

While you're in England and before you left for the United States, you met your wife. Would you tell us her name and then describe your family and the final days in England?

Well, I met my wife in Manchester in June 1940 and we got married January 26, '41. And we had two children.

Their names?

Michael and Leslie. Leslie, they thought it was a girl's name but Leslie Howard, my wife liked Leslie Howard. That's why she called her Leslie. And then finally my parents and my brother and my sister got settled in America. And they said it's time. And her sister lived in America. My wife's sister lived in America. It's time to get there. And so we left and my mother-in-law lived with us, her mother. Actually her aunt. Her father-- Her mother died in 1928. And then he her father met the aunt, the sister. She lived with us in England and we left together for America, St. Paul.

We went with two little kids, four and five years old. From England we went to Denmark, from Denmark we went to Sweden, and from Sweden we take a boat to America. Well, you know after the war it wasn't so easy to get passage for five people. And we went to New York where my parents lived. And I stayed in New York till Labor Day. I couldn't take it. New York with my kids too big. We lived out in the country, you know. The kids were wandering around. And we were too confined.

So my wife's sister said, why don't you come out to California? That's one of my better decisions I made in life. And we went to California. I came here on a Thursday and I started working next Tuesday. I had a job when they saw my references from Germany and England and so forth, in America-- I worked in New York for a couple of weeks-- and I had a job.

What job was that?

I work for my Marshane Calculator. They made mechanical calculators. In Oakland. In Emeryville, actually. I worked for them, and later I got a job for Caterpillar, the big tractor outfit. The last 17 years I worked for Caterpillar in quality control. Had a very good job there. We are very active in the Jewish community. My wife is very active in Hadassah. I'm very active in the temple in Alameda, men's club and the religious committee.

Which temple?

Temple Israel in Alameda. Temple Israel in Alameda. We've been members since 1947, so we're the old-timers now.

That's not an Orthodox--

No, it's reform.

Are your children in the faith?

Oh yeah. My children, my oldest is 50 and the youngest is 49. And they have children. My oldest has two boys and my youngest has two girls.

And they're active.

Oh yes, they are active. The oldest grandson that's going to get married next year is 23 years old. So we're looking forward to that. That's a happy occasion. We just celebrated our 50th anniversary last January. My wife did, I didn't, but that's all.

[LAUGHING]

Have you, in the years since the war, returned to either England or Germany?

I stopped over in Germany one night because I couldn't get a flight to London, from London to Israel. I want to go to Israel, and I wanted to stop and I wanted a British airplane to take us from here to London, then I want to go from London to Israel. I said, I better make sure we got everything. I called the travel agent. No English plane. You have to go to Germany. I said, oh God. Well, so I went to Frankfurt one night.

And then in '87, my wife gets a notice, you should come to our hometown. They're making a memorial plaque for the synagogue that was destroyed. They will pay for the stay but they won't pay for the air fare. So we went there, reluctantly.

Her hometown is--

North Friesen. They treated us very well, but I had a funny feeling.

You didn't feel at home in Germany.

No, no, no, no, no. They always ask me, how come you speak such good German? I said, well, my parents only talked Germ to me. So I didn't let them know. They knew I was from America, the dress and all of that. But I always had that funny feeling. Even you can't blame the younger ones. But anybody in my age group, 99% are Nazis. I don't care what you say. Even if they deny it, I don't believe. They're all Nazis there. In the town I lived, I only knew two people who weren't Nazis, the doctor and the milkman next door. The rest of them, all Nazis. They all deny it, naturally. The Germans are known for big liars. The biggest lie in history. Always. They know from nothing.

How do you feel about what's happening in Germany now?

With the East and West you mean?

Yeah.

That's the worst thing that can happen to the world.

For them to get back together?

Sure. They make another war. In years to come, America will go with Germany to fight Russia one of these days. I always said that. I hope it doesn't-- I hope I'm wrong. I just hope I'm wrong. I don't trust the Germans. They're born to make war. That's their upbringing.

But do you think America will help them make it? Do you think America will help Germany make a war?

Sure. They want to sell ammunition. Why do you think we have these factories making tanks and airplanes and all that? You don't put it on the mantelpiece. It's a terrible thing, war.

You came to America at '49?

'47. And in '48 there was the Berlin airlift. Do you recall that?

Any recollections of what you were thinking about in those days?

You know what bothers me most, it's a very funny thing. England helped us during the war. You know the English and the Americans together for Germany and Japan. Japan Germany on top of the world, and England is down the drain. And so is America. We build up these guys, made them big. First we destroy and then we build them up. They're bigger and better off than we are. I don't understand that. I never could figure it out. so I don't know. Politics stinks anyway.

You've been to Israel at least once

I've been twice.

Recently?

No, '87 I think. I don't know. I forget. My wife was a delegate to the Hadassah convention, so I accompanied her.

What were your feelings when the Gulf War was underway? What we call a war with Iraq. Did you have feelings about that?

Yeah.

What were they?

I think America should let the Israel finish the job. They would have finished the job.

You think perhaps America did not finish the job.

No. They should have gone in, take care of him, take care of Hussein and finish him for good.

What were your feelings when-- did you see television?

Sure.

The Scud missiles were landing in Tel Aviv.

Yeah.

What were your feelings about that?

