

Told her naturally about it, but in general I don't talk much about it. And it's sometimes to me now this is like it isn't really my life. It's like reading a book. Because it's so long ago. And I mean, I never forget it, but it's still it's not real. I notice that many times when sometimes people ask you.

I could tell in the beginning when you were talking that it was as though you were reading a book out loud to me. And then it seemed to change somewhere and you seemed to be more living it.

Because certain things, many times I dreamt about it and these things. And you really never forget it. But it's still-- see, when I left and I arrived, I mean, after I was liberated, I decided this is part of my life, but I don't want it to take over my life. That from now on, I'm going to be just remember all these things constantly. I didn't want this because I figured it would hurt me more and I have it's a new life now.

And that's really how I recover, because I know some people, we went to New York a couple of times and met some of the people, naturally, from Riga and we talked about. And you could see some of them are mentally never recovered. And I made up my mind at the time in order to survive, you really have to, the word-- to forget about it, it's not the right word, because I didn't forget it. But you put it-- you block it out. That's the word. I blocked it out.

Did it help through the years that your wife was from the same background as you?

Oh, absolutely. Yes. We are now married 43 years. And definitely. Because so many times there are certain things which we just look at each other and there are certain things, if somebody talks about certain things. And you know exactly what the other person is thinking. Oh yeah, definitely.

Mazel tov on 47.

43.

Oh, 43.

Let's not overdo it now.

You were married in '47.

Yeah. It's 43 years. I think we did all right.

[LAUGHS]

Harry, I wanted to go back to the Russians. Now, what happened? You told me you heard through the drivers and you heard the bombs. And you were unloading at the dock. What else? What then?

Well, I mean, see, before the Russians entered, we left. They took us away from there. The only thing we did was Riga has several bridges. And I remember we had to-- they took us on a job once on one of the bridges. Apparently they attached some of these detonators to the bridge so they could blow it up. And I remember we had to bring some of the stuff out.

We had to load and unload this whatever it was. I mean, they had steel cables and all this. And we had to bring it over to the bridge. That was shortly before, but that was about all I remember, because we never saw a Russian, naturally, because they took us out. We had to drive some of the trucks back to this town, Libau in Lithuania.

And the Germans took everything they could get hold of. I mean, the trucks were loaded with all of a sudden there was so much food. It was unbelievable. Canned food. They took it all with them. And we had to take it back. Naturally, we didn't get it.

[LAUGHS]

And then but that was about all I remember of the end of Riga. For us there was, I mean, we weren't really that much affected by it since they took us back. But they did take a lot of Jews from the ghetto. But that was-- no, that was before already. They took them to other camps outside of-- some of them went to, I'm quite sure, went to Auschwitz and some of them to this camp in Stutthof, which was in Germany. But then I don't know too much about it, because like I say, we were a smaller group of people.

And what happened to you once you got to Libau?

OK, like I said, we worked there mostly on bombed areas. We had to get some street work so that trucks could get through and tanks. And the whole army had to get through there. So we did that kind of work. And then shortly after we had this-- when we were bombed and these people got killed in our shelter, then we were told this is the end for us in that area.

And one day they told us, the Gestapo told us, OK, tomorrow morning, all of you go back to Germany. So you never know what that means. It could mean you get killed or what. Because nobody really believed anything. But then there was a ship there. And we had to load the ship. First of all, all kinds of they put on armaments. I mean, some tanks and some guns and everything and with all the holds inside. And then they covered it all up and then they took us and put us on that ship. In the morning, one of the other ships leaving was torpedoed.

And naturally, we were kind of scared, all of us, because you never knew. You didn't know what could happen. So we left and we were supposed to go back to a small-- they told us we take you to a camp in North Germany. But then they changed that for whatever reason. We never found out.

And they took us to-- you ever heard of the town of Hamburg? OK. And we arrived there after four or five days. And they put us in a prison, a regular prison called Fuhlsbuettel. It's a famous prison in Hamburg. And this was the time when they had all these heavy bomb, when they bombed Hamburg so heavily. Thousands and thousands of people were killed. But our prison was never hit.

Now, we were always talking about this. We always had a feeling that those were mostly either Canadian or American pilots. And we always felt that they were told, they knew exactly the area, knew that this is a big prison. It's a huge brick walled prison. And they were apparently aware of it that there were a lot of prisoners in there. So never once.

And we worked there. One of the jobs we had was to-- the soldiers had to pick up the cartilages of the bullets, the spent bullets. They had to bring them back with them. Because by that time, Germany was so poor on raw material they had to-- and we had to segregate them, copper and I still see this, mountains of it. I mean, it's unbelievable. Millions of them. And we did this every day. As soon as they would bomb Hamburg, we would have to go in ourselves. They would never put us in a shelter. We just had to stay in ourselves. But this wasn't really, this was still not too bad. I mean, it was better than Riga.

