Interview with Eddy Wynschenk
Holocaust Oral History Project
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[Begin Tape 1]

Q. Why don't you start out by telling us, have you ever talked about this before?

A. No. I do talk a lot for the last 20 years about what happened to me from 1940 to 1945, as a nonprofessional speaker who doesn't accept any fees. But I never, except with my wife and two children, never talked publicly about what happened from the liberation until, say, today.

And I feel I have to talk about it. I don't know if I can succeed, because it may be kind of a reliving again, but I feel it's a continuation of the Holocaust. The Holocaust will always be in me, if I like it or not, will always affect my life, and is affecting my life every day.

Q. Why don't you start out by saying how you think it affects your life.

A. During the interview it will come out how it affects my life; emotionally, physically, where the anger comes from, the pain comes from. From the day when I was liberated, I never realized it until many years later, I lived for 32 years, actually -- yes, it
started in 1940 when the Germans occupied my country
then, Holland, until 1972, I lived in a state of
shock, but I never realized it. All my feelings were
gone. I didn't have any -- could not feel, actually,
could not feel enjoyment, couldn't feel any pain.
I was numb. I was told I was in the
freezer for 32 years, but I am slowly but surely in a
process of defrosting. I can talk about what happened
in the camps, and I will try to talk about what
happened after the camps.

Q What started this defrosting process?
A That started in 1972, in a way.
Q You mentioned something about your
12-year-old son helped start this?
A Now we jump to 1972, okay?
Q Well, we can go back and start.
A I would rather start from the beginning.

But whatever is better for you.

Q No, that's fine.
A Is he taping now?
Q Yes, he is.
A I'm sorry.
That's okay. Go ahead. Why don't you start talking about what happened at liberation.

I was liberated -- by the way, I was born in Amsterdam, Holland. My whole family was murdered. I was liberated by the United States Army, by the 104th infantry division, nicknamed the Timberwolves. But when I was liberated, I didn't know who liberated me. I only saw soldiers, American soldiers. I was 17 years old and my weight was 70 pounds when liberated.

From 1943, April 1943 until April 1945, exactly two years at five different camps as a teenager. I was never a teenager. I don't know what it is to be a teenager, because from 1940, when the Germans invaded my country, then Holland, I was 12 years old, and I never had a normal childhood after that. I don't say that to have sympathy, but it affects part of my life.

It is also said by professional people that survivors who were in the teens suffered more, not many teenagers survived. In my life, generally speaking, I had a much harder life than people who were already adults in the camp, because the growing
years from child to adult I never experienced. I was 17 years old but I was already a very old man because of my experience in the concentration camps. I was one year in Auschwitz Birkenau, and that by itself would be enough.

I was 70 pounds. I was a cripple. I am a cripple. All my ten toes are cut off. Again, I'm not talking about sympathy or pity. It affects my life. Also, during this interview, there's a possibility that people won't like to hear it or don't agree; but as long as I tell the truth, if people can't handle this, that's not my baby.

I also feel very strongly that I have to do the interview as a message to people, to the younger generation born after World War II, and 50 percent of the population of our country are born after 1940. I was liberated in the concentration camp Dora, near Nordhausen, where the V-12 and V-2 rocket factories were underground. That was actually a sub-camp of Buchenwald. Near every big concentration camp, in the area were little sub-camps.

Q So you were in a displaced persons --
A. No, no. I was liberated from the concentration camp. The American soldiers opened the gates of hell, and this they never were trained for. Then --

Q. What did you observe about the American soldiers and how they reacted?

A. I mean, I was completely numb, as I said before. I was numb, in a state of shock, from 1940 until '72. I didn't have any cause for celebration because my whole family was murdered. I didn't feel any enjoyment, nor emotion. I was dead inside. No feelings. There was no home to go to!

But now the American soldiers, on April 11th, 1945, one American tank came in the concentration camp with three members of the United States Army, and I was fortunate, I was one of a few survivors. They had a reunion in 1986, my liberators, in South City, in the Airport Hilton, and it was the first time after 41 years that we could say thank you. And the people who liberated me, the first tank, were still alive. And they remembered. That we cried and laughed together goes without saying.
Then the next day, on April the 12th, the other Americans came, all American soldiers. I remember, I learned English in high school. I was only a couple of years in high school, and most people, the few people who were in the camps could not speak English, we were all skeletons, the American soldiers, the first thing they did, they did it from the heart, the giving, they gave us all military food, the canned food, but our system couldn't handle it. They never experienced so much inhumanity, to see skeletons. They had a hard time handling it.

There were survivors who died of the rich food. But the Americans are not to blame. Later they realized they have to stop giving food. They were trained to fight other soldiers, but they were not prepared for what they saw when they opened the gates. I could not eat, I was too ill.

But I do remember that the Americans had Lucky Strike cigarettes, and everybody wanted to have cigarettes, and I was the only one who could speak a little bit of English, so the American soldiers gave me cartons of cigarettes to share with the other
fellows, and when I did light the first cigarette I fainted. I remember, I fainted, because I couldn't handle it.

The American soldiers, they were very angry. They were in a rage. They wanted to give all the inmates who were in good shape weapons to go after the Germans. Some of the inmates who could walk went to villages and killed Germans. One could say that was cruel, to kill people. But around every village -- I'm sorry, around every concentration camp were villages, and they knew what was going on in the camps.

To kill Germans was kind of revenge. I couldn't participate. Otherwise I probably would have.

Q What made you unable?
A Physically. I couldn't walk. I didn't have any toes.

Q So it was physical.
A Physical, yes. The American soldiers told the inmates, when you go in the village and you see some of the SS murderers -- they changed to civilian
clothes -- let us know. Some inmates went into the villages and recognized the SS murderers. The American soldiers said, don’t touch them, bring them in.

And they brought them in. And what they did, it was just after the liberation, shortly after the liberation, they told the inmates, the ex-inmates, okay, beat them up. And finally the Americans shot them to death. No trial, nothing, because what they saw justified them to kill the SS.

And then the commander, I think that was the ex-Governor of New York, Carey, C-A-R-E-Y, many years ago he was Governor of New York, and I think he was in charge, he said stop, we’re now allowed to get out. Then we went to Buchenwald, the main camp.

I never saw a doctor. I can’t remember. I’m talking about after the liberation. I can’t remember ever seeing a doctor, because the war was still continuing. It was April 11th. Many of my liberators were killed afterwards, between the 11th of April and the 8th of May, the end of the war. The war wasn’t over yet.
So we went to Buchenwald, which was
liberated also, I think, April the 11th. Now, in the
camp you were always bald. Before the liberation I
was very, very ill. My toes were cut off, and I had
other illnesses, apparently. I don’t remember what it
was. For two months my hair was not shaved -- head
shaved. So my hair was growing. And it was not
allowed.

And I remember -- now I go back to before
the liberation -- the barber was a Belgian inmate. He
said, Dutchman, come down, because you have to have a
haircut. I said, I’m too ill. He said, they will
beat the hell out of you. I don’t care. I’m too ill.
I could not physically, and I couldn’t care less. So
when I was liberated I had hair. As a young child I
had a lot of wavy hair, I was always proud of my hair.
What I have now is still mine, of course, but I don’t
have much.

So when was liberated I had a little hair
and a little wave. So when we arrived in Buchenwald
they put us in barracks, after the liberation I’m
talking about. Then they had German soldiers, POWs,
who had to take care of us. And they were very quiet. Of course, they lost the war, thank God. But they had a kind of fear. But I never realized it until many years after the war. But I remember very well, one of the first things I did -- by that time I only spoke German. Now I can't, and I don't want to, but then I did.

So I ordered them around the way they ordered me around. I said, bring me a comb and some soap, whatever you can find, I want to wash my head, and I want to comb my hair, and I want to see a mirror. That was the first time I saw myself in two years. So they brought it to me, and they held up the mirror, and I never forget, the thing I never forget, and I told them -- let me clean it up -- you idiot, higher, higher, I can't see it, are you kind of a nut? But other language, the same that they use to me I use to them.

One can say, why do you lower yourself to their level? No, but for two years I only heard expressions as, you dirty Jew, you Jewish pig, you are not human, you are an ant, the little ants are better
than you are. We were human garbage in the camp.

    And I understand it's very hard for you to comprehend, to understand what it was all about, for people who always have lived in freedom and slept in their own bed, and don't know what it is not to be free. I understand that, but you have to try to have some kind of compassion for what people like myself, and I'm not the only one, went through.

    And then I remember, they put us on the plane. I went back to Holland, now, to the southern part of Holland, it was May 14th, 1945. I have a tremendous memory of dates. May 14th has a special meaning for me. On May 14th, 1940, the war between Germany and Holland was over. Holland was completely occupied.

    On May 14th, 1943, my father and mother were murdered by the Germans in the extermination camp of Sobibor in Poland. How ironic. I arrived back in Holland on May 14th, 1945. I hope I make sense to you.

Q  Yes, it does.

A  We went by plane, and I remember I didn't
like to fly. I still don’t like to fly. It was a military plane, we were on stretchers, and it went to the southern part of Holland that was liberated in 1944. The rest of Holland was liberated May the 5th.

Anyway, when we arrived in Holland I did not see people, there was nobody. I repeat myself many times, I know that already, I was in a kind of shock, no feelings, no expectations. I remember there were only people from the Red Cross in ambulances, and they brought us to a hospital. There was nobody to say, welcome home. Nobody.

Later, I think I realize why, but -- it was many years later. Then I didn’t -- I only remember it happened. I had no feelings. I hope I make sense to you.

Q I’m not sure. Do you mean that you just felt forgotten?

A Many years later.

Q Did you have any feeling?

A Then, no, I didn’t feel anything.

Q When you finally realized why you thought it happened, why was it?
A lot of anger came out, but it was much later in life. But I'm telling you, I'm now back in time -- actually May 14th, when I arrived in Holland, 1945. Did I confuse you?

Q No.

A Please tell me. Because, again, I never talked about it before.

Q No, I understand, nobody was there at all.

A No. And I am actually visualizing what happened to me, even though I didn't see myself. I'm sorry, what did you say? There was nobody there, no. Ambulances.

Q Yes.

A Then they brought us to -- I'm talking about us. Not only Jewish people were liberated. The underground fighters, people from Holland who were very ill. Others went by train, but I'm talking only about what happened to me. They brought us to an emergency hospital. There was a school used as a hospital.

I never forget, when they put me in a bed, and I couldn't walk, I was on a stretcher, it was a
real bed, real pillows, pillowcases, real sheets. I
remember, all of us, we only talked German, and I
always talked to the nurse, and I called her in
German, "schwester," something like that, that means
nurse.

And she said, you're in Holland, don't you
know how to say it in Dutch? Because apparently in
the camps we were so brainwashed or a robot or
whatever. I don't know if I ever talked Dutch in the
camps. I can't remember that part. In camps in
Germany and in Poland, I'm talking about. I was also
in camps in Holland.

But anyway, again, the only people who
visited us were -- every day two nuns came, and they
knitted for me a pair of slippers. They never talked
about religion. They were real good human beings.
But I realized later, apparently they wanted to give
something from themselves. They knew, not from me,
maybe from the doctor, that I didn't have any toes.

I was the youngest in the big room, maybe
40, 50 guys. And I was a baby. And I also remember
the nurses always tucked me in. They tucked me in and
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gave me a kiss on the cheek because I was a child. I was 17 years old. And I remember the other inmates were jealous, at bedtime. But by the way, I never knew, maybe thinking back -- I had three sisters, one was married, had a baby girl, a husband, of course, who was murdered, and the two other sisters, but I was the youngest. And the other two sisters were not married, always spoiled me.

So maybe the sisters who spoiled me, in my mind, in my unconsciousness, were my sisters when I was a little child before the war who spoiled me. Do I make sense to you?

Q Yes.

A And then something happened, they brought in, in the big room, it was kind of a big room, classroom, actually, but they changed it, put beds in, whatever -- oh, yes, we got German cigarettes, but German POWs who were working downstairs we heard were smoking Camels and Lucky Strike. So the adults, not myself, raised hell. Boy, did they raise hell. Those bastards, and we have the junk?

That was right away changed and stopped.
They got the junk and we got the good stuff. I didn’t raise hell because -- but I remember that it happened. There was so much anger then. But I never realized until many years later what they did to us, the Germans, that is. I mention Germans because I only know about Germans. The people who did it to my family never showed an ID that they’re a member of the Nazi party. The Germans, I want to emphasize that. The Germans during World War II.

One day they brought in a young man about my age, his whole body was open. We found out he was a Dutch young man who volunteered to fight against the Russians. And he was kind of dying. We could care less. And we raised hell, get the traitor off the room here. And he was always crying and whatever. He was a volunteer for the Germans, who fought the Allies, whatever. We didn’t want any part of him. Later we found out that he died and we enjoyed it very much. It sounds inhuman, but he was one of our enemies regardless of his age, because he went voluntarily.

Q He was a real volunteer?
A  Yes. Why -- but the insensitivity started there. Why to put such a person in the same room with all Jews and non-Jew alike, physically handicapped, we were all physically handicapped. You don't put such a person together with us. Do I make sense to you?

Q  Yes, it makes sense to me.

A  But, again, of course, the doctors and the nurses, they didn't realize what we went through. Now, then one day a young lady came, and she was a Jewish young girl, apparently she was maybe my age, a couple of years younger, she was in hiding with her parents, and she made me -- and I read this, this is now 45 years old, "Nederlands, Buchenwald," with the flag from the Netherlands, and she wrote on the back, "Please remember me," and her name, Ruth Winter -- as the climate, winter -- and her address.

I didn't know how she knew about me. I don't know. Oh, it was announced on the radio, I'm sorry. It was announced on the radio when survivors came back in Holland, the names, and we heard our own names being announced. Maybe that's how she knew. I don't know. And I will never throw it away. That's
very touching.

