

I think that we didn't watch the timing on that other tape too well. So you were talking about your mother eventually divorcing your father. And how did that go?

Well, I think what I was saying on the other tape was that after the war, when we all returned, his wife had died. She died about four days before the end of the war. She was on her way to Denmark. And the bus or the car or whatever mode of transportation she was in was bombed, and she was killed.

His name is Eugene Por, in Hungarian Jenő Por. And he and my mother finally did get married. She came to the United States. He did too. She divorced my father and married him, but she stayed very friendly with my father, who subsequently also married, but who died very young. He was 58 when he died in 1958.

Tell me, as a Hungarian, how did he, your stepfather, get to Westerbork?

He got to this Westerbork because he had lived in Hungary, then in Vienna, and then moved to Amsterdam.

I see.

And he was picked up as a Hungarian Jew. As a matter of fact, he had tried to escape this by being baptized, and it didn't work. A lot of Hungarian Jews did that. They got baptized thinking they were automatically Catholic and Judaism was wiped out. But it didn't work that way.

I must tell you that after the transport started--

You think--

OK.

After the--

After the transport started the school session stopped, especially for those of us who were 13 or older. And we were required to do some work. And I had a friend who was a lab technician. She was in charge of the lab. Her name was Gisa Wolf, Wolf. She was from Vienna. And she was very charming. As a matter of fact, she got married in Westerbork. And--

How did that--

And I was at the wedding. And one of the poems in the little book is about them getting married.

When there was a wedding in Westerbork, how did that happen? Did you need permission? Or--

I don't know the-- I don't know about that. I know they got married. And there was--

There was a rabbi?

I don't remember whether it was a rabbi or a civil ceremony, but they did get married. And her husband's name is Harold Wall. It was something else in German, but he changed it. I think it was something else, Harold Wall. And they moved to California after the war.

At any rate, because she was a lab technician, I was able to get a job in the lab that she was heading. And I was trained at age not even 14 to be a lab technician. I learned to do urine analysis. And I learned to do blood testing.

And after a while, I was sent around the hospital taking blood from patients' fingers. And to think that I was able to do that at 14 is quite amazing. And I enjoyed that work. It was with doctors and with other lab people. And it was a good

job, was considered a very good job. And I stayed with that till we went to Belsen.

And your parents kept on at their work?

And my parents kept on their work. And my brother did go to some sort of a school program at times. It wasn't very regular. It wasn't very regular.

But there was no cruelty, no beatings, no anything that identifies a concentration camp going on to the Jews at that time?

I can only speak for our family. There was nothing, as far as we were concerned. I know that in the barracks where my parents were it was very crowded, where my mother and Jenő were, it was very crowded. And there were some altercations between people, between Jews themselves. I don't know whether the Germans actually came in and did anything, not as far as I know.

I'm sure when the transports left on Tuesday and Thursday there was pushing and shoving at least. I mean there may have been more. But I did not go to those.

I did at one point go get up on a Tuesday morning very, very early, like at 4:00 in the morning because a friend was to be shipped to Auschwitz. And he was alone. And his name I think was Abie or Abbie, Abraham. And I was very, very fond of him. And I brought him food to take on this trip. And I did see him. And this was one of the very few times that I actually went to the train early in the morning to see people.

And that train came right into the camp?

Yes, there was a railroad track that ran right in front.

Were they frightened when they were going to--

Yes, they were petrified. You'd be to.

Of course. Yeah. So they seemed to have some idea that they were going to something pretty horrible.

Yes, because most of the time the trains were not regular trains with window seats and windows. These were cattle cars.

Did the people who knew they were going in the transports ever think at any time about escaping? Was there any of that?

I'm sure they all thought about it. But you see, the camp was surrounded with very high barbed wire fences. And there were outposts all over with Germans and machine guns. So there wasn't that much. There was probably an escape attempt here and there. But I don't remember. I don't remember.

I remember of one in Belgium. But I don't remember one in Westerbork. I also think that I blacked out so much that I don't remember because of that.