And then one day the-- oh, and women were separated from men. Different cells. Then one day we had to-- they would take us out and said, well, you are leaving now and we are taking you to another camp. And then we had to march four days and four nights. Hardly any food. Really, hardly any food. They gave us some bread and some jam, a little bit, and that was it for the four days. And constantly being bombed. There was this.

And they took us to what they called a work camp, but it was actually an extermination camp. It was called Kiel-- Kiel is the town right at the waterfront in North Germany. And that was the last camp. This was now in '45. And we arrived there.

And by that time, I had typhoid fever. And I was so sick I was. I mean, really, I felt like I wanted to give up. And then they took us to this camp and we worked there. Even though I was sick, I had to work. Because if you said you were sick, that was might as well forget it. That's the end of it. And then we stayed there for a while.

And one day they said, well, oh, and there were Polish officers in that same camp. Prisoners. And one day they shot all the Polish officers. All of them. There were I don't know how many. There must have been there 150 or 200 of them. They killed them all. In the same day-- oh, excuse me. I have to go back.

While we were marching from Hamburg to this town Kiel, all of a sudden we see these white trucks coming with red crosses. And they passed by. And later on, we found out that you have heard of the Swedish guy who got killed, Folke Bernadotte? Well, he saw us. And he made a deal at the time with Himmler. You know Himmler was the man in charge in Germany. Well, you must have heard. Made a deal with him.

[KNOCKING]

Yeah?

Apparently he made a deal with Himmler to let these women, all these women he saw, let them go. And whatever deal they made, that we don't know. But we heard later on that this is how it happened. And naturally, we didn't know anything about it. So now we are in that camp and several people died there. And then they shot all these Polish officers. And that same day, the men in charge of our barracks, we were in separate barracks there, so many people in each barracks. Came over to us and said, you know, you guys, you are lucky. Tomorrow morning you are free. And naturally nobody believed that, especially after what happened. We saw all this with the Polish officer.

And during the night they-- by the way, we wore striped clothes, striped uniforms. Most of us had that. And if not that, then we had a big white cross painted on the back of our clothes if you didn't have the striped clothes. And we had to get rid of all our clothes, and we had to take-- there was a huge room there, or a barrack, full with dead people. And we had to take their clothes and put them on. They were civilians they had killed. So we had to put all those clothes on because they apparently for whatever reason-- I mean, you never understand. It's so hard to understand. When I look back, all these things were-- it's like reading a book. And we had to put those clothes on.

And in the morning, all of a sudden, this was May. May the 1st. It was a week before the war ended in Europe. The war ended, I think, the 7th, May 7th. And here are these white trucks coming with the red cross. And all the Swedish drivers jumped out. And they said in broken German, you are free. Well, it's unbelievable. And the first thing is they gave us food and all this, which we hadn't seen in so many years. And then they took us to Malmo in Sweden. And then yeah.

Harry, can you describe what that was like at all?

Well, it's really after so many years, it's really hard to-- I'm not enough of a poet to put this into it. That's how you should really. The only explanation would be if somebody would be on his deathbed and all of a sudden he would be told you're OK. I think that would be the only. And even that, it was too long.

And too many things which-- that's why so many older people couldn't survive. The younger people could because when you're young, there's always a certain amount of hope. And I'm quite sure that Americans in the Japanese prison camps, they must have felt the same thing when they were released. Young people always hope. And that's the only way I can explain it.

But I must say this. I was so sick that I'm not sure that I really understood what was going on. Because then when we arrived in Sweden, they put me in quarantine on account of the typhoid. And then I got hepatitis on top of it. And so I was sick for quite a while. But I survived that too. But coming back to your question, I really don't-- at this point, I couldn't explain it. It was overpowering. But it's too long ago to really feel it.

Did you believe it?

No. None of us. Matter of fact, that I remember. We were on those trucks and I remember that none of us said we are free. We still thought this is just another thing. They're going to play another game with us and take us somewhere. Till we actually-- oh, I remember the first time we noticed it was they put us on a train. And we went to Copenhagen. And this was several days before the war ended. And the German troops, see Denmark was occupied. And the troops were

standing. The German troops were standing at the station but didn't do anything anymore because the war was practically over.

And here were thousands of Danish people. They were screaming and applauding when our train came through. And the train stopped and they would throw candies. And I mean, that's exactly when we really started to believe this is freedom. They were absolutely fantastic. Yes. I still remember that.