People who visited us were people from the neighborhood. One day a lady from the Dutch Red Cross came. I laugh about it now. What she brought us was pencils and paper. Just what we needed. Pencils and paper? Insensitive. Besides the two nuns, nobody of any religion. No Rabbi ever showed up, no priest, nobody. Only the two nuns came and stood for a couple of minutes, every bed, how are you doing.

And for me they made the slippers. And I needed slippers because I couldn’t walk in shoes. I couldn’t walk at all then. But here maybe my anger is slowly coming out, and that’s all right. I let it come out. Why not? It was pushed down long enough.

Then one day -- my mother had three sisters. Everybody was murdered except one sister who was married to a non-Jew. He was the principal of a high school. During the war he was not allowed to stay principal, they kicked him out. He was non-Jewish, but his wife was Jewish. They had one daughter. One day she came with a girlfriend. How she survived, I never asked, I don’t know, to visit
But thinking back about it and looking back to that time, I don’t think I had any feelings. Oh, they were sweet. They came, I think, by bike, or they got some transportation, I don’t know. A tremendous distance from Amsterdam to the southern part of Holland. It was very sweet, but I didn’t feel anything. I hope I make sense to you.

No hugging, no kissing, no holding hands, no tears, not from my side. Just dead, completely dead. It’s hard maybe to understand or to comprehend that a person can be completely without feelings.

Q I think probably it is hard for a lot of people to comprehend it, but I do comprehend it.

A I was told many, many years later, it was a part of my survival, in my unconsciousness, you block everything out, so completely in the freezer, and a big fence around me. But anyway, then I had my 18th birthday in that hospital.

Q Before you move on, did you ever see your family again, your mother’s sister and her daughter?

A Oh, yes.
Q    You did. Okay.

A    As I said before, people did not visit me. It still amazes me. Some of the fellows could walk. By the way, we did not have any clothes. We still had our inmate outfits, mind you. So they went, they were allowed in daytime to go walk around in that city. The city is -- have you ever heard about the big Philips Corporation, P-H-I-L-I-P-S, a giant nowadays? In that city, Eindhoven, E-I-N-D-H-O-V-E-N.

And they were allowed to walk, and they were walking in the pajama camp outfit. They got presents, everything, the population was fantastic, and they brought it for us, too; but people, officially nobody visited us.

But anyway, then I left, I couldn’t walk, or hardly walk. I had to learn to walk again, because when you have toes, I think -- I don’t even remember anymore, I presume you go that way when you walk, but I walk on my heels. There’s the foot. So I have -- I had to learn to walk.

Q    And you still walk that way, right?

A    Oh, yes. To keep my balance.
Q. Does that cause you other problems, like with your back?

A. No. My feet. The older I get, the worse it gets. If you want to hear more about that later, I'll tell you. I don't want to be rude, but otherwise I will lose it, because I never talked about it before, so it's not easy to keep the story straight.

Q. Okay. I'm sorry.

A. Oh, no, that's okay. My feet didn't want to heal. They were amputated, my toes, but still junk was coming out. But I learned how to put the bandages on. The doctors who looked at it, yes, once they found a little bone, because my toes were amputated with a pair of scissors, not a regular amputation, and I was conscious. That took place in concentration camp Dora.

It was in the camp of course, so they took a pair of scissors and cut it off. Apparently there were still bones left. So once I remember a bone was growing out, out of the amputation, and then the doctors looked at it and pulled it out. Yes, that happened once.
So then I had to learn to walk as a little child. Thank God for the beautiful nuns, they gave me -- made me the slippers, otherwise I couldn’t -- no shoes, of course. So I walked in a way, held by nurses, on slippers, on my heels. I was scared to death to put my foot down. I walked that way. Now I walk that way.

I went in an ambulance, and I went to my aunt and uncle and their daughter to live. Now, let me first tell you, the people meant well, but I was then 18 years old. Under the law in Holland then, you are a minor until you’re 21. In age I was 18, but in experience in life I was maybe 50 or 200, or 500 years old, I don’t know. So they thought, Eddy is back, he’s 18 years old, and we treat him like any other 18 year old. But that didn’t work out.

Let me explain what I mean. The insensitivity of people, and they’re not bad people, let me emphasize it. My aunt was a sick woman, she had diabetes. They treated me the same as, say, their daughter, who is 18 years old. You have to be home by bedtime, whatever.
And they meant well, but here, I who came
back from death and hell, I don't want to be boxed in.
I wanted to breathe. But they didn't realize that
they cut off my breathing. Not to hurt me, but they
didn't know. They saw an 18-year-old kid.

I didn't stay there long, because they
couldn't handle me. But while I stayed there, they
never, never asked -- no, they did ask me. Did you
see anyone of the family, aunts, uncles? I said, no.
They never asked me. In the hospital nobody asked me.
And there the beginning of my anger building up came
out, after '72, pain and anger and rage.

My own family, aunt and uncle, they never
asked, Eddy, do you mind to talk about it? Maybe I
would have said, no, I don't want to talk about it.
Okay.

Q You mean do you want to talk about it, not
do you mind.
A Whatever.

Q I was just confused for a second.
A They did not ask me, Eddy, we would like to
know more, do you think you can talk about it, will
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you tell us what happened to you.

Q   They didn't want to know?

A   No, no. It was never asked. Later I

realized, on account of my counseling that I have,
why, and it angers me tremendously. Maybe I don't
make sense to you. They did not ask me any questions,
what happened to me, whatever. They didn't even ask
me how come you don't have any toes. They knew I
didn't have any toes.

Okay. Then I didn't realize it. I wished
they would have asked me, not only them but other
people. I would maybe be a different person now.
Thank God, now, if you take the Vietnam veterans,
thank God, they deserve treatment, the delayed stress
syndrome, they get treatment, psychiatry, whatever. I
never heard about psychiatry, or go to a doctor. So
everything stayed frozen.

Now, on account that I was a handicapped
person, I went to the department -- disability
department to ask for a disability payment. Now, let
me make it clear, I never in my life asked money
because I think people owe me money or they owe it to
me on account that I am a survivor. No way. I’m too proud for that.

But I thought -- I was a Dutchman then, right, I was a kid, when it happened to me, when I came back I was still a kid. My uncle, by the way, was appointed by the court as official guardian. My aunt and uncle told me, your father left money behind, which I didn’t know, and you have to pay us every week 20 guilders, say, $20, but you don’t work, of course, because you’re sick, and when you’re 21 years old -- we wrote everything down, they were honest people, don’t misunderstand me.

I hope I make myself clear. So they charged me $20 a week as a boarder, and they took it from the money that they had from my father, do I make sense?

Q Yes.

A And when I was 21 -- they were honest and good people, but again, no warmth, no hug, just nothing. It was cold. Maybe I was cold too. I don’t know. Maybe my unconscious, I drove people away. I don’t know.
Q Was this new after the war? Before the war were they warmer?
A I was only a kid.
Q So you don't remember?
A No. I remember them before the war, but I was not the same child. They thought they would see the same child that they knew when I was 12 years old. They expected the same, apparently. And the person who came back from the death and hell was a very old man at age 17. If I would be in their shoes maybe I would have been -- acted the same way as they did. Do I make sense to you?
Q Yes. It does.
A Does it answer your question?
Q Yes. Did you find it just as insensitive that they would charge this board from you?
A Not then. Again, I was in a state of shock, no feelings. I couldn't care less. I didn't have any feelings. It didn't touch me. Much later --
Q Did that bother you later, then?
A Oh, yes. A lot of things. But I will talk about it later, if you don't mind. No, no. I was
still a robot in a way. But I never recognized myself then as a robot. I was told years later, in counseling.

So I went to the department of disability and I wanted to have disability benefits. I'll never forget, it was an elderly gentleman. I told him my background and that I could hardly walk, only in slippers, how I went there I don't remember. And the man started to cry. He said, I want to prove to you that you can't get any money. He wanted to prove it to me.

And I remember he opened a big book, the article, whatever, in the year 1900 whatever, if you never paid in you can never collect. And he cried. He said he was an underground fighter and he saved people. It hurt him so much to tell me, nothing for you. Again, I didn't have any pain.

Then at the beginning of the war, my father and myself gave to our neighbors for safekeeping, I helped my father carrying, in 1941, beginning of '42 -- '41, '42, carrying all kinds of stuff to neighbors, who we thought were honest and decent.
people, in case when we come back. It was silverware, but also my bike. So after the war my aunt and I -- I was walking on slippers, I didn’t have any shoes, I never heard about orthopaedic shoes. I went with public transportation.

So we went to see the people, and then I saw a beautiful carpet from my mom and dad on the floor. First of all, after they took us away in 1943, before the Germans came to plunder our home and send it to Germany, neighbors, it happened all over the place, went into the homes of the Jewish people and grabbed whatever they could. I don’t say they’re bad people, but that’s what they did.

So I saw the carpet. So I asked them, not even about the carpet, I wanted to have my bike back. Then there was a big fight. Not physically. The oldest son, who later became a member of the clergy, mind you, worked part-time for the police, and he threatened me. Here I’m just back from hell and death. If I don’t leave their home, they will get the police.

In other words, he’ll put me back in jail.
Here I am, just 18 years old, emotionally a cripple, one can see, physically a cripple. Besides being a cripple, the experience. I only came to get what was legally mine. Finally he gave me only my bike back, but they took off the tires, would you believe that? The tires of the bike. They were very religious Christian people.

Now, I have to jump a couple of years later. In the same period, '41, '42, I helped my married sister bring all kinds of stuff to neighbors for safekeeping, okay? A lot of Jewish people thought they had neighbors they could trust.

I also went there because I was close to my married sister, especially on account of their little baby, who was murdered when she was one year old, but I always loved her very much, even though I was only, when she was born, 14 years old.

I went to the neighbors of my sister's, and here is what they told me. When your sister brought the stuff she told us, don't give it to anybody except to us, when we come back. I said, I brought it over with my sister myself, because I know you, when I
visited my sister we visited you next door. Very
religious people. I never got it back.

I've told now about people who took
advantage, but then my father, who had a wholesale
business in food and vegetables for many, many years
in Amsterdam, had clients, of course. And as a child
I was always working, and really working, with my
father in the business. He said, you can visit, but
you have to work.

On account that I helped him, until 1941, I
was born in 1927, so as far as I know I was always --
on the wholesale market, not retail. We started to
work in the middle of the night. Anyway, I always had
to carry heavy crates. Maybe it helped me survive,
somebody told me years ago, that I had such strong
arms, I could do work. I don't know.

But he had two clients who I knew very
well, and in the old country, you would never call
older people by their first name, you never call them
Joe. It was always Uncle Joe and Aunt Mary, for
instance. Never the first name. Oh, are you kidding?
No way. So I remember them as Uncle So and So and
Uncle -- so they saw me growing up.

And one came to me one day and he said,

Eddy, your father gave me money, and I want to give it
back to you. I didn't know about the money. I was
only a kid. My father never told me about it. I
said, that's beautiful. Do you have children? He
said, I had a son, and he was killed after the war.
And he started crying, because I wanted to give
something to him as a thank you. He was not a
religious person. He was not Jewish, but he was a
real human being.

Then about the same time, another client of
my dad brought me jewelry from my parents. I didn't
know he was hiding it. He was not Jewish. Both, as
far as I remember, I got to know them quite well,
ever went to church.

So going to church -- maybe there are
people who don't like it, how can you say that, but
going to a synagogue or church doesn't make somebody
good or bad. It's inside of people. And I
experienced that. And I emphasize, in our synagogue
or church -- I believe for myself God is around me. I
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don't go to a place to worship, I don't have to.

But being a church-going person, two
families, they stole. The other two never went to
church, they were honest. Later I realized that going
to a synagogue or church doesn't make anybody good,
regardless of how much they give to the church or
synagogue. But anyway, I got my bike back. I hope I
make myself clear. I got my bike back without tires.

But I didn't have an occupation nor
education. Only two years of high school. I couldn't
go to school. I had to make a living, but I didn't
have an occupation. Then I went to the Salvation Army
and got second hand shoes, because I had to have
shoes, and I put cotton to fill up the shoes, where
the toes are supposed to be, and all kinds of layers.
I had to be very careful because I could feel the
stones through the soles. But I had to walk.

The Government of Holland then had the
philosophy, the Jews came back but they were not
political prisoners. We're not underground fighters.
There is no law for them, okay? Later, maybe -- all
the accumulated anger, maybe I make myself clear now,
but it happened after the war, it was building up, but
I never knew it was building up because it was not
there, the feeling, but it was still building up. Do
I make sense so far?

Q   Yes, I understand. You can have lots and
lots of feelings and not feel any of them.

A   Nothing. Right. I didn’t feel anything.

I wanted to have the business from my father back. In
‘41 a Dutch German sympathizer came and stole Jewish
businesses. Not only from my dad, from other Jewish
people too. He stole private money, business money,
and kicked people out. He was a robber, a thief. And
he became a German sympathizer on account of making
money off the stolen Jewish businesses.

After the war I wanted to have the business
back. But I was not trained or knew anything about
doing business, let me emphasize that. But I thought,
I’m the sole beneficiary of my family, I can prove
that, my family was murdered. It was not easy. I had
to take a loan. The Dutch government created the
department of reinstatement of justice. I always
called it continuation of injustice department.

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One of the reasons I talk about it today is about justice. Not about money. Justice. I fight for justice. I will not accept injustice, under no conditions will I compromise with justice, because I know what it means to live under a system where you don't have justice. I fight for my rights, because they took everything, my rights, away.

They took away my civil rights, legal rights and human rights, and my human dignity during the war. So I made up my mind, when I came out of the freezer, to fight for it. But apparently I started fighting then, but I never realized it. If I would have been open then, I would be another person today.

But anyway, I had to go to a lawyer, we had to -- and yes, they gave me the business back. Then what happened? The Dutch German sympathizers were punished in court to go to jail, many of them. But slowly but surely they all came out, because, quote unquote, they were ill. They became ill, got a piece of paper from a doctor, okay, and they were released.

