

1
00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:23,300

2
00:00:23,300 --> 00:00:26,300
Can you first tell me when
and where you were born

3
00:00:26,300 --> 00:00:30,360
and a little bit about what
your childhood was like?

4
00:00:30,360 --> 00:00:30,860
OK.

5
00:00:30,860 --> 00:00:34,930
I was born in a town
called Memel or Klaipeda,

6
00:00:34,930 --> 00:00:38,860
a seaport on the Baltic Sea.

7
00:00:38,860 --> 00:00:44,180
I come from an educated,
middle-class family.

8
00:00:44,180 --> 00:00:47,500
My father was a flax
export business.

9
00:00:47,500 --> 00:00:50,810
He bought flax from
the local farmers,

10
00:00:50,810 --> 00:00:54,590
graded it, sorted it, and
baled it and then shipped

11
00:00:54,590 --> 00:01:01,450
to Ireland, Czechoslovakia, any
place that manufactured linen.

12

00:01:01,450 --> 00:01:05,300
I was an only child
amongst a family

13
00:01:05,300 --> 00:01:11,560
of two sets of aunts, an uncle,
my parents, a grandmother.

14
00:01:11,560 --> 00:01:14,860
As a result, I
was badly spoiled.

15
00:01:14,860 --> 00:01:17,530
I had a maid that
took care of me.

16
00:01:17,530 --> 00:01:20,070

17
00:01:20,070 --> 00:01:23,715
I was brought up like a
little prince in some respect.

18
00:01:23,715 --> 00:01:27,590

19
00:01:27,590 --> 00:01:30,530
My aunts would take me--

20
00:01:30,530 --> 00:01:34,800
I did more with my aunts than
I did with my mother and father

21
00:01:34,800 --> 00:01:35,300
usually.

22
00:01:35,300 --> 00:01:38,570
They took me to
cafes and my one aunt

23
00:01:38,570 --> 00:01:41,270
was a little more interested in
sports, so she took me skating

24
00:01:41,270 --> 00:01:42,073
and to the beaches.

25
00:01:42,073 --> 00:01:43,490
We had beautiful
beaches in Memel.

26
00:01:43,490 --> 00:01:47,150

27
00:01:47,150 --> 00:01:53,750
I went to a secular Hebrew
public school, which

28
00:01:53,750 --> 00:01:55,310
was totally not religious.

29
00:01:55,310 --> 00:01:59,510
It was basically a
Zionist type of school.

30
00:01:59,510 --> 00:02:04,250
But they taught us modern
Hebrew and Jewish history,

31
00:02:04,250 --> 00:02:06,170
not Bible studies as such.

32
00:02:06,170 --> 00:02:10,880
And at the time it was an
unusual education also.

33
00:02:10,880 --> 00:02:16,350

34
00:02:16,350 --> 00:02:19,840
We lived in a very nice house.

35
00:02:19,840 --> 00:02:25,200
We had a whole floor
of a three-story house.

36
00:02:25,200 --> 00:02:27,540
I had my own room
overlooking the river that

37
00:02:27,540 --> 00:02:31,540
passed through the town, saw
ships going by all the time,

38
00:02:31,540 --> 00:02:33,553
and as a result I
still like them.

39
00:02:33,553 --> 00:02:35,610
I am now involved in sailing.

40
00:02:35,610 --> 00:02:38,670

41
00:02:38,670 --> 00:02:40,920
Sundays and weekends
I remember being

42
00:02:40,920 --> 00:02:42,720
taken to the little ferry.

43
00:02:42,720 --> 00:02:44,660
Across the bay
from where we lived

44
00:02:44,660 --> 00:02:47,910
was a place called
[? Zankou, ?] and

45
00:02:47,910 --> 00:02:51,780
I would be taken with my
family and lots of older people

46
00:02:51,780 --> 00:02:53,760
always to cafes.

47
00:02:53,760 --> 00:02:56,410

I really did not
have much opportunity

48
00:02:56,410 --> 00:02:58,410
to play with other children
because I was always

49
00:02:58,410 --> 00:02:59,860
entertained with adults somehow.

50
00:02:59,860 --> 00:03:03,840

51
00:03:03,840 --> 00:03:08,830
It was just a very
pleasant life in general.

52
00:03:08,830 --> 00:03:13,120
And then how did
things start to change?

53
00:03:13,120 --> 00:03:16,940
What do you remember
that you saw and heard?

54
00:03:16,940 --> 00:03:22,730
Well first of all, we
had a radio at home

55
00:03:22,730 --> 00:03:26,990
and my father would
be glued to the radio

56
00:03:26,990 --> 00:03:30,990
and you kept already hearing of
what was going on in Germany.

57
00:03:30,990 --> 00:03:34,700
Even though Memel was
half German-speaking,

58
00:03:34,700 --> 00:03:38,570
it was not a German town,

it was a Lithuanian town.

59

00:03:38,570 --> 00:03:44,340

And eventually we heard of
invasions of Czechoslovakia.

60

00:03:44,340 --> 00:03:47,990

And I could, even
as a child, sense

61

00:03:47,990 --> 00:03:51,290

the uneasiness of my parents.