And after how long were you in the hospital? You were in the hospital in Sweden?

Yeah, yeah. Well, first of all, all of us were brought from Malmo. First we came to Malmo, which is a town closest to Denmark. I mean, there is a ferry boat going over and the train goes right on the ship and then they take you over. And they put us into tents. And the first thing was we had to go through, got sprayed with all kinds. They were afraid of-- we were all full of lice. And naturally, this was. And we got new, clean clothes and everything else was burned.

Then they took us to a rehabilitation, yeah, rehabilitation camp. And it's called, well, it wouldn't mean anything to you. Smalandsstenar. It's almost in the middle of Sweden. And we were supposed to recuperate there. And then they put me in a hospital in quarantine for a while. All together, I would say about a month. And then I gradually recuperated and went back to this camp where all my friends were. All the surviving people.

And then after a while, they took us to another camp. I mean, these were all beautiful. The Swedes were fantastic to us. I mean, you couldn't get better food and clothing and everything. And then I remember the then I tried to get in touch with some of my relatives. I tried to find anyone. The only ones I found was this one uncle in Israel. And I thought, well, maybe I will go to Israel, because I didn't know what.

Then gradually people would leave from Sweden. They would find relatives. The HIAS would work. And all these Jewish organizations, World Congress, and they all worked for us. And gradually they would leave. My wife went to England. She had a sister in England. We wanted to get married in England.

England in those days was very, very bad. And I mean, it's hard to understand today. But we requested my brother-in-law in England, who is an Englishman, I mean born Englishman, he went to the home office over there and tried to get me over so that his sister-in-law could marry, that we could get married. And they said no, absolutely not. We let only close relatives, mother, father, daughter, sister. So there was no way. They wouldn't. And we told them we were both together in a concentration camp. No. Nothing doing. So that was a big shock.

Then I worked in Sweden as an auto mechanic for almost two years. And then I found a friend in Bolivia in South America. So I wrote to him and he sent me the papers to move to La Paz, Bolivia. And then I took Lottie, my wife, over, and we got married in La Paz, Bolivia. And then we waited till we could get the papers to go to the United States. Because that was our dream. We wanted to go to the States.

And I remember the consul in La Paz, Bolivia, the American consul, he was the most wonderful man you can imagine. That man, he was actually the one who said, two young people like you should go to the United States. And I'll do anything for you. And really, I mean, in those days you had to have an affidavit. Or you had to have-- somebody had to guarantee. They had to put, matter of fact, I think they had to put \$50,000 in escrow or you had to have it in order to-- but in those days, it wasn't easy to move from one country to the other. And he helped us quite a bit with all these things.

What was his name?

Walker. He was the consul in-- matter of fact, he visit us two or three times when we lived in San Francisco. And all of a sudden he disappeared. And I really don't know whatever happened to him. Well, he might have-- he was quite a bit older. So he might have died.

What was his first name?

I think it was John, but I'm not 100% sure now.

And another thing I meant to ask you. What was your wife's maiden name?

Berger. B-E-R-G-E-R. Berger. Lottie Berger. And we have a daughter, but she was born here in San Francisco. Jeanie.

How old is she?

38.

So tell me what happened once he-- did you get an affidavit or how did you get in?

OK, yeah. I had a-- first we got an affidavit. And not an affidavit. How was this now? Because I remember we were supposed to go to Cleveland, Ohio. And Mr. Walker said, listen, you don't want to go to Cleveland, Ohio. Winters aren't good there. He said, you want to go to California. And it just so happened that I had a friend who also a survivor of Riga who had an aunt in Oakland.

And he wrote to me to Bolivia and said, well, he doesn't, I mean, he is fairly new here too and he doesn't have enough money to send me an affidavit. But since he has a job, he could get me partial if I could get one somewhere else too. And then I found another friend. And actually these two friends together sent me the affidavit and we went to Oakland, California. And we stayed there for about a year or so, and then I got a job in San Francisco and we moved to San Francisco.

When you came from La Paz, did you take the boat to New York or around?

No, the boat went through the Panama Canal and back. First they had to go through and back again. And because we had to change ships in Panama. And then we arrived at San Pedro, California, which is Southern California. We never came through-- no. Only the West Coast.

And when you got to America, what was it like?

Oh, well, till this day, I feel it's God's country. I mean, it sounds like a cliché or it sounds like, but for us, it really is. I mean, we came here, matter of fact, we arrived here with-- we promised a couple in La Paz, they gave us the money for the trip. That was \$1,000.