You want to hear the truth? You know where the Scud missiles were transported from? Metzeler-Spence. Germany made to the trucks to put the Scud missiles into Israel. And who you think made the chemicals for Assad, or whatever his name is? Germany. Sure. America didn't finish the job proper. Now look at Hussein from Jordan, King Hussein. He sided with the guy from Iraq. So what's happening now? He comes back to America, he's a good boy, they deliver weapons to him. He sells them to Hussein again, and he starts another war. And our boys get killed for the Arabs with their own weapons. That's what's going to happen again.

You know in Arab history they did not mention one word of American or foreign soldier who won that war? People don't know that. But not one name of American or English or Italian. And all the Arabs, all in glory. They won their big war. My foot. They couldn't eat a fly.

Did it bother you to see the television of the missiles dropping on Jewish cities?

Sure it bothered me.

Because you had been through a blitz.

Yeah, in England. I know what it means. But actually I felt that Israel should retaliate. Oh, absolutely. They should have, but they didn't because America said, don't do it and they listen to America.

And you feel they should have.

Oh yeah, absolutely. Go right in and finish the job. They would have finished the job, no question about it. You remember Entebbe when they went down there? Who would have done that? No country in the world would do, only

Israel done it. 3 million people, 250 million Arabs around them and they go into Entebbe and in Uganda and get their people out. Thank God we got Israel, you know. We should have had Israel already when Hitler started, but it was unfortunate.

Do you have any feelings about what's happening in Soviet Russia with the Soviet Jews being allowed to come out?

Soviet Jews are coming out, hopefully. I hope you don't make the same mistake we made with the German Jews. But Russia has everything coming. They got it coming.

Whatever happens to Russia--

It's good. Whatever happens to them. They're just as bad as Hitler. There was no difference between the communists and the Nazis. No different. The one was on the left, the other one not on the right. Stalin killed millions of his people, millions. People don't know that. He was the biggest murderer in history, Stalin, bar none. He was bigger than Hitler killing people. People don't know that. People don't read history.

Did you say your father was from Minsk?

Near Minsk.

Did you ever discuss with him, after Germany had invaded Russia and killed many, many people in Minsk--

No, we couldn't.

And you never talked about that?

No, because we were in England and he was in America. There was no communication. You couldn't communicate.

And since then you never, after there was peace, you were never able to talk to him about it.

No, we never mentioned. See, at that time we didn't talk too much about it. My children didn't know too much about the Holocaust, as I said before, but the grandchildren, they learned in Sunday school and school.

Have you told your story to your own children?

Oh yeah, they know my story. Oh yeah.

Do they have any interest in it?

I don't think so. This generation is not a good generation for it. The next generation, the children, the 20-year-old Jews and the 16-year-olds, they have more feeling for it than the older ones.

Have you told it to your grandchildren?

Oh, they know. They interviewed my wife, one of the boys' project, a school project.

Will you show them this film?

Oh, absolutely, if I get a copy, sure. I have a VCR at home. I show it. I invite all my friends and show it to them, absolutely. I talk every Kristallnacht, close to Friday night when we have services, I give speech on what happened and why it happened, why it shouldn't have happened. You know it shouldn't have happened, really, if you think about it. If France and England would have put their foot down, it couldn't. It would have saved 6 million Jews. But nobody cares.

Can you give us an idea of how many of your relatives stayed in Europe and were victims of the Holocaust, if you can?

That's hard to say. I don't know anybody from my father's side. We have no contact whatsoever. We had, in the 20s, we had contact I know when I was a kid. But from my mother's side, I would only say her brother got murdered. That's all I know. Her sister was buried, so my friend told me. She died a natural death.

Your mother's brother was where?

In Germany.

In Germany.

We had no trace whatsoever.

Do you know whether he was deported?

No, no idea. Not the slightest what happened.

All your father's relatives are in that area of Russia that is near--

Well, there were some in Germany. He had two sisters in Germany and they all went to Israel in the early '30s

They got out of Germany.

They got out.

Those people in Russia, do you have any idea what happened to them?

No, not the slightest. No contact whatsoever. We lost every contact in the '30s.

But you know now what happened to Jews who were living in Russia.

But at that time we didn't know. There was no way.

And you mentioned that you went back to Germany about four years ago with your wife to her hometown. She was invited for a memorial. You said that you had a funny feeling to be there. What was so peculiar about that visit?

What?

What was so peculiar about that visit? You said you had a funny feeling about it.

First of all, I don't like Germans. I don't like them. I know what they stand for, I know what they are, what they do and what they did. We were both very hesitant to go. And they treated us cordially, very well and all that. But we went to Holland by car. I had rented a car. I said, I'm glad I'm out of Germany. I don't want nothing to do with it.

How long did you spend there?

A week. They had performances, and my wife's brother who came from Israel-- they came from all over the world that day, from Argentina, from Holland, from Israel, from America, from Belgium and all over-- and my brother-in-law went to high school there and gave a speech about what happened and so forth and so forth. But these are very younger people. So you cannot really blame them for what happened. But as I said before and I say it again, anybody my age group, I don't want nothing to do with them. Nothing whatsoever. I know what they done. They say they didn't, but I know better. They say, oh no, no concentration camp or blah, blah.

Did your wife meet any of her friends from her childhood? Did she have personal conversations?

They invited her one day over for tea. I went with her to a house. And then later on she got a letter. There was a reunion and they invited her to go back. She said, I wouldn't go back to give me the money to go back. She said, this girl who wrote, her father was the biggest Nazi in town. Now they don't know from nothing. Finished.

I believe we're finished.

Yeah, good. Finished?

Do you have anything for him?