I could understand that. I could understand that. It's such a frightening, horrible experience. Because you talk about it living in such an unnatural situation so naturally, that I could well believe that you must have blocked out a good bit of it. So now these transports are going. The people who had hunks of paper that permitted them to stay felt relatively safe?

They felt that time was on their side. Because the longer you were in Westerbork, the better off you were. But as time went on and they cleaned out the cities in Holland and the Jews were moved east to Auschwitz, there were fewer and fewer left. And that's what happened.

Finally, they got to the people with all the papers. And instead of sending them to Auschwitz, they sent them to places like Theresienstadt and to Bergen-Belsen and other places.

My friend, Jo, Jo Seelman. She went to Theresienstadt. Afterwards, she went to Auschwitz. After which, I saw her again in Bergen-Belsen.

What made a person be selected for Theresienstadt and then moved and then moved again?

I don't know.

No rhyme or reason that you know?

No. Theresienstadt was supposed to be less threatening, less horrendous than Auschwitz. Everything was better than Auschwitz. And so maybe what they did-- I don't know, but I suppose that they may not have had enough room for everybody at once at Theresienstadt. So they gave the impression that you were going to something that was a little better. And then when they had room in Auschwitz, they would ship them to Auschwitz.

This is conjecture. I do not know. I don't know how they arranged it. But I know that people going to Theresienstadt felt they were better off than going to Auschwitz.

Your parents and their particular jobs at the camp, did that make them feel any more secure?

Up to a point. Up to a point.

Yes. And then?

And then we were selected to go to Belsen because we had the papers and the affidavits for Israel. So at that--

How did that tie up with going to Belsen as a--

Belsen was a camp where they had people with all different kinds of papers, as I told you, the Paraguayan passport, the Israel affidavit. And I don't know what else, all sorts of exceptions.

So that's what qualified you for that?

Yes.

And how long did in advance that you were going? Or did they just come in and say tomorrow?

I don't know. Maybe a day or two.

Maybe a day or two. So you got your things together?

Yes.

Then you went?

We went. That was February 15, 1944 we went to Belsen.

Tell me about that.

Belsen is in North Germany. It's not too far from Hanover, which is not too far from Hamburg. It's in the northwestern part of Germany. It's flat, very flat country, as was Westerbork. It was not a very long road. I don't remember, 6 hours, 7 hours, no idea.

And this was not a cattle train. This was an regular coach. And we went there. And when we got there we were greeted

by the people in charge at the section of Belsen where we were going to be.

Belsen was gigantic. And different sections were surrounded by barbed wire. So one section of the camp couldn't see the-- couldn't go to the other section. We were--

When you say gigantic, how gigantic?

Maybe, I don't know, more than 50,000. I'm guessing. But I would imagine at one point that is possible. Maybe a little less. But it went-- it was enormous. OK.

But it was not all Jewish. There were Polish criminals. There were gypsies. There was a section of Hungarian Jews. There was--

You were--

Recording.

So afterwards, I knew she was very close to where I was. We were in a Jewish section. And the top dogs in that section were Greek. They were Greek Jews from Salonika. And they were in charge. They were the big machers. Why? Because they were there first. So you had to be very friendly with them.

I remember there was a woman that was the milk lady. She gave milk to children and teenagers and pregnant women, of whom they were very few. But you had to speak to her. And you had to do it in French. [SPEAKING FRENCH]. And she would say, oui, oui or non, and whatever. We'd say, madam, un peu, un peu - - a little bit, a little bit. And she would say, demain, tomorrow, come back. Or she would say, all right, today.

But that's where I did a lot of speaking-- you had to speak French in that part of the camp because the Greeks were in charge and they spoke Ladino. They spoke Greek. And many of them spoke French.

Then they had Jews coming into that section from Tripoli and Africa, right. Why? I don't know, because that was Italian. And the Italians shipped them-- and those people were pretty cold because they had never been in a cold climate. So they didn't need to do much for them to die. All they had to do was give them enough warm clothes and give them enough food and you broke them.

So this was a very international section of Belsen. They did not have gas chambers. They had work kommandos and work groups. I worked every day. I worked--

What did you do?

Different kinds of work. At one point, I was in charge of children's daycare center, as it were. People would have little children. Mothers would work. I would be babysitting 10, 20, 30, whatever number.