And they got their own businesses back. But the Dutch government appointed people to run them,
to be in charge of the business. So the thief who
stole my father’s business and private money was
allowed to have his business back after he was feeling
better, mind you, he was never punished, he was never
required to pay the money back to me, never. That’s
why I called it the continuation of injustice office.
It was more justice for the wrong ones.

I realized still today, it got stronger,
we, the innocent ones, we become the guilty ones, and
the guilty ones became the innocent ones. Do I make
sense, what I want to say?

Q Yes, except I’m a little bit confused.

A I will make it clear. The Dutch government
appointed a caretaker while they were put in jail,
right, punished for what they did, the Dutch German
sympathizers, right?

Q Right.

A After the war, they went to jail. Say, a
sentence of three years or whatever. But after a
couple of months they were freed.

Q Because of the doctors?

A Oh, yes. And money, of course.
Q Now, were they sent to jail because you prosecuted them?

A No. I didn't, because I didn't know the man then. Apparently others did. Maybe he did the same as what he did in Amsterdam. He came from another city, Rotterdam. Have you heard about Rotterdam? The biggest port in Europe.

Q Yes, my grandparents sailed from there.

A Right. I left from Rotterdam to go to the United States, that's right. Now, so that man was allowed to work in his own business again, a similar business to what my father had, but he was not a free man. He was not in charge, only a manager. He was not the owner. The Dutch government appointed somebody, a caretaker, say, for two, three, four years, as part of his punishment. But he was managing.

Q And this was what part of your father's business --

A Let me make myself clear. He had his own business in Rotterdam. The man who stole my father's business had his own wholesale business in Rotterdam.
But he stole businesses in Amsterdam.

Q And incorporated them into his business?

A I don’t know. But he stole it. No, he kept it and he ran in Amsterdam during the war, and in Rotterdam everything flourished because he made a lot of money, besides stealing a fortune, not only from my dad but from other people too. Business money and private accounts. Do I make sense to you?

Q Yes.

A You’re sure?

Q Yes.

A If I don’t make sense, it’s my mistake, okay? So anyway, he was allowed to go back to his own business in Rotterdam, okay? But he was not the owner. Somebody appointed by the court was the owner. After the war -- how do I explain it? During the war there was no free trade in Holland. Every wholesale dealer got a percentage from what he had before the war, because there was hardly any food during the war.

It was not actually free trade, because retail is more than happy to pay to get some food for the people, right? A big organization was formed.
during the war, I found that out after the war. So he -- you didn't have to do anything. You got so much business. Automatically the next morning the retailers came and you didn't have to say, do you want to buy, I have beautiful cauliflowers. There was no business. There was hardly any food, especially at the end of the war, but they made good money.

So the thief, the Dutch thief made money on account of what my father sold, from '35 to '40, for instance. From that total of what you sold, you get so much percentage is your part, is your part, to be fair to all the wholesale dealers. Do I make sense?

Q    Yes. They just gave you the same proportion.

A    Correct. And I think they took the income tax, whatever. It was complicated. I found out after the war. But what did I know? So after the war when I came back, there was money accumulated in my father's business, but it was stolen by the Dutch -- I say "bastard," okay? I hope that's acceptable. But he made money on what my father sold from '35 to 1940, before the war.
So after the war, after going through the lawyer again, I didn’t have any money to pay a lawyer, I got money that was accumulated from 1945 to 1947, after the war. I’m talking now after the war. Food, there was still hardly any food. Same organization still existed, but now in a free country, all of Holland was liberated in ’45.

So they gave me an amount of money that was due me as the beneficiary of my dad on what he sold between 1935 and ’40, right? And he, the bastard, the thief, made money from 1941 to ’45, from my father, because he stole the business. So I got the money. It was not a lot of money, but money.

Then I got a letter, it was unbelievable, in my mind, in my opinion, from the man who was in charge of his business in Rotterdam. Mr. Wynschenk, you owe this corporation the money you received after the war in ’47, ’48. I said, what? That’s money due, what my father sold between -- okay?

I couldn’t believe it. And I said right away, no, I’m not going to pay a penny. I have to pay the thief who stole everything from my father and
mom, private money, business money, stole everything?
I went to a lawyer. I said, I'm not going to pay. He said, here's what you do. Pay him $10 a month and then stop. And then you get letters, and then you pay him again.

I said, I don't want to pay. But I was not strong as I am today inside. I was threatened, mind you, if I don't pay they would take the furniture away. I was married in 1949. History repeated itself, because the Germans took our furniture away. Here in '49, they wanted to do the same, but it was the Dutch government. The guy was appointed by the Dutch government. Maybe he was during the war also a German sympathizer. I don't know. I never met the man.

Now, I'm going to tell you what people don't like to hear, maybe. I was just married in '49. And it happened about 1950, whatever. I hope I make sense so far. I knew where the business was in Rotterdam. I lived in Amsterdam. I never met that bastard, I never met anyone. I found his address and I told my wife, I'm going to kill that man.
She said, you can't kill people. No, you can't kill people. But I said it. My father-in-law and my wife talked me out of it. But I went. He never met me before. He was general manager in his own business, the thief, okay? So I never forget it, when I walked in there, I said, where is the thief and war criminal? I spell the name for you, R-I-J-L, pronounced "bile."

And I went at a time that was a very busy time, on purpose. And people came to me, you want to talk to Mr. Bijl? I said, yes. Where is he? I yelled. I didn't realize it was already anger coming out. I didn't realize that.

So they brought me to the office, and they introduced me, and the guy wanted to shake my hand. No. I said, you know who I am? He said, no. He said, no. I said, I am the son of Moses Wynschenk. You stole everything from my father. Business money, private money. And now you want to have all the money back?

You're lucky, because my wife and father-in-law talked me out of it, otherwise I would
kill you right now, because in a way you helped kill my father. My father worked for 25, 30 years in his business, and stealing his business was the beginning of my father's end. I realized it many years later in life.

He said right away, Mr. Wynschenk, quiet down. I said, wait a minute. This is not the war anymore. I was very aggressive. I yelled. I remember that. He said, I am not free -- and it was true -- I am only the general manager here, but in a couple of years I am free. I promise you, if I am free I write you a letter that I don't want to have your money. And let me say, he kept his word.

Now, justice. I had to pay him. I never got back what he stole from my father. Either a dollar or 10,000, I don't care; but the stealing, the plundering, because they stole everything from us in the war, again and again. But the stealing continued after the war in a free country, Holland.

Now, I started to get my father's business back. I had to go to court to fight it. And I opened a business. But I could hardly walk, and I failed.
Wynschenk

went bankrupt, because I was 18, 19 years old. I never did any business. I helped my dad as a kid. I didn't know business. But I didn't know -- I thought I knew, but I didn't. And I hardly had any money. I didn't go bankrupt. I paid all the debts and then closed up.

And I remember, I named the business still the same as if my father had been alive, not my name, in honor of my father, and in memory of my dad.

But I didn't have any occupation. And there were no organizations, be it Jewish or non-Jewish, that we could go to or I could go to, and I'm not talking about money, to ask for help, for a job or whatever. The only thing I got after the war was one package from the Dutch Red Cross.

I had a close friend after the war who was with me in the camp, I lost sight of him but we met again, he was my age, and I found out last week that he passed away a couple of years ago. I am now 62, so maybe he was 59. He lost half a leg and half a foot in the camps.

And I remember we went to a Jewish
organization in 19 -- oh, let me see -- '48, '49. They had all clothes from the American Jewish people. Now, we hardly had any clothes, because we came back naked, only our inmate outfit. So we went there not to expect an expensive tailor-made suit, but they had only rags.

In the camps we walked in rags. Again, we did not expect beautiful clothes, but decent clothes. Myself, I would never give to the Salvation Army junk. Either we give decent clothes or we throw it away. Human beings are human beings, maybe because of what my wife and myself experienced in life, in World War II.

So we were outraged. But I needed clothes. And my anger was still -- was not there. I picked out an Army coat, from the United States Army, but they painted it dark blue. It was warm, heavy. Ugly, but beautiful, warm, heavy coat. The rest was rags. Apparently in our own unconsciousness we didn't want to have rags anymore. Again, we did not expect expensive, beautiful clothes. No. Decent. There's a difference between decent and rags.
The American Jewish people listened to that and said, what does the survivor expect, we give him diamonds? No. If you give you give with your heart, but don't give rags.

Do I make sense? You can feel now the anger building up, but it never came out. I was in boarding homes, I was under 21, my aunt and uncle put me from one boarding home to another boarding home. Why? I don't know. I never asked, because they made the payments to the person in charge of the boarding homes. I was in about six or seven boarding homes in about four and a half years --

Q: Now --

A: -- from '45 to '49. I never realized how much pain I had from that until many years after the war, when I opened up. I come back to that every time. Because since 1943 I never had a normal home life, and in 1940 they took us away. My normal life stopped in 1940. My aunt and uncle never had the common sense to say, listen, we have some money from your dad, but why don't you go on a little vacation, go out with girls -- I never knew what girls were.
You come back at 17. I never know what holding hands or kissing or dating was.

In 1940 when I was a 12-year-old, I became an old man. So I paid a price for it, I know. Nobody can change it. I never had the forming years, that parents nowadays say, in a normal life, "My 17-year-old, he drives or she drives me nuts." I never had that. I mean, I also never had sexual relationships, didn't know what sex was. You interview me, and I want to be open, I have nothing to hide, and thank God nowadays we can talk about sex. But I didn’t know.

My aunt and uncle should have said to me, okay, we make a reservation in a summer place, whatever, in the summer of 1945, right, when I came back, and stayed there for a couple of weeks, and with money from your dad we pay for that. No, there was no rest in between. There was no time to become human again. And again, apparently I fought for survival, but I didn’t realize. After the war, I had to keep fighting for survival.

I always said, the Holocaust for me will
never stop, until I die. The Holocaust is still in me. Somebody said, you can take the Jew out of the camp, but the camp never out of a Jew. Maybe other survivors don't agree or don't feel it, but I agree with it, because I feel it very strongly.

So I never had a vacation. I needed special shoes, orthopaedic shoes. I had to fight with the Dutch government until 1953, '54, that I had to sign a paper that they only gave me one pair of shoes. Go to an orthopaedic shoemaker and we pay for it. This is only once. The rest of your life, never come back. And I never asked for money, never asked for favors. But I needed orthopaedic shoes. I could hardly walk.

I hope I make sense. It's not for sympathy, but it's a fact of my life. In 1945, the Dutch government, and I gave them credit, made a special offer to underground fighters who were in concentration camps, caught by the Germans, who came back, they were treated fantasticly, deservedly so, when they came back maybe as much a wreck as I was, and aftereffects, whatever.
I was in the hospital after the war together with many of them. They deserved everything they get. But for Jewish survivors, there was nothing at all. It’s hard to comprehend, to understand.

I hope I make sense to you. There is bitterness, yes. Anger, yes, a lot of anger. Let us give the guy $1,000 a week, I’m not talking about that. There are other ways. For instance, if I could have gone back to school and the Government said, okay, we give you $20 a week so you can pay the boarding home, then maybe I could finish my education, because without a high school diploma it’s hard to get a job.

So I failed in my father’s business. I was out of the camp, 18 years old. How I even tried it is unbelievable to me, that I even tried it, when I look back on it. But I didn’t have an occupation. So I worked in a factory, in a leather factory, and had to stand the whole day on my feet. But I did. And my feet were swollen and my amputation was still not healed.

But then, in the old fashioned way you
didn't get a paycheck, you got a little brown bag, say
you earned 25 guilders or $10, whatever, you put it in
a little brown bag, on a Saturday they give you that
money. I worked five and a half days a week, the same
as Americans then. There was no check, nothing. I
was a minor, not allowed to handle money.

I was in a boarding home on one side of the
city. My aunt and uncle were on the other side. I
had to borrow money for public transportation to bring
that little brown bag that I earned, they turned
around and gave me two guilders and 50 cents pocket
money. If I wanted to go to a movie, I didn't have
enough money. Even when I started realizing there is
such a thing as girls in the world, you know, but you
can't take a girl out for a cup of coffee. I didn't
have any money.

So it was building up in me. Then I did
something, at a tremendous, good boarding house, but I
could not handle it anymore. Depression from my aunt
and uncle, they treated me as a little child. I was
choking. I went in hiding. After the war, I went in
hiding. I made a big mistake. I made a lot of
mistakes in my life.

I had money accumulated somehow, and I got a cab, I ordered a cab with an open roof, for everybody to see. I don't know why I did it. And I left. Everybody could see that I left, went to the railroad station in Amsterdam, and went to a friend, a survivor who lived in another part of Holland, and went in hiding. Mind you, in hiding.

One day, the police came. What apparently happened, the guardian, my uncle, went to the juvenile police and said, he's gone. So they were looking for me. I didn't commit a crime, but I was in hiding, goodbye. And I remembered -- I had to come back. And then I had a long conversation with the inspector of the police. And when I talked, the man cried. He said, I can't blame you what you did, I would have tried to go in hiding in the war. But after the war?

Also, many years later I found out that somehow, some way, people who want to be good to me, I pushed away, people who wanted to be warm and good. Later I learned through counseling, it was normal, even though it was not nice. I didn't realize it,
because goodness in people, I lost -- in the camps, if people, certain people want you to have some extra bread or whatever, there was always, hey, why? What is behind it? Why nice?

The Germans also use the tactic all over the place, whoever comes in the railroad station at 10:00 in the morning gets extra bread. In the Warsaw uprising in 1943, you remember, they used it all over the place.

So when people were good to you, apparently in my unconsciousness, hey, wait a minute, that's not kosher, go away. So I pushed -- where I could I made up for it, but after the war a lot of good people I pushed away, on account -- and I didn't realize why I did it. I was still in the camp. I was told, you're still in the camp.

Now, do I go to slow or too fast? Do I make sense?

