:03:47,270

ever did was to go ballroom  
dancing in white gowns

67

00:03:47,270 --> 00:03:50,320

and tails for the men.

68

00:03:50,320 --> 00:03:52,530

And actually I love to do that.

69

00:03:52,530 --> 00:03:54,940

My husband and I do a  
lot of ballroom dancing

70

00:03:54,940 --> 00:03:57,370  
in evening gowns and tails.

71

00:03:57,370 --> 00:04:02,050  
I don't know whether  
there's a connection there.

72

00:04:02,050 --> 00:04:06,850  
But I think he was  
quite a serious person.

73

00:04:06,850 --> 00:04:08,650  
I think he really  
liked his work.

74

00:04:08,650 --> 00:04:10,780  
I think he was a good dentist.

75

00:04:10,780 --> 00:04:13,675  
I think he was serious and  
interested in his patients.

76

00:04:13,675 --> 00:04:16,152

77

00:04:16,152 --> 00:04:18,110  
Did he always run the  
practice out of his home,

78

00:04:18,110 --> 00:04:20,170  
or did he ever work  
for someone else?

79

00:04:20,170 --> 00:04:25,165  
As far as I know, he always ran  
the practice out of our house.

80

00:04:25,165 --> 00:04:29,140

81

00:04:29,140 --> 00:04:33,480  
And there was something

else I was going

82

00:04:33,480 --> 00:04:35,340  
to say but it just eluded me.

83

00:04:35,340 --> 00:04:36,630  
I'm sorry.

84

00:04:36,630 --> 00:04:38,460  
No, it wasn't because  
you interrupted,

85

00:04:38,460 --> 00:04:40,280  
it was just because  
I'm so forgetful.

86

00:04:40,280 --> 00:04:55,020

87

00:04:55,020 --> 00:04:57,610  
Well, I don't remember  
what I was going to say,

88

00:04:57,610 --> 00:05:01,560  
but I don't really know very  
much else about my father.

89

00:05:01,560 --> 00:05:05,280

90

00:05:05,280 --> 00:05:09,880  
You know I think he was  
probably a gentle, kindly sort

91

00:05:09,880 --> 00:05:10,380  
of person.

92

00:05:10,380 --> 00:05:13,730

93

00:05:13,730 --> 00:05:16,130  
I think he was



rather good looking.

94

00:05:16,130 --> 00:05:18,710

I mean he looks good  
looking when he was young.

95

00:05:18,710 --> 00:05:20,780

I have a picture of  
him around the cadaver

96

00:05:20,780 --> 00:05:25,640

on a dissecting table and he  
was rather good looking then.

97

00:05:25,640 --> 00:05:32,760

But then later on he  
got kind of stocky

98

00:05:32,760 --> 00:05:36,180

and I don't know, to my  
mind that didn't really

99

00:05:36,180 --> 00:05:37,490

look too great on him.

100

00:05:37,490 --> 00:05:44,750

101

00:05:44,750 --> 00:05:47,150

Do you have any memory of  
any outings or anything

102

00:05:47,150 --> 00:05:49,940

that you ever took with him?

103

00:05:49,940 --> 00:05:51,680

No.

104

00:05:51,680 --> 00:05:54,590

I don't have any particular  
memories of my own.

105

00:05:54,590 --> 00:05:59,210

I know that in the summers  
we used to go to the country

106

00:05:59,210 --> 00:06:01,460

and he would come on weekends.

107

00:06:01,460 --> 00:06:04,640

And I know my  
brother to this day

108

00:06:04,640 --> 00:06:08,060

still talks about those  
things in a sort of somewhat

109

00:06:08,060 --> 00:06:12,860

mocking way about how many  
suitcases and porters my mother

110

00:06:12,860 --> 00:06:15,515

needed to go on those trips.

111

00:06:15,515 --> 00:06:21,750

112

00:06:21,750 --> 00:06:25,995

I guess that's really  
about all I can say.

113

00:06:25,995 --> 00:06:29,080

114

00:06:29,080 --> 00:06:34,910

I know it always  
seems weird to me

115

00:06:34,910 --> 00:06:37,238

how circumstances  
shape people's lives.

116

00:06:37,238 --> 00:06:38,780

And about the fact  
that my father was

117  
00:06:38,780 --> 00:06:42,110  
in the Austrian Army, and if  
he had been sensible enough

118  
00:06:42,110 --> 00:06:44,570  
to come to the United  
States earlier,

119  
00:06:44,570 --> 00:06:46,610  
he would have been probably  
in the American Army

120  
00:06:46,610 --> 00:06:50,750  
because he would have  
been in that age group

121  
00:06:50,750 --> 00:06:53,510  
where he still would  
have gotten drafted.

122  
00:06:53,510 --> 00:06:59,900  
And you're sort of a pawn of  
the country that you're born in,

123  
00:06:59,900 --> 00:07:01,700  
in a funny kind of way.

124  
00:07:01,700 --> 00:07:03,888  
On the other hand, if they  
had remained in Austria

125  
00:07:03,888 --> 00:07:05,930  
they probably would have  
been deported very early

126  
00:07:05,930 --> 00:07:07,370  
because they were Polish born.

127  
00:07:07,370 --> 00:07:08,930  
Yes.

128

00:07:08,930 --> 00:07:12,050  
Right, right.

129  
00:07:12,050 --> 00:07:15,860  
So I guess that's  
about all I know.

130  
00:07:15,860 --> 00:07:18,298  
I think he was a  
rather serious person,

131  
00:07:18,298 --> 00:07:20,840  
although I don't think he's as  
serious a person as my brother

132  
00:07:20,840 --> 00:07:22,490  
has turned out to be maybe.

133  
00:07:22,490 --> 00:07:25,770

134  
00:07:25,770 --> 00:07:28,320  
So I guess that's about  
all I can say unless I

135  
00:07:28,320 --> 00:07:29,420  
think of something later.

136  
00:07:29,420 --> 00:07:30,870  
Is it all right  
with you if we're

137  
00:07:30,870 --> 00:07:33,870  
able to use what we  
have about your father

138  
00:07:33,870 --> 00:07:38,570  
to represent his story as of  
being a victim of the Holocaust

139  
00:07:38,570 --> 00:07:39,450  
to a large extent?

140

00:07:39,450 --> 00:07:40,890

Oh, definitely.

141

00:07:40,890 --> 00:07:42,840

Yeah, I think not  
to a large extent.

142

00:07:42,840 --> 00:07:44,010

I think entirely.

143

00:07:44,010 --> 00:07:48,300

OK, so that we represent the  
suicide as a direct result.

144

00:07:48,300 --> 00:07:49,810

Oh, absolutely.

145

00:07:49,810 --> 00:07:50,670

Yes.

146

00:07:50,670 --> 00:07:51,390

Definitely.

147

00:07:51,390 --> 00:07:52,230

OK.

148

00:07:52,230 --> 00:07:53,850

All right, well  
thank you very much.

149

00:07:53,850 --> 00:07:58,130

This has been very useful  
and I appreciate your time.

150

00:07:58,130 --> 00:08:00,000