

OK. This is a personal experience which if you wouldn't mention I would really forget. When we have been in labor and other camps, we have a teacher. His name is Mr. Wertheimer. He was a Jewish teacher but tremendous ability in secular knowledge. I mean, today and at that time even the professors of the university didn't even come close to his ability.

Every evening he asked us to sit down with him and he gave us little lectures. We didn't have pencil, we didn't have pen, we didn't have a piece of paper. He just tried to have the youngsters to educate.

Were there many youngsters? Were the majority--

50% yes. The 50% it was born between 1921 and 1926. Those five years. The other five years there were between 1895 and 1900. So this we had about they were 45 year, 45, 50s, and we were 18 to 23s. So about 20, 25 years. It was the cross section 50%, Our parents, our fathers, could be [INAUDIBLE]. He was on that age group as a teacher.

So he asked the youngsters to sit down around him and he gave us little lectures. The first few days, first weeks you were interested. And after we have answers to the questions I asked him once, I said, tell me Professor-- We called him Professor because he was a lot of time. Or Uncle a lot of time because he was very close. Whenever you talked bad with him he didn't care.

I said, how you feel about it that we have to go through these things and we don't even know that we live tomorrow? I mean, you think this is so important. So why are you doing it? Tell me because I am interested. I feel sometimes a little awkward when you give us all the history or the mathematics or any knowledge, any science. It's fascinating, it's nice, but if I am hungry, if I am tired and my mind is completely 100 miles from here, why do you think it is so important? What is your explanation?

He said, Look, you have your point. But I have to look in the future. First of all, you kids shouldn't supposed to be here. At your age, I was in the college, I was in the university, I was studying. My parents took care of me. I get my home. I went home, I had good grades. We were happy. You didn't have that life. You don't have it. I just try to recreate a little what I had happiness in the study in the future.

If you are not using your arm, if you broke your arm and you put it in a splint and after you take it off just six weeks later you see the thickness of the one arm and the other is a big difference. You have atrophy in your muscle cells. You 18-year-old kids you have atrophy in your brain cells. I don't know that you will survive or not, but we cannot afford as Jews that if you will get out from here you wouldn't be able to start to study again further because you need education.

I like to maintain your brain cells exactly the same like your muscle cells is going. This is my duty because I am a teacher. I have to teach and I will teach until I close my eyes. And you kids have to know it. And the important thing is because we are the people of the book. We don't have a book, we don't have pencils, we don't have pieces of paper. We have paper because we can buy some.

He said, this is not the time to do it. But the time to do it we have to know things. You have to progressing. You can't afford to run for a year. I don't know when will be this over, but whenever it is over, you can't afford you don't start again and you have a certain knowledge.

I never knew until I became an adult how much this man contributed to everybody's life. And we who survived, only we know what this man meant to us. Just one single person who opened our mind and the importance and took us out from that disastrous circumstance just momentarily. And he was talking about history. He was talking about the Mayerling tragedy when Franz Joseph son committed suicide and the Maria Vetsera was the girl to whom he--

I mean he always schmaltz it up a little bit. He was a very colorful person. But when he has seen us that we are not so interested he always put in something which gets something from the youngsters. He was a teacher. He was a mensch. He was a Jew. It's unheard of the second to none I would even-- I can't remember anybody who contributed in the camp to my life, besides God,

[INAUDIBLE] throughout?

Yes. Yes, and he survived. But after he died in 1950s, a few years later. And I think he went to Israel in '48, '46, '48.

So he'd talk about history and philosophy.

History, philosophy, mathematics, physics, . And also Hebrew, I mean of religion, of the Torah. So anything what a youngster-- He was not very selective. He just wanted to maintain our mind to be occupied and have a little bit something us not constantly we were depressed. So it is just whenever--

He had a big mustache. And in 1944 Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur he was talking to us and he called in the German guards and the Hungarian guards. And the German guards he spoke Hochdeutsch. The Germans opened their eyes. They never believe a man can commanding in the German language as well. He was talking to the Hungarian guard Hungarian. But I tell you we were crying when he was talking.

And he told them, you have children, you have family, you have wives, you looking in the future. We are human beings, we have children. When you have a dog and you have a sheep or you have a cow, whenever they have a little cow would you throw him out? Would you don't give them have their life? And we are human. We didn't do anything, just born different religion. He was spoken and I would never believe it.

And we asked him, how can you talk like this? He said, let them know if they would kill me makes no difference to me because I just like to open their mind. And he was told to run to the garden face to face among the 214 at least 10 to 15 will be alive. And if you guys don't behave the way a human have to behave. You will pay later. He was never afraid. He contributed tremendously to our life. After, those guards, temporarily, but a few days they were so nice to us.