Q No, you make sense.

A Any questions?

Q Well, I'm kind of interested in, how did you manage to do those jobs when you didn't have any
toes?

A I didn't have any choice. I had to make a living.

Q How did you get support eventually so you could support yourself?

A I don't know what you mean. Until age 21 I was a child under law, right? So I could not buy a shirt or a handkerchief. They bought everything. They meant well, my aunt and uncle, okay? In their mind they did exactly what the law told them to do. But there was no love or understanding.

Maybe I would have done the same if I had been in their position. So people say, hey, you walk funny. And I remember saying, I don't have any toes. Nobody ever asked, how come. After the war people asked me, I'm so and so, Jewish, I heard you are a survivor, did you know my aunt, uncle, blah, blah, blah. These are normal questions. And I have to say no.

Nobody, Jew and non-Jew alike in Holland, ever asked me, over all the years, I lived in Holland from '45 to '56, do you mind talking about it? Can I
ask you questions what happened? Nobody.

    I was told, the good Jews were murdered and
the bad ones came back. Apparently you survived
because you did terrible things in the camps. Oh,
yes. You came back, Jew, but you better shut up,
you're lucky to be alive, don't make any waves. The
non-Jews told me that. You're kind of shocked, right?

Q     I'm very shocked.

A     I can see it. Yes, I was shocked then.

Now I feel angry. By the way, in a way this is still
the same here, but I'll tell you later. Anyway, it
was my country then. Again, I never asked for, please
help me with money. No, no. I want to have a chance
to live life. They bottled me up. Justice, I never,
never, ever got justice. Till today, never.

    So nobody asked. Maybe, and I repeat
myself, maybe I would have said, I don't want to talk
about it. That's fine. But looking back so many
years, if they had have asked me, I would have been
different maybe today. I would have started talking
about it, slowly but surely, the same as we talk, and
as we did eight or nine months ago. And I would be
inside a different person.

Nowadays you hear people say, oh, 45 years after the war. They don’t know. Thank God they don’t know. But don’t kick me, don’t minimize me as a human being, because -- I’m easily angered, of course I am. I talk now the same way, the first time ever I talk about that part, as when I go to schools and universities or wherever, radio, if I am invited. I address myself -- you address yourself when you talk. Yes, I have nothing to hide.

In 1948 -- so I worked in a factory, in a leather factory. In 1948, when I became 21 years old, 18th of July, 1948, I was a free man. They gave me all their papers, your father gave you so much money, said my aunt and uncle, and we spent so much on underwear, so much on socks, and all receipts. They were beautiful people, they were honest. Only they were not warm. No love.

You know what I did? I quit my job, and I became an alcoholic, because I wanted to die. By being an alcoholic I wanted to commit suicide. I better tell you, I tell the younger generation when I
go to schools, I don’t want to live anymore. Apparently in my unconsciousness I couldn’t handle to be alone. I never had a role model in life.

In normal life, a parent can be a role model, a brother, a sister, an aunt, an uncle, whatever. And that is the price teenager survivors pay -- all survivors pay a price, but we pay a heavier price, in my judgment, because we were children, but we were never allowed to be children. Only the age of children.

So I became alcoholic, and spent money, oh, my gosh, I went out with girls. Finally I started going out with girls. I was wild, I could care less. Working, no way. And one man, he kicked me. Not physically. He kicked my behind. And I fought with him, with my mouth. He never asked me what happened in the past. He knew I had come back from the camps. It was an expression, you came back from the camps. And he hit me. And I accepted his hitting.

Q  How did he hit you?
A  By talking to me. It was the first time ever -- he was kind of a stranger, who talked to me.
About the camps?

A No, about life. Yes. Not about the camps.

He knew I came back from the camps. He knew I didn’t have any toes.

For instance, before the war, in Europe, the sport was and is soccer, you know that, right? Here also, of course, but not as big. Here it is baseball and football. So I grew up a soccer player, and I wasn’t a bad one. I don’t say a good one. I was fast as a kid. Then the man who kicked me said, why don’t you play soccer? I said, are you out of your mind? I don’t have any toes. How can I play soccer? My feet aren’t even healed.

He said, you can buy soccer shoes and let them somehow build a way to protect your feet. I said, but I can’t run. Do you know the game of soccer? You have to run a lot. You also have a goalie, right? The same as hockey, correct?

Q I don’t know soccer, but --

A A goalie, you have a goalie in ice hockey, for instance, or field hockey, right? You have to -- in soccer you have to kick the ball in the nets. He
said, why don’t you become a goalie? I said, I never played goalie, I was always forward.

He said, any organization would like to have a cripple like me. And he found one, and told them apparently my background, I mean that I didn’t have any toes, and I lost my toes in the war, that’s all he said, because that’s all he ever knew.

And they said, okay. Will you try it? So to get to the point, I tried it. And on account of that, playing soccer again -- he was so smart, that man. He touched apparently one spot that was open, that was my youth, in soccer. It was my hobby, it was my life. I remember when I came home from school, before the war, my mom would say, homework? No, I want to play soccer. No, homework first, then soccer. And it was very normal at that time of life. My parents were very conservative.

But anyway, I couldn’t -- I don’t think I really enjoyed it, because remarks were made, look, a cripple, the guy walks and plays soccer as a cripple, whatever. And I didn’t really enjoy it. So I had to stop it. Physically I couldn’t do it. My heart, yes,
oh, yes. But I couldn't do it.

Then I stopped drinking. I never touched any alcohol anymore from that time on. Never.

Q What caused that?

A Because he talked me out of it, to stop drinking, and don't commit suicide. I didn't say commit suicide. Later in life I realized I was committing suicide. By the way, there are survivors who committed suicide after the war, who couldn't handle it anymore. Apparently we could handle the things that happened in the camp. Not what happened after the camp.

Q I was going to ask, do you think it was more often the memories, or the way you were treated afterward?

A There is the key. Afterwards. No justice. Now, I got married, and I was still frozen, right? I was still in a state of shock. So I got married. I never cried. I never talked -- didn't even think about birthdays or my family, as I do for many years now. I never talked about it. My past was never talked about. I told her -- my wife, she knew about
my feet, and I told her.

Another thing that people said, you know, you think you had a rough time in the camp, right? I said, yes, pretty rough. Ha. You should have been here in Holland, because we had terrible hunger.

True, the winter, 1944, 1945, many people died on account of starvation. They were not in camps. There was hardly any food. But so the people minimize the Holocaust. Ha, you think you had it hard in the camp. They didn’t even know what happened because nobody asked. You should have been here. I thought, now I can say, I wish I would have been here.

So they even minimized and compared with their hunger. But they could go on their bike or walk and try to find something to eat without the fear of being put in a gas chamber. All the years, they slept in their own beds. Not in freedom, but slept in their own beds.

And I don’t say there were no non-Jews killed, many underground fighters were killed. I’m talking about what the people said, you know, you should have been here. You think you had it hard. If
people told me now, I would jump on them with my mouth
and teach them something. Then apparently --

Q Well, what happened inside when people said
this to you?

A It never came out. It was building up.

I'm still building up, what I'm telling you now is
still accumulating. Do I make sense?

Q Yes.

A It was there, but I didn't feel it.

Q Did you feel like you were two people?

A No. Nothing. I didn't feel anything.

Q So you never split or anything like that?

A I'm sorry?

Q You never split?

A No.

Q That happens a lot of times under stress.

A No. No. I don't think so. I also went
back to the old neighborhoods where I grew up,
whatever, and people -- I go and say hi to the people,
hey, I'm back. Not for sympathy, just hi, I was born
there. People completely ignored me.

Q Even when you would say hi?
Yes.
They would walk by?
Yes. Just ignored me.
Did everybody do that?
I can only tell you what happened to me.
No, I mean, did everybody you met there do that?
Except the clients of my dad. They were nice to me. But where I grew up, I can’t remember anybody saying, hey, come in for a cup of coffee, whatever. No. Or they would say, hi. I know now why. I talk about it later. Oh, yes. I know why.

So I got married, right? My first wife was not Jewish, but what did I care? And I worked in a leather factory, of course. And my income was about, when I got married, 22 guilders a week, and I got a raise to 27 guilders. The prices were low. But I, again, had no education. She had a job. And we lived with her parents, so the rent was very low.

Then in 1950 -- in the beginning of ‘50 -- remember the first chancellor of Germany, Adenauer? I wrote him a letter. I said, listen, my name is so and
so, whatever. This is what happened to me. I only ask -- because the Germans are responsible, I am not -- I only ask for the payment of orthopaedic shoes and a pension on account that I am a cripple. I don't even ask you for all the suffering, mental suffering, nothing.

I got a letter back, they turned me down. And I wrote more letters, angry letters. I remember, my wife then said, no, they put you in jail. I said, listen, I write the truth, what I feel. If they put me in jail, I could care less.

I sometimes have cramps on account of my feet.

Q Do you want to stop and walk around?

A No, that's okay. I got a letter back from Adenauer, yes. It was terrible what happened to you, but you were a Dutch citizen. You have to go to the Dutch government. I said, wait a minute. They did it. The Dutch didn't do it to me. I wrote the Dutch government. I got a reply. It was terrible what happened to you, but the Germans are responsible. We don't have any laws for people like you.

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Justice? But there was all the anger building up, correct? So the Germans said, no, you have to go to the Dutch. The Dutch said, you have to go to the Germans. And we don't have any laws for people like you.

And I remember, I wrote -- apparently the anger, at certain times the anger came out loud and clear, because when I wrote letters to Adenauer and to the Dutch government, to the Secretary of State, there was a knife in the letters, if you know what I mean. I didn't hold back, right? And Adenauer, oh, I kicked the behind of the Germans, because that's the way I felt. And after the letter, I would close everything up again. It was very strange.

And then my wife said, they will put you in jail. I said, put me in jail, for what? The kind of language, my God. It's truth, it's my feelings. Big deal, put me in jail, send me back to Auschwitz, big deal. So I never got justice in Holland. There was no law for people like myself. Not only for Eddy Wynschenk, but for many people like myself. That's maybe why a lot of Jewish survivors left Holland,
Dutch Jewish survivors.

Before I go on, do you have any questions?

Q How was your first marriage working out?

You said you didn’t talk to her at all about your experiences.

A I think did I. I think -- about my feet, of course. And I presume I talked, but -- in detail, but I don’t remember. Of course, she knew about me because she was a girlfriend of my cousin.

Q But wasn’t it hard to have a marriage when you were having all this anger building up?

A I think, yes. Let me tell you, I’m married now for the second time. But I admire every spouse who marries a Holocaust survivor, be it a he or a she. I admire them all, because it’s not easy to be married to a survivor who is not in the freezer anymore, and who erupts. I admire the children of survivors, how hard it was for them, when they were children, to grow up with sometimes an angry parent or to be a witness to Auschwitz, whatever it is. Because children of survivors, in my judgment, most of them are victims too.
Q They have an organization called Children of Holocaust Survivors.

A Right. I wish I could make up for it, but I was not nice enough to my two children, who are adults now. There's no way I can make up for it. And probably my first wife, I wasn't very pleasant at all with her, and I'll talk about it later. I wish I could make up for it, but I can't. But my second wife, Marianne, we're married now seven years, there's a difference. She knew what kind of person I was. And still I admire that she has the guts to marry me, I mean, with the pain. But --

Q I just want to say that I don't think -- you're probably not the hardest person to be married to, because you're open to the idea that your past has these effects on your life.

A The past has a tremendous effect on my life.

Q Right, but what you don't seem to be doing is, I am always right, and you don't know anything. And so I think that makes a person much easier to live with. Our coming out, the way you phrase it, coming
out of the freezer. I just want you to know I don’t think you’re the worst person to --

A Let me thank you for the compliment. There may be one or two walking around worse than Eddy Wynschenk. Call the lawyers, we’ll have a lawsuit.

Q You know what I mean. I just think that it’s just taken so much courage for you to go out and start talking about it and to start --

A Now, that’s something different. But later I talk about the rage and anger and the explosions. I call it explosions.

Q Okay.

A But I thank you for the compliment, but I don’t agree with you. I don’t agree with you, what you just said.

Q About what?

A About that it’s not that bad, or whatever you said, about easy. It is not too hard. Yes, it is -- I think it is hard to live with -- to be married with a survivor, be it a he or a she, who is out of the freezer.

Q You think it’s more difficult than being
with one who still has their emotions under control?

A Oh, sure. Of course. I had it for a long
time. Sure. I didn’t feel anything from 1945 until
1972. That’s 27 years, right?

Q Right.

A Please remind me to talk about it later,
okay, about the rage and the anger and the explosions,
right?

Q Yes.

A So we were married in 1949. I didn’t have
any family, so there was nobody from my side. And I
never felt any loss, no pain, no tears, because it was
still -- everything was numb, state of shock, in the
freezer. So I -- yes, I wrote the German government
and Dutch government. But I didn’t come to first
base. So I was again a person without any rights. No
justice.

So the nonjustice that happened, from the
Germans in World War II, all our rights, all my
rights, and of course all the injustice being done, in
a different way, but still continued the injustice.
No rights. Because if I would have gotten my rights,
why do I have to pay the thief who stole my father's business after the war? I owed him money.

   If I tell people, they say, I don't believe it. I say, yes. I remember the name of the man, now I remember it, the Dutch government appointed a general manager, and the name was -- let me spell it for you, D-I-R-K-Z-W-A-G-E-R. He was a fanatic, he was after me. I never met the man. I don't know why. He went after me.

   Q      So you really worked hard to get this money?
   A      Yes. I don't believe in justice. Until today, I don't believe in justice.
   Q      I understand.
   A      Right? Hard for people to understand or comprehend. And again, I don't want to have sympathy, but that was life. Still today, never got justice. I fight for justice.