And we promised them we put it here on a bank, for they had a bank account here. And we promised we're going to put it here. Now, they trusted us with \$1,000 was a lot of money in those days. And I remember, we paid that off in I think in one year. We didn't do anything else, just paying this off. And we didn't, I mean, the first jobs we had was I worked at a gas station pumping gas.

My wife had a job telephoning. She spoke, by the way, she spoke English very well for the simple reason that she lived in England after the war. And in the past, she worked as a teacher, English teacher, at the American Institute. I didn't speak one word. I mean, yes and no, and that was all. Matter of fact, this sounds like a joke, but it's the truth. I got this job at the gas station.

And somebody comes over and says, give me two, in those days, two bits worth of ethel. And I knew Ethel is a girl's name, you know, Ethel, and two bits, I didn't know what two bits are. I remember calling my wife. Tell me what are two bits? Never forget that.

That's great. Two bits of ethel.

So no, to us really, I mean, we had really, I mean, in a way a wonderful life in the States. Both of us had to work, naturally. But no complaints. I got sick several times, but that can happen anywhere. So it's really couldn't ask for a better life.

Harry, after the pumping gas, what was next?

Oh. Well, then I worked at a job in a chemical company. We had to put a glaze coat on bakery pans. They had to do this for Kilpatrick and Liendorf, all these bakeries.

And then I got a job as a warehouse man at Sears Roebuck. And I stayed with Sears for 25 years. From that job, then they gave me a job in the store as a salesman. And I worked in selling appliances. And my wife started with a trucking company and became quite a high executive in a major trucking company.

What is the company?

The company is now out of business. It's ONC, Oregon Nevada California Trucking. But they are out of business. And then I-- let's see. And then I worked with Sears in San Francisco till they closed the store. That was store on Mission Street. And then I opened my own. I had a little gift shop on Irving Street in San Francisco. And I did this till three years ago, till I retired completely.

What was the name of the shop?

Gifts By Harry.

Where? What number? What number on Irving?

I think, oh my God, 22 or 23 Irving Street, I think. the 2200 block. It's between 22nd and 23rd. And so I mean, and my daughter had a summer job with the Bank of America. And she is now Vice President of the Bank of America. So that's, knock on wood, another success story.

Mazel tov.

Yeah. Thank you. That's really. So that's why I say, it turned out to be a wonderful life. I wish my parents could have seen it.

I'm sure they see it. I'm sure they see it. I'd like to ask you a little bit about the effect that the war had on you, on how you see life.

Well, I am an optimist. I always was. So otherwise I wouldn't sit here today. Like I said, I mean, I have talked to other people and they just mentally they couldn't take it and survive all the misery. But somehow I was always optimistic. I can't really say that I-- I don't give up very easily. And that's why I feel I'm a survivor.

Because believe me, like I said, I had during these 40 years now, I mean, I was six times in the hospital. I had many operations. And still I always recovered because I told myself, no, you don't give up. You don't give up. So I really, I hate to say this. It sounds like I'm bragging, but it's not. It's just I feel I'm an optimist and I'm strong enough to survive a lot of things. Probably a lot had to do with being in camp. Maybe that gave me the strength.

But on top of it, I have to admit it, I have a wonderful wife. I have a beautiful daughter. And that helped quite a bit. They helped. I have a very strong wife. So the combination is there.

What about the way you raised your daughter, Jean?

Jeannie.

Jeannie. Do you think that you raised her in a certain way because of the war? Certain things?

We talked about that. And probably if we would have, let's say we would have been, I mean, under normal for us,

normal circumstances, whether in Germany or in America, but whichever country, we probably would have brought up our daughter different. But now I don't know whether we did this or it's just plain luck. But we are very, very close with our daughter. We always could talk about everything. And she said that so many times we are very open about everything and that helped quite a bit.

But probably a lot had to do with the whole background. So that we feel it wasn't so much that she was like a daughter. She was more like, especially with my wife. Those two are, I mean, absolutely fantastic. They are practically every day they are talking even though my daughter lives across the Bay. And she said many times that might have something to do with it, with our background. She also looks at things a little different than maybe somebody who would have been brought up under normal circumstances.

Can you give me any specific values or things that are different?

Well, she went through the '60s. Let's say all this. I mean, all her friends, I remember they were in our house. They were smoking pot all the time. She tried it. She didn't care for it. I'm quite sure she must have done it a few times. I'm certain. I mean, she is a young person together with her friends. But she got through all these times. I mean, she was never and not once in trouble. Not once.

She always found good friends. And so I think she, no, as a matter of fact, I know she is all right. Very much so. She's very courageous. That sounds like a doting father. Because we talk about these things and I know she is pretty good. She had a partner too. She was married for 10 years. And she is right now in the process of divorce. But that's her husband's fault.