But later on if you come back from a funeral and you see what life is you feel that why I am still working so hard? What is the things worth? What they end up with? A few days, you will remember after you go back to the routine anyhow. The same thing at least temporarily between Rosh Hashanah Yom Kippur they were nice to us. And Yom Kippur he was talking again.

So that was one of the experience which really-- And this inspired me whenever I finish the school here to go back to teach to Georgetown. Just I felt that this man I always give him my-- Even when I went to Georgetown I got \$3.50 per hour, even after 26 years and I get this award for distinguished service. You can read that if you want.

And somehow, somewhere I felt that they were nice to me. They accepted me, give me the possibility to study. I owed to the profession because I couldn't teach anything except dentistry. I was not as talented as Professor Wertheimer. But he contributed to my life tremendously what I missed and lost with my father during those years. I didn't have the luxury to listen to my dad. And he was able to fill a mensch who I always look up to him always, always remember.

If I had any asset, or the biggest asset I took out of the forced labor camp, I would see, beside my life, and that God to help me, I think that he formed me to be a different person. And I would be able to raise my head and study further and get some goal and try to do something and contribute and be a teacher. He was an unpaid teacher too. I was an unpaid teacher for a time.

After you returned home, how long did you remain in Hungary?

1945 until 1956, 11 years. The hardest 11 years during the Soviet era. It was very difficult.

During that time, you mentioned you finally managed to get into university.

Yes, two years, three years later. But in 1947 I would be able to go out from Mexico City with Ernesto and his parents. But in 1947, my sister who came back from the camp, when I told her she said, we don't have a father, mother. We lost Rosalie, my sister. You leave, what can I do here? It was a very difficult decision. I decided not to leave. That was in late 1946, early 1947. Eight months later, she got married, 1947.

She had somebody.

She had somebody. And Iron Curtain is closed and they're stuck there for additional 10 years. But look, I tell you I didn't mind. I didn't mind. Everything, you always have to take the good side of it because I don't know what would happen if I would come out and would go to Mexico and would come to the United States. I don't know. I don't know. I'm not looking back. And just look at that aspect of it. Did I right? So far, thank God, I think if I would evaluate my life how I said at the beginning, I would come sooner here.

So I feel that I would go to the dental school. I would still get married with my wife. I would still leave Hungary whenever I get the chance to leave. I still would come to the United States. I still would come to Washington. I still would live in Bethesda. I still would be in my office here. I still would go back to teach to Georgetown at that time.

I really I feel blessed for one big reason. Because I'm always satisfied with life. I have seen so many tragedies in life from childhood. A lot of luxury, having parents, having discussed with something with my parents my future, my life. I did not have that. But one thing. Whenever I want to make a basic big decision, I'm not talking about daily decisions, big decisions, I always felt what my father or my mother would say if I came home at the evening and I asked them, I want to do this and this. What will be my dad's answer? And I tell you one thing. When I went through all those decisions, I always felt that my father was with me. My mother, too. I'm sorry.

It's OK.

I don't know that we went far enough or any other questions, please. Sorry to be emotional but--

No need to apologize.

Certain type you're getting to the point that even I'm not a child anymore. But your children-- Are you married?

Yes.

Your children-- You have children?

Yes.

If you have a child, your child will be your child. You will always be a father for them. I am 10 years older now than my father was when he died. I still feel that I am a kid and my father was an old man. But I still feel if I see my children and I saw them the first time I had no idea how they will look but we accept them the way as it is. She's still my daughter, he's still my son and will be older now

And I think-- I don't know we touched all the bases I see in America. I think we're still in the ballpark to express myself. And I feel very strongly that the most important thing is the Jewish life, Israel. Very important. And I can tell you also with all respect to the United States and we are very lucky Jews in the world that America does exist. We have to do everything to exist.

We have sometimes certain administration is not as pro-Israel how we expect it, but basically the humanity, democracy, the future of the humankind is nowhere as deeply like here in the United States. I think that everywhere you go in the world you will find things what will be more disagreeable that you have here. And I feel strongly that God grabbed my hand and led me to here to come to the States. And I'm sure my father said that you go to America. If I would ask him that question, what should I do November 28, 1956? I would ask him, what do you suggest? What should I do? I think, I'm convinced now that he would see it go. So that's why.

I am very happy for what I have done, what I had to do, and I feel blessed being here. And like always if somebody asked me and they asked you have a double of loyalty, Israel and the United States, I will say that Israel is my father and my mother, United States is my wife. I married the United States but I'm still a Jew. I have to be loyal because America

is very important. I am loyal to Israel is one of the most important because I am still a Jew and I am Jewish.

Yes. I don't know how much more I can add to it.

That's great.

I don't know how much you benefit of it.