At another point in time, I was in a factory. We made some sort of material for the war effort, for the Germans. It was plastic piping that had to be woven in certain ways. It was like braided in five different ways. And I totally don't know what it was for. But it went on for hours and hours, just sitting doing the braiding. Those were my main jobs.

You worked all day. And at that time I was 15. And the barracks were lousy. They were cold in the winter and very hot in the summer. It was triple deckers. And it got so crowded that you had to have two in a bed.

At that point, there was a lot of disease, people with lice. And a lot of people got typhoid. I had it twice. I had one case that was called paratyphoid. And then at the end of the war after we were freed by the Russians, I had typhoid fever. I also had-- when you get yellow.

Jaundice.

Jaundice. I had jaundice. I had that twice. So that was life in Belsen, which was much less--

You were not living with your parents then. They were--

I was living with my mother. And my brother and my father was in a barrack for men. They separated men and women. And there wasn't much family life.

I mean you did get together for meals once in a while. And they would bring in the big containers. And the main staple was turnips. Every day we had turnips once a day.

And you did get some soup, the second meal, and in the morning some sort of coffee substitute, Ersatz. A And that was it You got--

Sanitary?

--a slice of bread.

Yeah.

Sanitary to a certain degree. We went to bathhouses. And they would turn on the water. And you walked, take a shower, hot water. And this was maybe once every so often. I don't even remember if it was once--

What about the bathroom?

--a month or so. And there were long lines with sinks and toilets-- no, toilets were outhouses. But they did have bathrooms and sinks. And you could wash there. But I remember very often in the cold of winter months that we would use the coffee instead of to drink it to wash ourselves because it was hot.

And your mother and father did that kind of work?

Yeah, my mother was in charge of a barracks there too. And my father, he had all sorts of jobs. And I do not remember exactly what he did. But I know it was a hard physical labor at one point.

Was there any thread of Jewish life existing there? Like was there any--

Yes, there was. We would have our little meetings, which were an outgrowth of this group in Westerbork. We would have them once in a while. But it wasn't as often. It wasn't as nice.

And I know one group would make little matzos for Passover. They got some milk and-- I mean not milk-- and flour and water. And they would make little matzos over a fire. But it was really nothing. No, there were no services. There were no meetings. Not that I know of.

And family and friends, did they keep-- did they even ever turn up? Did you live there--

Well, my father was in the same camp. He was just in a men's barracks. I mean--

No, people from the other camps that you would-- or people that you had known in Holland, did you--

Yes, once in a while. Yeah, say when another transport came-- actually from Westerbork, I only remember that there were two or three after us and that was it. And so, yes, people would turn up. And you would see each other.

And a lot of them would die. And you would be aware, you know. And they died because of starvation and because of lack of medical facilities and because of a lack of will to live, I think.

Well, when you came down with the paratyphoid and jaundice, were you given medical treatment?

No. No. Not in Belsen.

Not in Belsen.

I was sick with the paratyphoid for weeks and weeks and weeks, maybe 7, 8 weeks. As a matter of fact, after that was done, very close to the end of my illness, we were-- it was the end of the war practically. And we were told to move out of the camp and go on another train, which was suppose to go to Auschwitz. And I had to walk. And I remember that, 7 kilometers after I had lost a lot of weight. And I was extremely sick. And I made it.

Was the news seeping down into Belsen about what was happening?

To a certain extent. We had a lot of bombardments around the area, not in the camp. Although at one point, a British plane strayed and did hit the camp a little bit. It killed one woman. And she was standing next to me, as close as you stand to me. So she was hit, and I was not.

You could well wonder--

Why?

Why? Were you guarded by Germans in the camp?

Yes. My grandparents were also in that camp.

Oh, tell me about your grandparents. They had gone to--

My grandparents had come to Holland. And they stayed in Amsterdam much longer than my parents and brother and I. But they finally were sent to Westerbork. And they came with us to the Belsen. I believe we all came together.