Any children?

No. As much as we want grandchildren, but I think at this point, this is just the right thing. It's better. But then she is also she is a career girl. Her career is very important to her.

It's wonderful that you were open with her. It takes so much courage to be open.

Yeah. No. I agree with you, sure. But that's why I said before, I don't know whether we were just lucky.

Harry, what about religion and God? After the war, what are your beliefs?

Well, first of all, I always believed in God 100%. But I am what they call a three day Jew. I go to the high holy days and once in a while in between. But I mean, I'm not going every week. It may be wrong, but this is my belief. If I talk to somebody, I always say if we talk about it, I'm Jewish.

But I must say this much. In camp also you see a lot of things which are-- how can I explain this? There were a lot of-- we had a lot of very Orthodox Jews who wouldn't even eat. They would rather die than eat something because it wasn't kosher. On the other hand, some of them, and I hate to say this, but I know I've seen it, a lot of them in order to survive put other people to death.

In those days, you would say, well, everybody wants to survive. But I remember there are degrees how far you go. So I was sometimes, and not just me, I mean, after the war we were also, after we were liberated we talked about this many times with other people. And there were a lot of these people they were very, very Orthodox and yet they were very, very selfish. Which is very upsetting, naturally.

But this doesn't change my belief in God. I mean, we all know, I mean, if we start really thinking about it, then you would say, well, if there is a God, how could this happen? I know that my parents, they probably weren't the best people in the world, but they weren't any worse than other people. So why would they have to die and I'm alive or Mr. So-and-so or Mrs. So-and-so? But my belief never changed in God. But I'm not a practicing Jew.

OK. I have another question for you I forgot to ask. When did Levison become Lawton?

Oh, OK. This is one of the-- well, when we were liberated, in Sweden we were still-- my name was still Levison. When we arrived in the United States, we got married in Bolivia. I was still Levison. When we arrived in America, I said to my wife, when I was a child, when we started talking about this, that's one thing I never mentioned. The name Levison in Germany was definitely a Jewish name. And many times I remember the minute I mentioned the name, automatically people knew I was Jewish.

So when I arrived in America, as much as-- now, here I was liberated now and this seems to me it's going to be a wonderful life in front of me. And I said if I ever have a son, I don't want my son-- you never know what the future brings. And I said, I will change my name so that if I have a son that he doesn't have to go through just the minute he mentioned the name, because I was so bitter, so hateful. If you would have known me, even with being so optimistic, but I was hateful. Oh, I hated the Germans in those days.

And I felt I shouldn't do this to-- now, maybe I used this as an excuse. Maybe I myself wanted a different name for myself because I was afraid. I never really admitted that to myself. But this might have been too. That's when I took-- when we took out what we call first papers here.

And that's when I changed it, but I wanted to keep my initials. And I felt my father would forgive me for that. But again, I'm not 100% sure that there wasn't a certain amount of selfishness involved. So then I had a daughter and the name didn't mean anything.

God got you back.

That's right.

[LAUGHS]

So you were born Heinrich?

No, Heinz.

Heinz, Heinz.

Yeah. Well, the reason why I changed the name Heinz because when we arrived here right in the beginning, I still remember that there was the advertising Heinz 57 varieties, the canned soup and vegetable. And I was afraid they might kid me about Heinz. So I changed it to Harry.

What did you do with your hatred of the Germans? How did you get over it?

Well, in a way, I'm not always-- matter of fact, we were in Berlin. You heard about these invitations Germany gives to former people. And we went. They had a seven day trip to Berlin. And we went there a couple of years ago. And at one of the luncheon meetings, there were about I would say about probably 400 Jewish people in Berlin at that time.

And at our table at the luncheon, there were two senators from Berlin. They were sitting at our table. And we were talking about it. And we were talking about this whole relationship now between how we feel about it. And I said, I'll be very frank with you. If I meet somebody on the street and he's about my age or older, this might have been the person who killed my parents. But the younger people, I just cannot see blaming them, because then I put myself on the same level with Hitler. I hate just because they're Germans. And you can't go through life hating.

But there is definitely a certain amount of hatred left. Oh yeah. I don't think I will ever-- and I don't really want to get rid of it. And I remember we had at our synagogue Sherith Israel, they had the Crystal Night, and the rabbi, Rabbi Weiner. I don't know if you know him. He and the cantor asked me if I could say a few words, which I did about remembering the Crystal Night in Berlin.

And afterwards they had some of the students, some of the kids. We were talking about it and we brought this up and that's why I say it now again, because that's what I said at the time. It's something you will never forget these things. And there's a certain amount of hatred. But it's not enough for me to go on hating.