   Q      Did you ever actually pay the man this money?
   A      A little bit, on the advice of a lawyer.
because I didn't want to. The thief wanted to get our
furniture, but my father-in-law said, if they come for
the furniture, don't worry about it. It's my
furniture. You rent here a furnished apartment, don't
forget. I said, thank you, but no way. Nobody ever
will take furniture away from me again. I said it.
So in my unconsciousness, I went back to 1943, right?
Do I make sense?

Q Yes, you went back to where they took your
furniture away.

A The Germans. So nobody ever, ever, over my
dead body, never. But it's hard for people to
understand, and thank God they don't understand,
because they don't know what it is. But this part of
after the war has to be told. It has to be known.
Not only for me, and not for sympathy, but for
understanding.

And the people should accept us. We have
the Vietnam veterans who went through hell; the World
War II veterans; or Korean soldiers who fought in
Korea during the police action; a Holocaust survivor.
Accept them the way they are. And in my judgment,
until today, they don't. People don't.

Q  Right.

A  But I talk about it later. They don't.

That was one of the reasons that I made up my mind to
be interviewed about this, after the war, otherwise I
would never have done it. Not only for myself, but
for other people. If there is one person who watches
this program or two who changes from pushing people
away with my background or similar backgrounds, but
accepts them, then it is worthwhile, what I go through
now. I hope I make sense to you.

Anyway, I wanted to leave Holland. I
wanted to go to Canada or Australia, but my wife said
no. Then in America there was a new law, signed by
Eisenhower, President Eisenhower, who made it possible
to enter the USA. In order to come to the United
States you have to have a sponsor, you have to wait
three, four, five, six years, whatever. An
organization sponsored me. There was a law made for
victims of World War II. I'm not talking about Jewish
people. Victims. It made it easier to enter the USA.

Q  All victims?
Yes, who want to come to the United States. You have to go through a process, the police checked you out in Holland, and a counselor and everything, you have to be in good health, whatever. Before I came to the United States you have to go back and forth, it was understandable.

And I have to go -- they called me, I was notified you have to come to the police station. I thought, I didn't know what I did wrong. But they needed questions about me, questions about if I was a Communist or whatever. But I didn't feel any pain about it. But I wanted to leave Holland very badly.

Also, what later hurt me, and maybe people who watch this program don't like it, in particular Dutch people, there were German war criminals in Holland who were responsible for the death of over 100,000 Jewish people. 100,000. And these Germans were in jail, and they got the death penalty. And the Queen of Holland then, by the way that came out last year, and I tell you now, the Queen of Holland, then was Juliana, now it is Beatrice -- the Germans, they were mass murderers, one I experienced some things.
from that person myself -- person? He was not even an
animal. He was inhuman. He was responsible for over
100,000 Jews that went to their death, Dutch Jewish
people.

And he was going to be executed after the
war. And the Queen said, if you execute him, I will
not be a Queen anymore. That came out last year.
Now, what happened, apparently --

Q That wasn’t Peter Mentin?

A No, not Mentin. Mentin was a little war
criminal. He died, by the way. You know that, right?
He passed away. No, he was a German. There were
several in jail, several went free for medical
reasons, were released by the Dutch government, mind
you, for health reasons, for poor health.

One of them, L-A-G-E-S, was released while
I was already living in the United States, and a
doctor or doctors convinced the Dutch government that
he had cancer, he was a war criminal. It’s hard for
people to comprehend, he was responsible for 10,000
people or 30,000, or he shot 50,000 people, whatever,
it’s nothing. I can be sarcastic now, of course. And
they convinced the Dutch government he was dying of cancer, so they let him go to Germany. I think he's still alive. He fooled them.

Cancer is terrible. Dying of cancer is terrible. But that kind of people don't belong on the street. They should be against the wall or at least for life, no parole, nothing. But there's a lot of politics behind it, because Germany put a lot of pressure, Germany became stronger and put pressure on the Dutch government.

Q Also from what I read Prince Bernhard made a deal with the German government and actually tried to betray Juliana's country, from what I read.

A No, I never heard about that. He fled.

Q He fled, but it was a secret -- the book I read it in was a book about Peter Mentin.

A Mentin, yes. He was a war criminal and a thief, of course.

Q Right. And Prince Bernhard saved Mentin right after the war. He stopped the --

A I'm sorry, I never heard about it. But I can't accuse -- it's kind of funny. It's sad. The
grandmother of the current Queen Beatrice was
Wilhelmina. During World War II we had Wilhelmina.
Her husband was a German. Juliana married a German,
Bernhard. Beatrice, the current Queen, married a
German, Waffen SS man, who has blood on his hands.

Q Really?

There were big riots in Amsterdam. Can you imagine?
You have the SS, Waffen SS. They were a special
unit -- Hitler's special units. His name is Claus,
C-L-A-U-S. Can you imagine? You're flabbergasted, I
presume. That's the truth. Of course, he became a
Dutch citizen when he got married, you know. But
still, he's about my age.

Q You know that?
A But he was not in the regular army, no, no.
Waffen SS is something different.

Q That was army, right?
A Yes, but they were murderers. SS, in
the -- the Waffen SS, for instance, killed American
POWs -- yes, American POWs, in the Battle of the
Bulge. You remember, in '44, you heard about it, you
read about it? The Battle of the B-U-L-G-E, in
Belgium, near Ardennes.

Q    Yes, it was our last offense.
A    Correct. In 1944, if my memory is correct.

And the Germans had American POWs. So against the
Geneva Convention, they undressed the American
soldiers, put on them civilian clothes, tied their
hands behind their back and shot them to death.

Crimes against humanities and against
Geneva Convention. The Waffen SS killed them. And
one of the members, I don’t say he did it himself, but
a member of the Waffen SS group is the current husband
of Beatrice. Can you imagine? Can you imagine? I’m
not surprised.

Now, in ’56 we went to America, and then
still everything was frozen. I never felt sorry that
I left Holland. I came into Philadelphia, where I was
sponsored. I stayed a year in Philadelphia, never
talked about my life. Started from scratch, of
course. I didn’t have any family, no friends, nobody.
And I came with the attitude of, America doesn’t need
us, America doesn’t have to adjust to us, we have to
adjust to them.

So a lot of kind of funny things happened.

We did not have money for a car, of course not, furniture, nothing. We came with $70 or $90. But a lot of immigrants came with nothing, it’s nothing special. And the organization that sponsored us about America, you know, about jobs, et cetera, the first thing we asked, how do you go about jobs?

Now, my first wife was a fantastic office worker. You know blind typing? You type but you don’t look -- I think 70 or 90 words a minute. She was fantastic. In different languages. But I didn’t have a good occupation for the United States. I worked in the leather factory.

So to the Jewish organization, Family Service of Philadelphia, who sponsored us, I said, I would really like to have a job. They said, take it easy, take it easy. I said, we didn’t come here to take it easy. By the way, we arrived here the 28th of April, 1956. We left Holland April 18, 1956. We left Holland the day that Grace Kelly, the late Grace Kelly got married with the Prince of Monaco.
I always made the joke, we came by boat -- and I became seasick, but I always made the joke, one famous person left Philadelphia -- Grace Kelly came from Philadelphia, right? Another famous one is going to Philadelphia. And Jimmy Durante can make it with his long nose, so I can make it, too. I always made that joke on the boat while the boat was not on sea yet, because I became seasick. But anyway -- then it was not funny.

But anyway, we told the people in Philadelphia, we came here to start a new life. How can we find a job? Again, we were never asked -- I was never asked about my background. Never. But I was still in the freezer in '56.

So we didn't have a place to stay. In Holland you have waiting lists. You can't rent a place like here, you look around for an apartment, whatever. So we lived with my in-laws in Amsterdam. And then somehow, because my father-in-law was very ill, became ill, he couldn't handle the noise from young people, and doctors checked it out, and then we got on apartment on our own. We were very lucky,
very, very lucky.

But anyway, we didn't know -- in Holland you don't have signs, vacancies. Philadelphia is a very big city, right? I start laughing. Here is what we did. We went to find a place to live. No idea where to look, to go. We never heard about real estate offices. You don't have that in Holland. The Government has a waiting list, how many children do you have, one, two or three children, and you wait about three or four years, and maybe your in-laws can take you in, because of the shortage of homes, apartments.

So downtown Philadelphia -- have you ever been to Philadelphia?

Q No.

A You start counting 1st street until up to 60th Street. 1st Street is near downtown, if my memory is correct. So we were looking for a place to live. In the meantime we did not have money for a car, we had only a couple of dollars, we did not use public transportation because we wanted to save the money. The Jewish organization paid one month rent.
when we found an apartment, yes, $50. A terrible
apartment. They did not help us to find a job. We
didn’t know anybody. Later I found out that in
Philadelphia, 10 percent of the population is Jewish.
Many had businesses, but they did not give me a job,
or a chance to prove myself.

Again, the anger was -- I felt it similar
with Holland somehow, as a Holocaust survivor I was
being pushed away. I didn’t feel. Later it came out.
Don’t come close to me, keep a distance. I tell you
later why in my judgment that feeling existed and
still exists.

So we wanted to look for a job and they
told us, look in the yellow pages. In Holland you
don’t have yellow pages, but that’s the way I found a
job, looking in the yellow pages and going to all the
factories with similar work as what I did in Holland.
In my first job, I made a dollar an hour. It was a
lot of money then, in ’56, a dollar an hour gross.
And my wife made a dollar an hour gross.

In the meantime we needed a better place to
live. And we saw all signs on buildings, vacancy,
vacancy, vacancy. And I’m not making it up. People said we have a good sense of humor, maybe it helped us survive. I told my wife, people are cuckoo here. She said, what are you talking about? Who is going on vacation and putting a sign in the window so burglars can go in? Because "vacancy," in Dutch you have the word "vacantie," it’s only spelled a little different, "vacantie" in Holland is spelled T-I-E. It’s so similar.

And I couldn’t get over it. And we walked from block one to block two to the 50s block, and I was tired walking, thank God no hills, it was flat, and I could not get over it, how stupid people are in America to go on vacation and put a sign in the window! You don’t do that.

And I was not that upset over it, but I didn’t say America, I said, are people cuckoo, stupid, I would never do that. But realizing, "vacancy," what it means -- so then we didn’t know what to do, where to go, because where do you look for a place in another country? Somebody said, go to a real estate. I said, what is a real estate office?
So we went to a real estate office, and I said, will you explain to me why people put the signs up, "vacation"? He said, vacation? The guy broke up. Then I learned something. I felt embarrassed. My God, in my mind maybe I insulted the American people, I didn’t mean to, but how stupid, to go on vacation and put a sign up. My God.

But then with his help we found a nice place. But we walked until in the 50s. I’ll never forget. We could have had an apartment in the first block, but we didn’t know there was an opening.

We stayed about a year in Philadelphia, and we saved money, but we couldn’t handle the climate anymore because the humidity was too much. I didn’t have a car. We went shopping by public transportation. Sometimes, the nice landlord, they would pick us up and we went for grocery shopping once a week.

Then, I always made a joke about it, my wife -- my first wife’s birthday was March the 7th. And we arrived in Philadelphia at the end of April, 1956. In ’57, we made up our mind, we’re going to
leave Philadelphia, let's go to the West Coast. We
didn't know anybody. We didn't know any people. We
heard about an elderly couple, but no family, no
relations. How to go? So we saved money to buy a
car, but I know nothing about cars, nothing.

In the meantime nobody ever asked me, where
I worked, questions. They thought I walked funny,
that's all. The remarks, what is the matter, you walk
funny. I said, yes, I don't have any toes. Oh.
That was the end of it. I never volunteered to talk
about it. Nobody asked me, because I felt it was my
problem, probably.

So I made a joke, I told my wife, okay, I
buy you a lipstick for your birthday or we buy a car.
Of course, the cost of a car is different. So we
bought a second hand car with the help of somebody.
$500, $700. We were members of the Triple A, a sister
organization of Triple A.

We wanted to go to San Francisco. Again,
Holland is a very small country, very small, compared
with America, of course. So we look at the map from
America. You go from here to there -- no idea what
kind of a trip, and the distance, right? So we bought a car, and I went for my driver's license and I passed the first time -- yes, drivers license, then we bought the car, and we bought the car near downtown.

And I said to my wife, we go right downtown, through small streets and terrible traffic.

[End Tape 1, Begin Tape 2]

My aunt and uncle and other people said, okay, you came back, now pick up where you left off. I left as a 15-year-old kid. I came back as a 17-year-old old man. But there was no home to go to, so I could never pick up, because there was no family, nothing. They were stupid statements. People are very insensitive, even my aunt and uncle.

From Philadelphia we arrived in San Francisco in 1957, and in 1960 something happened. Now, we talk about kind of, I did hope, justice in 1960. The German government made a deal with the Dutch government. I have it all in black and white here. They gave Holland the amount of about $100 million for all survivors. All people who suffered during the war, Jews and non-Jews alike. That sounds
like a lot of money, right?

Q    Right.

A    Correct? But when you cut it in so many pieces, the Dutch government had to make a decision. Nobody could receive more than about 5,000 guilders, maybe about $2,500. In 1940, I was a minor. I could claim for my parents who were murdered. Then I would get the maximum of 4,800 guilders, say $2,500 or whatever.

But then I could not file a claim for myself, because I got already the maximum under the law. Do I make sense? The Dutch government said, no one person can receive more than 5,000 guilders or $2,500. On account of that, I could not file for my brother, my sisters, nobody. Only I could file for my parents, because I was living with my parents.

But I could never file a claim for myself, but I still did! My own claim was denied. So I never got one cent, penny, compensation from the money that the Germans gave to Holland. They gave peanuts to Holland, and they made a deal with Holland, a dirty deal. It's a long story.
I have it all in black and white. I was declined on account that I received the maximum amount for my parents. So I never was recognized as a Holocaust survivor who is a handicapped person. Now, then I start fighting with the West German government again. Here in San Francisco. I'll only read you parts of letters, okay?

Q Okay.