My grandfather died of a heart attack in June '44. My grandmother held on pretty well and at one point did not have to go to the Appell, which was the morning exercise, the morning call where you had to line up 5 in a row. And so she was exempt from that because she was over 65 or whatever the age was. And so she could stay in bed.

And I remember very clearly that I, on a very cold morning, hid under her covers not to go outside. And then SS came in and he pulled the covers from her, and there I was. And he could have done all sorts of things. And I just gave him a little smile and said I wouldn't do it anymore. And he let me go.

But that was pretty risky. It was pretty risky. But then you did a lot of things that were pretty risky. But this was one of them.

My grandmother did get very sick and towards the end was really bedridden. And you could see she would have much longer to go. And she also went on the train that we went on to go to Auschwitz, which was in April of '45. And she died three days before the end-- before we were freed.

She died a day after President Roosevelt died. And we got the news that he died, and she knew it. And after he died, she died. It was just before the end of the war.

Do you make any connection between his death and her death?

Yes, to a certain degree because he was her hero. And she always--

Why was he her hero?

She felt that Roosevelt would win the war and we would all get out. But basically Roosevelt didn't help the Jews very much. And the American government was either powerless or unable or unwilling, I don't know.

Well, tell me, were there guards other than Germans?

Yes, there were kapos.

Tell me about them.

K-A-P-O. These were the Polish convicted criminals who were acting in behalf of the Germans. And they were extremely cruel. And they would guard the camp. And we needed to be on good terms with them.

A number of the women went to sleep with them to be able to save their skin, perhaps to keep their lives, because they were tough. They were mean. They were tough. And they had nothing to lose.

Were any of the guards either, Germans or the kapos, civil at any point to the prisoners? Can you remember any time--

I would imagine so. I don't know particular kindnesses. But I would imagine that there must have been something because it wasn't total harassment at all times to everybody. But I don't know. I have no-- I really don't know. I mean, I was lucky when I was discovered and he didn't beat me and he didn't kick me. So I must say, at that point, he was not cruel.

Would you just briefly review the routine in the camp, the daily routine? You got up at what time? You did what--

I don't remember. I know we got up early. And we did get some of this hot brew. And you got approximately a slice of bread to go with it. If you slice the bread thin enough, you could manage.

And after that, very often they would call the Appell. And you had to go outside in cold and rain and snow and ice and heat. And you had to line up 5 in a row. This was done evidently to get work crews together. And also, so they could see who was where.

Now, I don't know-- I don't even remember whether it was done every single morning or most mornings. But I remember it was often. There were days when it was done twice a day, morning and night. But again, I don't know how often.

And after that, many of the people would go to work. They would go to their work detail, like I would go to the place where they made the plastic whatever. And my mother would take care of the barracks. And my father would go whatever job he had. And my brother would sort of wander around or be in a group where they took their children.

Were there many children in the camp?

There were quite a few. I don't know how many. And most of them did reasonably well. Some died. And different kids, for the most part, did reasonably well.

Do you know of any religious services--

No.

That were held or prayers--

I don't know--

Or groups.

I don't know. But then, don't forget, probably there were more of them in the men's barracks too because a lot of the Orthodox men would have their prayers. But I don't know when and where. I don't know.

I'm going to turn this tape on to the other side. And I think we're kind of getting to the end.

[AUDIO OUT]

Were there any-- or was there any particular leader in the camp, and any figure in the camp who helped the others to kind of hold on and rally?

Yes, the leader for the particular section that we were in was the man who had been our neighbor in the little suburb where we first lived. He was my father's business partner. His name was Joseph Weiss. And he was a very kind man. He was very highly respected by everybody. And he was the leader for the German and the Dutch Jews.

There was a leader of the Greek Jews. He was a big, handsome, tough sort of a guy. And I don't remember his name. [PERSONAL NAME] or something of that sort. I don't remember. So there were various leaders, but they worked together.

But what did they offer you that helped to sustain you?

They were able to make some contact with the Germans that evidently benefited us from the point of view that they would, from my understanding, assure them that we would cooperate, but would they please let the sick people lie down and that they give some medical help. I don't know.

Sort of intermediaries.

Yes. It probably is described in that book, which I bring today, of the destruction of the Dutch Jews.