That's well put. I wanted to ask you about Kristallnacht. You were still in Berlin? And what happened?

Well, at that time, I had a job, that's another job I had, together with a friend. And we were supposed to go to work. We usually went by-- we had a bike and usually went by bike. Now, this was November 1938. And we went to work that day on a bus or streetcar. Not bus, streetcar. And we saw all the store windows were all broken. And they had white paint painted over. Jew pig and all these slogans they had.

And our synagogue, first of all, our synagogue was burned to the ground. As you probably heard, practically all synagogues they put fire to them. But the synagogue wasn't far from where we lived at that point. And we went to work and when we arrived there, our boss was Jewish too. This was a printing outfit. And so it was another type of job I had for a while. So we decided there's no sense in staying here and we disappeared.

And so I told you before, my father was put into the concentration camp Buchenwald in June '38. So it was only my mother and I at home. So I went home and told my-- and I don't even know how we heard all these things. But it seems like under those circumstances, there is the grapevine is so fantastic. It was in no time we found out that they're going to pick up Jewish men.

So I decided-- I went home and told my mother I am disappearing for a while. And I took my bike and I left Berlin. And for three days I hid. I found some people I had met before and I stayed with them. Christian people. And after three days, the whole thing was over. I mean, they picked up thousands of Jews, put them in there was a couple of concentration camps near Berlin called Oranienburg.

And this was where and then later on I guess they went to Theresienstadt where you probably heard of Rabbi Baeck, Leo Baeck, who was the Jewish leader there. And then I came back and I continued working. But those three days, and it was miserable. I mean, all the Jewish stores were vandalized and people were picked up.

Did you hear the Germans on Kristallnacht doing the breaking of glass and the fires?

Well, the fires we saw at our synagogue. Because we went over there, and the rabbi, we had a rabbi, Dr. Swazenski, who later went to America and he was in Wisconsin somewhere as a rabbi and died there 10 years ago. So we went over to the synagogue and we saw the synagogue burning. And the fire engines, I'll never forget this, they were protecting the neighbor houses. They put water on the houses next to it but not on the synagogue. They let the synagogue burn.

There is a book. It's called in German [SPEAKS GERMAN] which means almost like arrow through Berlin. And it shows all the synagogues before and after they were burned. I mean, if they could get pictures of it. Quite a number. I have this book at home. So one could see it there in that book. So that's the only one I saw actually burning. But I don't know how many synagogues were burned in Berlin.

Let's see. There was one other thing I wanted to ask you, Harry, and that is to what do you attribute your survival? Do you think it was luck?

Well, definitely a combination. I mean, a certain amount of luck. I mean, anything, you can always say luck. But also when I talked before, being an optimist had a lot to do with it. I wanted to survive. And you see all these things, those little things come back. I remember in the ghetto one day remember I told you I was faking. I was sick. And I remember it was a sunny day because so many times now I like the sunshine. I like to go out and go on walks. I like the sunshine.

I remember lying, there was like a patch of grass, like a meadow. And for a short while, why I had to go there, I don't remember. But I remember lying on my back. I'll never forget. This is one of the little things one never forgets. And there was a tree above. And the green leaves against the blue sky I'll never forget. And somehow this gave me, I mean, it sounds really like we say in German, we say kitsch. Kitschy. But this gave me somehow I felt I'm going to survive this.

Just looking at those green leaves against the blue sky. And I never forgot that.

I believe you.

That's one of the little things. But otherwise sure, luck has a lot to do. Because when they selected me, I could have been with my father and go on that truck. And there were many more times.

And what about Israel? How do you feel about the state of Israel?

OK. Israel. I've been there. Like I told you, I have a cousin there. I think it's an unbelievable country. It's fantastic. It gave all of us-- I'm not talking about other people right now. I'm only talking about us survivors. It gave us something to hold on to later on. I mean, not in the beginning, because it was only Palestine. But later on.

The only thing is what I have seen when I was there, and it was really too short a time to really, I mean, to make up your mind about something. You shouldn't do this in a short time. The problems they have in Israel, a lot of these problems are self made, made by the people themselves. And that's the bad thing to say they, because after all, they are all people too. But too many of the people are very arrogant I noticed when I was over there.