62

00:03:51,290 --> 00:03:53,780

Also, I had an uncle and
an aunt who had already

63

00:03:53,780 --> 00:03:56,750

come to the United
States and they

64

00:03:56,750 --> 00:03:59,067

kept writing because they
were trying to bring us over

65

00:03:59,067 --> 00:04:00,650

and trying to bring
us over, but there

66

00:04:00,650 --> 00:04:02,600

was struggle in
getting affidavits

67

00:04:02,600 --> 00:04:05,820

and somehow that
never materialized.

68

00:04:05,820 --> 00:04:09,450

And then finally, this
whole beautiful existence

69

00:04:09,450 --> 00:04:13,530

stopped a few months

before Hitler invaded.

70
00:04:13,530 --> 00:04:15,660
I don't know exactly
the date, but Hitler

71
00:04:15,660 --> 00:04:19,880
invaded, took over
Memel, and that's

72
00:04:19,880 --> 00:04:22,880
before the war with
Russia started.

73
00:04:22,880 --> 00:04:28,980
And we had to move
to Lithuania proper

74
00:04:28,980 --> 00:04:31,440
and my parents, even though
we live in Lithuania,

75
00:04:31,440 --> 00:04:34,110
had German citizenship
and we were not

76
00:04:34,110 --> 00:04:37,230
allowed for some reason to live
in the capital of Lithuania,

77
00:04:37,230 --> 00:04:39,750
which was Kovno,
Kaunas at the time.

78
00:04:39,750 --> 00:04:45,040
So we ended up first and
Siaulai and then in Panevezys

79
00:04:45,040 --> 00:04:48,825
And suddenly from this
where I had my own bedroom,

80
00:04:48,825 --> 00:04:49,930

we had a dining room.

81

00:04:49,930 --> 00:04:57,250

The living room, breakfast room, it wasn't but it certainly

82

00:04:57,250 --> 00:05:02,380

was near that, we lived in very cramped quarters

83

00:05:02,380 --> 00:05:08,500

in a backyard near my father's somehow either competition

84

00:05:08,500 --> 00:05:11,170

or colleague in the business.

85

00:05:11,170 --> 00:05:17,500

And things just changed drastically.

86

00:05:17,500 --> 00:05:20,350

However, my school, I continued going

87

00:05:20,350 --> 00:05:22,870

to the same type of a secular Hebrew public school

88

00:05:22,870 --> 00:05:26,980

in Panevezys and kept getting this rather interesting

89

00:05:26,980 --> 00:05:27,640

education.

90

00:05:27,640 --> 00:05:30,170

91

00:05:30,170 --> 00:05:34,030

I also remember, I must have been 10 at the time,

92

00:05:34,030 --> 00:05:39,160
the day the Russians invaded
Lithuania and the tanks coming

93

00:05:39,160 --> 00:05:44,050
through and the first time
I saw people from other--

94

00:05:44,050 --> 00:05:46,900
I saw Kyrgyz, who looked
like Chinese people,

95

00:05:46,900 --> 00:05:50,080
and so as a child for me
this was a great thing

96

00:05:50,080 --> 00:05:52,960
to see all these tanks
rolling through town.

97

00:05:52,960 --> 00:05:58,480
But my father, even though
he was a German citizen,

98

00:05:58,480 --> 00:06:02,410
was born in Russia and
escaped prior or just

99

00:06:02,410 --> 00:06:05,260
after the revolution
and was very--

100

00:06:05,260 --> 00:06:08,327
I think he was more
concerned at the time of what

101

00:06:08,327 --> 00:06:10,660
the Russians would do to him
than what the Germans might

102

00:06:10,660 --> 00:06:11,230
do to him.

103

00:06:11,230 --> 00:06:17,220
So he was really quite worried.

104

00:06:17,220 --> 00:06:20,970
And I mean as a
10-year-old you always

105

00:06:20,970 --> 00:06:24,210
try to have fun and go
around with your friends,

106

00:06:24,210 --> 00:06:30,160
but you sense this unease
in the family at that time.

107

00:06:30,160 --> 00:06:33,120
And then when the Russians came,
again being German citizens

108

00:06:33,120 --> 00:06:35,070
they did not want us to
live in the provinces

109

00:06:35,070 --> 00:06:41,200
so they made us go to
Kovno or Kaunas proper.

110

00:06:41,200 --> 00:06:49,470
And now the whole family, two
aunts, another uncle, we all

111

00:06:49,470 --> 00:06:55,470
got crammed into even
tighter quarters in Kovno

112

00:06:55,470 --> 00:06:58,170
under the Russians.

113

00:06:58,170 --> 00:07:01,710
The Russians did not allow
Hebrew or Yiddish or any sort

114

00:07:01,710 --> 00:07:05,415
of education that was other
than Lithuanian or Russian,

115
00:07:05,415 --> 00:07:07,380
so I was put into
a Lithuanian school

116
00:07:07,380 --> 00:07:10,110
and I didn't know what
was going because I

117
00:07:10,110 --> 00:07:11,970
didn't speak Lithuanian.