And were there any spiritual leaders there, people who spiritually kind of lifted you out of the despair?

I don't remember.

You don't remember that. Where were you when you were liberated?

I was in a small German town called Trobitz, which was near Leipzig.

Well, how did you get there?

We were told in April of '45 that we had to leave. And we knew that the war was close to an end. There were some reports that seeped in.

So we were told to go on a train. And the rumor had it that we were going to go to Auschwitz. And as I told you before, we had to walk 7 kilometers. My friend Jo Seelman was in another section of the camp. But we were able to get together, and I asked her to come with us. And she was afraid to. And she told me recently after I left she was so upset that she didn't go with us.

Her family were not there?

She lost everybody. Anyway, we walked the 7 kilometers and reached a station or a platform with a train that was cattle cars.

Now, the Germans were supervising this exit?



Oh, the Germans, yes. All right, there were several hundred of us, German Jews, Dutch Jews, French Jews. They also came. A lot of French Jews were in our section. Greek Jews--

Belgians I guess.

I don't know about Belgians. I don't know. But it was a whole conglomeration of people, a lot of languages.

We got on the train. And I remember sitting on the platform before going in, and it was the only time in all these years that I broke down and cried. And I sobbed. And I thought I would never make it. But I got on the train--

Because you were so tired or you thought it--

I was tired. And I thought it was the end, that this is it.

And your parents were--

My parents were on the train. My grandmother was brought on the train somehow with some kind of transportation because she couldn't walk. We got on the train. And it was a horrendous ride. It was from April 7 or 9 until April 23 on the train.

Every day, we would be attacked by planes. Or there would be alarms. And we had to hide. We--

Whose planes were they?

British, French, American, whatever. They didn't know who we were. We crossed the river Elbe on the way to Berlin. And we were in the middle of the river and there was an alarm. We couldn't go back and we couldn't go forth. And we were told, this is it, guys. And I remember saying, the Shema Yisrael. We made it. We weren't bombed.

We were in Berlin two days before it fell. The train stopped in Berlin, saw the destruction, and we moved on.

You didn't leave the train? You were not--

We left the train. And in certain places, not in Berlin--

But as the trip went along, you could get out?

We could get out because we had to find food. We eat raw potatoes. We ate whatever we could get.

They were under no obligation to feed you. You fed yourself.

They couldn't give us enough food because they didn't know where to get it from evidently. They weren't interested in getting it.

We were in one town where suddenly there was an alarm again. And everybody had to get out of the cars. And I lost my family. And I ran. And I hid under a locomotive.

And then I thought, that's stupid. And I ran, and I ran away. And just as I was running away, maybe 100 yards, the whole locomotive was hit and it blew up. And that's the kind of trip it was.

We did not have places to wash. So we at one point stopped at a little lake or a pond. Many, many people would bathe together in this little lake.

How many people were on this train would you say?

I would say it was 600 to 800. But many of them died. And more of them died after we were liberated.

So then finally this train ended where?

The train ended-- can you stop a minute. I have a-- oh.

[AUDIO OUT]

There are about 600 or 800 people you think on this train.

Yes. However, after we were freed in Trobitz.

How do you spell that? T-R-O-- umlaut-- B-I-T-Z.

Yeah.

Many of them contracted the typhoid. And many of them died after the liberation.

You don't know who was responsible for your liberation?

Yes, I know exactly who was responsible. [LAUGHTER] The Russians. We were liberated by two young Russian soldiers on horses.

Tell me about that.

This was the 13th or 14th day. And the train stopped. And it was early in the morning. And we could see the Germans. And there weren't that many by then. And they had white flags. And two Russian soldiers appeared on horses. And that was the liberation.

And we couldn't understand them. And they couldn't understand us. But we knew we were free.

And then what happened?

Then through some people who did know Russian, we were told that we should go to the nearest town, which was Trobitz and find ourselves apartments, which we did. We were told the Germans would leave or they would make room for us so we would have houses. I went and found an apartment for my family.

Did you have to displace someone to find--

Actually, we didn't have to displace. They lived downstairs. And they gave us the upstairs.

These were Germans.

German. So they made room for us.