A Let me see. Dated June 7th, 1984, that came from San Francisco, the consul general, the German consul general. "As you will remember, our office, in a prolonged and very serious effort, has approached the authorities competent for restitution in Germany to repair the '63 to '65 in order to carefully examine as a possible claim of yours, being former Dutch citizen," because I'm an American now. "Also our embassy in the Hague was included into our efforts to clarify the matter."

Then they write me here, on account, as a result of -- "Unfortunately, it turned out that there is no legal basis for a claim against the Federal Republic of Germany, as you have been already
informed, on account that you were a Dutch citizen."
They kicked me with "Dutch citizen." They took me
away in 1943, even though I was a Dutchman!

Then in 1987 I continued to fight, right?
"I have learned that from the ambassador, German
ambassador in Washington, D.C., and I have learned
through the consul general of the Federal Republic of
Germany in San Francisco that you are one of the
victims of Nazi persecution who did not receive
compensation for your sufferings because you were
during World War II a citizen of the Netherlands."
Then they should have never touched me, correct?

Now, ’87 and ’88, I kept fighting again. I
got from the ambassador in Washington, the West German
ambassador, "Under the German law, no payment can be
made out of government funds unless there is a legal
provision authorizing such payment. I have to come
back to the explanation which you have heard probably
a hundred times, and that is, there is no legal
provision for compensation for former Dutch citizens."

The German government never recognized me
as a victim from Germany. I don’t exist for them.
Q You know, I guess, I thought we were open-ended on time, but since we’re not, we don’t have much time left, and so there seems to be the thing that, like, the denial that you had to deal with --

A No justice. There is no justice. I only asked for orthopedic shoes, and a disability pension because I’m crippled. That’s all.

Q I mean, you didn’t even get recognition.

A From the Germans, no.

Q From anybody.

A I’m talking about the Germans who did it to me. I’m talking about Germany who is responsible. Nobody else.

Q Right, but earlier you were talking about the insensitivity, which very often sounds to me like --

A Right. In 1975, the Dutch government changed. 30 years after the war, and then they realized that people from concentration camps, be it under the Japanese, in the Japanese concentration camps in the Pacific, or in camps in Germany -- are suffering.

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Q  Right, but you said you were going to talk
about the insensitivity and why you figured out later
people were so insensitive, why they didn’t come to
visit you, why they wouldn’t talk.

A  Okay. I found out -- let me tell you what
changed me, okay? Let’s jump now to the important
part, the most important part, correct?

Q  Right. Well, I think it’s important.

A  I never talked about my experiences.
Nobody asked me, and I had no feelings. In 1972, when
my son, Michael, was 12 years old -- close to 13, I
was a member of a synagogue, and he went to Sunday
school. One day I got a phone call from his teacher
on a Sunday, I remember. He said, Mr. Wynschenk, I
heard from your son that you are a Holocaust survivor.

I said, yes. Do you mind to come and talk
for the kids? And I went in a kind of a rage. How
dare you? I said, absolutely not. I don’t want to
talk about it. I was angry at the idea about talking
about it. He said, think it over. He was a real a
gentleman. I was the one who was in terrible anger.

Now, I’m glad that my children, my daughter

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and son grew up with the knowledge of the Holocaust, otherwise if he wouldn't have known, my son through me, and I hadn't talked about it, I wouldn't be here today, I would never talk about it. My son helped me open it up.

So the teacher said, here is my phone number, call me back if you change your mind. Then I had a terrible fight inside. I said, I can't do it, I never talked in front of groups of people, impossible, no way. To stand in front of people, no way. I said, I will let you know. But I don't think I will do it, but I will think about it.

So I told my wife, if I don't talk about it, I think I'm kind of selfish. Maybe I should just make a step and tell the younger generation. And if I don't talk about it, then the story goes with me and stays in, everything stays in, and I take it to my grave.

So I called him back. I said, I will try it. I never did it before. So we made a date. I went and talked for the kids. I don't know how I did it. I don't remember it. If my son was in the class,
I don't remember. When I came home, I remember -- I'm still talking about my first wife -- she had to put me in bed. I was a wreck. My whole body ached, everything ached. It was apparently slowly the process of my talking, slowly opening.

It was a terrible aftereffect. My wife said, I don't want you to do it anymore, don't do it anymore. It kills you. It takes too much out of you. But by talking about it, I started to change.

Feelings that I never felt before, anger, particularly, injustice, rage. Nightmares, I always have nightmares, I think many survivors have -- I always have nightmares. Muscle aches. But that's a part that you have to accept.

But then things came out, I felt, that I never felt before. Then my wife, my first wife saw suddenly a stranger. I'm not knocking her. A person she never knew. I was a different person.

Q  All this from talking once?
A  No. Slowly but surely, that was the beginning of -- I was changing, because I talked more and more and more. She told me not to talk anymore,
but I still continued more and more to talk. My son went to high school, he told the teachers, and my son had to interview me, and my daughter interviewed me, I had more and more requests to talk.

So I changed more and more. And my anger and the pain came out. Something -- the injustices being done to me, and then the rage. I can go in a terrible rage suddenly. If you would say, the Holocaust never happened, I go in a rage. Not physically, but I’ll let you know, it takes everything out of me, my whole body would start shaking.

I hope I make sense to you. So I start to defrost. And then the Eddy came out that my children and my ex-wife never knew. It was very hard to live with me. I understand that. I am responsible for that, they are not. But I can’t help it.

And in particular, when my son reached age 12, my son is the oldest, I started to change already before I start talking, because I was 12 years old when my freedom was taken away in Holland.

Q I just thought of that, yes.

A So I was my son. I’m glad I’m talking

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about it. When I was 12 years old in 1940, the
Germans occupied Holland. End of freedom, end of
childhood. The moment my son became 12, I panicked.
Oh, my God, the same is going to happen to him. Oh,
my God.

Later my daughter became 12, I had the same
feelings. And I thought, Michael and Nancy, God
forbid, if it happened now. Michael is 14, Nancy is
12. You will not survive. Especially the oldest,
Michael, my son, when he became 12. Oh, my God, if it
happens, I survived, but -- I never told him, but he
can never survive. I have tears in my eyes from
thinking about it, if it ever were to happen.

So that started the turmoil, the pain, the
rage. Then I became apparently a different father,
too. Because the anger I had, I maybe took out on
them -- I learned that later, through counseling --
and on my ex-wife. That's why all of them suffered on
account of me?

And then Michael became bar mitzvah'd when
he was 13 years old. In the Jewish religion a boy
becomes bar mitzvah'd. I remember my bar mitzvah when
I was 13 years old. It was the last time my whole family was together, July of 1940, my aunts and uncles. So I enjoyed his bar mitzvah, but I didn’t enjoy it in a way, because Michael did not have aunts and uncles, grandparents, et cetera.

Q  It brought memories?

A  Oh, yes. I saw he was me. And that scared me terribly. It could have happened to him. Later to my daughter too. So I became actually a person they never knew, and my ex-wife and my children didn’t know me.

So it was nearly impossible to live with a person like me. So from ’45 until ’72, what built up, 27 years, suddenly exploded. It’s still exploding. My psychiatrist, he said, what built up, even the years in the camp, you have to add them to it, because you could never express yourself, from 1940. So actually from 1940, occupation, until ’72, 32 years, to be correct, all these years to get it out, and not everything is coming out. I am still partly in the freezer.

Do I make myself --
Q All the grief and anger?
A All the anger, a lot of pain. Now, about people. I was told on account of my counseling, that apparently when people walk around you, I can feel it. Some people have a fence. I don’t trust people. Trust has to be earned. If I trust I get hurt. I learned that in the camp. Because I’m open. Before the war I trusted everybody. I never thought about it. But do I make sense? I was another Eddy Wynschenk then, right? Do I make sense to you?
Q Yes.
A So I don’t trust people. I’m a very private person. There is a state of fear that they will come back again, always thinking that there are bad things going to happen or they will happen, because it is -- the fear that things are going to happen is also from 1940, ’45, it is in my system, what is coming out.
   And I’m on my third psychiatrist, and he’s fantastic. There are some psychiatrists who can’t handle a survivor, I realized that. The man who counsels me now understands. He says, I hear you, I
can never feel it, but that's secondary.

I started to change into a different person. Then I started missing my family who were murdered. I anyway observe their birthdays, the dates of their death. Then, feeling the pain that my children -- have no grandparents on my side, no aunts, no uncles, no nephews, they have nobody. I don't think I ever told them, but it hurts me since '72, and every day it gets stronger and stronger, the loss for my children, what they lost. Their loss, the family they never knew!

Now, I feel people around me. I was told, not by one, but by several people, do you realize you are the conscience of people. I said, why? When you talk, and people like it or not, you become their conscience. Do I make sense to you?

Q Yes.

A Because what angers me also -- this is something maybe the American Jewish people don't like to hear, but that it's not my baby -- during the war, with few exceptions, in the free world the Jews and non-Jews alike were silent. The churches were silent.
The synagogues were silent. When the few survivors
who came back -- I always talk about it now as
somebody reaching out, okay, hold my hands -- there
was nobody to hold our hands, nobody cared.

And I talk about other survivors, friends
of mine, my age group, from Holland, two young men I'm
thinking about, there was nobody to hold my hand, or
hug me or whatever.

So my philosophy is, you always have to try
to save a life, and if you fail there is no blame. If
you don't try to save a life, then there is a blame.
And I blame the Jews and non-Jews alike, the churches
and the synagogues, with few exceptions, that they
didn't try to save a life. If they would have tried
to save a life and succeeded, it was worthwhile. I
blame the International Red Cross, that is located in
Switzerland, when I talk about World War II. They
didn't try to save one Jew.

Then I heard from American Jews here, they
told me, are you American? Do you think we owe you
something? I said, I never asked you for anything.
Nobody owes me anything. It's a defense. Don't ask
So it was defensive that nobody asked you?  
No. I was told, you come here, you think we owe you something. We American Jews owe you something because you're a survivor? I said, you don't owe me anything. They were afraid that I would ask for anything.

And they said that before you even asked, right?

Yes, I didn't ask anything. I never asked. I'm not a beggar.

So was this an extension of the kind of insensitivity that you experienced so much in Holland?  
Correct. A continuation. Until even today, and I feel it, I feel people, okay? When I talk about -- if people hear me talk and get angry, how dare he say it, but I only tell the truth and what I feel and what I experienced. And I thought it was me, so I talked to other survivors, one in particular, a close friend of mine from Holland.

And we communicate excellent. I always tell him, listen, if you don't agree, tell me, but is
it me? What's wrong with me? He said, no, I’m
exactly the same. So much similarities. I always
thought I am the one with the hangups or whatever it
is. Another thing that made me very angry, very
angry, that the free world, the people in the free
world, and in particular the Jewish people in the free
world, did not learn the lesson from the Holocaust.

Q    No, I don’t think they did.

A    What angers me is not for me, but for their
children and their grandchildren, they told me -- and
I'm speaking publicly now for 18 years, so I know what
I'm talking about, not being a wise guy, but that's my
experience -- Eddy, it was so terrible. I said,
listen, thank God you don't know how terrible it was.
Thank God.

Oh, yes, but I heard a survivor once five
years ago, and he talked for an hour, I know
everything about the Holocaust. I said, thank God you
don't know. But you have to know so you can tell your
children. You don't do me any favors. But they push
you away. And I am an outspoken person, that's an
understatement, right, Peggy?
What I do is not for my ego. When I try to go on the radio as a guest or on TV, it's not because I like it. I'm a nervous wreck. When I go to talk to kids, I'm a nervous wreck. Thank God I never charge a penny for any talk when I go to kids, but money is not the issue. But I have to do it. You can't buy it. There's no price tag for it.

But I have also the experience in the media -- now generally speaking, please, 18 years talking -- that generally speaking, I emphasize that and I repeat it, I get more help in my mission from non-Jewish people in the media than from the Jewish people.

Q  In the media?
A  Yes. Strange. You are an exception, thank God. Generally speaking. And it hurts me very badly. Because I have a feeling, they don't want to have a part of me. Here is the key, why people would rather walk around me. I remind people of the unpleasant things in life.

I was told years ago by somebody, Eddy, if one has a lot of friends, and that person goes to the
hospital, not many show up to visit, hold their hand, to say I love you and care about you. It's unpleasant! The same with you. You have to accept it. You don't understand it, but accept it. You remind them of the unpleasant things in life, so, "Go away, go away."

And I feel that from people.

Q And you think that's the basis of all of the insensitive things that you experienced?

A Oh, yes, yes. From Holland, when I came back in my old neighborhood, you remind us of the terrible things, go away. They don't tell you, but you can feel it! Because over the last years I became very sensitive, I pick things up. Also due to the counseling.

So I always tell people, in five, 10 years, there are no survivors left. Learn from us. No pity, no sympathy. Then hopefully it will never happen again to anybody, regardless of race, religion, color, creed or sex. You can save you, you can save your children, your grandchildren. Don't push me away.

Q Well, when they pushed you away like that,
did that increase your sense of isolation?

A Yes. Yes.

Q And how did that affect you?

A I have one person that's close to me. I'm not talking about my wife, of course. But a Dutch survivor who lives in Berkeley is close to me. We are close emotionally, right? Because I feel his pain, he feels my pain, and we talk about our pain. Thank God we can help each other by talking about it, right?

So that I quit being a member of a synagogue in the Peninsula, after 20 years, because they didn't stand up for what was right. They would rather please the community than stand up as real Jews. And I will tell you, when the Pope came here, '87, I think, '87, '88, I have nothing against the Pope or the Catholics, but about Waldheim, the Waldheim affair, again, I respect everybody's religion, and I hope they respect my religion too.

You could right away see that here you had the survivors, and there the Jewish community, and a few from them joined us, a very few. And we stood up. We had to stand up. We owed it to the 6 million who
were murdered. And we owed it to our children and to humanity to stand up. What kind of a person would I be not to stand up?