118
00:07:11,970 --> 00:07:15,780
And mainly you could get by with
German, which is what we spoke,

119
00:07:15,780 --> 00:07:18,930
and the Russian which my
father spoke with his sisters.

120
00:07:18,930 --> 00:07:22,690

121
00:07:22,690 --> 00:07:26,240
Again, as a child you
have funny experiences.

122
00:07:26,240 --> 00:07:29,570
I mean, in this
house that we lived,

123
00:07:29,570 --> 00:07:32,740
in the backyard Russian
soldiers were quartered.

124
00:07:32,740 --> 00:07:36,580
And once I knew enough Russian
then the Russian soldier

125
00:07:36,580 --> 00:07:38,690

call me over and say,
you want to have a smoke?

126
00:07:38,690 --> 00:07:41,203
In Russian,
[SPEAKING RUSSIAN],, she says.

127
00:07:41,203 --> 00:07:41,870
And I said sure.

128
00:07:41,870 --> 00:07:46,400
And he rolls the cigarette
with the stem of tobacco

129
00:07:46,400 --> 00:07:48,890
and he and I smoke.

130
00:07:48,890 --> 00:07:51,590
And I come home and I threw
up the whole afternoon,

131
00:07:51,590 --> 00:07:54,320
and my mother said,
what did you eat?

132
00:07:54,320 --> 00:07:56,360
Finally, I told her I
smoked with a Russian

133
00:07:56,360 --> 00:07:58,620
and she let me have it.

134
00:07:58,620 --> 00:08:00,620
I mean it's a--

135
00:08:00,620 --> 00:08:06,230
But that was still under
Russian occupation.

136
00:08:06,230 --> 00:08:11,900
Then I clearly remember the
day when the Germans invaded

137
00:08:11,900 --> 00:08:15,900
because it's the first time
I heard planes overhead

138
00:08:15,900 --> 00:08:17,760
and bombs falling.

139
00:08:17,760 --> 00:08:21,780
So you know just
this gorgeous life

140
00:08:21,780 --> 00:08:25,110
that we had in Memel slowly
and surely deteriorated

141
00:08:25,110 --> 00:08:28,240
to the point where--

142
00:08:28,240 --> 00:08:36,020
And a lot was hidden from me,
but I always saw my parents

143
00:08:36,020 --> 00:08:37,490
talk in hushed voices.

144
00:08:37,490 --> 00:08:41,120
And [? Eva ?] is coming, stop
talking and this kind of stuff

145
00:08:41,120 --> 00:08:42,200
I still remember.

146
00:08:42,200 --> 00:08:47,660
So even though I wasn't told
the specific details of what

147
00:08:47,660 --> 00:08:51,740
was going on, I sensed the fear
and the worry of my parents

148
00:08:51,740 --> 00:08:52,550
at that point.

149
00:08:52,550 --> 00:08:55,670

150
00:08:55,670 --> 00:09:00,560
And then the next
thing, once the Germans

151
00:09:00,560 --> 00:09:07,520
had invaded it didn't take
long that I don't quite

152
00:09:07,520 --> 00:09:11,540
remember how but the next
thing I know I'm in a ghetto.

153
00:09:11,540 --> 00:09:16,010
And now we are really cramped,
maybe the whole family

154
00:09:16,010 --> 00:09:18,680
in a room, one or two rooms.

155
00:09:18,680 --> 00:09:22,340
And that's again the
two aunts, an uncle.

156
00:09:22,340 --> 00:09:28,280
And interesting enough, there
was a refugee from Germany

157
00:09:28,280 --> 00:09:30,620
to Lithuania by the name
of [? Karnatkan ?] who

158
00:09:30,620 --> 00:09:35,790
became involved in
the ghetto gatekeeping

159
00:09:35,790 --> 00:09:37,020
police of some sort.

160

00:09:37,020 --> 00:09:43,080

And he was a German Jew who knew
his way around this Germans.

161

00:09:43,080 --> 00:09:47,140

And he was married to
a non-Jewish woman who

162

00:09:47,140 --> 00:09:47,830

maintained--

163

00:09:47,830 --> 00:09:49,510

He was rather wealthy the guy.

164

00:09:49,510 --> 00:09:51,610

He lived with us and
he sort of became

165

00:09:51,610 --> 00:09:54,970

like a protector of
the family because he

166

00:09:54,970 --> 00:10:00,580

was involved in the
administration of the ghetto

167

00:10:00,580 --> 00:10:04,060

and was friendly with the
Germans, knew how to bribe them

168

00:10:04,060 --> 00:10:07,690

and so--

169

00:10:07,690 --> 00:10:15,510

But anyway, things were
really crowded, tight.

170

00:10:15,510 --> 00:10:18,570

I always had enough
food because I

171

00:10:18,570 --> 00:10:21,060

guess as a child they gave

me all the food that they

172

00:10:21,060 --> 00:10:23,130

didn't have, that the
others didn't have.

173

00:10:23,130 --> 00:10:30,580

So this protective life in
the way continued for me.

174

00:10:30,580 --> 00:10:57,000