Did they do this willingly or angrily?

Yes, because they knew if they didn't, they were going to be shot. So they did it quickly. So we moved in.

And the next day, we went and looked, like scavengers, looked for food. We found a German abandoned army train with enormous supplies of food, especially cheese. And we took it back.

Also, the man I was going with to find this, he and I killed rabbits. And we had rabbit stew. And we ate. And we all got sick frankly because it was too much.

After that, a lot of us got typhoid. And then even though we've been inoculated, evidently it wasn't strong enough at that point. And many, many people died right after the war ended.

Where were you cared for?

The Russians set up a hospital and gave excellent care. As a matter of fact, they took my brother because he was very sick. I was terribly sick too. But they took him away. And they cared for him, shaved his hair. And he recuperated.

My father was very sick. I took care of him. He had a heart attack in addition to having typhoid. My mother was very sick. I took care of everybody.

And then I got it. And I got it worse than they did, really was near death. But I made it.

And then two Russian soldiers wanted to come and take me with them. And I kept saying, typhoid, typhoid. And that sort of scared them. But otherwise I think-- I'm sure they would have taken me. And--

That's to--

To rape me. To rape me.

The Russians?

Yes. But they didn't. We stayed in this little town for about six weeks. One of the people who died there was the wife of Joseph Weiss. She died there along with many others.

And after six weeks, the Americans came in and said they would resettle us, but in the West, first in the western part of Germany and then into Holland. This trip took many weeks because the roads were in poor condition or bridges were blown up. But we did finally make it back to Holland.

Did you get together with any of the family that you had--

We didn't have any family Holland. When we got back to Holland, we stayed at the house of some friends who had been with us in Belsen. The name is Perlberg. And we roomed there for several months.

Was there any contact with Jewish agencies? Like the--

Oh, there were lots of contacts. Once we were on the way, we repatriated. The American Jewish Agency, the American governmental agencies, everybody did whatever they could. Then we were taken care of.

So how long did you stay in Holland before coming here?

I was in Holland-- I got back in July '45, and I left in July '46. A year.

A year. Did someone--

I went to school.

Who guaranteed your admission to the United States?

The Quakers.

The Quakers.

I was admitted-- I was first European student to be admitted to a Quaker school after the war.

And your parents also came under their--

No. No. My mother came as a visitor. I came as a student. And my brother was sent to boarding school in Switzerland. My father stayed in Holland. So that the family was completely split it up then.

Did your father stay in Holland by choice or--

Yes, because he assumed my mother was coming back because she went to the United States as a visitor. But then she wrote and she would divorce and marry Leonard Cohen.

Who had gotten to the United States?

Yes. Yes.

Had they been in contact with each other?

Oh, yes. After the war.

After the war.

Yes.

And then he eventually came to the United States, your father?

My father married a Dutch woman. And they came to the United States. And they lived in California. And they were very good friends with the Gisa and Harold Wolf, the one who I worked with in the laboratory in Westerbork.

Mm, hmm. Mm, hmm.

Yes. And I'm in touch to this day with people that I was in Westerbork with or in Belsen. But not many.

Mm, hmm. And then your brother and you eventually stayed. And your mother stayed also.

My brother arrived in 1947 as a student. And he was admitted to the same boarding school that I'd been to. He also came as a student to go to the Quaker School.

Well, Erica, I think that kind of ends our soiree. I'm so sorry that second tape really was not good.

In closing, I think I should say that you're a very good interviewer. And while it was painful, I think it had to be said. I personally am of the opinion that it's very important not to forget what happened during the Holocaust. I'm also of a very strong opinion that certain people or certain institutions are using the Holocaust to their financial benefit that I do not agree or subscribe to.

For instance?

I don't like to name names.

OK.

I think that--

Are you talking about people who are writing books or--

I think there are certain people who have made the Holocaust their livelihood or their profession. And I just find it some-- I know I could not do this at this point. I'm not saying never because you can never say never. But I find this somewhat distasteful. I think it has a place in history. And I think I've made my contribution.

I would very strongly urge those who are putting this together to use my poems simply as a record. They're not to be published and not to be translated by anybody without my permission. I think basically I gave this interview to remember those that did not make it. And that's really what it's all about.

