

Beforehand. How I felt during the interview?

How it felt to you to think about doing the interview?

Ah, well, I mean, it's a difficult thing to think about all these painful events of all kinds. I'm always surprised, again, that it's a painful thing to do.

You mean, you think that the pain has gone away and you find that it hasn't?

I don't think so.

No?

No, not altogether. Otherwise, you know, I mean, this is the second time within a month, you know, that I've really talked about these things. So maybe that makes it a little easier.

Did you find yourself talking about it very much with your children as they were growing up?

Well, yes, I've talked to them about it in bits and pieces. Never to this sort of complete extent. And I went back, actually, to the boarding school once with two of them. And I have one daughter who is a psychiatrist. And then she was in England with me and Marcel and one other daughter, Dominique.

She said, I really want to go and see the school where you were so long. It was kind of interesting, I thought. And I thought about that as I was, you know, relating all of this here. Because she thought it was really a nice place. And she was surprised at how nice it was.

And one of the nuns who used to be a teacher of ours at that time was still there. She showed us around. And she was very charming. And she had sort of much more positive memories of me in that school than I had myself, actually.

She remembered you? Did you remember her?

Yes, I remembered her, too.

So your daughter thought it was important to see that place?

She wanted to, yes. She thought for her that was an important visit to make.

What did it feel like for you?

It felt, I don't know, sort of like a nice outing. I mean, I saw it with different eyes when I went back, of course. And you know, let's say, when I talk about it like this, I remember the more painful aspects of it better than I did when I visited there. It was just a visit to me, really, in a way.

Yeah. It didn't bring back those feelings of isolation that you had there?

No.

Not belonging there? Have your children been interested in knowing about your past?

Yes, particularly Kim, who is a psychiatrist. She's very interested in it. She'd probably be interested in seeing this. And since I've come back from this recent trip to Germany, I read them my talk and I told them something about that.

And I've received more questions from them since then, especially from Philip, who really hadn't asked me that many

questions before. And who hadn't been on that trip that we made, you know, back to that school.

Hadn't been?

No. But I just talked to him a couple of days ago, and he had a lot of questions. So I think that the more I sort of relate, you know, the more interested they'll probably become. But it's sometimes, you know, hard to decide how much to tell them, how much they really want to hear. At what occasion to tell them, you know. When the time is right or when the setting is right, unless you're specifically asked. You don't really want to roll it all out.

Yeah, but somehow, you have to give them the green light to know that it's OK to ask.

Yes. And I think they do know that. I don't think I've ever--

No, they sound like they're all right.

--been hesitant to talk about it. No, not really. I mean, I could have told them everything I told you if they'd really wanted to sit down and listen to it.

Yeah.

So maybe they can see this tape.

How about Marcel?

Well, I've told him a lot more so he knows an awful lot. And he's much more interested, too.

It sounds like these excursions that you've made into the past have been good for you.

Yes, I think they have.

The one with your grandmother--

Yes.

--and your trip--

Yes.

--to Essen.

Well, you know, I just feel that it's better to go back, and face these things, and look at them, and take the opportunities that they are to do that. And that's why I made these two trips. And I think they've been really good for me.

Does it feel funny to be the only one in your family who's really interested in doing that?

I think so.

In a way, you've kind of been the outsider in your family.

Yes, I think that's probably true. Yeah.

Do you think that something like this could happen again?

Oh, I think it's always possible. Whether to such an extent, I kind of doubt. But on a smaller scale, probably. I think that

some antisemitism could probably arise again.

The big problem, I think, is in this whole thing how much the Jews really can become part of the country in which they live. And the old sort of ghetto mentality that's been imposed upon the Jews, really. And also maybe their own wish to isolate themselves from-- set themselves apart, I don't know. I think that's got to be surmounted. And I think I see it happening here.

But that was what was so painful about Germany because it was considered one of the leading countries to really be part of the country in the mind of the Jews. And then that was a real cold water dashed in the face to have--

Yes.

--not turn out to be.

Yes.

Do you think that could happen in America, that Jews who seemed to be part of our culture and our country could be separated that way and seen as different?

Well, I think that if there is a society and a culture that makes this different or takes a different view, it's here. And I think one of the reasons, probably, is that there are so many different groups of people here, all of whom are Americans.

And yet, when you think back to what happened to the Japanese, you know, you begin to see that yes, they're Americans, but how American are they really? How much are they regarded as Americans by everybody else?

They certainly thought they were American.

They did. And so you know, that question, I think, is still unresolved. I mean, today, at this particular moment, and I think especially in Berkeley, we seem to feel that it's kind of gone away, you know.

And that people are mixing more in general and making real efforts, I know, in the Jewish community not to set themselves apart, especially the more liberal Jews. And to be part of the community as a whole, rather than the Jewish community. And to my mind, that's a great thing.

And I think that that's the solution in the end. And the problem, I think, that some Jews see is how do we remain Jewish and do that as well? And we all know there's a lot a lot of intermarriage, for instance, you know. And you know, are those people that intermarry going to be Jewish? Are they not? And all of those things, I think, are still questions that haven't been answered yet.

Have any of your children intermarried?

Yes they have. So you know, I think whether their children are going to be seeing themselves as being Jewish or not, I don't really know right now. Somewhat I think they do. But to what extent that follows in their own lives and in their own future families, I don't know.