Now, if people don't like me for it, I could care less. I have to live with myself. So I was angry at the temple as such. I went before the board and I resigned. They don't need me, I don't need them. Because that was the time to stand up, and they didn't. They did not. At least join. But they didn't want to make any waves because they wanted to have a good relationship between the Catholic Church and the synagogues.

There should be a good relationship. But there is a time in your life when you have to stand up and be counted. Life is not always steak and prime ribs. Sometimes it's a slice of bread without anything on it.

So they turned me off on the Jewish religious -- organized religion. I don't need a temple to believe in God and to pray to God.

Q So the impression I'm getting is that you don't feel like the Jewish people who didn't go
through the Holocaust are any more sensitive than anybody else.

A Correct. There are exceptions. Please, let's emphasize that. But we're talking about generally speaking, right? In other words, are you aware what happened in the convent in Auschwitz, they build a convent, the Catholic Church?

Q Oh, yes, I'm aware of that.

A And the cross? They put a big cross in Auschwitz? Yes, the convent with a big cross from the Catholic Church. Now, we picketted peacefully, right, we survivors, okay, we picketted a place two years ago, a year, whatever. Nobody from the Jewish community, be it a rabbi or whatever, joined us.

Because it was in the Jewish Bulletin, a whole article -- I don't blame the Jewish Bulletin, I have to give the Jewish Bulletin credit, they help me tremendously whenever they can, absolutely. They're great for me. They believe in my mission. They believe in other survivors' mission. They don't push us away.

That's my personal experience, and I can't
talk for other survivors. They are great for me, to be honest, because they believe in what I do. That is not for my own ego -- it's for humanity and for prevention. Now, when -- somebody was interviewed from the Jewish Community Relation Council, and that Jewish person said, that is a survivor's issue.

Now, wait a minute. Is the convent and the cross a survivor's issue, or is it a Jewish issue? Now, here we go. They pushed us away, what I felt for many years, my anger, when I read it, and -- oh, we were furious. Here we go. Here survivors, here are you, and here is the rest of the Jewish community. I was told by my psychiatrist, I said, am I abnormal? He said, no. You are different. If you had not been different you would be abnormal.

But what for other people is normal is for me a red flag. I see a lot red flags. You know what a red flag is, right? When I get in a rage, big red flags. So I'm not against American Jews, but -- I can't change them, I don't even try, but it angers me. During the war they were silent. Here we go, the connection. They didn't do what they have to do.
they tried and lost, I admire them, I say, thank you
for trying.

Q So does it feel kind of like
re-abandonment?

A Yes, 100 percent. There was a non-Jewish
gentleman who wrote a terrific book about it,
Mr. Wyman, a reverend, I think. Oh, yes. I feel
abandoned by the Jewish community. Absolutely.
Absolutely. As a human being. They turn around and
say, yes, he keeps distance. Wait a minute. I feel
people who are -- who really accept me the way I am.
I talked about it before.

Accept me the way I am, with my
shortcomings, my good side, my bad side, whatever,
because I was not born the way I am. I was made that
way. If I would have had counseling that I have now
for many years, in 1945, I would be a different person
today. I would have been open since ’45. I would
have a lot of peace.

Q In 1945, did you want people to ask you
about it? Did you feel like you wanted people to ask
you about your experiences?
A Put it that way, Peggy. If they would have asked me, I don't know today if I would have answered, but at least the gesture, the reaching out, asking is -- if it happened to you, if I see you crying I would say, Peggy, what happened to you, I give you my shoulder, I'm reaching out, correct?

You might say, I don't want to talk about it, I don't need your shoulder, but I'm reaching out. Nobody reached out to me. And I don't feel sorry for myself, but it was the effect on part of my life. Nobody said, listen, do you mind telling me, what happened? Nobody.

Here, nobody in our country, with a few exceptions. Of course, people don't want to be around the unpleasant, don't want to be around people who remind them of the unpleasant things in life.

Q I have a question about that, because in Holland after the war, a lot of people kept their belongings, they didn't give them back. That happened to a lot of people.

A Oh, yes.

Q I always -- some of the reading I've done,
it sounds like Holland was one of the better
countries, it really made more efforts to save the
Jewish people than a lot of other countries did. So I
had the impression that Holland was a lot less
prejudiced. But it sounds like from what you're
saying it was very real --

A I can only say what happened to me and what
happened to other people in big cities. Not for all.
Maybe other people have other experiences, okay? But
Goebbels was the Minister of Propaganda for the
Germans. His poisoning, that started in 1933, '34,
'35, right? That poisoning came in Holland in 1940,
for five years the people were poisoned by them,
during the occupation, right?

Q Yes.

A Before I left, before 1940, I don't
remember as a kid, that they say, oh, you dirty Jew.
I don't remember being discriminated against or being
looked at as a second class citizen. I'm talking for
Eddy Wynschenk. But after the war a lot of people
were poisoned. Why to make a statement, "the good
ones were killed and the bad ones came back," "you
survived, apparently you did something wrong," or "you better be quiet, you’re lucky to be alive, shut up, don’t talk, don’t make waves."

Q So you think the level of prejudice was increased?

A Oh, tremendously. It still exists today. I hear it from other people. I’m not talking about the good people who saved Jewish lives. I’m not talking about that. You’re absolutely right. Shocking.

Q But didn’t it exist before the war, too, but it was increased?

A As far as I know -- you always have people who don’t like Jews or Catholics or whatever, yes. Of course there were people who didn’t like Jewish people. But you can’t compare it to after the war.

Q How come you think the Dutch government was so unhelpful?

A Until 1975.

Q Because they were very helpful, it sounds like, to the underground fighters.

A Yes, amazing. They -- I think basically,
basically, that many of them were anti-Semitic, or in
their unconsciousness they would say, Jew, you came
back but shut up, you have your life, what do you
want? Because we were not considered actually
political camp inmates.

Q    Why not?
A    That is the answer the Dutch government has
to answer. Not the current Dutch government. From
after the war. We weren't treated similar as the
underground fighters. No. There was no law. They
made a law for them, not a law for us. And they
deserved that law, the underground fighters, don't
misunderstand me. Do I make sense to you?

Q    Oh, it makes sense. I would think that the
men who had that attitude -- how did that affect your
psychology, I guess?
A    Since '75, when I go to counseling, but the
insurance company doesn't pay, they pay.

Q    Who pays?
A    The Dutch government.
Q    Oh, they do?
A    Since '75, I'm talking about.
Q    So in '75 there was a change?
A    Correct. For us -- outside Holland in '75, and inside Holland, '72. For orthopedic shoes, all the years in America I paid for them myself. Now they cost about $400, for instance. Since '75, the Dutch government pays for it. Do I make sense to you?
Q    Yes, it does. Yes.
A    But for 30 years, nothing. And I think I needed it -- personally I needed more. Right after the war it was impossible to expect it, but in a reasonable amount of time, right, we were ignored, completely ignored. I would have been different if I could have gone to psychiatry or whatever, after the war, go to organizations for help.

    After the war I even lived with other Jewish kids in a Jewish orphanage, for boys, of course. Nobody cared about us. Now we laugh about it. Nobody cared. Nobody visited us. Nobody -- there were some people who invited me sometimes over for dinner. I remember that, yes. But for jobs, no way, no way, nobody helped us.

    I'm not saying -- I don't mean giving
money. Help me start in life, because this is a new
life. I had no education, no occupation, no family.
I'm alone. But give me a hand. Only give me a hand,
guide me, tell me.

Q    Have you talked that over, do you have any
insights on -- I find that really incomprehensible
that you would be back there, you didn't have any
toes, could you hardly walk, and that you were just
discarded, basically. Have you talked about that --
do you have any insights on why would people do that,
just totally ignore the obvious physical --

A    In my opinion, it's that I shouldn't have
come back. In a lot of people's minds, all the Jews
should have been killed.

Q    They really believe that?

A    I feel that. Please. I'm talking about
after the war now. Not today, now. Right? I can't
accuse people who have nothing to do with World War
II. Because many, too many in Europe, in occupied
countries, profited from the death of the Jews. In
France, it's terrible, terrible. Holland had a bad
reputation. Denmark had the best reputation during
the war. My gosh, the Danish people are beautiful people.

But here we go again. And I never realized it, until it was pointed out to me several years ago, through my counseling. People don't want to be reminded of the unpleasant things in life.

You don't even realize it, you remind them of the unpleasant things in life. If I go to talk before a junior high school or a high school or wherever I go, I can feel love from the kids, and I love the kids, the kids are beautiful, when they hug me afterwards and we cry together, I am in their hearts. My reward is their letters. The kids write me letters. I get thousands of them. In their way, they reach out to me as nobody ever did, no adult ever did.

It's beautiful. That's something positive. But maybe their parents would not do it. Because kids are innocent. When I was a kid I was innocent. Kids can be nasty. Why don't you behave, you're late, whatever, but kids are innocent. Kids are pure. 12, 13, 14, 15 years old, they are pure. There are always
exceptions, but they are beautiful. And if they write you, if you read it you would cry. Nobody has to dictate it to them. It’s from their heart. Kids write with the heart. They hug with their hearts. I know it!

But for them, I am, quote unquote, a special person. I am a kind of a role model. My gosh, he made it, right, when he was my age, blah, blah, blah, so I better shape up, whatever. Oh, yes. Yes.

But on account -- okay. I think I have a part of the answer, in my judgment. Guilt feeling. The people who did not try to save us have now a guilt feeling. We remind them of their shortcoming. That is probably what you were looking for, right, or searching for, right?

Q I don’t want to search for something that’s not there.

A No, but suppose my neighbors, where I lived and was born, in Amsterdam, in a non-Jewish neighborhood, maybe they would have tried, we can hide you in the basement or whatever. But nobody offered
anything. I'm talking about my family, now. Not about other families. So when I came back without anybody else, right, maybe they have a guilt feeling. But I feel here, and I come back to that again, the American Jewish people, the older generation in particular, have a kind of a guilt feeling. Oh, yes, they have a guilt feeling. That's why they push away the word "Holocaust."

Q What do they feel guilty about?

A That they didn't try. They don't realize it, but in my opinion, and I will never change my opinion about it, they didn't try to save, try to make waves.

Q You know, some of the reading -- apparently some did.

A I said there are always a few exceptions. But I'm talking generally speaking. And I thought it was my hangups. But I talked to other survivors. I read books. And you mentioned about the Jews, and we felt they let us go. Do I make sense to you?

Q Yes.

A But what I expected from them is to try.
You do whatever you can. Give everything you have. Because they forget one thing. Hitler and his henchmen, the Germans, created the Jewish Question and the Final Solution -- that means what to do with the Jewish people, and the final solution is murder them all.

Hitler never said only German Jews or European Jews. He said the Jewish people. If Hitler would have won the war, then American Jewish people would have been murdered, too. I wouldn't be alive today. Our country here would be a big concentration camp. Of course, the Japanese would have also won the war.

The Jewish Question, the Final Solution, and they don't realize it. If Hitler had won the war they would have been killed, too. Maybe I don't make myself clear.

Q    No, you do make yourself clear. I think maybe the Jewish people are more aware of the whole -- you know, the history of the Holocaust than non-Jewish Americans.

A    No. They use it as an excuse not to hear
about it. I was told so many times that it's too
terrible to talk about it. It's too terrible to
listen about it. I said, you were never there, thank
God, you don't know how terrible it was. And it's
better to listen to it and have an upset stomach but
live in peace and freedom than not to listen to it and
one day it will happen again.

Q  Do you think that refusal to listen to it
at all could actually lead towards it happening again?

A  Yes. History in every respect will repeat
itself, be it unification of Germany, the power of
Japan. That's politics, of course. Yes. I'm not
worried about my life, but my children and hopefully
grandchildren -- I think it is possible to get another
World War, absolutely, in the next 20, 25 years, at
the most. I'm very pessimistic about it.

Because he who doesn't learn from the past
is doomed to relive it.

Q  What are the important lessons that you
think, most important lessons -- like, how would you
prevent another Holocaust?

A  To anybody in the world -- not only the
Jewish people, by the way. Cambodia, 3 million people were murdered. People. It happened, and nobody stepped in to stop it. Uganda, a quarter of a million people. The Vietnamese boat people. We can go on and on. If the world would have learned something, Cambodia, the holocaust in Cambodia would not have happened. But 2 and a half, 3 million human beings were murdered.

Q And what do they need to have learned?
A To step in, to stop it.

Q Intervene?
A No countries in the world, with a few exceptions, small countries, helped the Jewish people. They said, you can’t come in. They said, we don’t want to help the Jews. The St. Louis, the voyage of the damned, 1938, Cuba, America turned the Jews away. Most of those people were murdered in the gas chambers, they had to go back.

So all the borders were closed, right? So nobody cared, right? If you say, okay, it’s politics, if we have the Jews, then we have unemployment -- but you talk about human beings, about little babies,
about children, the elderly, sick. We are all human beings, with all our shortcomings, Jew and non-Jew alike. They should have helped the Gypsies that were murdered. Nobody cared about the Gypsies either.

Q It sounds like the lesson you're talking about is making people more important than politics and boundaries and jobs.

A You're absolutely right. Human beings for me are number one. Politics is number two. But I'm sorry to say, it's politics, money, politics, money, politics, money, and maybe a little human being. That's why I talk for the younger generation in the hope that they can change it.

I tell them when I talk. You are the future. You are the only hope for our country here. I tell them. I count on the kids, not on the older generation. I gave up on them. I don't even get upset about it anymore.

Q About --

A You want to have another example of insensitivity?

Q Okay.
A Once a year is Yad Vashem, the day of remembrance, observed over the whole world. Not only in synagogues, but the Government, our government is in a way involved with it, when we remember the 6 million. Now, as a survivor I don’t have to have a special day, because my family, and what I experienced and the 6 million -- my family is always with me. I’m an extension from my family who were murdered. I represent my family.

It is more, in my judgment, to remember the people for the benefit of people who don’t know. We survivors don’t need a remembrance day. It’s excellent, I’m in favor of it 10,000 percent.