We're here. And we go on. And this interview was in memory of those who didn't.

Erica, just one more, because you are so clear in what you say and your convictions, do you think it could happen again?

I think anything is possible. I think that the same thing couldn't happen identically. I don't think it's an identical thing.

I do believe that many similar events have already happened and the world has taken very little notice of them. I would point out Kampuchea for one and Afghanistan. And these are two examples that certainly are tremendous tragedies, the loss of human life. We don't know the number. But it runs into many hundreds of thousands. And we're not taking any active role in that.

Whether it can happen to Jews again, I would imagine things can happen. I don't think ever to the degree. I think the state of Israel is in a way our hope that something not happening. And I do think that cruelty will continue forever. And that's a terrible pessimistic thing to say. But I have seen nothing to indicate that people are less cruel in 1982 than they were in '42, maybe some different methods.

On the other hand, I also think there is always hope. And I'm a great optimist by nature. And I feel that even throughout this horrendous experience, had it not been for my strong hope, I would have never made it. And I do look for good things in any situation.

And I told you earlier that some of the things in Westerbork, as crazy as it sounds, they were good for me in a certain way. Not that I was in Westerbork, but some of the connections I made and some of the experience I had.

And your alignment with Judaism, your--

Yes. Yes. So that there was some things that weren't totally horrendous. They were-- I had some good times. And I don't mean to say that the experience in general was good. No. But there were some snips of it that were definitely good because I met some wonderful people and did some very interesting things and joyful things.

Now, let me ask you, your experiences with a young girl--

Yes.

Would you venture what your mother might have said in conclusion? Would she have echoed your kind of feeling? Or do if she subscribes to a different point of view?

I think my mother has also blocked out a great deal, maybe even more than I have. And I'm quite sure she would subscribe to that too. I don't even know that she would be willing to be interviewed. I don't know.

My parents-- my mother and stepfather have tried to let the past be the past, and they went forward. And they visited Austria and Switzerland and Germany fully aware of antisemitic tendencies there, even to this day. But also aware that they enjoyed certain aspects of it as vacationers, and that's all they were. They were on vacation, and they enjoyed certain amenities and certain parts of that.

And they do not wish to be awakened again and again over what happened. They know it happened. I'm sure there are

certain guilt feelings. I'm sure there are certain scars. My stepfather had nightmares for years. But they have buried it to a large degree.

And what about their feeling of Jewishness? Their feelings of the state of Israel?

Their feeling for the state of Israel is very positive philosophically. And they would make contributions. But they do not have a personal involvement.

My brother also has buried much of it. And he was so young that his experiences--

Lean forward.

OK-- again different. My brother, Ernest Hilton, he changed his name from Herz to Hilton. He was married--

Why did he do that?

Because he felt it would be better for business. And he changed it a long time ago. He was married to a woman from Australia for 15 years.

A Jewish woman?

No. And he divorced her. And he is presently happily married to a woman from Thailand by the name of Saisampan [? Werner ?] [? Kravit. ?] And they have a son, a year and a half old.

And I think my brother is in a unique position. My brother was the first to be bar mitzvahed in Holland after the war. And I would say--

Whose idea was that?

My parents. And I would imagine--

Well, that was a switch for your parents, wasn't it?

No. No, that was not. That was part of it. I mean bar mitzvah was a part of a--

It was a ritual.

Yes. He was the first to be bar mitzvahed in Holland after the war. And he probably is the last or one of the last to have a baby from the people who were encamped. His baby was born a year and a half ago. And that was his first and only child. So that he has two records-- the first bar mitzvah and the last to become a father.

Well, with that, let's end on a positive rebirth.

OK.

OK, thanks, Erica, a million. Erica van Adelsberg called me about two hours after our interview to express her concern that she had not indicated to us that she had married in 1955. In 1957 had a daughter, Judith, who was now Judith Berman, married to Michael Berman. And she is currently working on her PhD in Israel at the Weizmann Institute. In 1960, her son, David, was born. And he is presently completing his studies at Drexel University in Philadelphia.