I think my answer would be that in this country, there is the best chance to achieve both Jewishness and Jewish identity and yet not be set apart from the rest of the country. And to be really true Americans, be regarded as real Americans. I think it's happening here. Unless I'm very much mistaken, I think that Jews are being regarded as real Americans here.

So you're hopeful about that?

Yes, I'm hopeful. But I don't know how it is in the rest of the world.

Well, we see things going on in the rest of the world that don't look too good.

I mean, there's a lot of this sort of narrow nationalism still around in Europe. I don't know how it is in South America, or in Asia, or in Africa. But I mean, the Jews are not alone, obviously, in the struggle. And what we've seen recently happening in the Balkans, you know, seems to point to the fact that you stand on very shifty soil.

I think even in Indonesia.

Yes.

How did you come to start your business?

Well, I think, first of all, the first business I started together with Marcel. And that was because we felt that we'd better start something on our own or we'd never really make it in this country. We felt we were too European to rise in a real American corporation. That was probably realistic.

And then my own business, Papyrus, I started because I think I've always been a promoter of women's independence and women's need to do something for themselves and on their own. And that comes from my family background, too.

Because I had just this one brother, you know, who was sort of regarded as the king and heir. And I was also, as I said before, the middle child in this family, with twins on one side, and a very beautiful sister at the oldest. And then came the brother.

So I was there in sort of a no man's land. And I was either part of the quote "bigger ones" or part of the quote "little ones." Whichever way it happened to happen or whichever way was sometimes the most convenient. Not always the best for me necessarily.

So you know, I think it came from that history and also from my realization in England that I had to do something for myself or it wasn't going to happen. That I started, you know, Papyrus.

And you know, I put a lot of effort into that all these years, for 25 years, to grow that business and to make sure that I was going to succeed in it. So I think I developed a certain amount of individualism, you know, after all this time. Because you know, that was-- I thought that was my way to assert myself from childhood on, I think.

Are you proud of yourself?

Yeah, I'm pretty proud of myself.

I think you should be.

Yeah.

Are there any things that you would like to add?

Well, I just-- I think, probably, what I would like to add or might sort of end on a note is that difficult experiences in life, I think, can be painful but very useful. That I'm not really sorry I've lived through all this period and all these things.

I'm kind of happy that I've been able to live in so many different places and so many different countries and situations. Because I think it gives me a perspective and certain strengths. And I don't think anything fazes me very much, really. I think whatever happens, I don't think I'm too shocked or I feel I couldn't manage it somehow or the other.

It's really given you a lot of fortitude.

I think so, yes.

And grit. And breadth.

Yes. I mean, I realize there's still a lot of things that you know, have sort of become part of me that certainly can work on, and that I can develop further in many directions that have sort of impeded me one way or the other because of my history. I realize what they are pretty much. And on the whole, I think my life has been a very rich one, a very fortunate one. I think I've been very lucky.

On behalf of the Holocaust Oral History Project, I want to thank you tremendously for your willingness to be able to use this interview to share your life, to talk about these painful things, and also the good things that have come out as well. We really appreciate--

I hope so.

--your sharing your story.

Yes. I hope it will be useful for them. And I hope to be useful for whoever listens to it.

Thank you.

OK, recording now. Go ahead.

OK.

Ready? This is my paternal grandmother. Her name was Theresa or Teresa Schurman. And I did not know her. She died before I was born.

OK.

And this is my maternal grandmother. Her name was Emilia Rosenthal, or Emilie. And she lived in our house by Paderborn. And she was deported to Theresienstadt when she was 81 years old.

OK. Go. Ready.

In the middle is my maternal grandmother, Emilia or Emilie. And on this side here is her house before the war. And her house is damaged during the war. It was eventually pulled down.

OK.

OK.

OK, we're recording. There's my father and my mother. William Schurman and Tude Schurman. And in the middle is probably a picture that was taken around the time they were engaged or early married photograph. One side is my mother as a little girl of about five.

This one right down the right side?

Maybe even younger.

OK.

And on the other side, she is in the center, right over here, with her two sisters. There were three girls and three boys in her family. And my mother was the youngest of six. And she is in the middle.

OK. OK, go ahead.

OK, these two photographs are of the five children, older sister, brother, myself in the middle, and Anita and Karen, the twins. And the other photograph is a few years later, maybe one or two years later, with my brother Peter in the middle, the twins, Anita and Karen on either side of him, Ursula top right, and I'm looking to sideways, just to the left of his head.

OK.

This is a photograph of myself aged 6 on my first school day, holding the sledge. And I think it was taken against the wall in front of our house.

OK.

This is a picture of me when I was about 13 years old in England and I'm wearing the school uniform that we wore on Sundays. A skirt, and a jacket, and I think a school tie.

OK.

These two photographs refer to a trip to Neuhaus, by Paderborn, and show the side of the road that was named after my grandmother. And obviously, there is a detail of it on one side. And on the other side, the group of people consists of a number of cousins and one or two of their spouses, and one person from the younger generation, a grandson of one of my cousins, myself, and some people from the city.

All right.

This is a picture of my mother, Omi, and myself here in Berkeley. I think it was taken in our Berkeley house. The date, possibly around 1980.