I'll take the opportunity with vacuum cleaner.

Oh, why it's just--

Oh it's a couple of times that we've knocked the pepper container over, there's pepper under--.

[LAUGHTER]

Yeah.

And then, in 10 seconds, we can start it up and if you'll answer your question, Emily, any time.

So my question was the difference in perceptions and experiences between you as a 14-year-old and the oldest people in Sosua?

At the time when we lived there?

Right, and when you went to the reunion, whoever were the oldest people who were able to be at the reunion?

Well, the older people, the young couples at the time we were there, most of them couldn't get out of there fast enough. Because they realized they wanted to go on with their lives and they knew that this wasn't a place where they were going to settle, especially the young married couples. Unless, as I said before, they decided to stay there permanently. And my sister may have better figures on how many people actually stayed.

We were shown a list when we were there, and I think there were approximately 75 individuals, not families but individuals, on the list. So it's not very many. And from those, I think those were the people that are members of the cooperative, that have holdings in the cooperative, and some of those don't live in the Dominican Republic, they live elsewhere. They just come home every once in a while.

Yeah. But in retrospect, all of them have the same feeling in their hearts about the place as I have, the older ones too. There are some people and-- but not very many, that cut the ties completely once they left. It was something that they didn't-- that belongs to the past and they didn't want to look at it, and they didn't want to have any connection. But the majority has this very strong feeling of connection.

For me personally, it has been difficult to understand those people that didn't want to come to meetings and have any of the connection. But, everybody's different. But the majority of the people did. At the reunion there were people in their mid and late 70s, and maybe even early 80s that came. And one very dear friend of mine came with her three children and her granddaughter, yeah.

Could you explain a little bit more about why you were allowed to leave Gurs was it--

Gurs.

Yes. Who was it that let your family leave, and what was the philosophy at the time?

France. The patrons of France collaborated with the Germans, but they themselves were not interested in really keeping us. They were doing, at that point, the Germans a favor. The German camps were not ready yet, and apparently, the French had some facilities. But they weren't necessarily interested as long as--

Generally in France, in those early days in 1940 and early '41, if people had papers to leave Europe and France, they could. And that was the same at the camp, as we had to-- it had to go through, as I said earlier, through the-- through the commandant of the camp, through the administration, the camp administration and whatever stamps that they had to put on the papers. And once we-- that was accomplished, that was fine, we could leave. It was not-- they had no interest in

and keeping us at that point.

What was the reaction in Sosua soon as people started to learn about the murders and other atrocities that had been committed? And how and when did you learn?

No, I think I blocked most of them out. I don't have a very clear recollection. It had to be disbelief, like for everyone else, and we had radios. We personally didn't have a radio, but that was some of the things that were scarce there. But people found out, no different than the rest of the world, I'm sure, except that we realized that our family that-- that they were gone.

At what point that was, I don't remember, I must have blocked it. I do remember getting the news about the atomic bomb. And those things I remember very clearly.

I remember my father's immediate reaction being, this is the end of all wars, there aren't going to be any more. He thought that was fantastic. And after that, I personally only had one thing in mind, to get to America.

[LAUGHTER]

And really start my life.

Well would you like to make a summary of all those things you'd like everyone to come away with from listening?

Well--

Or just a statement, or anything you'd like.

Well, I feel that all of these things need to go on record, I feel very strongly about it. Sometimes, I still can't believe how we escaped because our family, particularly, was our personal story. More so than some of the other people in the Dominican Republic, because we were singled out. The only reason we were there was because of my cousin having had that job by coincidence.

It's really like a needle in a haystack. And I know that as a very young child, I had immediately, after the war, I had terrible feelings of guilt about that consciously. And before that ever became a popular-- what are you trying to think of the word-- Yeah, a symptom, exactly.

I was aware of that. I remember very clearly in the Dominican Republic thinking, you're not supposed to be here. Maybe that was the reaction that I had when I found out. You're supposed to be there with the rest of them. And it was interesting for me to find out later that this is a very common symptom for people.

I think all the people may have dealt with it in a different way. Because I know my sister and I have talked often that the early letters that we have, correspondence between our family and my uncles in Germany it was so close. It was a very, very close family.

And that our early letters, my dad and my mother were writing things like, oh every time we look at a strange fruit that we hadn't known even ever existed. We're thinking of you, how we would love to share this with you. And yet after the war, they never spoke about them, never spoke about them. And I think it must have been just too difficult to look at for them.

Did you ever--

And my dad's business in New York was restitution, he-- that might be another interesting thing to-- even though he was a merchant in Germany. He was a very, very intelligent man and had the mind and the knowledge of a lawyer and all during the war he already, and as a matter of fact, already corresponded with some people in England about that the Germans will have to pay reparations after the war. Something is going to have to be done, he had no idea what, but he

already started- he had such a creative mind- started to think about things that actually then happened.

And after we were in New York, shortly after we were in-- my parents were in New York, my father had a heart attack. He had a very difficult time adjusting to American life at first and he never learned English. But then after he got a little better, he first started to do his own restitution doing-- filling out his own papers and his own correspondence. And then he started doing it for other people and it mushroomed, and it got bigger and bigger.

And he had eventually built up a very successful business, and he was-- the American Bar Association tried to push him out because they were jealous of anything successful. Even though they had never had the knowledge, they had no idea how to do it, but he used to get a big kick out of-- Germany actually accepted him as a representative and they used to send him letters. A German lawyer has a doctorate, and his-- the correspondence he used to come with a title for him and he always thought that-- he got big kick out of that.

And he was-- that way, he never needed to speak English because all of his customers were German. And also, he eventually had an apartment in the building that we-- my parents lived in, so he didn't-- he didn't have to go out, even go out of the house. And he was not well, he was he was really a sick man, but he worked seven days a week and probably 15 hours a day. And today it's unthinkable.

I think he was, in those days, taking something like three or five percent, so he really was just paid for his work mainly. And that was his satisfaction is to help the people, lots of people who were actually permanently-- with permanent damage from concentration camps, physical damage that he helped to get good pensions. So it was a lot of satisfaction for him.

He went at first, the first few years, through very deep depression because he had been a successful businessman. And, as I had said earlier to you, really the caretaker in the family, and then all of a sudden he was dependent on my mother and my sister and myself. And it was very difficult for him. And then he had a heart attack, and he couldn't do anything.

And he pulled himself up after that, and he got so much satisfaction out of doing this for people that he would get phone calls in the middle of dinner and he would get up and talk to people. It was like calling a doctor as far as they were concerned. They did not pay attention to office hours and it was a 24 hour a day job for my dad. And he retired only maybe-- never really retired. He only stopped maybe six months or so before he died at 79.

Well we are out of time now, but it seems to me that there is so much more rich history here. And also that you didn't even finish your final statement, so--

Right, I keep running off.

Make it shorter. But--