The day of mourning, the 22nd of April this year, 1990, it is for me a day of mourning. People should go, if they want to go, to synagogue and pray, whatever. Services should be held in synagogues. Now, I am all for interfaith. I love it. I love to talk for all kinds of people. But what has happened in the last couple of years in the Peninsula where I live, I will not mention names -- you want to have names, I’ll give you names, I have nothing to hide,
and I'm not running for a popularity contest, either.

The day of remembrance service, the 22nd, the whole week is the week of remembrance, from the 22nd to the 30th. And it should be observed as days of mourning, a particular service in a synagogue, because it's a Jewish day of remembrance. The only place is a synagogue, or the Holocaust memorial. But we talk about buildings now.

For the second year in a row, temples and churches in the Peninsula, Northern Peninsula here, Burlingame, San Mateo, have an observance in a church. I have nothing against a church, interfaith. It belongs in a synagogue, and invite the non-Jewish community, absolutely, everybody is welcome. But foremost it should be held in a synagogue, in my judgment. So I talked with other survivors about it. They are furious. And that hurts me. I am furious about it too.

Then last year they have a main speaker. It should always be, on the day of remembrance, a Jew, and I prefer a survivor, whoever it may be, because who can better give the message than a survivor?
Nobody else can. And I'm not pushing the non-Jewish people away. On the contrary. Join, come. The same as a rabbi is not invited at Christmas to go -- yes, to go to give a speech in a church, or Christmas is going to be observed in a synagogue. You don't do that. I hope I make sense.

So the mourning should be observed in a synagogue. And let the clergy, a member of the clergy, non-Jew, make a speech. Beautiful. Let it be a part of it. But it should be a Jewish observance. the emphasis should be on the Jews who participate. I was invited last year. I hope I make sense to you. And I talk about the Peninsula here. They didn't learn from the Holocaust, they don't understand the Holocaust.

If they had understood the Holocaust and understand the sensitivity to the survivor, they would not do it in a church. On top of every church you have a cross, correct?

Q Yes.

A I talk only for myself. The Germans were religious people during World War II. On the buckle
of their belts was the slogan, "God Is With Us."

Many, many, many of the camp guards who were murderers went to church on Sunday and came back and murdered again. How you can misuse God, that is very hard to understand!

Now, the cross, I'm talking about as a symbol, is for me personally a red flag. It's the same cross that was in Auschwitz, correct? Not the religion. If I didn't like the religion I would be a bigot, and I hope I'm not, please. I think all religions should work together for humanity, to save humanity, regardless of what people look like or whatever religion.

But I don't like a day of remembrance in a church, any church. The same as Christmas, it should not be in a synagogue with the Star of David on top.

Q So that was a form of insensitivity?

A Correct. I was invited with other survivors. I was invited, because I want to participate. I didn't give a message. I don't want to be the main speaker. I am not a person to be a main speaker. Give me five minutes, that's all. Then
I can give some input. Because a lot of non-Jewish people attend, it's excellent, beautiful.

I was only allowed to light a candle, and tell in two minutes what happened to me in five years. And I was told that by a young Jewish lady. I got into a big fight. This is my rage. Then I exploded.

I'm not a nice person for them. Oh, he's not nice. Oh, he yells. Big deal! I felt hurt and insulted.

Yes, then I yell. How dare you. Do I have to be a decoration, sitting in a church, lighting a candle, a shalom Jew, being told by American Jews who sat on their behind while 6 million people went to their death? What did they learn? Nothing.

They didn't learn from it. Not for my sake, but they don't understand this for their sake and their children's, and their grandchildren's sake. They don't understand it. They go through denial.

Q And if they understood it, what would they understand?

A Then they would understand, they have to try to learn from the survivors. That can be their survival. Not that we are special people. No. But
how can women who are raped, and they give a session
and tell other people what it is, what you can do to
prevent, these persons are teachers, from their pain
and aggravation and stress the rest of their lives,
other women can and should learn.

To listen to us, in a way we are teachers,
right, by talking about it. Everybody talks about
history is a teacher. But the real teachers many
times don’t talk about it. That’s another story.

But if they would be open, invite us, they
would. Again, the children want to hear us. All
children want to hear me. But why to push us in a
corner again, on the day of remembrance? It’s not
their families who were killed. Our families were,
correct? In the 6 million is my family too.

So I’m sure this year I will not be invited
even to light a candle. Thank God for little favors.
I don’t need them. But that is what angered me
tremendously. And I thought it was me. I contacted
other survivors. And they went in a rage, similar as
I. So I let them know my feelings, and they pushed me
away. I could feel it. But I will not be silent
ever!

I think the organization of the day of remembrance is in the hands of a non-Jewish clergy person. Nothing against that person. I don't know who it is. It belongs in the hands of the Jewish -- it's a Jewish day of mourning. I give you an example now of the insensitivity.

They didn't learn. 45 years after World War II, they still didn't learn. They try to please their non-Jewish friends, and I don't know why, and push us aside, only light a candle. Hey, you survivor, light a candle. That's enough. Sit down.

Q Have you ever read a book by Alice Miller called, I think it's called "For Your Own Good," and in it -- the book is about child abuse, and she proposes that one of the reasons the Holocaust happened was because of child abuse, abusive child raising practices in Germany, and actually kind of all over the world, but in it she talks about Hitler at length. She also talks about Eichmann and Himmler. Have you heard of that, the people who link child abuse to the Holocaust?
A No, never heard about it.
Q Have you thought about the role psychology played in it?
A No. I am not -- by the way, I am not an intellectual person. I'm not an educated person. I go by feelings and by experience in life. There are people who are "experts" about the Holocaust, historians, thank God they were never there. They know it. But it irritates me also. They have a speaker on the Holocaust. For me an expert is a survivor. Actually, the 6 million are the experts, but they can't talk, they don't even have a grave.
Q I guess the reason I ask that question is, I'm asking, why do you think people actually participated, and why did they --
A Hate. The Jew was a scapegoat in Germany because the economy was terrible. Hitler in the 30s, '33, whatever, came into power on account of that. He used the Jews as a scapegoat. In "Mein Kampf" he wrote in 1927 or the '20s, he wrote what he was going to do with the Jews, right? Are you aware of that?
Q Yes.
A So he had it all planned out. He followed his plan.
Q But what created such hatred? Do you have any thoughts on that?
A Scapegoat. There are people who hate black people in our country. Whatever goes wrong, it's the blacks, or the Vietnamese, or the Jews. The minorities are always being used as scapegoats, particularly in bad economic conditions.
Q That's true.
A Everything is well in Germany until -- they united, there will be one Germany, nobody will get hurt. The moment the economy gets bad, it's the Jews who are to blame, the Gypsies, the Jehovah's Witnesses, and we start all over again.
Q How does that prospect affect you, Germany getting together again?
A They go together, and I think eventually Poland has to give them a part of the territory. They will -- nothing changed. Only the faces and the clothes and the names. Basically they didn't learn from their own mistakes.
The prime minister, Kohl, was a teenager during World War II. He is innocent. Now we find out, in my judgment, he didn't learn from history. In the back of his mind he wants to have a part of Poland. He wants to have a part of Poland back.

Q: He said that?
A: Oh, yes.

Q: Recently?
A: Yes. Really. And he gets a lot of press, he says no, I didn't mean it. But he wants to have Poland. After the war, Poland got a part of Germany. He wants to have it back. I hope I am wrong. Who am I? You ask my opinion, I give it.

No, I will not be surprised if eventually Hitler -- there will be another Hitler, and you get another war in the next 15 or 20 years, because why didn't people help the Cambodians? In the eyes of the rest of the world they were minorities. Uganda people were killed. A quarter of a million! Why didn't the rest of the world step in? The free world, easy.

Right? Send them some troops and tell them we're coming in planes and bombs to save people.
In 1944, in the summer of '44, I was there since November '43, in Auschwitz Birkenau, remember I told you before, in the railroad station when the people came, I worked there. I was an eyewitness to who will live and who will die. I was 16 years old. Then one day the American planes came over, and I remember, we talked to each other, drop, drop the bomb, drop it, flatten it, because we were going to be killed anyway.

So if they would have flattened the camp, say they killed 30,000. Maybe they could have saved a million, 2 million people. They had to do it. They didn't drop one bomb on a gas chamber, nothing. It was daylight, summer, I'll never forget, May, June, '44. They knew and they didn't do anything about it.

They knew it. They didn't bomb the railroads to all the concentration camps, to Buchenwald, Mauthausen, while they flew over Germany. They wanted to get rid of the Jewish people.

Q Americans wanted to get --

A In particular, England.

Q To get rid of the Jewish people?
Absolutely. They didn’t do anything to stop the trains. Nothing. Absolutely. They closed their borders. America closed their borders, too. I’m proud of my country, but we can’t be blind. I can’t be blind, okay? But you ask me, how come, in my judgment, it happened in World War II? The Jew was the scapegoat. So by focusing on a minority, then all the other troubles go away for the people, in their mind, correct?

Q Oh, okay. Focusing on a minority makes people -- okay. That makes sense.

A I’m not an intellectual, I’m not a psychiatrist, nothing. I only go by what I feel. I have common sense. Always blame the minority, that’s the game.

Q So actually one of the lessons then would be to focus on your own problems, your real problems?

A The lesson is, be sure to respect everybody as an individual human being, and treat everybody as an individual human being. Don’t put people in a bag. And reach out to people. Reach out. Don’t think only about money, the greed. They respect people, oh, he
or she is a leader of the community, she gives them half a million dollars, whatever.

Money doesn't buy respect, in my book, or character. Ivan Boesky, he gave a lot of money to charity. He makes now a dollar a day, whatever.

Remember Ivan Boesky? The stockbroker.

Do you have more questions about -- do I make sense now about the rage, the anger?

Q Yes, it makes a lot of sense. Actually, I could probably talk a lot longer, but we've already gone way over.

A I hope I make sense to you.

Q You make a lot of sense. Before I end, I would like to ask you, having no toes, has that given you a lot of physical back problems during your life?

A No, but -- on account that I didn't have a, quote unquote, "a normal amputation," I have lately terrible pain, my feet are swollen. I can do nothing about it. They made me a cripple for life.

Q It just gets worse?

A Yes, the swelling goes down, and up and down. A lot of muscle aches. Of course, every day
when I see my feet I get angry, especially in the morning, here comes the anger. Germans, why did you do that to me? I was innocent. I may not be fair to all the Germans, but the Germans did it to me.

The Germans took me away, and whatever else happened to me, why do you do it to me and why don’t you recognize me, that you did it? You are the guilty one, I am the innocent one. And don’t push me away.

Q That’s very important, isn’t it? That they recognize --

A Yes. The recognition. There are -- I’m talking about Eddy Wynschenk. There are people who have compensation, from the German people. I’m talking about me. I’m not talking about other survivors. I can’t talk about other people. If they would have said, we give you $1 a month pension, I would have accepted. Then they admitted they were wrong.

I hope I make myself clear. Not a cent. And they don’t like to hear it when I go public, wherever I go, but that’s their baby. Let them tell them that I lie, right?
So no, I will never forgive them, what they did to me, and I can never forget. Because there are people who say, you know, why don't you forget what happened and forgive them? Oh, forget, okay, then I have to forget that I once had a father, a mom, a brother, and three sisters, and a brother-in-law, and a one-year-old niece, all murdered. Forget my nightmares. To forget my pain, my sadness of the ones I once had, I loved, all murdered -- what kind of a person would I be? If I forget, I would betray my family!

I should forget I was in concentration camps, I should forget that I don't have toes anymore, part of forgetting, right? I have to forget I have a number on my arm. I should forget the crimes they committed against me as a human being.

And I should also forget Christmas and Hanukka and Memorial Day, please forget Memorial Day. That's in a way to honor the soldiers who gave their life so we can live in freedom. Forget everything. Forget your grandmother's birthday, forget your grandparents' birthday, forget your heritage!
And forgive? I can't forgive what they did to my family. My family can only forgive them. I can't. Only a victim can forgive. Nobody else can. And I can never forgive them what they did to me, for myself. I can't. That's absolutely impossible. And I know people say, yes, it is now 45 years after the war, my God. I say, yes, 45 years I don't have any toes, it is 47 years that I don't have any family.

That is also easy to say, when you always slept in your own bed in a free country, no fears, and thank God, don't know what war is, what went on during the war, what man can do to man. You only know it from movies or from books, maybe school, a page from a history book. Then I understand that you would say, forget it. And the only ones who have a right to forget or forgive are the victims, nobody else.

Q I have a question before we end. Did you always have to work on your feet, or were you able to find employment where you didn't have to work on your feet anymore?

A Oh, yes, I can't stand on my feet for employment. Is that what you mean?
Q: Yes. Were you able to find a job finally where you could work without --

A: I had to, yes. I had to. I couldn't stand anymore. I couldn't do it anymore. And the older I get the worse it is. Oh, yes. Yes.

Q: And were you able to get other education?

A: No. I became an assistant bookkeeper in the United States. I went to evening high school in Philadelphia, because I like figures, bookkeeping work. But I'm an outside person, not inside. But anyway, then I got a job as assistant bookkeeper. And then I became a salesman, January 1st, 1958, in the insurance business, as a salesman. So I don't have to stand up, I could drive in my car, right? Yes.

But I could not handle any job where I have to stand. I can't stand in line to go to a movie, whatever. My wife stands in line. I sit in the car, and then she calls me. I can't stand on my feet for a long time.

And thank you for giving me the opportunity to hopefully give a message or warning; and an insight in Eddy Wynschenk. In a way I felt I undressed myself.
in front of you and John. And I don't mind. Probably there will be reaction of people, "that's not true," whatever -- let them come to me and tell me what is wrong, what I said, what kind of lies I said. I have no reason to lie.

Q       Thank you very much.

A       Thank you for inviting me.

[End Tape 2]