And probably a lot has to do with all these years of fighting. And I mean, there is a reason for it. But again, what I told you before about the very Orthodox people in the camp, I have seen the same thing. It happened to us. My cousin took us into the very Orthodox area. And we made that mistake driving in there and somebody threw a rock at us. It was on a Shabbas. It was, I have to admit, we made a mistake. We didn't think. But

I'm just afraid that they always will have internal problems. Not even talking about the Arabs. This is a different story. I mean, what they did, what the people did over there is unbelievable. There's no doubt about it. But I'm just afraid that a lot of them are their own enemy. And that's very discouraging, because they have enough problems with the Arabs.

I mean, people always say you should learn from history. In Germany, they had what? They had under the Weimar Republic. I don't know if you ever read about how Hitler could hold-- how he could come to power. I think they had 23 or 25 or 30 parties. Every little thing was a party. So they could never be united. Well, in Israel in a way they have the same problem. I mean, this is, again, that's my opinion. I may be completely wrong. But I think they have to iron out their own internal problems first.

What about Germany and the reunification and Eastern Europe? What are your thoughts there?

Well, naturally we are always afraid of a united Germany. No doubt about it. Because Germany will be the most powerful country in Europe. But then it's a different generation now. Again, that would be the same thing what I said before. You can't go on all your life hating. So consequently you have to give them a chance too. I'm quite sure, I mean, economically there's no doubt about it. They are probably the most powerful country in Europe. I mean, the Germans are that way. It's part of their life and upbringing.

But I don't know. I just feel that the world has changed so much. You can watch so much more today. I mean, the world is basically so small today that you can see what's going on. It's different than 1933. That's how I feel. So countries like the neighborhood. I'm not even talking about the United States. But the countries over there can watch it much better. And I don't think, but maybe I'm wrong, but I feel this couldn't happen again. And sure there will be a very powerful-- I think we have to worry more about it over here economically, because their products are A-1. They might be our competitors and we should watch that.

We may have to move back to Germany if the antisemitism here gets too bad.

Well, you will never-- there will always be antisemitism. I think most people are not true to themselves because basically everybody has a certain amount of prejudice. No doubt about it. I mean, again, as far as I'm concerned. We all have something or somebody we don't like. But it's only one thing to do, to watch out for it. And every time something happens, if one has to, you can't just go around like that.

Harry, what values-- you said that you're a three day Jew. But what values do you think you got from Judaism?

Well, I think I'm a much more tolerant person. And I think this has something to do with my Jewish background, as far as I'm concerned. I see that not everything is black or white. There are a lot of gray areas. And I mean, all these things sound like cliches. But it's really how I feel. And I think a lot has to do with being a Jew.

Because I notice it so many times with all the problems today. When I really read the paper, watch television, and you see whether it's abortion or whatever. And I feel I am more tolerant of a lot of things because I'm a Jew and my background, my parents, the way I look back so many times even so. Well, after all, I was 22 years old. So I wasn't a little child when they died. And I remember we talked very openly about a lot of things. And I think this has a lot to do with it. Even so, I'm not a practicing Jew. But I think it has something, really.

I've asked just about everything I had thought of. But I just wanted to ask you if you have any wish for the future for yourself or Jews or your daughter's generation, for the world.

Well, that all fits together, really. For my daughter, definitely I told her so many times, don't be so prejudiced. Be more tolerant. That's one of the things. That's why I brought this up. For the Jews, you mean just all over the world? As far as I can see, the problems Jews have will be the same problems in each country. Whatever problems they have over there, I just feel, like I said before, the antisemitism will not disappear. Because as you can see, there are hardly any Jews left in Poland and the Polish people are even now even today in a way, there's a lot of antisemitism. So I don't think this will change.

Otherwise and for myself, well, I just want to stay healthy for a few more years and together with my wife and my daughter. That's really. I mean, when you're 70 years old, naturally you think more about it.

I would never think you're 70.

Oh yes, I turned just 70 June 16.

Congratulations.

Thank you.

Is there anything else that you would like to say or thoughts that came up that you wanted to talk about that I might not have asked?

Well, I think we covered probably-- the only thing, like I said before, the only reason why I thought this might be a good idea was because I felt there is so very little known about Riga. And I thought I don't know, have you been in New York at all? Or did you interview only in the Bay Area? I see. Because in New York, naturally there are, like I said, there are some more survivors. And they probably do the same thing over there. I don't know, but I imagine there's much more of them.

There's the archives at Yale and then I know of one group. Lani would probably know of groups in New York.

Holocaust oral history projects?

Yeah.

There's one on Long Island, isn't there?

That's right. Long Island. There is one.

And well, they're building one center in Washington.

A memorial.

Yes.

If you have any names of people in the Bay Area that we should be calling and asking if they would also like to share.

Yeah, let's talk about that off camera. But I definitely--

Oh, I see.

Get some ideas from you.

Well, yeah. I would have to think about it.

Maybe after we finish the interview, we can talk about that a little bit.

Is there anything else that you wanted to talk about?

I think everything was covered. So I think this is-- I don't think I have anything to add to it. You were a wonderful interviewer. You made it so easy for me.

You were wonderful. I couldn't stop. I was hoping I'm not tiring you out.

No, that's not. But I thought maybe I talked too much.

I loved every word. So thank you very much.

Thank you.

Yeah. You have such a wonderful way of talking. You remind me so much of my father. He's from Mannheim-- both of my parents.

Oh really? Oh, I didn't realize that.

Yeah. They were born there in '22 and '24.

But you were born here?

I was born here, yeah. Cincinnati. They had cousins in Cincinnati who signed the affidavit. They signed three affidavits. So my father came out and his parents. They brought him out because he was the only son. And then my aunts didn't get the affidavits. They were daughters.

Oh, I see. So what year did they leave?

They left '39.

Oh. So also that time. Just before the war.

Yeah, after Kristallnacht.

So they lived in Mannheim?

Yeah. And then my mom was born next door and they hated each other. They used to-- she would stand on the corner

and spit at him because he had a bicycle and he wouldn't give her a ride.

Really?

And they moved to France and lived under Christian names in the Alps. And she was in the underground.

Oh, she was in the underground?

Yeah.

So are you using your parents' name or is this--

My father's named [? Feibelman. ?]

Oh, that's your father's name.

That's my dad.

I see.

Her name was Levy and they changed it to [? Long ?] They just made the E into an O, the V into an N, and the Y into a G.

Well, you're lucky too.

Yeah. Some days.

Well, look. Could have been completely different. In those days.

Yeah. There was a lot of luck. There was a lot of lucky. Harry, if you would like, John, do you want to shoot the pictures?

Yes, I would like to do that.

OK.

So what is this?

This would be the main street between the two ghettos in Riga. On the left side is the German ghetto. On the right side would be the former Latvian ghetto. Naturally there's the barbed wire all around the ghetto, which is part of Riga. It's part of the town.

Do you know the name of the street offhand?

I'll be honest with you, no. Not on that particular picture, no.

Shot of that there. All right. And this one is--

OK, this is also--

This is also the Riga ghetto.

OK. Yeah. That's just another-- the ghetto is on the right. Again, it's the same thing actually. There is the one gate, as you can see. And I'm quite sure that this is reversed now. On the right side is the German ghetto and on the left side is

the Latvian ghetto.

Are you saying the negative was flipped over when this was printed?

No, it's just from a different-- now, by the way, these pictures originally were taken by Germans. And we just got them by stealing them.

OK. You referred to that earlier in your interview, right? OK.

This would be the entrance to the ghetto. If you can move your camera over, that's right like that, on the right side there's a big building. That was as far as I remember was the Gestapo hospital. And this would be the entrance into the ghetto.

OK. And this is?

That would be the German part of the ghetto. And I don't know if you can pick up the sign.

That's as close as we can get with this camera.

OK. But it says that in German and in Latvian, anybody who is climbing over the fence or getting near the fence will be shot.

Tell us the story of this picture here.

OK. Everybody in the Riga ghetto had to have his or her photograph taken for the archives, the German archives. Shortly before we left Riga, I broke into the office and went through the files which were all over the floor and found my picture plus pictures of some of the people, some of other people. But I didn't bring those along. I just brought this along so that you can see. Now, the picture was taken in 1943. Beginning of '43.

Just when you think it's getting easy, it gets hard on you.

Are you getting them--

I guess it's from [INAUDIBLE].

Oh. Should I hold it here?

That'll be OK. And this is just a copy of the same thing.

Naturally we had to, in those days, we had to wear the star. The number is not a number we carried. This number was strictly for the picture. In other words, I was number 56 picture. But underneath, it's hard to see on that picture, but there is the yellow star. And later on, we got the striped clothes. Or we had a big white cross painted on the back of our clothes.

OK. OK, this is again?

It's a group of people from the ghetto. But I don't remember naturally which group it is, whether they were coming back from work or they just brought them in from a transport. That I don't know, because I don't recognize anybody. I mean, so it's such a small picture. So I really don't know. But as you can see, there is a guard. We're on a bike on the--

On the far right there?

That's right. And then usually they had one in front, one on the side. Actually on both sides and one in the back, but sometimes they were short. And the interesting part is very few people escaped for one single reason. Riga is

surrounded by wilderness. You couldn't survive. Everybody knew it. And you didn't speak the language. So what would you do?

Right, where would you go?

Where would you go? Because the Latvians wouldn't hide you. No way.

OK.